Sounding Margins: Musical Representations of White South Africa

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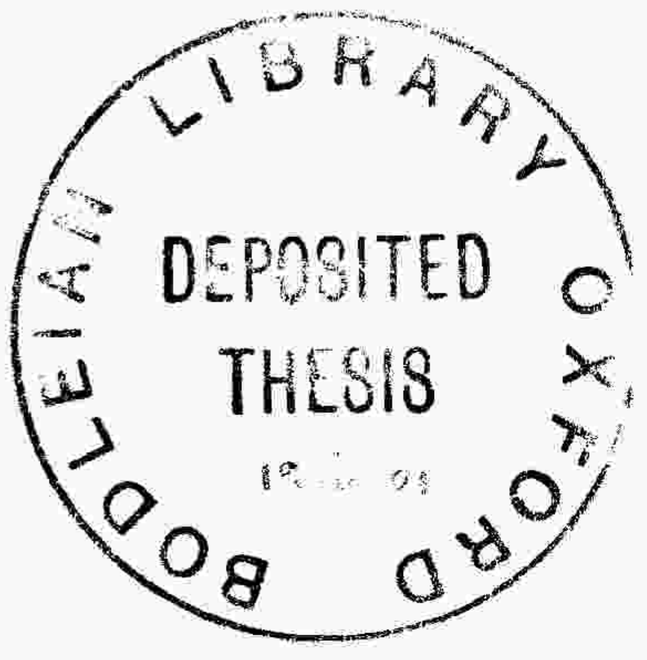

MAKER: Meneer? Sal ek jou van Suid-Afrika vertel, meneer?

Breyten Breytenbach

Boklied

Abstract

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White South African culture is not a monolith. Neither was Apartheid. Neither is the pan-Africanist hegemony proclaimed over the New South Africa in the name of the 'African Renaissance'. It is these highly politicized premises that inform the five case studies undertaken in this thesis – case studies that aim to explore the role music can play as a cultural mediator, acting as a sign-system of difference in the postcolonial sphere in general and in the South African context in particular. Post-Apartheid South Africa presents a time and place where Western musical culture is an uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity – between art and politics, past and present, the public and the private. Our musicological solutions to political problems, and our attempts to find them, are, I believe, important and exemplary. My reading of art music in South Africa as part of a large and ambitious social and political experiment – the outcome of which hangs in the balance – makes music a crucial site of imagining more composite, unfinished identities. White South African protest, fears, hopes and strategies are explored in the music of John Joubert, Arnold van Wyk, Stefans Grové, and in the literary texts of N.P. van Wyk Louw, André P. Brink and Breyten Breytenbach. My approach is unashamedly interdisciplinary and intentionally eclectic. Musicology has the chance to show, in the South African context, how difference can be productively engaged with and accepted in a way that does not undermine its significance. By exploring the merits of the postcolonial

position, I also hope to show how South African musicology can contribute to modes of musicological discourse aligned to postmodern thought.

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I should like to thank Roger Parker, my supervisor, for his unfailingly sympathetic and encouraging engagement with my work. He has needed few words to inspire me, and made more time available to read the many drafts sent to him than I could have expected. John Joubert was extremely helpful in granting me access to his manuscripts and music, as well as discussing his music with me on numerous occasions. Mrs Hetty Badings, widow of Henk Badings, searched through her late husband's archives for me, while Ena van der Walt of the Nasionale Letterkunde Museum in Bloemfontein, Elda Nolte of the music library of Stellenbosch University, Hanna Botha of the Kosie Gericke Biblioteek and Idalette Beute of the SABC Sound Archive in Johannesburg have all gone to vast amounts of trouble on my behalf. Closer to home (sic), John Wagstaff and his staff always succeeded in making even the stormier days look a little brighter. I also owe thanks to Peter Franklin, Peter Klatzow and F.I.J. van Rensburg for reading earlier drafts of some of my chapters and for the insights they contributed. Bennie van Rensburg, André Hattingh, Marian Friedman and the late Stefan Zondagh all made my intellectual development and personal enrichment their mission at various times predating this thesis. I have not forgotten, nor shall I.

Without the financial support of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Council, studying at Oxford would have remained only a dream. I am deeply grateful for their financial backing. I am only too well aware that a large part of what I have been able to achieve as a student from a largely poor and chaotic Third World country, is due to the privileged upbringing I was afforded as a white South African. Statistically, my chance to succeed was always going to be greater than that of my black counterpart. This carries a responsibility I will do my best to live up to when I return to South Africa. It does not diminish the fact, however, that my parents made huge sacrifices to see me go to university, that they lavished resources, time and attention they probably did not have on me, and inspired me to attempt ever greater challenges. To a large extent, my biggest 'unfair advantage' was the privilege of having them as parents.

Two people shared the past few years more intimately with me than anyone else. My son, Willem, only arrived on the scene in 1998, and deserves commendation for teaching me, in his own inimitable way, the virtues of effective time management and a phlegmatic temperament while he good-naturedly endured the privations of time and attention resulting from my research. Elmi, my wife and single unwavering supporter, has been my rock for the life of this thesis and well before. With no one would I rather have shared the disappointments and joys of the past ten years. It is to her that I owe, and dedicate, this thesis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Death is the birth of imagination.[1]

Breyten Breytenbach

In J.M. Coetzee's 1999 Booker prize winning novel, *Disgrace*, South African academic David Lurie loses his position as adjunct professor of communications at the Cape Technical University as a result of an impulsive affair with a student. Once a professor of modern languages (Classics and Modern Languages having been closed down as a result of rationalization), Lurie has no great regrets leaving academia. He admits his guilt, but refuses to yield to pressure to repent publicly for a 'human rights abuse'. Retreating to a smallholding owned by his daughter Lucy in the Eastern Cape, he is determined to start afresh, away from the gossip circles of Cape Town, and to start working on a chamber opera, *Byron in Italy*. But on the smallholding life becomes a nightmare. Lurie and his daughter become victims of an attack that serves as a catalyst for a shift in power relations between Lucy and her black neighbour, Petrus. Lucy is raped, Lurie set alight, their belongings taken. The incident becomes the regulating principle of their lives. Lucy refuses to pursue the matter, not telling the police that she was raped, declaring herself willing to marry Petrus to enjoy his protection (even though she is a lesbian), enduring the continued presence of one of her attackers in Petrus's home. Lurie urges action: confronting Petrus with his suspicions of the latter's complicity, actively prosecuting the criminals, leaving the smallholding, leaving South Africa. For Lurie, defeat amid the chaos of a changing nation lies in a resignation to

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[1] Breyten Breytenbach, *Dog Heart: a Travel Memoir* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1998), 17.

forces, often evil, beyond individual control. No matter what the imbalances of power, salvation of body and mind begins when the individual takes charge of his or her own life. For Lucy, on the other hand, defeat means to leave her smallholding, to surrender her *physical space* and with that her right to physical existence. If victory over evil can only be achieved by suspending one's life as one *wants* to live it in order to engage in a possibly endless struggle for justice and truth, that victory is worthless. If being able to continue living 'normally' means compromise with overwhelming external powers, Lucy will do what it takes just to *stay* and live her life as best she can within the new constraints. 'Guilt and salvation', she says, 'are abstractions. I don't act in terms of abstractions.'[2]

If living in South Africa is possible for whites at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which of these directions is it to take? If there is no society without defining social fictions, what sort of fictions are best suited to sustain a(ny) vision of white Africans into the next hundred years; in particular what *musical* fictions? In his foreword to the report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes that Apartheid and racism played a defining role in the history of the period the commission set out to review, namely 1960-1994. But, he continues, racism in South Africa was not invented by the social engineers of Apartheid, it 'came to South Africa in 1652' with the first Dutch settlers.[3] The implication is clear: official South African Truth views racism as a European/white vice. I should like to suggest that, whatever fictions are devised to accommodate their existential needs in Africa, it is inevitable that white South Africans will have to come to terms with the questions posed by Coetzee's novel through the prism of the racisms of colonialism and Apartheid. When Afrikaner poet Antjie Krog asked in an early poem, 'hoe lank meen

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[2] J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London, 1999), 112.
[3] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, ed. Susan de Villiers (5 vols., Cape Town, 1998), vol. i, 15-6.

ons om hier uit te hou … as 'n stukkie curiosum westers',[4] hers was arguably still an 'innocent' question probing only the existential uncertainties characterizing the lives of Europeans in Africa. As Coetzee wants to have us realize in *Disgrace*, this question has, in the wake of the revelations following the collapse of white minority rule in South Africa, become more urgent, more self-conscious, more inevitable. Therefore it is not disingenuous polemic to insist that Apartheid and its still lingering presence, as well as racism in general, should inform the struggle to produce meaningful answers as to what it is to live as an emasculated white minority in an African state and, finally, to become African in a way that is acceptable to our fellow (South) Africans.

Strategically, white intellectuals like David Lurie, who wish to preserve leadership roles and entire disciplines in an increasingly uncompromising black African hegemonic environment, may find that a total attack on their colonial and neo-colonial pasts alienates them from core elements of their constituency identity. Ever alert to the watchful eyes of the new black powers waiting for any signs of white supremacist attitudes and the enduring kudos of unreconstructed racism and reluctant participation in a new order surrounding white South Africans, the dilemma has to be negotiated of how to be part of a country in which whites constitute a marginalized minority culture and, at the same time, preserve the memory of who they are and where they come from. There is only so much that one can ask forgiveness for, rehabilitate and disown, only so much *Säuberungsaktionen* that can be ritually performed before compromise and reconciliation become censure, censorship and then instruments of suppression in the war of narratives, effecting an obligatory obliteration of all difference. In a space seeking to be defined and to be identified, such as South Africa at this time, not to struggle for something is to lose it. One can lose oneself. The nation state concept, slowly wasting away in the consciousness of other peoples and lands over many generations under the anodyne

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[4] 'how long do we intend to hold out here as a piece of Western curiosity'.

effects of time, had been amputated summarily and mercilessly in South Africa for the greater moral good. Understanding, though desirable, was not required. The imperative was and remains a moral one, and it is categorical.[5]

Conversely, challenging the clearly aggressive assertiveness of a black South African cultural hegemony may prove strategically disastrous, given the overall imbalances of political power and the perceived moral decrepitude of the 'white' point of view. The task, then, is to find and formulate a position from which to do neither, and both; to rework African hegemony so as to make black South Africans reconsider their historical and racial positions,[6] and to refashion white cultural traditions so that they can attempt to transcend their European roots. Perhaps it is better to describe this ambiguous position as a *non*position, from which one has to confront a constructed world of races and difference, to formulate alternative discourses to challenge the antinomies of race. Then again, this combative and adversarial phrase may not be the right metaphor to set the tone for what we want to achieve. 'Negotiating a treacherous tightrope' fixed between the extremist positions found everywhere in South African society may present a more appropriate, if tired, figure of speech. Interrogating the power dynamics of the new South African dispensation and probing sensitive issues of identity is, I believe, a balancing act that needs the strategic stabilizing of some of the new dispensation's own ideological armature. Though it may be a little bit of both, this *modus operandi* presents less of a Trojan horse strategy than one intended to establish some common ground for discourse in order to prevent its eventual disintegration into mere perspectivism,

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[5] In a sense, the minority culture that strives for assimilation and yet has to remember where it is coming from in order to survive is faced with the defining problem characterizing modernity: the promise that adaptation to the dominant hegemony will lead to acceptance, belied by the existence of (racial) barriers that stand in the way of fulfilment of this promise.

[6] Why, one may ask, focus on the intransigence of black South African historical and racial positions? It is my opinion that since the change in power-relations after 1994, white South Africa has been forced into a continuous revisionism of its history, identity, racisms and prejudices. In my view no such *urgent structural imperative* informs the dynamic of post-Apartheid black South African identity.

extremism and polemic. It is a necessary compromise as long as the inauguration of the subject of 'white music' in South Africa means the *ipso facto* adoption of resolutely oppositional, even separatist, premises with regard to the dominant ideologies of reconciliation and nation-building. Culture, as Veit Erlmann has written, is an arena for both the crisis characterizing a rapidly changing society and the attempts to stabilize it.[7] In South Africa, as the irreverent Breyten Breytenbach has laconically remarked, culture becomes the 'ritual trying to clarify who is going to be chosen as sacrifice, victim, or only supper'.[8]

Chapter Two takes a rather bleak view of what this ritual might produce. If difference can be deconstructed to the point where it becomes insignificant, this should make facile decisions as to what, and more pertinently, who, should be sacrificed for the greater good of the new(ish) South Africa more difficult. Survival chances of vulnerable groups should increase proportional to the decrease in discernible difference. The postcolonial point of departure, which frames this chapter as it does the others, is predetermined as the deconstruction of the essentialisms of difference created by the ruptural event of colonization, in order to reveal difference as cultural (and therefore inherently historical). But the extent to which difference can be strategically replaced by a 'generic sameness', I suggest, is both theoretically infinite and, possibly, of no practical use (and therefore irrelevant). By invoking Afrikaner composer Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore* through Adorno's theory of dialectical critique, I intimate that, as Montesquieu observed, even silence, in an environment of censorship, can be eloquent.[9] If music can speak the language of difference from within, the possibility opens up of

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[7] Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Chicago, 1999), 173.

[8] Breyten Breytenbach, 'Aanbeveling by opvoering in Niemandsland', *Boklied* (Cape Town, 1998). It is also worth remembering Serenus Zeitblom's remark in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*: 'Kultur [ist] recht eigentlich die fromme und ordnende, ich möchte sagen, begütigende Einbeziehung des Nächtig-Ungeheueren in den Kultus der Götter.'; *Doktor Faustus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 15.

[9] Cited in J.M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago and London, 1996), 43.

difference inside aligning itself with difference outside to set up the principle of difference as universal and therefore indicative of 'sameness'. Music's 'great refusal', as Lydia Goehr has termed its resistance to written and ideologized meaning, makes it especially significant as a way of opening up this kind of alterity. Drawing on the work of Ernest Gellner, I describe nationalism and its concomitant nineteenth-century Herderian baggage of national communities as unique, *sui generis* formations, as a regulative principle of twentieth-century South African history. Although undermining a nationalist programme, as I argue happens in the case of Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore*, can easily be read as chipping away at this idea of 'authentic' difference, Gellner's notion of 'diasporic nationalism' brings us face to face with the enduring entropy inhibition of race and its disturbing consequences. If notions of *racial* difference remain at the core of South African society and politics, as it does to this day, can 'white' culture realistically be expected to survive?

Implicating culture generally and music and musicology more specifically as arenas in which the crisis of post-Apartheid South African identity formation unfolds, inevitably raises the question: is a musicology outside politics a conceptual possibility *at this time* in South Africa? Indeed, re-articulating historical white musical voices of protest against Apartheid oppression, voices that were censured by Apartheid and continue to be marginalized by the homogenizing discourses of Pan-Africanism's exclusive acknowledgement of African struggle and protest as the basis for a superior moral platform of power, is about the *deliberate* and *strategic* historical politicization of musicology and art music. If South African musicology is to start participating in debates on reconciliation and cultural diversity, this argument goes, it is imperative in the current social climate of moral-ethical posturing, that it identify a *moral niche* in its 'white' past. The discussion of John Joubert's Second Symphony in Chapter Three may invite accusations that politics is not a particularly convincing point of departure for

readings of art music, and accusations of disingenuous opportunism arising from such overtly political stances are to be expected. It is indeed arguable that turning every work of art into an intensely social or political document suggests an agenda on the part of the critic that may lead to a procrustean exercise. But compromise is necessary. Survival is uppermost in the mind – and the mind is what needs to survive. The point argued here is that music filtered through a political prism at a specific time and in a specific place is perhaps useful and even necessary opportunism.

Clearly, reinventing a traumatic past and negotiating a difficult present through musicological discourse and musical texts is not to create a paradigm or theorize a systemic approach.[10] It is a (temporary) strategy intended to benefit its stakeholders, which in this context include art music and musicology. Chapter Three thus aligns itself to Lucy's refusal to surrender her space, a choice that implies that if the argument against a one-sided imposition of victor's morality can no longer be made and won't be heard, prevailing moral dogma needs to be appropriated. We may now smile knowingly at Constantine the Great's invocation of first the Erythrean sibyl and then Virgil for his Christianizing mission in the third century BC, but can we deny that through his reading Virgil became the most prestigious of all oracular writers, transforming him from imperial poet to Christian visionary?[11] As this example of (an admittedly powerful) reader demonstrates, the power of the reader lies in the discovery of new possibilities in which to dress up memory, memory that can become visible in writing, writing that can redefine oneself and one's precarious position. It was José Saramago who wrote, 'It's not a question of believing or not believing, everything we go on saying is added to what is, to what exists … I have to believe in having said it, that's often all that's needed'.[12] If

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[10] It can, however, constitute a 'theory': in its etymology 'theory' has to do with 'seeing'.
[11] See Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York and London, 1996), 205-11.
[12] José Saramago, *The Stone Raft*, tr. Giovanni Pontiero (London, 1999), 157; Portuguese edn., *A Jangada de Pedra* (Lisbon, 1986).

South Africa needs revolutionaries more than believers, fanatically believing in words is perhaps the most revolutionary attitude possible.

The reading of eminent Afrikaner poet N.P. van Wyk Louw's libretto to Dutch composer Henk Badings's *Asterion* in Chapter Four is partly a continuation of this attempt to historicize white cultural morality. But the opera that serves as textual base for this case study also leads to a consideration of what made white art in the Apartheid era more ambiguous than effective 'engaged' art arguably demands, and certainly less openly confrontational and oppositional than the forces aligned in the anti-Apartheid struggle were eager to see expressed. The intense inner conflict of Afrikaner intellectuals, also demonstrated to some extent in my reading of Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore* in Chapter Two, is informed by the choice they have had to exercise – a choice between turning a blind eye to the immoral consequences of the utopian dream of Afrikaner self-determination and freedom, or confronting this immorality, so risking minority cultural and ethnic vulnerability and possibly extinction. Having for so long persisted in choosing the former option (to universal condemnation), it was only after (pragmatically) embracing the total dismantling of the system that protected them, that Breyten Breytenbach could write that 'we [Afrikaners] are painted in the colours of disappearance here. At best we are destined to become other (while even now not knowing who we were): it is "good" in a practical and possibly a moral sense, but it is painful.'[13] For Afrikaners of Louw's generation, disappearance was not an option. *Asterion* is one of a number of texts warning against the excesses of Apartheid, rather than fundamentally questioning its inevitability if Afrikaner sovereignty was to be maintained in South Africa.

The reading of the libretto and music of *Asterion* does not, however, exclusively constitute a project of moral archaeology. It attempts to demonstrate how music was

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[13] Breytenbach, *Dog Heart*, 151.

envisaged as part of the solution to Afrikaners' political dilemma in the imagination of the pre-eminent Afrikaans poet of the twentieth-century, but also how music resisted being co-opted in such an imagined programme in a coherent instrumentalist capacity. It gives us a view about how a desire for synthesis resulted in symphysis as Louw succumbed to a form of voluntarism: *willing* a metaphysical union in a space-opening gesture intended to ameliorate not only his own art, but Afrikaner culture as a whole. *Asterion* suggests, I believe, that Louw saw in music the possibility of contributing to a redemptive broadening of the parochial values he feared would come to dominate Afrikaans and the Afrikaner nationalist project, while Badings's music is a palimpsest, the composer erasing, deleting and rewriting the nomenclature of Afrikaner/Afrikaans nationalism: the Afrikaans word becoming culpable of systemic violence, music partaking of truth and freedom. The partnership, it emerges, was never a *natural* fit in the Hegelian sense. It was rather the means of becoming something, a transformative experience, something like a Möbius strip: offering the opportunity to go outside while remaining within, conferring a special outsider-insider or insider-outsider status to those participating in it.

Let us pause to look at two paintings. The first is a celebrated Protestant icon painted in 1854 by Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt. One of the most enduring images of Christ, *The Light of the World*, as the painting is called, now hangs in Keble College, Oxford, while a larger copy dating from 1900 to 1904 was presented to St Paul's Cathedral in London in 1908. Like many of Hunt's paintings, the canvas is filled with allusion and symbolic implications. The image of Christ is that of a berobed bearded white Victorian Anglo-Saxon male. He is shown knocking on a door, holding a lantern surrounded by images of hell and salvation. The painting presents us with a codified index of theological underpinnings of the Christianizing mission of empire. The

symbolism that we are interested in here is not theological, but the powerful allusion of Empire produced when *The Light of the World* was dispatched to the corners of the British globe, including South Africa, between 1905 and 1907.[14] We are presented with the powerful imagery of the metropolitan Christ bringing light into the heart of colonial darkness.

Now a very different depiction of Christ: *Nelson Mandela*, a 1978 painting by Icelandic artist Erró, depicts the famous prisoner as a suffering black Messiah with a crown of barbed wire. The painting forms part of a collection of 150 paintings and sculptures representing 30 countries that was exhibited on 21 November 1993 at the Rothschild Foundation in Paris. The exhibition was the result of a project born in 1980, through which Antonio Saura and Ernest Pignon-Ernest, creators of the association 'Artists of the world against Apartheid', hoped to bring together a collection of works of art destined to become, through a world tour, a cultural denunciation of Apartheid.[15] The works of art were assembled with the ultimate aim of offering them to the 'first'[16] democratically elected government of South Africa, and since 1984 the collection toured the globe in an international campaign that denounced Apartheid as a crime against humanity and culture.

In Erró's painting, Nelson Mandela is positioned off-centre to the right and is thereby juxtaposed with the two Boer caricatures next to a Ku Klux Klan member in the top left hand corner. The eager arms of one of the Boers reach toward a group of mercenaries (in the back right hand corner) who are adorned with Nazi insignia. What connects various wars and atrocities with South Africa on a background synchronic level is the shared history of the Holocaust. The denial of and/or complicity in this shared knowledge is achieved in a middleground crowded by four respectably clad, blunt, one-

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[14] *The Image of Christ: the Catalogue of the Exibition 'Seeing Salvation'* (London, 2000), 32-5, esp. 34.
[15] *Art Against Apartheid: 78 Artists in the 80's*, ed. Jacques Legrand (Paris, 1995), 5 and 13.
[16] See Chapter Five, n. 15 for a note on South African democracy since 1910.

dimensional 'European' cardboard figures engaged in a card game, a depiction that can be read as a hypocritically civilized and universalized trivialization and dilution of the local manifestations of Western hegemony and racism. Three of the figures are represented only by their profiles, the fourth partially hides a cut-out doll's face behind a hand of cards. The expressions and postures suggest that the 'game' is less than honest.

Hunt's work and its world tour as Protestant icon are the very embodiment of the 'civilizing mission' ideals used to underpin justifications of empire. As an historical event, the tour was an intriguing cultural enactment of colonialist narratives and ideologies. Erró's painting undermines the notion of the uniqueness of the South African situation by aligning South African racism with the memory of the catastrophic racism of the Holocaust, with Western greed and exploitation, with the excesses of a then only emerging globalization. As a defiant anti-colonialist statement, it toured the world as anti-Apartheid icon eventually to be sent to South Africa as a celebration of the achievement of *uhuru*. But when Erró establishes Nelson Mandela as a martyr who links Africa, white South Africans and global historical events, his martyrdom is pinned to the martyrdom of Christ as the axis of two thousand years of Western history. Nearly a hundred years after Hunt's *The Light of the World* was sent to South Africa, there arrives, again from the 'West', a symbolic Redeemer. We ask: has justice now been done that Christ is no longer a Victorian Anglo-Saxon, but a famous Tembu tribesman? Does it matter that Erró imagines the Mandela story in terms understandable to and somehow dictated to by Western religious iconography? Can the spirit of postcolonial freedom ever be painted, written, composed, theorized or charted by *white/Western* artists and intellectuals? Does non-racialism dictate that this can only ever be done in terms of the enmeshed identities of West and Africa, and never in and on Africa's terms alone? In Erró's *Nelson Mandela*, does it matter that the hand that held the brush was *white*?

It is the self-consciousness of this intellectual and historical rhizome that informs the strange meaning of being white in South Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century and that leaks into the seemingly intractable issues of authorship confronted in Chapter Five. Exploring the implications of the overtly politicized adoption of assumptions privileging 'ethnoclassical'[17] music and musicological discourse operating under the banner of 'postcolonial ethnomusicology' as an act of strategic positioning, Chapter Five takes as its point of departure a (critical) acceptance of these assumptions as valid, followed by two detailed case studies exploring its possible merits. Though ostensibly similar to concerns raised in Chapter Two, concerns probing causes of the *Angst* underlying musicological discourse in South Africa and eventually leading into a consideration of possible alternatives to the existing terms in which the musicological debate is conducted, the deconstructive skepticism of Chapter Two makes way for an *ad hoc* reflection of the debate *on its own terms* in Chapter Five. In this penultimate chapter we consider how overwhelmingly white South African art music composers and musicologists are currently acting to dismantle the consequences of a still rampant prejudicial and Eurocentric perspective in their field, and to recast the world after colonialism in what Edward Said has called a 'new inclusiveness'.[18]

The 25th Congress of the South African Musicological Society at Rhodes University in Grahamstown made it clear that South African musicology was still, as Rose Rosengard Subotnik described American musicology in the 80s, a backwater committed to 'continue to adhere uncritically to a comforting Enlightenment belief in universal laws and certainty, or at least, one might add, to some newer, thinly disguised, but essentially unchanged version of that belief'.[19] It was strikingly ironic that the

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[17] See Chapter Three, n. 35, for a discussion of the term 'ethnoclassical'.
[18] Cited in Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 180.
[19] Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis and Oxford, 1991), 90.

multiply marginalized discourses that constitute South African art music (marginalized as aural and feminine Other in white South African society, as colonial extension of the empire metropolis and now as a white minority discourse in an African country), seemed unable to profit from a postmodern discursive dynamic because of the apparent unwillingness of South African musicological discourse to engage in such discursive practices.

In a world where any simple distinction between expression and action has become untenable, the speech-act has to engage with the *pragmatics* of its local context (which in South Africa remains a potentially explosive political space). In this sense the intuitive consensus of the Congress that it is morally and strategically important (and prudent) that South African musicology is seen to engage with ethnomusicology in as many ways as possible, cannot be faulted. The work of Veit Erlmann, discussed in the second of the case studies in Chapter Five, does indeed suggest two possible templates for a future South African musicology aligned more closely to ethnomusicology. The first will entail reversing his process of elevating the local to a global discourse by starting to construct local histories of the universals of art music practice in South Africa. Reconnecting the autonomous authors of high modernist texts with local structures, even if it is only to trace the dialectic between the subject and the structure and not to prove interdependency or teleology, will be paramount. The second avenue is suggested by a connection Erlmann himself establishes in his text when he writes of Josiah Semouse's description of Beaufort-West and Paarl that 'It is tempting to see a parallel here between this kind of matter-of-fact description and the thinness of landscape writing [J.M.] Coetzee has found in Afrikaans.'[20] Afrikaners have this in common with *colonized* black South Africans in their previously politically disempowered positions: their voices are by

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[20] Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 79. Erlmann refers here to Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven and London, 1988).

definition marginal, their abdication of power in the early nineties helping to expose the lie of the so-called 'Super Afrikaners' (another name for the infamous *Broederbond*) of the centre.[21] Afrikaners' rightful place, perhaps even *more* so than black South Africans who live and practice a majority culture, is that of the margin. As the title of my thesis indicates, this is a premise central to my understanding of the power-relations of South African society. 'Sounding margins' wishes to convey both the *probing* of sounds inhabiting the space of the (white) margins of a modern African society, as well as my focussing on marginal music per se. It is my conviction that these purposes can best be served by adopting more of the 'new' musicology's premises, driven in this instance by the critical impetus of postcolonial theory.[22]

Because postcolonial theory is used throughout this thesis to open up new avenues in reading white South African culture and to enable fresh perspectives on South African art music, I should briefly like to outline my understanding of its possibilities and limitations as critical stance. Under the closed and qualitative formalist conceptions of music favoured by South African musicology, South African art music has been forced into the position of a parochial second-rate or third-rate music: geographically peripheral and ideologically pinned down as an extension of Europe or exotic Other. The prospect offered by postmodernism and poststructuralism (and, under the rubric of the latter, postcolonialism), I would argue, is not necessarily an inversion of roles in the peripheral/centre dialectic, but rather the initiation of a more powerful and open-ended dialectic that will also enable South African musicologists to initiate a dialogue (probably for the first time) with indigenous creators of art music texts (and with the texts

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[21] See Philip John on how Afrikaans literature's position as 'minority' coincides with its elitist and modernist aesthetic; John, 'Marginaliteit, die Afrikaanse letterkunde en die "ongedefiniëerde woekering van vryheid" ', *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, 4:2 (1997), 250-69.

[22] I take due note of the view that the 'new musicology' is nothing but an *expansion* of the traditional disciplinary frame of reference to include previously excluded Others. Even if this were true, I would argue that such an expansion effectively changes all the fundamental precepts of traditional musicology.

themselves) on their *own terms*. Africa must be written, and not, as Breyten Breytenbach warns, to please 'the masters of culture' in London and Paris.[23] As a radical deconstructive force in postmodern critique, postcolonial criticism paradoxically depends on an historical meta-narrative (in the sense of 'that which has to be in place for something else to occur') to carry out its critical function. As Stuart Hall writes:

> Colonisation ... was no local or marginal sub-plot in some larger story ... In the re-staged narrative of the post-colonial, colonisation assumes the place and significance of a major, extended and ruptural world-historical event ... It is signifying the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonisation and imperial hegemonisation which constituted the 'outer face', the constitutive outside, of European and then Western capitalist modernity after 1492.[24]

Postcolonial criticism is therefore foundational in its historicity, but at the same time its historical narrative is constituted of open, dislocated events of differentiated character. Put in other words, the dualities active in postcolonial discourse (gender, race, ethnicity, place, time) are the 'changing material' of the 'mythic' story, but the methodological continuity and coherence provided by the essentially historical postcolonial framework counterbalances the openness and disjunctness characteristic of these dualities.

Working from historical presuppositions towards a deconstruction of constituent dualities and binary narratives ultimately leads postcolonialism to the concept of a 'generic human nature' – a thoroughly postmodern 'state of being' where all difference is perceived as culturally constructed. As a strategy aimed at eliminating the scourge of 'race' from the South African debate, it is ideal. It is of course possible for this 'nature'

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[23] Breyten Breytenbach, *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution: Essays on Africa* (New York and London, 1996), 125.
[24] See Ian Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies Divided Horizons* (London, 1996), 249.

to be continuously transformed and reconstructed through deconstruction and the defamiliarization of the subject, a prime function of any postcolonial critique. The historical foundationalism of the postcolonial critic arguably provides an advantage over positions that aim at a postmodern critique from a perspective that has to work from a duality that can only be historicized when run through an epistemological process (like feminist criticism). Ontological dualities like gender invite (demand) liberation and affirmative action through the deconstruction of their historically constructed manifestations, but lapse easily into the same (constructed) essentialisms of the ontological dualisms that they set out to expose as historically contingent. If this happens, such critical theories can be just as reductionist as biologism or economism.[25] They run the risk of becoming historically negating and epistemologically enervating.[26] By conflating the historically contingent dyad of the colonial-postcolonial with the racial-ontological faultline running through South African society, this is ultimately the criticism to which Erlmann's work becomes vulnerable. It is my contention that this, possibly unintended theoretical manoeuvre allows his discourse to become essentialist, closed and unyielding – a discourse reflective of the power relations in the present day South Africa.

It is in the tonal dreamscapes of Stefans Grové's post-1984 music, the first of the two case studies conducted in Chapter Five, where I look for an escape from this fundamental problem. Whereas John Joubert's Second Symphony was presented as a transparent attempt at empathizing pastiche, Grové's music is something altogether more ambitious and enigmatic, not least because of the reluctance of both the composer and his music to 'explain' themselves in terms of an assimilationist aesthetic. If Erlmann is to be

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[25] Though the postmodernist will deny this, not all ontological difference can ultimately be accounted for as culturally constructed phenomena.

[26] See Leo Treitler's essay 'Gender and Other Dualities of Music History' in Ruth Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, 1993), 23-45, for a critique of essentialism in feminist musicology.

believed, the crucial point to be made about the early twentieth-century high modernist expressions of 'inclusiveness', such as Primitivism and Exoticism, is the extent to which they succeed in incorporating into the West's total vision the symbols of difference that are supposed to be the very negation of the West. In this way these 'styles', if that is what they can properly be called, 'incorporate the Other as the off-center representation of that which carries modern Western subjectivity to new levels of universality.'[27] In the same way, does Grové's 'African' music stem from a desire to regroup around its own white axis the unruly forces of difference between 'Africa' and the 'West'? (We remind ourselves of the similar questions posed by Erró's *Nelson Mandela*). Does his music, in doing this, still do the work of the West? By aligning Grové's music, dreams, stories and fables to the ecstatic world of *Moria*, Desiderius Erasmus's *Folly*, I suggest that discourse as play (which includes music) may potentially escape this stricture.

High culture, as that wily sage *Jan Afrika* has warned us, is no accurate barometer of the Afrikaner's soul. It is considered 'a threat, or at best an obscure pastime, by the Afrikaners. A luxury. Something indigestible.'[28] And so finally we turn to that great white South African ritual, rugby, to continue probing the boundaries of belonging, to learn how the 'world in union' proclaimed by successive Rugby World Cup tournaments' theme song, should look in real life. More specifically, it is to the role of South Africa's national anthems in the elaborately staged and self-congratulatory global spectacle of Rugby World Cup 1995 that we direct our gaze and ears, in the hope of seeing, hearing and understanding the reconciliation and togetherness of which it was and remains the most poignant and powerful moment in post-1994 South Africa. Following Roland Barthes's reading of Eisenstein film stills, we ponder the meaning of the obtuse in the opening ceremony of the 1995 Rugby World Cup. For the last time we dwell on the

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[27] Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 183.
[28] Breytenbach, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (London and Boston, 1984), 162.

meaning of difference, that, in Rian Malan's tortured phrase, exists in South Africa as 'parallel kingdoms of consciousness'.[29] Reading the singing of the South African national anthems during the opening ceremony of the 1995 Rugby World Cup allows us to contrast difference as an independent and regulative agent to *moral* difference that paradoxically depends on an improbable degree of 'sameness' in all other categories, including the historical. If we South Africans are not (yet) a nation, we explore what can at the very least be called an intuitive sense of inter-dependence.

In summing up: my case studies seek to explore the role music can play as a cultural mediator that acts as a sign-system of difference in the postcolonial frame. Post-Apartheid South Africa presents a time and place where Western musical culture is 'an uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity – between art and politics, past and present, the public and the private'.[30] Our solutions to problems, and our attempts to find them, are, I believe, important and exemplary. In the words of Breyten Breytenbach:

> South Africa is a construct: because it is the result of dreams, in equal measure to thoughts and deeds; because it is in the process of being made … ; because it mostly escapes clicheed categorizations; because it is a dangerous puzzle; because it needs to be continually said so that we do not forget the taste of the words in our mouths; because it needs to keep moving as congelation can induce a fatal polarization and confrontation. In such a melting pot the will to understanding is important, but also the aspiration to building up.[31]

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[29] Rian Malan, *My Traitor's Heart* (London, 1991), 414.
[30] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), 175.
[31] My translation from Breyten Breytenbach's 'Vuur in die vingers: 'n Voorwoord' in Frederik van Zyl Slabbert's *Afrikaner Afrikaan: Anekdotes en Analise* (Cape Town, 1999).

Art music has (inadvertently) become part of a large and ambitious social and political experiment – the outcome of which hangs in the balance, and music can be said to provide one of the crucial sites of imagining more composite, unfinished identities. Musicology has a role to play in this unfolding experiment by exposing complexities in the non-signifying language that constitutes its subject – complexities that are all too easily simplified (by essentializing difference) in other discourses. Indeed, as John Shepherd and Peter Wicke have shown, it is possible that there are aspects of social and cultural processes which are revealed *uniquely* through their musical articulation and therefore demand musicological intervention to be made known.[32] Musicology has the chance to show how difference can be productively engaged with and accepted in a way that does not undermine its significance. Thus, for musicology, the South African context provides an opportunity for exploring the merits of the postcolonial position in the undergoing professionalization of new kinds of musicological discourse aligned to postmodern thought.

In Elsa Joubert's famous novel describing the tribulations of a 'black' woman in Apartheid South Africa, *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*, there appears the following sentence:

> Die tweede Januarie 1971 was my man daar in Observatory en sê die baas moet nou maar vir my so gou as moontlik 'n plek kry, ek kies nou maar om weg te gaan.[33]

Thus sounds the inevitable capitulation of Poppie Nongena's struggle to hold her family together in white South Africa, a struggle that had by then already turned into a bloody

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[32] See John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Oxford, 1997).

[33] ' The second of January 1971 my husband went to Observatory and asked the master to find me a place as soon as possible, I am choosing to leave now'; Elsa Joubert, *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena* (Cape Town, 1978), 142.

political tug of war, but, it is important to remember, was and remains a deeply personal and human struggle for food, clothes, shelter, dignity, a future. In Pretoria, on the same date that Poppie gives up struggling to keep her family in the Cape, to leave for the Apartheid *bantustan* of the Transkei, another, perhaps stranger, fiction is born: a little white Afrikaner *kleinbaas* ('master'). And ever since his own life's fictions started interweaving with the realities of Poppie's struggle for survival (of which he was only dimly aware), the unfolding story has also been both explosively political and exhaustingly personal. 'Meneer? sal ek jou van Suid-Afrika vertel, meneer?',[34] asks MAKER in Breytenbach's *Boklied*, only seconds before deciding under duress to jump from his high chair with a noose around his neck. If it is possible to imagine a different ending to Breytenbach's dark and confusing South African analogy, this is exactly the moment when we need to freeze time, to urgently start telling our stories in the hope of changing the outcome of the future we expect. Writing identity, re-inventing pasts, imagining a different future – in short: re-situating one-self to create new and better choices – are highly personal, supererogatory actions resulting from tortuous, (hopefully) cathartic, personal journeys. And so it is that these case studies, apart from their academic postures, tell of love and hate, of guilt and fear, of uncertainty and hope. And of the fiction of 'Western art music', such a large part of my life, in its capacity as both a continual probe of the boundaries of belonging which are so important, and a vehicle of imagining South Africa anew.

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[34] 'Sir? Shall I tell you about South Africa, sir?'; Breytenbach, *Boklied*, 156.

Chapter Two

Art Music and Afrikaner Nationalism

... maar dié wat skoonheid en hoogheid dra as las

en ver verlange, is 'n vreemde ras

van mense en bloot aan veel gevaar.[1]

N.P. van Wyk Louw

In the 1993 edition of the *South African Journal of Musicology* (*SAMUS*), Christine Lucia, then of the University of Natal, reviewed a new piano suite entitled *From the Poets*, written by Cape Town-based composer Peter Klatzow. She accused Klatzow of 'extremely tenuous links with (not to say contempt for) the use of the "local", especially the African, in compositions of European descent'.[2] Klatzow replied in a letter published in the 1994 edition of the periodical. He remonstrated that Lucia's charge was based either on ignorance, or on a wilful failure to take cognisance of certain aspects of his oeuvre.

Klatzow proceeded to point to a number of his works, starting with his earliest compositional attempt at the age of 13, which he felt exonerated him. He referred to the appropriation of ethnic African melodic material in the form of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* in a youth symphony, the conscious emulation of idiomatic Southern African performance

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[1] ' ... but those who carry beauty and privilege as burden/ and as a distant memory, is a strange race/ of people and one exposed to many dangers'; N.P. van Wyk Louw, 'Raka' in *Versamelde Gedigte* (Cape Town, 1981), 102.

[2] See Peter Klatzow, Letter in *South African Journal of Musicology*, 14 (1994), 125.

techniques for the marimba in his *Concerto for Marimba and Strings* of 1985 and his *Concerto for Flute, Marimba and Strings* of 1993, the African drumming section in the last act of his ballet *Hamlet*, and the attempt to integrate European and African choral traditions in his *Mass for Africa*.

Shifting his defence from the music, Klatzow drew attention to his appropriation and use of South African literary texts. He cited his early songs, all using Afrikaans texts and culminating in a 1963 setting of Eugene Marais's *Die Dans van die Reën* for chorus and orchestra. He pointed out that his two major song cycles make use of one Afrikaans text (a selection of N.P. van Wyk Louw's texts in the work *In Memoriam N.P. van Wyk Louw*) and one English text by English-speaking South African poet, Dennis Brutus (*Songs of Exile* for tenor and piano). The music composed for the two ballets on themes by Van Wyk Louw (*Drie Diere* and *Vier Gebede by Jaargetye in die Boland*) was also singled out by him. In conclusion he noted his active involvement in the publication and promotion of 'African-inspired works' such as Hans Roosenschoon's *Makietie* (based on the 'click' song) and Johan Cloete's *Celebration* (based on Township music). Klatzow ended his letter by stating that

> It is clear that Prof Lucia has used the opportunity of a review for the purpose of airing her own agenda. A review ... might have rather focussed on such issues as the tonal/modal nature of the musical language, the references to music of other composers (e.g. Stravinsky, whose *Soldier's Tale* puts in a brief appearance in *Prayer for the Bones*), and many other aspects which might have been of interest to musicologists.
>
> Alas, no ... I regret that *From the Poets* was not handled by someone more aware of both my contribution and my debt to the music of South Africa.[3]

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[3] Ibid., 126.

Klatzow's intriguing reference to Lucia's (hidden) agenda and his ironic defence, inviting on the one hand a more traditional analytical approach to his music which would 'interest musicologists' and reveal influences of 'mainstream' Western art music, whilst at the same time bemoaning Lucia's lack of awareness of his 'contribution and debt to the music of South Africa', reveal glimpses of discourses and practices at the heart of cultural and musicological debates in post-Apartheid South Africa. Lucia distinguishes between the use of the 'local' and the 'African' in compositions of 'European' descent. In doing this, she assumes the existence of a cultural triangle in which the 'local' is neither African nor European, the African is indigenous but somehow not 'local' and not European, and the European is neither 'local' nor African. It is significant that she does not formulate her accusation only in terms of European art music versus African musical influences, but is forced to concede that there exists a mediating 'local' which is neither, and yet cannot altogether be left out of the cultural and musical equation.

In his answer, Klatzow accepts without protest this triangular cultural problematic, and proceeds to refute the charges by focussing on the 'African' and the 'local' elements respectively as they occur in his music. The 'African' influence is illustrated by his use of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, an anthem with strong anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid connotations,[4] the 'patterning' of his marimba writing and the 'very African nature of the drumming section of *Hamlet*'. The 'local' is defended in extra-musical terms – his use of Afrikaans and English South African texts.[5] Three important points emerge from this exchange:

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[4] See Chapter Six, especially Section III, for a discussion of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*.

[5] It is interesting to note that at the 2000 Zimbabwe International Book Fare in Harare, Afrikaans was not included in the category 'African languages'. It remains grouped together with the other 'colonial' languages like English, French and Portuguese, as does, curiously, Arabic.

1) The tacit acceptance by both parties that musicological discourse in South Africa should be conducted within the paradigm of a 'European' music situated in an 'exotic' or 'alien' environment, which is Africa.[6]
2) The agreement on both sides of the argument that the need exists for art music (comprising 'compositions of European descent') actively to seek credibility in its new setting by initiating some form of transcultural transaction.
3) The emergence of the term 'local' as an unidentified, hybrid cultural space between Europe and Africa.

First, the question of an 'identity' in South African art music – as thought of in terms of either 'European' or 'African' – goes back to the establishment of an art music culture in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century.[7] As the Lucia-Klatzow correspondence indicates, however, this oppositionalism is surprisingly resistant to musical interpretation. Lucia offers no example of how she thinks a typical 'composition of European descent' that does not have contempt for the 'local' and the African should sound. Klatzow nevertheless proceeds to outline why his music *is* influenced by African and other 'local' texts and therefore presumably does not constitute typical compositions of 'European descent'. The question as to what constitutes a 'composition of European descent' in musical or extra-musical terms remains undebated, as does the seemingly obvious question of why the extent to which a musical work is either 'European' or 'African' is so important to both correspondents.

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[6] Nietzsche's Apollo-Dionysus concept, expounded in *The Birth of Tragedy*, has been famously invoked in this regard as particularly relevant to the South African situation. See 'The Republic and the Arts' in Guy Butler, *Essays & Lectures 1949-1991*, ed. Stephen Watson (Cape Town, 1994), 98-114, for a development of this theme within the general context of South African art.

[7] Between 1905 and 1910 the anglicized Afrikaner concert pianist Bosman di Ravelli tried to develop an indigenous South African art music based on ethnic Bantu motives. He studied Zulu traditional music at the court of Dinizulu, chief of the Zulus. Jacques Malan writes of the songs that resulted from these endeavours as 'musically Western and [with] little trace of Bantu influences'; J.P. Malan (ed.), *South African Music Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Cape Town, 1979-86), vol. i, 217.

This absence of an explanation of what constitutes first a questionable assumption of European and African homogeneity[8] with regard to music and secondly an accepted need for South African art music to be legitimized in some way or another, is of course hardly confined to this instance.[9] In 1986, the South African Music Rights Organization (SAMRO) sent a questionnaire to South African composers, asking them if 'Western and African styles could be reconciled' in South African art music.[10] Although Lucia's 'European' music is here substituted with the seemingly broader concept of 'Western styles', the question is posed as if difference between a 'Western style' and an 'African style' is a musical fact. In his reply to the questionnaire, composer Hans Roosenschoon replied that 'It seems that there are composers who prefer to be associated with Western art music, while others are putting all their efforts into preserving the original and unblemished forms of our indigenous music.'[11] Roosenschoon takes the debate away from the musical text and turns the focus outside the music, where composers forming part of social figurations in society either refer to Western models, or alternatively become ethnomusicologists dedicated to preserving indigenous African music. He does not seem to think it possible for art music composers to create art music at the 'African' end of the oppositional model.[12] Not surprisingly, Roosenschoon makes no attempt to articulate in what kind of musical terms an 'association with Western art music' can be conceived of as opposed to a hypothetical 'association with African music', or indeed what musical implications an embrace of the other side of the opposition would result in.

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[8] With regard to Western conceptions of unanimism in African music, see Kofi Agawu's 'The Invention of African Rhythm', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XLVIII:3 (1995), 380-95.
[9] The implications and extent of this issue are explored in greater depth in Chapter Five.
[10] Michael. S. Levy, 'African and Western Music: Shall the Twain ever Meet?', *SAMUS*, 6 (1986), 111.
[11] Ibid., 112.
[12] This seems to have been the widely held view of the white music establishment in pre-1994 South Africa. In his suggestions for a national arts policy, J.P. Malan writes that 'An authentic South African musical style ... cannot be attained by grafting indigenous motifs on to the stem of Western music; it remains a musical graft, an exotic effect rarely spiritually assimilated' (my translation); Malan, ''n Bydrae tot 'n voorgestelde nasionale kunsbeleid', *SAMUS*, 1 (1981), 40.

The acceptance of an oppositional framework in which to view art music is not new, nor is it unique to South Africa. As Carl Dahlhaus points out, even seemingly innocuous and 'harmlessly descriptive' historical facts or statements are the products of systems of interpretation.[13] The term 'Western art music' is of course no exception. It signifies the 'East' as oppositional 'other' to the West and 'art music' as a canon standing opposed to popular music and even as implicitly opposed to 'discarded' or 'second-rate' art music. The terminology with which musicological discourse is conducted therefore inherently constitutes a signification of 'others' and enshrines an exclusive musical canon embedded in Western political thought. What is important to realize, is that this process of signification lies *outside the music*: in the political and social structures of society. Attempts to justify and influence canon formation by shifting the focus to the musical text itself are no less politically motivated; 'Self-Other' dualities (such as those brought into play here) do not necessarily display an overtly political content. Dualities can operate in purely conceptual or aesthetic spheres, thereby 'implying a cultural politics without declaring one'.[14]

In a similar way, the oppositional model of 'Western' music (or 'European' music) versus African music, which Klatzow and Lucia so tacitly accept, is not a hypothesis posed by musical works, but a political construct that has through political processes (of which colonialism and Apartheid are the two most obvious) been transformed into the terms of a politically correct musical aesthetic. The ease with which this political structure has imposed itself on art music can probably be related to the fact that nearly all South African art music composers, and all South African composers of any significance (i.e., those enshrined in the canon), are white. Art music inevitably finds itself positioned on the 'European' or 'Western' side of the racial divide in South African

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[13] Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, tr. J.B Robinson (Cambridge, 1983), 42; Germ. edn., *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne, 1977).
[14] Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1995), 38.

society. It is therefore not difficult to impose the terms of a racialist political discourse on it and for cultural criticism to become nothing more than an ideology critique. The reason why this mythical opposition ('West' versus 'Africa') is debated but not disputed as premise, is rooted in the political myth embedded in European or Western racial thought of a homogeneous Africa as 'Other'.[15] Whilst it is possible that art music might function as a cultural trope in which the politics of race and class opposites can be either subverted or re-enacted, it is incorrect to subscribe to notions of either a homogeneous 'Western' or 'African' music and thereby to classify or evaluate South African art music as constituting either the one or the other.

