Sounding the Cape Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa

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The history of Cape Town’s musics has been underpinned by a long process of creolisation, which probably began as soon as Vasco da Gama set foot on the shore of what is today known as Mossel Bay, on 2 December 1497. His party was entertained by a group of Khoikhoi musicians using the hocket technique on their flutes, which had been extremely popular among European composers, such as Guillaume de Machaut, at the end of the Middle Ages, and is widespread in Africa. Vasco da Gama’s diarist recorded that the Khoikhoi musicians “[…] began to play upon four or five flutes, some of which were high and some low, so well in fact that they played harmoniously indeed, quite surprising for negroes, from whom one expects little in the way of music, and they danced in the negro fashion […]”. Vasco da Gama responded to this resounding welcome with dance music executed on trumpets (Kirby 1937: 25). Later, when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) developed a permanent settlement at the Cape of Good Hope, the first Commander of the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck, is said to have regaled a Hottentot chief with a concert of the harpsichord (Kirby 1937: 26). These little incidents show that the first encounters between Europeans and people living at the southern tip of Africa were almost always accompanied with music and that, on both sides, the sounds heard on these occasions, however strange they may have appeared, aroused interest, and even possibly pleasure, among the listeners. Musical exchanges proceeded from these early encounters and nurtured dynamics of creolisation that were to stimulate the development of South African musics until today. In order to better understand how processes of creolisation fashioned South African musics in general, and Cape Town’s musics more specifically, it seems necessary to give an overview of creolisation theories and examine their relevance to South Africa and South African music.
The Meanings of Creolisation

Historian Robert C.-H. Shell was probably one of the first scholars to suggest, in 1994, that South African history could be interpreted in terms of creolisation. Chapter 2 of his *Children of Bondage* is dedicated to “The Cape slave trade and creolisation”. In this chapter, he starts by using “creole” and “creolisation” in the traditional sense of the words, related to the growing number of slaves born at the Cape. However, he immediately emphasises that, within the framework of slavery, contacts between bearers of European cultures (who, in some cases had themselves been partly “creolised” in Batavia) and slave bearers of many varied non-European cultures, created the conditions from which a creolisation process could unfold: “From these imported and local cultures arose the imperfectly understood but richly textured, syncretistic, domestic creole culture of the Cape” (Shell 1994: 40). And at the very end of his book, he writes: “Cape slavery had another legacy […] the as yet unexamined creole culture of South Africa, with its new cuisine, its new architecture, its new music, its melodious, forthright, and poetic language, Afrikaans, first expressed in the Arabic script of the slaves’ religion and written literature” (Shell 1994: 415).

The South African debate

Following up on Robert C.-H. Shell’s recommendation, and based on research undertaken by David B. Coplan (Coplan 1985) and Veit Erlmann (Erlmann 1991), I found in the history of Cape Town’s New Year festivals confirmation that a creole culture grew and blossomed in South Africa (Martin 1999). Sarah Nuttal and Cheryl-Ann Michael propose in a more general way to adopt creolisation to analyse culture-making in South Africa, and emphasise “transformative fusions”, with connotations of multiculturalism and hybridity. Referring to Martiniquan writer Édouard Glissant, they explain: “Post-colonial readings of culture have tended to focus on difference – but more complex studies of affinities and how they are made are now needed, particularly in South Africa. The theoretical possibilities of the term ‘creolisation’ need to be drawn on not to bring about erasure – an erasing of difference – but to underwrite a complex process of making connections” (Nuttal & Michael 2000: 10).

Drawing from the same collection of essays by Édouard Glissant, Zimitri Erasmus, uses creolisation in her analysis of coloured identities “[…] to refer to cultural creativity under conditions of marginality […]”. She therefore underlines
the agency of the oppressed, and very clearly posits “[…] at the heart of this particular process of creolisation […] a colonial racial hierarchy […]” (Erasmus 2001: 16). At the dawn of the 21st century, however, it seems to her that an emergent discourse of African essentialism “[…] denies creolisation and hybridity as constitutive of African experiences” (ibid.: 20).

Herman Wasserman and Sean Jacobs do not grant creolisation the same heuristic potential as their fellow South African scholars. They are worried by the elaboration of myths about creolisation, hybridity and métissage that tend to describe them as smooth and gentle transactions generating societies harmonious in their plurality, where people can revel in their diversity. Creolisation, they insist, “[…] does not take place in a space devoid of power struggles, nor does it signify a complete break with the past” (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003: 16).

If the works cited above can be considered representative of the discussion generated by the introduction of the concept of creolisation in debates about South African society in general, and the making, re-making and perpetuation of identities in particular, it seems that most authors – while differing on what creolisation is likely to unveil of the past and on how it can help to shape the future – associate with it connections (relationships that do not obliterate differences), and creativity, but within a context of oppression and power struggles. Many of them refer to Édouard Glissant, but rely mostly on a volume that represents more the point of departure of his reflection than the conclusions he later reached. For, although Caribbean Discourse (Glissant 1989) does introduce the concepts of Relation and the Diverse (le Divers), it does not yet deal much with creolisation, a topic Édouard Glissant would elaborate upon in more recent works such as: Poetics of Relation (Glissant 1997b), Traité du Tout-Monde (Glissant 1997c), and La cohée du Lamentin (Glissant 2005). Before assessing the possible fecundity of Édouard Glissant’s theory of creolisation in relationship to South Africa, it is probably necessary to revisit a few earlier works in which South American and West Indian authors put forward ideas about creolisation, derived from the experiences of their native countries, and suggesting new understandings of their histories.

Rehabilitation of colour and the romanticism of mestiçagem

Brazil offers the example of a country where doctrines of white supremacy were replaced by what Hermano Vianna calls a “mestiço nationalism”3 (Vianna 1998: xv). In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, “race mixing”, understood as a factor of degeneration, tended to be generally considered as the main cause
of Brazil’s problems. Brazilian intellectuals oscillated between the adoption of
deterministic models asserting the existence of innate human differences, therefore
considering *mestiçagem* as a menace, and an apology of cross-breeding that did not
preclude the acknowledgement of racial differences (Schwarcz 1993). Prevailing
racialist conceptions were first challenged by Oswald de Andrade in his manifesto
for a Brazilianist poetry known as *Manifesto Pau-Brazil* (De Andrade 1924), then
in his *Manifesto Antropofágico* (1972 [1928])⁴, and later by Mário de Andrade,
Eventually, Gilberto Freyre’s culturalist theses reversed the dominant perspectives
on *mestiçagem*, without, though, totally erasing previous ideas about race (Schwarcz
1993: 247–250). In 1933, his *Casa Grande e Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*)
(Freyre 1974, 1986) appeared as a real watershed because he systematically examined
the history of Brazil in the light of interactions between “big houses” and slaves’
quarters, and argued that the Portuguese, who were already a *mestiço* people, were
particularly inclined to adopt a tropical way of life, to adhere to indigenous value
systems, and to live with local women (Freyre 1952: 8). From early intercourses
developed a hybrid and harmonious society where cultural exchanges were almost
equal (Freyre 1974: 96–97). Consequently, modern Brazilians are all, in one way
or another, mestiços (Freyre 1952: 8). Gilberto Freyre’s reinterpretation of Brazil’s
past involved a rehabilitation of colour: “A valorisation from a sociological, and
not only an aesthetic or sensual, point of view, that acknowledges, by way of
comparative studies in the sociology of culture, the fact that yellow, brown, red, or
black people are bearers of values which are superior, and not inferior, to the values
of white or European people” (Freyre 1952: 7).

As a matter of fact, Gilberto Freyre proposed a new founding myth for 20th
century Brazil, a “[…] Brazilian philosophy of ethnic and social fusion […]
intended to promote the formation of a new state of collective conscience […]”⁵.
His *mestiço* nationalism was indeed exploited by Getúlio Vargas’ populist and
authoritarian *Estado Novo*, but survived it and for decades continued to provide
the fundamental representation of Brazilian society. Indeed, he idealised and
romanticised relations between masters and slaves, between people of various skin
colours; he postulated an absence of violence in *mestiçagem* processes, thanks to
a Portuguese paternalism that made it easier to cope with “[…] one of the most
inferior people of the continent […]”, the Amerindians, and Africans who had
a mentality different from Europeans’, even though sometimes superior to them
(Freyre 1974: 94; 262; 278; 289). Softening history to make *mestiçagem* not only
a feature of Brazil as a whole, but an asset and a source of pride, Gilberto Freyre’s
ideas created a field where an internal perception of the country as the producer of an original form of modernity could grow, “[…] a modernity that incorporated the very cultural elements long considered the causes, or at least the symptoms, of that backwardness” (Vianna 1998: 116).

Gilberto Freyre’s romantic rewriting of Brazilian history underpinned the emergence of new social representations and new political ideologies. It could not, by itself, totally upset social hierarchies. It did not put an end to white supremacy, except in official discourse (Vianna 1998: xv). It did not dismantle the inequitable system keeping most dark-skinned people at the bottom of the social ladder, nor did it abolish colour prejudices. The vision of a harmonious Brazil where all citizens had the same chances, whatever their origin and the colour of their skin, was eventually eroded when proponents of Afro-nationalism opposed mestiço nationalism, and stressed not the beauty of mestiçagem, but pride in African origins. Brazil demonstrates that a rehabilitation of human and cultural blending, if it is not tied to effective policies of social redress aimed at abolishing, or at least at diminishing inequalities, does not suffice to eradicate past antagonisms between stratified and opposed groups (Agier 2000).

*Métissage*, hybridity and interstices, the dead ends of post-modernity

Historians of the Americas have recently investigated actual processes of *métissage*, as can be reconstituted from texts and various artefacts. They shed new light on the mechanisms whereby “amazing creations” were produced, giving a particular shape to each of the conquered societies as well as strongly influencing colonial metropolises. These studies also highlight the brutal context in which the process unfolded. The conquest of the Americas, and of the West Indies, by European powers, fuelled a new type of *métissage*. It started with a confrontation of concepts and norms (Gruzinski 1999), and must be understood as a political phenomenon, originating in colonial violence (Turgeon 2003).

Thus a new world developed after the conquest of the Americas, an inequitable world nurtured by slave trades, and based on colonisation or domination. Successive hegemonic systems covered the globe, decimating people and destroying civilisations. Yet, in this pandemonium of barbarity and racism, new cultures were invented, providing the basis for new aesthetic forms, and new types of societies that were to influence every human practice and every kind of social organisation, from popular music to states. The challenge confronting the social sciences, history and political sociology in particular, is therefore to devise conceptual tools
able to account for both the violence and the creativity which have supported the formation of the world we now live in, the so-called modern world, hoping that they also could contribute to imagining a better “post-modern” one. It is clearly from this angle that theories of hybridity must be approached.

Paul Gilroy proclaims “the unashamedly hybrid character” of “black Atlantic cultures” (Gilroy 1993: 99). He emphasises their “syncretic complexity” (ibid.: 101), and, in the conclusion of his celebrated essay, suggests that mutation, hybridity and intermixture can help construct “[...] better theories of racism and black political culture than those so far offered by cultural absolutists of various phenotypical hues”. The more so, since: “The history of blacks in the West and the social movements that have affirmed and rewritten that history can provide a lesson which is not restricted to blacks” (Gilroy 1993: 223). Specifically referring to Afro-Caribbean peoples, Stuart Hall also uses hybridity to characterise their “diaspora experience”, an “[...] experience which is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (Hall 1994: 402; italics in the original). Homi Bhabha looks back and finds that cultural hybridities “[...] emerge in moments of historical transformation”. They occur in “interstitial passages”, in “borderline conditions”, expand into “hybrid cultural spaces” to accommodate differences without hierarchy (Bhabha 1994: 3; 5; 9; 11).

Homi Bhabha’s overuse of spatial metaphors (space, in-between, interstices, borders) reveals one of the main contradictions of post-modernist theoreticians. They expose and condemn conceptions of culture as pure, homogeneous, stable and authentic entities, but always enclose the cultures they study within delineated spaces, surrounded by borders, in the midst of which are located “in-betweens” or “interstices”, construed as privileged sites for the irruption of hybridities. In so doing, they undermine the very ideas of complexity, fluidity, relation, intermixture, overlapping, or intersubjective experiences they pretend to promote. For spatial metaphors of culture imply boundaries and separations, not continuity (of cultural relations and interactions) and similarities (of cultural practices and value systems). Tying culture to space, which in the end leads to territory, as not only Homi Bhabha but also Stuart Hall suggests, refers back to a conservative idea of culture linked to a territory and the people who inhabit it, therefore to a fixist conception of identity, the very conception they aim to dismantle. Spaces, even “in-between” or “interstitial” ones, do not support a conceptualisation of the intertwined, the enmeshed, and the intermixed nature of culture, construed as a combination of connections, continuous interactions and innovations. In his
study of the conquest of Mexico and the métissages that ensued, Serge Gruzinski demonstrates the impossibility of drawing borders to separate human ensembles confronted with each other, even in the first stages of the colonisation of the country: the indigenous world and the conquistador world were so entangled that it is impossible to unscramble them (Gruzinski 1999: 75). Laurier Turgeon draws the same conclusion from his research on the history of Canada (Turgeon 2003). Summing up his reflections on identity and culture, philosopher Paul Ricœur gives the following advice: “First of all, it seems necessary to sever the concept of cultural exchange from geopolitical concepts organised around the idea of borders […] to which I oppose the idea of radiance from cultural beams. I imagine the cultural map of the world as an interlacing of radiances emanating from various centres, from various beams which are not defined by the sovereignty of the nation-state but by their creativity and their ability to influence and generate responses from other beams […]” (Ricœur 2004). In this conception, culture indeed has no “location” (Gadamer 1985; Martin 2002).

