

**PERFORMING WHITENESS; REPRESENTING OTHERNESS: HUGH TRACEY  
AND AFRICAN MUSIC**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a critical study of texts associated with Hugh Tracey (1903–1977). Tracey is well-known for his work in African music studies, particularly for his major contribution to the recorded archive of musical sound in sub-Saharan Africa and his founding of the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in 1954. My reading of him is informed by a postcolonial perspective, whiteness studies and African scholarship on ways in which constructions of African identity and tradition have been shaped by the colonial archive. In my view, Tracey was part of a mid-twentieth century movement which sought to marshal positive representations of traditional African culture in the interest of maintaining and strengthening colonial rule. While his recording project may have fostered inclusion through creating spaces for indigenous musicians to be heard, it also functioned to promote racist exclusion in the manner of its production, distribution and claims to expertise. Moreover, his initial strategy for ILAM's sustainability targeted colonial government and industry as primary clients, with the promise that promoting traditional music as a means of entertainment and self-expression for black subjects and workers would ease administration and reduce conflict. I believe that it is important to acknowledge and interrogate the problematic racial attitudes and practices associated with the history of Tracey's archive – not to undermine its significance in any way but to allow it to be better understood and used more productively in the future.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hugh Tracey was born in 1903 in Devon, England and died in 1977 in Johannesburg. He lived most of his adult life in South Africa following an early period farming and mining in Zimbabwe (from 1921 to 1933), during which he first developed an interest in traditional African music and began to study and record it. After a successful career in South African radio broadcasting as head of the Durban branch of the SABC, he moved to Johannesburg in 1947 to pursue African music research full-time, with financial backing from Gallo Records. The African Music Society was formed in 1948. Tracey established the International Library of African Music (ILAM) as an independent organisation in 1954, with major support from the mining industry. During the late 1940s and 1950s, he undertook expeditions over large parts of Southern, East and central Africa. From recordings made during these field trips and others, Tracey compiled one of the largest archives of its kind, and published two major collections (*The Sound of Africa* and *The Music of Africa* series). He became known internationally as an expert promoter of his subject, through LP records, books, articles, the journal he founded (*African Music*), broadcasts and personal appearances. ILAM moved from Roodepoort to Rhodes University, Grahamstown after Tracey's death, under the directorship of his son, Andrew Tracey.

My interest in Tracey developed when I worked at ILAM as a librarian from 2001 to 2004, several years before I embarked upon this study in a formal sense. As I learned more about ILAM's founder, through numerous textual traces encountered in the course of my duties, I became aware of aspects of his story which did not appear (or were extremely muted) in the public institutional narrative but which were very relevant to contemporary scholarship on representations of Africa, whiteness, colonial history and race.

### **On Race and Whiteness**

Tracey operated in social contexts which were structured primarily in terms of race. His project was practically positioned within, and oriented towards, political systems based on racial inequality. Overt and implied references to race also permeate his writings on African people and music. Although Tracey did not challenge white political or economic supremacy, he did challenge certain common colonial attitudes towards blackness. Because race looms so large in the context and content of Tracey's work, I felt it was necessary for my thesis to investigate, and not merely assume, meanings of race and racism. Accordingly, my second chapter includes a theoretical section on race, which uses David Theo Goldberg's work in

particular. My subsequent discussion of Tracey's book *Zulu Paradox* (1948) finds that it evinces many of the traits noted by Goldberg yet also diverges from his models of racist whiteness in significant ways.

Whiteness is a key term for this thesis and Tracey provides an interesting example of whiteness in operation, since he typifies a kind of racialised identity in many ways, yet is unusual in the manner in which he accumulated cultural capital through engagement with, and claims to knowledge of, African people and culture. His interventions on behalf of blackness supported and were presented within a dominant paradigm of white supremacy, rather than fostering its dismantlement. Nonetheless, the archive he collected incorporates many voices not easily contained by the frames imposed upon them and thus includes the seeds of its own deconstruction. As if oblivious to this continual threat of subversion from within their own ranks (as it were), Tracey's texts on African music assert expertise and prescribe development as part of an overt performance of whiteness which is often quite spectacular. While deeply concerned with representation – of itself and racialised others – this particular manifestation of whiteness is also directly implicated in material conditions imposed by structures of violence and racial rule.

Over the past few decades, whiteness studies has emerged as a diffuse interdisciplinary subject of study, rather than a clearly defined and concentrated scholarly field. David S. Owen identifies a lack of definitional clarity in much scholarship on whiteness, which sometimes “seems intended to underscore [...] variable and contextualised meanings”. Though he recognises that “the concrete modes of whiteness's instantiations in specific contexts are highly localized and variable”, he argues the need for “a general theory of whiteness”. Since “whiteness is a structural phenomenon”, an overarching critique “is required in order to identify effective means of disrupting its systemic effects” (2007, 210).

As a contribution towards the development of a general theory, Owen delineates seven “functional properties of whiteness”. All of these have relevance for this study. The first property denotes “a particular racialized [...] standpoint that shapes the white subject's understanding of both self and the social world” (205). Whiteness is associated with “a social location that provides a particular and limited perspective” (206). Though Tracey's whiteness expresses itself in different colonial roles (see chapter one in particular), his texts generally exude a certain commonality of tone and reiterate racial stereotypes. In chapter two I show how his narrative in *Zulu Paradox* reveals a limited understanding of self in that it lacks any reflexivity on its own contradictions. His interpretations of African texts and behaviours,

discussed in various places throughout this thesis, similarly demonstrate the conceptual limitations of whiteness as social habitus.

The second property of whiteness, according to Owen, is *advantage*. Its “social location” is not simply defined in terms of difference but is a position “of economic, political, social and cultural advantage relative to those locations defined by non-whiteness” (206). This point is particularly pertinent to Tracey, given his (physical, social and ideological) positioning within colonial space. My third chapter, in particular, outlines ways in which his project plays upon material as well as representational advantages.

Whiteness’s third property is that it “is normalized [...] defined as natural, normal or mainstream”. The fourth characteristic listed by Owen flows from the third: whiteness is “largely invisible to whites yet highly visible to non-whites” (206). With regard to whiteness’s invisibility, colonial contexts may complicate metropolitan practice. Associated with a settler minority, Southern African whiteness often seems to show signs of anxiety or self-consciousness, marking a certain *visibility* to other whites as well as racialised ‘others’. Invisibility – whiteness as ‘normal’ and taken-for-granted – certainly persists, nonetheless. Texts by and representations of Tracey provide interesting examples of whiteness as visible performance and as invisible practice.

Owen’s fifth property of whiteness is its *embodiment*. The embodiment of whiteness goes beyond mere skin colour to encompass social identity in the sense that attitudes associated with whiteness become “part of [...] bodily dispositions and comportment within the world” (2007, 206). Biographical evidence from the Tracey archive – in the form of photographic and recorded-sound representations of the man himself – seems to underscore this notion of embodied whiteness by suggesting a certain style which asserts ease and entitlement. In chapter three I discuss what might be termed embodied whiteness as a form of cultural capital or distinction. The association of whiteness with embodied behaviour ought to include a caveat, however. Physical postures and gestures commonly associated with whiteness, along with styles of dress and adornment (or indeed music) similarly identified, are often also used by people who are *not* racialised as white. To label their employment of these forms of embodiment an imitation of whiteness performs a kind of exclusion, imposing norms proper to blackness, and is thus itself an act of racism. As a self-proclaimed expert on African tradition, Tracey sought to discourage musical behaviours he considered foreign-derived and therefore judged to be inauthentic (see chapters two and four in particular).

The sixth property of whiteness, according to Owen, is *variability*: “its borders are continuously being redefined, entailing that analyses of whiteness’s functioning must always



be grounded in specific contexts of its manifestation”. Since it is a “socio-historical phenomenon”, studies of whiteness “should not reify it as an essential form” (2006). Certainly, Tracey’s whiteness emerges from unique and particular circumstances and is often expressed in unusual ways. In writing this thesis, I have tried to balance the necessary use of generalisation with historical awareness and attention to specificity.

Owen’s final property of whiteness is *violence*. According to him,

whiteness cannot be understood apart from the violence that it begets or apart from the violence that produced – and continues to produce – it. Not only does whiteness have its origins in the physical and psychic violence of the enslavement, genocide and exploitation of peoples of color around the world, but also it maintains the system of white supremacy in part by means of actual and potential violence. (2007, 206)

Though he focused on music – which is often figured as promoting peace rather than war – Tracey’s project had clear connections with whiteness as violence. Besides the symbolic violence apparent in many of his constraining (and often demeaning) representations of blackness, Tracey – as de facto agent of mining companies and colonial governments – was directly associated with systems which relied upon routine coercion and force for their daily maintenance.

Whiteness frequently stereotypes black people as primitive and wild, thus depicting ‘them’ as violent and sexually promiscuous, as well as immature. At the same time, such whiteness defines itself in opposition to wildness. Tracey’s representations of blackness, however, are expressed rather differently and often tend to counter common associations with wildness. In chapter one, I consider his whiteness in relation to Leon de Kock’s suppositions on the relationship between Southern African settler whiteness and wildness (2006 and 2010).

The properties which Owen assigns to whiteness all apply to Tracey, while often requiring some expansion or modification. As such, their application to one particular instance of colonial whiteness illustrates the generality of whiteness as an analytical concept as well as its socio-historical variety and specificity. I have chosen to list these properties here because I find them useful in clarifying a term which often remains undefined. They also serve to introduce many of the themes of my thesis. In addition, I reference Owen because I hope this study will contribute to the theoretical programme he promotes: that is, to improve understanding of whiteness and its role in racial oppression with the aim of dismantling social constructions of race and thus ending racism. If studies of whiteness do not pursue a clear –

and ultimately practical – liberatory agenda, they run the risk of reifying, entrenching, or even celebrating it as a social category.

While Owen’s points are relevant, his paper also serves to demonstrate some of the limitations of scholarship emerging from metropolitan social locations with regard to African situations and problems. Though he aims to develop theory with global applicability and makes universal claims, his reference to “our nation’s history” and his use of a term like “peoples of color” (2007, 203) reveal his particular context in the USA. All theorists are similarly situated, but his failure to specify his geographical terms of reference suggests that part of North America may be being mistaken for the world as a whole. In general, while contributions from South Africa and elsewhere are increasing, North American scholars still dominate whiteness studies. The socio-spatial location of many of its proponents is not the only reason why theories on whiteness require outside reinforcement, however. Owen argues that critical whiteness theory is “necessary, though not sufficient, to the formulation of an adequate explanatory account of the mechanisms of racial oppression in the modern world” (203). The problem with even critical readings on whiteness is precisely the fact that they keep the focus on whiteness. Such readings are counter-productive for an anti-racist agenda without additional theoretical input from other fields. With regard to my thesis, whiteness as a concept provides an important but insufficient lens through which to read texts on Tracey and Africa.

### **On Africa by Africans**

V.Y Mudimbe’s *The Invention of Africa* has been an important theoretical influence in the background to this study. Through his examination of the Africanist epistemological archive, Mudimbe outlines the extent to which Africa-as-we-think-it has been structured by colonial constructions. In this thesis, I follow his use of the term Africanism: to denote the knowledge claims and colonising mental frameworks of Eurocentric scholarship on Africa and Africans (1988, 23). Distinguishing between the respective works of Africanist and African scholars (which tend to be animated by contrasting political orientations and agendas), Mudimbe also points to what he perceives as an ongoing problem for African scholarship: the extent to which it itself remains embedded in a colonial mindset through its participation in European modernist methods and structures. He distinguishes between African *knowledge* – which is formalised and standardised within the textual parameters of the European-based international system – and *gnosis* – which indicates indigenous forms of knowing and creativity that are variable and localised and often not expressed in written texts or translated

beyond their particular language. When gnosis is translated into knowledge it is filtered through an organising framework which constructs it in certain ways and may impose meanings upon it. For this reason, it remains mysterious, “a kind of secret knowledge” and “a pertinent question mark” (186). Mudimbe’s insight into the difficulties and dangers associated with scholarly exploration which seeks to capture gnosis is very relevant to my study of Tracey, who presumed to ‘discover’ African culture but paid little attention to his own methods and assumptions.

The gap which Mudimbe identifies between knowledge and gnosis might be seen as a broader problem which is not confined to Africa but presents itself whenever and wherever formal academic study is brought to bear on informal, local and private experience or, indeed, in any instance of translation. Yet at times he seems to posit a more fundamental alterity between Africans and Westerners. His analysis traces a conceptual history which has imposed theories of difference, yet also seems bound to its own concept of difference which sometimes feels insurmountable and seems to place an added burden on African scholarship. For this reason, my reading of Mudimbe eventually reaches an impasse. My feeling is that he, like some postcolonial and critical race theorists (including Goldberg), defines the Western colonial project too broadly and identifies it too closely with modernity, thus creating a tension between *Africa* and *modernity* which is almost a contradiction in terms and leaves limited room for modern Africans. For me, reading Abiola Irele’s “In Praise of Alienation” helps to dispel the feeling of hopelessness which reading Mudimbe can induce. Through his re-definition of ‘European’ modernity, Irele provides a way to bridge the gap, or deconstruct the wall, between it and African tradition. My first chapter draws on Mudimbe while a section on Irele appears in chapter two.

Like Irele, Kofi Agawu is concerned with questioning ideas of difference and his work has been a major influence on my study from its earliest stages. Agawu’s *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries and Positions* examines the way African music has been constructed in terms of difference, undermines constraints concerning authenticity and opens the field to new methods and approaches. It provides the major theoretical input for my fourth chapter, on music.

When I started working on this thesis, I planned to devote more attention to reading African voices represented in Tracey’s archive than I was in fact able to do. Nonetheless, I hope that this work at least gives a sense of the rich variety of composition and expression which may be accessed through ILAM’s collection and encourages further analysis of it. The

volume of material on Tracey left me little room to focus on ‘his’ subject,<sup>1</sup> but there is far more that could be said about him too. Certainly, I have not produced anything remotely approaching a complete biographical study of Tracey the man, but then neither have I intended to do so.

### **On Biography, Text, Tense, Fiction and History**

The seemingly biographical nature of this project was a stumbling block in the initial stages of its conceptualisation. In reacting against the colonising tendencies I perceived in much of Tracey’s work, I did not wish to perform my own conceptual violence upon his memory, nor did I feel myself up to the task of presuming to construct a true narrative of Tracey the individual. I did not want to undermine achievements I respect, nor become embroiled in a petty and pointless argument over whether the historical person was essentially good or bad. Moreover, I became aware that my interest in Tracey is fairly selective: focused more on the work than the life and on the life primarily in interaction with its socio-political context and in its public, career-oriented and performative aspects. I decided, therefore, to situate my study at the level of text rather than person. Accessing Tracey’s statements, thoughts and actions through texts, I would analyse him as a textual construction, rather than as a real human being.

In practice, this distinction between textual persona and biographical person proved rather difficult to maintain. Once I had scanned through all the Tracey correspondence available at ILAM (which includes much that is personal as well as public), I felt I knew him rather well. I know that in this thesis I often write about him in a rather personal way and have at times found it difficult to avoid passing ethical judgements on him. Be that as it may, I would like to retain the emphasis on text, even if the ideal has been honoured more in the breach than the observance. Although I may sometimes write about Tracey as if about someone I know, in fact I have not been in any position to know *him*. I have learned a lot about certain texts associated with him, however. My intention is not to reduce ‘life’ to ‘text’. Instead, I read texts on the life and respond to the textual persona I perceive and create in the process of reading.

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<sup>1</sup> This material includes published books and articles by Tracey, unpublished manuscripts such as his unfinished autobiography (c. 1976), his report on Shona music for the Carnegie Corporation (1933) and an interview with Peggy Tracey about him (1980), extensive correspondence (official and personal) and photographs. It is all archived at ILAM and may be accessed there on request. I have surveyed whatever I was able to access and selected items which seemed to me important for close-reading textual analysis.

My home discipline is literary studies, which includes a major focus on fiction. In thinking of the textual Tracey *as if* he were real, I have treated him much as I would treat a fictional character when analysing a literary text. For that reason it has felt appropriate to follow the convention of using the present tense not only when writing about his writings, but sometimes when writing of him in a broader sense. Nonetheless, the texts which I have been studying are not fictional and their context is historical.<sup>2</sup> As such, in order to give proper attention to history, it has also been necessary to use the past tense. I hope my readers will understand and excuse my moving between the two.

The social spaces in which Tracey moved and worked were complex and varied. Within them, he played a number of different roles in which his whiteness and his interest in Africa were expressed in different ways. I have tried to balance my focus on the subjective aspects of Tracey's texts – the attitudes and actions expressed and discussed within them – with an understanding of the larger forces and structures (both material and social) surrounding him and his work. In attempting to do this, I have found Pierre Bourdieu's theory of society (of individuals, groups, power and resources within social spaces – or of habitus, capital and field) invaluable in providing a clear framework which is also sufficiently complex and flexible and which accommodates the various theoretical strands informing this study. Bourdieu is used most extensively in chapter three and I also draw upon his work in chapter four.

### **On the Structure of this Thesis, in Brief Summary**

Chapter one examines Tracey's autobiographical narrative, introduces five types of colonial whiteness which are pertinent to his story, and puts the spotlight on his overt performance in the roles of explorer and missionary, and his less visible position as settler. In chapter two, I focus on race, racism and his representation of blackness. Chapter three examines his cultural enterprise as a directly political project and focuses mainly on the roles of trader and administrator. Finally, in chapter four, I consider Tracey's writing on music and recording practice, his interactions with musicians and his selection, categorisation and dissemination of musical products.

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<sup>2</sup> I am aware of arguments which emphasise the textual, provisional and fictional nature of all representations of history. Historiographical provisos notwithstanding, however, there is, I believe, a difference between history and fiction. Though we may only access it imperfectly, through text, history is more than text and possesses a materiality which fiction does not have in quite the same way or to the same degree.

## CHAPTER ONE

### PERFORMING WHITENESS

#### EXPLORATION – DISCOVERY – DEVELOPMENT

Exploration today in Africa is no longer geographical, it is geneological [sic]. It is not obvious, it is among the intangibles. It is not so much ethnological as psychological. It is here, in the realm of psychology, that we must look for the essential African and his personality, and here is where we find the most difficulty, because we are in the realm of the intangibles. (Tracey 1961 “Importance”, 156)<sup>3</sup>

In presenting himself as a twentieth-century explorer, Hugh Tracey acknowledged the influence of nineteenth-century figures such as Livingstone, and indeed his exploratory project had much in common with theirs.<sup>4</sup> Like the geographical expeditions of earlier explorers, Tracey’s expeditions into musical territories were inseparable from the larger colonial project to which they contributed in their search for knowledge, and from which they drew their *raison d’être*. And like the journeys of Livingstone, Tracey’s investigations had both an ideological and material rationale. Using Bourdieu’s terms, they were concerned with symbolic capital and thus with power, since capital and power “[amount] to the same thing” (1986, 47).

The concept of exploration was, however, altogether more complex in the mid-twentieth century, that is, on the cusp of the late-colonial and independence (or neo-colonial) periods, than it had been at the height of empire. Since exploration, in what could be called the classical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sense, was a foundation stone of colonial expansion, the very use of a term so clearly identified with imperialism was becoming suspect, or at least highly charged, by the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, the era of Western dominance, in Africa and globally, in whatever form, was far from over.

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<sup>3</sup> From a paper presented to a joint meeting of the Royal African Society and the Royal Commonwealth Society, in London, on February 2, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> References to Livingstone in articles by Tracey imply respectful tribute to a predecessor while marking a distinction, laying claim to an exploratory lineage while contrasting his own work as a new type of exploration. In “Recording in the Lost Valley”, describing a recording trip among the Valley Tonga people before their relocation due to the building of Kariba Dam, Tracey notes “great tamarind and baobab trees” that were “old enough for Livingstone to have seen them when he passed through the district about 100 years before” (1957, 45). Elsewhere he writes that “David Livingstone [...] admitted in his diaries that he could not bear the sound of [African music]; it was always a trial to him in spite of his great sympathy and tolerance” (1954 “Social Role”, 236). More explicitly, Tracey ends one of his pleas for research support by arguing that “the gap in our cultural map of Africa marked ‘Musica Incognita’ [is] just as real and just as much a challenge to us today as the topographical gap that faced David Livingstone” (1966/1967 “Musical Appreciation”, 55). Although the most frequent, Livingstone is not the only explorer mentioned; others are also evoked, like Stanley, for example, in “Recordings in East Africa and Northern Congo” (1953, 14).