This perspective of the political foundations of the 'Western versus African' oppositional construct leads into the second salient feature of the Lucia-Klatzow correspondence, namely the assumption that the need exists for art music, comprising as it does 'compositions of European descent', actively to seek credibility in its African setting by initiating some form of transcultural transaction.[16] The most fundamental question posed by this assumption is why it should be seen to be *musically* necessary. The question is never asked. Neither Lucia nor Klatzow is prepared to elucidate what kind of credibility should be looked for by South African composers in their music: historico-political credibility, aesthetic credibility or commercial credibility and viability. It is not surprising, therefore, that Klatzow tries to cover all these options in his answer. Historico-political credibility is gained by his appropriation of black-struggle cultural artefacts like *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, aesthetic (and political) credibility by the emulation of what white musicology understands as 'African rhythm' and commercial credibility by the act of publication and commercial promotion of such 'European' music as can be said

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[15] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford, 1992), 62.

[16] This, it will emerge in Chapter Five, is part of a two-pronged approach aimed at diffusing the tensions existing between 'white' South African art and a newly fashionable Pan-Africanist philosophy belonging to the ruling African National Congress elite.

to derive from various forms of black music. More fundamentally, however, neither Klatzow nor Lucia ventures an answer to the question of why there is a credibility crisis in South African art music.

Proceeding from the thesis that the oppositional model held up as the framework for musicological discussion in post-Apartheid South Africa is essentially a Western political construct (and in the African context therefore a colonial construct), it may be said that the perceived crisis is not to be ascribed to South African art music as such, but rather to the political and social position of South African art music composers, who constitute a racial and class minority elite. As art music is culturally inseparable from white South Africa, it is not difficult to transfer a crisis of white identity and legitimacy in Africa (as a result of the collapse of colonialism and Apartheid respectively), to a crisis in 'white culture' and therefore in South African art music. Post-Apartheid musicological discourse has therefore urgently needed to be seen to operate as anti-Apartheid and postcolonial discourse, which privileges the previously decentred and politically disempowered 'African' end of the oppositional model.[17] As the political credibility and survival of its white constituent base has crumbled, aesthetic value and commercial survival of art music has increasingly depended on the political credibility that could be gained by turning from elitist 'Western' or 'European' music to a more 'African' style. Although this approach turns the hierarchy of the oppositional model on its head, it does not go so far as to question the validity of the model itself. Nor does it remedy the fact that cultural (and thus music) criticism *accepts* an overtly ideologized aesthetic.

It is therefore a perpetuation of the mythology of the 'Other' for Klatzow to write of his use of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, the 'patterning' of his marimba writing and the 'very

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[17] A process that has seen musicologists trying to blur the distinctions between musicology and ethnomusicology – the second stance characterizing their strategic positioning discussed in Chapter Five. See also n. 16.

African nature of the drumming section of *Hamlet*'. In a particularly politically informed statement, Roosenschoon writes of an approach that mediates between the 'Western' and 'African' styles by means of a 'cross-fertilisation of ideas ... which involve the best of both innovative and conservative approaches'.[18] Although a large corpus of music has been composed in South Africa since the early 1980s in this spirit of 'transculturation' and 'cross-fertilisation', it is unclear what exactly the process entails on the musical level. This is hardly surprising, since (as has been argued) it is difficult enough to conceive of 'European' or 'Western' music on the one end of an oppositional model, and 'African' or even 'sub-Saharan African' music on the other. No less than the extremes of the oppositional model, the space between the opposites, or the 'middle ground' of transculturation, quickly becomes a quagmire of ambiguity when one wishes to pursue it as a theoretical framework for a hermeneutic approach to South African art music.

What, in musical terms, would a 'fusion' of 'Western' and 'African' musics entail? Is it a reshuffled priority list of musical elements, with rhythmic complexity taking precedence over harmonic and melodic considerations (the very considerations Klatzow wants Lucia to concentrate on in his music)? Surely this idea could justifiably be said to emanate from Western preconceptions of what African music is supposed to be; but 'rhythmic complexity' could just as easily be said to derive from Bartók or Stravinsky.[19] Is it possible to identify African elements in conscious attempts to abandon the pre-eminence of musical form in order to emulate the aural traditions of Southern Africa's ethnic races? This, it can be argued, has its precedence in the modernist notions of aleatoric and minimalist Western music. Perhaps the true 'fusion' of West and Africa should be seen, in the words of South African-born composer John Joubert, as 'clarity of line – a result, perhaps, of early exposure to African sun and sky'.[20] Exoticism in the

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[18] Cited in Levy, 'African and Western Music', 112.
[19] Agawu, 'The Invention of African Rhythm', 384.
[20] Brian Morton and Pamela Collins, *Contemporary Composers* (Chicago, 1992), 458.

form of 'Africanisms', sunshine and blue skies thus seem to be the most concrete results the musicological discussion will yield when looking for the 'middle ground' in the oppositional model. Indeed it is difficult to see how this 'cross-fertilization' or utopian fusion of the oppositional model as envisaged *in the music itself* can function as an enabling theory from which to conduct anything but the most elementary and speculative readings of South African art music.

One cannot but conclude that the traditional oppositional meta-narrative of 'West versus Africa', in which the West assumes the dominant position, is a political and colonial construct that rests on ideologies and preconceptions situated *outside* the music. This model poses a logic of alterity that facilitates an understanding of art music as 'Western' and superior and African music as primitive and different, without having to justify this in musical terms.[21] To disentangle 'African elements' or techniques from 'Western elements' or techniques is futile. Ironically, the more a fusion of styles is sought on an analytical level, the more the oppositional model of 'Western music' as opposed to 'African music' is enforced as legitimate. Musicologists are forced to generalize about what makes the two musical worlds different in order to see how they combine (as happens when Klatzow mounts a defence of his own music) and so the politics of racialism, colonialism and Apartheid are sustained and perpetuated as cultural tropes. Ideology becomes less an instrument of knowledge than the strait-jacket of knowledge.

Apart from reifying mythical musical opposites, the acceptance of the logic of alterity in the form of 'Western music versus African music' leads to what amounts, in my view, to a false reading of South African art music as being in itself a homogeneous concept. This reintroduces the third point of importance in the Lucia-Klatzow polemic,

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[21] In his *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Lawrence Kramer provides a discussion of the 'logic of alterity' and music, 33-66.

namely the emergence of the term 'local' as an unidentified, 'in-between' cultural space between Europe and Africa. As mentioned earlier, it is clear from Lucia's review and from Klatzow's reply that they both accept the existence of a cultural triangle in which the 'local' stands separated from (and even opposed to) the 'African' and the 'European' opposites that frame their exchanges. Klatzow defended the 'local' dimension in his music in extra-musical terms by referring to his use of Afrikaans and English South African texts. It would thus seem as if, for him, those who occupy this 'local' space are none other than the 'white' population of South Africa, which is no longer European and not yet African. Though neither Klatzow nor Lucia admits to it, the 'local' space that stands outside the ethnic African space but can no longer claim to be European, is the space of 'white South Africa' and therefore the metaphorical space occupied by South African art music. This hybrid space is not a point situated somewhere along the sliding scale between the 'West' and 'Africa', but rather a third space outside this paradigm – a space that sets up its own local sets of alterities with the poles of the oppositional model.

As such, the deconstruction of the meta-oppositional model (West versus Africa) into two smaller oppositionalisms, namely South Africa versus the 'West' or 'Europe' and 'white South Africa' versus 'Africa', does two things. First, it explodes the supposed 'one-ness' of white South Africa and the 'West' ('Europe') – thereby stripping South African art music of the mythologized homogeneity implied in its appropriation of the term 'Western art music'. South African art music is set up as an oppositional 'local' to the 'universal' and normative implications of the 'West' and 'Western art music'. As such, it signifies South Africa as the colonial extension of empire and it names South African art music as a possible cultural trope of white *abjection* in the postcolonial frame and Afrikaner *resistance* and *nationalism* in the colonial/postcolonial frame. Secondly, the opposition of 'white South Africa' as 'local', versus 'Africa' as 'indigenous local', lays bare the

issue of *settler identity* in the colonial/postcolonial frame. With the question of identity comes the inevitable questioning of 'white South Africa' as a homogeneous concept as opposed to the mythologized 'Africa' as ensconced in British imperialism and Apartheid ideology. Both smaller sets of alterities share a common salient characteristic. Opposition in 'white South Africa' (Afrikaners) against 'Europe' (the British Empire), was ignited and consolidated in the form of Afrikaner nationalist aspirations to self-determination in the wake of the defeat of the Boer republics at the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902.[22] The confrontational binary opposition between 'white South Africa' and 'Africa', already present since colonization began in 1652, intensified as a result of Afrikaner nationalism consolidating itself as a polity over the whole of South Africa when the Afrikaner National Party came to power in 1948. The neo-colonial, 'in-the-making' high culture of Afrikaner nationalism during the Apartheid years from 1948-1994, in itself served as a catalyst for Pan-Africanist nationalist opposition which culminated in black majority rule in South Africa in 1994. Nationalism, and in particular Afrikaner nationalism, thus emerges as the shaping force in South African society this century.[23]

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[22] I ascribe to Gellner's view that 'Contrary to popular and even scholarly belief, nationalism does not have any deep roots in the human psyche' and it 'is the fruit neither of ideological aberration, nor of emotional excess.' Gellner insists that nationalism is the 'external manifestation of a deep adjustment in the relationship between polity and culture which is quite unavoidable'; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), 34-5. It has to be said that this position is contentious in that it grounds the origins of Apartheid in objective rationality. Taking an opposing view, J.M. Coetzee uses the texts of Geoffrey Cronjé to explore the thesis that the nationalist thought-process that ultimately lead to Apartheid was quite literally the product of madness and needs to be 'approached in the lair of the heart'; Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago and London, 1996), 163-84. He views Apartheid as *sui generis* and not as just another manifestation of nationalism particularized by a given set of circumstances, a point of view supported by Derrida when he calls Apartheid 'the archival record of the unnameable'; *Art Against Apartheid: 78 Artists in the 80's*, ed. Jacques Legrand (Paris, 1995), 54.

[23] It is a moot point whether nationalism is indeed inevitably cause and result of the postcolonial moment. If so, the predominance of nationalism as a historical force in societies ruptured by colonization can be assumed. See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford, 1995), esp. 98-137 and 180-222, for a literary survey of this question as it relates to the British Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Ernest Gellner in his typology of nationalisms, describes three 'nationalism-engendering' social situations which may correspond to the three defining postcolonial moments in South African history this century. He constructs a model in which three variables – power, access to education or to a viable modern high culture and identity or diversity of culture – interact either to induce the rise of nationalism or fundamentally to disarm it as a potent political force. The three 'nationalism-engendering' social situations are presented by him in a table similar to the one in Figure 2.1. Line 1 represents 'classical liberal Western nationalism' in which at least two cultures (A and B) coexist in a particular polity. Culture B is empowered and has access to a viable high culture, whilst culture A is disempowered but also has access to a viable (self-perpetuating and self-sufficient) high culture and education. Line 2 represents what Gellner terms 'Habsburg nationalism'. Two cultures (A and B) coexist in a particular polity. Culture A is empowered and has access to a viable high culture, whilst culture B is disempowered and access to a viable high culture is inhibited in some way. Line 3 is representative of 'diaspora nationalism'. As in the case of the previous models, at least two cultures coexist in the same polity. Culture B is empowered but is inhibited from attaining a high culture or access to education. Culture A is disempowered but has access to a viable high culture.

Early Afrikaner nationalism, sparked by the need for Afrikaner homogeneity to counter the threat of British dominance in South Africa after the Anglo-Boer War, was characterized by a disempowered Afrikaner culture that nevertheless shared in the 'European' high culture of the empowered British establishment. Though language operated as a diacritical marker to set the two cultures apart, a shared 'European' cultural heritage and race between the cultural antagonists enabled a fluidity between the barriers of communication – preventing the existing cultural fissures from becoming inhibitors of

Figure 2.1. A typology of nationalism-engendering social situations.

	P	**~P**	
	E	E	
1	B	A	classical liberal Western nationalism
	E	~E	
2	A	B	'Habsburg' nationalism
	~E	E	
3	B	A	diaspora nationalism

~ stands for negation, absence. P stands for power, E for access to modern-style education, A for Afrikaners, B for Britain in line 1 and for 'Black South Africa' in lines 2 and 3. Each numbered line represents one possible situation. If A or B stand under an E and/or a P, then the cultural group in question does have access to education or power; if it stands under ~E or ~P, it lacks such access. The situation of any group is indicated by the nearest E and P above it.[24]

[24] Taken and modified from Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 94.

social entropy. As a shared 'European' cultural heritage, art music constituted an ideal medium of 'shared meaning' and could thus be useful as a means of promoting communication between the margins and the centre. Music could 'mainstream' Afrikaner culture with the dominant British high culture in South Africa.[25] The 'Other' of the imperial narrative could be identified with and even appropriated, thereby subverting the more resistant cultural barriers and fissures like language.

For evidence that this mediating role of music was realized by supporters and opponents of the Act of Union alike, one need look no further than the music of the man described by Jacques Malan in encomiastic fashion as the 'prophet of South African art music', Arnold van Wyk.[26] Van Wyk's enormous contribution to Afrikaner musical culture is, seventeen years after his death in 1983, still undermined by ideologically framed accusations of an intrinsically 'English' style. Having accepted a Performing Right Society Bursary to study at the Royal College of Music in 1938, Van Wyk was prevented by the outbreak of the Second World War from returning to South Africa after the completion of his studies.[27] He remained in London until late in 1946, composing and working as a programme compiler and broadcaster in the Afrikaans section of the BBC's African service. From an Afrikaner nationalist point of view, this 'crossing of frontiers' was fraught with cultural dangers. Already in 1928 the Flemish musicologist Emiel Hullebroeck warned that musical cultural exchange in the imperial context could easily result in an alienation between those participating in it and the 'volk' whose cultural interests they were supposed to serve:

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[25] See Chapter Four for a development of this idea with regard to the work of Afrikaner poet N.P. van Wyk Louw.

[26] Jacques P. Malan, 'Arnold van Wyk in kultuurhistoriese perspektief' in M.C.J. van Rensburg and J.Y. Claassen (eds.), *Acta Academica*, B:19 (Bloemfontein, 1984), 10.

[27] Other South African composers awarded this bursary were Hubert du Plessis, Blanche Gerstman and John Joubert (who subsequently emigrated to England).

The result of this is that the younger generation who want to study music, is sent to London where they remain for a period ... and become musical half-castes. When they return to South Africa, they are alienated from their own people – they can no longer portray the soul and uniqueness of their nation.[28]

The few remaining documents at the BBC that provide glimpses of Van Wyk's tenure there provide a somewhat different angle on this theory. They suggest that, far from constituting the exaggerated fears of a nationalist xenophobia, Hullebroeck's concern that a gradual process of alienation between composer and people could be set in motion as a 'natural' result of cultural exchange was, if anything, naive in its belief that such a process was natural and not political.[29] The Good Friday broadcast on the African Service of Van Wyk's *Five Elegies* for string quartet in 1942 was the subject of the following correspondence between Hubert Clifford and Rollo Myers, then Empire Music Supervisor:

> May I ask you to see that there is the maximum possible exploitation on the publicity side of the fact that Arnold van Wyk is an Afrikaans composer and that England has given him his musical education. I am not sure how much Mr Etienne Amyot has covered of this – he was extremely interested from the publicity point of view – but in a case like this it is better that there should be overlapping rather than that we should miss opportunities.[30]

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[28] Jan Bouws, *Solank daar musiek is ... : musiek en musiekmakers in Suid-Afrika 1652-1982* (Cape Town, 1982), 181 (my translation).

[29] Three files on Arnold van Wyk, containing miscellaneous documents like letters and pay slips, still exist in the BBC Written Archive Centre in Reading. These files are: RCont1/Arnold van Wyk, Composer, File No. I (1940-1962); RCont1/Arnold van Wyk, Composer, File No. II (1963-67); RCont1/Talks, Arnold van Wyk, 1944-1962, File I. The bulk of material pertaining to Van Wyk's work as programme compiler and broadcaster, including all sound recordings of his music broadcasts and transcripts of these broadcasts, have been destroyed as a result of administrative procedure.

[30] Letter dated 26 Feb. 1942 from file 'RCont1/Arnold van Wyk, Composer, File No. 1 (1940-62)' in the BBC Written Archive Centre, Reading.

This letter has to be understood in the context of the propaganda value that such a broadcast would have had at this stage in the Second World War, in which a significant section of Afrikaners were reluctant actively to join forces with the former imperialist enemy against Germany. However, the political dimension in which it casts Van Wyk's stay and study in England can be assumed to have been exploited at least until South Africa cut its ties with the former British Empire by leaving the Commonwealth in 1961.[31] This assumption is strengthened by other letters contained in the files at the BBC Written Archive Centre, suggesting that Van Wyk's music, stripped of its rôle in the web of political intrigue, was never more than the peripheral 'Other' of the imperialist narrative.[32]

As a constantly mobile force operating between the margins and the centre of power, art music had the potential to engage in the cultural engineering required to make the previously 'low culture' of Afrikaners (in the British colonial context) a 'high culture', but it could just as easily be manipulated as an imperialist tool for domination of the 'Other'.[33] It remains to be examined by post-Apartheid musicology to what extent

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[31] The most famous documented instance where this matter came to head was at the Commonwealth Section of the Royal Society of Arts in London in 1955. Stewart Hylton Edwards delivered a paper entitled 'Music in Africa', insisting that Arnold van Wyk would be restricted to 'write English music to the end of his days'. Van Wyk took great pains to refute this point of view, as can be seen in Bouws, *Solank daar musiek is*, 181.

[32] See in this regard a letter of 16 July 1951 by John Lowe, describing Van Wyk's First Symphony as 'well-made Sibelius'. He continues in the grand imperial style of James Morris that 'I do not feel able to reccomend (sic) it for a broadcast but, of course, you may have special Overseas policy events for it – it is quite interesting and well scored and should not offend any wavelength'; RCont1/Arnold van Wyk, Composer, File No. I (1940-1962). Van Wyk's desperate attempts to have his work broadcast and performed also surface in letters written to Victor Hely-Hutchinson and John Grenfell Williams in the same file.

[33] Afrikaner culture, though it was a 'European' culture, was the object of considerable contempt in British South Africa. The single most homogenizing force amongst Afrikaners, the Afrikaans language, was referred to as 'Kitchen Dutch' and systematically marginalized by successive nineteenth- and twentieth-century British governors. The censorious scrutiny (continued to this day) of imperialist hypocrisy, and the racist stereotyping of Afrikaners documented in J.M. Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven and London, 1988), esp. 25-35, combined to make Afrikaners victims of a history of Western discrimination and ultimately persecution. Black South Africans ultimately became victims of victims. For an instructive comparative study of Afrikaner nationalism, see Alexander M.

the holism advocated by Jan Smuts and the Afrikaner nationalist forces marshalled by Dr Malan were responsible for the Janus face of pre-1948 South African art music – music characterized by tensions generated from concerns with assimilation into the mainstream of British South African society and thus mainstream world music on the one hand, and simultaneous concern to preserve a vision of cultural individuality amongst many Afrikaner composers on the other.[34]

After congruency was established between Afrikaner culture and state in 1948, Afrikaner nationalism underwent a change in focus and function, and Afrikaners became 'a people on the wrong side of history'.[35] Active on behalf of a high culture not yet properly crystallized, it presided over a chaotic map of many languages and cultures, with ambiguous historical or linguo-genetic allegiances, containing populations that had only just begun to identify with the emergent 'universal' high culture of industrialism. From 1948 the Afrikaner National Party systematically implemented Apartheid policy, which was aimed at stressing and accentuating the diacritical and differential traits of the privileged Afrikaner group as opposed to especially the threat of a Pan-Africanist nationalism – thereby externalizing and underwriting inequalities and differences in South African society and endowing these inequalities and differences with the aura of inevitability, permanence and naturalness.

Cultural exclusivity was central to Apartheid doctrine. The diverse black races in South Africa share folk cultures or folk culture elements which Apartheid attempted to standardize into a rival 'high culture' that could in turn be set apart from Afrikaner and

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Johnston's 'Variations on Settler Ethnicity: The Dissolution of the Afrikaner Nationalist and Ulster Unionist Coalitions' in Ran Greenstein (ed.), *Comparative Perspectives on South Africa* (London, 1998), 260-86.

[34] The latter function lending Afrikaner culture a semblance of a 'culture of survival', in Homi Bhabha's words; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), 172.

[35] Martin Walker cited in André P. Brink's *Reinventing a Continent: Waiting and Politics in South Africa 1982-1995* (London, 1996), 73.

thus 'European' high culture.[36] Art music functioned socially as a reinforcement of the entropy inhibition of race with regard to power structure in South African society, as is immediately obvious when one surveys the gallery of almost exclusively white South African composers whose works constitute the canon of South African art music.[37] Whereas art music could conceivably mediate between the margins and the centre of power in pre-1948 Afrikaner nationalist ambitions, it inevitably became part of a cultural process that strove to fortify the divisions between white and black South Africa after 1948, whilst simultaneously conferring the homogeneity on 'white culture' that was politically imperative for Apartheid to succeed.[38]

It is possibly this imperative for 'white music' that paradoxically undermined the establishment of a nationalist school of Afrikaner composers who could overtly further the ends of an Afrikaner nationalist agenda. Though 'white music' as the objective other of 'African' music usefully perpetuated the petrified divorce between Europe and Africa desired by Apartheid, it could not simultaneously underwrite an exclusively Afrikaner nationalist agenda that centred on the claim of Afrikaners as a 'chosen people' distinct from Europe (and especially Britain). The insistence on homogeneity in the performing arts was meant not only to cement the divisions between Afrikaans- and English-speaking white South Africans in order to present a supposedly 'united white front', but also to maintain the cultural link to a shared European heritage that could then be juxtaposed to a supposedly 'African' heritage. Faced with the dual challenge of fashioning an Afrikaner

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[36] In an ironic recognition of the structures created by Apartheid, the preamble to the resolutions adopted at the 1987 Amsterdam conference on 'Culture in Another South Africa', describes 'white' culture as 'racist culture associated with the apartheid regime' – a description that vividly contrasts with its description of 'black' South African culture as a 'vibrant people's culture, rooted in South African realities and steeped in democratic values'; Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa* (London and New York, 1989), 214.

[37] The role that ethnomusicological studies played in contributing to and strengthening the structures and concepts created and imposed by Apartheid, is considered in greater depth in Chapter Five.

[38] See in this regard the UNESCO report, *Apartheid: Its Effect on Education, Science, Culture and Information* (n.p., 1972). Also the Africa Bureau's *Sport, the Arts and the Colour Bar in South Africa* (n.p., c.1957).

identity distinct from Europe and at the same time claiming European cultural heritage as a crucial political differential in Africa, the Afrikaner cultural establishment seems to have decided early on to let the Afrikaans language engage in the former struggle and the performing arts in the latter.[39] South African author Guy Butler once remarked on the antithesis between historical divisions in white South African society on the one hand and the postulate of white cultural homogeneity on the other. During a lecture given at Stellenbosch University in 1988, he lamented the fact that Afrikaans and English literature seemed to function as divisive influences in South African society, whilst music and the other performing arts were always breaking down the barriers of the language laagers.[40]

Whether or not South African art music collaborated with this strategy is a central question that far exceeds the (largely metaphysical) concerns relating to an 'indigenous art music' by South African composers. It touches on the very nature of cultural criticism in society. The paramount importance of an overt recognition of the 'African' and the 'local' in South African art music, derives from the assumption that an 'African' presence in South African art music will produce a kind of musical synthesis of self and other that alone would be able to challenge the irreconcilable antinomies of a repressive external reality. If this were accepted, however, one would be faced with the moral (and subsequently political) liquidation of most South African art music.

An alternative reading of South African art music of the Apartheid period and beyond, a criticism that does not accede to the limiting definitions of its repressive political function on the one hand, or the (revolutionary) 'political' challenge to that line on the other (both of which, it has to be said, espouse ideological considerations), is

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[39] The superior status of literature over music, originating in the privileging of visual power over oral (see Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York, 1996), 28-9), suggests which of the two struggles was deemed more urgent and essential to the Afrikaner cause.
[40] Butler, *Essays & Lectures 1949-1991*, 219-20.

suggested by Adorno's dialectical criticism. It is worth quoting from Rose Rosengard Subotnik's essay 'Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style' at some length:

> The crux of Adorno's aesthetic theory is that the degree of social reality embedded in art is directly proportional to the conceptual autonomy of art; and there does seem to be good reason to suppose that the negative criticism of society can best be carried out entirely within the realm of a given art, without any direct imitation of the external reality being criticized. For in a world where individual and social interests are irreconcilable and where general harmony can be obtained only at the expense of individual freedom, the subject [musical and human] dares not risk any sort of direct confrontation with society, whose powers are superior to his own. Under such conditions, Adorno argues, the only protest left to authentic art is withdrawal from society.[41]

The continued creation of musical synthesis 'as if the latter were a *fait accompli*, in the knowledge that synthesis was after all not possible', is to Adorno 'falsifying the nature of existing reality and weakening individual understanding of what is true'.[42] To illustrate this point, more detailed examples are in order. I shall focus on two exemplary texts, one literary and one musical, produced in a year in which the antinomies and tensions in South African society were being driven to ever further extremes.

The first example picks up on the theme of Beethoven's late style. In his banned 1979 novel, *'n Droë wit seisoen*, André P. Brink's main character, Ben du Toit, gradually becomes aware of the dehumanizing society in which he lives and of which he, as an Afrikaner, is irrevocably part. In a poignantly symbolic scene, Du Toit and Melanie Bruwer settle in the study of retired philosophy professor Flip Bruwer to recount their life

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[41] Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis and Oxford, 1991), 25. André P. Brink's essay 'The Arts in Society' in *Reinventing a Continent*, 47-59, provides a South African literary perspective on this position.
[42] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 24.

stories, stories that struggle to come to terms with the 'white' experience in Africa, stories that try to comprehend something of the decaying world in which they live. Lateness, distance and faded nostalgia for Europe dominate the study, which functions as a powerful metaphor for two forcibly united worlds, articulating an aged tiredness that pervades the gathering of eclectic relics of two continents:

> Sy neem hom na die groot studeerkamer: eintlik twee kamers, waarvan die grootste gedeelte van die muur tussenin uitgeslaan is om 'n breë boog te laat, met 'n enorme olifanttand aan elke kant. Die meeste mure is oortrek van boekrakke, party ingebou, enkeles mooi outydse stukke met glasdeure; origens sommer greinhoutplanke op bakstene. Daar is 'n paar ou, uitgetrapte Persiese matte op die vloer, en gemsbok- en sprinkbokvelle; die gordyne voor die groot boogvensters is van verbleikte fluweel, eens seker ougoud, nou vuilgeel. Afdrukke tussen die rakke: Munch se drie meisies op die brug, Rembrandt se *Titus*, 'n Braque-stillewe, 'n vroeë Picasso, Van Gogh se sipresse ... Die kamer dra 'n swaar, ou reuk van pyptabak en katte en muwwerigheid.[43]

The grand piano, later used to expand the metaphor of alienation between Europe and Africa and the individual and society,[44] the prints of European painters and the old (sometimes unintelligible) books framing the walls and which lie scattered around are

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[43] 'She takes him to the large study: actually two rooms, of which the greater part of the wall separating them has been knocked down to make way for a broad arch with an enormous elephant tusk on each side. The largest part of the walls is covered with bookshelves, some permanent, others beautiful antique pieces with glass doors, others just planks on bricks. There are a few old, worn Persian carpets on the floor, gazelle skins; the curtains in front of the large bow-windows are of faded velvet once probably gold – now a dirty yellow. Prints hanging between the shelves: Munch's three girls on the bridge, Rembrandt's *Titus*, a Braque still-life, an early Picasso, Van Gogh's cypresses ... The room carries a heavy, old smell of pipe tobacco and cats and dampness' (my translation); André P. Brink, *'n Droë wit seisoen*, 2nd edn. (Cape Town, 1992), 101.

[44] This is the piano on which Flip Bruwer later plays strangely anonymous music that Ben du Toit thinks may be Bach. Though the piano is out of tune because of years of neglect, the playing is 'onderhoudend, inspanningsloos, oorwoë' (absorbing, effortless, considered). The music is 'clean and precise'; Ibid., 158. Not only does the music share Flip Bruwer's European past, the reference to Bach also maps on to Brink's (Adornian formulated) position that Bach was 'no more in harmony with his society than was late Beethoven'; Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 306, n. 35.

covered in a dusty, dim nostalgia. When, half-way through the evening, Melanie puts a record on the turntable, it is one of the late Beethoven sonatas. The volume is turned down so as to integrate into the murky shadows of the study. The music disappears into the 'debris' of the big double room to become a mere insinuation.[45] The specific work is never named, anonymity enhancing the music's value as general signifier in the general signifying constellation the study becomes.

It may seem surprising that when Brink reaches for a musical metaphor to describe individual Afrikaners' political and moral predicament vis-à-vis the Apartheid State of the late-seventies, he turns to Beethoven's late period. Beethoven's last music voices in dialectical terms the position of the individual in an institutionally traumatized society, racked by the moral inconsistencies of its assumptions. It does this by calling attention to 'the concurrent external disintegration of human integrity, to the enslaving, dehumanizing compartmentalization ... forced upon humans by society'.[46] In Brink's use of Beethoven in an extended metaphor, there is no question of a one-to-one correspondence between artistic components (recognizably 'African' and 'local' elements) and particular events (the exclusion of Africans from 'white society'). It is the explosion of the myth of 'musical structure as a totality that could accommodate a concept (e.g., subject, individual, or freedom) and its opposite (object, society, or form) in a resolution that preserved the essence of each',[47] that reflects truly (i.e. as 'negative criticism') on the socio-historical tendencies in the late-seventies South Africa. In this scene Brink opens a heuristic window on the European end of the oppositional debate in South African art music: silence of 'Africa' and the 'local' is not necessarily indicative of

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[45] Adorno would have had a problem with what he would probably term the 'harmonizing' and 'neutralizing' use of late Beethoven as 'background' music. The point here is not the internal musical argument of say Op. 111 vis-à-vis the Apartheid State and the petrified divorce between such 'true' art and corrupted society. Brink does not mention Beethoven as a commentary on South African society, but merely as a stage-prop. It is his choice of this particular music as stage-prop that is the issue here.

[46] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 25.

[47] Ibid., 20.

an art music ossified in an historical and aesthetic Esperanto, but can also be read in terms of the dialectic implied by its immanence in constellations of power.

The second example turns to the most ambitious work by Arnold van Wyk, arguably the most successful South African composer at this time. Van Wyk's mass, the *Missa in illo tempore*, was to be his last completed work and was finished as a commission for the tercentenary celebrations of the university town of Stellenbosch, where Van Wyk taught composition. According to Howard Ferguson, to whom the mass is dedicated, Van Wyk started work on the *Agnus Dei* in 1945 in London while residing with Ferguson at 106 Wildwood Road, NW11.[48] Hence Ferguson's claim that the work is on the whole inspired by the ravages and destruction of war. In the twenty-one years since its completion and first (and only) performance on 14 October 1979 in the Dutch Reformed Church at Stellenbosch-Welgelegen, the *Missa in illo tempore* has been dutifully analyzed and subsequently canonized by South African musicologists.[49] I believe, however, that Van Wyk's *magnum opus* does not necessarily conform to the universal, high modernist ideal informed by a meta-narrative of rational and formal structure, but that it is rather an iconoclastic critique on the utopian myths of the high modernist culture and totalitarian political system that produced it. The collapse of the latter has now made possible a discursive reading of the *Missa in illo tempore* as a piece of immanent cultural critique.

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[48] Information provided by Howard Ferguson during a personal interview with the author on 8 January 1998 in Cambridge. In *Composers in South Africa Today*, ed. Peter Klatzow (Cape Town, 1987), 26, Ferguson puts a date to the first theme jotted down by Van Wyk, namely 17 March 1945. The theme was for the opening of the *Agnus Dei*.

[49] As can be expected, analyses have tended to emphasize aspects of formal unity and structure in the music, not really initiating a search for 'the question to which the work was intended to be the answer'. See for instance Martina Viljoen, 'Eenheidsaspekte in Van Wyk se *Missa in illo tempore*', 114-20 and Stéfans Grové's 'Tekstuurprobleme in musiek vir gemengde dubbelkore en die oplossing daarvan, met spesiale verwysing na Arnold van Wyk se *Missa in illo tempore*', 84-93. See also Howard Ferguson's analysis in Klatzow, *Composers in South Africa Today*, 26-31.

According to Howard Ferguson, Van Wyk was not a religious man. Until the composition of the *Missa*, this is also reflected in his oeuvre.[50] Within this context, the proposition that the appropriation of the mass not only provided Van Wyk with a suitable medium through which to deny the subject in his music, but also to establish the music firmly in the 'objective' reality from which the subject is banished (a necessary condition for immanent critique), becomes plausible. The paradox contained in this situation is strikingly (if unwittingly) formulated by Malan when he writes that

> Just as Van Wyk fashioned the subjective and emotional sources of his art in a broader humanistic belief, so he also transposed his national roots with South Africa to a distant international focal point that is simultaneously representative of patriotic intimacy and of a neutral, unpartisan attitude.[51]

Malan's idea that that Van Wyk could, through the composition of a Roman Catholic mass, transpose nationalistic sentiments to a far removed, universal focal point (simultaneously symbolic of patriotism and neutrality), maps on to (and harmonizes) the paradox between the objective modernity of nations and nationalism (and certainly Afrikaner nationalism),[52] and the subjective claim to antiquity by the nationalist phenomenon. Benedict Anderson suggests that

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[50] See in this regard Michael Levy, *Catalogue of Serious Music: Original Works, Arrangements and Orchestrations Published and in Manuscript by Southern African Composers and Arrangers*, 2nd edn. (2 vols. and Appendix, Johannesburg, 1992), vol. i, 419-22.
[51] Malan, 'Arnold van Wyk in kultuurhistoriese perspektief', 12 (my translation).
[52] The Afrikaans language, a central pillar of Afrikaner nationalism, is among the 'youngest' developed languages in the world. For a short English synopsis of Afrikaans literature, see André P. Brink and J. M. Coetzee (eds.), *A Land Apart: a South African Reader* (London, 1986), 9-15.

nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.[53]

Even though the *Missa in illo tempore* makes Van Wyk no manipulator of national myth like Wagner, the music of this last work taps into an immemorial imagined past that provided continuity in the historical contingency of the nationalist Afrikaner myth. The appropriation not only of the Catholic liturgy, but also and particularly of the hegemonic Latin of the medieval church by Van Wyk, was to reach to universality through a myriad of specificities and particularities – a universality and timelessness characteristic of Christendom and claimed by nationalism.[54] It was to supersede the 'time-provincialism' of language so deplored by Van Wyk Louw, without compromising the nationalist myth. The enigmatic title *Missa in illo tempore* ('Mass for that time') may thus be regarded as the atheist's nod to Benjamin's 'homogeneous, empty time',[55] in which it marks not the ritual of prefiguring and fulfilment so characteristic of diachronic time, but rather temporal coincidence in both the artist's personal staking of a claim in the canon and his

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[53] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn. (London, 1991), 12. It is interesting to note that Susan McClary identifies the shift in culture from the sacred to the secular as the historical turning point from where musical culture is expressly tied to male defined models of sexuality; McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1991), 119-20. If this premise is uncritically accepted for the moment, Anderson's suggestion of a similar historical genesis for nationalism poses the question as to a possible link between nationalism, chauvinism and music. Art, with its transcendent qualities, would without doubt be an ideal vehicle to help facilitate a seamless transition from religion to (secular) nationalism.

[54] Adorno writes that Neo-Classicism 'became an accepted style because it enabled individuals sated by their individuality to colonize the libidinous space of a past age not yet fully individuated'; Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, tr. Rodney Livingstone (London, 1998), 155; Germ. edn., *Quasi una fantasia* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963). Leaving aside for the moment the (equally interesting) gendered terminology employed by Adorno when writing of colonization, it is significant that he uses a colonial metaphor when he writes of the atavistic tendencies of Neo-Classicism. The remark is rendered more poignant in this context when it is considered that the etymology of the word 'individual' suggests that the word initially inferred a 'greater whole', an indivisible entity. Van Wyk's Neo-Romantic style can be read as the collectivized 'greater whole' of the meta-narrative of (colonialist) nationalism staking its claims of legitimacy in the remote past.

[55] See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, tr. Harry Zohn (London, 1973), 265; Germ edn., *Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1955).

positioning of his broader societal context in the mainstream of Western history and culture.[56] In short, on a certain level the *Missa in illo tempore* can be read as grounding the subject in external reality.

Though the atavism of the *Missa in illo tempore* could be thus read as an objective[57] manifestation of the nationalist narrative of the Afrikaner, Van Wyk's own warning to the *Feeskomitee Stellenbosch 300* who commissioned the work, namely that it would perhaps be prudent not to celebrate too extravagantly in light of the situation in the country, suggests the possibility of a more disseminated meaning. His choice of a Roman Catholic mass to celebrate the tercentenary of an Afrikaner Calvinist intellectual stronghold was a remarkable decision that flew in the face of what would have been deemed acceptable by a highly puritanical Afrikaner establishment.[58] The atavistic reach for the archaic, ancient liturgical formula of the mass and the resulting superficial collectivity it embraces, and alienation it dissolves into a surface synthesis, suggests something of the immanent criticism that Adorno also recognizes in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. In the same way that Brink intuitively reaches to the 'all-European' music of Beethoven's late style as a symbol of alienation between art and society in the Apartheid State, the negated and particularized subject takes on the formal physiognomy of an archaic Western object in the form of the *Missa in illo tempore*. Ultimately, I believe, this can be read as an alienating and a subversive act of dialectical critique.[59]

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[56] Certainly the fact that the last section of the mass was conceived before any other, similarly undermines the concept of linear, Messianic time.

[57] 'Objective' only in the sense that it adopts the formal characteristics of the acceptable cultural object.

[58] A fact also remarked upon by Malan in his article 'Arnold van Wyk in kultuurhistoriese perspektief', 10-3.

[59] As Dahlhaus writes in an extraordinary and highly significant linking of two opposites also at stake here, 'a restoration of the remote past shares with an esthetic revolution the tendency to alienate. Both restoration and revolution, through the amazement they evoke, tend to cut loose perception in the full sense of the word.'; Carl Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, tr. William W. Austin (Cambridge, 1982), 96; Germ. edn., *Musikästhetik* (Cologne, 1967).

It is in the spaces and silences of the music where the dialectical critique between the retreating subject and the subject taking on the formal characteristics of the acceptable cultural object is best observed. The spaces and silences of the *Missa in illo tempore* (the silence of 'Africa' and 'the local') may well be read as the avoidance of any direct imitation of the external reality being criticized in order to take refuge from either political confrontation or the neutralization of a harmonizing synthesis.[60] In fact, the most immediately obvious absence in the Van Wyk mass is of any instrumental accompaniment. The work is sung *a cappella* throughout, a severe test of intonation for the three choirs for which it is scored. In the only available recording of the work,[61] the fragmented melodic style and ambiguous tonalities conspire to transform the tempered intonation gradually into a just intonation.[62] It is in this, a characteristic feature of African choral music, that the absent 'Africa' becomes the single most dominating presence of the mass.[63] This is not an absence that enables recollection, but rather one that records a moment of amnesia. Africa is lent a voice in the silence of the *Missa in illo tempore* – primarily in the silence of instrumental accompaniment, but also in the spaces left by the tonal murkiness and melodic fragmentation that characterize the work:

> Now, since the avoidance of direct communication (resistance to neutralization) and protection of the musical subject from direct exposure are aspects of the same humanizing artistic purpose, the

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[60] A refuge from neutralization that would have been aided by the 'othered' status of South African art music in South African and Afrikaner society – the lack of interest and performances constituting an effective barrier between the music and its political neutralization/appropriation.

[61] The work was recorded on 21 October 1979 in St Georges Cathedral in Cape Town by the Stellenbosch University Choir with members of the Tygerberg Children's Choir, conducted by Johan de Villiers.

[62] Melodicism can indeed be said to be 'hidden' in the layers of the part-writing. This constitutes a surrender to the repressive collective force of the largely static (and for large sections non-motivic) counterpoint, if not altogether an 'absence' in itself.

[63] Howard Ferguson opines that 'the use of purely vocal resources is so varied and subtle throughout that it is tempting to speak of the work's "scoring", as if it were for orchestra'; Klatzow, *Composers in South Africa Today*, 26. Ferguson hears a transcending of absence in an exchange of orchestral and vocal idioms in the *Missa in illo tempore* – a 'going beyond' that tempts Stephen Greenblatt's question 'Who is assimilating whom?'; *Marvelous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World* (Oxford, 1991), 4.

> diagnosis of silence as the last refuge from neutralization converges with Adorno's interpretation of the silences ... as spaces left by the flight of the musical subject.[64]

The retreat of the subject behind a 'collective' character is, on a macro-structural level, facilitated by an abstract physical surface devoid of physical sensuousness.[65] It is the same physical banishment of the subject that is presented as the *status quo* of the composition at the beginning of the work, when it opens vacuously with a wide-spaced sonority that declares itself in an agonizing tritone before dying away almost immediately (see Example 2.1). The possibility emerges of a South African art music under Apartheid that does not simplistically constitute a colonialist text[66] emaciated by a political system that forced it to become a ventriloquist's dummy for a temporally and geographically removed Europe.[67] South African art music need not only be understood as 'an art that accepts without discussion ... a repression' and therefore 'has given up trying to be true and has renounced what is, in fact, the only justification for its existence'.[68] It can also be read as postcolonial text critically scrutinizing the colonial relationship and setting out to resist colonialist perspectives from 'within' the music. The musical argument need not necessarily 'mirror' external reality to sustain legitimate and valuable criticism. Indeed, the point has been made that such foreground manifestations of external reality are easily 'neutralized' – neutralization made impossible in this case by what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as the active 'hidden dialogicality' between presence and absence:

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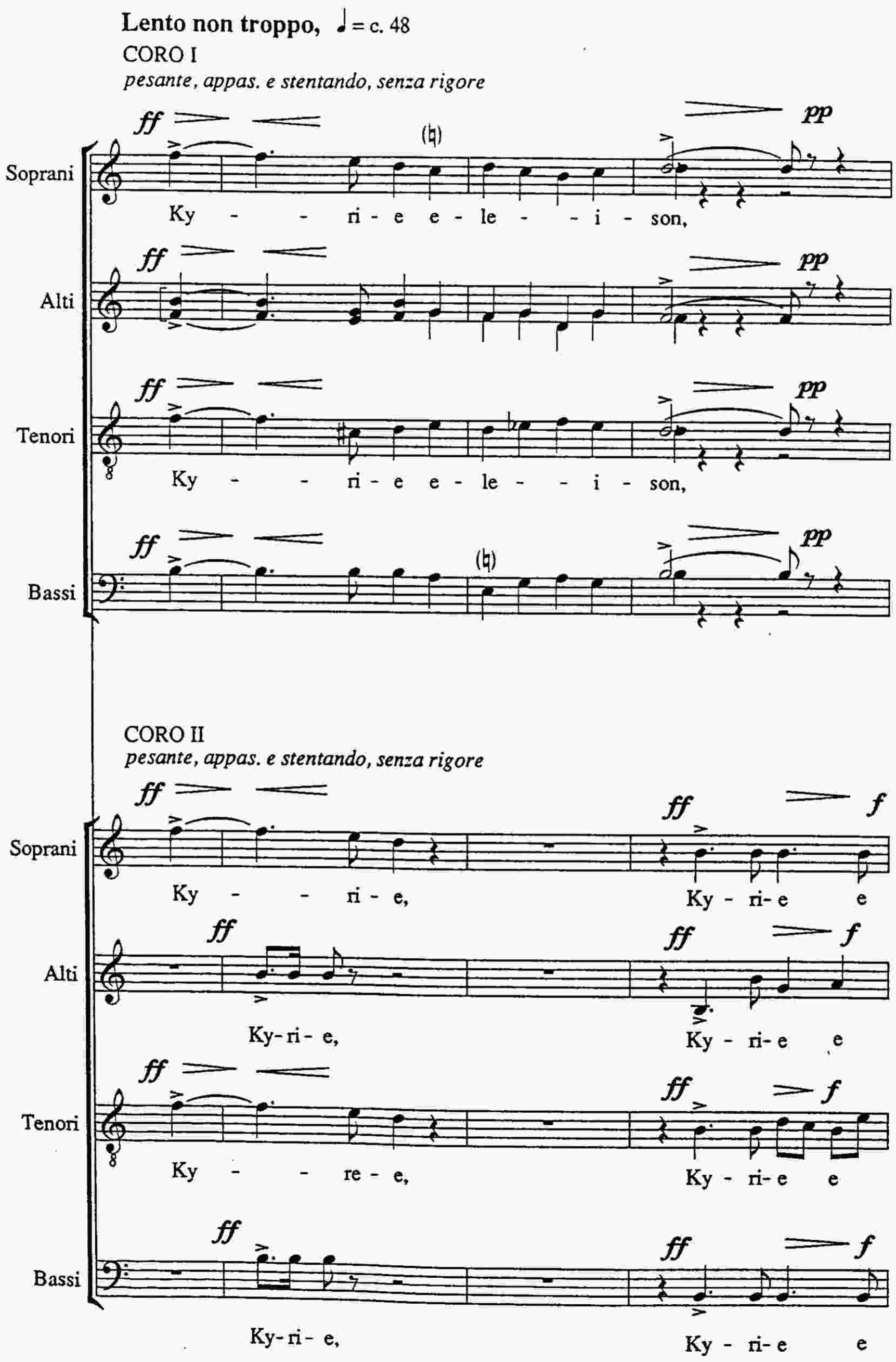
[64] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 34.
[65] See also the 'absence' of melodicism remarked on in n. 62. The absence of solo voices in the mass can be read as a manifestation of the retreat of the subject into collectivity.
[66] I use Elleke Boehmer's terminological distinction in this regard, where 'colonialist' attitudes and texts denote the stereotyped attitudes relating to the superiority of European cultures used to mediate the white man's (gender intended) relationship with colonized peoples. For a useful (though not broadly accepted) clarification of the terms post-colonial, postcolonial, colonial, imperial, neo-colonial and nativism, see Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 1-11.
[67] The ambivalence of Europe as a 'removed', yet central (absent) space in the white South African experience is elegantly formulated by Nadine Gordimer when she calls it 'that other world that was the world' in *Writing and Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 114-34.
[68] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 306, n. 34.

Example 2.1. Van Wyk, *Missa in illo tempore*, bars 1 – 3.

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such as way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only

> one person is speaking ... each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fibre to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person ... The other's discourse ... is merely implied, but the entire structure of speech would be completely different if there were not this reaction to another person's implied words.[69]

The reality of historicity as ideology remains a threat to any semblance of individual musical autonomy and is not diminished by exposing a critique of the literal manifestations of external reality in art. Brink's 1995 novel, *Sandkastele*, includes the character of Louisa Muller, whose 'natural singing talent' stagnates and ultimately withers away as she is forced to assume the role of dutiful housewife to a National Party apparatchik (the role of weaker 'other' that music itself occupies).[70] Her secret diaries abound in imaginings of European fame, correspondence with famous singers and conductors and invitations to perform in the world's most famous opera houses. The more restrictive her situation becomes in reality (her husband only allows her to sing at National Party related functions), the more vivid and extravagant the pretensions to world-wide recognition become in the diaries. These illusions become 'die waarheid in

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[69] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and tr. Caryl Emerson (Manchester, 1984), 197 and 195.