Moreover, for anthropologists who have done fieldwork in Africa or in the Caribbean, the use of such words as métissage or hybridity also raises problems. Both originally imply that original “pure” and homogeneous elements entered into a combination. They cannot accommodate a history of mankind made of métissages of métissages, of hybridisation of hybridities, in which there was never a beginning, never any barrier to blending and mixing (Amselle 1990, 2000, 2001). As soon as the word métissage appeared in French, it signified something negative, a disorder in nature (R.P. Labat 1722, quoted in Bonniol & Benoist 1994: 60; Schwarcz 1993, chapter 2); an inference that was systematised in the 19th century by pseudo-scientific theories assimilating métissage with degeneration, turning the appellation métis into a brand of inferiority and a cause for shame?. Anthropologist Jean-Luc Bonniol demonstrates that métissage belongs to the same essentialist argument as race (Bonniol 2001: 11), therefore, if the concept of race is discarded, métissage becomes irrelevant (Bonniol & Benoist 1994: 68). Jean Benoist, both a medical doctor and an anthropologist, understands métissage as “[…] a social perception based only on those physical features that are socially visible, and ideologically signal a distance […]” and concludes: métissage “[…] amounts to a social way of thinking hybridisation” (Benoist 1996: 50) and, behind hybridisation, perceives the idea of something artificial, engineered (Benoist 1996: 48), not to mention the fact that hybridity may connote sterility. These are the reasons why Jean Benoist, as well as Jean-Luc Bonniol, think it would be better to do away with métissage and hybridity: “There are other metaphors opening new
roads, radically overthrowing images [of illegitimate societies], and fostering the vision of a wholly positive future, where the eternal desire to apologise for being oneself has disappeared” (Benoist 1996: 52).

An incomplete eulogy of creoleness

A manifesto published in 1989 by three writers from Martinique, entitled *In Praise of Creoleness* (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant 1989) seemed to offer an alternative to métissage and hybridity: creoleness (créolité). They defined it as “[…] the interactional and transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, English translation quoted in Gyssels 2003: 310). Creoleness is the product of creolisation, which must be understood as the process derived from “[…] a violent meeting, on islands or enclaves – even if immense, as Guyana or Brazil – of culturally different people […]” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant 1989: 30). Creoleness manifests itself as “[…] a synchronistic cross-section on the unbroken axis of creolisation […]” (Confiant 1992: 27) and, although it is rooted in islands or enclaves of the West Indies and the Americas, it may expand to the whole world.

Theories of creoleness, and even more so of creolisation, encapsulate the main features of the phenomena that social scientists have been trying to analyse when dealing with colonial and post-colonial societies: original violence, in conquest and the slave trade; systems of domination, in slavery and colonisation; cultural contacts between people of different origins (autochthons, slaves, indentured workers, deported convicts and settlers); interactions and creations, from the beginning. Their authors underline that creolisation is a process and, thereby acknowledging their debt to Édouard Glissant, that it is on the way of becoming a world process. *In Praise of Creoleness* has nevertheless stirred up waves of criticism from other Caribbean writers, as well as from Caribbeanist scholars. They all remark that creoleness is basically defined as an identity, and a specificity, however open and complex it may be (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant 1989: 13; 27–28). The reliance of the authors of *In Praise of Creoleness* on the concept of identity as specificity also appears when they describe creoleness as made of an aggregate of various people who came or were brought to the West Indies from societies treated as homogeneous, in other words where they had not yet experienced diversity. The creoleness they praise can be interpreted as a form of Martiniquean parochialism which suffers from a lack of pan-Caribbean perspective (Price & Price 1997: 8;
11) and their depiction of West Indian life does not really correspond to the daily realities of the Caribbean. Maryse Condé, a novelist and scholar from Guadeloupe, considers that In Praise of Creoleness drafts “[…] a new order, even more restrictive than the existing one, [which] leaves little freedom for creativity”. She finally asks: “Are we condemned to explore to saturation the resources of our narrow islands?” (quoted in Gyssels 2003: 305).

The title of the manifesto probably encapsulates the limitations of Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant’s text: it praises creoleness, not creolisation. Although they hint at the potentialities of creolisation as a transformative force, they dwell much more on creoleness, as an identity, as a condition, as a background for the stories they write. Consequently, their creoleness, if considered inadequate to analyse West Indian societies, cannot be of much help with regard to other countries, South Africa in particular. Michael Dash, the translator of Édouard Glissant’s Caribbean Discourse, underlines that In Praise of Creoleness tends to “[…] turn Glissant’s ideas into ideological dogma […] in terms that are suggestively reductionist […]” and “[…] risks undoing the epistemological break with essentialist thinking that he has always striven to conceptualise” (quoted in Price & Price 1997: 10). This can be read as an invitation to come back to Édouard Glissant and consider the implications of his notion of creolisation, and what radically distinguishes it from creoleness (and hybridity), and all the more so since Édouard Glissant was not the first to elaborate on creolisation and emphasise its processual and dynamic dimensions.

Creolisation as Relation

It seems that the idea of creolisation was introduced by Barbadian writer Kamau Brathwaite in 1971 to account for cultural processes in the course of which the confrontation of cultures was not only cruel, but also creative (Brathwaite 1971: 307). Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (Mintz & Price 1992) then used it as a means of comprehending the multiple aspects of cultural dynamics generated by contacts and exchanges between people of various origins that underlay the creation of new cultures in the West Indies. In their sense of the word, creolisation took into account both the environment (including power systems) where contacts occurred and the creative impulses it generated (Chivallon 2004b: 128); precisely what Rex Nettleford termed a “meeting in conflict”. In search of a Caribbean cultural identity which would both encompass a dynamic pluralism and support national unity, the Jamaican unionist-cum-sociologist reconsiders the history of
his country, and uses creolisation to encompass every event the country went through since the arrival of the Europeans. To him, creolisation “[…] refers to the agonising process of renewal and growth that marks the new order of men and women who came originally from different Old World cultures (whether European, African, Levantine or Oriental) and met in conflict or otherwise on foreign soil”. In the end, he stresses: “The operative word here is conflict” (Nettleford 1978: 2). Creolisation, as developed by these authors, has become one of the most efficient tools for unravelling the complex histories of the Caribbean, and for drawing lessons from it. Édouard Glissant eventually broadened the conceptual field covered by creolisation, so that it could no longer be confined to the West Indies or the Americas. The logic behind the movement of Édouard Glissant’s thinking can be roughly summarised in four stages.

He starts from métissage, in spite of the load of doom and shame it carries and the controversies it has aroused, because he assumes that it still allows us to overcome the opposition between the One and the Other (Glissant 1997a: 213–214) and that the thought of cultures of métissage (distinct from cultural métissages) is a safeguard against limitations and intolerances, and may open up new spaces of Relation (Glissant 1997c: 15).

Creolisation is constructed against this backdrop; as a matter of fact, it is like an unlimited métissage (Glissant 1990: 46), a dynamic process which does not operate by synthesising, but generates an unpredictable energy of overcoming (une dépassante imprévisible) whose results cannot be foreseen (Glissant 1997c: 16; 37). Being a process, it cannot be reduced to one content (like creoleness), and nowadays affects the whole world: “Creolisation does not restrict its operations to the Archipelagos’ creole realities, or to their nascent languages. The world is creolising, it is not becoming creole, it is becoming the inextricable and unpredictable phenomenon that any creolisation process is pregnant with, and which is neither supported, nor legitimated by any model. Elsewhere, neither a stiff hybridation, nor a lone and limited métissage, nor a multi-whatever” (Glissant 2005: 229–230).

Creolisation, construed as a dynamic process originating from métissages, must be understood as an introduction to Relation, the real force that moves today’s world. Relation links/relays/relates/renders relative what cannot be broken down into primordial components; it is a product that in turn produces (Glissant 1990: 174–175; 188). It is intellectually mastered through a poetics of Relation that leads to addressing both the elusive globality of a chaotic world and the “opacity” of the place one is from (Glissant 1997c: 22). The poetics of Relation makes thinkable
the communication between cultural idiosyncrasies (*opacités*) which have mutually freed themselves of the idea of their differences (Glissant 1997a: 50). “For the poetics of Relation implies that everyone be presented with the Other’s density (opacity). The more the Other defends his thickness and his fluidity (without limiting himself to what they define), the more expressive his reality becomes, and the more fertile the relation”¹⁵ (ibid.: 24).

Relation is the foundation of the Whole-World (*Tout-Monde*), that totality in process affected and remodelled by creolisation, in which contractions of space and accelerations of time produce unexpected effects (Glissant 2005: 138). A poetics of Relation answers the obligation to think in terms of worldness (*mondialité*) and not of globalisation (*mondialisation*): a universe that for the first time in history can be envisioned as inextricably multiple and one. The multiplicity of the world thought as *mondialité* accommodates individuals and specificities; it eliminates all contradictions between multiplicity and singularity; but demands a “[…] massive insurrection of the imaginary that will at last lead humans to want themselves and to create themselves (without any moral command) as they really are: a never ending change, in a perenniality that never congeals”¹⁶ (Glissant 2005: 25).

A creolising South Africa?

Although neither Brazil nor the Caribbean islands ever endured anything like apartheid, they share with South Africa a history of conquest, slavery, colonialism and domination by a ruling class that originally pretended to draw its legitimacy from racial superiority and which, for a long time, was able to retain power as an inheritance from the past, even after racist ideologies were officially discarded. Given the abundance of literature dealing with the history of these regions and the theoretical discussions that have been generated by the works of historians, anthropologists and sociologists, it appears possible to look to Brazil and the Caribbean to see if South Africa could benefit from both their experience and the scholarly research that has attempted to grapple with it.

The impact of Gilberto Freyre’s reconstructions of Brazil’s past certainly suggests that rehabilitation, not only of colour, but of cultural and biological blending – *mestiçagem* – can definitely have an impact on the evolution of a post-colonial, post-slavery society; that a philosophy of fusion may contribute to the emergence of a new collective conscience, thence to the development of a new collective being. However, given the particular brutality of the type of social organisation that reigned in South Africa after the 17th century, one may doubt
that a romanticisation of its past, from slavery to apartheid as uncovered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, will acquire any transformative power.

With regard to South Africa, one argument in Gilberto Freyre’s theory needs to be revisited at this point. He repeatedly states that the Portuguese were a *mestiço* people, which made it easier for them to adapt to tropical conditions and, since they were devoid of racial prejudices, to mix with indigenous populations. Gilberto Freyre considers that the Portuguese were radically different from “Nordic” people. The history of Batavia, however, belies his argument. In Java under Dutch rule, a creole culture blossomed, engendered by intimate interaction and mixing between colonisers and local people, against the backdrop of a previous “Iberian and Asian cultural medley” (Gelman Taylor 1983: 51). Marriage of lower-ranking officials of the government of Batavia with slave women (who then had to be manumitted) was encouraged, and as a matter of fact Dutch men belonging to all walks of colonial life engaged in sexual and social relations with indigenous women (Gelman Taylor 1983: 171–172). Children born from these unions were raised in the Indonesian fashion (Gelman Taylor 1983: 16-17; 28–30). As early as 1642, at a time when Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch official sent to the Cape in 1652, was still in Batavia, the Dutch East India Company officially acknowledged miscegenation. This *mestiza* way of life remained dominant until the 19th century, and even persisted until the 1910s and 1920s in the interior of Java (Gelman Taylor 1983: 168). In Batavia, according to most historians, the sense of “race” was radically different from the one that was to govern social life in South Africa: “[…] in the Dutch East Indies, the notion of race never acquired the performative power it is generally considered to have gained in black Africa. Most Dutch settlers would easily have admitted that they and the Javanese belonged to the same ‘species’; the Javanese were just not as ‘civilised’ as the Dutch” (Bertrand 2005: 594).