After World War 2, there was a growing tendency to present the pursuit of knowledge about Africa in terms of post-colonial development. While he also employed the vocabulary of development, Hugh Tracey's overt embrace of the term exploration, as late as 1961 in Britain, could therefore be seen as somewhat anachronistic, even embarrassingly so. It is, I believe, this very anachronistic quality in Tracey's discourse which makes his textual persona such an interesting subject for postcolonial whiteness studies.<sup>5</sup> His promotional messages did not fall on unresponsive ears: on the contrary, many members of the European and American audiences to whom he appealed were enthusiastic in their support. Tracey's overt embrace of colonial terminology in pursuit of knowledge production, within metropolitan, broader African, as well as Southern African contexts, therefore provides a useful window through which to view late-modern whiteness in a period when global whiteness (though not its Southern African variety) was beginning to turn towards disguise and invisibility.

On the one hand, Tracey's whiteness expressed itself in familiar terms of difference and dominance with regard to its black 'other' by assuming a self-defining and self-perpetuating superiority. Yet, on the other, his whiteness advertised a special understanding of blackness: claiming the role of interpreter to less knowledgeable whites and thus also expressing a superior attitude in relation to them. Like many others, Tracey made his career out of Africans, rather than simply in Africa, but unlike many other settlers, the property and capital he appropriated in the process was not primarily material. Rather, it comprised intellectual and artistic constructions of indigenous people and his own interpretations and knowledge claims about these people and their cultural products. Accordingly, representations of blackness are central to his assertion of white power. This chapter will focus on Tracey's performance of self and whiteness in different colonial roles, with particular emphasis on the figures of explorer, missionary and settler. First, I shall examine and contextualise his type of exploration, drawing on V.Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*. Biographical accounts of Tracey will be considered in the next section. Thereafter, I shall introduce five pertinent types of colonial whiteness – explorer, missionary, trader, administrator and settler – and focus on 'development' as missionary endeavour. The remainder of the chapter will consider Tracey in the light of Leon de Kock's discussion of whiteness and wildness, largely through analysis of sections of Tracey's incomplete draft autobiography.

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<sup>5</sup> I use 'postcolonial' without the dash deliberately, to denote the postcolonial as theoretical field – which presupposes a liberatory stance *against* colonialism – as opposed to the post-colonial as historical term.

## **Twentieth-Century Exploration as Psychological Colonisation**

As presented in the quotation with which this chapter begins, Tracey's definition of exploration has undergone a two-fold shift from what might be termed the classical nineteenth-century paradigm: firstly, a turn away from physical features of landscape towards a greater focus on human beings as its object – from the “geographical” to the “genealogical” – and, secondly, a change in the nature of the focus on African humanity – from the “ethnological” to the “psychological”.

With regard to the first of these shifts, the implication that earlier exploration had had little concern with African humanity is of course false, since, as Mudimbe demonstrates, fascination with ‘primitive’ and ‘savage’ peoples had characterised both the production and marketing of Africanist travellers’ texts for several centuries and the corresponding rise of anthropology as a discipline. Nevertheless, anthropology’s foundation as an explicitly Western discourse on ‘other’ peoples, marking ‘them’ as both inferior and spatially distant from Europe, could be seen as subsuming Africans within a larger geographical, rather than historical, framework.<sup>6</sup> In allowing genealogy to Africans, within a discourse on indigenous African culture with ‘traditional’, or pre-colonial, roots, Tracey could be seen as acknowledging African history, through a recognition of African music and culture as historically determined. This acknowledgement diverts from the denial of African pre-colonial history exemplified in Hugh Trevor-Roper’s statement (from as late as the early 1960s) that “[p]erhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness [...] and darkness is not the subject of history” (qtd. in Grinker and Steiner 1997, xxiv).

Tracey’s marking of an epistemological shift from the “geographical” to the “genealogical”, then, could be aligned with a contemporaneous trend in (Western) Africanist scholarship, towards a recognition of African history (albeit often as ethno-history) and a more self-critical and historically grounded anthropology (Mudimbe 1988). This trend opened new possibilities for more sophisticated analysis of African societies, but continued to operate from a particular position and power differential with regard to its subject. Tracey’s alignment with it is at best partial and problematic, since he was not an academically trained scholar and his vantage point as resident of Africa differed from that of the metropole. As Mudimbe illustrates, the same period saw the development of related but amplified thinking by African scholars, who “tended to use critical analysis as a means for establishing themselves as

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Mudimbe on anthropology’s eurocentric imperial foundations and geographical focus (1988, 15–23 and 28).



‘subjects’ of their own destiny, taking responsibility for the ‘invention’ of their past as well as of the conditions for modernizing their societies” (1988, 167) while drawing on “the same origin [as the former Africanist currents] in the Western *episteme*” (166). Although Tracey’s arguments sometimes coincide or overlap with the discourse of African scholars, the gulf between him and them is extremely broad owing to his identification with colonial whiteness. His writings as a whole evidence scant awareness of African scholarship in the first place and the statement that Africans are not yet capable of representing themselves is frequently reiterated. Where Tracey does partially acknowledge African musical scholarship, as in his encounters with Nketia and Mohapelo which will be examined in the next chapter, his treatment of it is reductionist, patronising and tinged with derision.

Tracey’s use of the term ‘genealogy’ with its formalist, scientific overtones, rather than the more general term ‘history’, may well be an alliterative rhetorical flourish, but also points to his placement of African music within a classificatory framework which has been commonly defined as Western, and thus provides an inherent justification for the white Westerner’s involvement in the archival task of discovery which is exploration’s object. In marking exploration as “psychological” rather than “ethnological”, Tracey performs an ambiguous move. On the one hand, he seems to admit ‘the African’ (without an ‘ethno’ prefix) to the universal category of psychology hitherto generally reserved for the normative category of the white Western individual. On the other hand, he reifies the “African and his personality” as a single unit awaiting discovery in a manner which both essentialises “the essential African” as inherently different from ‘his’ Western counterpart and erases social complexity.

Elsewhere, however, Tracey’s texts on African music recognise social complexity in abundance. He speaks, for example, of “Bantu musics” as “folk musics” in the plural (1954 “State of Folk”, 32–33), and reports that there “*is a great variety of music in Bantu Africa, from the simplest flute tune to the most complex ensemble playing*” (1954 “Social Role”, 238). The various musics are divided along tribal and language lines and influenced by local environments in terms of the types of instruments commonly used. Within each ethnic variety further divisions emerge. Tracey’s early unpublished report on Shona music for the Carnegie Corporation (1933) classifies musical examples under four types – “self-delectative”; “entertaining”; “hypnotic” and “mystical”. Volume 1 of the *Catalogue to the Sound of Africa* series (1973), meanwhile, lists “types of performance” under twenty-five headings, each with their own sub-headings, ranging from music “for children and young people” to “instrumental

tunes without words” and including songs related to love, death, religion, work, drinking, politics, entertainment, morality and war along the way (19–45).

In “The Social Role of African Music”, Tracey states emphatically that “*African music is not a museum piece*” and that “[oral] music evolves, all the time – it can never be static” (1954, 235). His survey for the International Folk Music Council, also published in 1954, analyses the musical effects of colonialism – described in benign terms as the “[opening up of] the continent to commercial, religious, mineral and agricultural enterprises” – as resulting in the contemporary co-existence of

three facets of Bantu music side by side: *the original folk music*, which is still the music of the great majority, and is far more active than some would have us believe; *music in decay*, eclipsed both by foreign prejudice and by indigenous gullibility, and thirdly, *music in reconstruction*, a state of affairs in which the melting pot is throwing up new forms of music, good, bad and indifferent, all of them strongly coloured by intrinsically African characteristics. (“State of Folk”, 32)

With Tracey having noted ‘traditional’ music as diverse and complex in itself, *and* located this prior complexity within, and in dialogue with, the additional pressures and influences of colonial modernity, it would seem, surely, that his “essential African” is a being of such multiplicity that it would make sense to dispense of ‘him’ altogether.<sup>7</sup> This does not happen. The “African” recurs in the singular, time and again, in Tracey’s writings, often as the subject of unflattering pronouncements such as “the African is pathetically incapable of defending his own culture” (32). Here, as in the quotation on exploration, the singular state of the “African” is reinforced by the use of the plural to represent the voice of whiteness and underline its authority: “we have found that the African is pathetically incapable”. In a symbolic reversal of actual population demographics, “the African” is outnumbered on his own cultural ground and found wanting with regard to its upkeep.

It is also possible to detect a note of anxiety or defensiveness in the use of the first-person plural as a sign of whiteness at a time of growing success in struggles for freedom throughout the continent. Its authority could be seen as overstated and thus inviting its own deconstruction. Nonetheless, given Tracey’s headquarters in apartheid South Africa, his close ties with senior representatives of colonial administrations in a number of African countries, and his status as an ‘expert’ in a newly-recognised ‘field’ – in short the resources of various forms of capital at his disposal – the inequality of the opposition is appropriate rather than

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<sup>7</sup> Tracey’s “African” is almost always gendered as male.

unrealistic. The numerical disparity is merely an overt illustration of the inequality always already inherent in the construction, by whiteness, of the oppositional relation between the paired terms 'white' and 'black'.

Moreover, bearing in mind that the subject of his exploratory discourse is, in his own words, nothing less than the "African personality" expressed in the socially significant and emotive art-form of music (1961 "Importance", 155), Tracey's acts of exploration, discovery and representation on the terrain of African culture amount to an epistemological and very personal colonization of African indigeneity, identity and gnosis. If acts of representation are inherently prone to symbolic violence, his representation of, and appropriation of the right to speak for, African musicians about their music is a case of symbolic violence in stark extreme.

Tracey's recognition of African value notwithstanding, his proprietary gestures are marks of power within structures weighted for his benefit. The economic situation of most of the musicians he recorded meant they were dependent on his recognition for the experience of being recorded, the award of small gifts or cash hand-outs in return for their songs, or even, for the few, the chance of a commercial recording contract. Within the context of colonial racism, such recognition by whiteness might also highlight black dependence in a more profound, psychological sense: the shameful situation in which, according to Frantz Fanon, the "blues – 'the black slave lament' – was offered up for the admiration of the oppressors" (1970, 47).

The symbolic violence of his colonisation in representation of the "essential African" is compounded by the way in which derision lingers alongside Tracey's admiration, for at the very moment of recognition of the value of the "African personality" and its musical products, "the African" is found wanting. From being derided for their 'primitive' difference and distance from the standards of the West, Africans are now derided for their weakness and "gullibility" in succumbing so easily to inferior Western forms.

Acts of exploration and discovery are premised on the idea of finding and appropriating something of value. (They are also premised, of course, on the presumption of *difference*, of finding something new.) Classical exploration sought and found value in geographical conquest of African land for its physical products, animal, vegetable and mineral. European fascination with ideas of 'wild', 'savage' or 'primitive' exoticism notwithstanding, the human inhabitants of Africa were not accorded value status by European explorers. They tended rather to be considered, at the one extreme, inferior to the degree of being branded inhuman and declared permissible objects of genocide, with value only as units

of labour, or, at the other, as culturally ‘primitive’ and currently unworthy but potentially redeemable through conversion to the ‘universal’ norms of Western, Christian ‘civilisation’. (At which point the missionary makes an entrance.) African cultural products, and indeed Africans themselves, were collected and displayed as curiosities and scientific objects, but were not, by and large, considered worthy of appropriation by Western culture.

Tracey’s version of exploration differs from this (admittedly highly simplified and generalised) picture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century exploration in that its object of value is not African land, crops, animals, minerals, labour or conversion, nor African bodies for ‘biological’ study, nor even customs as anthropological curiosities, but rather African thought and creative processes (which had, ironically, remained unrecognised, and therefore uncolonised, at earlier stages of imperialism). Nothing less, in fact, than the innermost being of the African psyche, with the object of exploration being “not so much ethnological as psychological”.

African music, the less ‘contaminated’ by foreign influences the better, is recognised as aesthetically valuable not only for itself but also for the West: its “distinctive [...] musical genius” would “contribute to the sum of the great folk musics of the world” (1973 *Catalogue* Vol. 1, 5). The “intangible” creative mysteries of the “essential African” promise continued excitement and challenges in an ongoing process of exploration which can never quite be complete. In Tracey’s words: “It is here, in the realm of psychology, that we must look for the essential African and his personality, and here is where we find the most difficulty, because we are in the realm of the intangibles”. It is now generally recognised that discoveries cannot be separated from the construction involved in their representation. Furthermore, Tracey’s texts are overtly concerned with assisting and moulding “the African”. His task of exploration is therefore also doubly one of invention.

But who is this particular explorer? From where does he speak? For whom? To whom? To what end? On what does he base his authority? And whose interests does he serve?

### **Texts about Tracey**

The hero figure of the explorer is central to any narrative of exploration, and Hugh Tracey’s signature features prominently (literally as well as figuratively) in the archive of his ‘discoveries’. When one turns to the archive of writings about Tracey, as opposed to Tracey’s archive about African music, one finds self-performance which invites praise and commentary that bestows it. There are also telling silences.

Quite a bit has been written, and much has *not* been written, on Hugh Tracey. Speaking biographically in the literary sense, his ‘life’ remains unfinished. An autobiography-in-progress was cut short by his illness and death in 1977, leaving behind multiple drafts covering sections of his life up to the mid-1940s – mainly his period of field research into Shona music in the late 1920s and early 1930s, during the latter period of his residence in Zimbabwe, and accounts of his career in broadcasting. The period from 1946 to the early 70s marked the culmination of Tracey’s career in African music, with extensive travels and publications, the formation of the African Music Society and the journal *African Music* and the establishment of the International Library of African Music (ILAM) as a major archive. Despite some major disappointments, there were substantial successes and Tracey received international recognition. This latter period, which would surely have formed the core of the autobiographical work, remained unwritten. Tracey did however leave some other autobiographical constructions – such as his introduction to the *Catalogue: The Sound of Africa Series* (1973) and various brief self-authored biographies – as well as numerous autobiographical fragments in correspondence, articles and broadcast scripts.

The textual after-life of ‘Hugh Tracey’ is also an incomplete story. Three biographers in succession (David Bandey, Antony Trowbridge and Geoffrey Holiday) were hired by his family and sponsors, with unhappy results: their labours cut short by death in the first case (Bandey), found unacceptable and left incomplete in the second (Trowbridge) and completed (in a meticulously detailed, ponderous manuscript) but deemed unpublishable in the third (Holiday).<sup>8</sup> In a letter to Edwin Mickleburgh (dated 6 December 1982), Andrew Tracey comments on the planned biography:

Possibly a film about my father might be a good idea. I feel that it should perhaps follow the biography. Much would depend on the sort of reaction which the biography evokes. What I mean is that Dad had several images and images go in and out of vogue. The old colonial/explorer image might not be the in-one to push at the moment.

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<sup>8</sup> I encountered information on these three biographers in various sources at ILAM and read Holiday’s manuscript during the time I worked there. See also Noel Lobley’s thesis (2010, 169). Concerning Bandey and Trowbridge, I found evidence of work in progress but did not access sufficient material to assess their positions on Tracey or speculate on how their finished works might have been. I chose not to return to Holiday’s manuscript when I researched ILAM’s archival material in 2009, since I recalled a tedious read filled with biographical minutiae which made little comment on Tracey in relation to his political context. Rumour has it that the Tracey family prevented publication because of information on sexual relationships with women other than his wives. According to my memory of the manuscript, their decision was spot on in terms of style. Through his inability to select, organise and present material attractively, Holiday’s text seemed to drain all the interest from a rather interesting life.

This quotation reveals Andrew's anxiety about, and involvement in, his father's portrayal: there is a clear concern to forestall criticism and ensure that the public "image" be favourably received.

Tracey played one of the leading roles in the establishment of 'African music' as a recognised field of study, and ILAM continues to be a major resource for what remains (globally) a small and intimate field. The memory of Hugh Tracey as founding pioneer remains central to the self-image presented by ILAM in its efforts to secure funding.<sup>9</sup> ILAM has had a strong dynastic element: Andrew Tracey succeeded his father as Director, served in this position for almost thirty years, and remains actively involved after his retirement. Other family members, particularly Andrew's son Geoffrey, have also been closely connected. The memorial function at work is thus a deeply personal matter.

It is therefore not surprising that much of the writing about Tracey, particularly that sponsored by ILAM, has tended towards the commemorative mode.<sup>10</sup> The book *For Future Generations: Hugh Tracey and the International Library of African Music* accompanies ILAM's exhibition with the same name, which opened at the Origins Centre Museum at Wits on 14 October 2010. In her introductory chapter, Diane Thram writes that the exhibition and book "make no pretence of presenting a socially and politically contextualised critique of Hugh Tracey's legacy". Accordingly, she seems to acknowledge that a more critical and broader historical approach would have produced a different outcome from the one chosen. Despite this admission, Thram goes on to allude to Tracey's political setting in a way that sets him apart from the ruling structures of his time and presents him as a victim of them:

Suffice it to say that international sanctions against the apartheid regime made it increasingly impossible for him to source funding to support his work. The 'Codification and Textbook Project' he tried to launch in the 1960s, intended to produce region-specific teaching materials for use in schools, was stymied for lack of funding. His accomplishments stand as truly remarkable given his liberal stance during the oppressive realities of the colonial era towards the African music and heritage it was his mission to preserve and promote. (2010, 12)

The remainder of Thram's celebratory account leaves little room for context or complexity, along the lines of the following summary: "Motivated by an intense fascination and love for

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<sup>9</sup> In terms of the affiliation agreement with Rhodes University, ILAM must provide for a large proportion of its own funds.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Renders distinguishes between commemorative and critical biography, with commemorative "seeking to consolidate", in "celebratory" fashion, the reputation of a subject who has lived a "remarkable" life, as opposed to critical, which is "based on diverse sources", situates "the biographical subject in a particular context" and is "usually unauthorized" (2008, 100–101).

the songs and folktales of southern Africa, Tracey's achievements – documentation and preservation, research, publication, community outreach and education – became, and remain to this day, the five-pronged mission of ILAM" (14).

Boudina McConnachie's chapter on Tracey in her MA thesis shows a similar naiveté. Although McConnachie notes Mark Hudson's suggestion "that Tracey's involvement with inter-tribal dance competitions gave credence to South Africa's apartheid 'divide and rule' policy" (2008, 57) and recognises apartheid's link with mining capital (58), the suggestion of any cooperation between Tracey and the apartheid government is quickly denied and Tracey's motives are affirmed as impeccable. McConnachie writes:

I believe, like Thram, that Tracey's intentions were research and outreach based. There is no documentation to suggest that Tracey had any involvement with the apartheid government of the time or that he coerced mineworkers into performing for these purposes. His son Andrew notes [...] that Hugh clearly explained his reasons for recording the music and dance to the performers. However, the Mining Industry of Southern Africa gave Tracey a substantial grant in 1954 which might suggest that they, at least, thought that he was providing a service to the industry and thus the apartheid regime by providing a form of entertainment to the "restless" workforce. (57–58)

McConnachie's statement concerning documentation indicates a rather selective acquaintance with the Tracey archive: there is in fact correspondence which undermines her claims (some of which I will examine in my third chapter). The implied equation of a lack of overt coercion with freedom betrays a limited awareness of intrinsic power relations within a system of legally entrenched racial inequality. Furthermore, McConnachie's thesis shows little evidence of reflexivity or awareness of the problematics of representation in general. In this regard, it is out of step with the textual and self-critical turn which has made itself felt within music studies, as in other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, in recent years.

Like Thram and McConnachie, Noel Loblely asserts distance between the apartheid government and ILAM in his more recent doctoral thesis. Despite providing evidence of having consulted a wide range of published and unpublished sources concerning Tracey, he declares categorically that, "[w]ith the exception of a small bursary from its education department that funded John Blacking's appointment as ILAM's musicologist in the mid 1950s, Tracey and ILAM never sought or received support from the South African Government" (2010, 159). Loblely provides a far more extensive and sophisticated examination of Tracey than McConnachie does, yet his approach too is ultimately commemorative rather than critical. Although he acknowledges "language and methods

[which] inevitably remain a product of colonial times and reveal strong links to the colonial administration”, for example, he nonetheless maintains that “rather than being an anachronistic supporter of government or apartheid separate development policies, [Tracey] was driven by a more enlightened humanism to work for the benefit of African musicians” (213).