[70] Music has always been, in the words of Lawrence Kramer 'ultimately, on the other side' and 'the definitive sign of otherness'; Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 45. See also John Shepherd's article 'Difference and Power in Music' in Solie, *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, 1993), 46-65, where he argues the connection between music's otherness and femininity. Elleke Boehmer's *Mothers of Africa: Representations of Nation and Gender in Postcolonial African Literature*, diss. (Oxford Univ., 1995), treats nationalism as a force (in literature) that casts its defining symbols and reserves its powers and privileges according to gendered criteria. A South African case study, exploring a hypothetical connection between music as (genderized) Other and nationalism, is yet to be conducted. See also n. 53.

die masker van 'n hartseer leuen' and 'die fantasieë van 'n grenswêreld, almal groter as die werklikheid: die oordrywings van 'n gemoed op die drempel van die dood'.[71] The insistence on an art music (fatally) rooted in Europe may well be the expression of the exaggerated fears of a community in perpetual fear of cultural extinction. For South African art music to chain itself to the past, to the extent that it becomes subsumed in delusion and wishful thinking, is to participate in and hasten that cultural extinction.

The extent to which the musical texts produced under Apartheid ideology were inscribed with both the (not always mutually exclusive) ideological narratives of exclusivity and nationalism remains to be examined by post-Apartheid musicology. What is clear, however, is that pabulum definitions invited by the kind of discourse practised by Lucia and Klatzow itself becomes a 'false consciousness' – an ideology. It has been an especially useful construct from an Apartheid point of view, reinforcing prejudices and divisions that Apartheid attempted to formalize politically, socially and demographically by inventing 'African music' as the Other of 'Western music'. In so doing, it leaves the aporias of South African art music unread and unchallenged whilst perpetuating (not criticizing) the chasm it perceives in society.

In order to understand the role of art music and the concerns of musicological discourse in post-Apartheid South Africa, we need to understand that the cultural engineering required to attain the close relation between state and culture (which is the essence of nationalism) was and remains an issue posed by the inherent 'logic' of the South African situation. Art music does not naturally 'belong' to the nationalist congruence now sought between a black African state and an 'African' culture. Gellner's 'diaspora nationalism', the last of the nationalism-engendering social situations he describes, refers to elite minority groups that are easily identifiable in terms of a counter-

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[71] 'the truth in the mask of a sad lie' and 'the fantasies of a frontier country, all of them larger than life: the exaggerations of a psyche on the verge of death' (my translation); André P. Brink, *Sandkastele* (Cape Town, 1995), 165.

entropic trait such as race or culture and that become politically impotent by surrendering the right of communal self-defence. This conjunction of economic superiority and cultural identifiability with political and military weakness has in modern times, as Gellner rightly points out, often ended disastrously.

This is perhaps where one needs to search for the cause of the *Angst* at the heart of the agendas of both Lucia and Klatzow. The counter-entropic traits of race, culture and language in South Africa are effectively preventing the assimilation of the wealthy white minority by making that minority highly visible in its African setting. As has been demonstrated in the case of the major moments of colonialist rupture in South African history this century, an examination of the strains of the nationalist narrative that informs South African art music has yet to be conducted. The more urgent question posed by the contingent dangers of diasporic nationalism in post-Apartheid South Africa, however, concerns the implications of these dangers on art music as a high-profile part of the cultural visibility of its constituent practising base in a black African state.

The 78-year old Afrikaner composer Stefans Grové has for the past sixteen years been engaged in composing an 'identity' in his music which he believes effectively absorbs the cultural 'Other' of Africa in a manner that defies easy classification of 'indigenous' principles and 'exotic' appropriation.[72] His own conception of himself as an African who composes African music challenges the entropy inhibition of 'white' Afrikaner culture and revivifies Afrikaner culture as African culture. In so doing, Grové is consciously subverting the myth of a unitary Africa against a monolithic 'West' – and with it the legitimacy of an autochthonous *echt* African culture previously excluded by 'whites' and

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[72] This marks a pronounced break with the eclectic international style cultivated by Grové before 1984. For a more thorough exposition of Grové's style, see Mary Rörich in Klatzow, *Composers in South Africa Today*, 77-101.

Afrikaners.[73] Grové's music is perhaps an indication that a genuine change has taken place with regard to the Afrikaner position in South African society after 1994. If so, this parallactic shift is also the challenge for post-Apartheid South African musicological discourse – namely to transform the culturally embedded oppositions of South African society from 'first principles of a conceptual or political order' to 'temporary limits in a dynamic open-ended process'.[74] In this 'opening out of [the] categories of self and other', music and musicology may, in the words of Lawrence Kramer, eventually undo the logic of alterity which they are historically fated to reproduce.[75]

Lucia seems to think that art music and musicology can in this way help to avert the human apocalypse which is the worst case scenario of the South African experiment. The need for the transcultural transaction in which both art music and musicological discourse should partake then becomes no less than the need for cultural erasure. The plea is less for a 'new' aesthetic than for the abandonment of the aesthetic perspective in favour of the amalgam of society – an 'open-air prison' where all difference is obliterated and replaced by nuanced versions of the same in a miraculous resurrection of the meta-narrative from the ashes of high modernism and the Apartheid State.[76] For Klatzow the apocalypse is the abyss into which both art music and musicological discourse will inevitably slide by relinquishing its own particularity and thereby its salt of truth – a kind of 'Entnordung' of South African art music. But, in declaring himself willing to engage in an oppositional debate which 'knows the place of every phenomenon and the essence

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[73] If, on the other hand, Grové's music becomes part of the 'affirmative culture' of a new political establishment (in so far as the aims of that establishment do not conform to objective reality), it becomes ideology in itself and cannot aspire to the pretensions of 'authentic art' in the Adornian sense. The redeeming factor for Grové's music seems to be the fact that it is not neutralized (in relation to the market and the political establishment) and may therefore claim a position in a negative dialectical conceptual framework. See also Chapter Five for a further discussion of Grové's music, esp. 128-43 and 162-6.

[74] Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 49.

[75] Ibid., 49.

[76] This goes, I believe, beyond the mere 'politisation of aesthetics' predicted by Christopher Ballantine in 'Taking Sides or Music, Music Departments and the Deepening Crisis in South Africa', *Papers Presented at the Third and Fourth Symposia on Ethnomusicology* (Grahamstown, 1984), 52-5.

of none',[77] he is already in a paranoic free-fall – accepting the dictatorship of the ideological framework whilst criticizing the creators thereof.

In his 1941 epic poem, *Raka*, N. P. van Wyk Louw remarkably prophesied the ultimate collapse of his own minority high culture. The epic tantalizingly ends with the defeat of Koki, Raka's chief antagonist, presenting a situation in which no one in the enclave of the village can ever again close the gates against Raka, the dark one.[78] South African society is today delicately poised at this point. The question can well be asked: Can there be a South African art music after Apartheid?

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[77] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society' in *Prisms*, tr. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 33; Germ. edn., 'Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft' in *Prismen* (Berlin, 1955).
[78] N.P. van Wyk Louw, 'Raka' in *Versamelde Gedigte*, 119.

Chapter Three

Protesting Relevance: John Joubert and the Politics of Music and Resistance in South Africa

Drawing the Marxist-structural connection between music and politics, Donald Horne posits a familiar mode of inquiry: 'if one is interested in questions of power and democracy in modern industrial nation-states, a useful question to ask of such a society is: *What are its dominant "languages"*? And: *Whose interests do they most serve?*'[1] For Horne, language is an extensive field, covering 'visual images, music, buildings, dancing, body language, textiles, political rhetoric, entertainment, even odours, and it is a language we learn, unlike the language of the senses'.[2] The acceptance of music as a culturalism, contingent rather than universally meaningful and anchored in autonomy, is hardly a radical epistemological manoeuvre in the current musicological and critical scene, though the demonstration of the practical use and methodological scope of such (often still grudging) acceptance with regard to the advancement of our knowledge about music and society in general has consistently proved to be more problematic. Following on from this putative acceptance that talking music and politics is no longer blasphemy, however, it would seem like an entirely legitimate claim that questions of power and politics are not entirely incidental to music (as one of Horne's 'languages' in the broadest possible sense). This assumption gains momentum when music (self-consciously) declares itself to be morally conscious and, following from this moral consciousness, strives to be

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[1] Donald Horne, *The Public Culture: An Argument with the Future*, 2nd. ed., (London, 1994), 32.
[2] Ibid., 48.

politically active.[3] This chapter proposes to explore the contiguity of music and politics with specific reference to the music of the émigré composer John Joubert and the ambivalent space of his relationship with the neo-colonial racist state that was the country of his birth, South Africa.[4]

Although no significant study has been done to assess the impact of Apartheid ideology on the development of art music in South Africa, a reading of Western art music (the normative and dominant musical 'language' of the institutional musical establishment in Apartheid South Africa) as an ideological extension of Apartheid doctrine will probably not be difficult to achieve.[5] South African composers of art music can conceivably counter this (impertinent) 'link by geo-political association' to a specific political ideology by protesting either the autonomy of the musical work of art,[6] or by arguing the case that their music embodies an active endorsement of an opposing pole of the ideological axis. Joubert's pertinent remarks on the social responsibilities of (his) music

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[3] Such a declaration can take the form of an immanent critique of musical style and structure or the more overt expression of intent from the composer. Of course any such intention does not guarantee that the intention is realized. The intentional fallacy is as relevant to this discussion as it is to matters of aesthetic intent.

[4] Lydia Goehr has recently claimed that 'musical practice is already political whether or not one finds in any given arrangement of notes an explicit ideological message … The contemporary theoretical burden to "prove" music political reflects our contemporary attempt to move beyond the dominance of a formalism that increasingly tended towards separating the significance of music's content from its origin in expression.'; *The Quest for Voice: Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Oxford, 1998), 128. 'Proving' music political is not the object of this chapter. It is rather to (re)claim the politics of music as an 'empty' condition of aesthetic 'freedom within' as opposed to the demands of conflicting ideologies that have a stake in regressively limiting this freedom.

[5] Perhaps the problem of such an inquiry lies in just this alluring promise of easily achieved teleological connections in the suggestiveness of the question. My reading of Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore* in Chapter Two tries to question just such a facile connection, though this does of course not try to negate the contingent nature of the culturally embedded text.

[6] This assertion of autonomy need not be a regressive rearguard action either. Autonomy can be asserted in a more progressive way that does not deny the 'extra-musical' a role in the search for musical meaning, as Lydia Goehr argues in the section entitled 'Resituating Musical Autonomy' in *The Quest for Voice*, 126-31.

place him in the latter grouping, though precisely where on this axis he positions himself remains unclear:

> The vocation to be a composer must be a vocation to serve others and to lead others: and that involves being a musician in a wider sense as well. In other words, the practice of one's calling involves responsibilities of the highest order towards the community – and ultimately the society – in which one lives. The issue is a moral one ... '[7]

The large corpus of Anglican church music, and the scattering of works with South African themes in Joubert's worklist, suggest at least two obvious societal figurations in which the composer could exercise this moral calling. Joubert's 'South African works' are not many in number. The earliest is his one-act opera *In the drought* (Op. 17), composed in 1955. In 1962 he wrote the orchestral work *In Memoriam 1820* (Op. 39) to a commission of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. *The African Sketchbook* (Op. 66) followed in 1970. It is a SABB setting of Hottentot animal poems with wind quintet accompaniment and is the first indication of wilful social realignment in the choice of an indigenously African subject. It is however only with his Second Symphony (Op. 68) of 1970 that Joubert takes up a stance opposed to the excesses of the Apartheid government. The symphony, which is a tribute to Alan Paton,[8] is dedicated to the

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[7] John Joubert, *The Musical Times*, 98 (1957), 33. Insisting on maintaining music's 'great refusal', however, Joubert maintains that even 'committed music' (his term) somehow has to reach beyond politics to assert the primacy of the music. He also intimates the ambivalence between his formalist insistence on the primacy of the music on the one hand and its moral 'function' on the other, saying that his church music is largely a result of his upbringing and that he is not a particularly religious person. Information provided by John Joubert during a personal interview with the author on 26 November 1997 in Birmingham.

[8] Author of *Cry the Beloved Country* and founder member and later president of the Liberal Party of South Africa.

memory of those killed at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960[9] and employs African musical material in the form of quotations of three African melodies.[10] Employing what to Horne would still constitute the *same* (musical) 'language', which in the South African frame constitutes a language of European imperialism, Joubert's Second Symphony breaks the silence that so often defines the African presence in South African art music. One is thus confronted by a situation not addressed by Horne in his fundamentally base-superstructure approach, namely the possibility of the 'dominant language' of a society or community serving interests other than those of the community to which it is linked.[11] But how can musical text, especially essentially instrumental and non-functional music such as Joubert's Second Symphony, music stripped of the obtrusions of voice and word, assume a socio-political contingency that interacts with political context and thus promises to deliver political meaning in the ethereal realm of the 'notes' in an act of political critique (or even defiance)?[12] One possible answer may be found by exploring

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[9] Non-violent demonstrations against the notorious Apartheid 'pass laws' by some 20 000 supporters of the Pan-Africanist Congress led to the South African police shooting dead 69 protesters and wounding a further 186 people. Among those injured and killed were 48 women and children.

[10] The work also includes a quotation from Joubert's 1970 oratorio, *The Raising of Lazarus* (Op. 67). According to Joubert, the Second Symphony is a by-product of an intended opera on Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*, a project that never materialized. The manuscript is prefaced with the following citation from the novel: 'It was Msimangu who had said, Msimangu who had no hate for any man, "I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they turn to loving they will find we are turned to hating." Oh, the grave and the sombre words.' Joubert's 1985 cantata, *South of the Line* (Op. 109), based on Boer War poems by Thomas Hardy, continues this moralistic path and concludes the list of works with an extra-musical South African reference.

[11] In a sense this inaugurates the question, further explored in Chapter Five, of whether the First World intellectual can or should speak for (represent) the subaltern, an issue contiguous with the debate on cultural colonization and spurious appropriation in the use of ethnic material in South African art music compositions. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's treatment of the question in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York, 1993), 64-111, esp. 66-75 where the positions of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari are critiqued and there occurs a useful illumination of the verbal slippage in the discourse of these critics in their use of Marx's signifiers *vertreten* and *darstellen* in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.

[12] Richard Leppert's reading of the dance to which Figaro invites the Count in the aria 'Se vuol ballare' from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, must count as one example of how this can be achieved from a theoretical point of view. Though Leppert's reading does not stray from 'the music itself', the example

Adorno's intricate formulation of 'immanent critique' (a solution that could prevent the construction of a narrative based on extrinsic references), but another could present itself in the manner in which musical works are placed in orbit around certain political ideas, thus locating musical meaning firmly *outside* the neutral level of the musical 'trace'. I choose this mode advisedly, because the poietic issues of intention and agency in the establishment of the *relative* autonomy of music (i.e. the acceptance of music as a working part of a certain social figuration in which politics also plays a part), are of obvious importance here.[13] If it is accepted that authorial intention is enough to deliver politically 'committed' music (and Adorno's hegemonic qualitative assertions can momentarily be set aside), the fraught question of the politicization of music becomes one not of principle, but of degree. When and how do the dynamics in the social figuration change to the extent that a musical work is read (or, more normatively, *should* be read) mainly in terms of the gravity exerted on it by the larger entity that it orbits – in this case politics?

In his *Musical Elaborations*, Edward Said places J.S. Bach's B minor Mass into political orbit by declaring that it (also) has to be read 'as an extended act of homage to the Elector of Saxony'. From this he infers that the

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admittedly uses Beaumarchais' highly political play as a point of entry into the 'political' meaning of the passage. See *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1988), 100.

[13] I am working here within the paradigm of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's tripartition of the 'total musical fact', making it possible to see authorial intention (or the poietic *process*) as an intrinsic part of music as a symbolic form. See in this regard Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, tr. Carolyn Abbate, esp. 3-37; French edn., *Musicologie Générale et Sémiologie* (Paris, 1987). Of course, from the esthesic side, where this kind of musicological endeavour is situated, criticism as agency can be just as significant as authorial intention. As Spivak remarks, 'The … critique of the sovereign subject thus

unclassical length of the piece derives not just from Bach's genuinely extraordinary authorial productivity ... but also from the ambition to win a place of noticeable importance in the entourage of a prince. Music therefore quite literally fills a social space, and does so by elaborating the ideas of authority and social hierarchy directly connected to a dominant establishment imagined as actually presiding over the work. The awe we feel in the Credo, for example, reinforces the separation between ruler and ruled, and this in turn is made to feel 'right' in great outbursts of joy.[14]

The air of imaginative conjecture and speculation which one senses in this passage is compounded by the absence of historical facts underpinning comments such as those pertaining to the length of the Mass (which we know was not conceived as a single work), but the decision to involve politics to the extent where it is claimed to have determined musical structure and content is an indication of how far the iconoclastic critiques aligned to postmodern thought have been prepared to go in deconstructing the pantheon of the Western art music canon and in pinning meaning to ideology or, more mundanely, politics. If this example seems specious, however, in the case of Joubert, any decision *not* to consider politics as somehow constituting an important aspect of the figuration containing music would seem arbitrary,[15] for when music calls attention to itself as a political activity, traditional modes of assessing (aesthetic) value and of hermeneutics surely have to yield to the insistence of ideological exigencies.[16] Put in other words, when musical output of (or pertaining to) certain geopolitical areas stands in

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actually inaugurates a Subject'; 'Can the Subaltern Speak' in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 66.

[14] Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London, 1991), 64.

[15] Though one cannot pretend that there is anything 'natural' in the choice. Even from an ideological point of view, it is impossible to deny that this kind of 'revisionist' critique happens only in order to provide cover for a very specific subject of knowledge, namely The West.

[16] See Benita Parry's discussion of Barbara Harlow's contentious articulation of this point of view in *Altered State? Writing and South Africa*, eds. Elleke Boehmer, Louisa Chrisman, Kenneth Parker (Sydney, 1994), 11-2.

opposition to the very social and political organizations within which and in reaction to which it responds, one is obliged to search for politics in the music. In the case of Joubert this is made inescapable by his explicitly stated intention to have all of his musical output read against a morally ethical (sometimes politically functional) background.[17] As Timothy Taylor writes:

> music and discourse on music are part of a metatext, inseparable. And I mean 'discourse on music' to include the composer's own utterances … All of these meanings rub elbows in this metatext, and all influence each other. In other words, what is said about the music shapes the ways the music is heard, and the ways music is heard shapes what is said about it. All of these ways of hearing and talking constitute this metatext.[18]

Attaching extra-musical (political) meaning to music by means of the musical setting of politically rich literary texts is one method for music to accumulate political overtones. Joubert is particularly fond, even preoccupied, with using extra-musical texts as inspiration and as vehicles of conveying humanitarian and moral content in his music.[19] Quotation from other musical texts, such as Joubert attempts in the Second Symphony, can achieve similar results.[20] Kevin Volans, in defense of his own overtly political

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[17] Timothy Taylor comments on a similar situation with regard to the music of another South African-born composer, Kevin Volans: 'their [composers'] statements on their works inevitably shape the way those works are received'; 'When We Think About Music and Politics: the Case of Kevin Volans', *Perspectives of New Music*, 33:1 & 2 (1995), 510. The danger in this approach, as the Said treatment of the B minor Mass illustrates, is that a fixation on the political may not only serve to elide other extra-musical factors of importance in the production of the work of art, but can also tie the role of a composer to the pragmatics of a political agenda to such an extent that the text ceases to recognize among its subtexts a musical text *per se*, so that all accountability in terms of subject and style is to political forces. It can mean that the seal of approval is awarded to a work of art merely by virtue of its announcing an oppositional stance.

[18] Timothy D. Taylor, 'When We Think About Music and Politics', 510.

[19] Examples are Joubert's operas and choral symphonies, e.g. the opera *Under Western Eyes* that is rich in political (even politically autobiographical) content, and the choral symphony *Gong Tormented Sea*.

[20] It is almost as if an anxiety of *non-influence* is to be found in the referential nature of Joubert's music (referential both with regard to musical and extra-musical material). His South African related works, his extensive use of literary sources and his ready acknowledgement of compositional influences from

strategy of quotation from African music, alleges that quotation is 'the technique of the twentieth century'.[21] Steven Feld comments that musical appropriation is an act with multiple implications and allows the composer to sing 'a double line with one voice',[22] reminding us strongly of the 'double-time' that Bhabha identifies as the ruptural space that 'connects' the performative and pedagogical aspects of the narrative of 'nationness', thus opening a space that can feed less directly and more successfully into intended political meaning.[23] If one expects that within this space it is the 'fantastic and the fabulous, the grotesque and the disorderly, the parodic reiteration or inversion of dominant codes, the deformation of master tropes, the estrangement of received usage, the fracture of authorized syntax'[24] that can act as oppositional and subversive, one can also expect that if anti-Apartheid politics exists in the notes of the Second Symphony, the inquiry should perhaps be directed towards the extent to which the musical text is a challenge to received musical convention, tonality, form, and established critical criteria (Horne's 'dominant language').[25] Paradoxically, however, this challenge seemingly has to be couched in musical expression that can be understood by non-esotericists. Reginald Smith Brindle writes:

Stravinsky to Shostakovich function as different sets of co-ordinates according to which the exiled composer from the colonial margin consciously tries to 'locate' himself.

[21] In Taylor, 'When We Think About Music and Politics', 512. The tendentiousness of this remark emphasizes the need for musical quotation to defend itself against accusations of stereotyping and covert subject constitution, especially in music that has played well to Western audiences and has been a commercial success. It is significant that Volans has subsequently abandoned this technique.

[22] Ibid., 514.

[23] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), 142-4. Lydia Goehr also theorizes 'doubleness' as a fundamental part of artistic identity and does so in terms of 'formal' and 'transcendental' points of view in aesthetic theory (corresponding roughly to Bhabha's categories 'performative' and 'pedagogical'). More specifically, she applies the term to the identity of music and musicians in exile. See *The Quest for Voice*, esp.174-207. Whereas Bhabha focuses on the ambiguity of the nation as space, Goehr significantly sees 'doubleness' pervading the much more intimate space of 'home', making it possible for alienation at 'home' to be classified as 'exile'.

[24] Parry, *Altered States*, 15.

[25] Timothy Taylor writes that Kevin Volans's 'search for new kinds of formal organization (or unorganization) in his music, and his flight from serialism can be read as a kind of disruption of Western European classical music.'; 'When We Think About Music and Politics', 517.

In reality, music and politics are uneasy bedfellows, especially if the music is couched in an arduous language. A political message can only be put across effectively if it has absolute clarity, if it is not obscured by music of an impenetrable dialectic ... Nono's *A Floresta*, for example, is almost incomprehensible. The only way to get at its ideological message is to read the programme notes and ignore the music.[26]

Impenetrable to whom, one might well ask. Smith Brindle assumes that if music does not present too many difficulties of its own, it is indeed possible to convey (political) meanings.[27] Joubert's more youthful efforts to distance himself from avant-gardism[28] and in so doing from what Rose Rosengard Subotnik has termed *a fortiori* the 'sensuous identity [and] personality' of a highly individuated style (something that undercuts the autonomy of the musical work), seems to embrace this point of view.[29] It remains difficult to formulate, however, how music with an 'impenetrable dialectic' differs from more accessible music like Joubert's Second Symphony when it comes to putting a political point across. In both cases one would need the programme notes to grasp the

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[26] Reginald Smith Brindle, *The New Music: The Avant-Garde since 1945* (Oxford, 1987), 184. In the light of this comment, it seems reasonable to expect the most radical displacement of dominant (musical) cultural codes in the South African situation will probably not be found in the music of art music composers, but rather in popular culture. This is confirmed in the examples used by Ingrid Bianca Byerly in her article 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music *Indaba* of Late-Apartheid South Africa' in *Ethnomusicology*, 42:1 (1998), 1-44. See also Lara Allen's 'Drumbeats, Pennywhistles and all that Jazz: the Relationship Between Urban South African Musical Styles and Musical Meaning' in *African Music*, 7:3 (1996), 52-9. Veit Erlmann has also explored this theme in *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago and London, 1991), *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa* (Chicago and London, 1996), and in *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Chicago, 1999).

[27] Smith Brindle does not comment on the fact that the programme notes may well feed into the 'impenetrable dialectic' of the music in quite a legitimate dialectic of its own, thus adding (political) meaning *to* the style and structure of the 'impenetrable' musical text instead of the music *adding up* to the political programme.

[28] See his letter to *The Musical Times*, 98 (1957), 33.

[29] See Subotnik's essay 'Romantic Music as Post-Kantian Critique: Classicism, Romanticism, and the Concept of the Semiotic Universe' in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis and Oxford, 1991), 112-40.

political message, although the more accessible compositional approach of Joubert will probably ensure more favorable if not quantitatively more hearings of the work for more and wider audiences. The implication here is that if a composer is serious about framing political opposition to a social figuration, (s)he can (perhaps should) do so in a language which, of its own accord, is not 'impenetrable' and does not alienate understanding. This can mean that such music maintains and supports the musical *status quo* and shuns the iconoclasm associated with protest or resistance art. At this point, we return to the 'comprehensible' music of Joubert's Second Symphony to ask, albeit in a more general way, Schoenberg's pointed and ironic question, 'By what *chord* would one diagnose the Marxist confession in a piece of music?'(my italics).[30]

The Second Symphony is a single movement work in three sections that supports a basically linear transformation of very limited motivic material. An introductory section (bars 1-146) presents two themes, the first of which is original thematic material accompanied by a pulsating semitone ostinato in the basses (see Example 3.1) that is a reference to the opening of the third section of Joubert's oratorio *The Raising of Lazarus*. At the start of this section of the oratorio Lazarus gradually comes to life, the ostinato simulating Lazarus's breathing. Glossing over the reference, Joubert explains: 'I think I had in mind an image of a resurgent Africa being raised from the dead like Lazarus, but I wouldn't take it too literally!'[31] It is clear, however, that the first theme owes its seminal idea to the ostinato figure, starting as it does with a twice repeated three note pattern comprising an ascending semitone and minor third – both repeats also ending on

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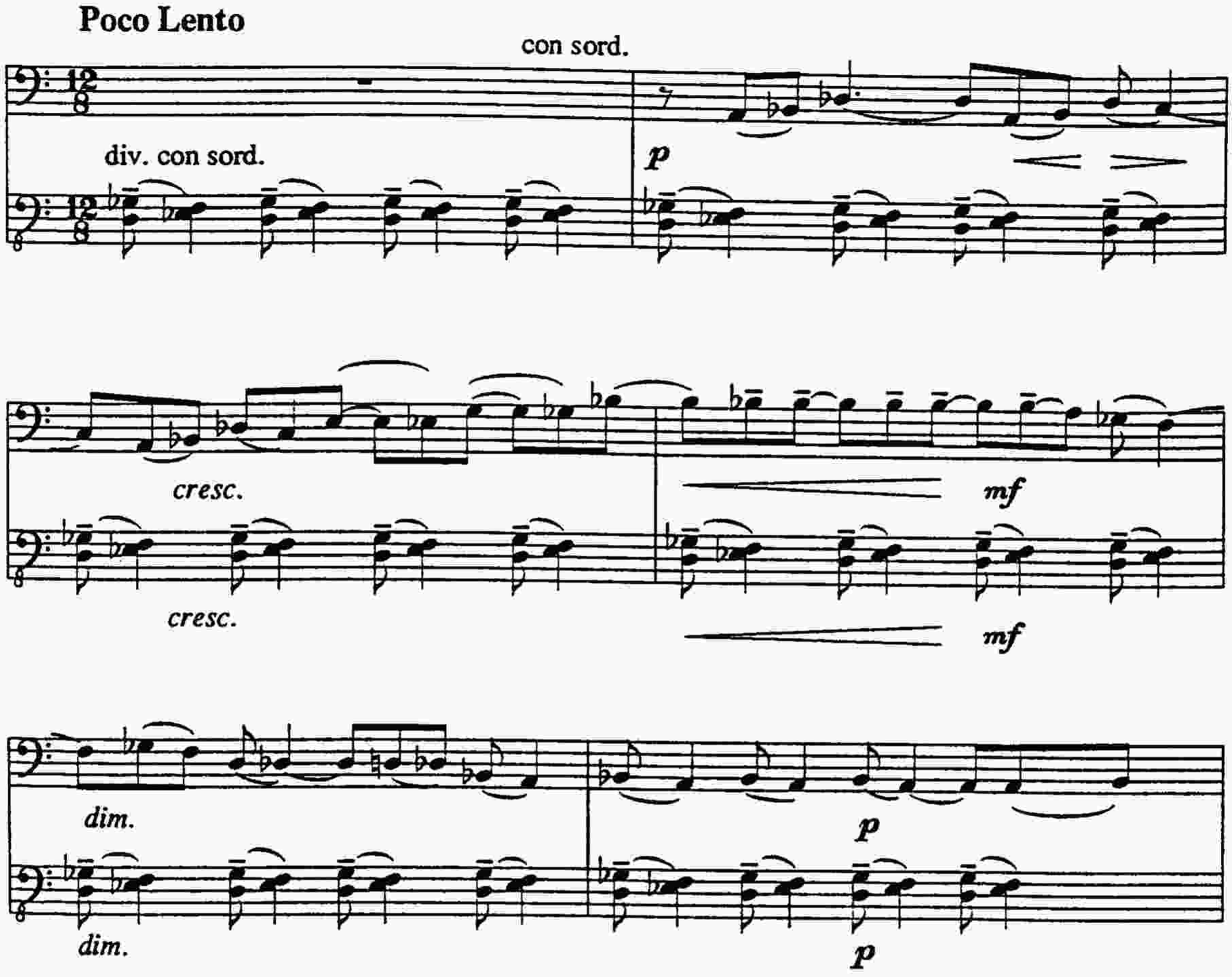
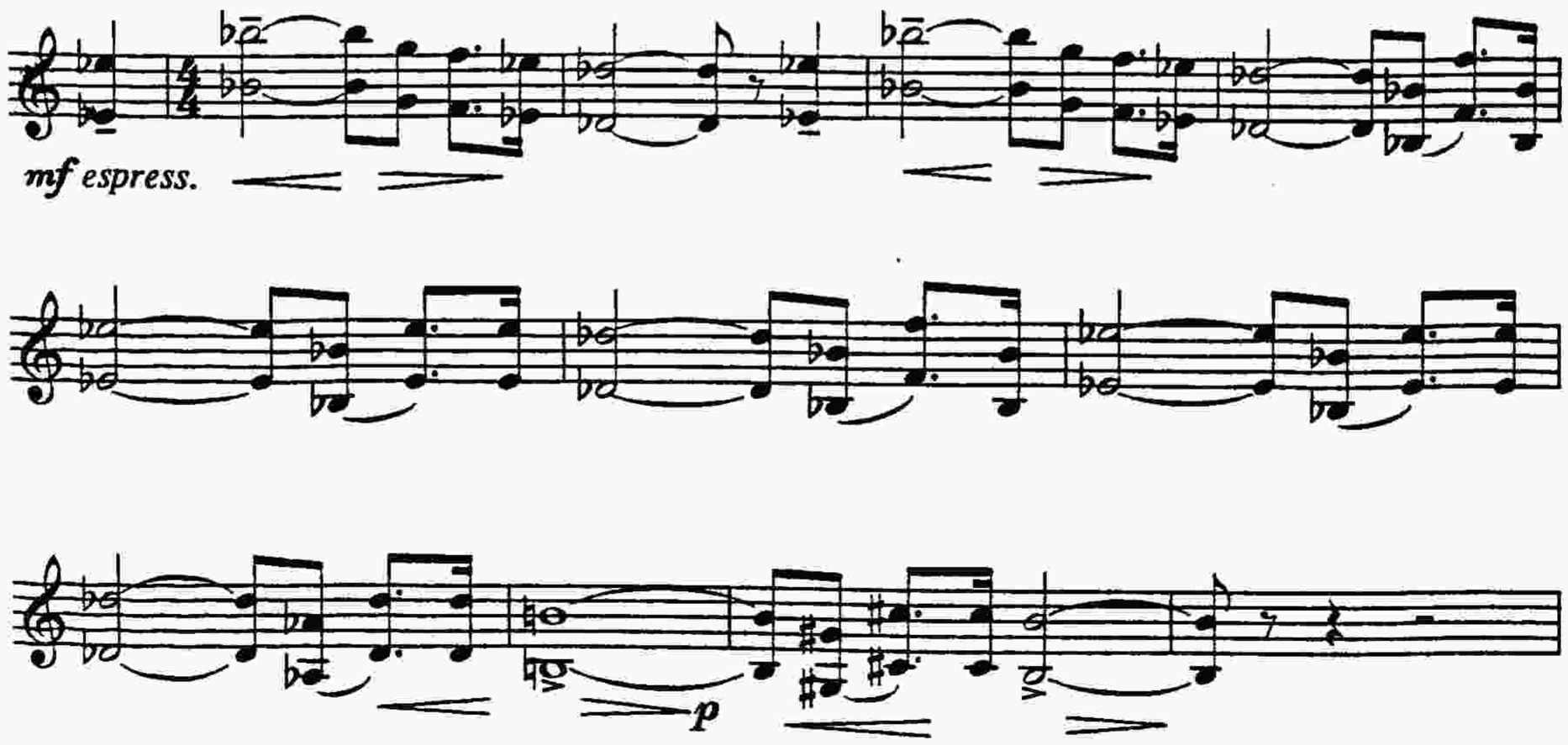
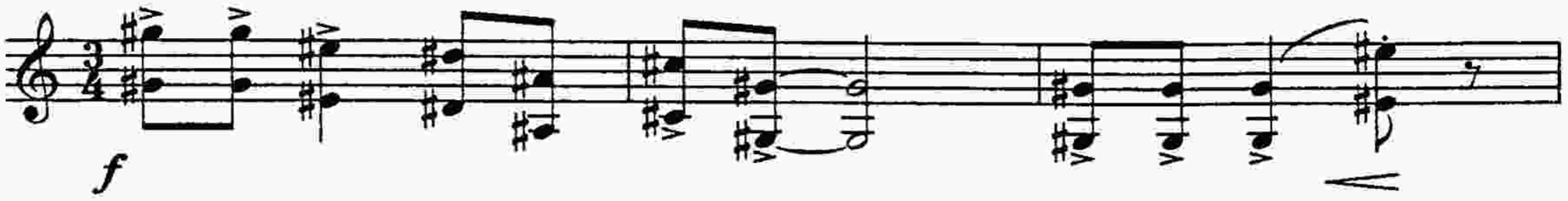
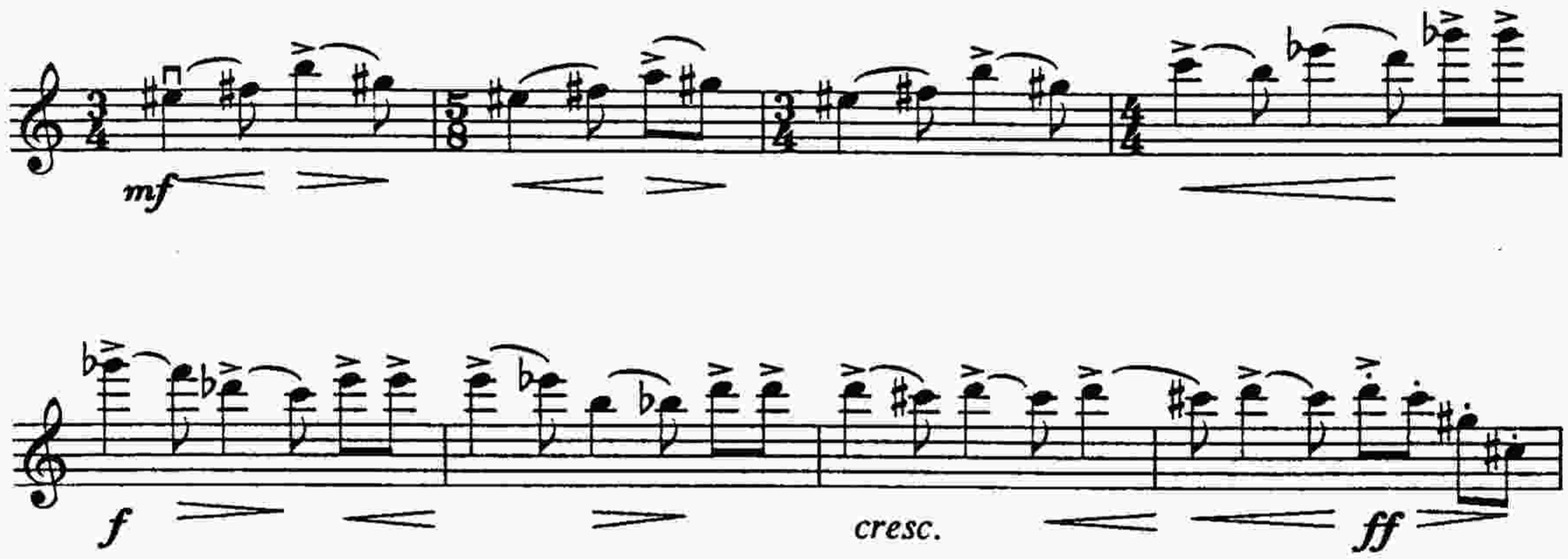
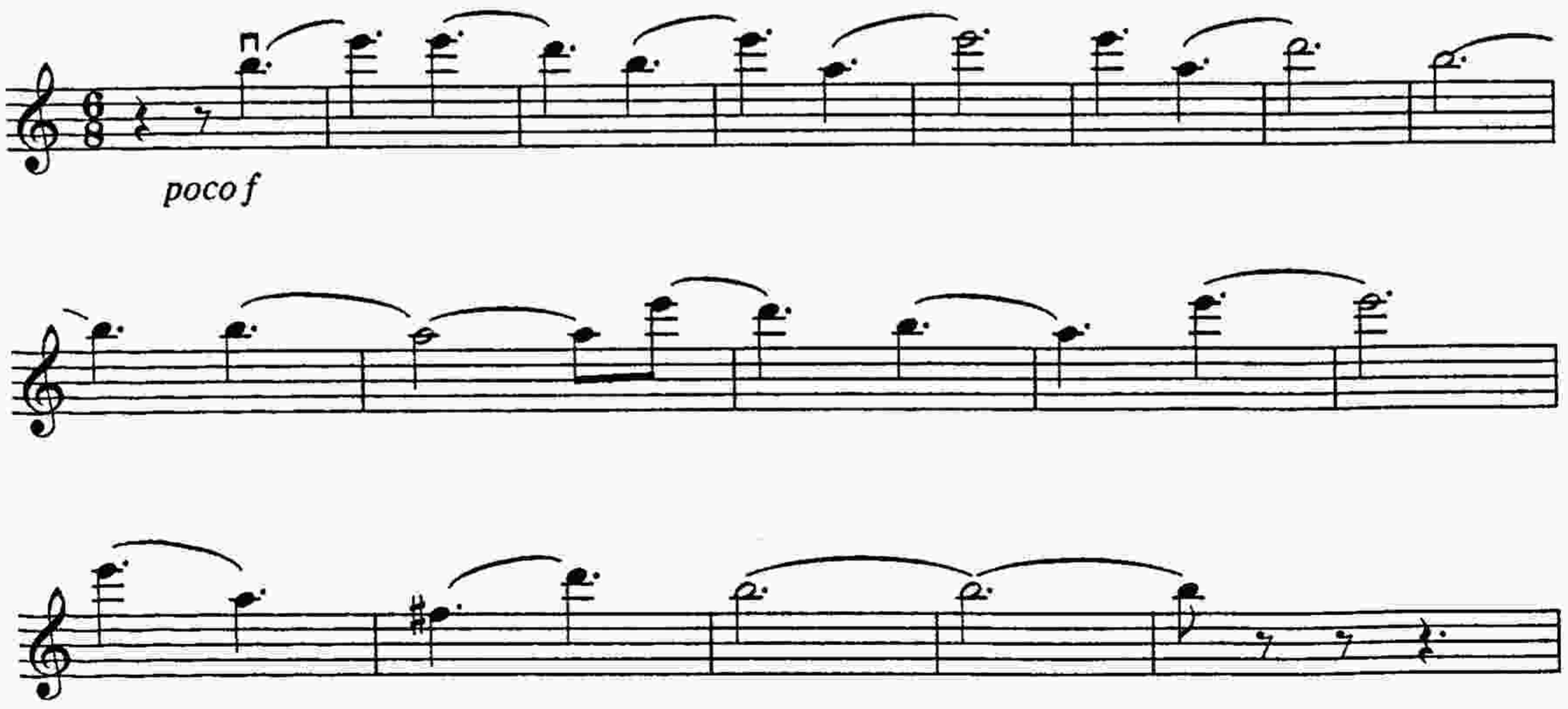
[30] Arnold Schoenberg, 'Does the World Lack a Peace-Hymn?, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, tr. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 500.
[31] Letter to the author from John Joubert, 18 March 1999.

Example 3.1. Joubert, *Second Symphony*, cellos and double bases, bars 1 – 6.

Example 3.2. Joubert, *Second Symphony*, French horns, bars 37 – 48.

Example 3.3. Joubert, *Second Symphony*, French horns, bars 147 – 149.

Example 3.4. Joubert, *Second Symphony*, first violins, bars 209 – 216.



Example 3.5. Joubert, *Second Symphony*, first violins, bars 262 – 279.



descending semitones. Without being too literal about it, the first theme does indeed suggest a weary resurgence in the way is allowed to grow from a reiteration of semitones and thirds in an ascending contour, culminating in a repetition of the tonal centre of the theme an octave higher, before descending by means of the same prime cells of semitones and thirds. This 'resurgence' is to an extent fortified in the thickly layered fugato treatment that the first theme is subjected to in the strings over the course of the first 21 bars of the symphony.

The remaining three themes used by Joubert are 'African', and taken from a rather obscure publication entitled *Songs of Africa*, a compilation by Adolf Wood (who wrote the libretto for Joubert's first opera *In the Drought*) and Stanley Glasser.[32] The second theme (see Example 3.2) is a protest song based on the pentatonic scale D flat – E flat – F – G – B flat.[33] The theme has an antecedent-consequent character – the perfect fifth that heralds the terse antecedent phrase developed in the consequent phrase, interspersed with material referring back to the ascending perfect fourth followed by the descending semitone characterizing the first theme. The latter material is also used extensively by Joubert in the accompaniment of the second theme. Although he must have been influenced by the moving protest lyrics of the song in selecting it ('How can you be a

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[32] *Songs of Africa: A Collection of 100 Songs*, ed. Adolf Wood and Stanley Glasser (London, 1968). Although the introduction to this little book acknowledges the influence of eminent ethnomusicologists like Hugh Tracey, Percival Kirby and Alan P. Merriam, the book is not targeted at an ethnomusicological or academic readership. The authors state the purpose of the publication as being 'to establish international recognition for this [South African] music', and propose to achieve this by providing singable English lyrics that are 'either free translations and adaptations of the originals, or entirely new lyrics that attempt to re-create in English the distinctive idioms and forms of African language, as well as to express some of the realities of African experience'; 8-9. The extent to which the lyrics of the songs used by Joubert in the Second Symphony have been rewritten by Wood is not made clear in the book. Nor is it entirely clear to what extent the melodies have been 'reconstructed' by Glasser. The reader is assured that, in suggesting possible chord progressions to accompany the single stave melodies, the authors followed 'one principle only – to retain the feeling and mood of the melody and words.' The question of the supposed 'authenticity' of the songs is perhaps best considered against the background of the 'inextricably intertwined aesthetic practices, fictional genres and discourses of personal and collective identity' that shaped the global imaginations (as manifested in music, amongst others) of Africans and Europeans described by Veit Erlmann in his *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 144.

[33] See *Songs of Africa*, 78.

man / if you have got no say, / If those who rule can just decide / the hurtful things that kill your pride. / A man is not a man if he has got no say. / What kind of men are these / Who do such things to you?'), it is nevertheless important to note that Joubert's choice of melodic material is notable not for its exotic character, but for rather for its potential as a melodic elaboration of the first theme's motivic cells – a point to which I shall return.

The third theme inaugurates what can be called a second section within this one movement work (see Example 3.3). 'The Mendi' is a song honouring the bravery of the African servicemen who were drowned at sea off the English coast in World War I.[34] The melody comes closest of the three African themes used by Joubert to presenting Africa in its stereotypical guise of short, percussive melodic fragments, syncopation and repetitiveness that emphasize strong rhythmic tendencies and dance (rather than melody) as the outstanding characteristic of 'African music'. Even so, the third theme is again chosen for the way in which it echoes elements of the first theme (the repetition reminds one of the axis point in the first theme where the ascending and descending contours meet, whilst the descending third and two fourths constituting the rest of this brief theme can easily be related to motifs occurring for the first time in the first theme). The result is once again that the third theme sounds more like a thematic variation of what went before than an exotic African quotation. The difference this time is that, with the advent of the second section within this one movement work, the mood has changed to a dance-like *Allegro Vivace* in 3/4 time that is characterized by *pizzicato* and *staccato* textures, transparent orchestration, playful syncopation – all of which serve to 'put a brave face' on the tragic story attached to this song and to break the grip of pervading melancholy that dominated the first section.

Although the third theme contrasts with the first in terms of mood, this contrast is undercut by Joubert when he follows it with a variant of the first theme (see Example

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[34] Ibid., 67 and 73.

3.4). He injects this reappearance of the first theme with syncopated accents and an almost breathless change of time signatures (3/4, 5/8, 3/4, 4/4). In this second appearance, the first theme assumes such a contrasting personality to its first appearance at the beginning of the work, that it seems consciously to be aligning itself with the third theme and a continuation of the latter's lighthearted and furtive character, rather than functioning as a return to the sobriety of the opening of the work. This effect is heightened by the fact that an almost seamless transition between the third theme and the reappearance of the first in its contrasting personality, occurring in bars 205-209, is achieved by the continuation of the transparent textures and patterns of accompaniment inaugurating the second section and supporting the third theme, but also by the fact that the tail of the third theme persists in interweaving the appearances of the remodelled first theme.

A lament, 'Mai-Yi-Ba-Bo', is introduced as the fourth and last new theme in bar 262 (see Example 3.5). Though its entry in the strings is emphasized by a brief suspension of all other orchestral activity, the textures and patterns of accompaniment prevalent during the presentations of the previous two themes soon rejoin the lament. Especially noteworthy is the accompaniment pattern that continually restates the motivic cells of the first theme (semitone, third). Indeed the lament could easily have been just a development of motivic ideas (ascending fourths and fifths, descending 'sighing' semitones) presented for the first time in the first and second themes, while its identity is also at least partly obscured by the fact that it is spun out in a rather lengthy 6/8 time that disregards the 3/4 time signature. It is exotic only insofar as it seems to yearn for a lost *time* (rather than place) within the strictures of the present.

At its first appearance, the lament functions more as a point of reflection on the dignified academicism of the melancholy first theme (the only 'non-African' theme used by Joubert). This is engineered in part by the dance-like dynamism of the three thematic

ideas separating the first use of the first theme and the first use of the lament. In fact, immediately preceding the lament is a rhythmically energized version of the first theme which, owing to its dance-like propensity, sounds less like a return to the first theme than does this fourth theme. The effect is compounded by the fact that the beginnings of both the first theme and the lament display similar contours in the ascending fourth and the rhetorically significant descending semitone respectively, whilst Joubert also refrains from developing the lament at this point, preferring to juxtapose its melancholy with interspersed fragments of the angular intervals of the third theme. During the course of this second section, the lament appears twice more (presented by the oboes in bar 366 and asserted more strongly by the trombones in bar 483). The lament seems of particular significance for Joubert, for though it is not developed in any way (as said, it is almost as if it is already a development of earlier melodic ideas), it is presented with greater prominence than any of the other 'African' themes. Inaugurating the coda (*Lento e Sostenuto*), it appears majestically in the horns (bar 522), spun out as before but now over no less than 36 bars. Connecting as it does to the initial statements of the first theme and given the latter's relation to the germinal motivic material of the *Raising of Lazarus* material, it is almost as if the lament transcends its own melancholy identity (arguably already shed in its earlier almost triumphant appearance in the trombones). More significantly, however, its connection to Joubert's oratorio suggests a transcendence of death itself in an utopian vision of ultimate victory and everlasting life.