As a matter of fact, at the very beginning of the Dutch East India Company’s rule at the Cape, masters and slaves entertained very intimate relationships, which resulted not only in the emergence of a group of people whose parents were of mixed European and African, Madagascan or Asian descent, but also in the first, embryonic forms of the creole culture detected by Robert C.-H. Shell. Historian Hans Heese has carefully studied both the interactions that took place between the people who met at the Cape between 1652 and 1795, and their incidence on the shape that South African society was to take in the 19th and 20th centuries. He demonstrates that intense miscegenation took place: “From the cited examples of ethnic and genetic mixing which occurred until 1795 at the Cape, it is clear that it would be difficult to find another place where the racial melting pot equalled that
at the Cape [...] If the harsh racial classification of the Americans in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century had been applied at the Cape, the white population of South Africa would have been much smaller and the ‘Coloured Group’ much larger. The South African melting pot is made much more complex by the fact that Europeans, Indians, Africans, Khoikhoi, San, Chinese and East Indian all contributed to the formation of a group of coloured people who, after three centuries, still do not show signs of physical homogeneity” (Heese 2006: 24). In the times of the VOC, social position was not so much linked to one’s skin colour and physical appearance as to the expression of behavioural codes and norms deemed European, decent and civilised: “[…] the colour of a freeborn person or the racial type he represented was until 1795 not a legal obstacle to material or social advancement in Cape Town and its immediate surroundings. Membership of the Christian church made assimilation into European society a greater possibility especially for women and was the key to, among other things, material prosperity. By contrast, Muslims or those who were clearly non-Christian found themselves outside white mainstream. It was among this group that Islam thrived and, through its strict moral codes, contributed to the social upliftment of slaves, free blacks and other free-coloureds” (Heese 2006: 56). The slaves’ social ascension depended obviously on the will of their owners to manumit them, even if some of them managed to buy their own freedom, and if free blacks endeavoured to liberate relatives, friends, or believers in the same religion. Manumission occurred primarily in the domestic sphere and, to a certain extent, at the Lodge where the Company’s slaves were kept (Shell 1994: chapter 12). “The key to social and economic (and in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century also political) progress for persons of mixed ancestry was therefore acceptance into the European-white group with its Christian-western character. Factors that hindered this assimilation were physical appearance (the blacker, the more difficult) and being born into slavery. A third factor that made assimilation into the white group impossible for an individual was, in the case of free coloureds, acceptance of the Islamic faith” (Heese 2006: 59).

Cape Town’s society in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century was at the same time extremely mixed and solidly hierarchised, although the borders between racial and social categories were still relatively blurred. A small number of persons of mixed parentage could be accepted within the ruling elite, provided they behaved like the Europeans, which allowed them to adopt matrimonial strategies aiming at progressively erasing phenotypical signs of a foreign and unfree origin. At the other end of the social spectrum, the poor, slave and free, tended to share the same living conditions, and the same ways of life. The various processes of mixing and blending that took
place at every echelon of Cape Town’s society rapidly transformed the town into a “melting-pot” from which flowed specific dynamics of creolisation. Until 1795, the Cape may not have been so different from Batavia: it was a slave society, brutal and ruthless; an expanding settlement encroaching on the land of indigenous people and drying up their economic resources; yet it was also a hotbed of miscegenation and cultural exchanges of which not only architecture, cuisine and language, but also, and most evidently, music bear testimony.

The germs of racial differentiation were indeed part and parcel of the Cape’s colonisation. But it was the aboriginal inhabitants of the region who were first declared non-human, or considered as belonging to a very degraded rung of humanity. When the Cape was colonised, the Khoikhoi people whom European discoverers then settlers encountered were immediately portrayed as not fully human. In 1608, John Jourdain stated bluntly: “[…] I think the world doth not yield a more heathenish people and more beastlie” (Boonzaier et al.: 9); Nicolaus de Graaf, surgeon aboard a VOC vessel, wrote in 1640: “In one word, in all their manners they look like beasts” (Fauvelle-Aymar 2002: 111); at best, they were re-introduced into the Christian vision of history in a derogatory position, as “doomed descendants of Cham” (Sir Thomas Herbert in 1627, quoted in: Fauvelle-Aymar 2002: 114). The story of Krotoa/Eva was used to lay the foundations of a long-lasting prejudice against indigenous South African peoples, and to provide evidence that any attempt to mix with them was conducive to failure and degeneration. Krotoa was a Khoi girl in the service of Jan van Riebeeck. She was baptised under the name Eva and subsequently married to a Danish surgeon; she is said to have eventually become a drunkard and a prostitute. “Those who claimed to have witnessed her ‘adulterous and debauched life’ believed that the care given her in the past was ineffectual in the face of her ‘Hottentot nature’” (Boonzaier et al.: 75). This attitude of hostility to Africans and to miscegenation extended to slaves and their offspring and was justified in the 19th century by racialist theories of social evolutionism. It moulded the conceptions of “race relations” that prevailed among the South African ruling classes in the 19th and 20th centuries. These conceptions have been so ingrained in the social fabric — being also partly internalised by those whose oppression was justified by them — that it will need more than a rosy repainting of the past to annihilate all their direct and indirect effects.

The contradictions and ambiguities of hybridity, métissage and creoleness, as have been exposed above, do not suggest they can be used as concepts capable of producing a new historical imaginary for South Africa. On the other hand, creolisation might open up interesting perspectives. In the works of the first
Caribbean writers who used it, it was meant to account for the confrontations and violence caused by encounters, without downplaying the creative dynamics unleashed by these conflictive meetings. This fits very well into South African history. Creolisation, Édouard Glissant insists, cannot be locked up in the West Indies; it has a universal bearing. In this sense, it is rooted in métissages that must be thought of as dissolving the oppositions between individuals and groups, erected by ideologies of racial differences, in order to put in their stead connections, interactions, common creations, of which culture always shows evidence. Métissage (not only miscegenation, but primarily blending of cultural elements) appears to be an undeniable feature of South African history and encourages us to see South Africa as a continuous creation by all its previous and current inhabitants. If creolisation is an unlimited métissage, a dynamic process thrust by an “unpredictable energy of overcoming”, one should consider whether redefining South Africa as a creolising country may clear the ground for overcoming internal conflicts inherited from the past. Creolisation is an aspect of Relation, which allows us to conceptualise communication between cultural idiosyncrasies (opacités) mutually freed of the toughness of their differences. This implies that particularities are a necessary ingredient of Relation, but also that they have to be permanently redefined and reconstructed; particularities cannot remain disconnecting properties, to be isolated and defended, but should be lived and understood as characteristics or specificities to offer, to share, and to mix.

From this perspective, examining the processes through which original musics were created in South Africa, and first of all in Cape Town and the Cape region, would contribute to demonstrating the intensity and protractedness of creolisation dynamics that threaded South African society, and eventually to assessing the impact that putting them in direct light could have on social relations in contemporary South Africa.

**Colonial Cape: The Cradle of Creolisation**

The complexities and intricacies of the type of society that developed at the Cape from the 17th to the 20th century have been minutely described and analysed. The extant literature emphasises the entanglement of intimacy and violence, of rigid hierarchies and cross-fertilisation which was common to most slave societies; it highlights the ambivalence of the settlers’ attitudes towards the Khoikhoi and the slaves, and shows how the denial of their humaneness never precluded curiosity, desire and lust. The dynamics of creolisation that were to fashion cultural
production at the Cape arose from this ambivalence. But it also led the dominant stratum – the government officials, the settlers and their descendants – to deny that they had been acculturated\(^9\) in a mixed society: they pretended not to have any part in the outcomes of creolisation processes, unless they claimed exclusive property of creole productions such as the Afrikaans language. Yet, many cultural practices still reveal how deeply European settlers and their descendants have been acculturated. Beyond Afrikaans, cuisine is one of them, and the sharing of a dish like \textit{bobotie} across alleged racial boundaries provides a good example of what has been invented in the kitchens where the first rudiments of \textit{kombuistaal} (kitchen language) were babbled (Martin 2010a). Outside the kitchens, in the lounges and the gardens, but also in the fields and in the slave quarters, music (and indeed dance) was the domain where the most intense exchanges between the extremely varied people who coexisted at the Cape took place; music and dance were the most efficient vehicles to overcome barriers erected to separate people according to their origin, their skin colour and their social position.
First encounters

As has already been mentioned, the first Europeans to meet the Khoikhoi inhabiting the region of the Cape of Good Hope had the opportunity to hear them play music. The reaction of Vasco da Gama's diarist, shows not only surprise but, in a way, appreciation: for, writes he, they harmonise “[…] very well together for blacks from whom music is not expected”. The same attitude would prevail among Europeans, settlers or travellers who discovered the music of the people called “Hottentots”: in the account given in 1661 by Pieter van Meerhoff (who married Krotoa/Eva); in William John Burchell's account of his 1811 encounter with an old chief who “was considered a good performer on the goráh\footnote{This African xylophone was made from a single pole, and the musician stood on one foot while playing it.}”. Burchell commented that although the instrumentalist “[…] intermingled with his music certain grunting sounds which would have highly pleased the pigs […,]”, Burchell was so interested that he carefully notated the brief melody played on the bow and drew a precise etching of the musician's posture; he concluded his presentation of the goráh and the music played on it by quite a positive commentary: “There is sufficient in these few notes, to show that he [the player] possessed an ear capable of distinguishing musical intervals; and they are besides remarkable, under all circumstances, as a specimen of natural modulation” (Burchell 1967: i; 460). In the same way, a year later, he minutely described dances, vocal polyphony and drum beating. Of the singing, he wrote: “Both men and women assisted in this singing, and, though not in unison, were still correctly in harmony with each other: but the voices of the girls, pitched a fifth or a sixth higher, were maintained with more animation.” From the display of the Khoikhoi's musical abilities, he concluded: “[…] in this point of view, it would be an injustice to these poor creatures not to place them in a more respectable rank, than that to which the notions of Europeans have generally admitted them. It was not rude laughter and boisterous mirth, nor drunken jokes, nor noisy talk, which passed their hours away; but the peaceful, calm emotions of harmless pleasure” (Burchell 1967: ii; 66). Burchell's judgement is indeed imbued with ideas of European superiority, and his appreciation of “Hottentot” music derives from the fact that he perceives in it similarities with European music; yet, it is music that encourages him to reconsider the low esteem in which they were generally held in his time.

If we know about Europeans' reactions to indigenous music, because they wrote about their experiences, we have no idea of the impression European music made on the Khoikhoi and the slaves (at least those who had not been previously exposed to the music of Batavian settlers), of what thought, for instance, the “Hottentot”
chief entertained by Jan van Riebeeck with a harpsichord recital (Kirby 1937: 26). What we do know is that slave musicians played for the pleasure of their masters, and that slaves and the Khoikhois appropriated European instruments and repertoires.

There is evidence that slave orchestras were formed very early in the colonial history of the Cape: “As far back as 1676, when Abraham van Riebeeck – the second child of European parentage to be born at the Cape – arrived in Table Valley on a visit to the land of his birth, he was entertained at the Governor’s residence by a black steward and another young slave who played the harp and the lute. Their execution was masterly; both of them had a nice ear for music […]” (De Kock 1950: 92). In the 18th century, although “The amusements of the people were few […] The Cape people had a passion for dancing and nearly everyone indulged in this form of recreation. Contre dances, waltzes, minuets and quadrilles were the favourite dances. Amongst the wealthy who had young folks in the house, dance was a regular past-time. The orchestra on such occasions was supplied by the slaves who were excellent musicians. The cook exchanged the saucepan for the flute, the groom left his curry-comb and took up his violin and the gardener threw down his spade and sat down to his violoncello. During the meals, the slaves, seated on a raised dais at the upper end of the large dining hall, discoursed music” (Botha 1970: 51). Around 1797, Lady Ann Barnard, the wife of the Colonial Secretary at the Cape of Good Hope, who left in her diaries, letters and drawings a vivid picture of social life at the end of the 18th century, used to invite all “who wish to be merry without cards or dice but who can talk or ‘hop’ to half a dozen black fiddlers, to come and see me on my public day, which shall be once a fortnight, when the Dutch ladies (all of whom love dancing, and flirting still more) shall be kindly welcomed, and the poor ensigns and cornets shall have an opportunity of stretching their legs as well as the generals” (Bouws 1966a: 139).

Such social dances continued well into the 19th century. “A nice example of a home orchestra during the last years of Dutch government is that of Pieter van Breda, owner of Oranjezicht. A music tent stood in one of the gardens of his estate. When Mr van Breda was to have his slaves play music there, he raised the flag so that music lovers in the city knew that they were welcome at Oranjezicht. The orchestra consisted of 30 slaves who sometimes wore uniforms. Most of them played flute or violin […] We have more information about another slave orchestra. In one of his letters (2 July 1825) the Dutch visitor M.D. Teenstra tells of his experiences and his visit to the widow Colyn of Klein Constantia. He writes about how surprised he was by the music of 16 musicians who ‘belong to
Miss Colyn as slaves: ‘they perform perfect fieldmusic [veldmuzijk], with all wind and other instruments needed, clarinets, flutes, trumpets, bassoon, snake, cymbals and two large drums, and play them as well as the best English corps in Cape Town dare to think’ (Bouws 1966a: 140–141). Jan Bouws draws part of his information from the journals of the German traveller Henri Lichtenstein, who explains that slaves were not only “natural” musicians, but were also trained: “[…] there were men ['affranchis', i.e. free blacks] in the town who gained their living by instructing the slaves in music, though neither master nor pupils knew a single note, playing entirely by ear” (De Kock 1950: 94).