Carol Muller’s *Focus: Music of South Africa*,<sup>11</sup> meanwhile, demonstrates awareness of historical contexts and the politics of representation, yet cannot quite abandon the heroic mode in its admiration of Tracey. Muller comments that Tracey “was a man of his times who operated in a transnational, Anglo-American network of White men who did the work, and other White men who financed it” (2008, 12). Nonetheless, part of her biographical account reads as follows:

Born in 1903 in Devonshire, England, instead of going to one of the British universities to be educated, he went to Zimbabwe with his brother, Leonard, to farm tobacco. While there Hugh Tracey learned a local language, Karanga, and began to sing and transcribe songs of Karanga farmworkers. This began a *lifelong love affair* with the traditional music of Africa, a *passion* begun in Zimbabwe, but which incorporated all of Southern Africa and much of sub-Saharan Africa. [...] The life and work of *this British-born man who came to love the music of Africa with a passion that divided him from most of his White peers in his lifetime* touches all four levels of analysis: the national, regional, continental, and the world-at-large. Though his work and contribution continue to invoke criticism and debate in South Africa, there is no doubt that Tracey was a man of *extraordinary vision, zeal, and sheer productivity*. (10–11; my emphasis)

Here, superlatives and repetition emphasising Tracey’s “passion” and “love” for his subject suggest a strong and positive emotion towards him on the part of the writer. Muller’s generalised reference to criticism of Tracey in the quotation above is extended in an autobiographical “digression”:

I recall sitting at the University of Zululand in the mid-1990s at the annual Symposium for South African Ethnomusicology, a symposium started by Hugh Tracey’s son Andrew in 1981. We were fresh out of the apartheid era, an era in which much of the work of ethnomusicology in South Africa had been dominated by White South Africans, Europeans, and Americans. At that meeting, deep in the heart of many significant sites of Zulu cultural pride and history, the International Library of African Music came under heavy scrutiny from many of those attending [...] Delegates wanted to know, for example, if ILAM was actually the personal property of the

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<sup>11</sup> Muller’s text forms part of the *Focus on World Music Series* of general introductions to area studies in world music and ethnomusicology (cover notes) and targets a primarily undergraduate rather than scholarly readership.



Tracey family, what the “African” in ILAM referred to, and why there wasn’t better public access to the contents of the archive. There were several intense and awkward encounters [...] The outcome of the encounter, however, has been quite extraordinary, and its fruits are being made visible through the worldwide web. (11)

I am not certain whether Muller is accurate in directly linking the criticism expressed at the symposium with ILAM’s subsequent digitisation project and improved accessibility via the internet, innovations which are being applied in many contemporary archives. Even so, the “extraordinary” resolution to the “awkward encounters” only addresses the third of the questions mentioned as examples of “heavy scrutiny” and leaves the first two unanswered. The “many” delegates who had asked the “intense and awkward” questions are not named, but are indirectly racialised through the juxtaposition of the named symposium setting and the reference to “Zulu cultural pride and history”. While the confessional tone of Muller’s autobiographical interlude lends added weight and seriousness to her acknowledgement of a problematic reception of Tracey’s legacy among certain (by implication black) South African (ethno)musicologists, the lack of specificity effects an erasure at the moment of acknowledgement which, in turn, enables a re-affirmation of ILAM’s importance and a mini-reconciliation (without disclosure) in the spirit of the ‘rainbow nation’ new South Africa myth.

It would be misleading to suggest that all accounts of Tracey’s work lean towards the commemorative mode. Several scholars have offered perceptive critical commentary on aspects of Tracey’s project. Mentions of Tracey have tended to be brief however – either tangential to specific area studies (such as Vail and White) or restricted by their placement within a much larger frame, such as a more general examination of the state of the (South/ern) African musicological field and its history (for example, Nketia, Agawu, Lucia). The type of research has been dictated by the most pressing disciplinary concerns. Within South African music studies specifically, the intimate nature of the field and the practical importance of maintaining a positive connection with an important archival resource may also have led, in some cases, to a degree of reticence. There has not, as yet, been an extensive account of Tracey’s life-work from a postcolonial perspective.

In Tracey’s writings about himself, one may trace the development of a certain self-performance, or the development in performance of a certain narrative of endeavour and success, in which, I will argue, two intertwined strands are most prominent. Related to two prominent types of colonial whiteness, these strands or themes are, firstly, an explorer’s narrative of discovery, and, secondly, a narrative of philanthropic development, which I will

call a missionary narrative within a secular rather than religious frame. Before returning to Tracey's autobiographical writings, I will take a contextual detour to examine these types, with a brief nod towards their colonial companions.

### **Types of Colonial Whiteness**

Colonialism in Africa, as elsewhere, was not a monolithic enterprise but a combination of complex processes involving a variety of groups and individuals. Scholarship of the colonial period frequently places the agents of European expansion within particular categories, each with its own preoccupations. For example, Kwabena Nketia speaks of textual references to African music in "the accounts of early travellers and traders, colonial administrators and missionaries, as well as anthropologists" (1986, 36). De Kock remarks on differences of outlook between "missionaries" with their "civilising" mission and "colonists, settlers and administrators" who "had a far less Utopian attitude to Africans" (1996, 42). Mudimbe, meanwhile, asserts that "[t]hree major figures [...] determined modalities and the pace of mastering, colonizing, and transforming the 'Dark Continent': the explorer, the soldier, and the missionary" (1988, 46).

My focus is on five major types of whiteness in Africa – the explorer, the missionary, the trader, the settler and the administrator. This chapter deals mainly with the first two of these types, while the settler (who can become the white citizen) will also receive attention. The trader (who becomes the businessman and the industrialist) and the administrator (who is also the archivist) will make stronger appearances in subsequent chapters. Since Tracey not only had strong connections with their representatives but also played all of these roles himself, the last three types need to be kept in the back of one's mind while examining the heroic postures of the first two. The trader, whose concern is primarily with the accumulation of economic *profit* through appropriation and the (unequal) exchange of goods and services, the settler, concerned with *place* and the problematics of forging his own sort of African identity, and the administrator (or the *archon* or archivist), concerned most directly with political *power*, control of people and of the official record, wield their own influence in the background, usually out of the limelight of public performance.

The explorer can also play the part of a scholar. Exploration is only acknowledged as such upon the presentation and recognition of successful discovery and is thus strongly textual (see Mudimbe, De Kock and Pratt) and intrinsically auto/biographical. In performing and representing discovery, the explorer's eye is focused not on the region of adventure but on the place from which he comes and where his journey ends. Approbation must come

ultimately from the North (or West), from the imperial centre which inspires, directs and ratifies journeys of exploration with reference to European ‘standards’ deemed ‘universal’ (or, in a more contemporary euphemism, ‘international’). The identity of the explorer is over-determined with regard to race, gender and class. His whiteness and masculinity tend to be unquestioned. The role is one of leadership, and recognition of success bestows social status, which means he is also figured as middle class, whatever his origins. The self-image performed by the explorer is one of energy, confidence and entitlement.

Exploration is ultimately allied most closely with *knowledge*: the explorer’s task being to produce a knowledge which hides its own involvement in construction and invention with the myth of finding and bringing to light something pre-existent but hitherto unknown. One expedition leads to another and the general theme may be ongoing, but each exploration narrative is a finished tale in which something – African music or the source of the Nile – is presented as discovered by the explorer and his status thus affirmed. The desire to explore may be directed towards the future, but the explorer, once named as such, may consider his task complete: in temporal terms his orientation is towards the simple past and present tenses – ‘Here I stand before you today, telling you how I travelled, conquered, discovered and returned.’

Although the same actor, like Livingstone, may play the roles of both explorer and missionary, the missionary’s role is more complex and its success cannot easily be measured. Missionary activity is always oriented towards the long-term future; its goals cannot be accomplished in the short term. (Indeed, its ultimate success or failure cannot be measured in this world but only in the next, not by ‘man’ but by God.) Of the five types in our cast of characters, it is only the missionary who declares the lives – or souls – of African people as primary project and concern. Missionary activity operates in alliance with political and economic objectives and the missionary works towards “the reformation of *natives*’ minds” as part of “the colonizing structure, which completely embraces the physical, human, and spiritual aspects of the colonizing experience” (Mudimbe 1988, 2). And yet, in terms of the missionary’s professed ideal, the process of conversion is ultimately the means of accomplishment and not the end, since the missionary’s ultimate objective is not conversion but *salvation*. (It must be emphasised that, according to the missionary’s theology, salvation comes not from the missionary but from God; the missionary enables salvation by leading the convert to a position where it is possible.) Whatever the objectives, the traumatic violence and alienating after-effects of the colonial missionary project cannot be over-emphasised.

Missionary activity is premised on both the potential of redemption for all – which assumes the possibility of universal human equality – and on the assumption of a present state of deficiency or sinfulness which requires intervention in order to attain redemption. The traditional missionary tends to view African culture as worthless and sinful, while closely identifying European ‘civilisation’ with Christianity. Ironically, however, the nature of missionary work involves long periods of contact with the people being converted and requires some knowledge of their language and cultural practices in order to transmit its message. It is therefore the missionary, out of the cast of colonising actors, who tends first to learn local languages and acquire relatively more lived experience and knowledge of African societies thereby, despite interpretive distortions and inequalities of power. In practice, religious and cultural conversion, violence and trauma notwithstanding, also involves complex acts of translation and reception in which the old cannot simply be destroyed and the new adopted in its place.

I have been constructing and exploring a stereotype of the missionary as a major type of colonial whiteness, yet there were a number of black missionaries working among Africans even in the nineteenth century, Edward Wilmot Blyden and Tiyo Soga being prominent examples, active in West and southern Africa respectively. Their backgrounds were very different: Blyden, born in the West Indies, moved to Liberia by way of the United States, while Soga, whose father was a follower of Ntsikana, was a second-generation Christian in the Eastern Cape. Yet Mudimbe’s account of Blyden and De Kock’s of Soga highlight similar themes in the writings of men who were both representatives of Empire and proto-nationalists who sought to advance the cause of Africans.

De Kock foregrounds the ambiguities of the reactions of white contemporaries to Soga and other successful ‘natives’ of his class. The presence of Western-educated black Christians like Soga as ordained ministers working among their own communities had potential to threaten the colonial hierarchy and the racialisation of Christianity as synonymous with whiteness. The responses of white missionaries brings to the fore contradictions inherent to evangelisation within the colonial context. The African convert was a sign of missionary success, an example of what the missionary professed to work for, yet too much success, too soon, could suggest a level of readiness and openness to the missionary’s message which might call into question the cultural difference, distance and deficiency attributed to the unconverted and thus undermine the sense of urgency and magnitude with which the missionary justified his project. Besides, such success exposed the hollowness of missionary promises – equality and brotherhood were not meant, not in this world, at least not yet – and

opened the door to political and social claims, using European concepts and languages, which would not be met. The “promise of ‘civilisation’” which was “the inaugural message of early missionaries” was continually being “deferred in the colonial space” (De Kock 1996, 119).

White missionary responses to people like Soga therefore tended to extol them as lonely, exceptional signs belonging more to the future than the present – as in Soga’s biographer John A. Chalmers’ emblematic reference to Soga’s father’s use of a European plough as the sign of a “still greater power [...] secretly at work [...] destined yet to revolutionize the moral wastes of Southern Africa” (De Kock 1996, 172). Another common response was to praise black contributions in a reductive discourse of patronage which marked continuing difference and confined the ‘natives’ to their ‘places’ as subservient pupils – as in Chalmers’ “reduction” of Soga as being, finally, “A Model Kafir” (178). (In the next chapter I will trace similar discursive strategies of exceptionalism and reduction in Tracey’s commentaries on the composer Mohapeloa and the musicologist Nketia.)

In contrast to missionary responses, other colonial types, unburdened by the ideological or metaphysical imperatives of conversion and salvation, tended to express outright hostility towards Africans who had assimilated Western religion, education and cultural norms. Settlers, traders and administrators were likely to express preference for ‘traditional’ or ‘tribal’ Africans over ‘Westernised’ Africans who were more likely to threaten colonial interests and could not be as easily oppressed. (Westernisation opened the way to new markets and could hasten the appropriation of land, but mining, agriculture and industry favoured migrant workers and encouraged the retention of ‘tribal’ identities in attempts to heighten divisions among the workforce and keep wages as low as possible.)

Stephen Clingman writes of the prominence of both limits and limitlessness in the colonial imaginary. The “*prospective imagination*” desires “limitless play and power unchecked by customary moral authority or any other form of reality principle”. Nevertheless, “the colony is founded upon delimitations that divide the colonizers from the colonized” and once “in operation [...] depends profoundly on the idea and reality of limits” (1991, 247). The othering and fixing of ‘the African’ as ‘primitive’ or ‘traditional’ may be deployed by whiteness as justifying myth in both the above instances: it facilitates fantasies of “limitless play and power” *and* the paranoia over racial borders, characteristic of settler colonies, which reaches its zenith in apartheid South Africa.

Secular colonial contempt for ‘Westernised’ Africans was frequently accompanied by contempt for missionaries as agents of degradation destroying customary certainties to produce would-be Europeans who could never attain the heights of whiteness and were thus

doomed to be neither one thing nor the other. However, by the early twentieth century some colonial missionaries were beginning to turn towards a positive re-evaluation of African culture. This re-evaluation occurred within a complex of influences, including pressures for indigenisation from African theologians and ordinary Christians, the increasing popularity of independent Churches which incorporated indigenous thought and practices, and intellectual developments in anthropology and related disciplines. There was also a growing distrust among white missionaries of the standard Westernised conversion model, whose successful products were often at the forefront of political resistance. Mudimbe highlights the work of the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels, author of *Bantu Philosophy* (first published in French in the then Belgian Congo in 1945), as representative of a major shift in missionary attitudes. Although Christian conversion remained the priority for Tempels, religious conversion no longer necessarily implied cultural conversion. African tradition and Christianity were now seen as largely compatible. Tempels recognised indigenous culture as endowed with its own logical coherence and thought system, which he elevated to the ambiguous status of ethno-philosophy.

Tracey's writings express admiration for certain missionaries – those, like Tempels, who recognised value in African tradition – but his references to the class in general are usually negative. He would most certainly not have wished to be identified as any type of missionary. Nonetheless, Tracey's cultural project has similarities with the modified twentieth-century Christian conversion model outlined above. Moreover, aspects of his programme may be placed within a discourse of development which inherits many of the themes of colonial missionary endeavour.<sup>12</sup>

The adjectives 'developed' and 'developing' have become ubiquitous as markers of global inequality and have now generally replaced earlier terms such as 'first' and 'third' world to distinguish between geographical areas historically associated with imperialism's agents and objects respectively. Terms denoting various stages of 'development' permeate everyday language so widely as to seem self-evident: they tend to be used without question, as if unburdened by history. Opposing this tendency to naturalise 'development', Mudimbe reminds us that in "exploiting dependencies", "colonialism [...] produced a kind of empirical technique for implementing structural distortions" resulting in

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<sup>12</sup> Speaking from within development circles, Sarah C. White admits that "the continuities with colonialism are striking" (2002, 413), while Jacques Depelchin's Africa-centred analysis convincingly situates contemporary development within the colonialist discourse of "abolition" (2005).

the process of underdevelopment initiated everywhere colonialism occurred. This process can be summed up in three points: First, the capitalist world system is such that parts of the system always develop at the expense of other parts, either by trade or by the transfer of surpluses. Second, the underdevelopment of dependencies is not only an absence of development, but also an organizational structure created under colonialism by bringing non-Western territory into the capitalist world. Third, despite their economic potential, dependencies lack the structural capacity for autonomy and sustained growth, since their economic fate is largely determined by the developed countries. (1988, 3)

An earlier text from an opposing discursive field – colonial rather than postcolonial – confirms Mudimbe’s analysis, even as it attempts to present underdevelopment as a natural, pre-existing state of affairs and colonial powers as agents of development, or secular salvation. Julian Huxley and Phyllis Deane’s *The Future of the Colonies* places development firmly within the matrix of colonialism and also explicitly and repeatedly links development with whiteness in its description of a final, legitimate stage of “imperialist expansion”:

And finally, when we come to consider our own role and that of the white peoples in general in the process, we must make up our minds that the old type of imperialist expansion is dead and done with. The only type of expansion that is now legitimate, because it alone will fit in with the trends of the times, is a cultural expansion. We, the separate colonial powers and the white race as a whole, can and should still export brains and skill to the colonies, can and should help their people to acquire such of our ideas and inventions as will help their advance, can and should fertilize their countries with our accumulated wealth and our accumulated experience, and with the machines and techniques to which they have given rise. That will help the colonial peoples; but it will also help the economic prosperity of the world as a whole, including that of the colonial powers. The next and final phase of white expansion must express itself in assisting the development of the world’s backward and undeveloped regions, of which the colonies are an important section. (1944, 8)

Here, it would appear, is colonial whiteness at its most entitled, still exceedingly sure of itself and assuming moral as well as technical authority in the hammering repetition of the imperatives, “can and should”. Yet Huxley and Deane’s text has opened with an acknowledgement of the “colonial problem” as “a particular facet of the expansion of the white peoples of Europe [...] which has been going on for [...] five centuries” (7) and then sketched a brief history of colonialism in its two earlier “stages” – the first “of conquest and economic pillage” and the second of “exploitation, primarily in the interests of the metropolitan country” – calmly acknowledging genocide (“indigenous peoples were exterminated”), violent displacement, conquest, large-scale theft and slavery in the first stage and economic exploitation of “cheap labour” in the “mercantilist” and “strategic” second (7).

Despite this historical acknowledgement, their prescriptions for the third colonial stage of “trusteeship”, “partnership” (7) or development, refuse to draw connections between colonial exploitation and underdevelopment, which might present development in the form of a debt. Instead, the old trope of ‘primitive’ difference is re-deployed and underdevelopment is attributed to a “natural poverty” of environment, resulting in the “poverty of the native [...] ignorance [...] political backwardness” and “inadequate equipment for dealing with these problems”. “European ingenuity and scientific knowledge” are required to equip “primitive people [...] to deal with the crippling problems of drought, disease, hurricanes, soil poverty, ignorance, and social disintegration” (20).

Huxley and Deane’s writing provides an excellent illustration of the colonial roots of development discourses and the supreme self-confidence of late-colonial whiteness cloaked in scientific self-righteousness and blandly staring down the aftermath of genocide, unassailed by reflexivity and untroubled by any number of logical slippages. Their performance of whiteness provides a context in which Tracey also seems at home, though his performance of whiteness is perhaps less untroubled.

Having journeyed through terrain of exploration, missionary conversion and modernising development, I will turn to Tracey’s autobiographical narrative, which foregrounds exploration while proclaiming a developmental imperative. Also imbued with settler consciousness, it is a text in multiple, sometimes conflicting drafts, which sits uneasily, as if unsure of its ultimate orientation.

### **“The Discovery of African Music” – Tracey’s River**

On the first page of a typescript of the first part of Hugh Tracey’s unfinished autobiography, the main heading (capitalised and underlined) reads “The Discovery of African Music: Autobiography by Hugh Tracey: Part I”, with “Discovery” written in by hand to replace “Sound”, which has been crossed out.<sup>13</sup> The first choice of title echoes that of Tracey’s famous collection of recordings, “The Sound of Africa Series”, thus referencing Tracey’s work for those already in the know. But taken out of context, “The Sound of African Music” could suggest an exclusive descriptive focus on just that – African music. By contrast, the revised title provides an introduction to the subject himself, as well as to *his* subject, since a

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<sup>13</sup> This undated typescript, found in a folder labelled “HT Autobiography”, formed part of an un-catalogued collection of autobiographical and biographical material and related correspondence in various folders in a cabinet drawer, which I accessed at ILAM in December 2009. A footnote in a section titled “Respite in England”, on Tracey’s six-month stay in England in late 1931 and early 1932, mentions the death of Maud Karpeles in 1976, indicating that the typescript dates from 1976 or 1977, in the final months of Tracey’s life.