From the perspective of the present, the most noticeable aspect of the 'African' themes is how they structurally integrate into the texture of the rest of the work. The result is that, unlike quotations in the more recent phenomenon that has been termed 'ethnoclassical music',[35] and is in reality an Africanized art music that continues the

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[35] The term 'ethnoclassical music' is an unfortunate neologism that vitiates an already complex issue. In her article 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet', Ingrid Bianca Byerly uses this term to denote South African art music that seeks to accommodate and communicate in some way or another, a geopolitical Pan-African

long-standing European fascination with African artifacts (in the South African context sometimes pre-empting but mostly following *political* imperatives), the themes do not seem to parade in African costume dress or propagate the idea that 'they are different from us' (an aspect in which the European mediated source of the 'African' melodies may have played no small part). They do not announce themselves with (stereotypical) percussion and rhythmic virility. They are just there, almost as an *aperçu*, quotes completely subsumed in the music and practically inaccessible without the programme and the score. This is the point that comes across in Dominic Gill's review of the work in 1971:

> For all its genuine exuberance and deeply-felt melancholy, the music has an oddly academic ring. It does not come together naturally: there is a sense of forcing, of self-conscious constraint. Three promising African melodies are used and developed; yet they all, and in particular the third, a beautiful Zulu lament, fall in their context rather dully. There was a sameness about Joubert's instrumentation, an impassioned woodenness, which blanketed each one too comfortably, would not let it take wing. There were more impressive things ... But it is a work to admire, more than to be touched by: and something of a disappointment.[36]

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awareness. The first problem with the term is that it functions as a signifier for a respectable aesthetic for (potentially) politically acquiescent art. Secondly, the constituent terms 'ethno' and 'classical' are both misnomers. With regard to the first, J. Montagy writes 'I dislike the term 'ethno' and I wish that we could get rid of it. In most contexts it has a connotation of fake: ethnic food is usually uneatable; ethnic jewellery is incompetently made in someone's back room in your own city, and so on.'; Montagy, 'The Magpie in Ethnomusicology', *The John Blacking Memorial Lecture 1997* (Oxford, 1997), 1. Thirdly, the term implies an indigenousness and tradition (such as that of Indian classical music) that belies the recent and historically contingent emergence of the phenomenon. Fourthly, *art nègre* (and *musique nègre*) in this century have their roots in the modernist aesthetic and are neither new nor local. Coining a new term to replace the existing ones (primitivism, exoticism, Orientalism, etc.) and their concomitant strategies seems like laying a false trail, when what is needed is to decipher what the strategies and functions of these respectable modernist manoeuvres are in the localized South African frame. For a discussion of this aspect of modernism see Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1994).

[36] Review of the Royal Philharmonic Society concert in which Joubert's Second Symphony was performed by the LSO under Sir Adrian Boult on 24 March 1971; *The Musical Times*, 112 (1971), 461. Compare Veit Erlmann's description of reactions in London to performances by the African Choir in 1908. Erlmann writes: 'the disappointment about the lack of 'exotic' elements in displays of African identity such as the

Gill's disappointment is less with the symphony Joubert composed (it is full of 'impressive things' and 'bears all the marks of great concentration, dedication and passion'), than with the missed opportunity of an exotic African musical safari. The 'promise' of Africa is left unexploited,[37] the success of the assimilation of the themes is 'too comfortable' and the urbanity of Joubert's (usual) disciplined economy of writing becomes 'a sense of forcing' and 'self-conscious constraint' when dealing with the exuberance of Africa and its call for 'the stuff of passion'. For another critic, the Second Symphony does not satisfy the desire to 'name' the Other satisfactorily and is therefore 'altogether too straightforward and dully predictable'.[38] Characteristic and easily recognizable musical gestures from the 'alien culture' are missing in the Second Symphony, and so therefore also an exotic colour and suggestiveness. At the other end of the scale is the somewhat sceptical remark by Daniël Geldenhuys in a dated study of Joubert's music, insisting that 'this application [of African melodic material] is somewhat farfetched, as according to Joubert himself, he grew up in Cape Town and environs and

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concerts of the African Choir would therefore seem to signify two somewhat paradoxical aspects of imperial practice and consciousness. On the one hand, the metropolitan disillusionment was symptomatic of the kind of nostalgia that arose when imperialism sought to erase its agency in transforming the globe. But on the other hand, the same imperialist nostalgia veiled the fact that the colonial powers had long backtracked from the promises of the civilizing mission, whatever their worth. In many ways, it might even be argued that the category 'indigenous' was invented in order to soothe such nostalgia by invoking long-defunct Western fixities of place and identity, by countering the colonial world's unsettling hybridity and twofold logic of sameness turning into difference and difference becoming sameness.'; Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 131.

[37] Instrumentation is singled out as the weak point, of course, as African themes supposedly require an abundance of percussive colours and exotic effects, which presumeably include things like wild dances, unusual textures or esoteric instruments. For a wide ranging series of discussions of various exoticisms in Western music and extensive bibliographies on the subject, see *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston, 1998). Ironically, the instrumentation of the Second Symphony *is* particularly brilliant, evoking resonances of Shostakovich and Stravinsky.

[38] E. M. Webster, 'Communication II: The Ethos and the Ether' in *Musical Opinion*, 94 (1971), 500-3, esp. 502-3. These reviews continue the exotic connotations of Africa in its reinvented European guise so common in exhibitions of Empire like the winter season spectacle at Olympia in London in 1899-1890, entitled 'Briton, Boer and Black in Savage South Africa' and claiming 'real' and genuine' representations. See Annie E. Coombes's *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (New Haven and London, 1994), esp. 85-108.

was never exposed to any real influence from Bantu music'.[39] It seems as if the Second Symphony is either too little of the right thing, or too much of the wrong thing.

Perhaps a more salutary reading is possible when a fragment of the work's reception history is taken into account. Turning to the 'final arbiter' as the 'moment in history' will mean that we need to construct musical meaning 'not … within an abstract text' but as meaning that 'takes concrete form, and in turn concretizes the text, only in the course of reception'.[40] Commenting on the question of whether dedicating the Second Symphony to the Sharpeville victims influenced his standing in South Africa and performances of his works in the Republic (accompanied by invitations to go there), Joubert recounted a meeting in 1969/70 with Anton Hartman, musical director of the SABC Symphony Orchestra in Johannesburg, during the course of which Hartman announced his strong opposition to the political 'programme' of the Second Symphony.[41] He had no qualms about the musical merits of the work, but stated that as far as he could see it would never be performed in South Africa.[42] Hartman was a very powerful force in South African music and especially in the promotion of performances and recordings of art music by South African composers. A staunch Afrikaner Nationalist and racial supremacist,[43] he

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[39] Daniël G. Geldenhuys, *John Joubert se komposisies: 'n Stylkritiese ondersoek met spesiale verwysing na sy vokale werke*, diss. (Stellenbosch Univ., 1976), 123 (my translation).

[40] Carl Dahlhaus, 'Problems in Reception History, in *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge, 1983), 151; Germ. edn., *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne, 1977). Recalling Nattiez's semiotic theory of musical analysis, it is worth emphasizing that shifting the focus to the esthesic level does not take the enquiry outside the 'total musical fact'.

[41] Interview with John Joubert in Birmingham, 26 November 1997.

[42] This turned out to be true until some high level diplomatic activity ensured two South African performances of the work in November 1999.

[43] Composer Peter Klatzow writes 'I was working as a music producer at the SABC in the early 1970's. In those days we presented a programme entitled *Jong Suid-Afrika* [Young South Africa]. For the Beethoven bicentenary this became *Jong Suid-Afrika speel Beethoven* [Young South Africa plays Beethoven]. I was on duty when a young coloured guy came along, and presented the conventional programme. The head of Music at that time, Anton Hartman, refused to allow him to participate, since 'die kleurlinge kannie Beethoven speel nie' [the Coloureds can't play Beethoven]. The very strong feeling was that many art forms were a 'preserve'. When Hartman refused me permission to give a talk at a Johannesburg art gallery since the audience would not be segregated, I started to find ways to take leave of the SABC and eventually ended up in Cape Town. I admired Hartman for many things, not least his steady promotion of South

did later write to Joubert to invite him to visit South Africa again, an invitation Joubert declined. After the Hartman incident, Joubert's cultural links with South Africa were gradually relinquished. This was partly due to South Africa's growing (cultural) isolation and Joubert's ever diminishing personal ties with the country of his birth, but the Second Symphony no doubt accelerated this process and made it irreversible.[44] Hartman's admission of the irrelevance of the Second Symphony's aesthetic qualities in the face of its social and political commentary, vindicates a reading of the Second Symphony that acknowledges the importance of its political message of protest and resistance.

The 'seal of approval' need not be given to Joubert's music by virtue of its announcing an oppositional stance to morally repugnant ideology. Nevertheless, the Second Symphony gives voice to the particularly impenetrable musical[45] silence of the black man in 1970s South Africa, and it clearly does so in a way that was unpalatable to dominant white South African attitudes at the time. Joubert's preoccupation in all his music is with communication. He is himself in the situation of Razumov in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. At the time when the Second Symphony was composed he was not in favour of what he saw at best as destructive musical experimentalism in service of a political message, nor was he at ease with contributing silently to the ideologically framed corpus of 'South African art music'.[46] Joubert's insistence that his work should stand autonomous from its political 'function' does let the question arise: is the political (and more universal moral) statement that he would want to make not trivialized by his stand on musical autonomy, thus defeating the very purpose of declaring music to be either 'in favour of ' or 'against' certain ideologies in the first place? It is indeed possible

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African music, and his keen interest in the avant garde. So my feelings towards him, and that period in my life, have remained ambivalent.'; e-mail from Peter Klatzow to the author, 18 November 1997.

[44] This resulted in the 'problem' that Geldenhuys tried to resolve in his paper entitled 'John Joubert in Historical Perspective', delivered at the 1997 Congress of the South African Musicological Society when he tried to 'retrieve' Joubert for South African music.

[45] The reference is to art music only.

[46] See Joubert's discussion of his setting of *Under Western Eyes* in *The Musical Times*, 110 (1969), 470-3.

that his various critical (political) poses are in fact an elaborate screen covering some more essential and esoteric artistic agenda. We need to remind ourselves, however, that this ambivalence between *das rein Musikalische* and *das Aussermusikalische* is hardly a unique musico-historical stance. Lydia Goehr usefully describes it as an argument of 'doubleness' that recalls the dialectical nature of so many claims within the Romantic and modern musical aesthetic – an argument that can ideally endorse an enabling condition of added meaning, rather than a damning contradiction in terms.

The political significance of Joubert's Second Symphony lies in its 'speaking' the name of the Other, and in speaking it in a musical way that does not define black South Africans as touristic oddities. An insistence on reading one of the dominant languages of Apartheid South Africa's politics of oppression as a critique on that system is not (merely) a reassertion of that language in terms acceptable to a new political dispensation. It is in the first instance a strategic reading meant to challenge the enduring (racial) polarization and static dichotomies of South African society by theorizing a space for art music where Goehr's condition of doubleness (not division) presents itself as an enabling musical (and political) possibility.[47] The wider significance of this position is that art music 'discursively transliterates the political process into an aesthetic chronicle',[48] thus potentially situating music in an antagonistic and critical position vis-à-vis an official and ideological 'rewriting' of history – an act which is in itself an assertion of freedom and autonomy. This kind of strategic reading is also an act of defiance in the battle for cultural survival in a continuing dangerous power relationship that threatens to ideologize aesthetics (as it does politics and economics) in terms of protest and the

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[47] See Goehr, *The Quest for Voice*, 198-207. This is a space that reclaims Western art music as an inalienable part of South African cultural heritage. In the words of Hans Werner Henze, 'For one who is fighting, all music that has accompanied those who have fought before him – and that has preceded him in history – has subversive significance.'; Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics: Collected Writings 1953-81*, tr. Peter Labanyi (London, 1982), 170.

[48] Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley, 1993), 16.

Struggle. From an historical point of view, the implications of this tendency are illustrated by a *Zapiro* cartoon that appeared in the largest black South African newspaper, the *Sowetan* and in the left-wing *Weekly Mail & Guardian* in 1998:

Figure 3.1. *Zapiro* cartoon of 11 September 1998 in the *Sowetan* and the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*.

The subtle broadening of meaning achieved by linking the images of five Nationalist prime ministers (D.F. Malan, J.G. Strijdom, H.F. Verwoerd, J.B.M. Vorster and P.W. Botha in that order), with the term 'Apartheid-era artworks', constitutes historical homogenizing of a kind that perpetuates both an ahistorical construct of Apartheid, and invites cultural philistinism (disguised as enlightened ridicule), founded on the moral

revulsion based on that false and ahistorical premise. The assumption that art can be tainted by 'political association' and thus be vulnerable to *Säuberungsaktionen* is ominous enough, but the idea that such association can be established indiscriminately on the grounds of chronology ('Apartheid-era') and by way of logical deduction also on the grounds of race, is an indication of just how precipitous a position historically (white) art occupies in 'liberated' South Africa. Nor is the danger confined to historical interpretations and critical appraisals of existing art. Albie Sachs's warning, issued to his African National Congress colleagues during an in-house seminar on culture in 1989, has gained urgency at the end of the Mandela presidency:

> Instead of getting real criticism, we get solidarity criticism. Our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work, it is enough that it be politically correct. The more fists and spears and guns, the better. The range of themes is narrowed down so much that all that is funny or curious or genuinely tragic in the world is extruded. Ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future.[49]

As Hans Werner Henze contentiously asserts of Darmstadt in post-war Germany, South African art music runs the risk in the aftermath of the collapse of an authoritarian regime, to be reduced quietly and willingly to forces of power, influence, contracts, political and moral conformism.[50] It is in this politically charged geo-political environment that John Joubert's South African works, and particularly his Second Symphony, become more than a prolegomenon to the problematic of politics and art in twenty-first century South

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[49] Albie Sachs, 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge 1998), 200.
[50] See Hans Werner Henze's essay 'German Music in the 1940s and 1950s' in *Music and Politics*, 27-56.

Africa. Indeed, from a South African point of view, it may be possible to claim the improbable about this quiet South African expatriate and his conservative musical agenda(s), namely that he becomes the unlikely figure in South African art music that shares the historical kudos of 'Marx's reserve army of migrant labour who by the speaking the foreigness of language split the patriotic voice of unisonance',[51] thereby becoming a place-holder for constructive doubleness that makes a dignified discourse on art music in present day South Africa a possibility.

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[51] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 164.

Chapter Four

Spaces of Nationness: On Myth, Masks, Music and Afrikaner Identity

I

King Minos of Crete, it is said, wanted a sign from the gods that his kingdom was limitless. He built an altar to Poseidon to pray for this. If only I knew that I have no end. *Poseidon sent Minos a spotless white bull, without the stain or birthmark of either question or answer, commanding him to offer the bull to the gods. Doesn't it make sense?*

How else can you remain certain except by letting go of certainty?[1]

Breyten Breytenbach

In 1956 the South African Broadcasting Corporation commissioned the Dutch composer Henk Badings to compose an opera to a libretto, also specially commissioned, by the celebrated Afrikaans poet N.P. van Wyk Louw. Consultation between Louw and Badings about possible themes for the opera resulted in the choice of what was to be refined into a new radiophonic opera, premiered on South African radio on 11 April 1958 and named *Asterion.*[2] The title means 'of the sun' or 'of the sky', and, significantly, is

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[1] Breyten Breytenbach, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (London and Boston, 1984), 240.
[2] See in this regard J.C. Steyn's biography of Louw, *Van Wyk Louw: 'n Lewensverhaal* (2 vols., Cape Town, 1998), vol. ii, esp. 741-3, 780. *Asterion* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1965) has survived as one of the most neglected and obscure works by an Afrikaner writer otherwise dominating Afrikaans literature this

another name for Pasiphaë's Minotaur son begotten through illicit intercourse with her husband Minos's 'dazzling white bull'.[3]

The mise-en-scène of the opera is the court of an unidentified Princess in an unknown land.[4] She requests her *Ou Magiër* (old magician) to create a younger version of himself to relieve the oppressive familiarity and boredom of life at court. Under protest and in fear and trepidation, he creates Asterion, a godlike figure of great physical beauty. Asterion immediately identifies natural phenomena (a cloud drifting overhead, a white flower) as incomplete forms and movements and transforms the clouds into static shapes in the sky and the flower into a crystal form. Thereafter he embarks on a dance throughout the land, willing members of the Princess's court in tow. As he dances, he performs many wonders. He changes wheat fields to steel, lakes and waterfalls to ice and mountains to crystal. All water in the land is permanently solidified. Distraught, the Princess summons the *Ou Magiër*, who insists that Asterion has to die. The Princess refuses to allow this: her love for him is such that she would rather see her kingdom destroyed. When Asterion kills her old nurse, however, the Princess challenges him to

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century. The probable reason for this is its status as a libretto, a genre that Louw himself dismissed as the breeding ground for inferior literature; *Asterion*, 66-7. As with practically all South African art music, *Asterion* suffers from a frustrating lack of reception history. It was performed only once in South Africa and the musical format decided on by Badings determined that that performance would be via the evanescent medium of radio.

[3] Greek myth has it that, on his ascent to the Cretan throne, King Minos dedicated an altar to Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. Upon its completion, Minos prayed to Poseidon that a sacrificial bull might emerge from the sea. A positive answer from Poseidon would mean proof of his right to reign. As Minos prayed, a dazzling white bull swam ashore, but Minos was so struck by its beauty that he sent it to join his own herd, and slaughtered another bull instead. Poseidon, enraged by this affront, made Minos's wife, Pasiphaë, fall in love with the white bull that had been withheld from sacrifice. Pasiphaë confided her unnatural passion to Daedalus, the famous Athenian craftsman, and asked for his help. Daedalus built a hollow wooden cow, which he upholstered with a cow's hide. He set this structure on wheels concealed in its hooves, and pushed it into a meadow where Poseidon's bull was grazing under the oaks among Minos's cows. Then, having shown Pasiphaë how to open the folding doors in the cow's back, and slip inside with her legs thrust down into its hindquarters, he discreetly retired. Soon the white bull ambled up and mounted the cow, so that Pasiphaë's desire was fulfilled. She later gave birth to the Minotaur, a monster with a bull's head and a human body. Taken and adapted from Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* (London, 1996), 273-4.

[4] The anonymity of the characters (except for Asterion, the librettist dispenses with names and almost entirely with personalities) and of Louw's description of a legendary world as far removed as possible from realism, reinforce the validity of reading the libretto as an allegory. Even in the case of Asterion, the mythical name suggests that the character is archetypal.

confront the power of darkness in sleep. She sings of her love for him while he goes to sleep at her feet, and the *Ou Magiër* enters and sends her away. He starts to sing the alchemizing song of Asterion's death and returns life to normality.

In the published postscript to the libretto, Louw gives a short and rather interesting exposition of various matters relating to *Asterion*. After a short historical exposition of how the libretto came to be written, Louw launches into a description of the demands made on a librettist in order to assure successful collaboration with the composer. He writes of the necessity to work loyally with the composer and reports Badings's request to him:

> The first thing that he [Badings] told me, was this: he could more easily work with text that does not have too fixed a form. A strong and rigid language text, say with regular stanzas – refuses to be 'softened' and 'handled' by the composer. Such texts dictate to Music and binds her.[5]

Louw explains that he tried to find a suitably malleable style in a subtle combination of verse drama, lyric, dramatic verse, rhythmic prose and prose. Furthermore, he stresses the imperative for transparency and simplicity in the use of the language, references and symbolism: where song and music already transform the word into a vague entity for the listener, it is important that there is no cryptic, esoteric use of words or concepts. He continues by explaining that the length of the text, as well as the medium's demand for a 'simple and clearly discernible contrast of a few voices', restricted both how many characters he could create and the characterization of the personalities.[6] Pausing to

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[5] Louw, *Asterion*, 66. All translations from the libretto and the postscript are by the author. Elsewhere in his postscript, Louw also writes that he had been considering the seminal material of *Asterion* from as early on as 1954, but that (what he considered) the main problem of the writer, 'namely to find the *external form* that fits the chosen theme best', remained a problem until his commission to write the libretto; id., 65.

[6] A hint that all of this is slightly disingenuous, an elaborate screen erected to cover what one suspects is an artistic (and political) agenda that confirms his text as (the) independent force of meaning, is suggested by a textual slippage near the end of the libretto, where Louw provides what seems like a stage instruction:

reflect on a problem that has, according to him, not been thought through thoroughly enough in South Africa, and for which there is little understanding, Louw intriguingly writes of the manner in which a form that is consciously accepted by a 'craftsman' can 'reach into' (*ingryp*) the organism of the work that comes into being, thereby affecting 'every main and subsidiary part thereof'. Though he does not elaborate, he does issue a stern warning:

> Every external form has its own laws that still leave (perhaps) an inexhaustible amount of possibilities. But still every form has, together with its possibilities, its limitations. It is the task of the artist to feel his way around the edges of these limitations (like a prisoner feels around the walls in his dark cell). His task is to discover *all* possibilities within his medium and to exploit them, but *not* to attempt to go beyond them. The history of art is like a battlefield sown with the corpses of transgressions.[7]

Expressing a very conscious fear, Louw asks: 'Has this type (art?-genre) of which he [Asterion] is an example, also contaminated him?' This is not merely a rhetorical question: Louw is examining the interface between two art 'forms' thrown together to create a synthesized text – opera. What happens when word and music meet? It is a question to which Louw demands an answer. But though this is where the writer of the postscript ostensibly wants to leave us, at a libretto created in absolute servility to external (musical) form, the writer of the libretto, *pace* the protestations of the writer of

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'Everyone who has been so humiliatingly pointed out by Asterion, is dragged away and killed'. Louw knew from the beginning that Asterion was to be a 'radiophonic' opera, thus rendering the stage instruction redundant. It is almost as if Louw's real intentions and objectives point to a desire for *Literaturoper* of some kind, and this then spills over into the margins of the text. Remarks by commentators on *Asterion*'s 'open' and accessible verse (see for instance P.G. du Plessis, 'Asterion probleem vir resensente' in *Sondagstem* of 27 June 1965), perhaps place too much trust in the comments of Louw, who, as we shall see later, had every reason to lay a false trail.

[7] Louw, *Asterion*, 68-9.

the postscript, constructs a rich symbolism and an obtuse web of meaning that prepare the ground for a much more intriguing dialectic than Louw would have us believe.

At this point we should perhaps pause to unravel some of the referential matrices constructed by Louw in *Asterion*, trying to catch a glimpse of some of the meanings whose contamination Louw fears. A closer look at the libretto reveals that the macro-formal experimental project, involving the interaction between music as an extrinsic form and its linguistic content, is cleverly explored on a smaller level within the libretto itself. From the outset of his initial appearance in the opera, Asterion is associated with different dimensions of sound – associations that grow as the opera progresses. His first words after his creation are, 'Ek het gehoor: ek het die onvolmaaktheid hier hoor noem.'[8] Thereafter, Asterion is associated with the completeness and perfection of silence, after which he unambiguously identifies himself with music as ritual by declaring 'Laat alles dans-word! Dans! / Ek Helderheid, ek Lig uit Lig, dans voor! / Volg my, wie danser is!'[9] Asterion proceeds to lead the people in dance, he professes his strange love for the Princess even though she does not dance and when the *Ou Magiër* bends over Asterion to undo the folly of his creation, he calls him his 'groot danser, my dans-sélf, my eie …' and his 'heerlike danspas'.[10] Music ritualized as dance become the paradoxical synecdoche for Asterion.[11] But Asterion is a more complex signifier. The world into which he is

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[8] 'I have heard: I have heard the naming of imperfection' (in response to the *Ou Magiër*'s dying incantations 'naming' the imperfection of his new creation – Asterion); Ibid., 30.

[9] 'Let everything become dance! Dance! I, Clarity, I Light out of Light, dance ahead! Follow me, ye who is a dancer!'; Ibid., 49.

[10] 'my great dancer, my dance-self, my own …' and 'my ecstatic dance'; Ibid., 62-3. It is interesting to note that Robert Graves cites Homer and Lucian to assert that the maze at Cnossus, constructed to conceal the Minotaur (Asterion), 'seems to have been marked out in mosiac on a pavement as a ritual *dancing pattern*' (my italics); *The Greek Myths*, 278.

[11] One of the many seeming paradoxes of this text, as Asterion is also the mathematician and the perfectionist. One explanation of this paradox may be that Louw is obviously working with a concept of the modernist (musical) project, an assumption confirmed when one conciders the musical works he listened to while researching and writing *Asterion*; information obtained from the N.P. van Wyk Louw collection in the J.S. Gericke Biblioteek Spesiale Versamelings in Stellenbosch. See *NPvWL –vers (MS. vers. no. 2)*, 2.X.25, 68-71. Unity and continuation from a previous tradition (in that it is still remembered) is still desired and pursued in 'transcendental truths' of the modernist project, even while the modernist aesthetic is also subverting the idea that meaning resides in the world as an immanent force. It is surprising

created is one in which linear time ensures the eventual decay and demise of everyone and everything: beauty is transitory, cycles of light and dark impose patterns of life and sleep, the latter constantly reminding us of death. Asterion changes all of this. He stops the flow of time, creates eternal Light, everlasting youth and transforms all matter into unchangeable substance. He violently imposes a rigid temporal vacuum situated in the present and becomes life containing and ultimately life threatening form personified. Congelation now threatens the very life it was supposed to immortalize. Not surprisingly, Louw sets up 'the Word' as the essence of life threatened by Asterion's imposition of extrinsic form.[12] He pontificates through the voice of the *Ou Voedster*:

Heers: dié is anders:	To reign is different:
Heers-oor-die-woord	To reign over the word
dié wurg nie die woord,	does not strangle the word,
dit bring nie die swye.	does not bring silence.
Heers-oor-die-woord,	To reign over the word,
dit stort die sperma	spurts the sperm
Voortlewend uit.[13]	in a life-giving act.

It is important to note that Louw does not try to plot a way in which to achieve the 'ideal marriage' between word and music as regards the *content* of the libretto (as opposed to

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also that Badings's Asterion does not sing in any conventional sense. He always stutters terse repetitive phrases in his irrational, high pitched tenor, conjuring a perverse caricature of song. The nearest he does aproximate singing is a sort of 'canto declamato'. It might be added that the music suggests that his 'dance' is a caricatured march.

[12] Another paradox that calls for comment. Music, ontologically dependant on time as an art, is in *Asterion* associated with the destruction of time as we know it, i.e. linear, diachronic time. It undercuts the possibility of change and therefore of progress. It thus presents not only a threat to life per se, but it also robs the 'newcomer' Afrikaner culture of the opportunity to grow and develop to fruition. See also n. 28.

[13] Louw, *Asterion*, 37.

the form). Whereas he was keen to stress his compliance with Badings's request for a certain malleability with regard to formal structure, on the level of content his is an uncompromising dialectic between good and evil, light and darkness, truth and lie, flow and stagnation, content and form, and, ultimately, word and music. Synthesis is eschewed in favour of an outright victory for the word: Asterion dies and the *Ou Magiër* concludes by reinstating the principle of life-giving change through time:

> Nou is hy stil. Nou sal alles weer voortgaan soos
>
> dit altyd
>
> nog voortgegaan het. Niks weet ons dus.
>
> Nou is hy stil. Water sal afloop, ondernemings ook,
>
> en sake; tydperke van die geskiedenis; teorieë,
>
> ja, ek weet werklik nie wát nie sal afloop nie
>
> oorlosies … [14]
>
> Now he is still. Now everything will continue
>
> always
>
> as it always has. Thus: nothing do we know.
>
> Now he is still. Water will flow, plans too,
>
> and business; epochs of history; theories,
>
> yes, I really do not know what will not pass
>
> clocks …

Leaving the problems created by this 'smooth' reading of *Asterion* to one side for the moment, I should at this stage like to return to the trail left by the writer of the postscript,

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[14] Ibid., 64.

in particular a section of the postscript that calls attention to itself in a way not immediately apparent to the reader. Having committed himself to a discussion of external form versus content, a topos we have now revealed as woven into the very fabric of the libretto, Louw briefly dwells on certain aspects of commissioned work, a category into which *Asterion* ostensibly falls. But then he moves on to a second instance where external form can be extrinsically imposed, as it were. I quote the passage and the example given in parenthesis in full:

> One notes that external form is also in part determined socially: a sculptor who is commissioned to decorate a town square dare not present a nude in a country where most of the *volk*'s sense of decency is offended. (Were he to put a statuette, say two inches high, in the middle of the square: beautiful to look at, maybe: 'plucked from the artist's heart', maybe; perhaps very subtly satirical on the city and the city council's small-mindedness? This question points back, away from the social contingency of the external form, and in the direction of the inner laws governing the external form.)[15]

Whenever the artist creates within set extrinsic forms which are (partially) socially determined, Louw seems to say, (s)he is negotiating between accepted social norms/attitudes and her/his creative autonomy. This is ultimately a question, Louw contends, that points *away* from the social contingency of the external form, and in the direction of the (supposedly more universal) laws governing the form itself. He seems to be asking: What kind of immanent critique can the artist who is socially constrained and/or formally bound, get away with by taking refuge in the 'art itself' with its impenetrable laws of transcendental autonomy? He concludes that to obscure from view that which may offend, to aestheticize the improper and to protest divine inspiration, may

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[15] Ibid., 68.

be necessary if satire of the 'city and its rulers' is to pass unnoticed. The significance of this passage is highlighted by the fact that some of Louw's most important essays in defense of an Afrikaans literature free of political censorship appeared at the beginning of 1958, i.e. only months after the completion of the libretto.[16] Although the postscript to the published libretto was written only in 1964/5, that is at least a year after Louw was instrumental in drafting a protest letter signed by 117 Afrikaans and English writers and 41 other artists against the government's proposed *Publications and Entertainment Bill*, *Asterion* was created at a time when Louw was already starting to express public concern over the implications of political censorship on Afrikaans and the broader cultural landscape of South Africa. It is impossible not to take this into account when reading Louw's vignette on socially determined form, as it then also becomes impossible to avoid asking: Could Asterion, whom Louw called his 'homunculus', be his 'statuette' in the town square of Afrikaner nationalism with its concomitant fears and secrets? Is there in the opera an encrypted protest against censorship or a transgressive message that could offend the ruling classes' sense of decency and that had to remain secret, aesthetisized in the 'socially acceptable' form of ritualized 'high art'? Is it possible that we may have at this point in the postscript a moment of transgression, a moment where 'il poeta' rudely interrupts the reflections of the grand man of letters with a coy enticement to go beyond the formal concerns, a moment providing us with a key that unlocks a third level of meaning in *Asterion*? I believe it is, and that at this level we find a powerful subtext to the openly allegorical interpretation the text invites: a subtext pertaining to censorship and critical comment in a (politically) restricted environment. In other words, running parallel with his purely artistic agenda exploring the boundaries of word and music in a

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[16] The short series entitled 'Gesteriliseerde literatuur' published in *Die Burger* of 19 and 26 February 1958. See Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw*, 832. I should like to thank Prof F.I.J. van Rensburg for pointing out to me that the first article in which Louw took a stand against censorship was 'Sensuur of Pornografie?', already published in 1947.; letter to the author from F.I.J. van Rensburg, 1 January 2000.

commissioned collaboration on both structural and semantic levels, Louw formulates in *Asterion* a powerful political critique on a system of external form(al) control regulating the word, art and life itself in South Africa.[17] Before continuing, a consolidation of what we have ascertained thus far is in order. Figure 4.1 graphically illustrates the different levels of meaning identified in *Asterion*.

The large rectangle represents the formal musical principles (numbers in the opera, silences, phrase structure within specific numbers, cadences, etc.) which lend form to the libretto, represented by the small rectangle contained within the large one. This process of formal 'moulding' is indicated by the three arrows extending from the sides of the large rectangle to the sides of the small one. The large bracket identified by the number 1, indicates this structural relationship between musical form and libretto, the structure to which Louw refers as the imposition of external form on the word. Inside the smaller rectangle, the libretto constructs on a semantic level a dialectic between word and music, the latter personified by Asterion. This second level of meaning is indicated in Figure 4.1 by the smaller bracket numbered 2. The subtext of political and social critique is framed by the bracket numbered 3. We shall keep Figure 4.1 at hand to assist us as we continue to navigate the intricacies of the text.

Returning now to the somewhat speculative domain of a subtext, it is my belief that *Asterion* thematizes the most sensitive area of the colonial encounter ruthlessly suppressed by a collective Apartheid psyche, namely the tensions surrounding forbidden sexual contact across (racially) acceptable boundaries. As a mythological sign, the character of Asterion represents the (flawed) outcome of improper and illicit desire. He is both the 'wonder' and the 'monster' that Roland Barthes identified in another context

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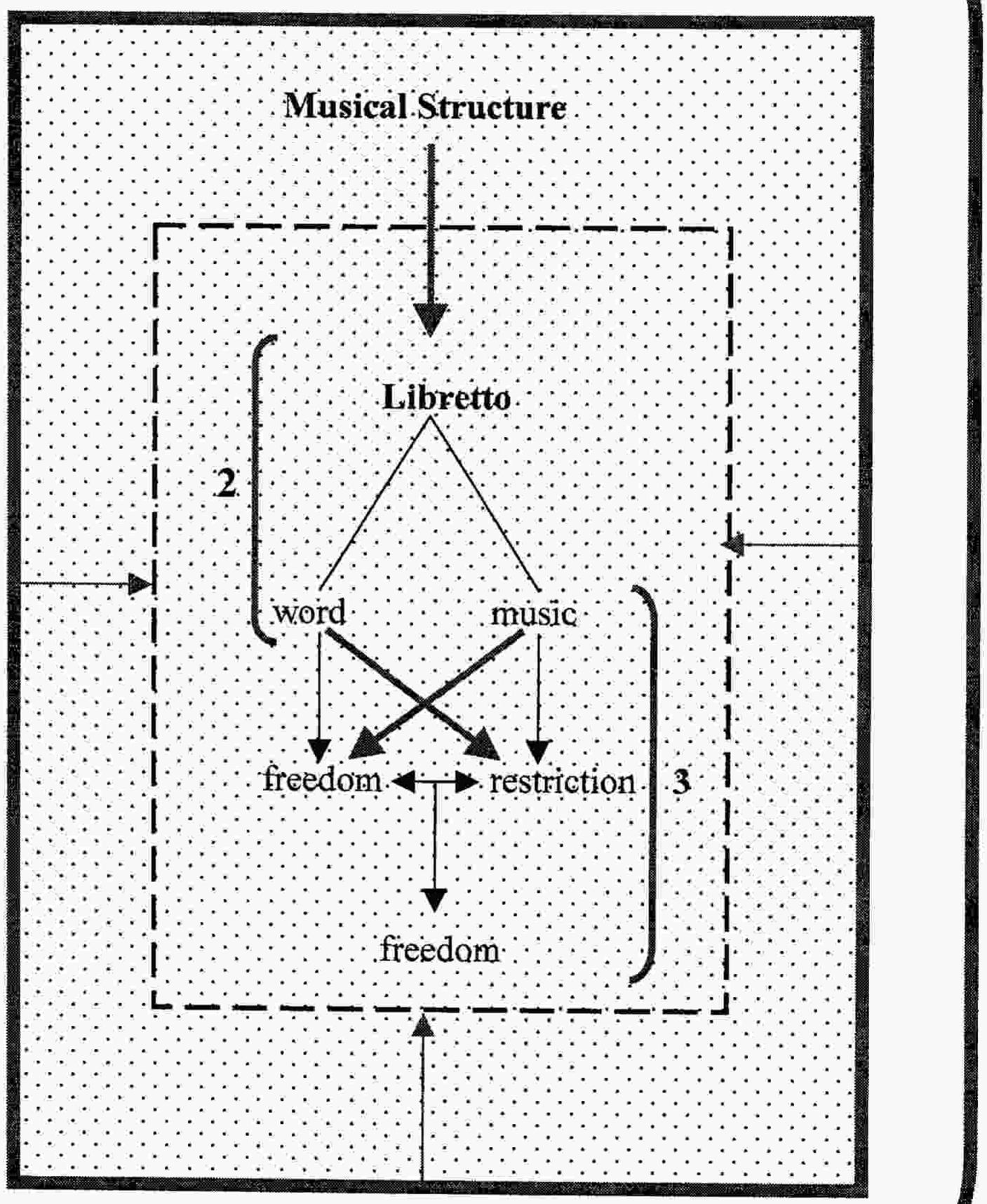
[17] See F.I.J. van Rensburg, 'Van Wyk Louw as geleentheidskunstenaar' in *Swewende Ewewig* (Cape Town, 1975), 112-25, esp. 122-3. Van Rensburg notes the tendency in Louw's commissioned work to place specific ideals and norms under pressure. Emerging from such pressures, ideals are purified and norms strengthened.

Figure 4.1. Graphic illustration of layered meanings in *Asterion*.



as 'essentially what transgresses the separation of realms, mingles animal and vegetable, animal and human; it is *excess*, insofar as it changes the quality of the things to which God has assigned a name: it is *metamorphosis* which causes one order to collapse into another; in short, to use another word, it is *transmigration*'.[18]

When the *Ou Magiër* envisages the creation of Asterion, he sings that his creation will be a 'shiny Homunculus, a splinter'.[19] Asterion is indeed a credible place-holder for the *lack* of the hybrid space occupied by *Asterion*, a space/social text preoccupied (even obsessed) with hybridity. As lack personified, Asterion can be read as an index to the creators and the creation of an ideology conceived and maintained by a group of people lacking coherence as a result of geographical displacement and mixed (European) descent, an imagined community gleaning its defining boundaries from a lack of security brought on by distinct racial features in an alien environment. In spite of being the mixed-blood product of an unnatural (sexual) alchemy, Louw's Asterion is simultaneously the embodiment of desire for completion and perfection and the source of intense loathing for the imperfect, the indeterminable mix.[20]

Analyzing the texts of Apartheid academic Geoffrey Cronjé, J.M. Coetzee writes that '[Apartheid] did indeed flower out of self interest and greed, but also out of desire, and the denial of desire.'[21] Coetzee argues that Cronjé, a professor of sociology at the University of Pretoria and as such one of Apartheid's academic exegetes, consciously

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[18] See 'Arcimboldo, or Magician and Rhétoriqueur', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, tr. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 147; French edn., *L'obvie et l'obtus: essais critiques III* (Paris, 1982).

[19] Louw, *Asterion*, 27. Not only is he splinter of the brain, he is also the incomplete Homunculus. With this name Louw connects the intrusion of Asterion with, among other things, the neurological Homunculus and points to the artifice of the *mental construct* that is social system as opposed to ideology's claims of 'naturalness'.

[20] For a detailed study of desire in the post-colonial paradigm, see Robert C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York, 1995).

[21] J.M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago and London, 1996), 164.

turns away from the 'desire for mixture' in his academic legitimization of Apartheid ideology, but that he in fact constantly broods over the 'enigma of desire, natural and unnatural' in his attempts to legalize it out of existence.[22] Coetzee points to Apartheid's obsessions with 'mixing' and 'difference' in its attempts to 'remove the black from the view of the white and prevent the black from becoming the object of white sexual desire'. Calling the undifferentiated (and indifferent) agent of mixing C, Coetzee articulates the fear of the algebra of C in which C in combination with anything 'comes out at the other end undifferentiated' as formalized in the formulae 'C + W = C, C + B = C, C + C = C, even B + W = C. In this formulae the key is the metaphor of 'mixing' as it is provided by blood-mixing:

> C, the *sluwe baster-insluiper* [sly bastard insurgent] who drinks and contaminates, represents to Cronjé the insidious sliding into indifference of a system of order based on keeping things apart, a system that is itself precarious, fragile: in Cronjé's substantial imagination it is ... a kind of integument holding together and holding apart a fluid content ever ready to interflow and flow out ... The *baster* C stands as the figure-in-chief of mixed fluids. Mixed fluids run in his veins; his nature is to trigger the mixing of fluids, fluids which by their liquid nature are all too ready to mix. What the *baster* threatens is the end of all things kept apart at every level: sexual, social, conceptual. The breakdown of the system, the breakdown of repression, threatens the self.[23]

In Louw's libretto, Asterion is threatened by liquidity *per se*, even pure flowing water holds the promise of the 'imperfect mix'. When the messengers arrive at court to report on his triumphal march through the land, their reports centre on Asterion's disastrous transformation of water. According to one messenger, Asterion asks: 'Water? dit? en

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[22] Ibid., 165 and 173. See also Alan Paton's *Too Late the Phalarope*, for an early novelistic treatment of this theme within the context of Apartheid ideology.
[23] Ibid., 177.

waarom moet dit stroom? waarom die leë babbeling? die vlug? waarom stáán dit nie: kristal? volmaak?'[24] Asterion changes the water into static matter, prompting the Third Messenger to exclaim: 'Wat gaan die *dors* nog word in hierdie land!'[25] As the *Ou Magiër* appears in obedience to the distressed summons of the Princess, the following dialogue between the Princess and the *Ou Magiër* ensues:

P: Ek het die afgrond óóp gesien.	P: I have seen the abyss *open*.
OM: Oop, ja: skoon of ontstellend?	OM: Open, yes: clean or terrible?
P: Ek het die afgrond óóp gesien.	P: I have seen the abyss *open*.
OM: Skoon of ontstellend? ... Jy moet sê ...	OM: Clean or terrible? … answer …
P: Ontsettend, en onstellend skoon.	P: Terrible, and: terribly clean.[26]

Asterion's wondrous transformation of water does not only echo the eschatological Apartheid commandment forbidding the blood-mixing fluidity of miscegenation, but the climactic dialogue between the Princess and the *Ou Magiër* also touches on the metonymic aspect of hygiene and contagion.[27] Not only does the looming disaster, started by Asterion's actions, look 'clean' (devoid of black/filth), but it is fatally so. It is worth reminding ourselves here of Louw's fears for the 'contamination' of his work by music. Whereas on the level of formal musical structure vis-à-vis its language content (bracket 1 in Figure 4.1), music is implicated as the potential contaminating agent of

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[24] 'Water? this? and why should it flow? why the empty sounds? the flight? why doesn't it *stay*: crystal? perfection?'; Ibid., 52. Asterion is particularly afraid of 'flow' as catalyst of change and also exclaims when he sees night approaching, 'My power flows from me like sweat'; Ibid., 41.
[25] 'What is the *thirst* going to become in this land!'; Ibid., 53.
[26] Ibid., 54.
[27] Although there are some obvious similarities here with the myth of Midas, as P.G. du Plessis casually observes and John Kannemeyer mentions in passing, it is important to note the distinction that Asterion's transformation of matter seems to be induced by fear rather than greed or material desire. See Du Plessis, 'Asterion probleem vir resensente' in *Sondagstem* and Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur 1652 – 1987* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1988), 148.

meaning, the libretto develops this theme by associating the enforcer of form, Asterion, with music. But there is a clear change of emphasis: in the libretto, systemic form transgressing its boundaries threatens not only 'meaning' but life itself. It would however be wrong to understand Louw's *Asterion* only in this smooth and relatively problem free framework of form versus content, music versus the word and social system versus personal freedom. Though these Manichaeisms undoubtedly form the parameter fences of *Asterion*'s dialectic, there is an element of *desire* in Louw's own fearful attitude to specifically musical formal restrictions. It is this desire that makes *Asterion* an example of Afrikaners' need for what Paul Gilroy has called 'diasporic intimacy'. Writing in *Die Burger* on the eve of Henk Badings's arrival in South Africa for the recording of Asterion, Louw's brother, fellow eminent *Dertiger* poet and critic W.E.G. Louw, eulogized the opera as 'an ideal example of cultural co-operation' between 'the old mother country and the young southern off-shoot, the Union of South Africa'.[28]

It is in this sense that music also becomes for Louw a 'form' that, in Schopenhauer's phraseology, approximates the 'will itself' without any mediation, an incontestable 'universal', and therefore a possible archetype for Western values and culture as opposed to the geographically, intellectually and politically marginalized Afrikaans word.[29] Even though Louw was convinced that Schopenhauer was wrong in awarding this central role to music and not to the word,[30] he was willing to envisage how, on a formal level, music could become *the* universal space of belonging to the particularized (Afrikaans) word. Music could thus become a culturally fixed Western archetype of ineffability that could not only augment the limitations of the word, but also offer the possibility of accommodating and completing the fundamental 'lack' in

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[28] 'Ideale voorbeeld van kulturele samewerking', *Die Burger* (Cape Town), 17 February 1958.
[29] A marginilization of which Louw was acutely aware. See F.I.J. van Rensburg, 'Van Wyk Louw as Ruimtemaker', *Swewende Ewewig*, 38-50.
[30] Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw*, vol. ii, 889.

Afrikaner identity and nationhood.[31] Louw appropriately formulates his desire for this space in musical imagery: 'World literature is a full orchestra – not a lonely flute. Every language, even the smallest, is a separate instrument with a singular timbre.'[32] It can be argued that it is music's paradoxical formalist claims, the very paradoxical nature that the premise of Louw's *Asterion refutes*, that make this pragmatic stance possible. Music is, after all, by common consent incapable of deriving its total 'meaning' from formalistic means (music's 'great refusal' as Lydia Goehr has called it), is a temporal and abstract art of which the aesthetic criteria are diffuse, the ontological status contentious and the 'meaning' indeterminably multifarious. Therefore music can be considered a 'benign' regulator of the word, its vague signifier status enabling it to be appropriated in order to transcend the small-mindedness of the parochial and bourgeois attitudes that stood in the way of Louw's conception of an uplifting Afrikaans nationalism.[33]

In this way music is integrated into his vision of an indisputable justification of the Afrikaner's desire to exist as a separate *volk*: 'but the whole of our attempts to stay separate through our language can only be justified by the richness of irreplaceable values we produce in this language.'[34] This 'code of connotation', as Roland Barthes would call it, in which music is *both* a force liberating the parochial Afrikaans word from its insignificance *and* a potentially fatal form that could deprive the Afrikaans word of its particularity, is an *analogon* that only makes historical and cultural sense in the particular

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[31] Louw was painfully aware of a 'lack' in Afrikaner intellectual life and culture, something to which J.C. Steyn's biography of him bears testament. This 'lack' had something to do with the geographical isolation, lack of an intellectual tradition and the newcomer status of Afrikaans as a language of great literature and art.

[32] Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw*, vol. i, 410.

[33] J.L. Coetser notes in '*Asterion* (N.P. van Wyk Louw): 'n Interpretasie' in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 31:2 (1993), 56-65, that the many different texts from which *Asterion* seems to derive its main ideas confer on the libretto the kudos of a synthesis. Ludwig Binge discusses Byron's *Manfred*, Nostradamus's prophesies, the biblical book of *Revelations*, Marlowe's *Faustus* and John Cromwell's *A Banquet for the Moor* as possible sources. See Binge, 'Aantekeninge by Asterion', *Standpunte Nuwe Reeks 67*, XX:1 (1966), 65-7. Antonissen has pointed to Plinius's *Naturalis Historia* and Goethe's *Faust*; cited in Binge, 'Aantekeninge by Asterion'. Kannemeyer alludes to the myths of Galathea and Midas; *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, 148.

[34] Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw*, vol. i, 169.

society in which Louw is writing. It is only when this interpretation is considered that certain passages of the libretto assume meaning in their poetic posturing. This is the case with the Princess's otherwise inexplicable deferment (to the point of destruction) to the 'wonderfully sweet relationship' and 'that which is wild and singing':

Ons moet die wilde en singende,	That which is wild and singing,
Die onverwagte,	the unexpected,
Nooit dwars en nooit in dubbelsinnigheid ontvang nie,	we should never doubt or obstruct,
Nooit dwars nie, maar in hoofse en hoflike	Never doubting, but in knowing
	and polite
Ironie die laaste	irony the last
Kodisil skryf en onderteken	codicil must be written and signed
– as dit moet –	– if need be –
van daardie heerlike en soet	of that wonderfully sweet
verwantskap	relationship
of ontmoeting.[35]	or meeting.

Similarly, Asterion's utopian vision of a constellation of interconnecting stars in a 'mastwork of chequered light', a constellation given expressive form in his *song*, lends this interpretation credence:

> *Ek* sing vir jou 'n ander lied: van Helderheid wat tussen sterre flikkerend knetter en bestaan: ster aan ster verbind tot 'n vlegwerk, maswerk van geruite lig waar Geheim nie kan trotseer nie, waar die heilige Getalle ewig heerlik bly en heersend.[36]

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[35] Louw, *Asterion*, 45.
[36] Ibid., 60.

For you *I* shall sing another song: a song of Clarity, the existence of which licks the stars: star connected to star in weavework, mastwork of chequered light where Secret cannot resist it, where the holy Numbers stay always – wonderful and supreme.