From these early relations, it seems that the music played must have been strictly European, even if of the parlour dance genre. However, it was not only the Europeans who participated in what have been called “rainbow balls”: “One visitor to the Cape, after attending a ‘rainbow ball’ – to use his own phrase – remarked that he was agreeably surprised to notice with what decorum the slave girls and others ‘composed of each different hue in this many-coloured town’ conducted themselves and with what striking success they imitated the manner, conversation and dancing of their mistresses” (De Kock 1950: 93). Later, in the 1860s, it even happened that masters and servants eventually joined in an inextricable confusion. Lady Louisa Ross recounts that, one evening on a Newlands farm: “[…] there was a general cry for the musicians to strike up and ‘spuil a bietjie’. Speedily a clever stringed band came to the front, and fiddled away at whatever was called for, entirely by ear. Jigs, melodies, and polkas followed in rapid succession. Then a supply of beer was served out to them, during the consumption of which the younger folk sent off urgent dispatches to their dancing neighbours to come and join them, and then dashed with the utmost zeal into the circling waltz and fatiguing gallopade. Then the servants – male and female – pressed forward to see the fun, and being descried, were ordered by the old squire to stand forth and dance away for their master’s amusement, while the old people placidly looked on and enjoyed their pipes and coffee à la turque. The new arrivals brought with them fresh musicians and vigorous limbs, and so master and valet, maiden and maid, footman and groom, and pages of high and low degree, in inextricable confusion, went footing it and capering it over the smoothly-mown lawn, until even the coarse grass broke out into a violent perspiration, and the falling dew drove the company within doors. Nor would they stop here! Their dancing blood being thoroughly up, a ball-room was soon improvised […]” (Ross 1963: 68).

Descriptions of musical events and dances mention names of tunes and dances which come from Europe: country dances, jigs, reels, minuets, polka, waltzes,
quadrilles. Nevertheless, it seems most likely that as soon as European tunes and dances were learnt, a process of appropriation started which, as always, transformed the repertoires and movements that had been acquired. Workers employed by the Moravian missionaries at Genadendal embellished Christian hymns in a peculiar fashion. Christian Ignatius Latrobe recalled having heard, in about 1815 or 1816, “[...] a party of men and women employed as day-labourers in the missionaries’ garden [...] most melodiously singing a verse, by way of a grace. One of the women sung a correct second, and very sweetly performed that figure in music, called Retardation [...]” (quoted in Lucia 2005: 7). Unfortunately, nothing is known of the way singers trained at the Lovedale Presbyterian Mission rendered hymns in the 1820s and later. What we do know is that from Lovedale spawned a generation of African composers who, like Tiyo Soga and John Knox Bokwe, re-invented Christian religious songs by instilling in them elements of African music. On his own, Ntsikana Gaba composed in 1822 a “Great Hymn” that is considered to be the first example of an Africanised Christian religious song (Coplan 2008: 39–45). On the fringes of the Cape Colony, at the beginning of the 19th century, appropriation of European music by Africans was indeed transformative and innovative.

At the Cape, one is inclined to think that, similarly, when slaves enjoyed some free time on Sunday afternoons, they did not just reproduce what they played for the entertainment of their masters but adapted it to meet what they expected of music and dance in the conditions of slavery. “Often on a Sunday afternoon the slaves could be seen dancing with their own womenfolk or with Hottentot partners; sometimes, indeed, they would pool their rixdollars to hire a wagon in order to spend an afternoon at the seaside or at one or other of the dancing-houses in the country. Clavichords, zithers, mouth-organs, trumpets, clarions, drums and even ‘een instrument dat men een ravekinje hiet’ were amongst the musical instruments employed by the slaves” (De Kock 1950: 96).

The ravekinje, or ramkie, had already been mentioned by O.F. Mentzel in the 1730s. Its inclusion here in a list of instruments played by the slaves on an occasion when they were making music by themselves, and not for their masters, needs to be underlined, for this instrument provides one of the first evidences that creolisation processes were at work at the Cape in the 18th and 19th centuries. A finger plucked lute, with a calabash or wooden resonator, which varied in form and number of strings, it appeared among the Khoikhoi and other African people in the 18th century, and seems to have been used to play chords rather than melodies, on its own rather than to accompany songs. Its origin is usually traced back to
Indonesia, where an ancestor of the *ramkie* could have been brought with Islam from Arabic lands. The *ramkie* also shares striking similarities with the Indonesian *kroncong*, a four or five stringed plucked lute, descended from the Portuguese *cavaquinho*, which seems to have been played for dancing, alongside a tambourine (Yampolsky 2010: 8). Percival R. Kirby suggests that the name *ramkie* comes from the Portuguese *rabeca pequena*, itself derived from the Arab *rabāb*30. According to this genealogy, *rebecas pequenas* were brought to the Cape by “Malay” slaves from Java and then adopted by “Hottentots”, Bushmen and Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa. There is a widespread tendency, among the first scholars who have shown an interest in the culture of the slaves and their descendants, to attribute any innovation and original manifestation of creativity to an external origin, be it western or eastern. As a matter of fact, it is likely that slaves imported from Batavia brought with them elements of the local creole culture, along with expertise they had acquired prior to their transfer to the Cape. This included the knowledge of instruments originating from Indonesia, Europe and the Arabian peninsula, and of repertoires played on these instruments, which could already, in the 17th century, be the result of early creolisation processes. It is therefore possible that a type of creole lute was transported from Indonesia to southern Africa31; but this does not preclude the even stronger probability that it met there with other types of lutes, indigenous or exogenous, and eventually, through several phases of *bricolage*, gave birth to the family of instrument named *ramkie*. Percival R. Kirby does mention that one of the *ramkies* in his possession may have been influenced by the American banjo32 heard in the hands of English or American blackface minstrels, and perhaps also sailors. Consequently, one may surmise that, earlier, lutes of the guitar and mandolin families, as well as African lutes, and Malagasy *kabôsy*33 have inspired makers of the various *ramkies*, and that music played on the *ramkie* was already creolised: “In any event, the *ramkie* rapidly became a favourite with Cape Khoikhoi, who played on it the first blendings of Khoi and European folk melodies, tunes that still lie strewn in the basement of black South African music, and passed the instrument on to the San and the Tswana and the Sotho” (Coplan 2008: 14).

Musical encounters also took place on occasions that were not frequently related, because they showed Europeans interacting too freely with slaves and the Khoikhoi. There are however a few relations that hint at how people mixed in certain places. It has been reported that, not more than 30 years after Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape, “[…] in the slave lodge of the Company, lechery between Europeans and slaves took place. They even went so far as to dance together stark naked […]” (Hoge 1972: 103). In the same period, “[d]uring the week days, and
even on Sundays after divine service, large numbers of the colonists repaired to the taverns to listen to the strains of violins, flutes, hautboys, trumpets, harps and other instruments played by the slaves […] Some of the tavern-keepers bought only those slaves who were familiar with the use of some musical instrument, and we find the owner of a False Bay inn admitting that he kept a slave boy for the dual purpose of fishing from the boat and playing the violin at the tavern. In his diary Von Dessin relates his pleasure at learning that a Madagascar slave whom he had purchased as a cook could perform on the flute, the hautboy and the French horn” (De Cock 1950: 91–92). And, of course, Cape Town being a port city, sailors had their favourite meeting places, where they rubbed shoulders with all categories of Capetonians: at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th, “[…] ordinary sailors could find entertainment in more than one sailor bar […] where they danced to the wind and string music of one or more slave musicians, at times the men with each other (not all musicians that played in bars were slaves)” (Bouws 1966a: 138).

Preludes to creolisation

When music was played at the Cape in the times of the Dutch East India Company, it always involved people belonging to different categories: Europeans, the Khoikhoi and slaves, as musicians, dancers or listeners. There is every reason to believe that in places where the poorest colonists, sailors, slaves and Khoikhois intermingled, they made music and danced together, and therefore began to invent new musical modes of expression. Unfortunately we know nothing about the characteristics of these original musical forms. It is only at the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th that evidences of particular musical practices are mentioned.

Percival R. Kirby affirms that, already before 1685, “[…] at Christmas time bands of Malays go through the streets of Cape Town performing upon violin, guitar and cello. The cello, remarkably enough, is slung round the neck of the performer by a strap and is played with a double bass bow” (Kirby 1937: 27). But the earliest reference to what could have been a creole song, the possible ancestor of the ghoemaliedjies that were to blossom later, relates to “[…] a certain ‘Biron’ who was punished in 1707 for singing dubious ditties ‘half in Malay, half in Dutch’ in the streets of Cape Town […]” (Winberg ca.1992: 78). Christine Winberg suggests that the “dubious ditties” may have carried satirical commentaries on “the ways of the white masters”, an interpretation which the punishment inflicted
upon “Biron” tends to support. In any case, the language used by the singer was original, and this was probably sufficient enough to make the song “dubious”, especially if the melody to which the words were sung was also unfamiliar to European ears. German traveller O.F. Mentzel confirms that creolisation was in the offing: “Among the slaves and Hottentots there are generally womenfolk who can pluck the strings of a raveking […], and to whose highly unmelodious sounds another slave of Hottentot adds a few discords on the gom-gom [ghoema, drum] to the dancing of the slaves” (Schoeman 2007: 237). This quotation suggests that, some time after Biron sang “dubious ditties” in a mixture of languages, slaves danced to the sounds of an original lute of their making, which had been named by them, and of a drum whose name evokes the English “tom tom” – created at the end of the 17th century from the Hindi tamb tam – the pan-bantu root ngoma, and one of the names attributed to the Igöra, a Korana (Khoikhoi) musical bow. The appellation gom-gom – one of the possible etymologies of ghoema, which will become the emblematic drum of Cape Town – hints at the blending of several families of drum originating in various parts of the world under a name which phonetically mixes English and Khoi. In addition to the names of the instruments played by the slaves, the depiction of their music as “unmelodious” and discordant amounts, in the biased Eurocentric language of the observer, to highlighting that what was played did not conform to European canons and was certainly original.

But in those times originality was not easily tolerated by the authorities: when non-Europeans played music the rulers found unpleasant, they were prosecuted. In 1724, “[…] the coloured drummer Daniel de Vyf appeared before the Burgher War Council because he had disturbed the peace by playing a violin ‘heen en weer swevend’ [weaving from side to side] while on guard duty” (Heese 2006: 47). In 1803, the government issued the following regulation: “[…] no private bands of music shall play in the streets after sunset or before sunrise nor any other musical assemblage, held in the streets, unless the military bands of his Majesty or of the Batavian Republic, who of course will have the previous permission from their respective commanding officers” (Bouws 1966a: 150). The ordinance certainly aimed at slave, Khoikhoi, free black or poor white musicians, or any congregation of them, but did not prove very effective; in 1813 the Fiscal had to remind that “[n]o slave may sing, whistle or make any other noise in the streets, by which they are accustomed to induce one another out of the houses, thereby affording an opportunity of committing irregularities or of concealing stolen goods, on pain, if detected, of being severely flogged” (Schoeman 2007: 231); and in 1875, the Cape Town municipality decided to give the police the right to arrest
people making “[...] any loud and unseemly noise, in any street, square, alley, or public thoroughfare either by shouting, screaming, or yelling, by blowing upon any instrument which may disturb or interfere with the rest, peace, comfort or tranquillity of the inhabitants” (quoted in Bickford-Smith 1996: 21).

During the same period, Muslim religious music was also performed as part of Sufi rituals. In 1772, “Javanese” political prisoners that had been deported from Batavia to the Cape and whose descendants were free, held prayer meetings under the guidance of a “Prince”, who may have been Tuan Guru37: “About eight in the evening the service commenced, when they began to sing loud and soft alternately, sometimes the priests alone, at other time the whole congregation” (Elphick & Shell 1992: 192–19338). This brief description allows us to understand that the songs performed during this ritual were built on a call-and-response structure, with variations of intensity, most probably a dhikr39, which may be one of the roots of 20th century nederlandsliedjies.

In the countryside, there were also signs that something new was in the making. William Burchell, again, paid particular attention to manifestations of “Hottentot” musical imagination and talent. In 1811, he tells of a musician who made his own instrument: “He brought with him a curious proof of his ingenuity; a fiddle of his own making. I could not be otherwise than exceedingly amused, for the rudeness of its appearance was really laughable. Yet it gave, every thing considered, an excellent tone, and proved, during our travels, a most valuable article. This mirth inspiring utensil was a kind of oblong bowl, carved out of willow-wood, and covered over with sheep-skin or parchment. A finger-board with screws, bridge, and tail-piece, together with a bow, were all formed in imitation of a European violin, and nearly in the proper proportion. The strings, twisted of their due thickness, were made from sheep’s entrails, and the horse’s tail supplied the hair for the bow […] But my own pleasure and surprise were heightened still more, when, on desiring to hear a specimen of his playing, he clapped his Cremona to his shoulder, handled his bow with all the grace of a Hottentot, and fiddled a dance in so lively a manner, that my men and myself were all in the highest degree delighted” (Burchell 1967: i, 499–500). The instrument, as described, borrows from African lutes (willow-wood bowl covered with sheep-skin) and from the European violin (type of finger-board). The kind of dance music played is not identifiable but is clearly enjoyable to Europeans, and it may have been of European origin and more or less transformed. For, a year later, William Burchell relates how young “Hottentots” easily appropriated European melodies: “[...] they listened so attentively to the tunes which were played on our violin, that they soon learnt them perfectly, and often gave me the
pleasure of hearing them sung with a readiness and correctness which surprised me […]” (Burchell 1967: ii, 437). Appropriation inevitably led to innovation. Local adaptations of the violin were used “[…] to play both neo-traditional, syncretic and European folk styles of dance and song” (Coplan 2008: 14). New genres of music were soon adopted by non-Khoikhoi musicians: “Rural Dutch and later Afrikaans-speaking (Boer) folk musicians participated in these musical innovations by sharing with their coloured neighbours the velviool, made by stretching a steenbok skin over a wooden frame. It was on such instruments that Euro-Khoi syncretic music was first played in the hearing of Bantu-speaking Africans, including Xhosa and Tswana” (Coplan 2008: 14–15).