“discovery” is always an individualised event or object requiring a discoverer, implying conscious, intentional recognition and representation. Tracey’s title proclaims the explorer’s right to own and name his “discovery”; it also proclaims the centrality of that “discovery” to his representation of his own life, naming his achievement before his own name.

The typescript’s first section – headed “Foreword” – has the subheading “A River Left for Me” and reads as follows:

Thomas Baines, the famous artist and explorer, on his first Goldfields journey in 1870 to Lobengula’s country from Natal, met a friend, James Elton, just south of Bulawayo. Elton, a prospector connected with gold mining further south near Tati, had intended to go up to see the Zambesi River but changed his mind. He now wanted to explore the mouth of the Limpopo instead. Where the river debouched into the sea was still unknown at that time. Baines had hoped to be able to make the discovery himself after his present journey, and so remarked in his diary that night that “if the Sabae (Sabi River) did not join the Limpopo, then there may still be a ‘River left for me’”.

Tracey’s address to the Royal African and Royal Commonwealth Societies, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, encourages his listeners and readers to support a new type of exploration which is “genealogical” rather than “geographical” (1961 “Importance”, 156). But some fifteen or so years later, near the end of his life, Tracey chooses to begin his autobiography with a geographical metaphor, situated within an historical anecdote drawn from the period of the ‘scramble for Africa’, when Britain was rapidly imposing control over vast swathes of the continent. The choice of Baines’ metaphor and autobiographical anecdote as beginning for his own autobiography – surely intended for posterity as his definitive self-representation – seems to have been a reaffirmation of an old identification for Tracey, since the phrase “A River Left for Me” is written in what appears to be the original ink, rather than that of later editorial comments, in a handwritten notebook dating from the period of Tracey’s Zimbabwean fieldwork in the early 1930s.<sup>14</sup>

The metaphor of a river is a rich one. Fresh flowing water, essential for life and growth, has been endowed with spiritual as well as material significance in many cultures at all periods of human history. Rivers provide lines of communication and routes for trade and serve as boundaries between territories and groups. Asserting ‘ownership’ and control over rivers was militarily and economically important for the colonial project and explorers were

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<sup>14</sup> Here I am relying on memory from when I found and read this notebook during the period I worked at ILAM (2001 – 2004). I have not managed to find the notebook during more recent archival research there. According to my recollection, most of its contents have been reproduced in the autobiographical typescript, mainly in the section on Tracey’s Zimbabwean fieldwork and trip to Cape Town in the early 1930s.

obsessed with the race to claim and chart them. Tracey's adoption of this metaphor for his "discovery" thus says much about his view of his subject, as well as his view of himself.

The likening of music to a river asserts the centrality and importance of music in human life. For Tracey, music, which he considered to be the highest artistic achievement of African societies, has a heightened significance in primarily oral cultures. His writings foreground the importance of indigenous music as medium for communication, entertainment and the expression of spiritual beliefs and moral teachings. In addition to giving prominence to what might be termed an integrating social use-value, Tracey's work also foregrounds African music as aesthetic, imaginative expression, with artistic value in itself, and identifies outstanding individual artists and composers as distinct from the broader musical community. He recognises African music as being sometimes a solitary activity, as in his category of "self delectative" songs "sung for one's own delight" (1973 Vol. 1, 22), as well as being performed for and with others. (Also see numerous publications, including *Chopi Musicians*, *Ngoma* and several articles.)

The strategic importance of rivers for colonial control calls to mind another motivation presented by Tracey for the preservation, study and promotion of African music. Clearly directed towards colonial or apartheid administrators and industrialists and contextualised in racial terms, this argument promotes music as a means towards enhanced social control over a more content and therefore less political black population. In his fundraising address to "members of the International African Institute, Royal Empire Society and Royal African Society", published in *African Affairs*, Tracey rhetorically asks "how could the study of music [...] have any bearing [...] upon the general run of practical administration?" and answers his question with the statement that "*home-made African music is one of the most important of all the integrating factors in their social life*" (1954 "Social Role", 235). Part of his editorial in the 1958 issue of *African Music*, echoing the common theme of oppressors that those oppressed are in fact perfectly content with their lot, reads as follows:

In recent recording tours undertaken [...] in six different territories of Southern Africa, two or three songs only out of a total of over a thousand recorded had any slight mention of the kind of political activity which the newspapers and others like to feature as being representative of the attitude of the whole community of African peoples.

The evidence of song clearly refutes the popularly held impression that all Africans are seething with political agitation and unrest. Those articulate African composers who sing for, if not speak for, their various communities are clearly more pre-occupied with local social realities than with hypothetical political questions which are the urgent concern of a small but vocal section of the African public who

may, however, be able to coerce the simple-minded into supporting their cause with local acts of enjoyable irresponsibility.

A true cross-section of the songs of Africa still reveals the heart of the people rather than the columns of the daily papers to which sensation rather than sense, romanticism rather than romance, and revolt rather than responsibility is saleable 'news'. The great body of solid social common sense and activity as revealed in their songs is, perhaps, more truly representative of the outlook of the mass of Africans than the fulminations of politicians seeking swift self-advancement. (1958, 1)

Therefore, this clearly implies, promotion of traditional-style "songs of Africa" will strengthen the "social common sense" of the "solid" yet "simple-minded" masses against the minority of agitators, out for self-advancement, whose alliance with the media implies the possession of a Western education – a textbook message in line with what would later be called the 'battle for hearts and minds' of apartheid propaganda.

From a postcolonial standpoint, a reading of the editorial quoted above conveys very little about African attitudes but much about Tracey's whiteness. Leroy Vail and Landeg White comment that Tracey lacked experience either "as a literary critic [or] as a historian to examine the meanings of the songs he transcribed" and that "his general comments range from the whimsical and patronizing to the totally erroneous" (1991, 45). Although he does acknowledge variations in the quality of available translators and other technical difficulties leading to gaps or possible errors in some of his data (1973 Vol. 1, 10–11; Vol. 2, 3), Tracey's writings convey no hint of doubt concerning his own interpretive abilities. Neither is there any uncertainty concerning the accuracy of his image of "the African": there is no sign of awareness of even the possibility of irony, deception or self-censorship on the part of the musicians and informants upon whom his work relies. Nor is there any reflection on possible effects of his personal position of authority and his alliances within colonial power structures on the degree of access he is granted or whether any music is performed for him at all. For instance, Tracey is content to write off the Kikuyu people of Kenya as "unmusical" rather than draw any inferences concerning their active role in the struggle for independence, which escapes mention (1951 "Recording Tour", 48). In its presumption of authority, whiteness may equal blindness. Like that of earlier explorers, the tenor of Tracey's texts is largely "prescribed by a tradition [...] defined by the Enlightenment", situated within "a discourse in which an explicit political power presumes the authority of a scientific knowledge and vice-versa" (Mudimbe 1988, 16).

While it serves as a sign of his own self-placement within the realm of colonial exploration and underlines the social, aesthetic and strategic importance of traditional music,

Tracey's river metaphor is also an epistemological claim expressed in geographical terms, which encompasses universals and particulars, inclusivity and divisions. The river is at once music itself situated geographically – as culturally specific artistic expression, flowing from a distant archetypal source of common humanity and towards the broader ocean of “great folk musics of the world” (1973 Vol. 1, 5) – and the distinctive boundary of a knowledge area seeking to proclaim its difference from surrounding territories, while simultaneously asserting its right to recognition within the broader range of disciplines.

If the first part of the phrase “A River Left for Me” evokes the grandiose scale and power of the colonial enterprise, the second part, read in the context of the Baines mini-narrative, might convey a less secure aspect of whiteness, a certain wistfulness or poignancy on the part of the would-be discoverer who wishes to play his part in the larger enterprise and make his name, but fears he may have arrived too late to win a prize in the great imperial game.

White masculinity seems to have a peculiar attractiveness when displaying its vulnerability. The snippet from the Baines story, applied by Tracey to himself, calls to mind characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* which are also shared by much of the auto/biographical genre in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In a narrative of *Bildung*, the hero must be shown to have earned and attained his position of power, must have suffered and conquered through external and internal vicissitudes to attain “masterful selfhood” (Susan Fraiman, qtd. in Abrams 2009, 229). Mastery is thus individualised and justified as the fruits of victory. The hero's victory cannot be seen to be pre-determined and must be read as one that could have ended differently, despite the fact that the telling of the tale at all presupposes a successful outcome. Speaking still in general terms, such a tale might be designed to evoke the reader or listener's sympathies for a figure that is at once particularised as an individual endowed with particular qualities of strength and leadership which place him above the rest, and generalised through the telling of his earlier difficulties and moments of doubt. The result is a rounded figure of realist narrative who is yet a type of everyman, demonstrating possibilities for all that are nonetheless attained only by the few. In this particular instance, the recollection in retrospect of the longing for one more river, a river of his own (to paraphrase Virginia Woolf) could be seen to focus on the young hero's doubt and uncertainty in order to foreground, in relief, the strength of his desire and the power of his will. Of course, the reader's sympathy with the hero's desire – to play the game, claim the river, win the prize – presupposes a certain complicity and the absence of larger questions – concerning eligibility for participation, the rules of the game and even its existence.

Such generalisations as I have been making, however, should be cautiously applied to Tracey's representations of his own story, which are notably reticent on the psychological plane and concentrate on achievements rather than depicting a full sense of personal relationships or an 'inner life'. Even as I cannot avoid making them, I am aware that my presumptions about Tracey's unfinished autobiography are open to questioning and qualification and should not be too certain. Furthermore, while his tone is self-assured for the main part, there are places where Tracey's editorial alterations suggest a level of anxiety or ambivalence, with opposing forces seemingly at work.

In Tracey's typescript, the introduction continues after the story about Baines with a section headed "Inquietudes" that opens as follows:

A friend commenting upon my work of discovering and recording African music once remarked that it was fortunate that I, and others like me, experienced inquietudes which led to studies of out-of-the-way subjects to the benefit of the whole community. The question remained "How do such inquietudes come about?" (1-2)<sup>15</sup>

The remainder of this paragraph has been substantially edited in Tracey's handwriting. The typed version continues:

In my own case it came gradually, with increasing interest in African recreations for which I could help take an initiative. For example, I found myself surrounded by African singers or dancers, noted how they performed, enjoyed the occasion and arranged for public displays for their benefit. It was a shared activity floated on songs of their own making, the music working its magic. (2)

The edited version reads:

In my case they came gradually, with increasing interest in African recreations and by helping African musicians and dancers to present their activities to wider audiences firstly of their own countrymen, and secondly to a discerning public, through recordings, research and publication. (2)

Here the edited version is notable in placing less emphasis on the "magic" of the music and a more detailed and formal emphasis on Tracey's role in representing the music. It also draws a distinction between two different types of audiences with a definite racial inference – the (black) "countrymen" separated from the (white) "discerning public". There is an evident fluctuation between an emphasis on the universality of music, with African traditional music

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<sup>15</sup> The word "about" is handwritten, replacing "to be chosen".

sharing many characteristics common to folk music in general, and an anxiety to preserve difference in binary terms, to preserve a boundary rooted in the extra-musical.

The next paragraph reads as follows in the typed version:

Folk music of the African countryside, like any other, is made by all of us present, for 'us', ourselves. Anyone of 'us' can join in. It is done for our own purpose, not for others. Everyone 'makes the music run', and the better we do so, the better it works. Most of the music-makers are content with the result alone; that it be effective for its purpose. (2)

Editorial changes are largely stylistic ("of us" deleted in the first line; "if we know how" inserted after "join in"; "Everyone helps to 'make the music run'" with the rest of the sentence deleted) until one that is more significant. The last sentence now reads: "Most African music-makers are content with the result alone [...]." The importance of this change is emphasised by what follows: "But for me the "Why?" and the "How?" remained, and my responsive inquietude whispered... 'a river left for you?' My story is the telling of it" (2).

What singles Tracey out from most others who appreciate and participate in the making of music as a communal activity is his urge to understand and analyse the music and explore its actual and potential purposes. The earlier version presents an ambiguity as to whether this difference exists between Tracey and most others universally, or whether a racial distinction is also being drawn. The editorial revision emphasises the latter, since it is now most "African music-makers", rather than "most music-makers" in general, who are unconcerned with deeper understandings of their art. The revision, then, implies an identification in whiteness as a defining characteristic of knowledge production and reception. African musicians are objectified as part of the discovery, which requires Western exploration – central to which is representation and dissemination, involving the production and circulation of texts as cultural capital and within established discourses, or, in Tracey's words, "recordings, research and publication" – in order to be brought to the light of knowledge.

As we have seen, the opening of Tracey's draft autobiography identifies himself, quite explicitly, as an explorer. The developmental or missionary drive is also emphasised, in the reference to "helping African musicians". By contrast, archival and entrepreneurial motivations are not mentioned. The administrator and the trader remain less marked than their companion actors who command performing roles. Between the glamour of the explorer, the self-sacrificing idealism of the missionary and the utilitarianism of the administrator and the trader, is the problematic figure of the settler. Tracey does not foreground this role in the same

way in which he identifies himself with exploration and development, but settler identity is central to his performance of whiteness, both with respect to his own identity and his interactions with other whites in colonial and apartheid contexts.

### **Whiteness and Wildness**

For the colonial explorer and missionary, an orientation towards, and eventual return to, the metropole can generally be assumed. By contrast, while no less an agent of empire, the role of settler implies a future in the colony. Moreover, unlike economies of colonial settlement which have been built mainly on the large-scale displacement of original inhabitants (such as those in parts of Australia, Canada and the United States), the economic well-being of white settlers in Africa, with few exceptions, has depended on the exploited labour of an indigenous majority. Situated in a place overdetermined as ‘other’ within colonial discourse, and paradoxically threatened and secured by its minority status, African settler whiteness cannot take itself for granted. It is driven to declare and define itself in ways that metropolitan whiteness, and some other settler whitenesses, need not. Probing the relationship between race, place and identity, De Kock has suggested the “working proposition” that southern African whiteness “developed in a dialectical relationship with ‘wildness’, partly because whiteness had defined itself in opposition to ‘wildness’” (2006, 176).

My initial reaction upon attempting to apply De Kock’s whiteness/wildness dialectic to my study of Tracey was that it did not seem to fit. Firstly, Tracey’s musicological work throughout his career undermines established notions of the ‘primitive’ as applied to Africa.<sup>16</sup> The following statement against notions of African musical ‘wildness’ was found among his papers after his death:

[T]he popular western idea of African music is associated with a kind of chaotic orgy of percussive music – the more it appears to them to be chaotic, the more it pleases the uninitiated, who imagine that truly represents real African music – ‘wild’ – ‘primitive’ – ‘savage’ – magically possessed and so on. But to associate music with chaos is a contradiction in terms – music is a closely regulated art – an orderly art – if it is not measured and ordered, it is not music.

So when I started my research many years ago, we set ourselves to discover the orderliness in African music – the elements which control rhythm and crossed rhythms, the sets of musical tones and percussion sounds from which they create music from the simplest materials around them [...] like old bits of motor cars, logs of wood, seed pods or hand clapping, but which nevertheless, make an orderly set of

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<sup>16</sup> Tracey used the term ‘primitive’ in his earliest work on Shona music, but largely abandoned it and argued against its use.

sounds, which can be called African, in concept, and in practice, this distinctively African music.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, neither De Kock's notion of identity "fashioned [...] according to a sense of rebellion *against* the strictures of one's own cultural habitus" nor of identity "'seamed' – held together in a strained relation to a perceived alterity" (2006, 177) seemed appropriate to my impression of Tracey's confidence in travelling across and between various cultural territories while maintaining a very British demeanour of polite distance and well-mannered decorum throughout.

A closer examination of Tracey's autobiographical material, however, has led me back to De Kock's dialectic. It may be productive in a rather awkward way, against the stream, in a sense, of the schema. De Kock employs the "referentially fractured" term *whiteness* as "a trace and not an essence" and insists on the "acknowledgement that any installation of a referent must be regarded as provisional and potentially complicit in the process of erasure" which "paradoxically affords one a greater play of nuance and variation, a bigger range of potential meaning" (2010, 15). The types of whiteness he cites nonetheless fall into a qualified binary pattern – a "founding dualism" (17) of whiteness as "coercive" and "commanding orthodoxy" keeping strict distance from "wildness (for which, read the attributes assigned to blackness)" (16) versus the "counterlife" (18) and "anti-myth" of whiteness associated with "a wild white frontiersman" like Coenraad de Buys in the nineteenth century and rebellious, radical white artists and scholars in the apartheid years (19). Compared to De Kock's examples of whiteness, Tracey seems to react as powerfully, but very differently, to the notion of wildness: he cannot be made to fit comfortably on either side of the divide. Tracey's presence therefore destabilises the whiteness/wildness binary and requires expansion and qualification of its terms – an expansion in tune with De Kock's larger project which embraces "dissonance and instability" (34) and "refuses to enforce sovereign subjectivities and absolute contests" (2006, 186).

A reference to wildness occurs in the opening paragraph of the first section of Tracey's autobiography, following the introduction, titled "Family Background":

The Tracey family of my generation consisted of eleven children, five girls and six boys. Our family home was in the village of Willand, near the little country town of

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<sup>17</sup> This is an undated handwritten single page, accompanied by a typed posthumous copy dated 30.4.80 and labelled "HTT rough draft found in an old file at AMI". (AMI stands for African Musical Instruments, the commercial company founded by Tracey to manufacture and sell adaptations of traditional instruments such as the "Hugh Tracey Kalimba". It is still in existence, now based in Grahamstown.)



Cullompton in East Devon, on the old main road between Exeter and Taunton. The village church of St Mary with its three bells presided like a broody hen over the small cluster of thatched or slate-roofed houses on the crest of the modest hillock which it had occupied since Saxon times. From this gentle eminence, surrounded by tall elm trees, the voices both of St Mary's bells and the rooks which nested nearby proclaimed the passing of time, months and seasons, across ploughed fields and pastures which had long since renounced any claim to the status of untamed waste land that had given the village its original name of 'Wilderland' or Willand. (3)<sup>18</sup>

After the first sentence which refers to his siblings, Tracey situates his origins geographically. He begins formally, referring to "the" family, with "my" slipped in unobtrusively before the more general term "generation". The next sentence shifts to the collective first-person plural, but again as possessive adjective (determiner) rather than pronoun, placing the emphasis on the noun "home", as it has been placed on "family" and "generation". Placement within the autobiographical genre in itself assumes the 'I' writ large and its invisibility could thus be taken as a sign of security, assuming mastery with a confidence that does not need to be seen to do so. However, the curious absence of the first-person singular in this section marks, I believe, an insurmountable distance from the picture, even in the act of its affectionate construction. It also suggests a definite reticence, avoiding any breach of privacy. The messiness of individual, relational memory is placed beyond limits and emotion is projected away from people, onto landscape.

Tracey's home village is mapped with precise directions, ensuring perhaps that any would-be pilgrims to his birthplace would not lose their way. His setting's Englishness, by contrast, may be taken for granted, need not be named. The idyllic country scene is generic English pastoral, almost to the point of caricature, though surely meant with the utmost seriousness. Appropriately, given his musical subject, Tracey's nostalgic pastoral is soundscape as much as visual portrait. The sounds of bells and rooks have a temporal function, providing a regular pulse to "the passing of time, months and seasons". Time passes securely, reassuringly cyclical in its regular repetitions while advancing slowly and steadily within a broad, established flow of history. The landscape is highly cultivated yet the natural and man-made merge seamlessly. Bells and rooks are in harmony; everything works in its proper time and place. If, as Tracey argues, measured order is a primary characteristic of music, this is a musical landscape.

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<sup>18</sup> This section of the typescript does not contain extensive editorial markings but there are places where handwritten changes have been made. Since these are minor and do not seem to have much effect on meaning, I have not felt the need to note them. All quotations follow the latest, edited version unless indicated otherwise.

An English pastoral fantasy may seem a strange beginning to an African exploration narrative. Yet the emphasis on, and expression of appreciation for, English origins is important for Tracey's performance of whiteness. For the explorer who must return to tell his tale, and for the secular missionary whose developmental projects promote metropolitan self-interest as much as philanthropy, the assertion of English roots might be an assurance of belonging, the presentation of credentials to the Western authority from which ultimate recognition is sought.