Louw provides the following motto for Asterion: 'Slaan vir my 'n masker, vader, vir 'n smal gesig' (words also spoken by the Princess when Asterion's powerful destruction is released on the land).[37] The word 'forge' is particularly important here. In contrast to the togetherness that results from 'flow' (which is stopped by Asterion with brute violence), the forged unity of flesh and incorruptible steel (the princess and the mask that on the outside has to be of white platinum and on the inside of steel), is desirable and stronger than any mix that a 'flowing together' or a 'mixing of blood' will produce. It is almost as if 'forging' this unity is not enough. Its importance elicits from Louw a word more indicative of a forceful imperative than the English word 'forge' would suggest ('forge' is better translated into Afrikaans as 'smee'). Louw uses the word 'slaan' (literally 'hit'), with all its implications of violent action and pain. Art music, iconized in Afrikaner society as an archetype of Western civilization and high culture,[38] ultimately owes its desirability in that society to its becoming a protective mask shielding the vulnerable settler extension of the metropolis, even though this mask may also 'kneus en vorm aan wat agter lê'.[39]

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[37] 'Forge me a mask, father, for a small face'. Steyn attributes the epigraph to the fact that Ria Muller, Louw's daughter, to whom *Asterion* is dedicated, had a small and finely chiseled face; *Van Wyk Louw*, vol. ii, 986.

[38] See, for example, how leading *Sestiger* novelist Ettienne le Roux's prose in *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1962) is pervaded with almost incidental musical references in the context of the *possession* of music as a symbol of sophistication/Europe. Le Roux establishes music as the *Leitmotif* for the constraint of civilization.

[39] 'hurt and form that which lies behind'; Louw, *Asterion*, 50.

Asterion is (also) a drama about the tensions tearing at the seams of Afrikaner society and the possibility of a redeeming catharsis of Afrikanerdom triggered by synthesis of word and (art) music and ultimately particularized meaning in universal values.[40] For Louw, it is crucial that this synthesis reconfirms the (Afrikaans) word as a paradigm for freedom and sovereignty. This desire is illustrated in Figure 4.1 where, in the space of the libretto, the dialectic between word and music (metonyms of freedom and restriction respectively) results in a synthesis asserting the free *word* as the inevitable/desired outcome. *Asterion*, a South African meeting of white music and literature, Europe and Africa, metropolis and colonial extension, becomes for Louw the exemplary experiment of this hope.

> *And the Minotaur? Never mind. That is freedom. The I is out. It is outside the walls. For if it doesn't need walls, it is not a Minotaur. If it can be written about, it doesn't exist.*[41]

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[40] Remember the paradoxical Afrikaner nationalist agenda of establishing and maintaining 'European' (racial) values in Africa, while at the same time trying to formulate/articulate a separate cultural identity that guaranteed a separate survival as *volk*. See Chapter Two, 34-8 and 40-1.
[41] Breytenbach, *True Confessions*, 241.

II

> *Why then? What is this obsession for feeling structures, for flowing with the rhythm? Is it to escape objectivity? Is it to get away from the strictures of treachery? Is it to loosen the grip that time may have on us? If I have no end I can have no beginning and therefore there can be no ageing. Yes, if there is nothing beyond the organic reality of pattern and repetition and illusion and rhyme and rhythm, then the idea of breaking up structure becomes exciting. The concept of the fuck-up is a liberating idea. Freedom is accepting unfreedom, denying that they are opposites, reading one in the other, and going beyond.*[42]

The libretto of *Asterion* invokes a familiar Romantic topos: a representative of the supernatural intrudes on humanity, or, in this specific case (echoing Minos's request for a sign from Poseidon), the supernatural is invited to intrude on humanity. Freud regarded this myth (the 'myth of intrusion') as a representation of repressed fears and their disorientating surges into ordinary thought, and we have seen that Asterion is indeed made a representative 'insurgent' of the disturbing results of the repressed fears and desires of the racist imagination. In this sense *Asterion* seems to represent something of a *locus classicus* of the intrusion myth. We are not first and foremost concerned here with the nature of the repressed fears, if any: that is a question potentially better dealt with in a psychoanalytic enquiry in which some of the themes thus far identified (miscegenation, contamination, guilt, desire, inadequacy, vulnerability, etc.) may well play a role. But we should keep this observation in mind as we examine the musical image *Asterion* presents of itself. In this second section we shall begin to explore how musical form not only

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[42] Ibid., 87.

moulds but violates the formal principles of the libretto and how, consequently, music intervenes on the second level of meaning to change the programme contained in the third level of (political and social) critique. Louw's concern as expressed in his postscript to the libretto is above all with the way in which *external form* (in this case the music of the opera) can *organically* transform the meaning of material on which it imposes itself. In Figure 4.1 this 'transgression' between genres is indicated by the fact that music's outer form or structure (indicated by the large bracket numbered 1) refuses to act merely as a container for the libretto. As the textured content of the larger rectangle illustrates, musical form also contains music and ultimately musical meaning. While the similar external forms of opera and libretto adequately communicate the influence of the external form (music) being superpositioned on the libretto, the second and third structures of meaning contained within the libretto are not isolated from musical interference. The vulnerability of the libretto to incursions of musical meaning is indicated by the perforated sides of the small rectangle. The arrows originating in the large rectangle and penetrating the smaller one represent musical meaning leaking into the libretto, eventually intervening radically in the constructed meanings thereof. Music becomes excessive and unassimilable by Louw's official formal standards, which rest on a respect for 'boundaries' and 'limitations'. Its transgressive nature and refusal to be contained is almost Bataillesque.

The *Ou Magiër*, whose role as an untarnished force of *good* is central to the denouement of Louw's libretto, is assigned the first and last words in *Asterion*. The opera begins with a prologue, assigned to the *Ou Magiër*, in which he introduces the work, telling the audience who he is, sketching the scene about to unfold. This kind of opening to an opera is described by Carolyn Abbate when she writes of Wagner's Tannhäuser 'composing' music:

> When a character in opera sings 'hör an' and launches into a narrative song, he creates a special illusion … a magical illusion: that he himself created what he sings, that, for a few moments, he is both a poet and a composer.[43]

Badings sets the prologue to music in three contrasting sections. At first the *Ou Magiër*'s pontificatory address is interspersed with rousing chromatic figuration starting in the strings and sweeping the whole orchestra into two dramatic musical gestures of prosodic compliance. He then abruptly clears the sonic palette and inserts a spliced electronic fragment to the words:

> Ek is 'n toornaar, en ek is oud;
>
> – gewoon 'n toornaar: dit is my ámbag,
>
> of, soos júlle sê: my beroep;
>
> nie roeping nie – selfs méér.
>
> Want: eintlik sou ek sê: daar behóórt nie wonderwerke gemaak te word nie; niemand behoort te toor nie: alles wat bestaan, ís al wonder; en alles behoort eintlik áf te loop soos 'n tol, en te rus.
>
> Maar goed … dis maar ék wat dit sê.[44]

> I am a magician, and I am old;
>
> – only a magician: that is my trade,
>
> or, as *you* would put it: my profession;
>
> not a calling – even *more*.

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[43] Carolyn Abbate, 'Erik's Dream and Tannhäuser's Journey' in *Reading Opera*, eds. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton, 1988), 166.
[44] Louw, *Asterion*, 17.

> Because: what I really want to say: miracles *ought* not be performed; nobody should perform sorcery: everything that exists, *is* already wonder; and everything should eventually wind *down* like a top, to rest. But of course … it is only *I* who say this.

The *Ou Magiër* moves to an explication of the 'buitekringe', the space of his magical powers, while the music assumes the one part of its classic dual function in opera: it expresses the words by musically evoking the otherworldly region. When he wants the narrative to proceed in a more matter-of-fact tone in the third section, he (as poet/composer) *silences* the music. The last section of the prologue is left unaccompanied, with the music only rejoining the narrative when the *Ou Magiër* remarks: 'En só gaan die wêreld instap in ons ore … '[45] The whole of the prologue suggests that the *Ou Magiër* is *using* music to make his point more dramatic. But already in these first bars the music inserts an ambiguity into the words and character of the *Ou Magiër*. The latter's 'good' intentions are questioned and the sharp dialectic that the Hegelian Louw explores throughout *Asterion* (light/dark, good/bad, inhuman perfection/human imperfection, flow/congelation) and of which the *Ou Magiër* becomes one of the representative *dramatis personae*, is weakened.[46] His words are strategically injected with ambiguity and imply a dualism in the character of the *Ou Magiër* himself.

When it first appears, the word 'toornaar' (magician) is harmonized by a B major chord in first inversion (see Example 4.1). Its second and last appearance in the opening fragment is accompanied by an F major chord in root position. It is significant then, that when the two words 'wonderwerke' (miracles) and 'toor' (sorcery) come up, they resonate to the bitonal combination of the two chords, now both in root position. During

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[45] 'And *so* the world will wander into our ears … '; Ibid., 18.

[46] This is underlined by the fact that Louw intitially wanted to call the libretto *Die Magiërs*. See *NPvWL – vers (MS. vers. no. 2)*, 2.X.25, 12. It is important to note that one implication of Badings's decision to compose *Asterion* for radio was that one of the three distinct signifying systems of opera is absent, a choice that reinforces Louw's dialectical programme.

the whole of this section the *Ou Magiër* is assigned only one approximate pitch on which the text is to be part sung, part spoken. As the B major/F major bitonal combination coincides with the 'ék' ('I') of the last bar, an aura of uncertainty settles around the identity of the *Ou Magiër* and his sorcery, the wisdom of his words lost in the ambiguous tonal innuendo not only of the accompaniment but of his own voice. Thus it is that music belies the *bona fide* actions of the *Ou Magiër* – both in his assuming the role of audience confidant and in his representation of the symbolic 'good'. While music seems to follow and amplify his gestures and the modalities of his expression in the prologue, she also allows fissures to appear between word meaning and structure.

It is instructive to compare this section to the *Ou Magiër*'s contribution in winding up events at the end of the opera. Badings makes a dramatic cut in Louw's text that effectively destroys the almost violent closure achieved by the following passage: 'Uit hier! Weg! Buite! Jy: lis uit lus! Gevang in die biologiese'[47] and a few lines later again 'Weg! Buite! Uit!'.[48] In these lines Louw allows the *Ou Magiër* to establish his will on the errant and weak oscillating character of the Princess. She is cast out from her position as ruler like Eve from Eden. By deleting this crucial piece of text, Badings again undermines the *Ou Magiër*'s authority, depriving him of his veto, of his God-like power to banish or kill. Violent textual closure thus substituted with a 'natural' resolution made possible by an acquiescent Princess, the *Ou Magiër* continues with the last few lines of narrative in a small epilogue. Unlike his commanding performance in the prologue, his musings are almost incidental to the ending as his emphatic verdict that everything will eventually wind *down* ('afloop') is mocked by a steadily *rising* musical contour. Where he was both poet and composer at the start of the opera, the poet is now left standing,

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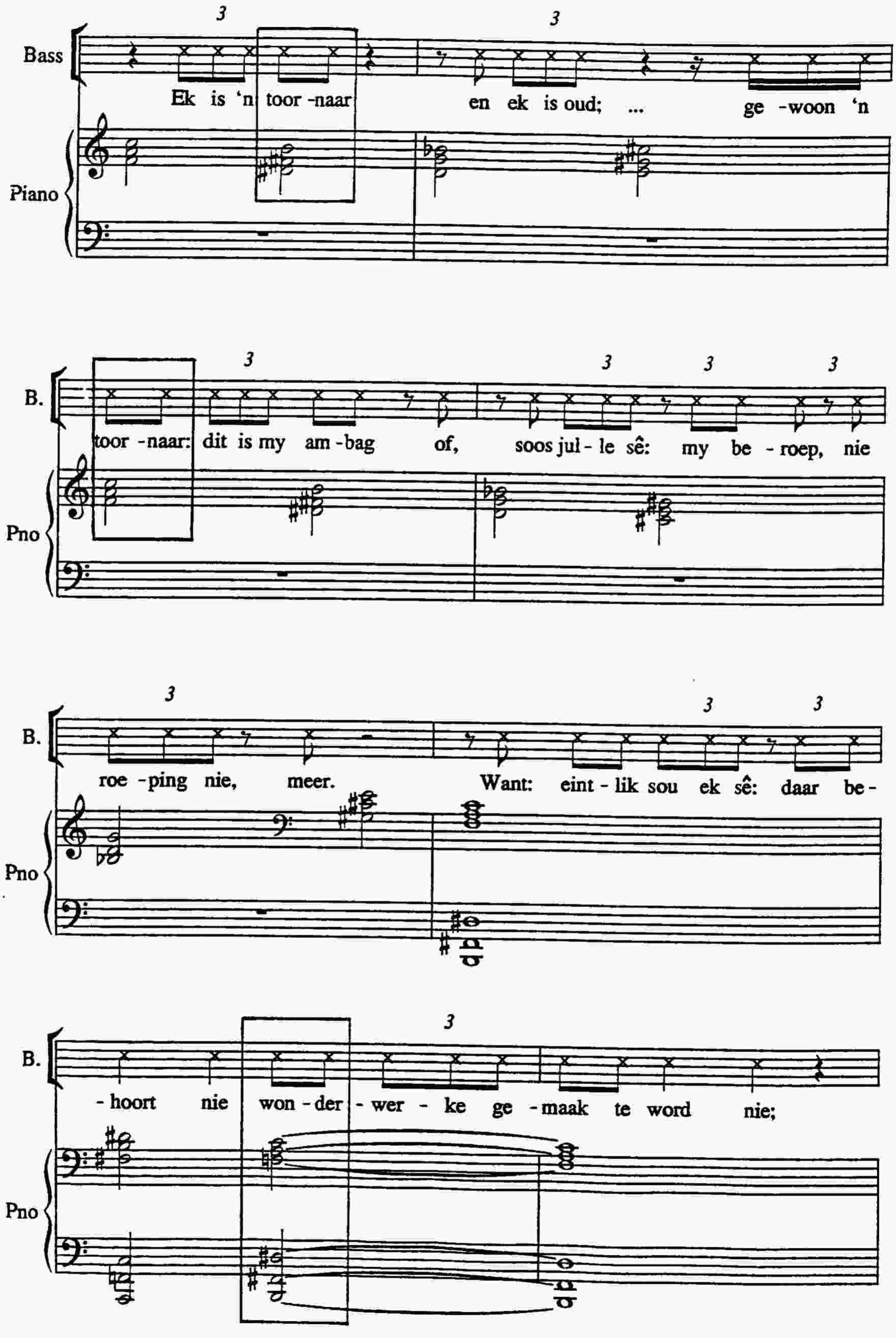
[47] 'Out! Begone! Outside! You: deceit from desire! Caught in the biological'; Louw, *Asterion*, 63.
[48] 'Away! Outside! Out!'; Ibid., 63.

Example 4.1. Badings, *Asterion*, bass aria, ms. p.3.



B.

3

nie - mand be - hoort te toor nie: al - les wat be - staan is al won - der

Pno

B.

3 3 3 3 3

en al - les be - hoort eint - lik af te loop soos 'n tol; en te

Pno

B.

3 3

rus Maar goed ... Dis maar ek wat dit sê

Pno

foolishly muttering *his* conclusion; a conclusion that seems significant only in that it is revealed as partial, if not misconceived.

And Asterion, whose occult strangeness is encoded by his electronically manipulated voice?[49] How does music escape his tyrannical grasp, he whom the word has made synonymous with song and dance? The answer is found in the only sustained piece of dialogue where an absent Asterion is made present by becoming the object of discussion, i.e. by the *word*. During the scene where Asterion has embarked on a mad dance throughout the land with the Princess's court in tow, and where he is engaged in congealing everything that flows in the land, Badings interrupts the 'flow' of his music for a long *parlando* section lasting the duration of the interchanges spanning Asterion's absence. By keeping silent, music steps back and exposes the intrusive presence of Asterion and the destruction as originating from a different structure. Indeed, the ruptural implications of Asterion's systematic configuration of nature to conform to his ideals of purity and perfection are complemented by the musical rupture: the absence of sound making music a *fellow victim* of Asterion's congealing madness. Leaving behind the analogy of systemic extrinsic form, music is restored its temporal, ontologically diffuse and evanescent qualities while it remains silent. In fact, it would not be going too far to conclude that this silence is, ultimately, *musically* choreographed. The magical illusion of synthesis, so powerfully illustrated by music being 'halted in its tracks' by the ruptural implications of the text, is retrospectively seen for what it might rather be: music stops

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[49] On 17 February 1958, the arts editor of *Die Burger*, W.E.G. Louw, published an article on *Asterion* entitled 'Henk Badings op besoek: "Elektroniese musiek vir Suid-Afrika" '. In this article he quotes Badings on the requirements for Asterion's voice: 'The principal problem he had to overcome in this work, was to create such an artificial voice. He hopes to achieve this by "bouncing" the voice against a glass surface, recording the vibrations and playing them back. This should result in a voice that is crystal clear, almost fragile and otherworldly' (my translation). In his diary, the composer writes that he used three sine wave generators for the accompaniment of Asterion's voice, tuned in perfect thirds with the use of Lissajous's method on an oscillator to form a triad; cited in a letter to the author from Badings's widow Hetty Badings, 29 September 1999.

not in obedience to Asterion's commands to nature, but in identifying with nature rather than the artifice of imposed form; it *refuses* to participate in events.

Possibly the best example of the dialectic of word and music playing itself out occurs in a section of the opera where conflict between content and form is already tantalizingly written into the poetic text. When Asterion forces the Princess to banish her old *Voedster*, Louw writes one of the most self-conscious pieces of structured verse in the libretto. The 24 line verse is divided into three stanzas. Each of these stanzas is characterized by a self conscious counterpoint in which the Princess seems to vacillate between the imperative (imposed by Asterion) to send the *Voedster* away and a curiously simultaneous prescient nostalgic lament for her to return, as if she were already dead (see Figure 4.2).

The first eight lines suggest a largely unproblematic accommodation of the dialectical tension expressed by the Princess, the only exception being the very first line. The interweaving refrain, identified as such by its interruptive (even disruptive) repetitive returns and its typographic separation in the printed libretto, implores the *Voedster* to leave, while the 'narrative' (lines 1, 3, 5 and 7 in the libretto) focuses on the love of the Princess for the *Voedster*. But already in the very first line of the first stanza, the force of dramatic tension spills over – upsetting the pattern, disturbing the structure, breaking the form and unsettling any expectations we might have about the way the text is to unfold. The second stanza starts off in continuation of the pattern, but in line 14 the ending on 'en' ('and') of what has hitherto been a self contained refrain, suggests that the Princess's plea to be left alone has spilt over into the narrative of line 15. That the refrain as structuring element has been absorbed into the narrative is evident when the by now familiar plea fails to reappear in line 16, being substituted instead by fragments of the narrative of line 15. At this stage the only reminder of the status of the refrain is the

Libretto

1 Gaan weg van my, Moeder, en láát my	Go away from me, Mother, and *leave* me
laat my alleen	let me be
3 ek verlang, en verlang, o moeder	I long, and long, o mother
laat my alleen	let me be
5 Ek verlang na jou, my moeder	I long for you, my mother
laat my alleen	let me be
7 skakel aan skakel, nie ketting!	link in link, no chain!
laat my alleen.	let me be.
9 Al my verlange, *jy*, Moeder	All my longing, *you*, Mother
laat my alleen	let me be
11 enkelvoudig moet ek	alone must I
laat my alleen	let me be
13 hier in die donkerte lê	here in the dark lie
laat my alleen en	let me be
15 aarde wees, aarde eet, moeder;	be earth, eat earth, mother;
aarde: wees Moeder.	earth: be Mother.
17 aarde, wees moeder:	earth, be mother
laat my alleen:	let me be:
19 ek wil my volheid kry	I want my fullness
sonder verlaat-wees	without being abandoned
21 opgetoë staan mane	moons stand
nog halfpad sinies en kyk	still half cynical and looking
23 en staar die mane en maan-heid	and stare the moons and moon-ness
grinnikend af … Verlaat my.	sneering down … Leave me.

Setting

1 Moeder, gaan weg van my,	Mother, go away from me
en laat my, laat my alleen	and leave me, let me be
3 ek verlang en verlang	I long and long
Moeder laat my alleen (x2)	Mother let me be
5 Ek verlang na jou my moeder	I long for you my mother

---

skakel aan skakel nie ketting!	link in link no chain!
7 Enkelvoudig moet ek nou	alone must I
hier in die donker lê	lie here in the dark
9 jy moeder al my verlange	You mother, all my longing
laat my alleen	let me be

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11 en aarde wees	and being earth
en aarde eet	and eating earth
13 moeder aarde wees moeder	mother earth be mother

Ek wil my volheid kry (x2)	I want my fullness
15 sonder verlaat wees	without being abandoned

---

opgetoë staan mane nog halfpad sinies	moons stand half cynical
17 en kyk	and look
en staar	and stare
19 die mane en die maanheid grinnekend af	the moons and moon-ness
	sneering down

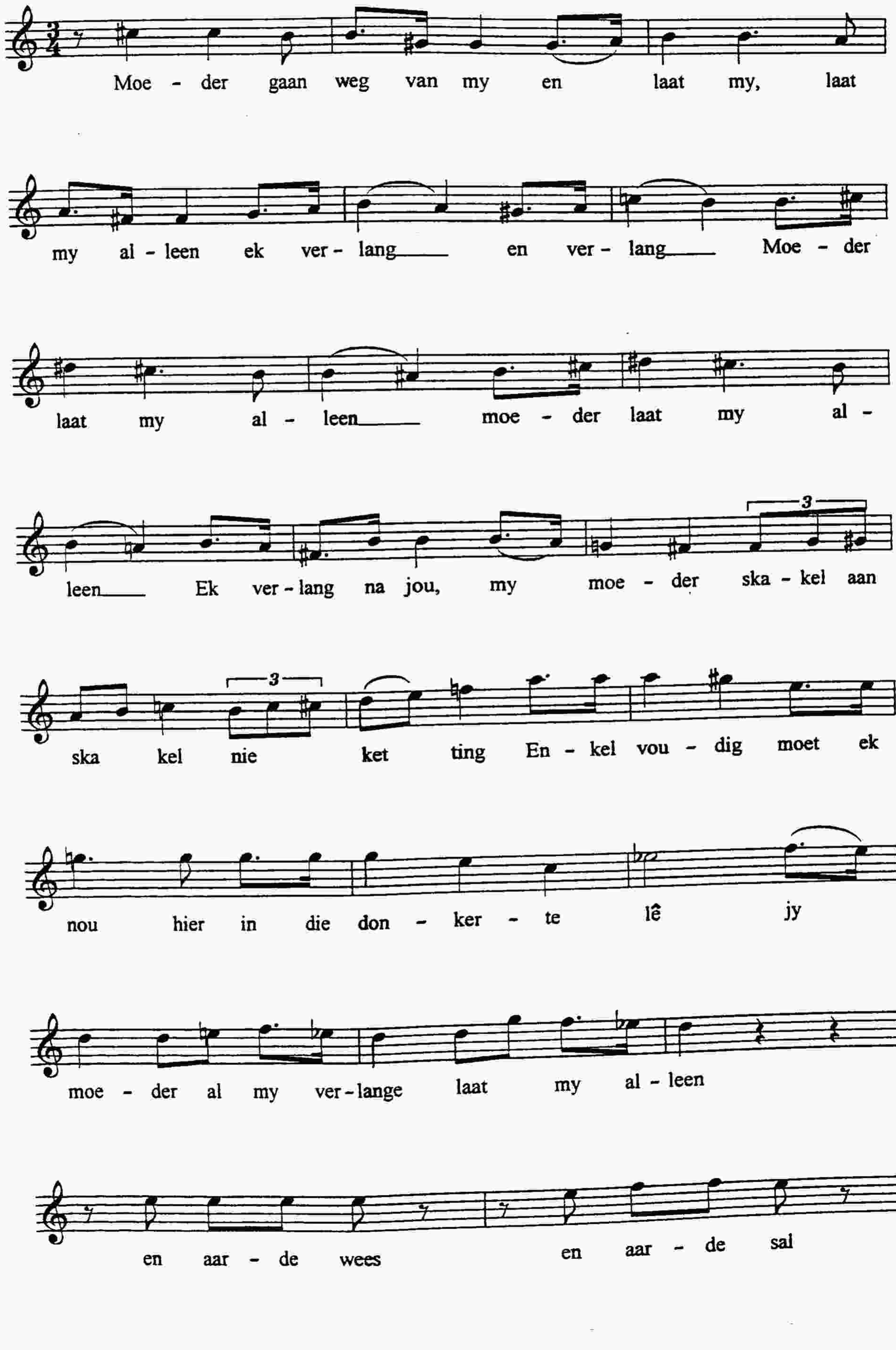
O moeder, verlaat my	O mother, leave me
laat my alleen	let me be

Figure 4.2. Comparison of Louw's published libretto with Badings's setting.

typography. The third stanza's first line repeats the last refrain of line 16, but now in the typographical space of the narrative, only to be followed in line 17 by the original refrain ('laat my alleen'), now unexpectedly restored to its position. It is still possible to read the first four lines of this stanza in the contrapuntal manner in which the verse starts out, but lines 21-24 abandon all pretense of clear counterpoint. Although the typography consistently suggests narrative echoed by refrain, it is clear that form has broken down. What started as a dialectic, a painful expression of irreconcilable desires, develops into an almost hallucinating confusion approximating madness. The inner conflict tears at the seams of structure and rips it open. Louw's experiment between content and structure is seen to play itself out on the level of the poetic text alone, where form is unable to prevent an uncontrollable haemorrhaging of meaning.

To read this text as music is to be confronted with a breathtaking negation and even subversion of what has been discussed above. Badings provides this text with an astonishingly bland aria to which he adds the rubric *Notturno* (see Example 4.2). Though one would expect this kind of stylized aria to be, according to convention, no more than a prosodic complement to the words, the incompatibility between text and setting results in the music imposing a vastly different formal structure on Louw's narrative, as is seen in Figure 4.2. The myth of intrusion, the archetype behind the drama, is played out in Badings's setting: into the disintegrated and broken *formal* space of a text that could not adequately mirror the conflicts playing itself out within it and was consequently engulfed by uncontrollable meaning, Badings asserts musical form that seemingly harmonizes the discontinuities of the text, but in so doing violates the inverted poetic complement established by Louw between structure and meaning.

Example 4.2. Badings, *Asterion*, soprano aria, ms. pp. 80 – 85.



It comes as no surprise when Badings engineers a pitch climax on 'enkelvoudig' (alone) and again on 'verlaat' (let me be), emphasizing precisely those words that *detract* from the textual complexity to resonate with Badings's treatment of it. The difference between our generic associations with the Nocturne, and its role in this instance as an actively transgressive form in relation to the poetic text, tests our credulity to the utmost with regard to what this section is saying. Who or, more to the point perhaps, what do we believe? The music sits round the libretto like the mask in Louw's epitaph, substituting the confused humanity of the Princess with what seems like a pre-assembled sentimental expression posing as expressive interpretation. The external formal relationship (represented by bracket 1 in Figure 4.1), is transgressed by the music's intervention (on the level of bracket 3 in Figure 4.1) in the libretto.

Could it be that Badings had, *pace* Louw's assurances to the contrary in his postscript, misunderstood the section of the text? We find the answer a few minutes later, when the by now familiar music of the *Notturno* reappears to a different text. By now the *Voedster* has been successfully banished, and the music constitutes the perfect prosodic accompaniment to a resigned situation. The second appearance of the aria is not entitled *Notturno*, though both text and music fulfil the expectations the rubric engenders. This second *Notturno* in all but name is informed by the first, enforced one, exposing to doubt the promise of rest and pastoral tranquillity with which the Princess attempts to persuade Asterion to go to sleep. For is it not the unlikely musical *coup d'état* of the first *Notturno* that conjured up an image of the night as dark and dangerous when it was still day? The paradoxical violence of the first *Notturno* lingers oppressively over the second in a relationship between textual fragments that are not immanently induced, but are first created in the music. This lingering presence declares itself openly only when the familiar, high pitched climaxes on the A single out the words 'leun' (to lean against) and 'rowers' (robbers): the first a synonym for the word 'leuen' (the noun 'lie', as in

'untruth'), the second lifted to prominence in an ironic inversion of the original meaning, where the presence of robbers was only meant to intensify the case for resting at night. Wrenching dramatic control in the way that it does, the music tells a different story to the one Louw is narrating. The protean character that Louw creates in the Princess is redrawn by Badings, not as a superficial or one-dimensional cardboard figure, but as a character of pretence and deceit. Her inner struggles between her love for the *Voedster*, Asterion and her country are made to sound construed. Her assiduous lullaby to Asterion is infused with musical insinuations of danger and lies. What is the significance of this?

Asterion comes into being as a direct result of the Princess's desires (which begin in boredom). She is portrayed by Louw as the *unwitting* catalyst for the catastrophic intrusion from the 'outside circles' by Asterion. As such she is written as an Eve-like figure: her misguided influence as ruler destroys her paradise/kingdom and her banishment by the *Ou Magiër* from his presence towards the end of the libretto, though not permanent, resonates in tone with the fate that befell Eve and Adam as a result of her transgression. It is the frivolous and whimsical tenor of the Princess's demands for an exciting younger magician (Asterion) that allows Louw to achieve two things: first, he can set about writing, through the character of the *Ou Magiër*, a figure of great wisdom and power – wisdom that is only revealed by its standing in stark *contrast* to the Princess's all too human weakness and folly, and power that results from his ability to mediate between the terrestrial and the extra-terrestrial and is confirmed in the position of moral authority he holds vis-à-vis the Princess. But secondly, the absence of pre-meditated malice in the Princess's actions enable the reader/listener to sympathize with the problems she brings on herself and her people. She can be excused, as it were, on the basis of being a child (the *Ou Magiër* calls her this) and possessing a childlike naivety. If Asterion comes to signify all that is dangerous and shameful in violently imposed forms or systems in society, the Princess as the (ultimately) blameless catalyst of the disaster is

a place-holder for the rulers of societies everywhere, but particularly in the local context, acting in a similar way. These may be the very rulers Louw identifies in his postscript as the 'sensitive to criticism' petty-bourgeois. It is in this context that the *Ou Magiër* becomes, along with the *Voedster*, a standard bearer for reason, wisdom and truth. But whereas the latter succumbs to the force of Asterion (being a mere old woman), the *Ou Magiër* is himself an exponent of the forces of the occult and can therefore potentially defeat Asterion. The occult zone in question, I would like to argue, is art. It is a zone where Louw identifies Asterion with music, and where both the *Voedster* and the *Ou Magiër* are written as protagonists of the word. Writing his *Notturno* and its recapitulation, Badings not only overturns Louw's characterization of the Princess, but in so doing undercuts the *Ou Magiër*'s authority that depends on the lack of pre-meditated 'innocent folly' of the Princess. By implication society's rulers become responsible for evil decisions, while the (reluctant) courtiers enabling them to indulge in social engineering become complicit.

But I should like to suggest that something even more interesting is happening here. Writing about *das Unheimliche*, the sinister and scary intrusion of the supernatural of which we have identified *Asterion* as a typical instance, Freud makes the point that *das Unheimliche* is more related to *das Heimliche* than the oppositional relationship of the two words would seem to imply.[50] Tracing the etymology of the word, he identifies two meanings for *das Heimliche*, namely that which is known and comforting (*des Vertreuten, Behaglichen*) and that which is hidden and kept secret (*des Versteckten, Verborgengehaltenen*). It is the latter meaning which he identifies as spilling over from *Heimlich* into *Unheimlich*, from homely to scary, as *Unheimlich* is also connected with that which is hidden from view and cannot be seen clearly. This forms the basis of his premise that *das Unheimliche* is always a kind of *heimliche*, partaking in *all* of its

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[50] Sigmund Freud, 'Das Unheimliche' in *Studienausgabe IV* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), 243-74.

meanings (including 'that which is known'),[51] and consequently of his intriguing statement that it is the moment of the *repeat* of the similar ('das Moment der *Wiederholung* des Gleichartigen'), that is the catalyzing moment for the evocation of sinister feelings.

It is this that enables us to understand fully the significance of Badings's repeated *Notturno*. It is the *recognition of the known*, facilitated by the repetition and blandness of the aria, rather than the intellectual confusion and uncertainty engendered by Asterion's sinus-generator induced voice as to whether he is a person or an automaton,[52] that is a true symptom of what makes *Asterion* a disturbing text. Asterion, the intruder from a *locus suspectus*, is not what frightens us in this opera. Rather, it is the (re)presentation in music of the Princess's sado-masochistic invitation of calamity, clothed in naïve innocence. We are lured by the text into thinking that it is the magic and sorcery at the centre of the drama that modulates our uncertainty and apprehension into fear of *das Unheimliche*, but in fact it is our recognition of evil in the known and knowable human form of the Princess that disturbs our complacency. And this brings us to the paradox that in art, much of what is unsettling in life can be made to seem normal, whilst everyday normality can be profoundly disturbing.[53] Setting his libretto in a fictional kingdom with a magician as protagonist of the word, Louw creates a world only slightly less fantastic than that of a fairy tale. In so doing he creates the opportunity for Badings to *normalize* Asterion as a character within this fantastic world where our expectations allow for wonderful things to happen as part of normality. But it is now the normal parameters that become potentially *Unheimlich*: the tonal, the regular phrase structure,

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[51] '…denn dies Unheimliche ist wirklich nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozeß der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist … das Unheimliche sei etwas, was im Verborgenen hätte bleiben sollen und hervorgetreten ist.'; Ibid., 264.
[52] See Freud's criticism of E. Jentsch's *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen* on this very point, using the example of Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*; Ibid., 250-67.
[53] Ibid., 272.

the easily recognizable repeat and, ultimately in this opera, the Princess. Even though Asterion cannot be distanced from his semantic co-ordinates of form and imposed (social) system, the emphasis is shifted from him to the demonic in the *creators* of system. Contributing to our fear is the uncertainty (the hidden dimension of *das Unheimliche*), as to what in the Princess's flawed humanity made her instrumental in the disaster that ensued. Recognizing ourselves in her, we ask: what is the name of the evil that, given the opportunity, *I* shall invite into the world?

Asterion is a seminal work in the way its many voices comment on the society in and for which it was created. Louw creates in *Asterion* a metaphor for both Apartheid South Africa and for the more perennial question relating to the manner in which words and music can inhabit the same artistic space in search of transcendental 'truth' and ultimate 'meaning'. For him, Asterion's death becomes a (violent) moral imperative. For the composer, *Asterion* presents on a practical level an opportunity to create 'new dynamic structures', to specify tempi 'unhampered by physical human constraints', to 'discard the limitations of traditional instruments in a search for unknown tonal universes and colours'.[54] Badings's utilitarian attitude occupies Asterion's own occult space of the inhuman. But the music in this opera transcends pragmatics to become a moral force. In a way *Asterion* becomes a palimpsest, with Badings erasing, deleting and rewriting the nomenclature of Afrikaner/Afrikaans nationalism: the Afrikaans word becoming culpable of systemic violence, music partaking of truth and freedom. Louw is indeed exploring 'the rough edges that inevitably occur when word and music meet', but he does so in the knowledge that, in a neat continuation of the 'intrusion myth' that is the archetype of Asterion, his project may be usurped by a force more powerful than the one he wields. In

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[54] SABC Sound Archive, Johannesburg, Recording 21/15(58) of 20 February 1958 of the programme *Die Soeklig*.

his postscript, Louw writes of Badings's sympathetic reading and complete understanding of his libretto:

> And as concerns the understanding of the text, I remember only too well how I had to explain every seemingly ambiguous aspect in the idiom to Henk (who knows a great deal of Afrikaans *well*). His mathematic intelligence probed every subtext of the language in an elemental way. He refused to set to music anything that he did not understand completely, and the fact that he set the text to music allows me to believe that the text is understandable. But: he never experienced any trouble with a single seeming cloudiness of meaning in the poetic intentions or symbolism.[55]

Badings's complete understanding means that, in the end, synthesis is achieved in *Asterion*, but it is not the kind of synthesis that Louw desires – a synthesis rooted in the Wagnerian notion of a fusion of words and music through a special effort of will on the part of both the composer and the librettist.[56] Louw is working in what Homi Bhabha would call a pedagogical capacity, treating his characters as *objects* and *past* in a continued cumulative temporality,[57] but music reaches into the vaults of Louw's semantics, assumes control over his *meaning* and ultimately changes the denouement of the opera. Acting as a performative agent, the composer makes the characters of the opera *present* and *contemporaneous*, thereby disturbing the (historicized) horizontal visual synchrony of the narrative. A situation in which artistic and ultimately political

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[55] Louw, *Asterion*, 67.
[56] The use of the electronic medium of radio in itself sees *Asterion* move away from the small unit of the *volk* to the consumer mass.
[57] See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation' in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), 139-70. This resonates with the words of another *Sestiger* Afrikaans writer, Jan Rabie, when he writes 'One's vocabulary is always that of yesterday or tomorrow, never of today.'; Jan Rabie, *Paryse Dagboek*, ed. André P. Brink (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1998), 55.

control is (fatally) lost, the music would seem to say, cannot always be as neatly resolved/returned to its 'pre-contaminated' stage as Louw's *Asterion* suggests.

Given the more open ending of the opera as opposed to the libretto and the transference of *das Unheimliche* from Asterion to the Princess, one is tempted to ask: is structure really dead? Once created, can social systems die if their intellectual origins are allowed to live? Music would seem to suggest that Asterion is still there, in the footsteps of his creators, in the rhythms of their stride, the direction of their chosen path and the labyrinthine pattern of their dance; that the land defined by his absence is a world still curiously dominated by his presence, a land where boundaries exist only in so far as they are wished for solutions and anodyne dreams of a so-called normality.

> *What one has gone through becomes a new corridor outlining the innards of the labyrinth; it is a continuation of the looking for the Minotaur, that dark centre which is the I (eye), that Mister I: which is a myth, of course. The thing is to kill the devourer of virgins and not to forget to take down the black sails of the soul when rounding the cape of the home port.*[58]

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[58] Breytenbach, *True Confessions*, 87.

Chapter Five

Rainbows, Soul Birds and Servants of Assistants Presenting Themselves Only When Needed

I

Rainbows, Centrifugal Forces and False Modulations

'Music and Society', the theme of the 25th Congress of the South African Musicological Society at Rhodes University in Grahamstown,[1] continued a frequently recurring debate in South African musicology on a subject perceived as crucial to survival and therefore of some fascination.[2] One could imagine delegates wrestling with questions along the following lines: Whose music should constitute the focal point of South African musicologists' interest? Is there among South African musics anything distinctive enough to encourage belief in a 'homegrown' musicology? Where would the new

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[1] The congress was held from 27-29 August 1998. A report on the proceedings, entitled 'Girling, Boying and Chasing Rainbows: Report on the Twenty-Fifth Annual Musicological Congress' and written by Michael S. Levy, is found in the *South African Journal of Musicology*, 18 (1998), 103-7.

[2] See for instance Jürgen Bräuninger, 'Gumboots to the Rescue', *South African Journal of Musicology*, 18 (1998), 1-16; Christine Lucia, ' "Africanizing" Elements in South African Composition', unpublished paper presented to the 24th Annual Congress of the Musicological Society of Southern Africa (1997); Kathy Primos, 'Revisiting some "Rites of Passage": South African Musicology in Society, and Society in Musicology', Ibid.; Sallyann Goodall, 'Herding the Sacred Cows in New Pastures: Teaching Musicology in South Africa Today', Ibid.; Jan Buis, 'Should Bach Survive in a New South Africa?: Redefining a Pluralistic Music Culture in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in *Papers Presented at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology (1991)*, ed. Carol Muller (Grahamstown, 1995), 14-8; Christopher Ballantine, 'Taking Sides or Music, Music Departments and the Deepening Crisis in South Africa', *Papers Presented at the Third and Fourth Symposia on Ethnomusicology* (Grahamstown, 1984), 52-5; Michael S. Levy, 'African and Western Music: Shall the Twain ever Meet?', *South African Journal of Musicology*, 6 (1986), 111-5; Jacques P. Malan, 'Suid-Afrikaanse musiekwetenskap: 'n Uitdaging en 'n verantwoordelikheid', *South African Journal of Musicology*, 3 (1983), 27-34.

margins for institutional discourse about music be drawn? Who should take these decisions, or is even the idea of an entrenched and elitist canon a relic of the past that we would like to abrogate? Questions could turn from subject matter to methodology: How do the new power relations in South African society impact on the relationship between musicology and ethnomusicology? Should the latter be privileged and elevated to dominant status at the expense of musicology in an affirmative action manoeuvre, or is it ethnomusicology itself that is a condescending and somewhat tactless reminder of Western anthropologizing attitudes to African music? How do we manage, locally, the tensions of music's 'doubleness' (music and society, the *Reinmusikalische* and the *Aussermusikalische*) that have become an accepted premise in musicological discourse over recent decades? Is it possible to do this in a way that may aid the de-politicization of music in South Africa?

In light of the cultural and political turmoil prevalent in South Africa after the dramatic changes of the early nineties, it was disappointing that very few of these questions were articulated and that even fewer attempts were made to address the problems underlying them. What seemed to be absent from the proceedings was a sense of the fragility of the claims of modernist art and positivist musicology to explain the world in terms that have the West as subject. Symptomatic of what can at worst be described as a fearful hypostatization of musical thought was the cautionary note sounded by the chairman of a panel discussion (taking as its theme 'Music and the Rainbow Society') not to discuss politics – a throw-back to more turbulent times in musicology when mixing Bach and politics could be considered blasphemous. This request set the tone for the Congress as a whole, approximating Colin Richards's description of critical work in South African art as 'cliché-ridden hagiography' and 'solidarity criticism'.[3]

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[3] Colin Richards, 'Peripheral Vision: Speculations on Art Criticism in South Africa', in *Art Criticism and Africa*, ed. Katy Deepwell (London, n.d.), 76.

Implied, of course, was the supposition that the musical work of art can be autonomous and therefore not historically contingent or accountable.[4] The resultant positioning of art music and musicology outside the sphere of culpability and participation in colonialist and racist historical constructs that include Apartheid, is a claim that resonates with Hans Werner Henze's description of music in post-war Germany:

> During the immediate post-war years no one believed how it could have been possible for a nation to have sunk so low – into a disgrace that centuries could not wash clean. We were assured by senior composers that music is abstract, not to be connected with everyday life, and that immeasurable and inalienable values are lodged in it.[5]

But there is also a second assumption hinted at by the shared reluctance of delegates to invite politics into the musicological discussion during the 1998 congress. To marry music and the 'rainbow society' without *politically* questioning the finer points of the union, is to make assumptions that certain kinds of music (like art music) are always-already integral to any cultural dispensation in a post-Apartheid South African society. Though art music and musicology, the reasoning seems to continue, cannot claim exemption from the tensions and strains unleashed by the dramatic political events of the 90s, its future ultimately has to rest secure in the knowledge so confidently proclaimed by Reinhard Strohm, namely that 'the European language of music has developed into a world language, and the European attitude towards music has become a model all over

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[4] This formalist claim that the meaning of music resides solely in music's 'tonally moving forms' is not to be confused with the more subtle and inclusive formulation of musical autonomy espoused by Lydia Goehr when she writes: 'A work does not copy the world, it critically intervenes in it – and unnerves it – by claiming through aesthetic illusion that it has nothing to do with it'; *The Quest for Voice: Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Oxford, 1998), 15.

[5] Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics: Collected Writings 1953-81*, tr. Peter Labanyi (London, 1982), 40.

the world.'[6] The paradox is striking: protestations of historico-political neutrality (as if Eurocentric discourses represent norms and not political invectives in South Africa) existing side-by-side with a need to synchronize discourse and practice with new political ideology most clearly manifested in the idea of the 'rainbow' space, in which the paradigmatic shift from colonial to post-colonial seems immanently attainable in the mere acceptance of the metaphor as a conceptual point of departure.

It was perhaps not surprising then, that the panel discussion was characterized by ominous agreement and the veil of word-filled silence that descends when the critical intellect is co-opted in current constellations of power in a ritual of self-congratulation.[7] This was a silence that did not see the need (or perhaps deliberately shied away from the imperative) to interrogate the relevance and legitimacy of musicology ('the [institutionalized] European attitude towards music') in a country where conflict between European/Western and indigenous cultures had become the norm over 350 years and where the balance of power had only recently shifted to an African National Congress hegemony that supports the resurgence of an 'African culture'. A more sceptical mind might have argued that art music and musicology are at best peripheral fields of interest in the new South African political dispensation, that Western art music does not belong to the Pan-Africanist nationalist congruence currently being forged and packaged by president Thabo Mbeki as an 'African Renaissance', and that South African musicology

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[6] Reinhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music 1380-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), 2.

[7] One of the participants in the panel discussion, Cesar Ndlovu from the University of Transkei, went so far as to suggest that the time for conceptualizing about music in South Africa had gone. This extraordinary remark was received in silence by the delegates and the panel, suggesting that South African musicologists are not ready to voice opposition to even the most extreme excesses of 'affirmative action'. Nor is this an isolated or maverick point of view. See for instance the paper presented by Jürgen Bräuninger and Zithulele Mahaye at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown in 1991, in which the authors state that 'We feel that conducting socio-economic, historical, analytical research into culture and the arts of a particular group of people which only results in papers published in academic journals or presented at specialist conferences is to a certain degree exploitative because this research is not feeding back into the communities out of which it was extracted.'; ' "People must share" the "Music for Liberation": The Culture and Working Life Audio Productions', *Papers Presented at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology (1991)*, ed. Carol Muller (Grahamstown, 1995), 10-3, esp. 10.

can now justly be described as an inapposite system of conceptualization of an alien collection of exotic European cultural artifacts.[8]

If this more sceptical premise is accepted, it is not at all clear if and how South African musicology can be expected to survive the change in South African power relations. Where the traditional strengths of systematic musicology have elsewhere in the West provided the gravitational base from which the centrifugal forces of postmodernism could be released to critical advancement and invigoration of the discipline generally, South African musicology – politically incorrect as regards subject matter, practised overwhelmingly by whites morally culpable according to the dictum of collective responsibility, and administratively starved of funding – appears not to have noticed the gains to be had by these recent advances. In a country where history is increasingly replaced by forced amnesia,[9] the musicologist who is 'first and foremost a historian' according to Joseph Kerman, has every chance of becoming redundant. The fear that musicology will fossilize in the mediocrity induced by replacing philosophical and historical approaches with affirmative action education programmes, before eventually crumbling before the onslaught of an antagonistic new order, does not, in the wake of the Congress, look misplaced. As art critic Colin Richards has remarked, 'For all the difference the "post-apartheid" signals … it shares a homogenizing impulse with that cruel and sour system of discrimination we are trying to put behind us.'[10] Lacking both institutional integrity as a result of its untenably privileged position in the Apartheid cultural dispensation, as well as a willingness (or apparent ability) to confront and

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[8] See Jan Buis, 'Should Bach Survive in a New South Africa?', *Papers Presented at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology (1991)*, 14-8. Buis formulates a similar dilemma at the start of his paper, but goes on to propose a combination of vague 'reforms' to Western art music and an approach of 'bimusicality' that seems to subscribe to the very segregationist aspects of Apartheid cultural policies that he is trying to overcome. What he does not consider, is how art music and its concomitant discourses can ingratiate themselves with an essentially *antagonistic* political order characterized by exclusivist, Africanist agendas.
[9] See Bryan Rostron's article 'South African history is becoming history', *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 11 August 1999.
[10] Colin Richards, 'Peripheral vision', *Art Criticism and Africa*, 73-87, esp. 73-4.

reconfigure its past, South African musicology seems to have chosen to undercut its own resistance to ideology. In the absence of the centrifugal forces of academic autonomy and a research ethic free from political interference (and there are many reasons to believe that this is still the prevailing situation in South Africa), one may well question whether any criticism aligned to postmodern thought can be envisaged as an 'affirmative' deconstructive force, or even a conceptual possibility, in South Africa.

If this is true of South African musicology's relationship to the cutting edge of the 'globalized intellectual economy', where does it stand with regard to internal problems and the demands made on it by society locally? Attending the premiere performance of Stellenbosch-based composer Roelof Temmingh's opera *Buchuland* in the Pretoria State Theater on 22 July 1998, it seemed to me as though acceptance of the 'rainbow' concept metaphor for South African art music was signaling a new Pan-Africanist South African nationalism that would carry the watermark of the sentimental cliché:

> Hold in your heart the promise of the land/ Know that its worth is larger than your own.
>
> Work in the fields the harvest of your hand/ Pass to your children all you have grown.
>
> Your greatness shall be in how you serve/ Not in claims of honour you do not deserve.
>
> Do not betray the soil which bears you/ yours is the land and the land is you/ Your spirit and your strength.
>
> Hold in your heart the promise of the land! The promise of the land … The promise of the land
>
> The promise of the land![11]

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[11] Extract from Act 3, Scene 5 of Michael Williams's libretto for Roelof Temmingh's opera *Buchuland*. The opera, premiered on 22 July 1998 in the State Theater in Pretoria, was a commission from the Unisa Music Foundation and the State Theater for the 23rd *ISME* congress that was hosted throughout July 1998 in Pretoria.