In Cape Town, European songs and dancing pieces, military music and Muslim religious music coexisted with what remains mostly undocumented: the various genres and repertoires brought by the slaves from their diverse cultures of origin. In the interior, neo-traditional and syncretic styles developed from the mutual discovery by Europeans and Khoikhoi of their respective music. Given the connections that tied Cape Town with the countryside, urban and rural innovations mixed and generated creole forms that observers began to notice in the 19th century.

In the 1820s, slaves were permitted to hold Sunday dances. W.W. Bird mentions that Mozambicans and Madagascans participated, but at this time, creole slaves must also have been present, since they accounted for about 60 per cent of the total slave population (Shell 1994: 47). The memory of musics from the slaves’ motherlands was certainly fading, overpowered by the new mixtures that were taking shape: “The grand display is in the outskirts of the town, to which the black population rush, on a Sunday, and go through their various awkward movements in quick or slow time, according to the taste of the dancers. The Sunday dance is accompanied by native music of every description. The slave boys from Madagascar and Mozambique bring the stringed instruments of their respective tribes and nation, from which they force sounds, which they regard as melodious. The love of dancing is a ruling passion throughout the Cape population in every rank; but music, though a pursuit favoured by a small part of the society, is here a passion with the negro alone” (Ross 1989: 45). Drums were also used during these meetings, and were said to be beaten irregularly, which may mean that they did not play on the beat but produced more elaborated rhythmic patterns (Kirby 1939: 479).

For the slaves and the poor, music was mostly an open-air activity: it was performed in the streets, on the outskirts of town, on the beaches during picnics, all
year round but more intensely when the weather was most favourable. The festivities organised for Christmas and the New Year, in the heart of the southern hemisphere summer, resounded with music. Even before the abolition of slavery, as soon as 1823, it became customary for coloured bands to parade in the streets on 1 January (Patterson 1953: 156). When emancipation was proclaimed, on 1 December 1834, street marches also celebrated the event: “Large bodies of the ‘Apprentices’ of all ages and both sexes, promenaded the streets during the day and night, many of them attended by a band of amateur musicians; but their amusements were simple and interesting; their demeanour orderly and respectful.” The same scenes happened again four years later: “In 1838, a witness to the celebrations ending apprenticeship said he saw processions of coloured people singing a Dutch song, in which every verse ended ‘Victoria! Victoria! Daar waai de Engelschen Vlag’” (Steytler 1970: 25, quoted in Bickford-Smith 1994: 298). This shows that British influences, made more attractive by the policy of the Crown on the slave trade and slavery, entered the Cape mix at the beginning of the 19th century. After 1838, musical practices that had taken shape during slavery persisted.

Cape Town accommodated dance bands, military bands, secular and religious singers. They all contributed to the creation of creole forms. Coloured and “Malay” musicians were so highly appreciated that they could perform alongside European orchestras. Around 1849, “On various occasions Van der Schyff's popular ‘native’ band – which consisted of Cape Malayans – took turns with their military colleagues; both groups were then praised for their playing. In the description of the ball in honour of Sir George Napier and his wife the quadrilles of the Malayan performers were called lively and spirited, but the manner in which the musicians of the 45th Regiment played the waltzes are described by the writer as ‘superlatively excellent’. At the beginning of this evening these two groups of musicians cooperated in the opening of the festivity. The important guests were welcomed outside by a guard of honour formed by members of the 45th Regiment. The latter was then taken over by the Malayan band when the governor entered the hall” (Bouws 1966a: 92). Orchestras composed of former slaves, or children of slaves, were still in favour among Cape Town dancers. “Already since the previous century dance music was played by small coloured orchestras, who played this music completely by ear, since they could read no music. Similar little orchestras were also active in 1855. The newspaper announced that the ‘well-known Malay Band’ played admirably at the performance by Parry’s Theatre Company. Hamelberg writes in his diary of 2 January 1855 that the ‘Mammoth Quadrille Band’, who played dance music on occasion of the fall of Sebastopol, consisted of ‘6 violins, 2 violoncellos, 1
trumpet, 1 clarinet, 1 Turkish and 1 ordinary drum, instruments played in part by Negores\(^{47}\) (Bouws 1946: 104). Cape Town discovered the quadrille with enthusiasm, and various figures of that dance were used as a basis for the creation of creole pieces of music, in a process that parallels what also happened in the West Indies and North America. “Coloured” or “Malay” musicians did not constitute a group isolated from European musicians. The “Mamoth Quadrille Band” appears to have included “non-negro” members and, in 1861, an advertisement published in *The Cape Chronicle* announced that: “J. Jacobs, Professor of music (lately from Germany) and P. van Der Schyff\(^{48}\), having succeeded in forming a superior Quadrille Band of sixteen performers are now prepared to attend Balls, Picnics or any other Assembly where their services may be required, on the shortest notice. Any number of the members can be engaged from four up to the full band. Terms Liberal. Applications to be made either to P. van der Schyff, 96, Rose Street or to J. Jacobs, 1, Lelie Street” (*The Cape Chronicle*, 13 September 1861).

The talent and ability of coloured musicians were generally acclaimed, and it was recognised that some of them could play much better than white instrumentalists. Lady Duff Gordon\(^{49}\) writes that at a New Year’s Eve ball held in Caledon in 1862: “When I went into the hall, a Dutchman was *screeching* a concertina hideously. Presently in walked a yellow Malay with a blue cotton handkerchief on his head, and a half-breed of negro blood (very dark brown), with a red handkerchief, and holding a rough tambourine. The handsome yellow man took the concertina which seemed so discordant, and the touch of his dainty fingers transformed it to harmony. He played dances with a precision and feeling quite unequalled, except by Strauss’s band, and a variety which seemed endless […] New night, there was a genteeler company, and I did not go in, but lay in bed listening to the Malay’s playing. He had quite a fresh set of tunes of which several were from the ‘Traviata!’” (Duff Gordon 1927: 80–81).

Besides professional or semi-professional musicians active in dance bands, amateur singers were innumerable and enlivened the streets with their harmonies. In the 1840s, “Cape Malays” who strolled “[…] on moonlight nights, and in warm weather, will whistle and sing in concert about the streets, linked in brotherly affection, with arms around each other’s necks, and a small fry in the rear, endeavouring to mimic harmony […]”\(^{50}\) (Bouws 1966a: 141). Three decades later, Scottish singer David Kennedy witnessed a similar scene: “In the beautiful starry evenings you hear their part-songs, some of the fellows singing at their open windows; and now and again a string of them extending across the broad street and shouting ballads to the accompaniment of guitar and concertina […]”
success of the concert-room is reproduced immediately in the streets of the Malay quarter […]” (quoted in Bickford-Smith 1995b: 188). Dance tunes, popular songs, arias from operas were given new interpretations in the parlours, the dance halls, the bars and the streets of Cape Town and small towns that mushroomed in the interior. Making music, singing and playing instruments, imported or home-made, were certainly the most accessible leisure activities to the majority of the Cape Colony inhabitants, and were most popular among the underprivileged. This is one of the reasons why in the 1870s, when Victorian paternalism imagined that the “morality” of the working class could be improved through controlled leisure, “[…] white Cape Town employers promoted ‘rational recreation’ in the form of ballroom dancing as a way to build ‘morale and loyalty’ amongst staff, because the control of leisure was seen as a means of imposing order on the city” (Coetzer 2005: 71; see Bickford-Smith et al. 1998: 240). Ballroom dancing indeed became immensely popular with coloured workers, but they appropriated it and invented from it one of their specific genres of music: langarm.

The New Year furnace

During the second half of the 19th century, narratives written about leisure, entertainment and social life in Cape Town give us an idea of the particular assemblage of music resulting from two centuries of intertwining. The foundations of mixed, métisses or syncretic music were laid in the 17th and 18th centuries, through the interaction of European settlers (mostly Dutch, German and French), Khoikhois and slaves of various origins; elements coming from Great Britain’s dance music and popular songs were later grafted upon the stems that began to grow. Then, new influences reached the Cape. The Salvation Army added their particular brand of brass band to the legacy of military orchestras and to the tradition of Moravian brass bands that had been introduced more recently. Salvation Army bands fascinated those who heard them: “Boom! Boom! Boom! Here comes the Salvation Army with the traditional tambourines, bugles and other instruments, they march along a Cape Town Street, their red and gold banners flying proudly. The scene belongs to the time when citizens still regard the ‘Army’ as a strange innovation, but both its white and coloured members are thoroughly enjoying themselves and the attitude of the onlookers is not unfriendly” (Rosenthal 1960).

Blackface minstrelsy impacted even more deeply on Cape Town’s musical culture. Shortly after Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice created the character
of “Jim Crow”, and embodied him in song and dance on American stages, it became known, discussed and interpreted in Cape Town, sometimes with original lyrics. Groups of “Ethiopian”, “Darkie” or “American” Serenaders were formed not long after the original Virginia Minstrels had popularised a format of minstrel show that was to become standard. Serenaders performed on many occasions, but especially on Christmas Eve (Bouws 1966b). Then, for the first time an American troupe of Christy’s Minstrels visited the Cape in 1862, and caused a sensation. The Cape Argus reporter was particularly enthusiastic: “[…] the fame of the distinguished party who have earned so wide a celebrity as portrayers of Negro character had preceded their arrival in Africa. Besides, the character of the entertainment is eminently suited to the tastes of the people here. Broad caricature, with a recognisable basis of fact and simple melodies, dependent for effect upon the amount of feeling the interpreter can manage to infuse into his rendering of them, are appreciated much more thoroughly than the higher conceptions of dramatists, or the more pretentious efforts of modern operatic musicians. Moreover, so essentially true to life – especially to African life – in many of its phrases, are the ‘sketches’ of these clever impersonators of Negro character, that they could scarcely fail to please […]”.

A few days later, he even heightened the tone of his eulogy and wrote: “Further hearing has convinced us that there is really no scope for criticism, everything being perfect of its kind and deserving of the highest praise. Perfection, in fact, seems the characteristic of all that the Minstrels undertake, whether it be pathos, humour, or true musical effect […]”. The shows given in Cape Town by the Christy Minstrels intensified the minstrel fad and their songs, their instruments (especially the banjo), their costumes, their type of speech and their style of dance became part and parcel of every entertainment among all categories of the population.

Racist prejudices which in the 1860s transpired in the supposed “characterisation” of American blacks and permeated minstrel songs and skits was either shared (as the tenor of The Cape Argus supplement’s article shows) or considered of little weight in view of the radical novelty introduced by blackface minstrelsy, and of the pleasures that could be derived from it. As a matter of fact, coloured performers adopted the codes of the Minstrel shows, and revellers adapted its aesthetics to the New Year festivals. The racist dimension of the Christy Minstrels’ spectacle was definitely erased when, in 1890, an African-American troupe of minstrels, Orpheus M. McAdoo’s Virginia Jubilee Singers, toured South Africa. The Cape Argus reporter was again enraptured: “Singing such as is given by the Virginia Concert Company has never before been heard in this country. Their selection consists of a peculiar kind
of part song, the different voices joining in almost unexpected moments with a wild kind of symphony. At one moment one has the full force of all the voices, and the next is straining the ears listening to a melody which seems to be fading away. It would be useless for others to attempt to sing music of this description, it is without doubt one of the attributes of the race to which they belong, and in their most sacred songs they seem at times inspired as if they were lifting up their voices in praise of God with hopes of liberty […] After each selection the audience were loud in their applause, and encores were frequent.”

The African chroniclers of King William’s Town’s (in today’s Eastern Cape) Imvo Zabantsundu and Edendale’s Inkanyiso’s Yase Natal were as full of praise as their Cape Town colleague (Erlmann 1991: 44). Orpheus McAdoo had been trained at one of the first institutions of learning created for African-Americans after the end of the Civil War, the Hampton Institute, in Virginia. He taught there for several years, and sang with the Hampton Male Quartet before joining the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Both vocal groups specialised in polished interpretations of “Spiritual Songs” created during slavery. With his Virginia Jubilee Singers, he retained certain aspects of the minstrel show format, as standardised by the original (white) Virginia Minstrels, but did away with any obvious or implicit manifestation of racism; the singers interpreted ballads, glee, sentimental songs, Scottish airs, operatic arias and spirituals. The prestige of minstrelsy could not be but increased in the eyes of coloureds and Africans by this dignified rendition of American modern popular music. The influence of McAdoo’s conceptions of music and spectacle was eventually disseminated in Cape Town’s musical communities by members of the troupe who decided to settle in the city and join local entertainers (Erlmann 1991: 21–53).