For the settler there is another dimension to the emphasis on Englishness. The settler leaves home not to adventure and return, but to establish a new home and community within colonial territory and remain there permanently. (Unlike the other solitary colonial types, settlers function in families and groups. Their imperative is generational, dynastic; an essential part of their task is to procreate.) Being neither natives nor exiles and not immigrants in any simple sense, settler identity is fraught, ambiguous and contradictory. Settlers extend and secure colonial power not by travelling but by staying. Tasked with recreating the mother country within the colony, they are required to bond with the new land in the name of the old and the process of bonding is inseparable from the violent processes of destruction, construction and cultivation by which settlement is established and maintained.

At the most mundane, intimate, everyday level, settlers are the pervasive signs of occupation, the physical embodiments of domination, mastery, ownership. But since resistance follows conquest, climates and landscapes stubbornly assert distinctiveness, and even interactions between masters and servants are at some level human relationships, however perverse, subject also to strange affections and subtle influences, the settler cannot remain completely unchanged. The space of the settler, then, tends towards hybridity even as its borders are anxiously defined and defended. If, as in Daphne Rooke's fiction, it is sometimes a place of madness and manic reversals, with scenes of gothic horror intercepted by slapstick hilarity (see also Clingman on Lessing and others), and, à la Bhabha, a third space of ambiguity and instability that somehow escapes containment, it can also be rigid and reactionary, characterised by expressions of excessive loyalty, jingoism and idealisations of the motherland. The settler's nostalgia for the land left behind cannot quite own itself as a longing for something lost, since the settler continues in the homeland's name and in a sense has not left at all, although by definition cannot succeed and return. Settler nostalgia is also the contradictory ideal for a colonial future that cannot be realised (the settler all along suspects) and, of course, the antithesis of wildness.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2004) defines “settler” as “a person who settles in an area, especially one with no or few previous inhabitants”, “wilderness” as “an uncultivated, uninhabited, and inhospitable region”, and the first three senses of “wild” as follows:

**1** (of animals or plants) living or growing in the natural environment; not domesticated or cultivated. **2** (of a place or region) uninhabited, uncultivated, or inhospitable. ► (of people) not civilized; barbarous. ► (of looks, appearance, etc.) indicating distraction. **3** uncontrolled; unrestrained. (1650)

In their bland erasures, which avoid any references to historical applications during centuries of imperialism, the above definitions betray a lingering eurocentrism and the after-effects of colonial discourse. The *Concise Oxford* definitions of “wild” do, however, usefully indicate the term’s slippages – from the geographical, to the botanical and zoological, to the anthropological – and suggest that a degree of caution may be called for when moving from one sense to another.

Although the name of Tracey’s birthplace, “Willand”, may be a given, the textual reference to its meaning is not. If taken as conscious authorial and editorial choice, the intent of Tracey’s reference to the “untamed waste land that had given the village its original name” (3) cannot be decided, only speculated upon. There is of course an ironic effect, heightening the cultivated, ‘civilised’ qualities of a landscape portrayed as anything but wild. The effect is also historical – or genealogical – presenting a kind of pedigree of kindred habitation over centuries, an unbroken continuity of entitled settlement, the cultivated success of which could be presented as colonial alibi and justification for repetition elsewhere. Tracey’s spotlight on European wilderness nonetheless introduces a hint of uncertainty into his narrative – wildness is not only to be found elsewhere but has existed (and therefore could recur) within. The urbane irony which bolsters the status quo exceeds itself, raising *also* the possibility of a reversal of value which could question the dichotomy on which it depends. Willand’s “ploughed fields and pastures [...] had long since renounced any *claim* to the status of *untamed* waste land” (my emphasis). The explorer is drawn towards the opportunities of wilderness; the prospector (a version of the trader) will stake his “claim”; the settler will “tame” a new land. For whiteness, is the value in the claiming and taming, or has wilderness value in itself? Each side undermines the other and yet my sense is that any choice would be a false one, the oppositions must interplay and coexist, however uneasily. It is worth remembering that, among other things, Tracey was both a farmer and a conservationist (who

established a private nature reserve on part of his Roodepoort property Saronde) and did not feel the need to choose between the two.

The remainder of the typescript's four-page section "Family Background" deals with family circumstances in a collective portrayal in which the various members are largely undifferentiated and in which a child's perspective, in the sense of Tracey's individual boyhood, seems completely absent. We are told that the Tracey family "were by reason of an isolated country home and strict evangelical principles, more devoted to each other than to distant families around us beyond the range of pony trap or bicycle" and "lucky enough to be able to find ample recreation in each other's company with shared activities" (5). There is little sign of emotion, which does not really surface even in the handling of the family's bereavements during the First World War. Tracey writes that "[i]t was families such as ours who paid a large share of the debt of the World War One. An uncle of ours, a retired general from the British army in India, kept a detailed record of all his close relatives who served in the war. Of the total of 26 young men, 18 did not survive" (5). Yet he does not mention the personal loss of his older brother, Geoffrey. Similarly, his brief portrait of his father, who died when Tracey was seven, contains no reference to their relationship or his own response to his father's death (4).

It is interesting to compare the restraint and formality of Tracey's depiction of his family with an account of his relationship to his family by his second wife, Peggy Tracey, in an interview with Tracey's first biographer, David Bandey (1980):

The thing about Hugh was that I think he had a very unhappy childhood really. He lost the two people in his childhood, that he was fondest of in his family, his father and his brother Geoffrey. It made a deep impression on him. [...].

But what I wanted to tell you was about my impressions of the family and how they regarded Hugh, when we went home together. That would be about 1948-9. [...].

Hugh was very much in awe of his older brothers – he hadn't got over that – and they didn't treat him – apparently they didn't realise that this was a man who had proved himself with no training at all he was manager of the broadcasting studios in Durban [...].

They never gave him credit for it. He was never given credit for anything. All they could ever talk about was how difficult he was when he was a little boy. [...].

And harking back to when Christopher came to see us off in this train going up to London, I remember how Hugh got into the carriage [...] and he did what any little boy in the presence of a headmaster would do, if he was frightened of the headmaster: he sort of crouched himself into a corner with his hands in his pockets – and Christopher stood in the door and said, "Well, goodbye". There was no sign of any affection or anything. (3, 6, 7)

Peggy also speaks of abusive punishments, referring to conversations between Tracey and his sister Vera in which Tracey's mother featured most prominently (8).

Stepping back from family conflict, which Tracey marks by absence, to a more sociological vantage point, one can discern another form of absence in the "Family Background" section. Unremarked by the author, we learn, almost in passing, of the family's extensive colonial involvement, reaching far beyond his own activities. With respect to his siblings: "As we matured, each of us in turn, wheeled off on his or her own, to what appeared to be the very ends of the earth. Nigeria, China, Sudan, Kenya, Rhodesia and South Africa" (6). The text seems to suggest that this dispersal is a sudden shattering of their father's "arcadian setting" in "Edwardian paradise" (4), following the war's trauma and economic after-effects – "massive postwar unemployment in Britain and [...] punitive taxation" (6) – and avoids overt engagement with the British colonial project. Terms such as 'colony' or 'empire' are not used, colonial territories are referred to as individual countries as if they were already independent and the word "emigrated" describes the moves to Africa of Tracey's older brother Leonard, his sister Vera and himself. The tell-tale reference to the uncle who was "a retired general from the British army in India" (5) nonetheless betrays a deeper historical implication in colonial processes, while the broader framing of Tracey's African subject in itself undermines his text's silences. Marking such gaps in the text is one thing, ascribing motivations is another. Similar erasures, which may amount to disavowals, assumptions of ignorance or innocence, are common in colonial discourse. Tracey's position as a citizen of apartheid South Africa at the time of writing in the 1970s, as well as his extensive international connections, particularly by this time in the United States, also bring added layers of complexity and possibilities of interpretation.

Wildness features prominently in the next section of the autobiography, "Emigration to Africa 1921". Tracey tells how he and Vera set out, "like a couple of Babes-in-the-wood", to join Leonard and his wife Eve on their farm in the then-Rhodesia (7).<sup>19</sup> As preparation for their new life, the eighteen-year-old Tracey had learnt veterinary skills and boot making, while Vera "was already a probationer nurse which was considered training enough for a savage land" (7). Tracey's account of the journey, in which the new landscape is depicted as utterly strange and even frightening, is worth quoting at length:

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<sup>19</sup> Appropriately, the farm had been named "Willand", after the Devonshire village, no doubt, and possibly with reference to the name's meaning (McConnachie 51).

Then a change of trains onto the branch line from Gwelo took us southwards towards Fort Victoria, as far as the siding at Chatsworth, where the single track briefly doubled itself beside a row of corrugated iron sheds. Opposite was a single trading store – and a nearby farm house which also served as the district Post Office.

Accustomed as I was to the green meadows of Devonshire which till then I took to be a universal norm, I remember being horrified at the comparative barrenness of the scenery through which we travelled. All the way from the Cape and through the Karoo the nakedness of the rocks and hills in the prevailing drought, revealed the bare skeleton of the African crust and suggested that the train was abducting us forcibly mile after mile into a veritable desert.

The mood of despair mixed with disbelief that this countryside could possibly be an improvement on our familiar Devonshire farmlands, now so far behind, persisted to the very last revolution of the wagon wheels, our last mode of conveyance over the 30 miles from rail to farm. With our pathetic collection of small trunks and packing cases, containing all our private belongings salvaged from the whole of our youth's experience [...] [we] were being jolted into place at the pace of the ox and the farm wagon.

The last leg of the journey, through the unfamiliar bush, stunted trees and sparse rank grass, made no contribution towards the lifting of my gloom – quite the reverse.

Our African wagon driver, Matiwone by name, with prominent front teeth, had been determined to cheer us on our way, gabbling long explanations of his familiar surroundings of which we understood not a word but gathered flashes of meaning from his mimed gestures, punctuated by the lash and crack of his long driving whip. Chindozi, the 12 year old leader of the front pair of sixteen oxen, walked ahead with the compass sense of a homing pigeon – occasionally leaving his post to do some errand for Matiwone.

Then, at long last, in the distance a mile or so away, appeared the rounded head of a small bare granite dome which, we gathered, marked the site of the farmhouse, beyond a small stream of sparkling clear water which each pair of oxen noisily sipped as they crossed.

[...] After eight or nine hours of unhurried progression and just as Matiwone's enthusiastic prattle and gesticulations had made it clear to us that the journey was nearly over, the youthful figure of Brother Leonard himself, appeared, shotgun over his shoulder. [...]

He escorted us along the last mile, on tracks which had already begun to show signs of mind over wilderness. (8–10)

A traumatic coming-into-being of settler whiteness predominates in most of the passage above, with little evidence of the excitement or anticipation one might expect to be associated with exploration or the beginning of a life's mission. It is also interesting to note the presence of the first-person pronoun, in comparison with the earlier English section, as if, despite the dislocation it depicts, Tracey as author is now on firmer ground with regard to his autobiographical narrative.

Wildness is often associated with an over-abundance or fecund chaos of uncontrolled life-forms – with dangerous animals and vegetative overgrowth. Tracey's first impression of

African “wilderness”, by contrast, is presented as “barrenness”, a death-like skeletal emptiness that seems devoid of growth and into which his unwilling entry feels forced and violent – “the train was abducting us forcibly mile after mile into a veritable desert” (8). This landscape is wild in the *Concise Oxford*’s second sense, as “uninhabited, uncultivated [...] inhospitable”.

It is easy to discern the presence of a familiar trope of southern African whiteness: the unpeopled land awaiting and justifying the settler’s transforming presence. As J.M. Coetzee and others have noted, the prevalence and problematising of a mythical empty landscape have been major currents in South African “white writing”. This self-absolving settler myth performs a second-level violence in erasing the signs of its own complicity with conquest: it reverses history to present whiteness as innocent rather than as perpetrator.

While Tracey’s narrative does not record any signs of human life in the landscape through which the young Vera and Hugh travel – besides the lonely markers of European occupation in the single track, sheds, trading store and farm house at the railway siding (8) – African characters soon make an appearance in the figures of Matiwone and Chindozi (9–10). What is their position relative to De Kock’s dialectic of whiteness and wildness, as evidenced in Tracey’s text?

The fact that they are named is surely important. Another thing to note is the possessive manner of Matiwone’s introduction: “Our African wagon driver, Matiwone by name” (9). Despite his “prominent front teeth” and unfamiliar language, Matiwone’s presence does not seem to evoke any anxiety. Rather, his and Chindozi’s entrance seems to signal reassurance and an easing of “gloom” in the narrative. Replacing the earlier references to horror and “despair” (8) at the “unfamiliar bush, stunted trees and sparse rank grass” (9), we are now presented with “familiar surroundings” (to Matiwone at least if not yet to the young Traceys themselves), the image of Chindozi “[walking] ahead with the compass sense of a homing pigeon” (9) and “a small stream of sparkling clear water” (10). In contrast to the empty land myth, African figures are presented as guides and go-betweens. Rather than bond directly with the alien landscape, the text suggests, the young Tracey will find his way in his new home through an engagement with its people, while assuming also the right to claim *them* as his, as their land has been claimed.

Although clearly marking Matiwone and Chindozi as different, Tracey seems to locate their difference within domesticity rather than wildness. This could be because they have indeed been domesticated, both in terms of general servitude to whiteness and in the more specific sense of being Leonard Tracey’s workers. However, Tracey’s response to these first

Africans he meets (or presents as having met) does not seem to be simply a response to African servants, as opposed to Africans who retain a greater measure of independence, since it fits into a consistent pattern of interactions with black people of different classes in a variety of contexts, as presented in numerous places in his texts.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, it seems to me that, rather than drawing a distinction between ‘wild’ Africans and Africans who are no longer ‘wild’ (either through being ‘civilised’ or being ‘tamed’ to servitude), Tracey does not really associate wildness with “the attributes assigned to blackness” in any straightforward sense (De Kock 2006, 16). No easy slippage from landscape to people is made. Rather, Africans seem to be represented by Tracey with a certain recognition, a level of affection and an assumption of familiarity. Matiwone’s language is not understood and yet the Traceys can already discern “flashes of meaning from his mimed gestures” and easily interpret his conversation as an attempt to “cheer” them (9). If he is not yet fully known, neither is he fully strange. Instead – like or as the “essential African” – he is to Tracey eminently *knowable* (1961 “Importance”, 156).

If Tracey’s words describing Matiwone’s conversation – “gabbling” (9) and “enthusiastic prattle” (10) – are not used to indicate wildness, they certainly suggest an attribution of juvenility, never mind the fact that the wagon driver is likely years older than the youthful protagonist. Tracey’s brief sketch also suggests that Matiwone is likeable, friendly, competent in performing his skilled task, loyal and trustworthy. At the same time, none of these attributes need particularly be remarked upon. They are simply the expected qualities of a good servant, which reflect back on the wisdom and care of a good master such as Leonard, of whom Tracey writes that his “concern for his African employees was constant” (6).

The early days of Tracey’s “African initiation” (12) were marked in two ways, both of which involved cultural contact with indigenous people. Firstly, since there was no room available for him in the farmhouse, he would sleep in “a newly constructed round hut [...] made from a circle of upright saplings, the cracks between them plastered with hardened mud” (11). Secondly and more significantly, the first task he was given by Leonard was “to learn to speak the local language in spite of a lack of reference books and so encourage fluent contact between master and farm hand”. This first farming assignment “directed [his]

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<sup>20</sup> The diary entries or letters from Tracey’s fieldwork on Shona music in 1932 and 1933, for example, combine hierarchical distance and formality with a sense of security and a relaxed attitude in describing local people and customs; they do not usually suggest an attribution of wildness. Accounts of recording expeditions in the 1950s continue to project domesticity and familiarity, yet with a shift. In these later texts, there is a greater use of humour, or sometimes ridicule, representing ‘the African’ as child or clown.



sympathies and moulded [his] ultimate profession". Tracey found that learning the workers' songs assisted his language learning; furthermore, the lyrics "opened a whole vista of African thinking" (12).

Tracey's learning of Karanga songs in the Zimbabwean tobacco fields has been recorded as a seminal event in several accounts of his life. His introduction to Volume 1 of the *Sound of Africa Catalogue* states that the history of the collection "dates back to the early 1920s when I first sang and wrote down the words of African songs I heard in the tobacco fields of Southern Rhodesia" (1973, 3). Biographical pieces by Thram, McConnachie, Muller and Hudson embellish the above quotation without any reference to its coercive context. For example, McConnachie writes that "Tracey was immediately fascinated by the music of the Karanga people" (2008, 51) and Hudson states that he "learned the language of the Karanga and sang their songs with them" while "[l]abouring alongside the locals in the tobacco fields" (1999, 669). By contrast, Tracey's draft autobiography acknowledges the divide between "master and farm hand" and explains the pragmatic beginnings of his introduction to an African language as a supervisory task assigned by the older brother to whom he was himself subservient. The myth of Tracey spontaneously learning and sharing the songs of black labourers while working with them as an equal does not originate from Tracey's own texts; rather, the conceptual leap from overseer to worker alongside seems to be an indication of wishful thinking on the part of scholars seeking to commemorate an appropriate post-colonial image.

"Leonard explained that it was essential for me to learn to speak the local language [...] and so encourage fluent contact between master and farm hand". This sentence is unmarked in the autobiographical typescript. If editorial revisions may signal ambivalence, their lack might be taken as a sign of security. Tracey's straightforward acknowledgement of his role within the Rhodesian economy assumes, without problematising, an equation of whiteness with mastery. The unhesitant, matter-of-fact presentation of himself as "master" indicates an underlying acceptance of colonial power relations. While Tracey does not question the construction of whiteness as dominance, subsequent sections of the autobiography signal ambivalence, like the altered text in the introduction discussed earlier. Indications of anxiety surface in connection with genre, when the construction of an explorer narrative conflicts with the factual verisimilitude of passages originally written many years before. Erasures also appear in an account in which Tracey's whiteness is placed in proximity to whiteness-as-wildness.

When Tracey set out to write and compile his autobiography he was well known for his work in the field of African music and had established a public persona in which his name, voice and physical presence were inseparable from his subject. This persona had been perfected over years of appearances in conference presentations, talks, musical demonstrations, storytelling sessions and radio broadcasts, as well as via the records on which his signature appeared in the visual design and which often included recorded introductory commentary in his voice. Tracey's personal correspondence suggests that this melding of life and work, of explorer and 'discovery', was more than public performance and had become part of his private sense of self. By the time its writing was begun, therefore, Tracey's autobiography was already over-determined as "The Discovery of African Music". The major section of the unfinished work, however, is based on diary entries or letters written over forty years earlier, at a time when Tracey had not yet definitively established a career.<sup>21</sup> His editorial changes often indicate tensions which seem to be bound up with the motivation to present a textual performance in accordance with the established public persona, scruples over personal privacy and a desire for realism and accuracy. The latter drive for truth and detail corresponds with what could be called the myth of the biographical genre – the definitive telling of a life story as true and complete – and also resonates with Tracey's role as meticulous archivist.

A paragraph from an entry dated "Sunday November 6<sup>th</sup> 1932" (when Tracey was undertaking field recordings and research on Shona music funded by the Carnegie Corporation and had been pursuing an interest in African music, albeit on a largely amateur level, for some years) provides an illustration of such editorial conflict at work. The typed version reads as follows:

It turned windy and a dull sort of depressing atmosphere that can't make up its mind either way and suddenly I realised I was feeling awfully alone. All the old miserable thoughts, self pity and disillusionment. A stranger in a strange land doing still stranger work in hope of future joy. Four small natives with nothing better to do and with vacant expressions sat outside the tent watching me and that made it worse. Silly silly day – when shall I find what I really want.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This largest section of the typescript consists of the "personal field diary" ("Book D" 8) he had kept for the period from 1 November 1932 to 29 June 1933. These diary entries are copies of letters sent to England. In the typescript the addressee's name is unrecorded and personal passages, indicating they were love letters addressed to a significant woman in his life, have been deleted.

<sup>22</sup> Pages in this section are not numbered.