On one level, *Buchuland* was clearly a politically significant work (complete with photo exhibitions in the foyer where prominent figures of the new political dispensation featured prominently), and indicative of a growing politicization of aesthetics (which significantly entailed a touristic handling of Afrikaner folk music). Librettist Michael Williams acknowledged his discomfort with the commission, writing that 'the members of the [commission] committee offered three deceptively simple criteria: the content of the opera had to be South African; the opera had to express the diversity of the peoples of South Africa; the opera had to embody the spirit of the peaceful transformation of the new South Africa … I feared the obvious politically correct overtones implied in the commission.'[12] Williams's fear was well-founded, and *Buchuland*'s mantra of political correctness was chanted to the accompaniment of the composer's 'accessible' (one probably has to read 'democratic') 'New Tonality' (that sounded unsurprisingly familiar). The idealized catharsis from racial conflict to co-existence in harmony was played out on the stage in a pedantic political lesson, so that instead of inducing an audience catharsis, one was reminded of Adorno's aphorism on what he termed 'commodity music': 'Music has come to resemble the mother who says, "Come and have a good cry, my child". In a sense it is a kind of psychoanalysis for the masses'.[13] As Antjie Krog has written in her reportage on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, 'In a sense it is … a culture that is asking for amnesty'.[14]

Musicology is, judging by the proceedings of the 25th Congress in Grahamstown, participating enthusiastically in this emotional fetishism. In the euphoria of a 'new democratic' dispensation in South Africa,[15] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's warning '[to]

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[12] Programme notes to *Buchuland*, 10.
[13] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commodity Music Analyzed', in *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, tr. Rodney Livingstone (London and New York, 1998), 37-52, esp. 50; Germ. edn., *Quasi una fantasia*, Frankfurt am Main, 1963.
[14] Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (Johannesburg, 1998), 96.
[15] See the thesis expounded by Anthony Butler in *Democracy and Apartheid: Political Theory, Comparative Politics and the Modern South African State* (London and New York, 1998), esp. 54-85.

know the limits of the narratives, rather than establish the narratives as solutions for the future', goes unheeded.[16] Calls for 'africanization', whatever they may mean to participants in the debate, are becoming a standard requirement of music, and a stock ingredient of discourse about music.[17] It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the lack of co-ordination and cavalier attitude to what amounts to a crisis not only in South African musicology, but in culture generally, mean that no discernible crises management strategy exists in the musicological outposts scattered across the country. Though not formulated or presented in pristine fashion, a bifurcated course of action seems to be general. Seeking to facilitate the bumpy ride to an uncertain future, art music is expected to offer a sign of good faith to its political adversaries – an acknowledgment of the ambiguous demands of 'africanization' (or, 'composing the new South African nation'), whilst musicology attempts to 'de-emphasize' music not sufficiently representative of this genuflexion.[18] Certainly art music and musicology's obsession with South Africa's 'transformation' (and what the 'transformation process' demands from institutionalized discourse about music) courts the danger of canonizing politically correct kitsch and

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Although the extention of a franchise *ceteris paribus* made South Africa a *more* democratic society after 1994, Butler maintains that it is only because South Africa had been a democracy since 1910 that Apartheid could be so successfully implemented, especially after 1960.

[16] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York, 1990), 19.

[17] See 'The "neglected tradition" is back home' in the *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 5 September 1997, in which art dealer Warren Siebrits is quoted as saying that 'museums are repeating old mistakes through political overcorrection, and that white conceptual artists will soon constitute the "new neglected tradition".'

[18] In a recent press release for a concert series in Grahamstown, Brett Pyper wrote that the series would concentrate on 'music that somehow reflects the encounter of African and Western musical values in South Africa. This approach de-emphasizes the substantial South African repertoire in the Neo-Romantic idiom as well as local composers largely in the thrall of the modernist aesthetic of the post-World War II European avant-garde.' Pyper went on to name Cape Town based composer Peter Klatzow as one of the latter school of composers, prompting a response from the composer that the Grahamstown music department was functioning as the 'cultural commissars' of a new, more 'africanized' South African aesthetic; 'SA's New Composers' in the *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 14 April 1998 and personal letter to the author from Peter Klatzow. Similar concerns with censorship in South African plastic arts have surfaced in the popular press. See Brenda Atkinson, 'So you thought the days of censorship were over?' in the *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 23 December 1998.

legitimizing commodity ideology. In the case of an opera such as *Buchuland*, this dramatic spectacle of commodity becomes central to society's unreality.

A second strategy has more to do with methodology than subject matter. Concluding his report on the Grahamstown Congress, Michael Levy writes that 'The [panel] discussion seemed to conclude that the challenge facing all South Africans at this time was to be ethnomusicological, that is, to immerse ourselves directly in the full spectrum of indigenous culture and music.'[19] The apparent ease with which discourse oscillated between the musicological and the ethnomusicological, a fact remarked upon by keynote speaker Ruth Solie, suggests a postmodern approach that may well be the envy of other, more established musicological societies.[20] However, reflection begs the uncomfortable question as to whether the 'crossing of boundaries' in this case is due to a dynamic deconstructive criticism arising from the conflicts and anomalies of an effete modernist approach, or whether it is the result of an ideologically motivated act of political self-legitimization. Is this, one may well ask, the musicology (or ethnomusicology) of liberation envisaged by Chris Ballantine at the Fourth Ethnomusicology Symposium held in 1983 at Rhodes University, or is it more of the

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[19] Levy, 'Girling, Boying and Chasing Rainbows', 106.

[20] It might be instructive to consider Jonathan Stock's sobering perspective on this phenomenon, which can easily be applied to the South African situation: 'We might wish to interpret the move by the new musicology into socio-cultural domains and the simultaneous appearance of ethnomusicologies of the West as the drawing together of these two modes of musical scholarship. It is just as probable, however, that what we are seeing is each discipline in more-or-less uncoordinated expansion. If this is so, overlap is coincidental, as new intellectual territories are staked out in the fields of academe, and dialogue is likely to be fraught with misperceptions.'; Stock, 'New Musicologies, Old Musicologies: Ethnomusicology and the Study of Western Music', *Current Musicology*, 62 (1998), 40-68, esp. 56. Winfried Lüdemann ascribes what he calls an 'inclusive approach to the whole field of musical scholarship' in South Africa to the small numbers of scholars actively researching a great variety of topics. The danger of this approach to the integrity of academic work resides in the question of whether such a thinly spread line of expertise can ever produce in-depth contributions to often already widely researched fields, as well as in the connection scarce human resources inevitably establish between research and its *functional* value. See Lüdemann, 'Report from Stellenbosch: 24th Annual Congress, Musicological Society of Southern Africa, 4-5 September 1997', *Current Musicology*, 62 (1998), 118-24.

same pragmatic realism of the early 1980s?[21] The suspicion lingers that the 'new' pedagogical approach of redistribution is perhaps nothing but what Breyten Breytenbach has described, in the wake of the political changes in the country, as 'the masochistic confusion of art and sociology and ethnography' and 'the hypocritical leveling of arts and crafts advocated by faint hearts and breastbeaters'.[22] If Philip Bohlman's premises, namely that 'Creating canons and buttressing them is indeed a normative task for musicologists' and 'At their most basic level, acts of disciplining take the form of choices: including and excluding',[23] are accepted, it is perhaps not overly cynical to believe that essentially discriminating practices did not dissipate in the euphoric liberation following Apartheid. It is just that signs of the old order are steadily being replaced by signs of the new.[24]

In conclusion, it can be said that South African musicology is responding to current societal pressures by initiating, first, a conscious drive to privilege what has become known as 'ethnoclassical' music[25] by (mostly white) South African composers, in the faint hope that more of it may in future be produced by as yet painfully slowly emerging black composers (like Musa Nkuna and Bongani Ndodana); and secondly by blurring the boundaries with ethnomusicology in an effort to shed the image of flaunting exclusive European concerns in the face of the long-suffering black masses of the

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[21] See Christopher Ballantine, 'Taking Sides or Music, Music Departments and the Deepening Crisis in South Africa', *Papers Presented at the Third and Fourth Symposia on Ethnomusicology* (Grahamstown, 1984), 52-5.

[22] Breyten Breytenbach, 'Dog's Bone' in *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution: Essays on Africa* (New York and London, 1996), 142-52, esp. 150.

[23] Philip Bohlman, *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology,* eds. Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago and London, 1991), 199 and 203.

[24] Relevant to South Africa is Gerard Béhague's caution to Latin American scholars to 'attempt to formulate and elaborate their own theoretical objectives, based on their own conceptualization of research problems and purposes and the problematic of research in their specific countries'. He makes the valid point that 'Such a positioning is especially critical for scholars from Third World cultural areas because these areas face numerous social, economic, and political issues that must be viewed as integral parts of the scholarly community.'; Gerard Béhague, 'Reflections on the Ideological History of Latin American Ethnomusicology' in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 56-68, esp. 61.

[25] See Chapter Three, n. 35, for a short discussion of the term 'ethnoclassical'.

country. I should like to have a closer look at the possibilities and limitations of both these manoeuvres in the next two sections of this chapter.

II

The Soul Bird

Ek ken die Afrika-son wat warm op my musiek skyn. Ek ken die nagsugte en die fluistering van die 'vuurmense' oor eeue-oue dinge in die skadus van vervloë mane. Ek voel die geluid van Afrika in hart en wese. Ek is 'n Afrika-mens wat Afrika-musiek skryf.[26]

I know the African sun that shines warmly on my music. I know the sighs of the night and the whispers of the 'fire people' about ancient things in the shadows of passing moons. I feel the sound of Africa in heart and soul. I am an African person writing African music (my translation).

Stefans Grové

Afrika-mens. Africa(n) person. Not African, but *Africa(n) person*. Somehow the English translation of the Afrikaans concept is inadequate, for what the speaker refers to is more a state of being than a description or classification of race, nationality or even geographical origin. It is African existence as a lived symbolic form, as opposed to blander 'namings' such as 'South African' or even the irremediably pejorative 'Afrikaner'. An Africa(n) person composing Africa. How does this music sound and where does it come from? Europe, where Stefans Grové's ancestors hail from, the United

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[26] Stefans Grové, programme notes to an *Exhibition of Music* held in the Old Mutual Hall at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, 24 May 1997 (1997a).

States, where he spent 18 years teaching and composing, or (South) Africa, where he has only ever lived in white suburbia?[27] None of these, Grové seems to say when he writes of his seminal *Sonate op Afrika-motiewe*:[28]

> This sonata … is the first work I composed after my stylistic Damascus Road experience. It can be seen as a bridge between my Eurocentric and my Afrocentric styles, as the first two sections represent my leave taking of my previous style, whilst the last three are my first homage to the way I am bound to Africa [*Afrika-gebondenheid*].
>
> The last three parts are based on an indigenous song that I heard one day, under the midday sun, as sung by a pick-ax wielding black man. The song first appears in its totality at the beginning of Finale II. In parts 3 and 4 fragments thereof try finding their way, and the strongest of the motives is worked out to such an extent that the appearance of the 'mother theme' from which it is taken, forms a logical conclusion.[29]

The question of where this music comes from elicits a surprising response. A stylistic Damascus Road experience suggests that this it comes from 'above', or 'beyond', or 'inside', or wherever that place is that is inhabited by metaphysics and/or divine inspiration. And, somewhat unexpectedly, Jean Cocteau. For it is he to whom Grové points as the catalyst of his musical catharsis – his pronouncement that 'the more a poet sings from the family tree, the more authentic his song shall be'[30] supposedly triggering the *Sonate op Afrika motiewe* and with it Grové's musical 'African' series in 1984. We return to Grové's short programme note on the *Sonate*, and especially mention of the

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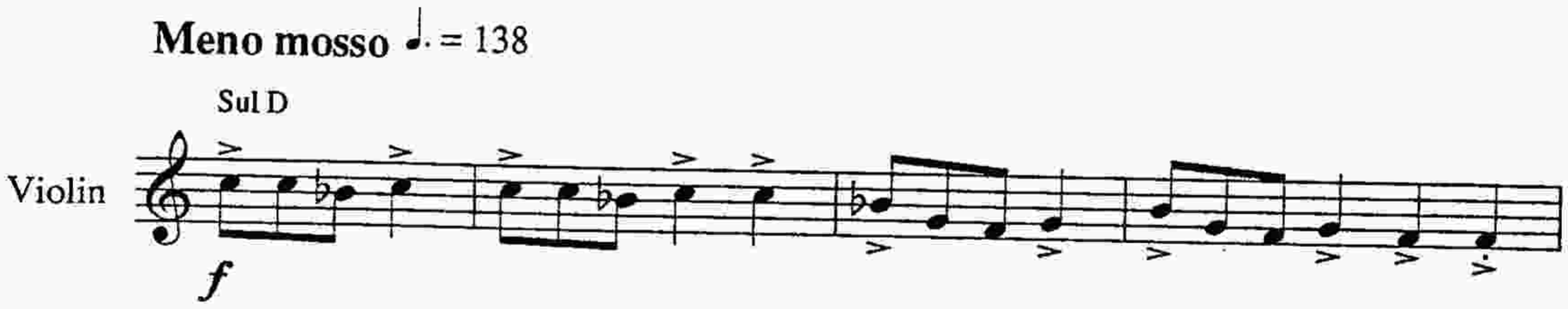
[27] For a short biography of Stefans Grové, see Mary Rörich's 'Stefans Grové' in Peter Klatzow (ed.), *Composers in South Africa Today* (Cape Town, 1987), 77-101.
[28] The *Sonate op Afrika motiewe* for violin and piano was composed in 1984.
[29] Taken from Stefans Grové's programme notes to the Obelisk concert held on 22 November 1997 in the Old Mutual Hall, University of South Africa, Pretoria (1997b) (my translation).
[30] Cited in Stefans Grové's programme notes to an *Exhibition of Music*.

indigenous song. It is worth pausing on the *idea* of this song (see Example 5.1), that recalls the Primitivism so much in vogue during the previous *fin de siècle* and the early part of the 20th century; a Primitivism very much part of the panoramic modernist gaze enmeshed in the ideologies of empire and colonialism.

Example 5.1. Grové, *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, *Finale 2*, violin, bars 7-10.

Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907, the picture symbolizing the inauguration of Modernism in the arts, provides a fitting analogy. Like Grové's five movements, three of Picasso's five female figures display stylized African masks. The figures are blunt and flattened, as is the space of the room. Everything is pushed to the surface. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was the beginning of the end for perspective in painting in favour of simultaneity of exterior and interior, of inner and outer space. A revolutionary idea of space-time, availing itself of the voodoo magic of ancient and primitive ritual, where the conceptual rudimentariness of the African artifact is perhaps more of an energizing authority than an obsession with primitive societies of a distant past. Grové's 'song' is a bit like these stylized African masks, sharing their space with the two remaining etiolated European faces: ahistorical, anonymous and devoid of the political potency infusing the song of the African who, under the strain of centuries of repression, breaks into song. But there is more to Grové's project than the trajectory linking his practice with the Primitivists would suggest, and it is to trace the multiple references and overlapping

fields of meaning that we now turn to examine the *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, indexing as it does the more ambiguous discourses and phantasms of belonging that refute the idea of cultural homogeneity and that constitute the politics of memory and the search for a new identity in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The five parts of the sonata are called *Recitativo: Notturno 1*, *Ditirambo*, *Intermezzo: Finale 1*, *Notturno 2*, *Finale 2*. As Grové has himself indicated, the first two movements fit together conceptually, as do the last three. At first hearing, a significant contrast does indeed become apparent between the first two movements and the rest of the work: in the former the absence of an identifiable melodic, harmonic or rhythmic idea creates a *universal* law impervious to the accident of time and place. As Christopher Waterman has pointed out, the metaphoric forging of correspondences between musical and social order is often more a matter of expressive qualities (timbre, texture, rhythmic flow) than of abstracted musical structures,[31] and indeed the self conscious juxtaposition of registral soundscapes in these two movements becomes primarily a description of universal space. Diachronic time absents itself from movements one and two: static passages hypnotize temporal awareness in movement one, fractured melodicism mesmerizes the listener in its almost palpable sensuous sound in movement two. Time and place float out of reach in the fusion of the composer's own deep spirituality and modernity in a dream of unity and wholeness of which the 'meaning' is no longer *in the world* (and therefore not merely global), but truly transcendental and universal. But the claim to this kind of 'wholeness' can be traced to a Platonic-Christian metaphysic scope that is essentially anti-terrestrial and where the 'truth' can only be asserted in what Wole Soyinka has succinctly described as 'an idea of the cosmos that recedes so far, that while it retains something of the grandeur of the infinite, it loses the essence of the tangible and

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[31] Christopher Waterman cited in Veit Erlmann, *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa* (Chicago and London, 1996), 236-7.

the immediate.'[32] In movements one and two we therefore observe modernism's deceitful conceit: the promise of wholeness (exposed as an *imagined* unity), maintained only by the sheer impossibility of bridging the chasm between the tangible and the imagined.

In movements three, four and five, however, this cosmic Manichaeism is shattered by the motivic scatterings of the song breaking forth from the African soil, as it were. Time and space are localized and cosmic totality reasserted by reclaiming that mundane part of it which is the *local place*. The invented nature of the category 'indigenous' in Grové's description of the song he uses, invoking long-defunct Western fixities of place and identity, hardly matters. Though not reducible to a local dialect ('working in Afrikaans', as Breyten Breytenbach contentiously asserts of the painter François Krige),[33] Grové's music does posit (like Krige's paintings) the possibility that the 'universal' embracing African and Western musics lies not at the level of immanent structures, but at the level of poietic and esthesic strategies.[34] It is a move that partakes 'of the goal of all symbolic practice: the returning of the whole',[35] becoming no less than the transformative gesture of the global imagination with which Grové enters Soyinka's 'fourth space' of African metaphysics: 'the dark continuum of transition where occurs the inter-transmutation of essence-ideal and materiality'.[36]

There is another crucial structural relationship at work in the sonata – one that is first hinted at not in the music but in the accompanying rubrics – that suggests that movements one (*Notturno 1*) and four (*Notturno 2*) have a special relationship, as do movements three (*Finale 1*) and five (*Finale 2*). Indeed, *Finale 1* and *Finale 2* exhibit

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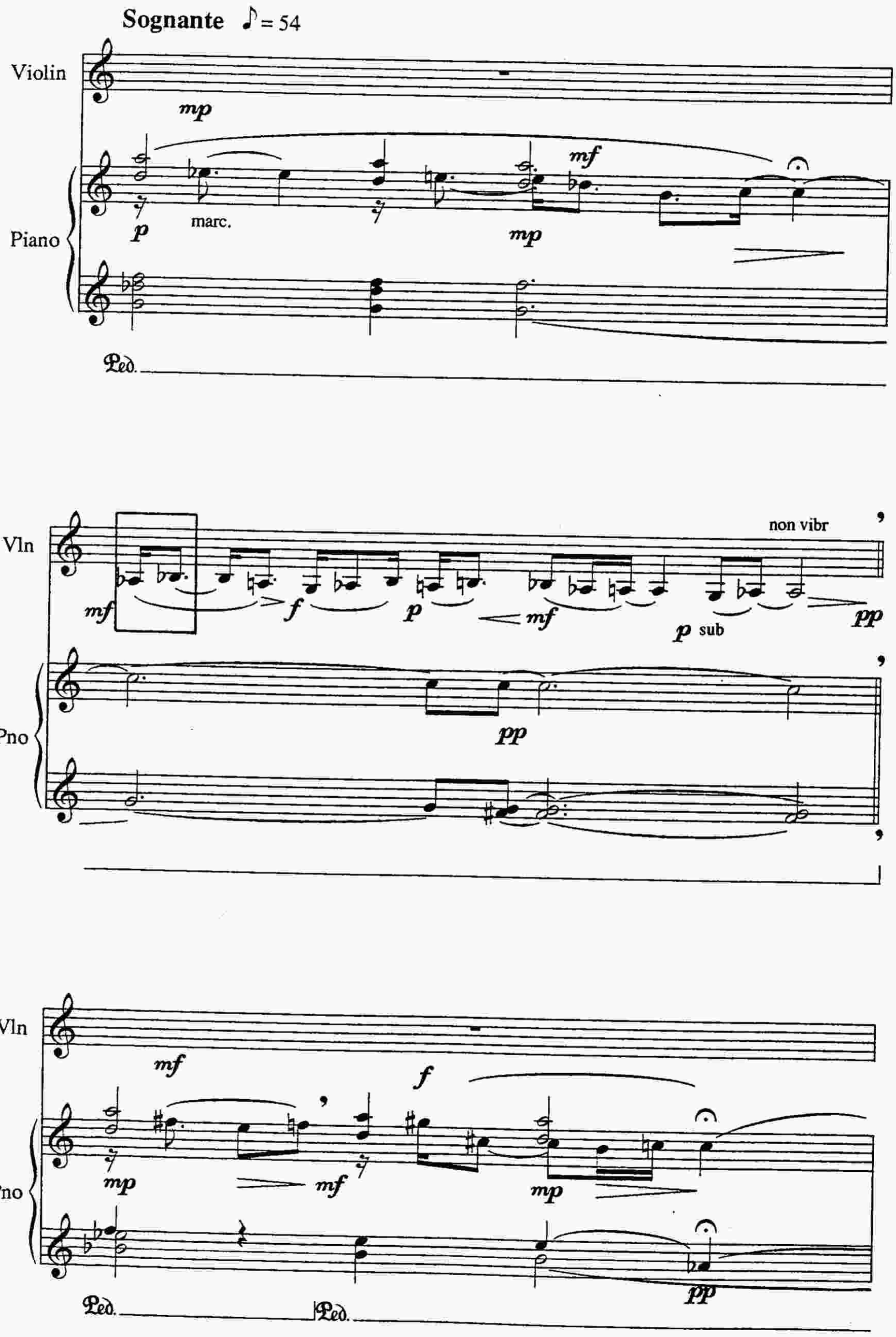
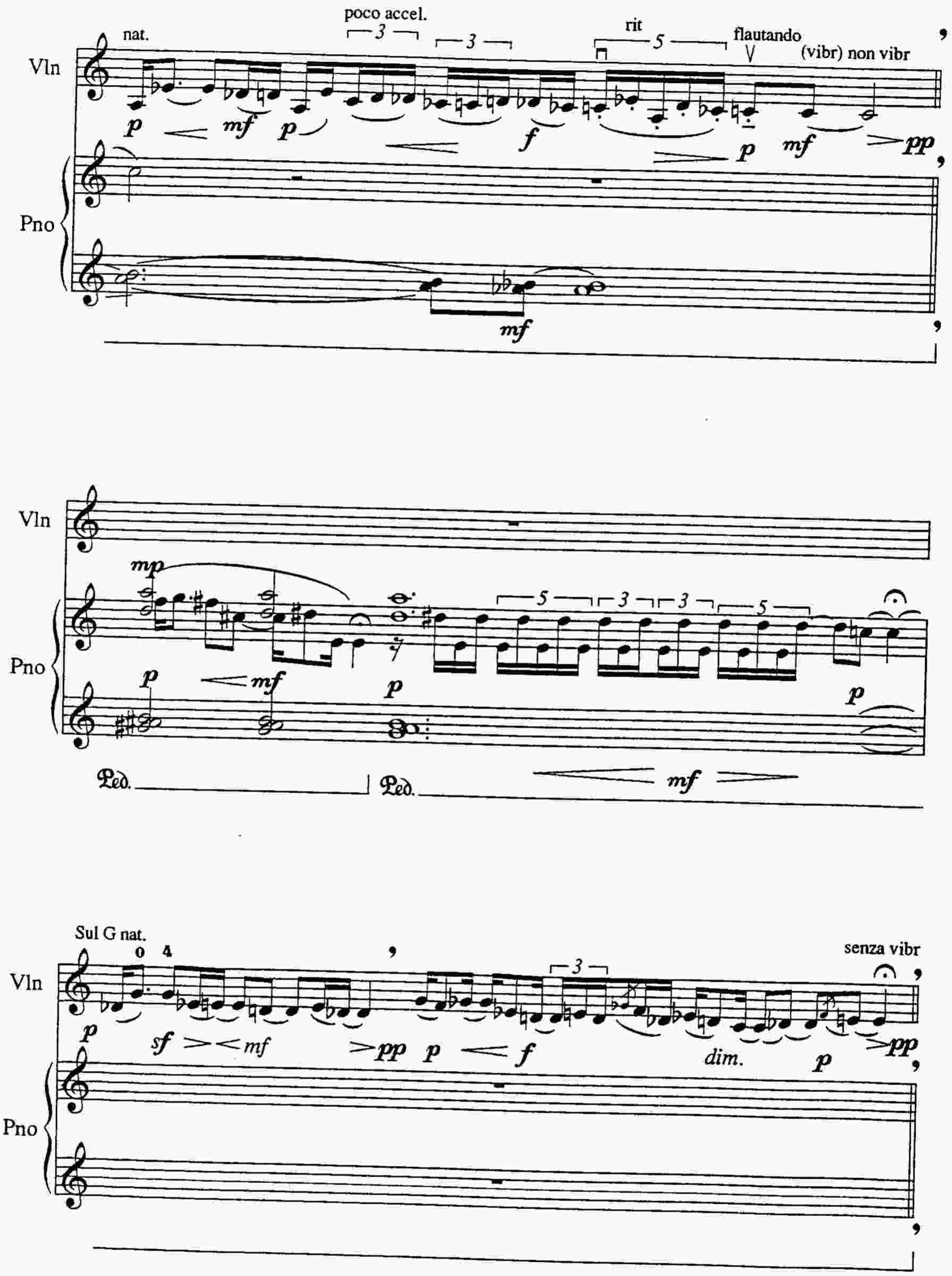
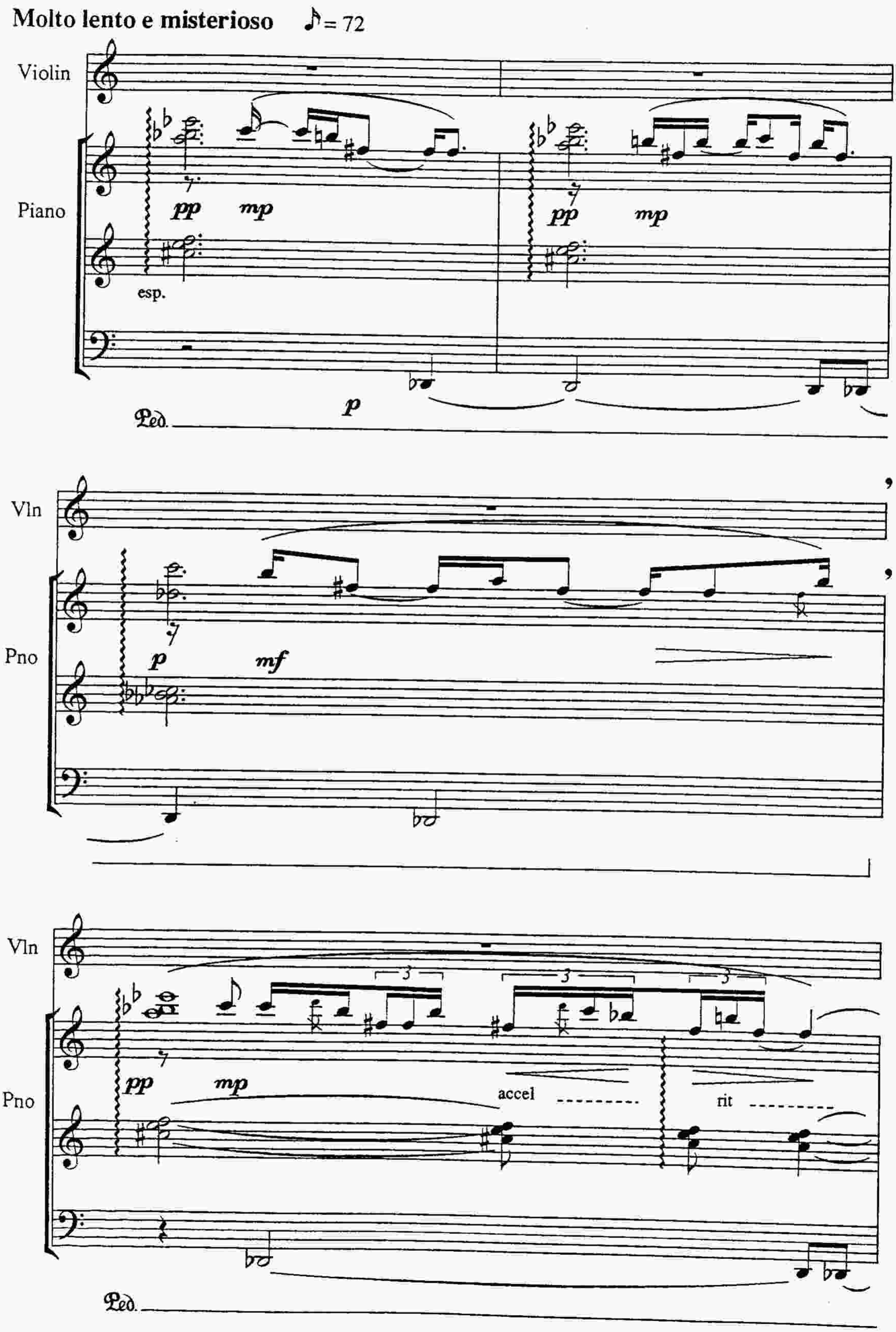
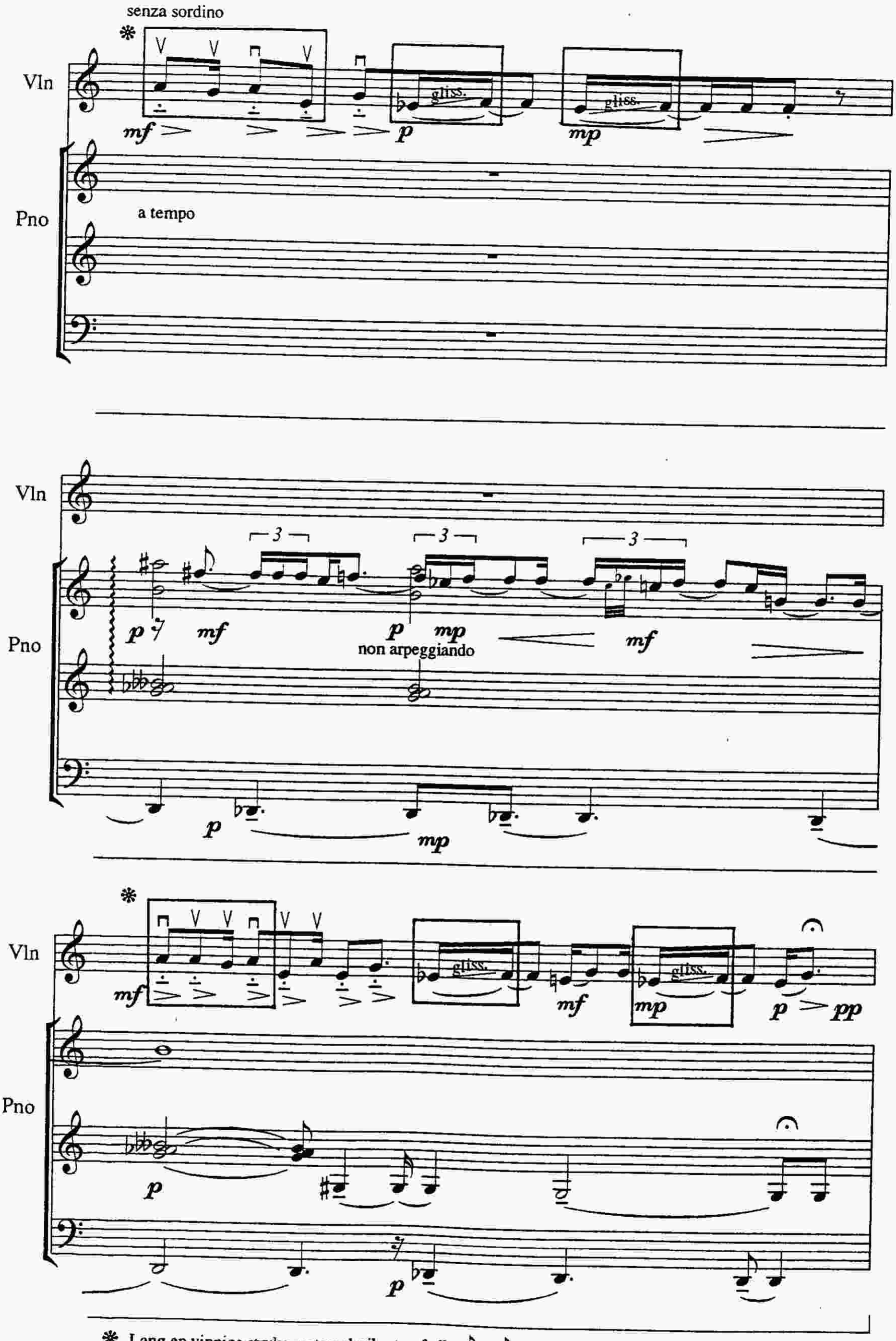
[32] Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge, 1976), 3-4.
[33] Breyten Breytenbach, *Dog Heart: a Travel Memoir* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1998), 117.
[34] See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, tr. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, 1990), 67; French edn., *Musicologie générale et sémiologie* (Paris, 1987).
[35] Erlmann, *Nightsong*, 133.
[36] Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 26.

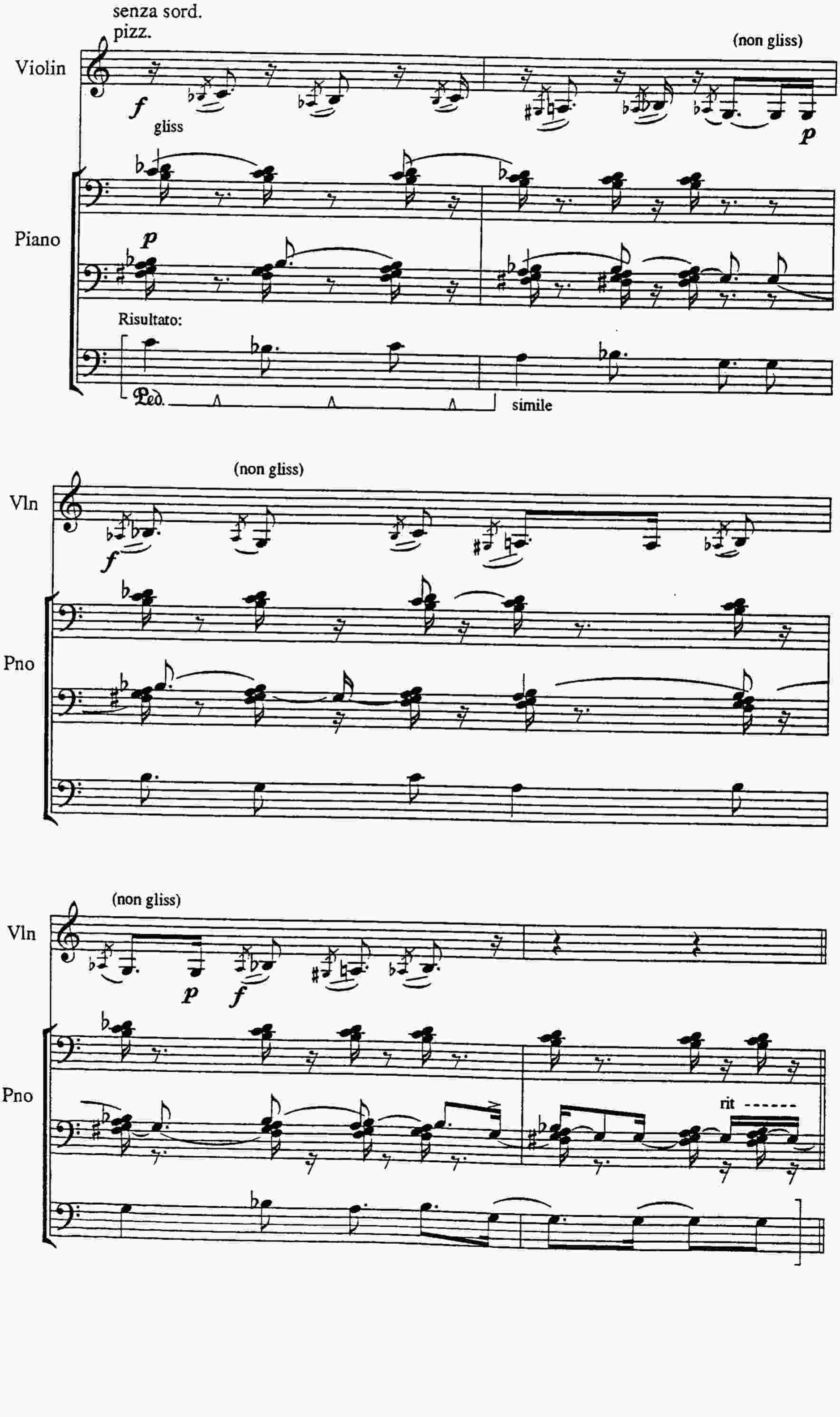
obvious similarities: the motoric momentum, the ever more recognizable African melody, the airy textures, the dance-like rhythm. *Finale 2* takes the music up where *Finale 1* has left it, providing the postponed ending to the false start of the end promised by *Finale 1* (movement three). It is the nocturne of movement four that creates a fissure in this act of closure. The rubric inevitably turns our thoughts back to movement one, also entitled *Notturno*. It is not difficult to see or hear the musical relationship between the two movements, a relationship most notably confirmed by a dialogic form and piano chords composed out in elaborate diminutions (see Examples 5.2a and 5.2b).

But there is also a difference: in the first nocturne the violin's voice, although distinct, remains anonymous, whereas the emerging violin in the second nocturne can be recognized as belonging to *both* Africa (the first notes of its initial appearance, marked in bars 4 and 6 of Example 5.2b, are taken from the African song), and the occidental world of the first nocturne. This latter identity is the result of the repeated major 2nd interval (marked in bars 4 and 6 of Example 5.2b), that follows the African notes, and is taken from the first two notes of the violin in the first Nocturne (marked in bar 2 of Example 5.2a). Though made present by the iconic prominence of the major 2nd, the latter world is now transformed (transposed): the distinctness of the major 2nd concatenated into a single sound gesture by a glissando that becomes a feature of its subsequent appearances. The two worlds, (South) Africa and the West, are imagined on a sliding scale transfiguring power from the structured interval of measured difference to the agency of the irreducibly ambiguous physical sound that now fills it.

There is another striking feature of the second nocturne, namely the long periods in which the music seems to lose interest in the 'plot' of thematic development. The haunting stasis of the first nocturne becomes a presence so dominating that emptiness itself becomes a feature. It is almost as if one expects visual compensation for the lack of direction, for some sort of choreography to fill the stage of the mind. But whereas music

Example 5.2a. Grové, *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, movement one, bars 1 – 6.

Vln
Pno
nat.
poco accel.
rit
flautando
(vibr) non vibr
Sul G nat.
senza vibr
Ped.
Ped.

Example 5.2b. Grové, *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, movement four, bars 1 – 7.

❋ Lang en vinnige stryke met veel vibrato of elke 𝅘𝅥𝅯 en 𝅘𝅥𝅯. met veel vibrato ten aanvang van iedere toon.
Long and fast bows with much vibrato on each 𝅘𝅥𝅯 and 𝅘𝅥𝅯. with much vibrato at the start of each tone.

Example 5.3. Grové, *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, *Notturno 2*, violin and piano, bars 11-15.

itself seemed hypnotized by the ultimate modernist dream of totality in the first nocturne, the music of the second nocturne accompanies the questioning look, losing interest in anything other than its own physical presence.

The temporal 'enclosures' (see Example 5.3) created by what can perhaps be called 'timbre modulations', are significantly enhanced by their occurrences as a calculated interruption of *Finale 1* and *Finale 2*. Grové makes clear here that his art consists in making things heard, not the things he *represents*, but those he *manipulates*. To paraphrase Barthes on Cy Twombly, Grové permits the sounds to linger in an absolutely aerated space; and the aeration is not merely a plastic value that forges unity of form, it is a kind of subtle energy that makes it easier to breathe. These spaces are big rooms which the mind seeks to populate.[37] They invite active participation (and communality) in the delights of sheer physical sensuous soundscapes and spaces which constitute nothing but sound, thus becoming a kind of musical background to a ritual drama, i.e. drama as a cleaning, binding, communal and recreative form.[38]

And yet it is clear that the conception of the work owes more to the Beethovenian reworking of small motivic cells in an exquisitely translucent counterpoint than to a process of exotic collage. A theme is prepared in such a way in order that its appearance at the apotheosis of the work is perceived as 'logical'. That this material is derived from an African theme is almost incidental, but nevertheless noteworthy in one important respect: Grové uses his technical facility as an art music composer to make the outcome, which he imagines as the transculturated movement, sound 'logical'. One might add, 'natural'. The *technique* used is anything but natural in relation to the aims sought, and we are reminded of Arnold Schoenberg's disapproval of what is in fact a Bartókian idea:

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[37] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, tr. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 182-3; French edn., *L'obvie et l'obtus: essais critiques III* (Paris, 1982).

[38] See Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 4.

'ideas from folk-art [are] treated according to a technique that [was] created for ideas of a more highly developed kind. The difference between these two ways of presenting an idea [is] overlooked, and there may even be an underlying difference between two whole ways of thinking'.[39] What Schoenberg did not think possible is what we are contemplating here: that this perceived discontinuity between materiality and technique can *only* be resolved in the person of the composer, who experiences both African (sonic) identity movement and the technical means with which he manipulates it as 'logical' and 'natural' and thus as somehow not only compatible but even the same, or identical.

To interrogate Grové's Africanicity (especially as a token of political good faith) is of no use. To quote Roland Barthes writing about Erté's Women, it says nothing more than itself, 'being scarcely more loquacious … than a dictionary which gives the … definition of a word, and not its poetic future'.[40] The characteristic of the signifier is to be a departure; and the signifying point of departure, in Grové's music, is not Africa; it is Authenticity, i.e. a restoration of (art) music as symbolic fact into a living social and cultural content. The music's conceit is that of a microcosm, which, as Wole Soyinka has written with regard to ritual African theatre, 'involves a loss of individuation, a self-submergence in universal essence'.[41] But with Grové the loss of individuation taken aboard by vicariously adopting Africa as 'theme' is checked by the vigorous assertion of creative individualism that makes diversity the single most common denominator of the composer's 'African series',[42] and while the name of 'Africa' is invoked over all this difference, it would be fanciful to say that these compositions *evoke* 'Africa' in any sense. Grové's (possibly disputed) success in *denoting* 'Africa' is not immediately (if

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[39] Arnold Schoenberg, 'Folk-Music and Art-Music' in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, tr. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 167-9.
[40] Roland Barthes, 'Erté, or À la lettre' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, 103-28, esp. 114.
[41] Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 42.
[42] There have been chamber works for a variety of instrumental combinations, works for choir, a song cycle, a piano concerto and even two large scale organ pieces.

ever) apparent in or through his soundscapes, but rather through the concurrent structures of titles, fables, dreams, intertexts, narratives and descriptions. One example is the fable that accompanies the *Trio for flute, cello and piano* of 1998:

> Once in far away times, in a far away, far away land lived an ancient people in a desert-like landscape where the sun shone hot during the day and the stars seemed very bright and near at night. And so, one night, when everyone was asleep and the chieftain of this tribe of soulless people sat alone next to the dying fire, he suddenly saw a bright shooting star. The star became a strange bird which settled in the tree next to the old man, and began to sing a plaintive song of great longing. The chieftain spoke to the bird and asked the reason for its sadness. The bird answered that it was a soul without body, and only visible to the chieftain. It said that the chieftain was a body without a soul – like an animal. If the two of them could be unified they would be wise like the spirits of their ancestors; like the sun, the moon and the wind. And so it happened that body and soul became united. Then suddenly at midnight shooting stars began to rain from heaven and each turned into a bird, a soul bird. And they began to sing their dream songs of yearning to become part of the other tribe members. Towards dawn each of the souls had found a body, and all rose from the ground and flew towards the rising sun to meet with him, and to become wise like him.[43]

It is tempting to think of this kind of story as a borrowing from the easy intercourse between the living and the dead that forms such an integral part of oral traditions in languages like Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. But again the searching gaze is frustrated in its quest for its African Other, for this kind of 'magic realism' is also rooted in Afrikaans literature from where it is developed by the ghost stories of the *Voortrekkers* and later the work of Eugène Marais, Louis Leipoldt and C.J. Langenhoven. Grové is in step with

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[43] See Stefans Grové's programme notes to the Obelisk concert of 23 July 1998.

what André P. Brink has called 'the inevitable return to roots which political events and the *fin de siècle* have prompted in South African writing across the cultural spectrum'.[44] This constant in Grové's compositions since 1984, namely that we have musical structures existing side-by-side with linguistic ones, also manages to leave much *unsaid*. In fact, Grové creates two heterogeneous structures that occupy separate if contiguous spaces *informing* one another, but refusing either to homogenize or mingle. The denoted message of 'Africa' is, for now, nothing but Name – open and vague – and therefore encouraging of connotation. How do we relate the analog (which is the Name) to the concurrent musical structure? I have tried to show how, in the case of the *Sonate op Afrika motiewe*, this can be done as an act of conscious imagination, but not without the aid of language. Grové knows, and here I am following Barthes closely again, that the Name has an absolute (and sufficient) power of evocation; that if a work is called *Afrika Hymnus*, for example, we need not look for 'Africa' anywhere except, precisely, in the Name. To write *Boesmanliedere* is to hear Bushmen. Ignore the title (language) and the composition, it would seem, escapes.

In a sense, to compose a work like the recent piano concerto called *Raka*, is to stage a performance of (Afrikaner) culture: N.P. van Wyk Louw's historical text is not represented, but *evoked* by the Name. In short, what is represented is (Afrikaner) culture itself, or the inter-text (which is the circulation of anterior or contemporary texts in the artist's head or hand).[45] But to represent Afrikaner culture, in the context of an adumbrated symbolic Africa, is to restore to it (and art music with it) its local *space*. Grové's concept of authenticity does not seek to undermine The West, or even the individual as a major Western Idea. His music represents an adaptation of the traditional

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[44] André P. Brink, 'Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, eds. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge, 1998), 14-28, esp. 26.
[45] Roland Barthes, 'The wisdom of art' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, 177-94, esp. 190.

art music framework rather than a radical break from it. The suggested trajectory linking Grové's project with that of the *musique nègre* of the early Modernists in Paris is therefore not as fortuitous as his Cocteau-derived credo might imply. One recognizes in the work of the Primitivists Grové's commitment to the colonialist idea of the primordial African space, an ahistorical space, if you will, where history can be started afresh, as well as a continuation of what Glenn Watkins has called a 'venerable tradition of appropriating the foreign in the service of defining the familiar'.[46] This is music that conceives of Africa as a *meaning* (and identity), not as subject. But, and this is an important difference, with Grové the adoption of Africa as analog is both an act of participation in the reconstitution of meaning *and* social gestus. This music does not metaphorically enact the crossing of two radically opposed worlds, but rather suggests a gesture at interaction between two facets of the same social space.

This reconstitution of meaning and identity is generally misunderstood by the urgent need of musicology to prove agglutinated synthesis as a trope for a 'unified South African nation'. In Grové's work, Africa *does* resume her rightful position in a global polity. But also, 'singing' about Africa as 'home' transforms all those engaged with the total musical fact into parts of that imagined space through the construction of metonymy. Illuminating the misunderstandings to which an imposition of political imperatives on Grové's *oeuvre* is likely to lead, is a review of a concert dedicated to Grové's works in 1997, in which eminent South African musicologist Mary Röhrich makes the following remark about the Afrikaner choir that performed Grové's *Psalm 150* for double choir and percussion on a Southern Sotho text:

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[46] Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1994), 57.