The New Year festival rapidly absorbed major features of American minstrelsy: songs, banjo, style of dress and of make-up. The New Year had been celebrated in Cape Town since at least the 1820s, when slaves were given a holiday on 2 January (Martin 1999). By the end of the century it had grown into the most popular event taking place in Cape Town; crowds assembled on 31 December in Adderley Street waiting for the clock to strike twelve, and groups of singers paraded the streets, interpreting the latest successes, but also original Cape Town songs such as “Daar kom die Alibama”, and playing little sketches, like running to a pretended fire in fire-fighter uniforms. In the 1870s, various clubs catered to coloured Capetonians: sports clubs, social clubs and mutual societies often accommodated singing groups. They marched in the streets on New Year’s Eve and attempted to differentiate themselves from other clubs by their costumes, and the colours they wore. These clubs were the predecessors of the carnival troupes
that were going to multiply in the 20th century. They became known as Kaapse Klopse (Clubs of the Cape). New Year Klopse were related to sports clubs, like the Pumpkin Darkies to the Cape of Good Hope Sports Club, the Highborn Coons59 to the Roslyn Sporting Club or, even more clearly, the Celtics to the Celtics Sporting Club. In Mowbray, a cricket team, the Pirates Cricket Club, was named after a local New Year group. These organised troupes of disguised revellers and choirs, started rehearsing their routines and songs long before the end of December, practised in the streets where their members lived, decorated them with streamers in their colours, and became the main protagonists of the New Year festivals. In 1886, *The Cape Times* reported that ‘[t]he frivolous coloured inhabitants of Cape Town, who take a holiday on the slightest pretext, indulged their peculiar notions in regard thereto by going about in large bodies dressed most fantastically, carrying ‘guys’, and headed by blowers of wind and players of stringed instruments, who evoked from their horrible monsters the most discordant and blatant noises that ever deafened human ears. At night time these people added further inflictions upon the suffering citizens of Cape Town in the shape of vocalisation, singing selections from their weird music with variations taken from ‘Rule Britannia’ and the ‘Old Hundredth’. They also carried Chinese lanterns and banners as they proceeded through the streets playing their discords, beating the drum, singing and shouting, and the strange glinting of the combined light from the street lamps and the Chinese lanterns fell upon their dark faces, they seemed like so many uncanny spirits broken loose from – say the adamantine chains of the Nether World. But it was their mode of enjoyment and strange as it is that such noises should be regarded as pleasant, it showed at least the desire on their part to celebrate the birth of a new year.”60 Words used by this writer, “weird”, “variations”, “discords”, “noises”, leave no doubt as to the fact that people who were generally considered as gifted musicians chose to celebrate the New Year with non-conventional forms of music, the creolised forms that Cape Town was beginning to produce. The seduction that this original, and sometimes “strange” music could exercise is confirmed by another article printed in *The Cape Argus*: “Many years ago the Cape boys used to delight in marching round the streets of Cape Town and suburbs in bands, armed with guitars, banjos, and mouth organs, etc., with which they discoursed music dear to their hearts. As there was no system of training, the music which emanated from these instruments was often of an exceedingly crude and weird nature, but a few of the bands were really good. On a calm still evening the melodious twang of the banjo accompaniment to some popular coon [sic] love song would have a soothing effect, and the song of
‘Lu-Lu’s’ love-sick swain would be greeted with great applause. Among these bands were also some fine singers, who although they clipped their words somewhat, put a depth of feeling into their songs, which seems to come naturally to them. On some bank holidays also none were more indefatigable dancers than the dusky beau and his belle, and at Plumstead on the greensward such a scene of animation would be presented as wood [sic] be extremely hard to surpass, even in the Southern States of America. In fancy dress the Cape boy delighted. Give him an old uniform and a faded stove-pipe hat and he would emerge from his house in the most fantastic and gaudy outfit it would be possible to construct."

By the end of the 19th century, Kaapse Klopse regularly participated in what was beginning to look like a New Year carnival. They paraded in the streets wearing all sorts of costumes and make up, singing and playing instruments, guitars, mandolins, banjos, cellos strapped round the neck, and a type of drum made from a small barrel named ghoema. After the shows given in Cape Town by Orpheus M. McAdoo’s Virginia Jubilee Singers, American influence became rampant. Journalist George Manuel suggests that: “A fresh impetus was given to the carnival spirit by an American Christy Minstrel troupe, the Jubilee singers […] The Jubilee Singers returned to America after their tour. Three of their members, however, remained behind. They were Marshall, Taylor and Allen. They linked up with the famous family of singers, the Dantu62 brothers, who ran the Cape Of Good Hope Sports Club. Together they formed the first Cape Coon troupe, the Original Jubilee Singers who were dressed in blue tailcoats and wore miniature top hats. Each had an eye circled in red. Their theme song was ‘Cherokee Maid’."

Klopse entered in informal competitions and tried to outdo each other by the elegance and colourfulness of their “uniforms” and the quality of their music. For instance, the singers of the Rosslyn Rugby Club from District Six were always keen to confront, and beat, those of the Arabian College from the Bo-Kaap. Klopse members donned “period costumes”, firemen64 or sailors’ outfits, bull fighters’ attire, and minstrel, or coon, garb: tuxedoes decorated with rosettes, bow tie and top hat. Imitating circuses or Wild West Shows, the Atjas or American Indians (which were possibly introduced by African-American or West Indian migrants), also began to appear, walking on stilts or riding horses. Casual street competitions eventually gave way to a carnival organised in a stadium for paying audiences. It seems that the idea of assembling Kaapse Klopse in a closed arena, and channelling their fortuitous rivalries into organised contests for trophies came from a member of the (white) Green Point Cricket Club, who thought it could help solve the financial problems the Cricket Club was facing. On Tuesday 1 January 1907, the first “Grand New
Year Coloured Carnival” took place at the Green Point Track. Only a few years after the census started differentiating between coloureds and “Bantus”, the carnival was presented as played by “coloureds”. It indicates that, by 1907, New Year masks, and the music that made them move, sung by choirs and played by string bands, had become the preserve of the coloureds. *The Cape Times* gave a detailed description of the event: “Residents in the Peninsula were on Tuesday afternoon afforded an opportunity of viewing a gathering on the Green Point Track of two or three hundred of those coloured mummers without whom New Year’s Day in Cape Town is not complete. The occasion was a coloured carnival, and apparently the event must have been considered one of the main events of the holiday, for close on 7 000 people found the road which led to the Track, packed the grand stands, and bordered the railings for a considerable distance. Naturally the coloured community was in force to cheer their compatriots engaged in the competitions, but there were also upwards of two thousand Europeans on the ground […] There were seven bands of mummers, decked out in the brightest colours, and accompanied by string bands. These formed the procession from the Parade. They created something of a stir on their passage through the streets, and were followed by a huge crowd of all colours, classes, and creeds […] The marching competition was the first item. The troupes paraded on the cinder path, every member of each troupe, with coat tails flying, prancing fantastically along the rattling of the bones, the tum-tum of the drums, the banging of tambourines, and the strumming of banjo and guitar […] Each corps had its marching song. Sung in that half chart, half mumble of the Cape mummer, and almost drowned in the strumming of the string instruments and the cheers of the spectators, it was difficult to ascertain what these were. They were typical coon ditties, and the guitar and banjo formed an effective accompaniment […] Despite the fact that the function was the initial one of its kind, the committee did excellently […] No awards were made on Tuesday, it being understood that the list would be communicated to the press within the next day or so […] In the evening the grounds were illuminated and various competitions were carried out, in the presence of a large crowd. The revels concluded at a late hour [...]”

### Creolisation Processes

At the dawn of the 20th century, Cape Town is home to several, interrelated genres of creolised music which have been maturing for around 250 years. The conditions in which processes of creolisation developed can be summarised by using the concept of “colonial situation” introduced by Georges Balandier. Although
all colonial societies were divided and hierarchised, and although they were dominated by an exogenous minority who used both the most brutal coercion and persuasion to ensure its power, colonial societies have to be approached as a totality: a complex system of power relationships in which the colonisers’ society and the colonised society were intimately entangled. Their enmeshment made colonisers and colonised co-actors and co-authors of the processes of change that affected the colonial situation: their relationships and the representations they had of each other were incessantly readjusted as each component of the colonial society absorbed elements of the culture of the other, and sought to find the most efficient instruments – material, intellectual, spiritual – to, on the side of the colonisers, strengthen their domination, or, on the side of the colonised, resist that domination (Balandier 1951; Smouts 2007: 29). Although the analysis of complex systems of relationship conducted by Georges Balandier on 20th century African colonies can undisputedly be applied to the Cape, in this instance slavery has to be incorporated in the analysis. Slavery exacerbated both violence and intimacy, divisions and contacts: as paradoxical as it may seem – but that is confirmed by American and Caribbean experiences – slavery provided a framework, a “situation”, for exchanges and creation from exchanges; slavery launched dynamics that continued to underpin changes in South African society after its abolition.

Daniel Maximin, a poet and novelist from Guadeloupe, insists that what tied, and at the same time distinguished, masters and slaves was their notion of humanhood (Maximin 2006). Both were human beings, but the masters denied the slaves’ humanhood (Patterson 1982). Consequently, the latter, once they had decided to survive, engaged an unending fight for recovering the sense of their own humanhood. Given the conditions of slavery, the near impossibility of recomposing the cultural systems of their regions of origin, and in particular of continuing to use their mother tongues, slaves had to, on the one hand, bring together every faintest trace that could have been preserved from their original cultures and, on the other, to “borrow” from the masters’ culture whatever could be used towards the reconstruction of their humanhood. Some elements of the slaves’ original culture were, if not identical, at least compatible, and could therefore be assembled, and the assembling again could be reworked in order to create something new. But that never occurred in isolation from the masters’ culture. What could be “marooned” from the masters immediately entered the slaves’ cultural combinations and the mixed practices that emerged from these fusions and assemblings were unequally shared between slaves and masters. This is the reason why bobotie and koeksisters are claimed by descendants of both the slaves
and descendants of the masters, why *vastrap* is danced by both, why Afrikaans is spoken by both, even if measures enforced, especially in the 20th century, to separate groups of human beings according to the colour of their skin led to the development of specificities in the way descendants of slaves and descendants of masters realised and actualised what they had in common.

**The Cape Town “situation”**

In a situation of “social death” (Patterson 1982), creation is the privileged means of asserting humanhood, because creation is the strongest sign that can prove and evince belonging to humankind (Cassirer 1979, 1991). By creating, slaves claimed their humanhood and manifested it in the faces of those who denied it. According to Daniel Maximin (2006), by “marooning” material for creation in the masters’ culture, the slaves established with them a link that showed the masters as human beings in spite of their inhuman behaviour as slavers: cultural “maroonage” symbolically re-placed slaves and masters on the same level, as human beings, by revealing both the humanhood of the slaves and that of the masters, beyond the stark reality of domination and oppression. The interpretation of creation in a situation of slavery as a process jointly re-claiming the humanhood of the slaves and revealing the humanhood of the masters does not amount in any way to downplaying the cruelty and barbarity of slavery. Rather, it aims at understanding better the creative dynamics that developed from this situation, and especially the meaning they acquired later. In particular, its goal is to understand why the results of interactive processes of creation involving, although in different positions, slaves and masters – that is creolised cultural practices – were not acknowledged as such by the masters and their descendants: why members of the white dominant stratum wanted to preserve a fallacious “purity” – biological and cultural – and presented the “gift” of creolised cultural practices to the non-white inhabitants of South Africa. The idea of “gift” comes from Ronald Radano’s enlightening re-examination of the racialisation of black music in the United States at the end of the Civil War. Creolised music that enlivened the North as well as the South in the form of dance tunes, minstrel shows and spiritual songs were categorised in black and white, and the creole dimension of what became classified “white” music (country and western, especially) was systematically erased. “The blackness of African-American performance coincided with the escalating desire to group slaves and free blacks into a hardened racial category that would be administered by a new state presence across the South. An unintentional outcome of this was the way racial supremacy also decentered the
exclusivity of an emerging whiteness. By excluding ‘Negro music’ from the common
tongue of American interracial resonance, whites constructed an exclusive domain
recognisable as it was inaccessible to their own participation and ownership […]
The ‘child’ called ‘Negro music’ may have been born of the United States […]
yet the reality of that ‘music’, while recognised as such and while growing out of
the interracial participation of whites, could never be acknowledged as a fruitful
interracial offspring. As a result, its value, power, and invention lay completely with
African-America. This odd turn of events would give to blacks a remarkable gift,
 inadvertent as it was, and one they proceeded to employ in casting a viable place in
America” (Radano 2003: 114–115).

Creolisation processes were not, however, the result of interactions limited to
slaves and masters. Those who have been called “free blacks”, and Bantu-speaking
Africans were also party to it. Political prisoners deported from Batavia were often
Muslim aristocrats who held political and spiritual positions of authority in their
societies of origin and had resisted Dutch rule. They arrived at the Cape unfree, but
not slaves; their retinue and their children were free. They continued performing
Muslim rituals in the Sufi way and sowed the seeds of Islam in South Africa (Da
Costa & Davids 1994; Dangor 1981). Some of the slaves were also Muslim and
seem to have been allowed to hold religious meetings at the Lodge in the 1740s
(Shell 1994: 49). A century later, Muslims, free and slave, represented one-third of
Cape Town’s total population (Shell 1994: 357). The original core of Cape Town
Muslims came from the Dutch East Indies, but other believers of the faith certainly
arrived at the Cape as slaves from India (Islam was predominant in Bengal, and
widespread on the coast of Malabar), and Madagascar (where Muslims were in a
minority). Non-Muslim slaves also converted to Islam. Altogether, they formed
what was called the “Malay” community which, through internal dynamics
and also because of negative stereotyping by the whites, developed feelings of
belonging together and pride in cultural specificities. “Islamic institutions, kinship
and occupational ties, as well as shared slave heritage, commemorated in annual
celebrations on 1 December (emancipation) and 1 January (the traditional slave
holiday), and their version of the Afrikaans language served to give people who
lived in close proximity to one another in the inner city a sense of community
which underpinned Malay ethnicity” (Bickford-Smith 1995a: 73). Although the
“Malay” community was mixed, there is no doubt that the first group of Muslim
deportees played a determining part in shaping the form that Islam took at
the Cape. Cultural practices associated with Sufism, which included vocal and
instrumental music, exercised a strong influence. Because of their coherence,
Muslim cultural practices acquired an ascendancy which went far beyond the borders of the “Malay” community, the more so since they were supported by a close-knit group, some members of which were revered because of their education and (relative) wealth.