The edited version has been substantially shortened, to read as follows: “It turned windy and a dull sort of depressing atmosphere that can’t make up its mind either way. Four small natives with vacant expressions sat outside the tent watching me and that made it worse.” There is also a line drawn in the margin, with “NB!” written in, suggesting that this edit was particularly important to Tracey. As already noted, Tracey is content to admit in his introduction that his interest in African music had developed “gradually” (2) and that its beginnings had been contingent (12). Once his river has been found, however, the textual motivation of discovery demands that it be shown as continuing to flow and strengthen unimpeded. References to strangeness, and estrangement, which signal an alterity that cannot be known and mastered, must also be excised.

A diary entry dated “Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 1932” describes a visit to Arthur Shirley Cripps, the poet and missionary, which Tracey found both fascinating and disturbing:

On asking a native woman where Cripps was she pointed over to a hut with a closed door. I went over and knocked. He answered and opened the door – a giant tall fellow – grey white hair and yellow complexion and dull blue far-away eyes. [...] He had just got up from sitting on the floor amidst piles of untidy paper, newspapers, letters and books all over the floor, a pathetic rubbish heap. We sat down and he insisted on my taking his only chair [...] while he sat opposite on a pile of papers and books – out at knees, out at elbows, half shaved, he looked the complete picture of abandonment. A sort of table on one side had a billy-can top with milk in it and a dirty plate or two that indicated a meal of sorts. One small window, unclean and nailed up was the only light except what came through the open door.

But when he spoke, one forgot it all and listened. He is a mystic if ever there was one – desperately engrossed by his feelings of religion and the cause of the common people but quite oblivious and forgetful of his own surroundings – to the point of madness. We talked of natives, of language and customs and of folklore but mostly his pet subject was the sanctity of their language. Then of Oxford and Cambridge, people at home in England. A photograph of his mother on the wall, showed a face full of character and force, a strict slit of a mouth, and I wondered if she was the cause of all this – this man, this mess, this futility.

He asked me to have some tea but I simply couldn’t. I could not face drinking anything in that atmosphere, or out of his cups. *It would be easier to receive food from a native than that, although* I know he would have been pleased to have given me some. I couldn’t get away from his conversation – it meant something, not just talk. I left at last in the middle of a sentence I believe – saying I’d try to see him again – not there in that hut – *I couldn’t, but he must come to my surroundings, my tent, or room whatever it was.*

Italics above indicate deletions in the typescript. Tracey has first added an unconvincing footnote to the clause “It would be easier to receive food from a native than that”, in which he explains that “I made a point of not accepting food from natives because they had so little to

share”, before rethinking and deciding to omit the compromising words altogether, along with the note.

The strong sense of revulsion expressed here, in the midst of, or as a reaction against, powerful shared interests and intellectual rapport, is a clear reaction to a type of “madness” – or wildness. This reaction suggests submerged desire and is most certainly a kind of fear. Tracey’s reaction to Cripps provokes a racist reference to blackness and his level of discomfort suggests a threat to his own sense of self. Given the fact that he, like Cripps, is interested in African culture, he seems to be reacting quite violently against the possibility of a personal ‘degeneration’ from whiteness to wildness. Tracey’s uncharacteristically urgent tone, the degree of detail in his physical description of Cripps, his fascination with Cripps’ talk and his wish to see him again (in surroundings in which he would have a better sense of control) all suggest the possibility of a sexual dimension to his response. The physicality of the references to dirt, untidiness and contaminated food and drink evoke sexuality as disease, impurity, contagion, and disgust as desire’s intertwined other.

### **Wildness as ‘Miscegenation’ – Whiteness as Philanthropy**

There are possible hints of homo-eroticism in texts referencing Tracey’s relationship to blackness. Black men certainly seem to interest him far more than black women.<sup>23</sup> If Tracey’s texts suggest an element of desire for African masculinity, however, such desire is well-contained within the bounds of colonial limits and norms. Peggy Tracey surmises that Tracey could have been homosexual in her interview with Bandey, referring to intense friendships with white men in support of her theory. Again, her supposition is framed as a latent possibility well-contained by convention so as to be non-threatening (1980, 11). By contrast, the encounter with Cripps seems to signal real danger. Desire for the ‘native’ may be safely submerged (one could suggest), as may desire for the white man, but desire for the white man ‘gone native’ might confuse established notions of sexuality and race and threaten hierarchies, provoking a fear of personal wildness and thus a flight to escape.

There are very few overt references to interracial heterosexual relationships in Tracey’s texts. A letter from Tracey to John Blacking in 1954, however, suggests that the lack of such references stems rather from distaste for the subject than approval or neutrality.

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<sup>23</sup> For example, in correspondence with F.E. Attwood of the Decca Record company in London concerning the cover design of the first record in the *Music of Africa* series (featuring Tanzanian music), Tracey expressed his disapproval of the drawing of a male African figure in the first proposed design and took pains to emphasise the attractiveness of “the type of African to be found in Tanganyika [...] which for handsomeness is not to be surpassed in Africa” (16 April 1952; HTC-D013).

Blacking, who was soon to arrive in Johannesburg to take up a post at ILAM and had mentioned having Chinese and Indian friends, had expressed concern about racial laws and practices in apartheid South Africa. In response, Tracey gives the following answer, which also reveals his attitudes towards class and ethnicity in general:

What you hear outside is grossly exaggerated as a rule, however bad the local politics may or may not be. With regard to miscegenation... the local Afrikaans whites have had such a taste for it in the past that they are the only white people in Africa who have had to legislate against it in order to prevent their menfolk from turning the whole country into a mulatto state within a few generations.

There is no ban on having anyone to one's private houses, white, black or yellow, but there is a law against cohabitation between white and black. There are not many Indians up here in the Transvaal, the best of them are in Durban and I knew quite a few there when I was in Radio there. Chinese are still fewer and mostly the simple shopkeeper type, who incidentally do most of the illegal trade in spirits with Africans. So I don't think you will find many of them sufficiently intelligent or interesting to become personal friends, unlike East Africa where there are considerable numbers. In this vast sprawling city, there is a wide variety of Europeans and others, and not a few good musicians. So I don't think you need worry about making friends here, you will have so wide a selection from all walks of life.

An allusion to 'miscegenation' may be found in Tracey's review of *Witchcraft and Magic of Africa* (by Frederick Kaigh). The review comments on a colonial genre which amounts to little more than racist pornography disguised as ethnography, in which Africans are presented as obsessed with violence, sexuality and witchcraft. While its recognition of the inaccurate and exploitative nature of such texts is justified, Tracey's review also implies a rejection of interracial sex as anything other than an aberration. He summarises Kaigh's book as being

grossly insulting to the body of African peasantry, as well as to the white public which is in any way connected with the continent [...] its descriptions of African music and dancing are so ill informed and prejudiced by what can only be described as an erotic haze that it is clear that beauty is not the only quality which lies in the eye of the beholder. (1949, 45)

Elsewhere, Tracey associates violence and sexuality with urbanisation and certain forms of Western modernity. The cultural influence of "western and other foreign intrusions" leads to "a sorry state of affairs" in which "[taste] is destroyed and licence extolled [...] [v]iolence is the quality in a 'cowboy' film which is most admired and the songs of the bawdy house eclipse all others" (1954 "State of Folk", 34–35).

If, as I argued earlier, Tracey's does not routinely equate blackness with wildness, at certain times he seems to do so. He reiterates colonial myths of cannibalism and continual inter-tribal warfare as characteristics of pre-colonial Africa. (See, for example, "Recordings in East Africa and Northern Congo" 1953, 12.) The stereotype of sub-Saharan Africa as a continent of warring tribes is invoked to support his pessimism concerning the ability of Africans in newly-independent states to govern themselves.<sup>24</sup> There is also a diary entry in the autobiography ("Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1933"), describing research in an area more remote from European settlement than he had hitherto visited, in which Tracey writes that "[the] local natives here look primal – so I'm not expecting much from them". (The following entry begins by remarking that a "couple of musicians turned up, and I did not have a bad showing after all".) On the whole, however, Tracey tends to depict traditional African societies as very different from the West, simple in organisation, weaker and less developed, but nevertheless exhibiting a strong degree of social cohesion and adherence to socially enforced mores and values and capable of culturally unique heights of artistic achievement in certain areas such as music.

The theme of African 'difference' will receive further attention in the next chapter. For now, I will suggest my own variant of De Kock's whiteness/wildness dialectic, which is that Tracey defines his own, and the best of, whiteness in opposition to notions of wildness, while simultaneously defining the best of blackness in opposition to wildness, but from the opposite side of wildness as it were. Africans are not normally wild, but are particularly susceptible, in the weakness of their childlike simplicity, to degeneration under the influence of types of European wildness. For Tracey, anthropological wildness therefore resides most strongly, it would seem, in the indiscriminate breaking down of racial limits, in uncontrolled mixing with degenerate Western forms, in negative types of hybridity and in 'miscegenation'. It is not that all forms of cultural mixing are necessarily negative, but rather that, left to themselves and the influence of unscrupulous whites, Africans are likely to choose the wrong ones in the wrong way and thus be led to wildness or madness, losing their own culture and gaining nothing but violence and uncontrolled sexuality in return. Responsible and knowledgeable whiteness, on the other hand, being stronger than blackness, may generally

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<sup>24</sup> Racially-based pessimism concerning African and African-American politics pervades much of Tracey's personal correspondence. A letter to his friend Daan Crena de Iongh dated 9 July 1964 provides one example (HTC-C054-01). Such pessimism also colours what Agawu refers to as "an astonishing series of editorials that appeared [in *African Music*] in the late 1950s and early 1960s", which reacted to liberation struggles by "condemning the uprisings, and, by implication, the African's search for a voice of his own" (1992, 254).

interact quite comfortably with any variety of cultures without losing its civilised sense of itself, its own power and its own strict limits.

Tracey's notion of wildness cannot be countered by simple preservation and racial separation, since colonialism is a given reality and, furthermore, a system he supports. Neither can, nor should, African progress towards modernity be halted. Thus enters whiteness in the philanthropic guise of missionary or agent of development, informed by the knowledge gained in the discoveries of whiteness as exploration. For Tracey, Africans require assistance from enlightened Westerners such as himself to strengthen, recover or gain appreciation of the best aspects of their own and other African cultures, in order better to withstand the negative pressures of modernity and to develop, eventually, into culturally integrated, fully African *and* modern citizens.

It should not be supposed that Tracey was unique in advocating this type of salvation by tradition. David Kerr has analysed a similar kind of ideological imperative at work in the development of films for African audiences in pre-independence Zambia and Malawi (1993). This period was characterised by “a policy shift in the Colonial Office towards adult education and the development of social welfare institutions in fields like savings, agriculture and health, in order to improve the image of the British Empire in the rapidly changing conditions after the Second World War”. Kerr notes that, rather than set up an opposition between modernity and tradition, propaganda film-makers constructed a moralistic blend of “entertainment and instruction” as the “best of both worlds” by appropriating aspects of traditional culture and folklore, “updated to help them emerge into 20<sup>th</sup> Century urban life”. The intent was to advertise “the advantages of Westernisation and consumerism, without losing the roots of rural culture”.

Secular salvation may be reached via an embrace rather than rejection of indigeneity, but still requires the Westerner as teacher and leader. Moreover, this doctrine of development ultimately serves Western purposes in aiming to provide a more contented workforce for capitalist enterprises and apolitical, compliant black citizens for (neo)colonial governments. Tracey's developmental project thus participates in Huxley and Deane's final imperialist stage of “cultural expansion” which would “also help the economic prosperity of the world as a whole, including that of the colonial powers” (1944, 8).

### **Whiteness as Freedom to Roam**

In his analysis of Kipling and racial identity in colonial India, Satya P. Mohanty argues that “colonial rule generated a dominant image of the white man as spectacle” while also revealing

another, seemingly contradictory imperative: the white man as simultaneously invisible, or at least capable of invisibility in a context that renders him eminently spectacular. The public sphere in the colonial context seems to contain within it both of these opposed modes of existence, modes reserved for and articulated as the imaginary of the white male colonial ruler: eminent visibility, the ability to command respect and fear in the subject race, on the one hand, and on the other, the ability to blend in, to be no different from the colonized and their society. (1991, 314–315)

In photographic poses, in the well-modulated tones of broadcasting English, in rhetorical pronouncements and humorous stories, in the self-assurance of gestures guiding village performers through the intricacies of recording for the first time, Tracey's own performance of whiteness is indeed "eminently spectacular". In the mid-twentieth century rather than the late nineteenth, the "spectacle" of whiteness is further enhanced by Tracey's facility in using the latest technologies and in transporting them to numerous places over a vast area of the African continent. While no white man with recording gear and an expedition entourage touring colonial Africa could attain the fictional ideal of invisibility to which Mohanty refers, texts by and about Tracey do reference an ability to "blend in" by, for example, adapting appropriately to manners and customs, joining in performances and helping "make the music run" or silently erasing all aural signs of the representational choices involved in the production of sound recordings to produce aesthetically and technically polished tracks of the required length that nonetheless sound spontaneous and entirely 'natural'. At the same time, Tracey frequently adopts strategies of invisibility in his writings, withholding information while hiding the gaps in his texts.

Mohanty's analysis goes on to note that Kipling's Kim "effortlessly" becomes what "most of the Indian characters [...] cannot quite become: a competent and reliable reader [...] of society as text" (1991, 318). As "a political abstraction: cunning and beguiling enough to outdo and fool the natives, yet always implicitly and securely on the side of Empire" (319–320), Kim "[embodies] values and qualities that are essential for white colonial rulers and their agents if they are to survive and *manage* a racially tense social and political world" by "learning to observe without being observed [...] to interpret people and situations, to move stealthily and unnoticed, and to assume roles", in short displaying the ability "to inhabit perfectly without being tied down to the place of [his] habitation" (326–328).

The exploratory freedom of movement associated with whiteness is expressed in the licence to control the means of knowledge production, to assume the ability to know, assess the validity of knowledge and control representations of both self and other, subject and object, while strictly upholding the self-imposed limits and binaries on which its licence



depends. If whiteness asserts a right to knowledge of blackness, its freedom to know also asserts a right to its own privacy, a freedom not to be known, a denial of equal knowledge of whiteness.

Reflecting on critical whiteness studies in contemporary Australia, Jane Haggis associates even progressive, anti-racist whiteness with “freedom to roam” (2004). Haggis responds to Irene Watson’s rhetorical question to fellow indigenous Australians, “Are we free to roam?” by asking “how do ‘we’ white ‘radical professionals’ stop assuming we are ‘free to roam’? Free to roam into indigeneity, free to roam out of whiteness, free to roam by re-naming the claim of incommensurability as essentialist, free to universalize our knowledge production?”

The textual persona of Hugh Tracey, a prime colonial specimen of masculine, middle-class whiteness at the end of empire, is supremely “free to roam” in many senses. And roam he does – geographically, commercially, academically, culturally and musically. Yet his roaming is also constrained by the wilful embrace of paradigms of difference and self-discipline. Confident of his own interpretive and aesthetic abilities in the terrain of African indigeneity, he yet never wishes to assume a freedom “to roam out of whiteness” which would equal the sacrifice of mastery. For Tracey therefore, one could argue that whiteness equals the freedom “to roam into indigeneity” without ever becoming indigenous, without ever losing his sense of whiteness, his sense of selfhood.

This chapter has offered an exploration of Tracey’s autobiographical narrative as performed in the roles of explorer, missionary and settler. The next chapter will focus more directly on his representations of blackness, his ideas or assumptions on race, and his racism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RECORDING BLACKNESS

#### AUTHENTICITY – RACISM – MODERNITY

The *raison d'être* of our work is to build up the essential true character of African people so they will be recognised as men in a world of men – more particularly recognised as twentieth century men. (Tracey 1966)<sup>25</sup>

Thank heaven that millions of 'blacks' are better equipped to cope with the realities of the paradox that all men are not created equal. They need appropriate skills of mind & philosophy to acquire & maintain those satisfactions which are best suited to their particular needs. (Tracey c.1975)<sup>26</sup>

The above quotations not only underline Tracey's representational project as inherently racial but assume a managerial role for whiteness in supplying the "needs" of blackness. These extracts also reveal a peculiar form of racialised thought, which incorporates an idea of essential difference and yet also advocates black participation in universal modernity. In the first quote, from Rossi's interview, Tracey defines his work as developing African authenticity within a contemporary global paradigm. Written for public consumption, the tone strives for academic authority and disinterest. The second quote, from private marginalia, reveals emotive qualities – self-righteousness, sarcasm, disdain – in its response to blackness. Tracey's copy of Braithwaite's book contains extensive notations. Braithwaite (who is Guyanese and has spent much of his life in Britain and the USA) had been allowed by the apartheid government to visit South Africa and had been granted 'honorary white' status for the duration of his stay. Tracey reacts with telling anger and bitterness to Braithwaite's description and denunciation of apartheid, in an openly racist, personal response which makes a mockery of claims that he did not support the government of the day.

Read alongside one another, the two quotations above reveal that Tracey's deployment of race is neither simple nor logically consistent. Nonetheless, bolstered by the systems in which he operates, his racist expressions exert influence and power. This chapter will examine the textual relationship between Tracey's whiteness and blackness, with specific

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<sup>25</sup> From the transcript of an interview of Tracey by Tim Rossi in November 1966, found in a folder at ILAM labelled "HT: transcript of interview re. HT's work".

<sup>26</sup> From notes in Tracey's handwriting inside the back cover of his copy of *'Honorary White': A Visit to South Africa* by E.R. Braithwaite (1975).

attention to race and racism. I have already noted that ‘exploration’, ‘discovery’ and ‘development’ of African culture were key elements in his autobiographical self-performance. His pronouncements concerning blackness cannot be separated from his enactments of whiteness and its entitlements. Nonetheless, while the previous chapter put the spotlight on types of whiteness, this chapter will focus more on blackness – both as the object of representation and as the subject position of those who claim, and re-fashion, the labels ‘black’ and ‘African’. In the process, structures of inequality, difference, authenticity and modernity will emerge as critical questions. I shall examine a series of texts concerning Tracey and race, and relate these to critical race theory. Thereafter, I shall consider contributions by African scholars which tackle, and move beyond, the impositions of racism.

### **Lions, Hands and Dusty Feet: 1929 Recordings in Johannesburg**

In 1929 a group of Zimbabwean singers travelled to Johannesburg to make gramophone records, the first professional recordings of Shona music. While I refer to the musicians in the active voice, the circumstances under which the recordings were made provided limited space for agency on the part of the artists involved. The sparse available texts providing access to this historic event reserve the active role for our other protagonist, Hugh Tracey. My main source for the 1929 recordings is Tracey’s draft autobiography.<sup>27</sup>

Engineers “from the Columbia Record Company in England” were on tour recording “local artists for the South African market.”<sup>28</sup> Learning of the opportunity from a news report, Tracey “leapt at the chance to have some of my tobacco field repertoire recorded by the very singers from whom I had learnt them” (c.1976, 20). He describes how, having first obtained the loan of a vehicle from the Rhodesian government and made arrangements with the Columbia representatives, he found the musicians he had in mind for the venture:

I set off southwards to the Fort Victoria district to look for the men who, I knew, could sing, but where were they? Two weeks of feverish activity aided by two of my most reliable ex-farm employees Gumure, a natural clown, and Babu who had been my cook and constant companion. Miraculously, as anyone who has ever looked for individual Africans in a wide and open countryside will know, I managed to collect a group of 12 men, known singers, from their widely separated home villages, and took them together to the District Commissioner’s office in Fort Victoria for the necessary travel documents. A hitch very nearly wrecked the exercise, as all of them were pre-literate and the travel passports had to show their thumb prints, a procedure associated

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<sup>27</sup> Brief references to the 1929 Columbia recordings also occur in Volume 1 of the *Sound of Africa Catalogue* (1973, 3 and 8).

<sup>28</sup> There were no recording companies based in southern Africa at the time (Tracey c.1976, 20).

in their apprehensive minds only with the identification of suspected criminals.<sup>29</sup> Gumure, equal to the occasion, started to sing a song to which he improvised humorous phrases and thus allayed their fears. The day was saved. With documents triumphantly in hand, I took my dozen down the slope away from the town and chose a site out of ear-shot to camp for the night, having first bought them a large supply of meat and mealie meal. This completed we had a rehearsal around the fire after supper. I had found no instrumentalists to come with us but by this time I had compiled a potential programme of about 40 known songs, detailed against the name of each song leader. (20–21)

The tone of Tracey's reconstruction, written in the 1970s, naturalises racial inequality, suggesting a personal habitus quite in tune with prevailing apartheid thought. His first-person narrative, for instance, asserts a sense of ownership over both musicians and songs. The account also maintains a clear difference and distance between Tracey as director and the black musicians over whom he exercises control. Most of the musicians are not named and they are generally referred to as an undifferentiated unit. Two of the group are singled out: Babu and Gumure, who assist with organisation and play a kind of middle-management role. Nevertheless, even though the text signals a special relationship between them and Tracey, it clearly marks their status as dependants, trusted servants to the master and 'boss-boys' to the rest.