Trapped in colour-coded, humourless robes whose designer label surely reads Calvin (without the Klein), the Unisa Ad Libitum Choir shuffled their way self-consciously through their prescribed choreography, faces buried in scores and emotions reduced to mere vocal emissions. One cannot but wonder what a black choir might have done with the music and its celebration.[47]

This injunction for Afrikaners to become something which they are not is not issued to Grové's music:

> Grové has reached a pivotal point in his development, one in which technique has truly become the handmaid of a unique dream and extraordinary compositional gift.[48]

We are left to reflect on the oddity: that even though Röhrich describes a white Afrikaner's music as a 'unique dream', she yearns for its performance by black South Africans as its only suitable celebration. As Erlmann writes of Janet Hodgson's critique of Ntsikana's 'Great Hymn', apart from sheer condescension, 'such a view suggests an inherent incompatibility of indigenous aesthetic practice and modern consciousness, just as it reproduces the basic mythology of missionization by positing a unilineal course of history from tradition to modernity, from local to universal, from collective to individual'.[49] Röhrich is wrong to think that Grové's music is about representing Africa: far from 'composing Africa', the composer is using a sign that stands for Africa, that is taken for Africa and that imbues his work with 'native' identity.[50] Grové's music does

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[47] Mary Röhrich, 'Grové's Creative Urge Honed by the Passage of Time', *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 6 April 1997. At this point it would of course be unthinkable to describe a black choir's performance of any work in the Western art music canon in terms as derogatory with regard to religious orientation or culturally embedded performance tradition.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Chicago, 1999), 126.

[50] See Erlmann's discussion of the sartorial aspects of the African Choir in London in *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 102-6.

not generate synthesis, xenophobia, or discernible affection for Africa. The approximate translations of the 'ethnic' fall short of fashioning a 'national style' in the way Ralph Vaughan Williams or Zoltán Kodály achieved with their use of folk elements, while it is also too diluted, even tangential, to form the basis of a stylistic alternative (in the way Bartók's music did) to the already replete stylistic palette displayed by 20th century music.

The 'African series' of Stefans Grové presents us with a form of representation that at once familiarizes and distances. The metonymical aspect of making a part stand for the whole is making Africa familiar and knowable, yet, to quote Erlmann, the same African tune, as a generic type of 'African' music, 'also distances its user [Grové] from a specific locale and tradition and in so doing it is substituting representation with historical practice'.[51] In this way Grové's music partakes in play with (Afrikaner) identity that is sufficiently subversive not only with regard to South African political imperatives, but also vis-à-vis the oppositional stereotypes maintained by South African musicological discourse. As such Grové's music *transforms* the meaning of 'African' to *include* Calvin … and Jean Cocteau, that extroverted collagist whose chimerical presence laces an obsessively narcissistic discourse with welcome irony. For it was also Cocteau who said: 'Since these mysteries escape me, I will pretend to be their organizer.'[52]

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[51] Ibid., 106.

[52] Paul Griffiths, 'Jean Cocteau', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, (London, 1980), vol. iv, 514-5, esp. 515.

III

Servants of Assistants

In an essay written in 1928, which he called 'African Negro Music', Erich von Hornbostel identified 'pure melody' as the definitive characteristic of black African music. In his then still entirely acceptable Manichaean framework of *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*, he contrasted what he considered this salient feature to harmonically conceived (Western) music. He described how, in African music, 'the intervals of perfect consonance' (mostly fourths and fifths) functioned as constructive elements in determining the distance between predominant notes, marking out the field that was supposed to constitute the natural amplitude of 'African' melody.[53]

Latently present in Hornbostel's narrative is a hermeneutic unashamedly vast and ambitious in scope, constructing the knowable boundaries that operate in the concept-metaphor 'African music', but one that is also engagingly empty, like a museum display cabinet awaiting exotic and wonderful artifacts.[54] These, Hornbostel explained, were to be gathered in a way that provided comparative musicology with distinct advantages over linguistics and ethnology:

> Comparative musicology is … forced to proceed downward, as it were, and by differentiation; and has, therefore, in certain respects, an advantage as compared with linguistics and ethnology. These began by having a bewildering number of individual facts at their disposal; starting from these facts, they had to search for resemblances, to prove connections, and are now on their way

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[53] Erich von Hornbostel, 'African Negro Music' in *Africa*, 1 (1928), 36.
[54] Hornbostel's account is not that different from the catalog description of the Stanley and African Exibition of 1890 in London that describes Africa as consisting of 'virgin countries' passively waiting to be explored. See Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven and London, 1994), 81.

> upwards from dispersion to increasingly large units. This synthetic process is directly opposed to the natural process of differentiating a unit, and therefore has difficulties and pitfalls of its own.[55]

The field of operation in which the 'African' practises music is proposed by Hornbostel as an 'always-already' present structure generated organically from inside, waiting to be dissected and analyzed by the European gaze. Today, one could be forgiven for doubting the neutrality of that gaze, the naturalness of that process (unhindered by bewildering facts) and the implied academic passivity of the intervention that produces facts by differentiation. In Hornbostel's language, however, 'natural' differentiation as applied to tonality becomes a structuring process (even a principle) clothed in the rich imagery of imperial and feudal hierarchies asserting gravitational forces from powerful metropolitan centres on servants of assistants answering to needs:

> There are predominant notes of greater or smaller weight ('tonic', 'dominant'), satellites gravitating towards them ('leading notes' in ascent or descent), servants of assistants presenting themselves only when needed (e.g. passing notes), in short, a complete hierarchy.[56]

It is tempting to read these last sentences, not as descriptive of the tonal characteristics of 'African music', but rather of the ethnomusicological practice of which it forms a seminal part. Catachrestically read, it points to a chink in the theory that a marriage of convenience between ethnomusicological methodology and/or areas of interest and musicology could be a panacea for the problems faced by musicology in present day South Africa. Hornbostel's work makes the late nineties reader acutely aware that the practice of ethnomusicology could be perceived as a somewhat tactless insistence on an

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[55] Hornbostel, 'African Negro Music', 39.
[56] Ibid., 36.

anthropologizing approach to an 'ethnic' music occupying a space well apart from Western art music. This is of course not to say that ethnomusicology has not changed fundamentally since 1928, or that its practitioners have abdicated the responsibility of exposing and resolving the issues associated with these problematic foundations of ethnomusicological practice. Stephen Blum has written about ethnomusicology as a Western conceptual tool employed in naming and controlling its Others, those 'servants of assistants', with specific regard to Hornbostel and African music.[57] However, while listing some of the problems involved in the imposition of foreign terminology in an alien field of operation, Blum stops short of considering the ideological implications of the practice of 'naming'. Writing twenty years earlier, Klaus Wachsmann states that primitive European recording technology made it easy for scholars to succumb to 'the Western fantasy about African rhythm',[58] while Kenneth Gourlay remarks in the more circumscribed context of Nigerian musicologist Chinyere Nwachukwu's writing on Igbo music that 'by forcing the Igbo concept into the Procrustean bed of western conceptualization, she is in effect surrendering to the dominance of western ideas – or at least to the dominance of the English language!'[59] Bruno Nettl's remark that 'ethnomusicology as western culture knows it is actually a western phenomenon',[60] needs to be understood in conjunction with Alexander Ringer's trenchant formulation of one of ethnomusicology's elemental weaknesses, namely that 'interest in non-Western music was always closely tied to strictly material and/or ideological concerns … inevitably reflect[ing] shifting trends in the realms of religion, politics and economics'.[61] Christopher Waterman's assessment of this situation deserves to be quoted in full:

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[57] See Stephen Blum, 'European Musical Terminology and the Music of Africa' in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 3-36.
[58] Klaus Wachsmann, 'Music' in the *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 6 (1969), 164-91, esp. 187.
[59] Kenneth Gourlay cited in Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 59.
[60] Ibid., 59.
[61] Alexander Ringer, 'One World or None? Untimely Reflections on a Timely Musicological Question', in Nettl and Bohlman, *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 187-98, esp. 190.

the notion that ethnomusicology is the study of music 'in context' – a phrase often invoked but rarely defined – has implicitly encouraged the reification of musical sound and the epistemological disjunction of music from the social and historical grounds of its existence. This has by and large allowed ethnomusicological discourse to bracket itself outside the very real world of colonialism, power relations, and the social production of knowledge. I would suggest that our understanding of sub-Saharan African music has been conditioned by factors infrequently discussed in the literature: for example, the varied training and practical goals of investigators; the portrayal of similarity and difference between peoples of African and European descent; the invention of 'traditional' or 'tribal' musics under colonialism and since independence; and the variable, though always unequal, relationship of the scholarly subject to the human objects of his or her study. African ethnomusicology has, with a few notable exceptions, lagged behind other branches of African studies in critically examining its own ideological 'context'.[62]

Ethnomusicologists are not, as this passage makes clear, unaware of the ideological concerns underpinning their discipline. However, the most significant sign of concern in the ranks of ethnomusicologists, as Waterman has suggested, has not been a thorough deconstruction of ideological premises pervading ethnomusicology, but rather a methodological dispute of which the following passage by Ruth Stone, written 54 years after Hornbostel's 'African Negro Music', is a symptom:

> asserting that ethnomusicology is interdisciplinary has provided an excuse and escape from searching for more powerful and elegant ways of studying music creation in human communities

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[62] Christopher A. Waterman, 'The Uneven Development of Africanist Ethnomusicology: Three issues and a Critique' in Nettl and Bohlman, *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 169-86, esp. 179. Waterman goes on to state that 'The relationship of ethnomusicology to neocolonialism has been addressed by only a few scholars … In 1984 Nketia and DjeDje … issued a call for the "decolonization" of fieldwork, though they did not define it or suggest how it might be achieved.'; id., 180.

and has left most scholars without a 'mission' to develop a paradigm for ethnomusicology. To develop systematic procedures in ethnomusicology does not deny that competing models and paradigms exist. But failing to make the attempt implies that ethnomusicology is a field so like some other field that it needs no special procedure based on an underlying theoretical orientation.[63]

The 'underlying theoretical orientation' of Ethnomusicology (and African Musicology) that Hornbostel was so confident about in 1928 seems to have disappeared by 1982, resulting in what Alexander Ringer has described as the 'neutrality of the research product' produced to 'satisfy current psychological or social fixations'.[64] In the African sphere, the relative comfort of being in control while deductively differentiating an assumed geographical/cultural/racial African space had given way to fragmentation resulting from competing interdisciplinary models – a state of affairs described by Stone as and 'excuse' and an 'escape'. The dilemma of Hornbostel's kind of ethnomusicology in a postcolonial world is, in the words of Jean-Jacques Nattiez, 'the dilemma of any *comparative* study. Any comparison will always be shaped by the comparer's point of view. In this sense, research on universals is invariably *etic*.'[65]

The dispute is about more than mere methodological differences. The 'lingering polarization within the field of ethnomusicology' that Joseph Kerman identified in 1985 points to a more fundamental unease in the discipline: what makes the music-in-culture of the 1980's incommensurable to that of 1928 and what, one may well ask, do ethnomusicologists need to 'escape' from? Acknowledging the drift of ethnomusicology into the little, distinct entities shorn of (eurocentric) systematic underpinnings, Alexander

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[63] Ruth M. Stone, *Let the Inside be Sweet: The Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia* (Bloomington, 1982), 13.
[64] Alexander Ringer, 'One World or None?, *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 188.
[65] Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 62.

Ringer writes that 'Egalitarianism and, eventually, affirmative action in various guises set the tone [in ethnomusicology] not only for the postwar generation but also those who had witnessed the evils of racial and cultural prejudice firsthand'.[66] In effect he is relating the issue of ethnomusicology's polarization to the traumatic events of the Nazi era and the Holocaust; a plausible thesis, not least because at the end of the twentieth century the fact of the Holocaust had become paradigmatic to Western thought to such an extent that in ethnomusicology, the Holocaust (more than the pervading European colonial racisms of the pre-war era), drove the issue of racially based comparison (the most powerful systematic tool of *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*) to the point of crisis from the point of view of European morality. The acceptance of this general premise holds direct relevance to South Africa, where musicological and ethnomusicological practice reinforce existing social and racial polarities. Taking this into account, one could argue that it is surely premature to consider how musicology can become 'more ethnomusicological' in the words of Michael Levy, when ethnomusicology has not yet devised a way in which the tired black-white co-ordinates of the institutional intellectual economy of which it is part, can be transfigured.

Although (African) ethnomusicology has undergone a methodological shift from the systematic or comparative to the ethnographic (a shift that has included the name change: comparative musicology – ethnomusicology – African musicology), the problem of race is still the fundamental tenet of any conceptual framework dependent on co-ordinates of which one is the general signifier 'African'. Acknowledging race in this way is of course not indicative of *racism*. The stance of what Sartre has called 'antiracist racism' and the perpetuation of 'race' as a useful category has been one that Africans have been forced to adopt as a positive, affirmative category in the face of colonial

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[66] Alexander Ringer, 'One World or None?', *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 188.

repression throughout this century.[67] Scholars like J.H. Kwabena Nketia formulate methodology with great care so as to prevent the musicological argument spilling over into the larger and more ideologically contentious issue of race:

> The study of African music is at once a study of unity and diversity, and this is what makes it exciting and challenging … The most important characteristic of this family of musical traditions is the diversity of expressions it accommodates, a diversity arising from different applications of common procedures and usages.[68]

Yet, as Nketia's mention of a 'family of musical traditions' inadvertently signals, race is a perennial presence in these attempts at compromise.[69] Ethnomusicology in Africa adopted this paradigm of Pan-Africanism (arguably under the political and moral duress of the West), leading to the invention of African rhythm, African melody, African musicality, African music and ultimately the myth of 'the soul of Africa'. There is an unavoidable historiological consequence to this premise. 'There is no past,' Joseph Kerman has written, 'except for a person involved in the historical mode of experience; and for him the past is what he carefully and critically thinks it to be'.[70] If African ethnomusicology has no historical dimension other than that provided by its own texts

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[67] See Kwame Anthony Appiah's differentiation between racism and racialism in his essay 'The Invention of Africa' in *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford, 1992), 3-27. A contemporary South African perspective is found in the debate unleashed in the media following the South African Human Rights Commission's report on racism in the media in 2000. See in this regard Howard Barrell's 'What has Racism got to to with it' and *Mail & Guardian* editor Philip van Niekerk's submission to the SAHRC in the *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 9 March 2000.

[68] J.H. Kwabena Nketia, *The Music of Africa* (London, 1982), ix and 4.

[69] W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the intellectual and practical founders of the Pan-Africanist movement, wrote: 'What then is race? It is a cast *family* of human beings' (my italics); cited in Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 28-9. In a lengthy essay entitled 'Illusions of race', Appiah succeeds in exposing this notion of 'race as family' as nothing less than the acceptance of the principle of biological racism. Appiah 'completes' Du Bois's argument in the ultimate escape from race: 'The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us'; Ibid., 45.

[70] Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 15.

(and this is a 'problem' that ethnomusicologists have tried to address at frequent intervals), then its past is the past of the practising ethnomusicologist. The past of ethnic African music becomes the past of the colonizing European.

Returning to the question that frames this section, we have to ask what gains are to be had for South African musicology by stepping into this political and ideological minefield? Kerman's reservations about ethnomusicology's use to musicology in light of the latter's formalist paralysis in the late 80s, appear insignificant compared to the racially inflamed problematic the South African space brings to ethnomusicological practice. In this explosive space the continued fragmentation of ethnomusicology looks like an *imperative* for survival in the wake of Apartheid's discredited comparative structures, while the *neutrality* of the research product, as lamented by Ruth Stone, presents itself as the *best* (not the worst) possible scenario. Ethnomusicology in South Africa is haunted by Apartheid's racial legacy, a legacy all the more potent owing to its close temporal proximity to the racial evils of the Holocaust.[71]

To explore this problem in greater depth, I shall now turn to a critique of a more circumscribed body of ethnomusicological work that has attempted to negotiate this ideological impasse in the South African frame. By tracing the process according to which Veit Erlmann's writing, mostly on Zulu *isicathamiya*, unfolds over the course of three very different ethnographies (all originating *after* the epistemic break forced by political events on recent South African history), I shall argue not only that he is engaged in an attempt to reconstruct the fragments of ethnomusicological knowledge by reversing Hornbostel's 'downward' probe in gradually constructing a global frame of reference from the minutiae of widely differing texts and contexts, but also that in doing so he is laying the foundations of what can easily become a headlong confrontation between

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[71] A very controversial sustained comparison between Apartheid and the Holocaust forms the basis of the methodology employed by Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts in *Reconciliation Through Truth: a Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York, 1997).

musicology and ethnomusicology in a space of accelerated historical process where musicology and African(ist) (ethno)musicology grapple for intellectual and economic control of institutional musicological territory – a confrontation reflecting power struggles in South Africa at large.

Erlmann begins his *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance*, a historiographic series of case studies, by distancing himself from earlier ethnomusicological paradigms at work in South Africa. He writes that veteren South African ethnomusicologist Percival Kirby 'was mainly concerned with the continuity of African musical practices' and that his work 'in essence and in practice contained a strong bias against any music that was not based on traditional idioms'.[72] He alleges that Hugh Tracey was, as late as 1954, still speaking of 'the "drab proletarian gray in imitation of others" that characterized urban black music and he thereby indirectly provided the scholarly underpinnings of apartheid cultural policies', whilst Yvonne Huskisson (whom Erlmann in a later work dubs 'a kind of Hendrik Verwoerd of music') doubted that urbanization could change an inherent 'feeling for the original' in Africans. Later he asserts that Kirby's and Tracey's 'educational efforts eventually laid the foundations of early apartheid educational policies of the late 1940s that used culture and performance as a vehicle to produce the ideal subjects of white *baasskap*'.[73]

As has been pointed out earlier in the chapter, it was the concept of pristine and distinct ethnic groupings that provided the basis for comparative analyses like those written by Kirby and Tracey. Erlmann is particularly adamant on dismissing these 'imagined communities' of ethnically based musical cultures,[74] whilst simultaneously dismissing the usual Marxist strategy of interpreting cultural activity by asserting that

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[72] Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago and London, 1991), 1.
[73] Ibid., 150.
[74] Ibid., 15.

'performance cultures are processes of active structuralization of social relations rather than institutions annexed to social classes'.[75] His historiography features consciousness, autonomy of forms of expressive culture, nonreducibility of consciousness to relations of material production, nonisomorphic relationships between sound structure and social structure and a complex dialectic set in motion by urban and rural heterogeneous spheres of experience. When Erlmann claims that 'the trajectories of migrant performance are less likely to be governed by processes of urban adaptation, but have to be understood as a cultural strategy corresponding with the articulation of a rural, domestic mode of production and urban wage labour',[76] we catch a glimpse of the subtle theoretical manoeuvre he is trying to execute. *Isicathamiya* performance, the Zulu *a cappella* genre which is the focus of much of Erlmann's later research, is, we are asked to believe, not *governed* by processes (it can disengage itself through various strategies), but nevertheless *corresponds* to processes. Saying yes and no to a link between political economy and performance allows theory to occupy the space between structure and practice.

Erlmann makes much of this in-between space in his ethnography of Zulu *isicathamiya* performance entitled *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa*, in which he continues the project launched in *African Stars* by embarking on a 'search for spheres of autonomous social and political action in the face of ever-decreasing choices for South Africa's laboring population and slum dwellers' and in which 'isicathamiya is an arena in which the dialectic of opposition and consent, structure and agency, is constantly reenacted'.[77] Arguing that 'it is the heterogeneity and fluidity of experience at the interstices of the world of wage labor and the world of subsistence production that characterize the situation of South Africa's laboring masses, and not any

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[75] Ibid., 180.
[76] Ibid., 174.
[77] Veit Erlmann, *Nightsong*, 243.

particular fixed class position as such',[78] Erlmann also asserts that 'the various aspects of isicathamiya are impossible to understand without taking into consideration the profound processes through which South Africa's modern geopolitical matrix was being shaped'.[79]

As is the case in *African Stars*, Erlmann makes no attempt to reconcile the latent dichotomy of these points of departure, offering no suggestions on how one can maintain an equilibrium between recognition of the 'sociomoral integrity of African societies' being 'undermined by the intrusion of the forces of colonial domination and the world market'[80] on the one hand, with a view of performance in Africa signifying a ritualization of a reality that is *within* it rather than reflecting a reality that stands *behind* it on the other. Indeed, when Erlmann is at his most convincing, as he is in a chapter like 'The Home Embodied: Dance and Dress in Isicathamiya', he is reading movement and sartorial practice against the background structures of Marxism and colonialism.[81]

Nightsong is an ethnography that goes considerably further than *African Stars* in probing the interplay between structures and agency in an attempt to privilege the latter. But in *Nightsong* this ambiguous third space of theory that started out as the disseminating tool for the irreducible dialectic of performance shows a disturbing proclivity to become as rigid as the neo-Marxist structures it is claiming to displace. Consciousness and agency as theorized by a *different* set of Western intellectuals (Julia Kristeva, Michel de Certeau, Clifford Geertz, Roland Barthes and others) not only regulates the discourse, but spills over into it in a way that questions the very agency of the subject he is attempting to 'liberate'. One needs only to invoke Althusser's understanding of ideology, as distinct

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[78] Ibid., 106.
[79] Ibid., 111-2.
[80] Ibid., 161.
[81] He writes that 'the fashionable body fashions itself, in hologram-like manner, after the juxtaposed and incompatible realms of social experience – the subordinated rural world and the unattainable spheres of white exclusive power – produced by the neocolonial system.'; Ibid., 198. But this does not prevent him from asserting the dialectic of resistance to structure when he concludes that 'the outlandish, "overdressed" costumes speak of the refusal of marginalized individuals to fashion themselves according to the balanced, measured designs dictated by the center', thereby 'negat[ing] the law of the proper.'; id., 203.

from various other Marxist definitions thereof as an essentially false version of objective social reality, to expose the danger inherent in this line of reasoning. In attributing to ideology a *material existence* and therefore an ontological status matching that of relations of production,[82] Althusser conceives of individuals or subjects as acting freely in the very articulation of the subjection:

> the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection*, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'.[83]

Seen in this light, the difficulty of Erlmann's task is not contingent to the South African or even the postcolonial paradigm, but fundamental. The intractability of this fundamental theoretical problem, though it should not detract from Erlmann's subtle and determined efforts to circumvent and undermine it, must nevertheless inform our *belief* of his claim that the 'polysemy of performance provides an effective base for a relatively autonomous realm of discursive freedom'.[84] When Alpheus Kuzwayo's misreading of a traditional text is not 'a misrepresentation of the historical record', but a 'highly articulate expression of an historical consciousness through which "human actors deploy historically salient cultural categories to construct their self-awareness" ',[85] the sovereign subject as privileged meta-narrative (or the 'centred individual' with the powers of self-

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[82] I closely follow John Shepherd and Peter Wicke's reading of Althusser in this instance. See *Music and Cultural Theory* (Oxford, 1997), 51-2.
[83] Althusser, L. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, tr. Ben Brewster (London, 1971), 121-73, esp. 169.
[84] Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 231.
[85] Ibid., 135-9.

constitution and symbolic redefinition) is subtly established, and Erlmann functions as its self-appointed, though not openly acknowledged, interlocutor.[86]

If this criticism is honed more specifically to the historically contingent matrices of the postcolonial world, Spivak's definitive formulation of the problem of postcolonial discourse enters the debate: Can the Subaltern speak in this way, or at all? What have we gained when our discourse is stripped of comparative structures only to install the subject as authoring-self whose 'meaning' is being produced by the West? How do we make sure the subject remains autonomous and how do Western academics like Erlmann, having theorized the subject in a designated space 'unhinged from the control of the dominant order',[87] avoid colonizing her? We find ourselves, depressingly, back where we started with Hornbostel: the moral obligation to act positively thwarted by seemingly inescapable historically informed intellectual paradigms.[88] Acknowledging this problem, Erlmann writes that 'Ultimately … the ability to recompose in words the pieces produced by a fragmented social universe, constitutes an assertion of power.'[89]

The personal choice and local culture representing individual agency that is progressively theoretically established over the course of the unfolding of *African Stars* and *Nightsong*, is finally confirmed as the basis for a relaunch of systemic ethnomusicology in Erlmann's most recent work, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West*. Switching from performance as a space of conscious practice and agency in *Nightsong*, Erlmann turns to texts such as

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[86] Only on the last page of this 'topography of global culture' does Erlmann admit that he has 'sought to intervene in the name of a specifically musical practice', relying on the naïve supposition that ethnomusicologists can potentially discover the voices of the people themselves.
[87] Ibid., 264.
[88] Writing a critique on Foucault's archaeological writing of the 'silence of madness', Jacques Derrida asks a similar disparaging question: 'Would not the archeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle restoration, the *repetition* … of the act perpetrated against madness – and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced?'; Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness' in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), 31-63, esp. 35; French edn., *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris, 1967).
[89] Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 222.

autobiography and travel writing as the locus for the imagining of new identities and the space in which the colonial world and the pre-industrial world of the African can be negotiated.[90] He tries to disentangle the extent to which self-identity in late 19th and 20th century black African thought was and is shaped by clashes in the West's universal claims and local realities. Central to his thesis is still the tenet of black agency, typified by the following passage:

> the rise of the black peasantry in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere in South Africa was not the one-sided process mission and other sources make it out to be. What was hailed in the ecclesiastical press of the day as 'missionary successes', in retrospect might be more properly described as African successes, in that the initial decision to invite missionaries was based on conscious and deliberate choices by traditional African leaders attempting to channel Western education along selected lines.[91]

By exposing the complex web of narratives informing these texts against the background of a steady erosion of the functional significance of base structures, he effectively demolishes the notion of a powerless African colonized polity and opens up a space that can operate within the dichotomies of South African society. This space has, he confidently proclaims, 'the potential of opening up alternative systems of culture and new ways of social ordering'.[92]

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[90] The seminal traces of this approach can be traced to *Nightsong*, which also ends with an (auto)biography of Joseph Shabalala, leader of *Ladysmith Black Mambazo*. Compared to Erlmann's biography of Reuben T. Caluza in *African Stars*, Shabalala's involvement in the narrative which is his life story indicates the enormous methodological distance Erlmann had covered to arrive at a situation where he could centre the sovereign subject in his/her own narrative. Where he is clearly the biographer in the case of Caluza, the ego-document that is Shabalala's life story is constructed on the terms of the subject.
[91] Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 64.
[92] Ibid., 50.

Linking local performance practices to global networks and exploring macro-systems on a global scale is a result of what Erlmann admits to be a sense of frustration with the current debates on postmodernity and postcolonialism. *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* is a project that seems to answer the need identified by Ruth Stone for the development of a powerful systematic paradigm in ethnomusicology, while Erlmann's remark that 'in the light of these far-reaching linkages … a future South African musical history might conceivably have to be written as a chronicle of much larger spatial dimensions'[93] would seem to lend credence to South African musicologists' current belief that ethnomusicology may, after all, provide a way out of the cultural impasse in which their discourses are entangled. But, as the conclusion of the chapter 'Inventing the Metropolis: Josiah Semouse's Travel Diary and the Dilemmas of Representation' demonstrates, Erlmann's work is disconcertingly inconclusive for a project advocating a return to systemic underpinnings. Semouse's 'silence' when confronted with the metropolis which is London, is construed by Erlmann as 'the first omen of a growing vigilance that this history was no longer going to be written from one center but from many different places', yet Semouse's inability to 'write' London is also an 'early example of the African global imagination' in which we find 'an epistemological order in which the colonizer can panoptically see the "native", but the "native" cannot see himself'.[94] Which is it to be? Erlmann is forcing a different conclusion to his own findings, trying to back up his extraordinary claim at the beginning of his book that the world we live in can no longer be considered Eurocentric.[95]

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[93] Ibid., 9.
[94] Ibid., 85.
[95] Ibid., 7. This pronouncement would seem like a central tenet of a thesis that posits (black) South African identity formation as a result of the agency of (black) subjects participating in the narrative of the self. Yet Erlmann is so dependent on the colonizer/colonized dichotomy to structure his narrative (a major problem of postcolonial theory generally) that he persists to the end in looking at his (black) subjects as 'selves situated at the margins of the postcolonial world'; *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 214. To what extent, one has to ask, is the West still dictating the story?

The problem is clearly that Erlmann wants to return to a systemic and comparative paradigm characteristic of earlier ethnomusicology out of frustration with the discourse of postmodernism and postcolonialism. To effect this, he broadens the purview of his study to include three continents, taking as his paradigm one of the most disputed premises of postcolonialism, namely the acceptance of the colonizing moment as the new master narrative binding the loose ends together. But the enlarged scope of his own modernist panoptic gaze depicts not a systemic paradigm enabling comparison, but in his own words the 'fissures that we see opening up … between structure and experience, code and meaning, authorial ego and its Other'.[96] Erlmann's narrative ends up documenting a multi-stranded dialogue in what becomes an ambiguous and contradictory space incapable of supporting definitive conclusions of any kind, undermining the promise of the systemic enterprise.

Apart from this problematic basis for what is to be an attempt at the development of a global episteme, there is another, less theoretical but more central and ominous concern laid bare by Erlmann's work. Writing of the 'far-reaching linkages' according to which he is fashioning his comparative methodology, he notes that:

> these transatlantic linkages entailed experiences and specifically black constructions of modernity in which music was to become the privileged signifier for what Paul Gilroy has called an 'obstinate and consistent commitment to the idea of a better future'.[97]

The privileged subject in Erlmann's narrative is always *black*. When he talks of the South African 'set of actors in our global drama', they are without exception black South Africans, and when he provocatively expands the purview of his earlier work to include

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[96] Ibid., 83.
[97] Ibid., 9.

'South Africa and the West', the line has been crossed between a representation (Marx's *Vertretung,* as opposed to *Darstellung*) of black South Africans in his earlier work, to the subtle implication that these black South Africans for whom he speaks represent all South Africans.[98] This is powerful political stuff that finds itself back in the business of comparative musicology and social exclusion by a new hegemony: not that of the 'global imagination', but that of the mind-set subtly allied to the new established order of black dominance and exclusivity. Writing about the nature of the problem that occupies him throughout *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, Erlmann concludes that

> the problem here, as in the other types of global fictions examined in this book, is not what they describe but rather how the object of description comes to be constituted by the way in which it is described. The issue, then, is not London as it was but London as it was imagined by various actors ... [99]

Put another way, having autonomized his subject and relinquished the ties to base structure, Erlmann is in fact posing the thesis that self-authoring subjects create the world by producing their fictions (performance, biography, travel writing, reviews, hymns and other kinds of text). Ascribing such powers of reality constitution to selected black subjects takes the exercise into a direction where, remembering Althusser's definition of ideology, the power relations of the day rule the discursive agenda. For how will the newly disempowered white minority (both in terms of internal political power and international recognition and support) live in the world of global fictions created by the

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[98] See the related controversy about *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge, 1998), of which Afrikaans philosopher Dan Roodt has written that the title implies an ironic hidden totalitarianism in an exercise of launching an English hegemony in South African literature, suggesting as it does that it is going to 'write' the whole of South Africa whilst confining this literature to English. Dan Roodt, 'Die sloping van 'n hegemonie: 'n Kritiek op literêre anglosentrisme', *Litnet*, (www.mweb.co.za.litnet).
[99] Ibid., 80.

newly instated hegemonic black power that occupies the centre of Erlmann's embedded Western discourse? How is one to escape the scopic regime Erlmann so eloquently describes and in the construction of which he is also participating in his global project? Is it possible to distinguish a view of the world that is separate from *his organization* of that view?

As Jonathan Stock has rightly pointed out in reference to musicology's treatment of ethnomusicological research, omission of qualifying phrases (notably so in the ambitious ambit of a phrase like 'South Africa and the West') results in rhetorical structures that 'sideline other forms of music – as well as the scholarship that describes them – whether or not the authors in question specifically intend it'.[100] Replicating this kind of methodological manoeuvre in 'white' South African musicology does not bear thinking about, especially as Erlmann finds it necessary to facilitate the empowerment of his subject with a silencing of the voice of its Others, both by their unnatural absence in his narratives as fellow *subjects*, and by their simultaneous denigration as 'uncontrollable alien forces of domination and oppression' that become structural eunuchs attending to performance theorized as agency. We are faced with the paradox that whereas Erlmann's project throughout his three monographs rests on investing his subject with autonomy, this strategy seems to depend on a directly proportional denial of humanity, so essential to his constructions of agency, with regard to white South Africa, who become the structural stage on which his liberated black actors can perform on a global scale. Erlmann does not succeed in shifting his opposition to white domination and 'naming' of the African Other to a logical level higher than the ground-level political battle. His failure, if it can so be termed, is that his deflation of monolithic cultural myths at the hand of music by black South Africans is accompanied by an inflation of the partisan historico-political duality on which his narrative relies. White South African narrative presence is

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[100] Jonathan Stock, 'New Musicologies, Old Musicologies', 44.

only effected in terms such as '[the] society that inflicted all the vagaries of the Fordist economic regime [on black South Africans]', 'ruthlessly oppressive white minority rule', 'oppressive, alien system' and 'the oppressor'.[101] This reflects a failure to find a position, and indeed a place, outside politics, that simultaneously rivals politics and dominates it.

At this stage, the charge may be levelled, not without some justification, that if one accepts the postcolonial framework as regulative principle of reasoning, that merely being white or Western-based (physically and/or intellectually) precludes any valid contribution or intervention in the difficult task of revising the (South) African intellectual landscape after Apartheid.[102] Even more than imposing a defeatest paralysis on the entire enterprise of African scholarship, the position for the critic becomes ethically untenable: *but* for some sort of Western institutionalized intervention offering to meet 'Africans' half-way, revisionist discourses aimed at restoring past imbalances of power resulting from emphasizing race as a category are unlikely to be heard and therefore to succeed. Indeed, an expectation from the representatives of the new South African political order for some sort of (collective) compensatory gesture, also from white academia, clearly exists. However, the moment this is acknowledged, as must surely be done in both the cases of Grové's music and Erlmann's ethnomusicology, the much vaunted African Renaissance is always-already colonized by the West. Thus these contributions become constitutionally suspect, ironically, because of the insistence of retaining race as a (now affirmative action) category. A gloomy sense of *déjà vu* and impasse prevails.

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[101] See also Chapter Six, p. 197, where a similar strategy of historical dehumanization is quoted from Asmal, Asmal and Roberts, *Reconciliation through Truth: a Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (Oxford and New York, 1997).

[102] The debate on racism in the South African media conducted over the first few months in 2000, makes this danger abundantly clear.

The strategic difficulty is for any side in the debate to concede the right to define, to name, to write the past and predict the future. Leaving Grové aside just for the moment, academics such as Erlmann will always be vulnerable to the criticism of perpetuating the power-relations of the day (which remain tilted in the favour of the West) as long as they *seriously* attempt to come up with anwers to questions relating to Africa. Erlmann's project is indeed like the panorama that serves as a premise for his book. It not only liberates the gaze but incarcerates it again. The *certainty of representation* that Erlmann describes as the 'theology' of modernity underlies his whole project, but like the 'spectatorial lust' he describes in *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, he is creating a spectacle of a society that is not only global but is also prevented by its centripetal structure from seeing itself.[103] In an age of collapsing world models, Erlmann's postcolonial discourse sets up a frame of truly global dimensions in which First World academics are able to fancy themselves as what Max Weber called 'cultural beings' who 'take a deliberate attitude toward the world' and 'lend it significance'.[104] What he says matters less than where he speaks from, and he speaks from a position of prescriptive intellectual *certainty*. His extraordinary predictions on the future of isicathamiya in the 'reconstruction of South African society' and the way in which that predicted future happens to coincide with his own already expounded thesis,[105] shows that he is the one constructing that future, he is the embodiment of the Western intellectual dictating history and the course it is going to take in Africa and that he is ultimately the embodiment of the aesthetics of the sono-dramatic[106] that he posits as central to the West's discursive practice of asserting the West in a non-material way.

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[103] *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, 96.
[104] Ibid., 98.
[105] Ibid., 210.
[106] Erlmann describes the 'sono-dramatic' as the idea 'that the globalized and rampant musics of late modernity *are* arbitrary indeed and no longer mediate'. He continues: 'the concept of the sono-dramatic works from the notion that sound produces action. It postulates that action is not in sound and sound not part or a consequence of action ... but rather action is an aspect of and supplement to sound. Put

Is the position of Stefans Grové and his 'African' music any different? I believe it is, and that it is in the emulation of this difference, which I shall presently set out, that a possible way forward lies. In his memoir, *My Traitor's Heart*, Rian Malan describes an incident on a back road in Swaziland. Stoned on *dagga* (cannabis), he and some friends had driven his old Peugeot into a ditch. Upon digging it out, they promptly reversed it into another. Malan describes how a laughing tribesman appeared out of nowhere to help, quoting Yeats: 'Things fall apart, the center cannot hold'. With the car remaining stuck, they all sit down in the middle of the road, light another *dagga* pipe, retrieve Malan's guitar from the car and start singing:

> there we were – some Boers, a Swazi, a Muslim from the Cape and two girls, dancing and singing in the dust of an African roadside. It was a moment of utterly blinding exultation, and all the more precious because it was so rare, so rare. In my life, those moments seemed to come mostly when I was stoned … All of a sudden, it didn't really matter whether you and blacks really understood each other. You could just laugh. It was good enough. The best times I had with blacks were when we were smoking together.[107]

This space of laughter, hallucination and intoxication, drunkenness, a space outside the regulatory principles of reason, becomes for Malan a no-man's-land in the untenably paradoxical position of the white liberal in Africa. But 'when the whiskey was finished', he writes, 'we always returned to our psychic trenches'.[108] It is exactly this liberatory *non*position, I should like to suggest, that is occupied by the music of Stefans Grové. His

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differently, sound is not *about* an event or context; it is the event itself, albeit not in some reified sense a frame in which sound *takes place*, but rather as a space in which other things – meaningful as they, too, are – also occur. Put in more basic terms and with regard to world beat, the point about the sono-dramatic role of music is that questions of aesthetic content or taste here become irrelevant and are replaced with a concern for pure aesthetics, for what Alfred Schutz has called syntony'; Ibid., 187-8.

[107] Rian Malan, *My Traitor's Heart* (London, 1991), 70.

[108] Ibid., 90.

habitation of an enfabled dream-world, mediated by sounds inspired by nightly visitations of ghostly apparitions, makes his posistion vis-à-vis society one of *ek-stasis*, of being *outside* reason and *beside* himself. Grové's music, which is similar to Erlmann's scholarship in diffusing difference to varying degrees of sameness, differs from the latter in being 'spoken' from a position *that does not know or imagine itself to be a position of truth*. Thus analysis, or even critique of this position is undermined.

In his *Moriae Encomium* (*The Praise of Folly)*, Desiderius Erasmus lets Moria (which is the Greek word for folly) proclaim 'the beginning and first principle of life' as follows:

> In short, it's to me, to me I say, that the wise man will have to have recourse if he wants to become a father. … Let me ask you if the head or the face or the breast or the hands or the ear, all of which are reputed the more seemly parts of the body, actually beget either gods or men? Not as I see it; it's that other part, so stupid and even ridiculous that it can't be named without raising a snicker, that propagates the human race.[109] That is the sacred fount from which all things draw their existence … [110]

Grové's music, in my opinion, occupies this place of Moria with her power to enunciate veracity. The 'little phallus', i.e. that which is weak, small and ridiculous, I would suggest, is also music. It introduces into a Western-oriented discourse of the Father a ludic element that enables it, in the words of J.M. Coetzee, to participate in discourse as 'free play' and 'careless dissemination' rather than 'discourse as patrilinearity'.[111] 'Isn't

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[109] More directly translated, it reads 'is the *propagatrix* of the human race' (my italics).
[110] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings*, ed. and tr. Robert M. Adams (New York and London, 1989), 12-3. For a more extensive literature on fools and folly, see R.J. Schoek, *Erasmus of Europe: the Prince of Humanists 1501-1536* (Edinburgh, 1993), 106, n. 5.
[111] Coetzee, *Giving Offense*, 96.

laughter', asks feminist writer Luce Irigaray, 'the first form of liberation from a secular oppression? *Isn't the phallic tantamount to the seriousness of meaning*?'[112]

How do we then solve this quandary of the position of the postcolonial Western intellectual, occupied by Grové and Erlmann? By differentiating, I want to suggest, between discourse as play and discourse as Truth, and by privileging the former. Though it must be possible for musicological discourse to occupy this *non*position, it is probably not from ethnomusicology (which rightly takes itself very seriously) that we will learn to distance ourselves from the Father. Erlmann's enlightened ethnomusicology reveals the opposition to colonialist narratives in his work as a merely political one: an opposition of rivals on the same plane, one of whom has stifled and silenced the other. In its censure, it occupies the place, together with musicology, of the 'big phallus'. If there is 'a position which is not a position, a position of ek-stasis in which one knows without knowing, sees without seeing', then Grové's music points us in its direction. It is music that bids us consider that:

> the power of the text lies in its weakness – its jocoserious abnegation of big-phallus status, its evasive (non)position inside/outside play – just as its weakness lies in its power to grow [and] to propagate itself …[113]

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[112] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One*, tr. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (New York, 1985), 163; French edn., *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris, 1977).
[113] Coetzee, *Giving Offense*, 103.

Chapter Six

Exploring the Aesthetics of Reconciliation: Rugby and the South African National Anthem

I

On 15 August 1992, two years before the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa, the still-in-the-making 'New South Africa' played host to an event that served as a barometer of the chances of achieving a lasting peace from a political settlement in the ongoing multi-party negotiations of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). This date was well into the time described by Dan O'Meara as the most dangerous six months in South Africa's history.[1] In March of that year president F.W. de Klerk had convincingly won an all-white referendum enabling him to continue his reform process aimed at abolishing Apartheid legislation. Emboldened by this fresh mandate from his core white constituency, he seized the opportunity to assert in the context of the wider, national negotiation process, his National Party's 'non-negotiable' position of power-sharing and group rights in a new democratic dispensation. Unimpressed by De Klerk's posturing, and probably realizing that the balance of power had by this time started to slide inexorably away from the National Party and towards them, this was a demand the African National Congress would not accept; increased levels of tension and political violence led to a breakdown of the negotiating process of CODESA. Then, on 17 June 1992, fourty-three ANC

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[1] Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Johannesburg, 1996), 411.

supporters were massacred in the squatter camp of Bhoipatong. Rumours circulated that a government-sponsored 'third force' had played a pivotal role in the tragedy, and recriminations on all sides were rife.

Seen against this background, the events surrounding 15 August 1992 hardly seem portentous, indeed, might even have been considered trivial. Taking place on a typically sunny highveld winter afternoon was not a dramatic political announcement or another horrific act of political violence, but a rugby test between the South African Springboks and the New Zealand All Blacks. This was, however, not just another test match in the famous and historic rivalry between the two teams. It was the first official test match on South African soil for sixteen years, and the first official match against the All Blacks in eleven years.[2] The Ellis Park test marked the Springboks' re-entry into international competition after the isolation and ostracism of the international sports boycott during the 1980s and early part of the 1990s,[3] a re-entry made possible by the political changes that swept the country after President De Klerk's epic speech in the South African parliament on 2 February 1990. Although the game of 15 August in this sense heralded a new era in Springbok rugby, it did not manage a complete break with an often controversial past. South African sport, and certainly rugby, had not parted ways with politics when Apartheid received its death-knell in 1990. That much was made clear when the tragedy at Bhoipatong and the stalemate in the CODESA negotiations prompted a response from the ANC's leading negotiator in sports talks and later Minister for Sport Steve Tshwete, who declared that 'The country is in a state of mourning. We will ask sporting bodies to reimpose the moratorium [on international competition] until the

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[2] John Nauright, 'South Africa in Unison? Sport, "Unity", Identities and the Rainbow Nation' in *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London, 1997), 157-81, esp. 180.
[3] See Nauright, ' "No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society": Apartheid, the Rise of Non-Racial Sport and International Boycott Movements 1958-90' in *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 124-56.

political situation is normalized.'[4] As a political tactic Tshwete's intervention was not surprising. The international sports boycott had been one of the ANC's most effective, although often underestimated, weapons in forcing a recalcitrant white South Africa to rethink Apartheid ideology. As it turned out, this particular attempt to draw rugby into the political argument failed. The first casualty of a re-imposed moratorium, it soon turned out, would be a series of soccer internationals against Cameroon, thereby penalizing the most popular sport among blacks. Nelson Mandela, alert to the political hazards of seeking to reinstate the moratorium, intervened to have the Cameroonian tour reinstated. The moratorium having been scuppered as counter-productive, the ANC now set about negotiating a series of conditions with the relevant South African sports governing bodies under which sports tours to and from South Africa could proceed. These conditions included the requirement that visiting teams visit Bhoipatong, that a minute of silence should be observed before all matches out of respect for the victims of violence; that the old South African flag should not be officially displayed; and that the old anthem, *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, should not be played.[5] Having thus arrived at a political solution for what was a potentially embarrassing *volte-face* by the ANC leadership, the Ellis Park test was allowed to go ahead.

Predictably, the event was charged with nostalgia and tradition. The apotheosis of a quasi-religious devotion to rugby among white South Africans, particularly Afrikaners, had always been Springbok-All Black tests. For decades such events had been treated by these two small, peripheral nations as emblematic of world rugby supremacy. Large numbers of the 70 000 white Springbok supporters came to Ellis Park bearing old South

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[4] Cited in David R. Black and John Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation: Sport, Cultures, Politics and Power in the Old and New South Africas* (Manchester and New York, 1998), 114.
[5] Ibid., 115. The account of developments before, during and after the test is based on 'Rugby, Politics and the Ambiguities of Transition' in Black and Nauright's *Rugby and the South African Nation.* See also Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal and Burridge Spies, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society* (Johannesburg, 1995), esp. 8-13.

African flags. Outside the stadium, right-wing Conservative Party members distributed flags and leaflets encouraging the singing of *Die Stem*, while inside the stadium groups of supporters were, according to Shaun Johnson of *The Star*, already chanting 'fok [fuck] die ANC', 'fok die ANC'. When the crowd was asked for a few moments' silence immediately prior to the game, they rose almost as one to sing *Die Stem*. Adding insult to injury, the then Transvaal Rugby Football Union president and South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU) executive member, Louis Luyt, approved the playing of the anthem over the public address system in an official expression of solidarity with the crowd.[6]

Media hysteria ensued. While the Afrikaans Sunday paper *Rapport* waxed lyrical about the 'softer tears of pride' at such a showing of Afrikaner solidarity and of the Afrikaner's defiant will in collectively proclaiming, 'Here is my anthem, here is my flag. Here I will stand today and I will sing: "Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe! Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika!" ',[7] *The Star*'s Shaun Johnson wrote that 'For that moment inside the concrete bowl, it seemed like a besieged tribe had gathered to take strength in their numbers and to send, from the protected citadel, a message of defiance to their perceived persecutors.'[8] The political fall-out resulting from the test is best appreciated by reading the ANC's statement concerning the pending August 22 test at Newlands in Cape Town against the then reigning world champions, Australia: 'If the spectators go to the test not to watch rugby but to challenge the new South Africa the ANC will have no option but to oppose all future tours to and from South Africa including the 1995 World Cup ... All spectators

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[6] Ibid., 115.
[7] Part of the refrain from *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, literally translated as 'We shall live, we shall die! We for you, South Africa!'; *Rapport* (Johannesburg), 16 August 1992, cited in Grundlingh, Odendaal and Spies, *Beyond the Tryline*, 13.
[8] Shaun Johnson, 'Inside the Protected Citadel', *The Star* (Johannesburg), 17 August 1992.

to the game stand challenged by this reality – they can make rugby a reconciler of people or they can use it as a ritual that celebrates conquest and domination of black people.'[9]

II

South African colonial sports such as rugby and cricket evolved during the twentieth century into central cultural elements in the emergence and maintenance of geographies of exclusion and division in colonial society and later the Apartheid state.[10] Of no sport is this more true than rugby, as no other sporting practice or indeed cultural pursuit became so closely tied to Afrikaner identity during the years of their political dominance of South Africa. As Afrikaner ritual, rugby has symbolized elitist connotations, emphasis on group cohesion and the need to establish collective dominance over an opponent. International tours and matches became focal points of white cultural identity, and as opposition to Apartheid policies intensified, success on the rugby field increasingly took on political relevance as a way to shore up white insecurities and to demonstrate the symbolic power of white South Africa. Rugby was indeed in the words of Archer and Bouillon, 'the Chosen Sport of the Chosen People.'[11] It is this context that informs the embrace of contentious white symbols like *Die Stem* at the hallowed test match venue of Ellis Park, transforming the stadium on 15 August into a space of cultural resistance and the singing of *Die Stem* into an aggressive assertion of a particular 'South African way of life'.