Finally, the Cape became home to a minority of Bantu-speaking Africans during the second half of the 19th century. Some of them migrated on their own, others were sent by the government in response to demands from farmers in need of labour. For instance, 4 000 African workers were brought to Cape Town from the eastern frontier between April 1878 and January 1879. Indentured labourers also came from Mozambique or from German West Africa (today’s Namibia) (Bickford-Smith 1995b: 44). Eventually, “[b]y 1899 Africans were also a familiar presence in Cape Town, estimated at about 10 000. Their origins were as varied as the rest of Cape Town’s population. At a baptism in the town on Christmas Eve, there were three Xhosa-speakers, three ‘Shangaans’, one ‘Inhambane’, one Zulu, and one Mosotho attending the service” (Bickford-Smith et al. 1998: 213). Their numbers will increase in the course of the 20th century, due in part to migration fluxes from the Transkei. They mixed with other poor people, white and coloureds, and added to already creolised musics original inputs in the form of rural songs and dance tunes, or Africanised Christian hymns.

It is during this period, at the turn of the 20th century, when Cape Town was a real kaleidoscope of people, colours and sounds, that an ideology of separation began to be officially promoted in government circles, under the premiership of Cecil Rhodes. Schools became segregated; franchise requirements were raised in order to diminish the number of non-white voters and prevent the election of black candidates; blacks had to stay in stands specifically allocated to them at the Green Point Common and could not enter exclusive white theatres, cinemas or hotels; new residential areas began to be reserved for whites. In 1902, the government passed the Native Reserve Locations Act and Africans living in the town centre were forcibly removed to Ndabeni, where they lived in appalling conditions, before being relocated once again, this time to Langa in 1923 (Bickford-Smith 1995b: 138–163). A few families managed to remain in Cape Town, and particularly in District Six, but the 1902 Native Reserve Locations Act marked the beginning of a policy of systematic separation not only of Africans and whites but also of Africans and coloureds. One of the pretexts used to justify the expulsion of Africans from the city centre was the discovery of bubonic plague at the docks in February 1901, which generated racist hysteria. Previously, the smallpox epidemic of 1882, grafted onto stereotypes of coloureds and “Malays” as keeping unhygienic habits, had
generated a “sanitation syndrome” which led to blaming black Capetonians for any health hazard affecting the city (Swanson 1977). Health services were organised to cater separately for whites, coloureds, “Mozambiquans” and “Malays” (Bickford-Smith 1995b:100–106). Although coloureds, including “Malays”, were not removed from the heart of Cape Town and continued to constitute the majority in Cape Town, or in certain neighbourhoods of Claremont, such as Harfield Village, they became increasingly hit by official or de facto discrimination. The 1904 census laid the foundation on which segregation was to be consolidated in the 20th century. It crystallised the division of Cape Town in three “clearly defined race groups”: Europeans, coloureds and Africans (Bickford-Smith 1995b: 205). A “three-tier social hierarchy” (Bickford-Smith 1995b: 210) was beginning to materialise at the beginning of the 20th century; decade after decade, until 1990, it will indeed become more and more rigid, and every attempt at making separation tighter will be accompanied by intensified violence. Yet, just as slavery never hampered the growth of creolisation dynamics, 20th century segregation did not stop their advance; but it modified the situation in which they could operate and changed the perceptions the diverse parties to their entanglements had of their outcomes.

From blending to creolisation

Creolisation processes that were to affect not only the Cape Colony but the whole of South Africa were set in motion in the Cape Town “situation” between the 17th and 19th centuries. They resulted from initial contacts and exchanges between European colonists, Khoikhoi inhabitants of the southern tip of Africa, slaves and Bantu-speaking Africans. The Europeans came first from Holland (some of the Dutch officials having been already “acculturated” in Batavia), Germany and France, then from Great Britain and Ireland. Between 1652 and 1808, about 63 000 slaves were brought from four main regions. Africans (from West and Central Africa, down to Angola, and Mozambique) constituted the largest group (26,4 per cent) and figured in large numbers at the beginning and end of the slavery period; Indians represented 25,9 per cent and came from Bengal, the coast of Coromandel (south-eastern coast of the Indian subcontinent), and the coast of Malabar (south-western coast of the Indian subcontinent); Madagascans provided regular contingents of slaves during the whole period and 25,1 per cent of the total number of slaves imported at the Cape; finally 22,7 per cent of the slaves consisted in people inhabiting territories included in today’s Indonesia (Bali, Java, Sulawesi and the Maluku islands) (Shell 1994: 41). Slaves were obviously of
Cape Town’s Musics: A Legacy of Creolisation

diverse origins; they did not speak the same languages, did not eat the same foods, nor did they pray to the same god(s). The only axis around which a more or less coherent cultural ensemble could be reconstituted was Islam – in its Indonesian, and probably predominantly Sulawesi version – and Malay languages associated with it, which infused Afrikaans in the 19th century (Davids 1991), although the Islam-Malay languages cluster never remained immune from external influences.

The first step of the creolisation process was an initial métissage – blending, syncretism – made up of elements of the cultures of the various people cohabiting at the Cape – masters, slaves and the Khoikhoi. This métissage intensified as the number of locally born slaves increased. They already represented about a third of the total in the 1740s and became a majority in the 1760s (Shell 1994: 47). The métissage phase, as far as we can reconstitute it, involved two movements: the fusion of elements of the original slaves’ cultures which could have been retained and which were compatible (again, Islam which was shared among part of the Indonesian, Indian and Madagascan slaves probably served as a ground on which original practices could grow); and appropriation – maroonage – of elements of the masters’ cultures.

The first movement – fusion – has to remain hypothetical since there seems to be no source mentioning it explicitly, except for the description of a Sunday Dance given by W.W. Bird (Ross 1989: 45); yet, comparisons with what happened in North America and the West Indies make it highly plausible. Singing based on responsorial (call and response) structures existed in European, African and Sufi musics. Melodic ornamentation is usual in most musical cultures, including those of Africa, India, Indonesia and Europe. Popular European (especially, but not exclusively, Celtic), African, Indian and Indonesian musics are based on modes which, although not identical, operate on the same principles. Finally all dance music, wherever it is made, demands some form of rhythmic intensity; rhythmic patterns indeed vary from place to place and period to period, but rhythm is ubiquitous. There seems to be enough evidence to argue that amalgamation of elements of Indonesian, Indian, Madagascan, African and European musics was possible and did take place at the Cape.

The second movement – appropriation – is abundantly documented. Appropriation is always transformative; at the Cape, it took place in conjunction with amalgamation; consequently the combination of amalgamation and appropriation became the engine that thrust the process of creolisation: métissage – a mixture in which the specificity of the original components can still be discerned – was transcended, and yielded to the unpredictable energy of overcoming (dépassante imprévisible) that characterises creolisation (Glissant 1997c: 16; 37). The first signs that creolising musical practices were brewing at the Cape...
have been found in the 18th century; they were to multiply in the 19th century. Appropriated and transformed musics circulated between the city and the rural areas, among whites, Khoikhois, slaves and Bantu-speaking Africans, thereby intensifying mixing and blending. New material was introduced into these early manifestations of creolising musics in the form of British and Celtic songs and dance tunes, missionary hymns and brass bands (military and religious). Finally, the innovations which blackface minstrel shows brought to the conception of entertainment supplied an aesthetic of modernity and universality that permeated a large part of the Cape’s creolising musics at the end of the 19th century.

The Madagascar enigma

Discourses on the origins of coloured Capetonians usually emphasise two lineages: from the Khoikhoi and from the slaves. When a slave descent is put forward, its source is frequently traced back to Indonesia. Africa is sometimes mentioned, especially since the 1990s. India hardly figures in these genealogies. And Madagascar seems to have been totally forgotten. This type of exercise – trying to reconstruct genealogies through the maze of filiations created by mixing and blending people of so many diverse origins – may seem futile from a purely historical point of view. It has been possible to compute a reliable estimation of the origins of the slaves, and to indicate with some accuracy the periods during which certain regions provided proportionally more slaves than others (Shell 1994: 40–41), but these estimations deal with slaves as a group, not as individuals. People brought from particular areas mixed – had, willingly or forcibly, sexual relations, and children – with people coming from other areas; they eventually lost most of their cultural memory, and retained what could enter in the production of new – métisse, blended, or creolising – cultural practices; consequently, memories of the cultures of origin faded away while creolised practices tended to become prevalent. Multiple and intense mixing created a large number of persons with a heritage of miscegenation. However, in contemporary South Africa, where questions of identity are hotly debated and attempts at reconfiguring group identities are flourishing (Bekker 1993; Bekker, Dodds & Khosa 2001; Zegeye 2001), aspirations to retie with particular groups of putative forebears are not meaningless.

The Khoikhoi occupied the Cape region before Europeans arrived; they were the first occupants and, in this respect, their descendants may claim a particular position in South African society, and possibly special rights. Indonesians deported to the Cape were not all slaves, but some of them were political prisoners, often
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aristocrats and Shaykhs. They played a determining role in spreading Islam and keeping it in the Sufi way; tracing back one’s ancestry to them amounts to including oneself in a prestigious lineage. In post-apartheid South Africa, coloureds who assert ties with black Africans show their willingness to overcome barriers and prejudices that have been erected to try and oppose them. An Indian origin does not seem to be very attractive, maybe because it could create confusion with the people who were classified “Indians” and descend from indentured workers brought to South Africa during the second half of the 19th century (Vally 2001). Finally it seems that the contribution to South African demography and culture of about a quarter of the slaves who came from Madagascar has been totally overlooked71.

Madagascar was a hub of slave routes in the Indian Ocean (Razafiarivony 2005; Vink 2003). Slaves were imported to the island and exported from there. During the Company’s rule, that is during the first period of slavery at the Cape, Madagascar was the main source of slaves: “[…] it is plain that the major single regional source for Cape slaves during the Company period was Madagascar […] No fewer than 66 per cent of the Company’s direct imports came from Madagascar and officials and burghers also acquired many Malagasy slaves from transient merchants” (Armstrong & Worden 1989: 121). They were usually appreciated: they were considered “strong and agile”, “naturally strong, diligent, quick of comprehension and not malicious” and mainly used as gardeners and farm workers (Schoeman 2007: 17, 116, 123; Shell 1994: 54, 234). It seems that slaves originating from Madagascar, although coming from various regions of the island72, were able to retain some elements of their culture, including their language: “A further characteristic of Madagascan slaves was that they remained remarkably faithful to their own language, and interpreting in Malagasy took place at the Cape from at least 1706 until at least 1766” (Schoeman 2007: 123). During the VOC period, and even under British rule, Malagascans constituted a large proportion of the slaves; after the abolition of slavery, Malagascans continued to be landed at the Cape as “Prize Negroes” (Loos 2004: 47). They could have originated from a region of the island or from another country, Mozambique for instance, yet it seems that most of them spoke mutually understandable dialects of the Malagasy language, and that it allowed them to keep the language alive in Cape Town at least until the second half of the 18th century.

The contribution of Malagascans to processes of creolisation was certainly compounded by the fact that their language and cultures shared many traits with Indonesian languages and cultures. The Malagasy language belongs to the family of Malayo-Polynesian languages, to which also belong languages spoken
in Indonesia. More generally, Madagascar was, in part, populated by people of Indonesian origins, and its culture shares a number of traits with that of Indonesia. The music of Madagascar results from interactions between Malayan, Indonesian and African musics (Nketia 1986: 9) and the instrument that symbolises it best, the tube zither valiha, is of Indonesian origin (Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 1984). Madagascan music incorporated influences from Portugal and the Islamic world. It also entertained connections with African musics from the east coast. It ensues that many traits from Madagascan musics were identical or at least compatible with characteristics of musics brought from Indonesia, Africa and the Sufi world, and that creative combinations enmeshing them should have been quite unproblematic. There is consequently every reason to consider that Madagascans made an important contribution to the burgeoning South African culture of the 17th and 18th centuries, and indeed to the musical mix that brewed in those centuries, although definite information is still lacking on what they actually delivered.