One story about the Johannesburg trip, an anecdote concerning lions, has become part of ILAM's folklore.<sup>30</sup> No arrangements had been made for the singers' accommodation prior to arrival in Johannesburg. Tracey recounts that:

Luckily the University had allocated us an open corrugated iron shed, a shelter used by day for the principal's car. We found firewood to cook their food and my cheerful gang happily settled down in their blankets for the night. In the morning Babu asked me if they could have a door to the shed "as there are lions in this place". The practical countryman had recognised the roar of lions. They were safely housed in the Johannesburg zoo a mile or so away, but Babu knew them only in the wild. (22)

Considering that it was winter – Tracey mentions the month of July (20) – there is an obvious alternative explanation behind the request for a structure less open to the elements. The men had little in the way of clothing: Tracey refers to them as "ragged" (22) and a photograph shows them barefoot and bare-limbed, wearing torn, thin shorts and shirts. Although they had slept outdoors during their journey, it seems likely that they might have expected slightly

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<sup>29</sup> Tracey's handwritten edit to the typescript has inserted "apprehensive" in place of "simple".

<sup>30</sup> McConnachie, for example, mentions this anecdote, citing an interview with Andrew Tracey as source (2008, 52). Andrew may also be heard telling the story on the radio documentary, "Discover and Record" (Wills Glasspiegel 2010). The manner of Andrew's retelling suggests that he had heard it orally from his father.

more on arrival in the city and were less than “cheerful” to be exposed to the cold. (Tracey does not say where he himself slept but one can assume he had walls and a door.) While I find the fear-of-lions narrative unconvincing, its retention and re-telling presumes a condescending humour: ‘They recognise the roar of lions but know nothing of the zoo.’

Without access to Babu’s version of events we can only conject as to *his* meaning. Perhaps he calculated that a tale of lions, which would provide amusement and allow Tracey to demonstrate his superior knowledge of the city, might have greater impact than a reference to the cold. If so, he correctly judged the story’s attraction for whiteness. What is less clear is whether it succeeded in providing better accommodation: Tracey does not say. Assuming calculation on the part of Babu, his strategy may have backfired. Whiteness does not countenance the possibility of irony on the part of racial ‘others’ presumed to be intellectually inferior. It is quite possible that Tracey took the comfortable route of assuming all was well once he had carefully explained about zoos and their cages.

We do not have a contemporary written account of the 1929 recordings. There is, however, a visual record in the form of a photograph, reproduced on the next page. The following description fits the image closely, suggesting that Tracey may have referred to the picture while writing this section of his autobiography:

The studio was a large room that had, until recently, been part of a disused theatre, now draped with curtains, carpets and any material calculated to deaden natural reverberation. It was a scruffy sight when I sat my ragged singers, still in their scraps of country clothing, in a circle on the floor, and coached them with hand signals when to start and when to stop their songs. (c.1976, 22)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In his contribution to *For Future Generations* (79) and in his thesis (170), Lobley erroneously attributes this photograph and description to Tracey’s second such recording trip, to Cape Town in March 1933.



In the picture above, we see a group of ten black men sitting in a semi-circle on the carpeted floor, around a microphone.<sup>32</sup> We also see a white man to the left of the group, in profile, raised above the rest but leaning down towards them. The third-person image, unlike the first-person text, provides us with a vision of Tracey's own whiteness as seen object rather than seeing, acting subject.

Tracey's form is a focal point. His raised stance makes him appear much larger than the other men. It is, however, light more than size that draws the eye first to Tracey and thereafter, as if following his hand and gaze, to the semi-circle of men on the floor. Dyer analyses the "racial character" of photography which "assumes, privileges and constructs" whiteness, takes pale skin as the norm and visually favours the lighter-skinned in any mixed-race group (1997, 83). This factor, inherent to the technology as it has been developed and used by Westerners, is present here. Tracey's facial features in profile are more defined, although most of the black faces are also visible. In this photograph, it is the position of Tracey's face and right hand in front of the grand piano that does most to create the focal effect. With its whiteness set against the darkest part of the image, the outstretched hand – which holds a conventional microphone and gestures towards the group with index and middle fingers – presents the greatest contrast.<sup>33</sup> The microphone held by Tracey appears as the technological equivalent of an orchestral conductor's baton, a symbol of authority.

Black and white photography emphasises the distinction between dark and light skin as a key marker in racial differencing. Colonial whiteness, however, as if fearing the inherent

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<sup>32</sup> After careful counting, I think it is ten. One of the group, penultimate on the right-hand side, is almost entirely obscured, except for a leg and an arm.

<sup>33</sup> Unlike the larger, old-fashioned microphone on the floor, the hand-held microphone is the familiar shape still in use.

arbitrariness and instability of mere skin-tone, cannot allow this visual difference to stand alone but must always clothe it in other signs of relative privilege and power. The photograph of the 1929 recording session provides an excellent record of contrasting material conditions of whites and blacks under racist rule. Tracey wears a neat suit and shiny dark shoes. The other men in the picture indeed look ragged, wearing old, labourers' clothing, all of them barefoot. The contrast is not merely in the type of clothes worn, but also in the appearance of relative cleanliness, particularly with regard to legs and feet. Here light plays a trick, reversing conventional colour coding to heighten the visual difference between the representatives of whiteness and blackness. The white man's left shoe (most of his right is outside the frame) appears black (although being polished it looks white in places, reflecting light). The black men's feet and legs are dusty and their feet and parts of their legs therefore appear white. When shoes are not routinely worn, it is common practice to wash the feet upon arrival somewhere. The recording session was an important occasion, but presumably the performers had no opportunity to wash their feet before getting down to business.

The photograph does not only provide a study of contrasts, but also plays upon similarities between the imposing figure of the singular white man and the group of black men he directs. Most of the group have their right arms raised, with fingers pointing in a similar gesture to Tracey's. This could be read as a sign of mimicry that reinforces the power hierarchy. Yet these mirrored gestures also express something more. To read them only in terms of inequality would be a disservice to the memory of *all* the people in the photograph.

Being silent, the photograph lacks an ingredient vital to its narrative, namely sound. A musical event is the absent subject of the picture and its inaccessible supplement. Music also provides the key to that 'something more' than mimicry mentioned in the previous paragraph: the representation of shared interest and purpose alongside hierarchical distance. Of course, the moment documented by the photograph is not merely musical but also technological. (Within it, traditional music and modernity are inseparable.) While the musicians' hands follow Tracey's signal, their gazes are focused on the microphone on the floor, rather than on him. The singers' facial expressions show intense concentration and absorption. They are clearly at work and there is a sense of seriousness, yet also of pleasure. Of the six faces that can be seen most clearly, two are smiling and others seem to hold the potential of a smile. They are clearly united in a common task but they are not an undifferentiated mass – signs of individuality may be read in their faces and in subtle differences between their similar stances.

Tracey also appears to be concentrating intensely. While his form, as previously noted, provides a focal point to which the eye is drawn, the composition of the photograph nonetheless provides some visual tension and ambiguity. Tracey's figure is not the only focal point in the picture. Following convention, the eye is also drawn to the centre of the image, and the man there. Although his face can be seen in some detail, it, along with his stance, is not privileged relative to the men alongside him, and the viewer's eye moves left and right, to each individual. The edge of the group to the viewer's right also attracts the eye, as the dark heads of three of the men are contrasted against light-coloured curtains above and clothing below.

I would argue, then, that the form of the picture's composition – by chance or design – in some ways contests the primacy of whiteness. The white man is visually privileged in terms of height, size, light and the relative formality of his clothing. In terms of his spatial placement in the photograph, however, Tracey is decentred. There is a measure of ambiguity in his stance. Kneeling with one leg forward, his right knee and left foot on the ground, he appears both formal and relaxed. His genuflection points towards the microphone, yet he also faces the other men, not standing and not on their level, but approaching half-way. These ambiguities of placement do not undermine the white man's mastery – the signs of hierarchy are too strong for that. Indeed, the partial decentring of the white subject (in a photographic composition of blackness, presumably by, and primarily intended for, whiteness) may be read as self-congratulatory. At the same time, the appearance of the black men in the image seems to open certain spaces for resistance and the possibility of alternate readings of race and modernity.

In relation to the Tracey archive, blackness (or Africanness) appears in a double sense. Africans feature both as subjects, as artists with varying degrees of autonomy, and as objects of representation by whiteness, their works presented as 'discoveries' of Africanist knowledge. These dual strands – blackness as self; blackness as other(ed) – co-exist, combine and compete in a troubled space structured by whiteness. The relationship between Tracey and Africans (as both subjects and objects) is overdetermined by racial thought and racism. Understanding this relationship therefore requires that attention be given to the complex of ideas, forces and actions subsumed under the label 'race'.

### **Race and Racisms**

In speaking of blackness and whiteness, we should keep in mind both the ultimate emptiness of these constructs and the ideological and material force they have acquired through



imperialist history. The struggle to expose and defeat racism requires a paradoxical strategy that involves simultaneously employing and undermining the idea of race. (Which ideas of race is a question to which we will return.)

Writings by Tracey suggest reticence regarding overt reference to racial categories, even when they are clearly being employed. He generally prefers the geographical allusions of the terms ‘African’ and ‘European’ to the visual markers of the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’. Yet marks and divisions of race thoroughly permeate his archive. Textual traces suggest his employment of modes of operation – actions and expressions – largely and generally in accord with the racially segregated and oppressive hierarchies prevailing in settler-colonial and apartheid southern Africa. To stop here would be too simple, however. Texts associated with Tracey also present significant departures from norms and stereotypes commonly associated with colonial whiteness and its depictions of blackness.

The bulk of material collected by Tracey consists of numerous individual works, or fragments, authored by black people who were experiencing racial exploitation. These works tell their own stories, despite being packaged and framed. Political expressions of protest may be clearly discerned among song lyrics, for example, even when these are accessed only through the brief, selective and (no doubt) frequently inaccurate English translations, via interpreters, noted on field cards at the time of recording.<sup>34</sup> The field cards often include snippets of Tracey’s commentary, so that one may read an extracted version of the original (imperfect as its translation may be) alongside his glossing of it. A proper examination of some of these song texts should include fresh translations from the recordings and requires a major study of its own. For now, I will provide just a few examples from Volume 2 of the *Catalogue*.

“Chemirocha 1” by Bekyibei Arap Mosonick and Cherwo Arap Korogorem (recorded in Kenya in 1950) “asks why the whitemen should have taken over the country”. Immediately after quoting this question, Tracey attempts to undermine it by adding the comment “incidentally they themselves took [the country] from others in the past” (371). Stephen R. Gumbo’s “Kare-Kare Maporisa” (“a policeman’s journey”; recorded in Zimbabwe in 1958) is glossed as a “humorous story” of “two policemen who go on a tour”, yet its description suggests political satire: the “English policeman goes ahead on his horse leaving his Karanga policeman far behind plodding along on his bicycle and trying to catch up” (163). Another item by Gumbo in 1958, with J.G. Zimivara, seemingly also comments on colonial power,

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<sup>34</sup> Volume 2 of the *SoA* catalogue is comprised of facsimile copies of the typed versions of original field cards.

specifically in terms of language. Tracey's explanation – "[t]he man who speaks only Karanga is not expected to understand English and when the teacher speaks to him in English, he only hears equivalent Shona sounds" – seems incomplete, however: the song's translated title, "Faulty translation", suggests there is more to the story (162). During the same tour in which the latter songs or stories were recorded, Tracey also recorded an "historical song" titled "Ngwindingwindi ishumba inoruma" or "England is the lion that bites" by Chief Takawarasha and a group of Karanga men (167).

Many of the songs in ILAM's archive comment on experiences of migrant labour. One particularly poignant example, recorded at Wankie Colliery in Zimbabwe in 1958, is by America Kanada from Tukuyu district in Tanzania, of whom Tracey writes:

The singer was a strange shy little man who did not even stay to hear his own songs played to the end. His second song gained rounds of applause. The burden of it was: "I want to go home. I'm wasting my time here. I don't want to stay. I'd rather desert. Please, boss, give me my money, I want to go home." (127)

A song from Mozambique in 1958, by Elias Silaule and "7 Shangaan (Ronga) men" is titled "Nahatangena" ("When I entered"). Tracey describes it as "a description of work on the Mine and on the farms" and quotes off-handedly: "My number was taken for doing something wrong. The cocopan was too heavy to push, etc." (145).

In addition to these examples from the *Sound of Africa* series, *Chopi Musicians* provides quotations of serious protest lyrics which Tracey chooses to interpret in a casual or humorous light. For example, he translates part of the performance text of the seventh movement of Katini's *Ngodo* as follows: "Here is a mystery, the Portuguese beat us on the hands, Both us and our wives" (1948, 15).<sup>35</sup> In *Power and the Praise Poem*, Vail and White point out that "*mystery* is a weak word for what ought to be translated as 'something arbitrary and inexplicable'" and comment on Tracey's "refusal to take the words of these songs seriously" (1991, 46). Nonetheless, their criticism feels rather mild when one reads Tracey's comments in detail:

Here again is a very light-hearted lyric. [...] It is the local custom for the Portuguese to beat the palms of the hands as a corporal punishment instead of 'the part specially fattened by nature for the sacrifice'. This is naturally somewhat disconcerting to the offenders. But from conversations I have had on the subject there seems to be some

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<sup>35</sup> A Chopi *Ngodo* is a major work for Timbila (xylophone) orchestra, dancers and singers, which consists of as many as ten or more movements.

resentment that the punishment should be meted out to their womenfolk as well as the men. There are other references in their songs to their dismay that even chiefs are given this punishment, and that their own men, native sepoys at the administrative office, should have to carry out the sentence, which seems to be considered something of an indignity. On the other hand, the giving of lashes can be far more brutal. It is so much a matter of opinion. (1948, 15)

Clearly, Tracey has no problem with the idea of Africans receiving “corporal punishment” from the people who had dispossessed them. He also makes light of the very serious words of the fourth movement of Gomukomu’s *Ngodo*, the translation of which reads as follows:

Come together and hear,  
Come together with your wives and listen to Ndano.  
Don’t you want the new *Timbila* music I make from my heart?  
Ha! We quarrel again! The same old trouble.  
The older girls must pay taxes.  
Natanele speak for me to the white man to let me be.  
You elders must discuss affairs.  
The one whom the white men appointed was the son of a commoner.  
The Chopi no longer have right to their own country, let me tell you.  
The sorrow of my Kawane, the mystery  
Why your children all die, yet you are still young.  
Now you cease to bear and take the inheritance of your dead children.  
Come together and hear,  
Come together with your wives and listen to Ndano. (1948, 43–44)<sup>36</sup>

In as much as the examples above demonstrate insensitive and offensive racial attitudes on the part of Tracey, they also show that his *archive* exceeds and escapes the whiteness he seeks to impose. Furthermore, his own texts reveal mixed attitudes, rather than a single coherent position concerning blackness and race. Even a book such as *Zulu Paradox*, perhaps the most racist of his publications, contains much that counters the offensive stereotypes within its pages. Indeed, selective quotation from it could yield two sets of opposing results, creating the impression that the respective selections referred to separate works entirely. Read as a whole, however, the confident, conversational tone employed in *Zulu Paradox* – lightly wearing its mantle of ‘expertise’ – holds together its contradictory breaches of logic without comment or apology. The horror of its stigmatising ‘observations’ is intermixed with moments of sympathy. In seeking to inform and entertain his fellow whites about a section of ‘their’ black underclass, within a framework that affirms white mastery,

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<sup>36</sup> I have left out the repetitions: each line or pair of lines is repeated once.

Tracey simultaneously employs strategies of essentialism and universalism, both asserts and undermines difference and hierarchy.

I have been assuming a certain coherence for the concepts ‘whiteness’, ‘blackness’, ‘race’ and ‘racism’. Such generalisation may be necessary at times for purposes of analysis, particularly since Tracey’s socio-political context provides a stark example of the “Manichaeic world” of which Fanon writes (1963, 43). However, while discourses associated with race may form part of our cultural ‘common sense’, examination of the ideas informing racial thought reveals their complexity and multiplicity as much as it does their stubborn pervasiveness. I will now consider a selective theoretical overview on race with the aim of providing productive definitions.

Scholarly opinion differs with regard to the emergence of race as a conceptual category, with some commentators marking it as a relatively recent phenomenon and others tracing its origins back to ancient times (Martin Bulmer and John Solomos 1999, 7). Nonetheless, there is broad agreement among historians that discourses on race emerged as widespread and prominent during the eighteenth century and intensified during the nineteenth. Bulmer and Solomos provide the following summary:

[I]t seems clear that the usage of the category of race to classify various types of human being is relatively recent, and indeed that the widespread usage of the language of race is a phenomenon of the post-Enlightenment period. [...] In short, the concept as we understand it today came into being relatively late in the development of modern capitalist societies. [...] the development of racial doctrines and ideologies begins to take shape in the late eighteenth century, and reached its high point during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (8)

Essentially, then, the development and use of racial categorisation was a phenomenon initiated and entrenched by Europeans during the period in which they extended economic, military and political power over most of the globe. The widespread use of race as a system of classifying human beings promoted European interests and was closely linked to violent acts and processes of imperialism, including slavery, colonial conquest and economic exploitation.

What exactly is meant by ‘race’, though? What does the concept contain? For some, a belief in biologically based, inherited characteristics pertaining to racial groups is essential to the idea of different races. Thus, Kwame Anthony Appiah defines “*racialism*” as

the view [...] that there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race. These traits and tendencies characteristic of a race constitute, on the racialist view, a sort of racial essence; it is part of the content of racialism that the essential heritable characteristics of the “Races of Man” account for more than the visible morphological characteristics – skin color, hair type, facial features – on the basis of which we make our informal classifications. (1992, 13)

Racialism is “false” but not necessarily “dangerous”, since it might simply be a belief in racial difference, without reference to hierarchy or exploitation. According to Appiah, “doctrines” of racism extend racialist assumptions to “make moral distinctions between members of different races”. Whereas “extrinsic” racists “believe that the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities” and that “members of different races differ in respects that *warrant* the differential treatment” (13), “intrinsic” racists “differentiate morally between members of different races, because they believe that each race has a different moral status, quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial essence” (14).

An underlying biologically based definition of race also explains Thomas McCarthy’s use of the term “neoracism” to explain contemporary discriminatory beliefs and practices which are attributed to assumed differences in culture and historical development rather than biology (2009, 4–13). According to him, just as “neoimperialism is a way of maintaining key aspects of colonial domination and exploitation after the disappearance of colonies in the legal-political sense, neoracism is a way of doing the same for racial domination and exploitation after the displacement of ‘race’ in the scientific-biological sense” (4–5). However, McCarthy also notes that “scientific-biological” conceptions of race were themselves multiple and changed over time, culminating in the “genetic conception of race that came to prominence in the twentieth century” and which was discredited “within a few decades” by “further developments in genetics itself”. Furthermore, “‘race’ was never [...] *purely* biological” but a “social construction out of such publicly available markers as somatic features, ancestry, geographical origins, cultural patterns, social relations, and the like” (5–6).

David Theo Goldberg’s broader conception of race makes the term “neoracism” superfluous. For him, race may, but need not, include biological elements. He emphasises its looseness and fluidity as a “very general [concept]” which “can stretch across any number of discursive orders, acquiring new interpretations as [it assumes] the values inherent within each” (1993, 3). Emerging “with the institution of modernity” and transforming “in relation

to the principal formative developments in modernity's self-understanding and expression", racial discourse is "*not simply* determined [...] by social conditions". Rather, "[c]onceptual and material logics internal to the emerging (trans)formation(s) of racialized discourse define self-determinants, directing its discursive expressions and implications *in intersection* with the broader sweep of sociohistorical conditions and other sociodiscursive formations" (1). Once established, conceptual and discursive constructs are not fixed and inert; they shift, develop and exercise influence as well as being influenced, in relation to prevailing conditions and other discourses.