Louis Peter Grijp writes that the national anthem, with its specific function at major sporting events, belongs to the most intense national and collective experiences of

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[9] Cited in Black and Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 117.
[10] See 'Making Imperial Men: the Emergence of White Rugby in South Africa' and 'At the Nexus of Power: Rugby, the Broederbond and the National Party during Apartheid' in Black and Nauright's *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 22-37 and 60-76.
[11] R. Archer and A. Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London, 1982), 56-78.

the *fin de siècle*.[12] Writing of the Dutch national anthem in particular, he ascribes its resurgence in popularity to its use at sporting events in general and football in particular. For him the national anthem belongs to the fixed rituals that capture moments of national excitement, of which song is very often the emotional climax.[13] The spontaneous singing[14] of *Die Stem* at the Ellis Park test seems to reaffirm this, making the old South African national anthem central to what the ANC perceived as a ritual celebrating conquest and domination. As James Brown succinctly wrote in the *Mail & Guardian*, '*Die Stem* was an emotive hymn for the riders of the wagons,[15] but it had the sound of a dirge in the lives of the black millions.'[16]

Ironically, the words of *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* were written by the early Afrikaans language rights activist C.J. Langenhoven in *protest* at the continued discrimination against Afrikaans then endemic in the British dominated Union of South Africa. The words, affirming Afrikaner historical mythology and asserting claims to land and religious favour with the Almighty, were published in various newspapers in 1918 as Langenhoven encouraged composers to try their hand at setting the text.[17] Appropriately, taking into account the close correlation between Afrikaner Calvinism and nationalism, the successful melody was composed in 1921 by a *dominee* in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reverend Marthinus Lourens de Villiers. In 1928 this version was sung, together with *God save the King*, when the Union flag was raised for the first time. After 1938 the *Volksraad* in the national parliament decided that *Die Stem* would be played at

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[12] Louis Peter Grijp, 'Nationale Hymnen in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden II', *Nationale Hymnen: Het Wilhelmus en zijn Buren*, ed. Louis Peter Grijp (Nijmegen and Amsterdam, 1998), 75-95, esp. 94.
[13] Ibid., 91.
[14] John Nauright points out that for all the right-wing agitation before the match, the actions of the 70 000 strong crowd remained largely a *spontaneous* expression of defiance and cultural solidarity. See Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 165.
[15] A reference to the Boer *Voortrekkers* who left the Cape Colony in the Great Trek of 1838 to escape British rule, an event referred to in the first stanza of *Die Stem*.
[16] James A. Brown, 'Going for a song …', *Daily Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 23 December 1998.
[17] Information obtained from the Nasionale Letterkunde Museum in Bloemfontein.

all formal occasions. From 1957 until 1994, when Enoch Sontonga's *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* became the joint national anthem with *Die Stem*, De Villiers's anthem in its Afrikaans and English versions was the only national anthem of South Africa. It was to be during this time that *Die Stem* would become closely associated not with the promise of equality and freedom to which Afrikaners aspired in the context of their historical adversarial relationship to their British colonial masters, but as a ritual celebrating conquest and domination over black South Africans.

It is hardly surprising that *Die Stem* has assumed different meanings for various groups of people at different times. In this it is no different from many older and more famous examples of the genre, notably the *Marseillaise*, to which *Die Stem* clearly owes its opening flourish.[18] But whereas both *Die Stem* and the *Marseillaise* can, broadly speaking, trace their beginnings to resistance against prevailing political orders, *Die Stem*, in contrast to its French counterpart, rather quickly shed any subversive connotations it might have had as the alternative to the establishment symbol, *God Save the King*. It rapidly became part of a respectable new political order engineered by the National Party, with the close relationship between the words, melody and the political aspirations of Afrikaners making it a symbol of *exclusive* political unity.[19] That ambiguity attaches itself to national symbols performing different functions for different (groups of) people in different social, political and temporal contexts, seems inevitable. As we shall see later, *Nkosi* is also not universally accepted as the representative 'black struggle anthem', even amongst black South Africans.

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[18] The opening phrase of the two anthems have the following in common: an anacrusis on repeated notes (the *Marseillaise* anacrusis consists of three notes as opposed to *Die Stem*'s two), followed by an upward perfect fourth leading to two repeated notes (i.e. four notes) of equal length (in the *Marseillaise* these notes are a major second apart and in *Die Stem* a major third), culminating in a melodic climax precisely one octave higher than the repeated anacrusis. Both phrases are to be played in the manner of a march.

[19] Although the *Marseillaise* has without doubt occupied a similar place in French culture, this has not detracted from the international appropriation of especially the melody as the almost universal sound of resistance and *lieu de mémoire* of the French Revolution. See Willem Frijhoff, 'Metamorfosen van de Marseillaise' in *Nationale Hymnen*, 128-61.

This needs to be taken into account in theses that posit the symbolic use of *Die Stem* (and *Nkosi*) in possible strategies of political resistance and subversion, such as those described by Ingrid Bianca Byerly with regard to popular music. Byerly's conclusions that both anthems were successfully used by artists in the 80s in South Africa to encode messages of protest, rest on implicit assumptions that as ideological signifiers both anthems lack ambiguity. Byerly refers to the adaptation of *Die Stem* in Koos Kombuis's *Swart September* (Black September), hidden references to *Nkosi* in the song *Weeping* by the group Bright Blue, Prophets of the City's rap version of *Nkosi* and Dan Moyane's superimposition of the words of *Nkosi* over the tune of *Die Stem* – all designed as subtle subversive critiques of the late-Apartheid state. Ironically, she states that after the changes wrought by 1994, 'the old Afrikaans anthem did not suddenly take on the sinister connotations of old racism of the old regime, but rather of a collaborative effort towards a new order.'[20] With this she affirms *Die Stem*'s rehabilitation as a symbol of the new and a tool in the ever so difficult process of nation building in the South Africa of Nelson Mandela and his heirs, and simultaneously accords it a measure of ambiguity (post-1994) not reckoned with in her theory of political subversion that predates black political emancipation.

Along with Dutch, Afrikaans is the only language that refers to the national anthem as the *volkslied*. The word came to Dutch (and Afrikaans) via Johann Gottfried Herder, who meant by *Volkslied* those old, preferably anonymous songs passed down orally from generation to generation and reflecting a certain *Volksgeist*.[21] In Afrikaans this meaning exists, but in the *volkslied* (read national anthem, *hymne nationale* or *Nationalhymne*), the understanding is primarily that of a song composed *for* the people rather than *by* the people. Again this is no unique trait, even amongst older national

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[20] Byerly, 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: the Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa', *Ethnomusicology*, 42:1 (1998), 1-44, esp. 32-5.
[21] Grijp, *Nationale Hymnen*, 7.

anthems such as *God save the Queen* or the Dutch *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe*, although as Grijp correctly remarks, the best examples of the genre usually succeed in combining both these imperatives: for and by the people.[22] The latter implies a general acceptance of the anthem singularly lacking when one considers the symbolic status of *Die Stem* in the broader South African context, placing Byerly's contention as to *Die Stem*'s potential to 'collaborate' with the new political order into serious contention. Significantly, Langenhoven's words ensured that, like the *Marseillaise*, singing *Die Stem* became part of a ritual that transcended its stately duties and functions. The fourth verse in particular, with its pronounced religious tone, facilitates a transference of the sacred and religious to the national domain that imbues the latter with everlasting and transcendental values. This is despite the fact that *Die Stem* is in character closer to the energetic (military) march of which the *Marseillaise* is probably the most representative example among national anthems, as opposed to the hymn character typified by *God Save the Queen.*[23]

III

It is to the category of the stately chorale that *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* belongs. Composed and written in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Xhosa from the Mpinga clan, it was allegedly first sung in public in 1899 at the ordination of Reverent Boweni, a Shangaan Methodist Minister.[24] The English mission station influence on *Nkosi* is palpable, and indeed Sontonga is believed to have received training as a teacher at the famous Lovedale Institution before being sent to a Methodist Mission school in Nancefield, near

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[22] Ibid., 7.

[23] Although *Die Stem* is often sung slowly, creating a hymn-like effect, both the dotted rhythm anacrusis and De Villiers's tempo indications in the manuscript (*poco vivo e marcia*) make his intentions as to the march-like character of his melody quite clear.

[24] Information page by Geneveve Walker of the National Monuments Council (1996). Veit Erlmann gives the date of composition as 1903 in *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago and London, 1991), 120.

Johannesburg. The composer's own choir as well as more famous vocal groups such as John Dube's Ohlange choirs frequently performed the song in Johannesburg and Natal, eventually making it a popular and well-known hymn. On 8 January 1912, at the first meeting of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the forerunner of the ANC, it was sung immediately after the closing prayer. It eventually replaced Reuben T. Caluza's *Silusapho Lwase Afrika* as the official anthem of the ANC in 1925.[25]

Veit Erlmann makes the point that during the first decades of its existence, the SANNC and later the ANC 'remained a conservative, middle-class association of people of rank whose cultural activities reflected the ideological straitjackets of Durban's minute black elite.[26] Music, he writes, had been an important component of early nationalist discourse since the early 1870s. It is this identity embedded in the aspirations of black middle-class South Africans, aspirations encouraged by the mission schools only to be denied by society later, that characterizes Sontonga's anthem. And it is this character that has also at times signified a distinct non-Africanness to more militant supporters of an African identity. In a paper delivered at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology at Rhodes University in 1991, Musa Xulu alleged that the anthem represented a 'total distortion of the African world view' and imposed a 'foreign oppressive ideological line of thought'. He attacked the song as displaying poor rhythmic organization, a single and dominant melody depriving the performers of the opportunity to mix and intermingle with multi-melodic signatures, harmonization that impedes creativity and texture that is literally disempowering. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* is, for Xulu, representative of 'African conformity to European command'.[27]

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[25] Walker, information page from the National Monuments Council (1996). Erlmann gives the date as 1919 in *African Stars*, 120.
[26] Ibid., 119.
[27] Musa Xulu, 'Socio-Political Change and the National Anthem in South Africa: A Critical Appraisal of Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika', *Papers Presented at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology*, ed. Carol Muller (Grahamstown, 1995).

From a white musicological perspective, Percival Kirby and other South African musicologists have added insult to injury by claiming that Bokwe's, Sontonga's, and Caluza's compositions, though 'westernized', are 'without a trace of the devices used by European composers to mitigate the "squareness" of the design or to inject vitality into the melody or character into the harmony'.[28] It is important to place both Xulu's and Kirby's criticisms in perspective by considering John Blacking's observation that the appropriation of the triads and cadences of European hymn tunes 'expressed the new relationships and values of urban groups, who expected fuller participation in the social and economic life of the community into which they had been drawn economically'.[29] Erlmann also contributes the additional insight that, from an historical and anthropological perspective of black South African cultural dynamics, 'the appropriation of elements of the hegemonic culture by a subordinate class of blacks was received with panic by the dominant white society' and so 'black achievement to a large extent had to be couched in defensive, assimilationist language'.[30]

It is not only as the opposite in the binary typology of national anthems (hymn or march) that *Nkosi* proves an antithesis to *Die Stem*. The song's humble and rather obscure origins and the lack of information available about the composer, conspire to invest this hymn with the elusive kudos accompanying the words 'by the people'. 'No one who heard the plaintive strains of *Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika*,' writes James Brown, 'could be unaware that its origins were in subjection. It is not a hymn of dominion or of belief in exclusive possession of the land. It has the kind of sound the Children of Israel raised in the brickfields of Egypt.'[31] It is the song's adoption by the ANC in 1925 that marked the start of its transformation into an anthem 'for the people'. Although *Nkosi* could

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[28] Percival Kirby, 'The Bantu Composers of South Africa', *South African Music Encyclopedia*, ed. Jacques Malan (4 vols., Cape Town, 1979-86), vol. i, 85-94, esp. 94.
[29] Cited in Erlmann, *African Stars*, 121.
[30] Ibid., 120.
[31] Brown, 'Going for a song …', *Daily Mail & Guardian.*

easily have become a song associated exclusively with the ANC, especially as its struggle for political supremacy among black rivals like Bantu Stephen Biko's Black Consciousness Movement and Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party was often bloody and ruthless, Sontonga's composition by and large managed to escape this fate. It has evolved into a song symbolizing the longed-for freedom and dignity of oppressed Africans everywhere, becoming in the words of Benedict Anderson an international 'echoed physical realization of the imagined community' of Pan-Africanism.[32] It has been a unisonant experience of simultaneity for people in Zimbabwe, Namibia and other parts of Africa and Southern Africa, while it is also the national anthem of Tanzania and Zambia.

Although *Nkosi* has, for white South Africans, mainly been associated with what has been for them the dangerous assertion of the nationalist aspirations of black Africans, its message and meaning have also not been unambiguous. In this it is no different from the ambiguity of meaning surrounding *Die Stem*, remarked on earlier. On holiday with my family in the Hogsback, near the former Apartheid homeland of the Transkei, I remember hearing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* for the first time. The year was 1987, a mere three years before the political landscape of the country would be transformed for ever, but then under the sovereign finger of P.W. Botha there was, incredibly, no hint of the dramatic changes to come. In a scene reminiscent of a dusty colonial past, hotel guests assembled in the large sitting room on Christmas Eve to listen to a choral performance by the hotel's black staff. At the end of the concert, all the guests (all of them white), respectfully rose to the opening strains of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. Having never heard the song before, I was perplexed to be informed afterwards that this was 'their', i.e. blacks', anthem. I had managed to grow up in South Africa for 16 years without ever hearing

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[32] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 1991), 145.

Nkosi. But perhaps even more remarkably, among the assembled adults there was no discernible animosity towards the anthem or the struggle it symbolized. We are left contemplating a country where black and white consciousness were (and arguably remain) so sharply segregated that even the most potent symbols of the Struggle would mean different things to white and black South Africans respectively.

IV

It appears, then, that far from occupying antithetical ideological positions and despite exhibiting some fundamental differences as generic anthems, *Die Stem* and *Nkosi* have certain characteristics in common. Both anthems have deep historical associations as songs of particular political parties, but whereas *Die Stem* has never been able to present itself as anything other than an Afrikaner nationalist symbol, *Nkosi* has found wider international appeal as an icon in the African struggle for freedom. Both anthems proclaim Christian values, although it is ironically *Die Stem*'s romanticized idolization of the land (and by implication the State) that led the provincial synod of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa to declare the anthem 'unsuitable and unacceptable' in 1989.[33] Whereas both anthems can claim the epithet 'for the nation' in their current usage, only *Nkosi* can lay claim to the distinction of national anthem *avant la lettre*, i.e. 'by the people'.

Given *Nkosi*'s mission station origins, it is hardly surprising to find a degree of shared musical vocabulary belying the historical and ideological differences between Sontonga's composition and *Die Stem*. Assessing what she calls the 'music indaba' of late-Apartheid South Africa, Byerly calls the two anthems 'remarkably compatible' when

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[33] Cited in an article in *The Sunday Star* (Johannesburg), 11 June 1989.

superimposed harmonically or woven together.[34] She makes this assertion in the context of developing her thesis of an inter-racial, anti-Apartheid musical discourse. It is therefore hardly surprising to learn that, when composers have seen fit to indulge in a musical 'reconciliation' of the two anthems, their projects have always been informed by a distinctly non-musical agenda. Carl van Wyk writes in the foreword to his 1986 *Overture for a Festive City: Johannesburg 100 Years*, that the two anthems 'sound splendid together.'[35] While one is tempted to think that the importance of belonging to opposing categories (march and hymn) would inevitably diminish when taking into account the preference for slower tempi in renditions of *Die Stem* in non-military contexts and the orchestration of *Nkosi* by Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph (intended to assert the change in status of Sontonga's composition from resistance hymn to symbol of State), Van Wyk's *Overture* actually reinforces the very different 'personalities' of each anthem. *Die Stem* fits the bill of festive march splendidly, its dotted anacrusis and triadic voice leading becoming a salient feature of the composition even without obvious devices (like higher register or brighter orchestration) employed to effect this. Where the two melodies of *Nkosi* and *Die Stem* sound together for any length of time, *Die Stem* overpowers its rival with ease. Musical compromise seems to favour *Die Stem*, giving an ironic twist to Van Wyk's conclusion that 'With a little "give and take", we can all get along splendidly.'

Christopher James's use of both anthems in the final *maestoso* section of the third movement of his choral symphony, *Images from Africa*, aims to 'depict the integration of different cultures' and emphasize the symbolic and philosophic content of B.W. Vilikazi's poem *Ukuthula* (Peace).[36] Both anthems are briefly introduced 13 bars before

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[34] Ingrid B. Byerly, 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet', 24.
[35] Foreword to the unpublished autograph of *Overture for a Festive City: Johannesburg 100 Years*, 27 October 1985.
[36] Programme notes to *Images from Africa*, rev. version 1992, diss. (Univ. of Cincinatti, 1987).

the start of the *maestoso* section and various combinations are developed through to the end of the work. Like Van Wyk's *Overture*, the apparent inspiration behind the combination of the two anthems is to be found in the loose analogy of peaceful co-existence between the groups perceived to be represented by their use. Arthur Wegelin's short symphonic movement *Musikaal Akkoord*, Op. 49 of 1984, is subtitled *Die Stem versus Nkosi*. Like Van Wyk's *Overture*, the appearance of both anthems is prepared in a short introductory section littered with melodic fragments belonging to both. Wegelin was deprecatory with regard to the use of 'Africanisms' or African influences in his music generally, his only other experiment in this regard being his *Drie Stukke van die Afrikaanse Vasteland*. Hendrik Josephus Stanford, who carried out an analytical study of Wegelin's music, was however sufficiently convinced by the experiment of *Musikaal Akkoord*, and presumably the outcome of the 'contest', to grace the conclusion to his analysis with the racist innuendo: 'fit for a multi-racial gathering.'[37]

Probably the most famous symbolic use of the two anthems *sans mots* dates back to 1966. Hubert du Plessis's *Suid-Afrika – Nag en Daeraad* for soprano, choir and orchestra was commissioned to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Republic created by Hendrik Verwoerd and the National Party on 31 May 1961.[38] Though black repression was arguably at an all-time high after the Sharpeville shootings earlier in the decade, the first half of 1966 was an optimistic time for Afrikaners: Prime Minister Verwoerd was in control having survived a first assassination attempt in 1960, South Africa's economic growth rate was among the highest in the world and, politically, Afrikaners could not see

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[37] Hendrik Josephus Stanford, *Die Komposisies van Arthur Wegelin tot 1988*, diss. (Univ. of the Western Cape, 1988), 184-95, esp. 195.

[38] The work's title was suggested by a paragraph from the *Gedenkboek van den oorlog in Zuid-Afrika* (Book of Remembrance of the War in South Africa). The following passage from this 1904 publication, appearing on the title page of the manuscript in the composer's own hand, reads in translation: 'It is as if an endless night reigns over South Africa. A night the anxiety of which can only be borne, because it contains the promise of a coming dawn.'; see Edward Aitchison, 'Hubert du Plessis' in Peter Klatzow (ed.), *Composers in South Africa Today* (Cape Town and Oxford, 1987), 33-75, esp. 57-8.

their superiority challenged successfully for many years to come. Du Plessis's official orchestration of *Die Stem*, dating from 1960, is memorably described by James Brown as the resounding confirmation of the Afrikaner success story: 'the pomp and ceremony of Parliament's openings with airforce fly-overs and troop-lined streets heard the triumphal crash of cymbals and the braying of what had once seemed a simple pastoral hymn. *Die Stem* had come of age.'[39] It was the triumphalist musical equivalent to what Ferial Haffajee has described as the 'megalomaniac architecture' of the time: to buffer the outcries against repression and to entrench their rule, she writes, Afrikaner architects designed and constructed buildings that blared 'We've arrived and we're here to stay'.[40]

Even so, *Suid-Afrika – Nag en Daeraad* sounds less like the accompaniment to a triumphal procession than a fearful and self-righteous war cry. One could be forgiven for thinking that the epic nature of its programme (the 'Night' and 'Daybreak' depict a symbolic journey from the defeated Boer Republics after the Anglo-Boer War to a unified white South Africa under Afrikaner rule), would effectively disqualify a small-scale form. Yet the work is relatively short, a brief flourish that seems to end almost as soon as it is set in motion. But it is the flourish of the second and final movement, entitled *Daeraad*, that holds the attention. The music is disturbing in the way we are simultaneously drawn to and repulsed by its excesses: the large and colourful orchestration with choir and soloist, the militaristic trumpet fanfares, the almost propagandistic use of the banal nationalist Afrikaans text, *'n Ieder nasie het sy land* (see Figure 6.1), the overpowering ethos of modernist superiority – all incongruously occupying the claustrophobic space of what becomes a grotesquely stunted movement. The discrepancy between ability and aspiration, content and form reaches down to the realm of the aesthetic, calling into question the possibility, perhaps even the desirability,

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[39] Brown, 'Going for a song … ', *Daily Mail & Guardian.*
[40] Ferial Haffajee, 'Under the Cold Stare of Hendrik Verwoerd', *Daily Mail & Guardian*, 21 December 1998.

Figure 6.1. Text and translation of *'n Ieder Nasie het Sy Land* indicating where fragments of *Die Stem* and *Nkosi* are used (my translation).

Die Stem (bar 142), Nkosi (bar 144)

'n Ieder nasie het sy land,	Every nation has its land,
ons woon op Afrikaanse vasteland.	we live on African soil.
Vir ons is daar geen beter grond,	For us there is no better land,
op al die vrye wêreldrond.	in all the world.
Trots is ons om die naam te dra,	Proud are we to carry the name,
van kinders van Suid-Afrika.	of children of South Africa.

Die Stem (bar 161), Nkosi (bar 162)

'n Ieder nasie het sy wet,	Every nation has its law,
wat goed gebied en kwaad belet.	that instills good and forbids evil.
En elke wet is na sy aard,	And every law is according to his character,
en gaan met sy natuur gepaard.	and cannot be separated from his nature.
So volg ons ook die sede na,	So we follow the moral code,
wat tuishoort in Suid-Afrika.	that belongs in South Africa.

Nkosi (bar 180)

'n Ieder nasie het sy reg,	Every nation has its justice,
al is hy nog so swak en sleg.	even if he is weak and bad.
Daar is 'n Oog wat alles merk,	There is an Eye that sees everything,
hy set die onreg paal en perk.	and sets the bounds of injustice.
Hy kyk ook ons verdrukkers na,	He sees our oppressors,
en waak ook vir Suid-Afrika.	and watches over South Africa.

Die Stem (bar 204), Nkosi (bar 205)

'n Ieder nasie het sy tyd,	Every nation has its time,
om op te groei en op te kyk.	to grow and to look to the future.
En soos die lewe en die dood,	And like life and death,
so is dit altyd wys en goed .	so it is always wise and good.
Daar kom 'n dag vir ons ook, ja,	Yes, there comes a day for us too,
van grootse daad Suid-Afrika!	of greater deeds South Africa!

of long range goals, questioning the future so confidently proclaimed in the last verse of the text.[41] It is as if this predilection for the short form traces a fault-line in Afrikaner nationalism: the inability of a strategically weak and numerically small ethnic group to match up and give substance to the aspirations and claims of national grandeur.[42] It is in this musical context that Du Plessis interweaves four fragments of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and three fragments of *Die Stem* between the stanzas infused with Hegelian nationalist conviction. The space of Africa in this world of white music is the space of the exotic periphery, the frame of that which should be considered content, the mere context of what matters. I have already mentioned the ambivalent status of *Nkosi* among white South Africans. Du Plessis's work suggests a possible explanation in that it posits the black voice as acceptable: granted that it is 'contained' under white control and domination, and that it accepts its land, law, rights and time as *naturally different* to that of white South Africa.

V

National anthems, writes Louis Grijp, need moments of strong collective experience in order to be consolidated.[43] The 1995 Rugby World Cup was to provide such an experience. The first major international event to be staged by the newly 'rehabilitated' South Africa, it constituted, in the words of David Black and John Nauright, a hallmark

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[41] See Leonard B. Meyer's association of this tendency with musical eclecticism in *Music, the Arts and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago and London, 1967), 346.
[42] As *caveat* to this remark I should mention Roland Barthes's refutation of criticisms of Schumann's prediliction for short forms: 'I hear it said: Schumann wrote so many short pieces *because he didn't know how to develop*. A repressive criticism: what you *refuse* to do is what you *can't* do; *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, tr. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 300; French edn., *L'obvie et l'obtus: essais critiques III*, Paris, 1982.
[43] Grijp, *Nationale Hymnen*, 11.

event in the politics of reconciliation and identity formation in the new South Africa.[44] The potential effectiveness of the World Cup as an historic opportunity for the consolidation of new symbols and a collective celebration in which new, shared feelings and identities could be experienced, is summed up by Grant Jarvie when he writes that 'sport … often provides a uniquely effective medium for inculcating national feelings; it provides a form of symbolic action which states the case for the nation itself.'[45] Rugby World Cup 1995 could, in Jarvie's words, provide 'an extraordinary source of "shared memories of specific events and personages", all of which could prove to be 'turning points for a collective national history.'[46]

Receiving support from Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela, who called the predominantly white Springbok team 'his sons', the South African team progressed, along with New Zealand, through the knockout stages of the tournament to set up a tense final between rugby's two greatest traditional rivals. The game was won by a drop goal in extra time by the South Africans. Only three years previously at Ellis Park, white Springbok supporters had defiantly and provocatively flaunted the old flag and anthem and hurled abuse at the ANC and Mandela. It is no doubt with this in mind that the London *Economist* worried in advance of the Rugby World Cup that the tournament could reopen old racial wounds. There could, it wrote, 'be jeering during "*Nkosi Sikelel I*".[47] As it happened, Nelson Mandela appeared at the final in Springbok cap and jersey and François Pienaar's acceptance speech acknowledged the support of 'forty million' South Africans. Many faces in the crowd were painted in the colours of the new flag, which vastly outnumbered the occasional old

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[44] Black and Nauright, 'The World and South Africa in Union? The Significance of the 1995 Rugby World Cup', *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 122-42.
[45] Cited in Black and Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 130.
[46] Ibid., 130.
[47] 'Rugby's New Songs', *The Economist*, 27 May 1995.

flag. So what role in all of this did the singing of the two anthems, the moment described by Grijp as the emotional apex of international sport competitions of this nature, play?

When the Rugby World Cup final took place in Johannesburg on 24 June 1995, the two anthems had been fused to create a single, shortened National Anthem. In January 1995, the then Minister of Arts, Culture and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane, invited a panel to form an 'Anthem Committee' in order to achieve this. The committee met on 10 February and 9 May 1995 and decided to 'remove repetitions and to omit those sections of the anthems which had words that might be found offensive or unacceptable by some sections of [the] community.'[48] The new version was approved by the Cabinet as the official National Anthem of South Africa on 17 May 1995.[49] The new anthem turned out to be less the result of patriotic inspiration than the committee compromise it inevitably was. It is interesting to note, given the Anthem Committee's statement that omissions from the original anthems in the new version were either due to scrapped repetitions or a sanitation of unacceptable words, that *Die Stem* is represented in words only by the first two lines of the Langenhoven poem (see Figure 6.2). Perhaps understandably the references to Afrikaner history (the ox-wagons used in the Great Trek) and the chorus affirming a willingness to die for 'our fatherland', informed by Afrikaner exclusivity, were omitted. The musical reference is somewhat longer and also accompanies the English part of the text that was newly composed for the conclusion of the anthem.[50]

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[48] See 'The National Anthem of South Africa', *South Africa Sings*, ed. J.S.M. Khumalo (Johannesburg, 1998), vol. i, 58-63, esp. 58.
[49] Ibid., 58.
[50] The fact that the English translation of *Die Stem* was not deemed fit for the new National Anthem is probably due to the fact that the committee wished for an English 'drawing together' of the different linguistic and cultural strands that preceded it. The words, a propagandistic declaration of a unitary state composed of a united people, resonates with the position that English as language is occupying in the new political dispensation as the preferred *lingua franca* of a new black elite. This position assumes enormous political significance given the historically adversarial positions of English and Afrikaans in South Africa.

Figure 6.2. Text of the 1995 version of the South African National Anthem.

Xhosa	Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika	God bless Africa,
	Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,	May its horn be raised up,
	Yizwa imithandazo yethu,	hear our prayers,
	Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.	Lord bless us, its children.
Sesotho	Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,	Lord preserve our nation,
	O fedise dintwa la matshwenyeho,	End all wars and troubles.
	O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso,	Preserve it, preserve our nation,
	Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.	The nation of South Africa!
Afrikaans	Uit die blou van onse hemel,	Ringing out from our blue heavens,
	Uit die diepte van ons see,	From our deep seas breaking round,
	Oor ons ewige gebergtes,	O'er our everlasting mountains,
	Waar die kranse antwoord gee,	Where the echoing crags resound,[51]
English	Sounds the call to come together,	
	And united we shall stand,	
	Let us live and strive for freedom,	
	In South Africa our land.	

[51] Translation from Khumalo, *South Africa Sings*, 58.

Though the biggest part of the effort in creating this symbolic quilt obviously went into soothing and trying to balance ethnic linguistic sensibilities (no doubt working from the supposition that the words and their meanings would linger long after the musical sounds had disappeared), inevitably the Anthem Committee also had to take controversial musical decisions. As a result of the severe textual pruning of *Die Stem*, the music had to be adapted to suit the shortened text. Two entire musical phrases are deleted so that two sections that were never intended as neighbors, suddenly find themselves in juxtaposition (see bar 34 in Example 6.1). The resulting harmonic progression (D: ii^6 – vi – I^6 in Mzilikazi Khumalo's harmonization) destroys what was intended as an imperfect cadence resolving to the tonic on the first note of the next phrase. The change of harmonic and melodic direction from what is expected to follow is and remains profoundly unsettling, even after many hearings. The actual fusion of the two anthems is achieved by a two bar tonal movement from *Nkosi*'s G major to its dominant, which is the original key of De Villiers's *Stem* (see bars 20-21 in Example 6.1). Too short to constitute a proper modulation, the 'coming together' in the new National Anthem could scarcely be less convincing in its linear conception as a kind of *Biblia Pauperum* for those illiterate in the more subtle signs and symbols of rainbow politics.

Whereas we have seen how composers like Carl van Wyk and academics like Ingrid Bianca Byerly invested great symbolic capital in the ease with which the two anthems fit together in a synchronic sense, the Anthem Committee treats the two anthems as separate musical entities that remain separate in the moment of their fusion. In displaying succession rather than integration, the question arises: is this not also a linearity that signals a collapse of belief in long-range, linear historical processes? In a society of the *present*, where faith in a shining future is rare if not extinct, and the past is available only as so many ethno-mythic constructions, it is only in the action of the present that survival can be conceptualized. In such a context the new National Anthem

Example 6.1. The 1995 version of the South African National Anthem.

becomes indicative of the irrelevance of aesthetics in the face of the necessity for *action* as an aspect and supplement of sound. The new anthem is indeed music as *action*, utility and production (nation-building): the will to unity invested in its form perhaps even a repudiation of the very idea of the aesthetic as a separate realm whose goal is feeling and understanding rather than action. It reminds us of Erlmann's statement that 'World beat is not a messenger. Rather, it is action – action that mediates nothing but action.'[52]

Apart from this unconvincing and almost reluctant co-habitation of the same musical space by *Nkosi* and *Die Stem*, it is interesting to note that the musical break that characterizes the difference between the two anthems, the short modulation, is not prepared, disguised, or suppressed. On the contrary, as Michel de Certeau has written in another context, 'the text presupposes and thwarts this break in order to be grounded as a discourse of knowledge'.[53] The transparent alterity on which the New Anthem is based, an alterity simultaneously invested with an intuitive sense of inter-dependency, makes it into a hermeneutics of the Other. As a strategy to coerce belief in the hegemonic idea of one South African nation of which some constituent parts would henceforth, in the spirit of 'affirmative action', be more equal than others (and so continuing the lack of equality institutionalized by Apartheid on segregationist principles), it is ideal. 'Hegemony', writes Homi Bhabha, 'requires iteration and alterity to be effective'.[54] The separateness (between 'us' and 'them') is visible in the spaces occupied by the African and European languages respectively, but also in the setting and choreography of the opening ceremony: *Nkosi* – *Die Stem*, Ellis Park – *Egoli* (Sesotho word meaning 'city of gold'), François Pienaar – Nelson Mandela, the white Springbok team – the black choir.

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[52] Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Chicago, 1999), 189.
[53] Michel de Certeau, 'Ethno-Graphy: Speech, or the Space of the Other: Jean de Léry', *The Writing of History*, tr. Tom Conley (New York, 1988), 209-43, esp. 222; French edn., *L'écriture de l'histoire* (Paris, 1975).
[54] Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory', *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), 29.

Cultural diversity, i.e. Bhabha's 'representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity',[55] is adopted from the Apartheid dispensation as the point of departure for the hegemonic narrative of a newly confident black elite.

However, culture as conceptualized as a principle of difference reveals itself as arbitrary when these categories of self and other are displaced. The music accompanying the African 'us' unmistakably evokes the mission-station, upholding the (musical) discourse of a European knowledge, while the Afrikaans text defiantly proclaiming a separate ethnic identity does so only on the basis of the understanding that it is, together with Xhosa and Sesotho, an indigenous African language. Visible marks of alterity, writes Certeau, 'are used not to posit other truths or another discourse, but, on the contrary, to found a language upon its operative capacity for bringing this foreign exteriority back to "sameness".'[56] It is possible, then, that the New National Anthem is all the better suited to its function as an instrument of nation-building in its current form.

VI

Video footage of the Rugby World Cup opening ceremony of course survived. The South African anthem, sung there by a black choir led by soprano Sibongile Khumalo, is not the official new anthem of the Anthem Committee. Instead, South Africa is represented by the first verses of the 'black' and 'white' anthems respectively. Searching the ritualistic tableau for meaning, we can find an *obvious* meaning that inhabits the surface: Nelson Mandela in Springbok attire acknowledging the chants of the crowd with

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[55] Ibid., 34.
[56] Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 227.

lifted cap, shaking the hand of his (mostly) Afrikaner 'sons', standing to attention when the anthems are played. This meaning is evident in the referential symbolism of the black choir and lead singer, in the diegetic symbolism[57] of the white space in the New South Africa (Ellis Park)[58] and the historical symbolism of the black president, the white game, the rugby rivals. The obvious meaning of these symbols (as a second level of interpretation over and above communication), is the themes of nation-building and reconciliation so closely identified with the Mandela presidency. Roland Barthes refers to the etymology of the word 'obvious': '*Obvius* means *moving ahead*, which is just the case with this meaning, which seeks me out.'[59] This particular function of national anthems, i.e. to lead and even initiate processes of identity formation, was succinctly described by the general secretary of the Council of Europe when he remarked on the problematic European anthem (the 'Ode' from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*), that 'the anthem would not only be a symbol but "the expression of a myth" which like all great myths "lead[s] the world".'[60] But also present in these video scenes, I would suggest, is the shadow of a third meaning, identified by Barthes in his critique on Eisenstein films as the 'obtuse' meaning. Barthes explains this meaning as 'discontinuous, *indifferent* to the story and to the obvious meaning'.[61]

Whereas South Africa in transition needs the support drawn from mythic narrative solutions like the 'rainbow people', the 'South African nation' and 'national reconciliation', the obtuse meaning establishes a space that compels a 'vertical', i.e. non-

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[57] Meaning here 'indirectly referenced dramatic space'; Issacharoff cited in T.T. Cloete (ed.), *Literêre terme & teorieë* (Pretoria, 1992).
[58] See John Nauright for a description of Ellis Park as an iconic space symbolizing white South African culture, economy and of white South African planning and engineering; *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 171.
[59] Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Several Eisenstein Stills', *The Responsibility of Forms*, 41-62, esp. 44.
[60] Cited in Caryl Clark, 'Forging Identity: Beethoven's "Ode" as European Anthem', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997), 789-807, esp. 796.
[61] Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 55.

narrative reading. As is the case with Barthes' reading of Eisenstein's films, the third meaning in this footage is intimately connected with the third sense in the classical paradigm of the five senses: hearing. For it is when we *listen* to what transpires in the tense atmosphere before the start of the match that we best grasp this third meaning as the '*transition* from language to *signifying*'.[62] When the singing of the South African anthems start, the feature of the moment is not the emotional apex of patriotic pride that Grijp describes as characteristic of such events. It is rather the dialogism between the beautifully sung *Nkosi* of Khumalo and the black choir and the almost surprised silence of the white crowd and the uncomfortable and nervous mumbling of the rugby players,[63] between the sonorous, almost imperceptibly accented black voices singing the Apartheid anthem and the impassive silent face of the black president. There is no white triumphalism on display, but also no spontaneous enthusiasm embracing this improbable moment in the subdued, one can almost say 'un-heard', participation of the nearly seventy thousand white spectators. Hearing the 'un-heard' is not only to hear musical silence, but also to hear the incomprehension and uncertainty accompanying the realisation of *difference*. If the South African national anthems are examples of 'sound as action' (and hence a 'body of productive work' in Certeau's formulation),[64] the *obtuse* meaning (over)heard and glimpsed in these televised moments, rescues them from being purely utilitarian. We are confronted in this dialogic of song and listening with 'the gesture of coming nearer', being played out between the various actors; a gesture that reduces but does not eliminate distance. Seen on the lips of the white players the

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[62] Ibid., 59.
[63] Even in 1994, 'Cheeky' Watson, a well-known anti-Apartheid sporting activist reported in *The Star* that an England rugby victory over South Africa left most blacks ecstatic. 'It is quite sad', he added, 'but people in the townships find it hard to identify with Pienaar and his teammates who don't know the words of *Nkosi*'; cited in D. Booth, 'Mandela and the Amabokoboko: the Political and Linguistic Nationalisation of South Africa?', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34:3 (1996), 459-77, esp. 468-9.
[64] Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 227.

unfamiliar sounds of *Nkosi* create 'a strange interval where the voice emits a speech lacking "truths", and where proximity is a presence without possession'.[65]

We shall identify this presence, still following Barthes closely in his reading of Eisenstein, as a certain emotion, delicately suspended between the image and its description. To draw these images into the narrative of the obvious meaning, as journalists and commentators after the event inevitably tried to do, is thus to destroy the fragile flickerings of the obtuse meaning, that constitutes 'the epitome of the counter-narrative; disseminated, reversible, trapped in its own temporality'.[66] And this is what Barthes described as the whole point of this unnamable third meaning: its freedom of position with regard to narrative (perhaps even its indifference), permits not a destruction of the narrative (of nation-building), but a subversion of it in an 'un-heard' script that is both counter-logical and 'true'. The intriguing question now presents itself: if we should follow this meaning that appears and disappears (it possesses no theme and variations like the obvious meaning), what parallel truth, what politics of address that alienates formal political expectations, will unfold?

VII

www.truth.org.za. The cyber address of official South African Truth and the website of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The commission was set up by the South African government to investigate human rights abuses in South Africa between 1 March 1960 (when police shot dead 69 black protesters and wounded a further 186 in the black township of Sharpeville) and 10 May 1994 (when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as State President), using as its point of departure Archbishop

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[65] Ibid., 230.
[66] Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 57.

Desmond Tutu's words that 'reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing up to reality, is not true reconciliation and will not last'.[67] The objective of the Commission, the establishment of which was first proposed in 1992 by Prof Kader Asmal of the ANC, was 'to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding' that could transcend 'the conflicts and divisions of the past'.[68] The five volumes comprising the eventual report thus display the narrative also identified as the obvious meaning of the Rugby World Cup's opening ceremony: reconciliation and nation-building. But as Tutu's words indicate, it is a document that believes in a *single* truth, *one* reality and *true* reconciliation. In order to script what was *a priori* set up as an essentially ahistorical and closed narrative facilitating its demand for moral and ethical closure, the Commission found it necessary to apportion blame, to symbolically cleanse South African society by performing a quasi-religious ritual of the identification and expurgation of sin and evil. In the name of moral-ethical Truth, it was found that most gross violations of human rights were committed by the former state through its security and law-enforcement agencies and, more significantly, that 'those who fought against the system of apartheid were clearly fighting for a just cause, and those who sought to uphold and sustain apartheid cannot be morally equated with those who sought to remove and oppose it.'[69] To hold this view, the Commission stated, was not to be guilty of bias. On the contrary, 'it is to assert that we move in a moral universe where right and wrong and justice and oppression matter.'[70] If the 'paper sophistry of the oppressors' is suppressed, writes Kader Asmal without a hint of self-conscious irony, 'heterotopias' of truth are possible.[71] And so a narrative is *imposed* on readings of the South African past and understandings

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[67] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, ed. Susan de Villiers (5 vols., Cape Town, 1998), vol. i, 17.
[68] Ibid., vol. i, 49 and 55.
[69] Ibid., vol. v, 212 and 67.
[70] Ibid., vol. i, 13.
[71] Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Reconciliation through Truth: a Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (Oxford and New York, 1997), 214.

of its present, also thus on our understanding of the obvious narrative identified as dominating the opening ceremony of the Rugby World Cup. The need for such a narrative, Barthes reminds us, is found in the necessity '*to be understood* in a society which, unable to resolve the contradictions of history without a long political process, draws support … from mythic (narrative) solutions.'[72] The function of official narrative is thus aligned to state driven processes of establishing English as the *lingua franca* in the multi-lingual South African society, namely to facilitate communication.

In a minority position contained at the end of the report, Commissioner Wynand Malan (formerly a liberal Afrikaner politician), hints at a more complicated truth existing outside the strictures of religion's absolutist and dogmatic judgments, which serve as the basis for conclusions embracing a single Truth. An historical counter-narrative would have the Truth acknowledge that 'Moral imperatives are phenomena of their times and locations.'[73] He continues:

> It would serve us well to reframe and shift from good versus evil to good versus bad, where clearly even good has different meanings. This would allow us to get away from the absolutist to a frame of evaluation of policy, away from right versus wrong, from black versus white, to shades of gray.[74]

Malan's historical counter-narrative to official Truth is useful in our identification of the 'obtuse' during the Rugby World Cup's opening ceremony. Whereas *diversity* is proclaimed by the choreographed juxtapositions of the nation-building spectacle, *difference* (or as Malan puts it, 'shades of gray'), emerges from the supplementary space of that part of the Other that cannot be retrieved, exploited, recouped, written (the space

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[72] Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 58.
[73] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*, vol. v, 448.
[74] Ibid., 440 and 441.

of Barthes's 'obtuse' meaning). In the impassively still face of Nelson Mandela, in the stumbling words on the lips of the players during the singing of *Nkosi*, in the uncertain participation of the crowd and the accented Afrikaans of the black choir, the non-pluralistic *politics of difference*, not sanctioned by the 'South African miracle', appear and disappear as a disturbingly persistent third meaning to the spectacle. In making itself known, it is provocatively *indifferent* to the moral category of the obvious meaning as closed narrative, the chilling 'new and *ethically decisive* political culture' (my italics) that Kader Asmal and his co-authors envisage as the result of 'the South African privileged' facing their 'pathetic', 'violent', 'illegitimate', 'criminal', 'lawless', 'immoral' and 'genocidal' past.[75] However, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concludes that *all* South Africans 'were drawn in and are implicated in the fabric of human rights abuse, both as victims and perpetrators – at times as both',[76] the irresistible power of different and multiple truths eroding official narrative Truth is (perhaps unintentionally) confirmed as all the more likely.

Much as the New Anthem is both image of the new and proxy of the old, this presence of sound without it being possessed by all, the space between body and language, constitutes a supplementary space of doubling: always less than one nation and double.[77] The richly symbolic rugby match at Ellis Park emphasizes that the politics of political correctness – the (now defunct) non-racialism of the Charterists, reconciliation and nation-building – cannot enforce one-ness, same-ness, or shared interpretations of dreams and memories. Indeed, faith in Hans Koning's 'Almost World' is required to accept the Archbishop's declaration that 'we have provided enough of the truth about our past for there to be a consensus about it.'[78] Because this faith asks adherence to a

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[75] Asmal, *Reconciliation through Truth*, 214-5.
[76] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*, vol. v, 258.
[77] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 168.
[78] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*, vol. i, 18.

politically expedient moral framework constituting a hegemony reminiscent of the one it displaced, its predictable absence creates slippage, invites subversion and spawns an unheard script that is 'counter-logical and yet "true".'[79]

Listening to the singing of the anthems, one hears the obligation to forget in service of the construction of the national present. But it is, according to Bhabha, 'through the syntax of forgetting – or being obliged to forget – that the problematic identification of a national people becomes visible … being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification.'[80] I have always been struck how, in one of the signature Afrikaans *luisterliedjies*, *Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux*, Afrikaner nostalgia for the past is indexed not only by the farm with its simple way of life, suffering through depression and drought, and the fond remembrance of Springbok rugby legend Mannetjies Roux, but also by Mozart's C major piano sonata KV 545. Afrikaners seem to experience no incongruity at this: the simple opening of the sonata leads seamlessly into the more familiar Afrikaner linguistic space where 'r's roll like thunder and the g's grate like a shovel in the grave.'[81] We traverse the cultural imaginations of the frontier farm and Afrikaner rugby prowess with Mozart shadowing, perhaps guiding, our progress. How does one explain this? Does it really matter that most Springbok rugby supporters don't know, probably never knew, who or what Mozart was and is, making the imperative to 'forget' superfluous? What is this other (also musical) past that we hear conversing with Mannetjies Roux, the existence of which is brought to our attention by the songwriter but is otherwise not *known*? Does this 'other' past not inhabit a place so far away that it forms a residue of resistance not accessible to the agents of reconstruction working on the Afrikaner consciousness? We link up again

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[79] Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 57.
[80] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 161.
[81] Malan, *My Traitor's Heart*, 331.

with the 'elsewhere of meaning' characterizing the 'obtuse' that shadows the official narrative of the Rugby World Cup opening, beholding a scene pervaded with almost palpable difference without there being present a defined sense of a collective and manifest Will (and therefore no moral impediment) willing it to defy 'one-ness'.

The promise of truth in Rilke's poetry, Paul de Man once wrote, is placed by Rilke himself within the dissolving perspective of the lie: 'Rilke can only be understood if one realizes the urgency of this promise together with the equally urgent, and equally poetic, need of retracting it at the very instant he seems to be on the point of offering it to us.'[82] An impasse that perfectly sums up the poetics of the South African tragedy. And it is at this point of the leaden pathos, the asymptotical promise that has to remain unfulfilled, that we revert to the pragmatics so characteristic of South African society. 'At worst', Wynand Malan writes in his minority statement, 'we misrepresent each other. At best, we misunderstand each other, yet we are able to cope and live with each other. We do not necessarily love each other. We may not even like each other.'[83] In the light of this reality the narrative has to assert its authority. The magic disappears. The imperfect icons and symbols of the new dispensation perform their expected functions. Yet, and this is the most concrete we dare become in our conclusions, we may cling to the *hope* inhabiting the contexts, sounds and spaces of *Nkosi* and *Die Stem* as they sounded that day at Ellis Park, when the subsequent victory created an unprecedented moment of national celebration and identification that crossed old colour barriers. It was a time when imagining South Africa anew no longer looked impossible, when opening up the field of meaning infinitely, beyond what Rob Nixon has termed in another context our 'vexed sense of half-shared histories',[84] beyond knowledge, information and culture,

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[82] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London, 1979), 56.
[83] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*, vol. v, 436.
[84] Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (New York, 1994), 3.

seemed within reach. Since then, we continually hover on the brink of forgetting and of imagining South Africa anew, of occupying magical time present where time past and time future fade into insignificance. Describing the conclusion of one of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings in her native Free State, this is the unison opening up of meaning and of selfless interconnectedness enabled by imagined sound that Afrikaner poet Antjie Krog captures when she writes:

> I stand, caught unawares by the Sesotho version [of Nkosi] and the knowledge that I am white, that I have to reacquaint myself with this land, that my language carries violence as a voice, that I can do nothing about it, that after so many years I still feel uneasy with what is mine, with what is me. The woman next to me looks surprised when I sing the Free State version of 'Nkosi'. She smiles, holds her head close to mine and shifts to the alto part. The song leader opens the melody to us. The sopranos envelop, the bass voices support … And I wade into song – in a language that is not mine, in a tongue I do not know. It is fragrant inside the song, and among the keynotes of sorrow and suffering there are soft silences where we who belong to this landscape, all of us, can come to rest.[85]

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[85] Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (Johannesburg, 1998), 217.

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[1] P.G. du Plessis's article, 'Asterion probleem vir resensente' in *Sondagstem* of 27 June 1965 was supplied to me by the Nasionale Letterkunde Museum in Bloemfontein. Subsequent correspondence to ascertain where the newspaper was based (it no longer exists) produced no results. It is possible that the title of the newspaper, handwritten on the cutting, is erroneous.