* * *

At the dawn of the 20th century, a creole culture began to emerge in Cape Town. It affected all the inhabitants of the Mother City at a time when segregation hardened. Racial separation, the consolidation of hierarchies positioning supposedly different “race groups” along scales of civilisation and purity, and the stereotyping of people arbitrarily put in these groups, would indeed remodel creolisation processes and channel their dynamics within each group. However, even the rigidity and brutality of apartheid will never stop contacts, interactions and creations derived from contacts and interactions. Intensified cross-pollination between original South African genres and foreign ones will bring new energies to processes of creolisation underpinned by internal cross-fertilisation. Eventually new – quite unpredictable in the 19th century – musical genres will develop. They will be associated with particular groups, as constituted by de facto and de jure segregation; yet they will entertain close relationships and evolve in concert. Musics performed during the New Year festivals, including nederlandsliedjies and moppies, will appear as the preserve of those classified as coloureds. But langarm, a type of coloured dance music, will share several features with boeremusiek, especially the vastrap, which did not play an insignificant role in the invention of marabi, the source of African jazz. Hymns composed by African musicians, intertwining rural African choral practices and missionary hymnody, will give birth to a large repertoire of
Christian African songs known as *amakwaya*. Muslim religious music sung in Sufi rituals or played during *khalifa* rituals will incorporate western harmonies and instruments; they will beget spiritual repertoires, such as contemporary *qasidah*, and secular genres, such as the *nederlandsliedjies*. The 20th century will again be a period of overlapping, mixing and invention.
Notes


2. This paragraph is largely based on Martin 2006b.

3. The words mestis, then métis respectively appeared in French in the 13th and 17th centuries. Formed from the Latin mixticius (born from a mixed race), the latter was probably adapted from the Portuguese mestiço and the Spanish mestizo (see Bonniol & Benoist 1994; Bonniol 2001). Since there exists no equivalent for these words in English (half-bred or cross-bred being inappropriate here), I shall use, whenever necessary, and according to the context, the French, Spanish and Portuguese words.


6. Interestingly, Homi Bhabha, apparently taking his information from a novel by Nadine Gordimer (My Son’s Story, London, Bloomsbury, 1990), proposes an essentialised vision of hybridity à propos of those who were classified coloureds in South Africa when he uses the singular to affirm “[…] the coloured South African subject represents a hybridity, a difference ‘within’, a subject that inhabits the rim of an in-between reality” (Bhabha 1994: 19). This assertion denotes an inability to analytically distinguish between the effects of segregation (“the rim of an-in-between reality”) and the capacity of “cultural radiance” built as part of a survival strategy (Turgeon 2003: 200), that transgresses and transcends barriers erected to prevent social and cultural interactions (Coplan 2008; Martin 1999, 2007).

7. Used, as explained Édouard Glissant, “[…] to destroy the brains of a community, to persuade it, from the inside, that its calling is exhausted […] and this very same community withers in accepting its shame (le métissage), unable to promote and give a positive value to the composite (which does not mean here the ill-assorted)” (Glissant 1997a: 213).

8. Hybrid: “Offspring from a cross between individuals of two different species, or two inbred lines within a species. In most cases, hybrids between species are infertile and unable to reproduce sexually. In plants, however, doubling of the chromosomes can restore the fertility of such hybrids. Hybrids between different genera are extremely rare” (Webster’s Interactive Encyclopedia, Chatsworth (CA), Cambrix Publishing, 1998, CD Rom); for a brief presentation of the biological understanding of hybridisation, see: Demarly 2000.

9. Contradictions between the statements they make in In Praise of Creoleness and their practice as novelists have been noted in: Price & Price 1997 and Gyssels 2003.

10. As far as I have been able to trace the only work by Édourad Glissant to have been translated into English, apart from Caribbean Discourse is Poetics of Relation (Glissant 1997b), which probably explains why most English-writing authors are not aware of the development of Glissant’s ideas on creolisation. Consequently, in the following paragraphs, all quotations from Glissant’s texts will be in my translation. However, given the complexity and idiosyncrasies of Glissant’s style, I shall also give the original French texts in the endnotes.

11. In Poetics of Relation, Édouard Glissant starts writing relation with a capital R.

12. “La créolisation ne limite pas son œuvre aux seules réalités créoles des Archipels ni à leurs langages naissants. Le monde se créolise, il ne devient pas créole, il devient cet inextricable et cet imprédictible que tout processus de créolisation porte en lui et qui ne se soutient ni ne s’autorise d’aucun modèle. Ailleurs, ni la raide hybridation, ni le seul métissage, ni le multi-quoi-que-ce-soit.”

13. “[…] la Relation n’instruit pas seulement le relayé mais aussi le relatif et encore le relaté […] La Relation relie (relaie), relate” (Glissant 1990: 40; 187).
Poetics here refers both to the freedom of imagination granted by poetry and to its Greek root *poïēsis*, creation, fabrication; it stresses the power of creation that imagination is endowed with.

“[…] la poétique de la relation suppose qu’à chacun soit proposée la densité (l’opacité) de l’autre. Plus l’autre résiste dans son épaisseur ou sa fluidité (sans s’y limiter), plus sa réalité devient expressive, et plus la relation féconde.”

“[…] cette énorme insurrection de l’imaginaire qui portera enfin les humanités à se vouloir et à se créer (en dehors de toute injonction morale) ce qu’elles sont en réalité : un changement qui ne finit pas, dans une pérennité qui ne se fige pas.”

Documents on the history of music in Cape Town can be found in my *Chronicles of the Kaapse Klöps*, available on line at: http://www.criticalworld.net/projet.php?id=47&type=0


Acculturation is understood here according to the definition provided by anthropologist Roger Bastide: “[…] processes that unfold when two cultures are in contact and mutually impact on one another”. This implies that acculturation always affect all parties to an encounter and is always transformative (Bastide 1998).

Also spelled *gora*, a type of musical bow sounded by the breath (Rycroft 1984a).

Translated from the Afrikaans by François Verster.

Ibid.


“Play a Little”.

A mission station founded in 1824 by members of the Glasgow Missionary Society in the Victoria Division of the Cape Province (now Eastern Cape).


An instrument that is called ravenkinje

On the *ramkie*, see: Kirby 1939, 1966; Rycroft 1984b.


That the possible Indonesian ancestor of the *ramkie* was an already creolised lute is suggested by the fact that *rabāb* is used in Indonesia to name a type of spike fiddle. The transition from *rabāb* to *rebeca pequena*, from a fiddle to a plucked lute, may result from the application and transformation of the name used for one instrument (*rabāb*) to another (derived from the *kroncong*), or might also signal the invention of a new plucked lute combining elements from Arabic, Asian and European instruments (such as the guitar or the mandore), two hypotheses which are not mutually exclusive.

“A curious feature of his ra’king [a *ramkie* made by a ‘Malay guitar player named Suleiman’] was that three of the strings stretched along the full length of the instrument, but the fourth string only went half-way, the peg to which it was attached being set in a hole in the ‘shoulder’ of the neck. This suggests very forcibly some relatively recent development, the American negro banjo being characterised by this feature” (Kirby 1939: 483–484).

The *kabôsy* is found all over the island of Madagascar, where it is also known as *gitara, mandoliny* or *mandolina*; it is also probably the result of a local adaptation of foreign instruments, such as
the European guitar and mandolin, and the Yemenite qanbūs; it may have been brought, or re-made, in South Africa by slaves of Madagascan origin (Randrianary 2001: 111).


36. Translated from the Afrikaans by François Verster.

37. Tuan Guru was the name under which became known Abdullah Kadi Abdu Salaam, a prince from the Moluccas who had been exiled to the Cape in 1767; he re-wrote there, from memory, a complete copy of the Qu’ran and became the leader of the small Muslim community that developed in the 18th century (Davids 1994; Elphick & Shell 1992: 192).


39. The *dikhr* (remembrance, or invocation of God) consist in chanting the names of God, or formulas taken from the holy scriptures; among Sufi brotherhoods chants are performed in call and response, with strong variations of intensity, and are usually accompanied by body movements, both the chanting and the movements being conducive to a trance state.

40. “Entirely indigenous forms performed in new colonial and urban contexts” (Coplan 2008: 67).

41. “Blending of musical materials and forms from two or more cultures, resulting in a new form that is more than the sum of its diverse parts” (Coplan 2008: 68).


43. Freedom granted by the abolition of slavery was not immediately total and slaves had to undergo a four-year period of “apprenticeship” before they were fully emancipated.


45. “There flies the English flag”.

46. Translated from the Afrikaans by François Verster.

47. Translated from the Dutch by François Verster.

48. P. van der Schyff was probably the same person mentioned above as the leader of the “popular native band”. There have been several generations of musicians named van der Schyff in Cape Town including the “eccentric” classical guitarist Neefa van der Schyff (1947–2006); see the obituary published in *The Cape Times*: http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=271&fArticleId=3352565

49. Lucie, Lady Duff-Gordon (1821–1869) was an English writer who spent several years at the Cape, hoping the climate would help her recover from TB, before going to Egypt. From both countries, she wrote a rich correspondence which abounds in interesting insights into the social life of the places where she resided.

50. Translated from the Afrikaans by François Verster.

51. The Moravian style of playing brass instruments was introduced to South African congregations with the dedication of the Genadendal Training School on 12 September 1838 (http://www.moravianbrass.co.za/index.php?page_name=more&menu_id=3&submenu_id=3; accessed 16/03/2010).

52. Caption for an etching by Heinrich Egersdörfer published in the *South African Illustrated News*, 11 October 1884: 316, and originally titled; “Salvation Army, Street Scene, Cape Town”.
53. Thomas D. Rice invented Jim Crow at the end of the 1820s. He presented him in New York in 1832, and in London in 1836. The first printed score of the song was published in the early 1830s by E. Riley with a picture of Thomas D. Rice as Jim Crow on the cover.


55. “Christy’s Minstrels”, Supplement to The Cape Argus, Thursday, 21 August 1862: 5.


57. An advertisement published in The Cape Mercantile Advertiser on 20 September 1869, announces that an “Amateur Coloured Troupe” will present a “Grand Entertainment” at the Old-Fellow’s Hall, Plein Street, and that the programme will include: “Overture, Lucretia Borgia”, “When you and I were young, Maggie”, “De Darkie’s Jubilee”, “Malingo Hoy, the Cape Town Coolie (Dutch-Mozambique Lingo)”, and an Ethiopian scene entitled the “Young Scamp”; the “Dutch-Mozambican Lingo” probably represented an indigenous addition to the “classical” minstrel show.

58. “Jubilee Singers at the Vaudeville”, The Cape Argus, Tuesday 1July 1890.

59. The word “coon” comes from the vocabulary of blackface minstrelsy. An abbreviation of raccoon, it suggested that African-Americans looked and behaved like the animal. It appears in the title of many minstrel or “coon” songs, like “Zip Coon”. In the United States “coon” is derogatory and insulting. However, at the Cape, its racist origin has been forgotten by most carnival organisers and revellers and “coon” has become synonymous with the carnival mask. Participants in the carnival proclaim “I am a coon” and troupe captains easily speak of their “coons”. Recently, political correctness has spurred the replacement of “coon” with “minstrel” or Kaapse Klopse. But it has not drastically affected the language of a majority of troupe members and leaders who continue to use “coon” without any qualms.

60. The Cape Times, Monday, 4 January 1886.

61. The Cape Argus, 1 January 1908: 5.

62. Or Dante, founders of a lineage of Klopse organisers and coaches, whose descendants are still active today.


64. George Manuel recounts that the Original Jubilee Singers were later transformed into “The Darktown Fire Brigade – a burlesque version of the real fire brigade whose uniform was used as a model for the coon costumes. The helmets were lent to them by the fire brigade and the local police. A big feature of this troupe was its parading with a real fire engine of those days – a ‘pomerplompie’ – complete with pipes and canvas buckets” (ibid.: 6).

65. The Cape Times, Thursday, 3 January 1907: 7

66. The first choice open to the slave is to die – to commit suicide, as happened frequently on slave ships or upon arrival at the land of deportation – or to live and survive.

67. This process is similar to what occurred in the United States; see: Martin 1991.

68. According to Haitian writer René Despestre, “maroonage”, that is poaching in the masters’ culture, allowed the slaves to “[...] make thrive within themselves a universal sense of freedom and human identity” (Depestre 1980: 99–100).

69. Not because, as is sometimes believed, they originated from Malaysia, but because they originally spoke languages belonging to the Malay family.

70. Especially if the mixed ancestry of a great number of supposedly “white” South Africans is taken into account; see: Heese 2006.

71. One of the very few evocations of Madagascar as a source of slaves, and culture, can be heard in Taliep Petersen and David Kramer’s musical Ghoema, when, in “Blue Sky”, Carmen Maarman and Zenobia Kloppers sing: “Take me back where I belong, Madagascar is where
I’m from, it’s where I want to be” (*Ghoema, Original Cast Recording*, Cape Town, Blik Music, 2005 [CD Blik 12], vol. 1 # 3).

72. Madagascan slaves were taken from Antongil Bay (north-east, 1641–1647), then from St. Augustine’s Bay (south, near Tulear); after 1676 and for a century, from Mazalagem (north-west) (Armstrong & Worden 1989).

73. According to Achmat Davids *khalifa* is: “[…] a sword game that is characterised by the hitting of a sharp sword across the arms or body or by driving sharp skewers through the thick flesh of the face without causing blood to flow. The exercise is accompanied by drum-beating and an almost hypnotic chanting in Arabic” (Da Costa & Davids: 63). It demonstrates the strength of the spirit compared to that of the body. *Khalifa* was performed during slavery and may have been used to persuade slaves to adhere to Islam. This ritual has been said to be of south-eastern origins (Jeppie 1996). It is actually practised in many countries where Sufism is influential, from the Maghreb to Eastern Asia, and is a testimony of the complexity which lies at the root of South African Islam.