Rather than limit the concept of race to the forms of racial thought which were increasingly codified from the eighteenth century onwards, Goldberg's analysis locates race as emerging early in the modern period – indeed, from modernity's beginnings. Ideas of race emerge *out of*, but also *alongside* discourses of modernity: "the concept assumes specificity as modernity defines itself, refining modernity's landscape of social relations as its own conceptual contours are mapped out" and "transforms theoretically and materially as modernity is renewed, refined, and redefined" (3).

By "*modernity*", Goldberg means "that general period from the sixteenth century in the historical formation of what [...] has come to be called 'the West'". He describes the conditions and concerns of modernity as follows:

The modern project [...] emerges as and in terms of a broad sweep of sociointellectual conditions. These include the commodification and capital accumulation of market-based society, the legal formation of private property and systems of contract, the moral and political conception of rational self-interested subjects, and the increasing replacement of God and religious doctrine by Reason and Nature as the final arbiters of justificatory appeal in epistemology, metaphysics, and science, as well as in morality, legality, and politics. As Bauman stresses, at the heart of modernity lies the concern with order. This concern is expressed through the domination of Nature by Reason; through the transparency of Nature to Reason in the Laws of Nature; through the classification of Nature in rational systems of thought' and through the mastery of Nature, physical and human, by way of 'design, manipulation, management, engineering'. Modernity manifests itself in the fixing of the social in terms of bureaucracy, of the political in terms of the law, and of the economic in terms of the laws of the market, the hidden hand of Reason. Opacity and obscurity are supposed to give way to the light of rational transparency and precision, the chaotic limits of indeterminacy and ambiguity to the perspicuity of definition, irrationality to the intelligibility of logical regularity, and the contingency of inclination to the absolute certainty of rational (self-)determination. Thus, the spirit of modernity is to be found most centrally in its commitment to continuous progress: to material, moral, physical, and political improvement and to the promotion and development of civilization, the general standards for which the West took to be its own values universalized. (1993, 3–4)

Modernity's commitment to order, rationality and progress is accompanied and facilitated by a particular conception of human subjectivity, that is, "a notion not of social subjects but of a Subject that is abstract and atomistic, general and universal, divorced from the contingencies of historicity" and "the particularities of social and political relations and identities" (4). Goldberg argues that the emerging concept of race provides a kind of mediation, or reconciliation, between the idea of a general subject commanded by reason and the identities of numerous individual subjects:

Enter race. It pretends to universality in undertaking to draw otherwise disparate social subjects together into a cohesive unit in terms of which common interests are either found or fabricated. Nevertheless, race undertakes at once to furnish specific identity to otherwise abstract and alienated subjectivities. Sufficiently broad, indeed, almost conceptually empty, race offers itself as a category capable of providing a semblance of social cohesion, of historical particularity, of *given* meanings and motivations to agents otherwise mechanically conceived as conduits for market forces and moral laws. Like the conception of *nation* that emerges more or less coterminously, race proceeds at its inception by arming social subjects with a cohesive identity. It is an identity that proves capable of being stretched across time and space, that itself assumes transforming specificity and legitimacy by taking on as its own the connotations of prevailing scientific and social discourses. In colonizing these prevailing connotations, race in turn has been able to set scientific and political agendas, to contain the content and applicability of Reason, to define who may be excluded and to confine the terms of social inclusion and cohesion. (4)

The above passage suggests that racial thought begins with self-identification on the part of the drivers of European modernity in their push for progress and power. Inventors of the race concept set up a vertical system of human divisions which, from the first, consists of a scale of value-laden difference, rather than a horizontal system of equivalent differences. There is an inherent arrogance to the project of racialising humanity on a global scale: those who categorise others as racially inferior have also, already, racialised themselves as superior. At the same time, inclusion is accompanied by exclusion: the superior sameness attributed to those incorporated as insiders is constructed through the imposition of inferior difference on those racialised as outsiders.

To explain the durability of racial differentiation and racism while recognising their diverse specificities over time and space, Goldberg presents an analysis of various and dynamic racial discourses within an overarching "field of racialized discourse" (1993, 42).<sup>37</sup> The "preconceptual factors" or "primitives" which underlie and enable this field "are not

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<sup>37</sup> Goldberg uses 'discourse' in a very broad sense, which encompasses Bourdieu's 'doxa'.

abstract a priori essences” but “manifestations of power relations vested in and between historically located subjects, and [...] effects of a determinate social history” (48). The “unity” or singularity of racial discourse

turns on the preconceptual elements structuring dispositions and the drawing of implications. These elements include classification, order, value, and hierarchy; differentiation and identity, discrimination and identification; exclusion, domination, subjection and subjugation; as well as entitlement and restriction. (49)

Thus, the underlying elements of this field of discourse identify inequality as basic to the system and contain the seeds of racism’s violence, extensive reach and global dominance in recent history.

Goldberg is at pains to emphasise the centrality of race and racism at the heart of mainstream traditions of Western modernity and explicitly criticises those who view racism as an extremist aberration exercised by irrational individuals (5–8). Arguing that liberalism is the dominant political current within the modern period, he presents a close connection between liberalism and racism:

Liberalism plays a foundational part in [the] process of normalizing and naturalizing racial dynamics and racist exclusions. As modernity’s definitive doctrine of self and society, of morality and politics, liberalism serves to legitimate ideologically and to rationalize politico-economically prevailing sets of racialized conditions and racist exclusions. It is thus key in establishing racialized reasoning and its racist implications as central to modernity’s common moral and socio-political sense. (1)

Twentieth century proponents of liberalism argue for the moral irrelevance of race as a distinguishing category – in line with their commitment to the ideals of individualism, rational universalism, progress and equality (1993, 5–6). Refuting this self-distancing from racism on the part of liberals, Goldberg notes “the historical record of moral appeals to race by many of the greatest intellectual and political figures in the liberal tradition”, such as Kant, Hume, John Stuart Mill and Benjamin Disraeli (6). *Racist Culture* also analyses statements on race by other major figures such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Locke, which demonstrate their deep implication in, and contribution to, racial and racist ideas. Goldberg argues that much contemporary liberal social science in the West – which tends to reduce racism “to personal prejudices of individuals” and “irrational appeals to irrelevant categories” to be overcome by reason and education – continues to take for granted the existence of *rac*es, as “given” or “natural social” identities. Thus, structural dimensions of racism are underplayed



by marking racist acts or expressions as individualised pathology, while persisting race-linked inequalities are normalised through the framework of “managing ‘race relations’” (7).

Definitions of racism, influenced by liberalism, tend to emphasize individual beliefs in racial inferiority in the first instance, with a secondary emphasis on the consequences thereof. Bulmer and Solomos’ “working definition of racism” illustrates as much: “racism is an ideology of racial domination based on (i) beliefs that a designated racial group is either biologically or culturally inferior and (ii) the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the racial group’s treatment in society, as well as to explain its social position and accomplishment” (1999, 4). By contrast, Goldberg uses the adjective “racist” to “invoke those exclusions prompted or promoted by racial reference or racialized significance, whether such exclusions are actual or intended, effects or affects of racial and racialized expression” (1993, 2). This definition of racism as exclusion focuses attention on those who suffer the material and psychological effects of racist systems rather than on the attitudes and intentions of the individual agents of such systems. It is a useful definition for my purposes, for two reasons. Firstly, it places the major emphasis where I believe it should be, on the repercussions for those who experience racism. Secondly, contextualised within Goldberg’s broader discussion, it allows for the possibility that an individual’s attitudes may internally mirror broader socio-discursive complexity and exhibit multiplicity, ambiguity and contradiction rather than singular coherence. The individual’s position retains relevance, but the establishment of certainty concerning individual beliefs and motivations is not a necessary criterion for the diagnosis of racism or the use of the adjective ‘racist’.

Goldberg does not preclude a role for individual agency; his historical analysis provides numerous examples of individuals who have shaped racial discourses. Furthermore, his work explicitly aims to disseminate an understanding of the complex workings of race in order to encourage the development of effective strategies against racism (12–13). His definition of racism in effect broadens the onus of responsibility, as racist exclusions are not limited to the effects of conscious, intentional actions or utterances. Those privileged by and immersed in racist culture will tend to participate in racism – and, therefore, *to be racist* – whether or not they have actively chosen to do so. To counter the systemic tide and oppose racism requires, by contrast, at the very least, active awareness and effort.

### **Naturalism and Historicism**

*Racist Culture* (1993) emphasises the historical and geographical variety of racial ideas and racist exclusions. In *The Racial State* (2002), Goldberg focuses on what he sees as the two

major types of racism within modern Western states in both their metropolitan and colonial contexts, namely *naturalism* and *historicism*. These streams are broad and internally diverse, and both racist forms entrench and maintain the power of whiteness with contrasting rationales and methods.<sup>38</sup> The line between them is not fixed and rigid, however: “while conceptually distinct and seemingly mutually exclusive”, they “coexist historically”, although there has been a strong shift towards historicism since the nineteenth century. Whereas naturalism relies on biologically based essentialism and claims the “inherent racial inferiority” of its racialised others, historicism “concerns itself with contrasting claims of historical immaturity” attributed to those considered racially inferior (2002, 74).

Racial naturalism, which characterises the most violent and explicit examples of racism, is associated with states that rely strongly on coercion in ideology and practice (75). Under naturalism,

racial rule was considered imperative, if not the product of a Divine hand then the logic of Nature. The racially dominant were seen to set laws, impose order, and maintain control because destined by their blood or genes to do so. Dilution of their blood or genes was considered at once transgression of nature, with dire consequences. It follows that colonial rule, (imperial or self-determining) expansion, governmental imposition, and state control might be motivated as manifest destiny or natural law and effected principally at the crack of the whip, the point of the sword, or the barrel of the gun. (75)

At its most extreme, naturalism is associated with genocide, as in Nazi Germany. It provided ideological support for slavery. Historical examples of its “state expression” include “early Spanish expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries”, the Belgian Congo, the South of the United States, and apartheid South Africa (77–78). Naturalist racism commonly imposes segregation, restricts opportunities and access to services by legislation, and enforces blatant exploitation of labour. Its “intellectual trajectory” runs “from pre-Adamism through polygenism to eugenicism and the likes of *The Bell Curve*” (77).

“By contrast”, Goldberg argues, “those states growing out of financial centers and founded predominantly on capital formation and circulation”, such as Britain or France,

tended in the history of their development to have inscribed in their racial administration, implicitly or explicitly, a historicist or progressivist set of presumptions. Racial rule here was seen as the outcome of history, domination ordained by the hidden hand of historical development, the “fact” of historically produced superiority. Likewise, their colonial legacy would tend to be predicated on

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<sup>38</sup> *The Racial State* addresses whiteness explicitly, whereas Goldberg’s earlier work, *Racist Culture*, does not.

developmentalist assumptions, committed at least on the face through a long slow process of “progressive development and maturation” to colonial self-rule. (75)

Historicist racial policy ostensibly favours education and assimilation rather than segregation. As with naturalism, racialised ‘others’ are labelled inferior, but their assigned inferiority is now presented as resting in cultural immaturity and lack of advancement, rather than being fixed and inherent. They are deemed to be amenable to progress and the eventual attainment of the heights of (white or Western) civilisation. Goldberg, who traces historicism’s intellectual roots “in the liberalizing hands of John Locke and John Stuart Mill and the developmentalism of Comte and Marx”, argues that historicist thought,

incipient in the claims of Las Casas about the convertibility of indigenous Indians in the sixteenth century, fueled the commitments of British and French abolitionists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But it also underlay French assumptions about assimilation or association in governing its colonies in Southeast Asia and Africa [...], the explicit “developmentalism” of British colonial policy from the 1940s on, as well as the ethno-immigrant model of race relations in the US [...]. (79)

Under both variants of racial rule and ideology, a temporal displacement is imposed upon those racialised by whiteness as not white. At its most extreme, naturalism classifies members of ‘black’ and other races as “phenomena, objects, lacking the capacity for rational autonomy that is the authorizing mark of noumenal beings”: they are silenced and placed outside of human history (92). Whereas,

[t]he shift from naturalism to historicism or progressivism [...] represents the elevation of those who had been considered objects of nature to subjects of history, of being placed not before but in time even if as inhabiting a time not yet modern. Here, in contrast to racial naturalism where those regarded as racially inferior are restricted to spaces before or frozen in time, the racially differentiated are defined in terms of inhabiting an earlier premodern time. In either case those not white are placed outside: outside time or outside the space(s) of modern time. Thus for modernity the space of race is that of *the outside* – the external, the distant. (93)

Historicism, however, holds out a promise of incorporation into modernity and civilisation – as selective, delayed and ambiguous as that promise may be. In the terms of Goldberg’s analysis, the racial historicist promise of ‘progress’ is assumed – one could say over-defined – to involve a process of whitening, of wholesale adoption of Western (and therefore rejection of any other) culture.

Goldberg's labelling of particular colonial powers as historicist or naturalist – such as French and British versus German – may seem to undermine his acknowledgement that the two variants have co-existed and that there has been movement back and forth between them (74–96). If naturalism and historicism are taken as hard and fast categories, his classification of certain powers as historicist, and therefore relatively less brutal and coercive in their methods, may easily be challenged on historical grounds. One can point, for example, to the conditions of those subjected to forced and indentured labour in Anglophone and Francophone colonial Africa and Asia, to refute any suggestion that these systems were in any way progressive or benign. Examples detailing techniques and casualties in warfare, policing and incarceration, and the squalor of (segregated) living spaces may be cited for the same purpose.

Policies of assimilation, furthermore, were often highly selective, including only a small elite of the colonised population. Goldberg could draw a stronger distinction between advocacy of wholesale biological and cultural 'amalgamation', as proposed by Herman Merivale (Goldberg 2002, 79–82), and policies of limited 'assimilation' located firmly in the cultural sphere, which continued to maintain segregation and discourage physical interactions between blacks and whites. It is also interesting to note that programmes of physical assimilation, such as state-managed 'adoption' of indigenous children by white settlers in the USA and Australia, focused mainly on those indigenes whose physical appearance would allow them to 'pass' for white, once signs of alien culture had been removed. Goldberg's example of the way in which, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "American Indians were regarded in the US as assimilable", unlike "people of African descent", who were segregated, illustrates this point. He explains such distinctions by arguing that historicist and naturalist policies were applied to these peoples respectively, because "the two groups were seen to occupy different rankings on prevailing racial hierarchies" (2002, 76). Here, as elsewhere, Goldberg seems to underplay the role of visible markers of race, particularly skin colour, in the determination of these "hierarchies" by whiteness, even as the ideological shift towards historicism was underway.

My above criticisms mainly concern matters of emphasis, elaboration and qualification. As much as he contrasts the two types, Goldberg also acknowledges that they are intertwined and intermerged. Moreover, he stresses the ambiguities and hypocrisies within historicist racist discourse, which may tend towards (or, rather, present itself as tending towards) paternalism rather than outright cruelty, but nonetheless remains a means "for continued invocation of racial power" (79). Indeed, the main thrust of Goldberg's

argument on historicism and naturalism is to unmask racial historicism as a form of racism which is often insidious and disguised and therefore more difficult to attack than balder naturalism.

Historicist forms of discourse claim the mantle of liberal universalism and emphasise custom and culture in delineating racial difference. Hence, historicism, unlike naturalism, does not advertise itself as racist and is not normally recognised as such by liberalism. Yet, Goldberg argues, racial historicism

is the mediation between naturalism as the extreme, classical expression of racist embrace and universalism in epistemology, morality, and legality that is considered a central mark and commitment of modernity [...]. Historicism makes it possible for proponents of modernity to hold onto the privileges of racial configuration of state and civil society without abandoning the expressed commitment to universalism. (156)

In other words, historicism attempts to overcome the contradictions raised by liberal modernity's historical commitments both to race and to professed ideals of universal freedom and equality.

Without using the term 'historicism', McCarthy argues similarly with regard to "developmental theory". Although he does not go so far as to view "imperialism as constitutive of liberalism as such", he asserts that

it is undeniable that the mainstream of liberal thought, running from Locke through Mill to contemporary neoliberalism, has continually flowed into and out of European-American imperialism, and that ideas of sociocultural development have been integral to that connection. Developmental thinking has proved to be rather adaptable and thus quite serviceable in rationalizing the various truncations of universal rights and obligations that colonial domination and exploitation required. Moreover, the putatively scientific status of theories of development has lent a naturalistic aura to socially constructed hierarchies, thus deflecting moral assessment and political critique. In this and other ways, the refraction of liberal ideals in the medium of developmental theory has made it rhetorically possible to combine universalism in principle with Eurocentrism in practice. (2009, 169)

Goldberg's historicism and McCarthy's developmentalism sketch an environment for the colonial missionary in secular guise. As with the whiteness/wildness dichotomy, however, Tracey's example does not quite fit the model of Eurocentric universalism assumed by these theorists. I will now turn to examine the positions on race which emerge in *Zulu Paradox*.

## Tracey's Racial Paradox

In his treatment of the "Historical Background" of the Zulus, Tracey writes the following:

While the thunder of the fire-spitting poles was deciding the fate of the European incubus, Napoleon, on the plains of Waterloo, the short stabbing spears of the Zulus were about to start just such another slaughter with the rise of the Black Napoleon, six thousand miles away to the south. In the next ten years, thousands of African peasants were to be ripped open, burnt alive in their huts, chivvied and driven from their homes, and even eaten by desperate neighbours turned cannibal, as the scourge of the Zulus exploded them into the surrounding hills or engulfed the remnants into the vortex of Shaka's new system.

No one has attempted to explain why this small nation should have consolidated itself into a vicious, bloodthirsty machine in the course of a single decade. We can but assume that the Nguni people as a whole were aggressive by nature [...]. Shaka did not achieve this remarkable success by his leadership alone but by the willing response of an equally depraved and greedy people behind him. It was the kind of glory which the Nazis enjoyed over a hundred years later under an equally perverted leader whose character suited their ambitions. (1948, 21)

This lurid picture fits the myth of the 'mfecane', invented by British settler writers in the nineteenth century and adopted by segregationist and apartheid politicians in the twentieth, which became a mainstay of both serious and popular versions of South African history until it was challenged by Julian Cobbing in the 1980s. According to the white-serving myth – which ignored imperialist pressures of slavery, trade and settler encroachment to the North, West and South, already present at the time of the consolidation of the Zulu kingdom – the Zulus alone had conquered all surrounding peoples, killing massive numbers and turning others into exiled refugees driven far from their earlier homes. The result, this history argued, was the convenient de-population of large areas of the South African interior *before* Europeans became active in those territories. The 'mfecane' narrative was used to support the 1913 Land Act (which consolidated nearly all land ownership in white hands) and later marshalled to justify apartheid policy concerning the 'homelands' and Bantustans (Cobbing 1984 and 1988).

Historiography aside, it is interesting to consider the above extract in terms of the racial assumptions it employs. Zulus engage in "slaughter"; they are "vicious, bloodthirsty [...] aggressive [...] depraved and greedy"; they engage in, or precipitate, cannibalism. With words like these, Tracey embraces a long tradition of white discourse on black African 'savagery'. He includes a naturalist statement: "We can but assume that the Nguni people as a whole were aggressive by nature".

At the same time, quite seamlessly, opposing lines of argument run through the text. The standard against which Zulu violence is presented is not African, but European: first Shaka is likened to Napoleon and then Zulus are compared to Nazis. Nazis are white Europeans and their actions are performed more than a century *after* the blood-letting ascribed to the Zulus. Africans and Europeans are placed within the same comparative historical framework, but this is surely not historicism in the straightforward liberal-modernist sense, since, read in reverse (as a comment on Nazis, or Germans, rather than Zulus) it would seem to suggest European degeneration rather than progress, thereby casting doubt on white superiority. Yet, in general, Tracey's texts convey calm cultural confidence, rather than angst or self-doubt. Perhaps Nazis are placed outside the magic circle of whiteness, or at least outside its morally superior version. As noted in the previous chapter, Tracey seems to recognise and reject some types of whiteness as inferior – violent, wild and uncivilised.

Besides the reference to Shaka as “the Black Napoleon”, there are no explicit racial references in the above quotation. On the face of it, Tracey could be taken as speaking of ethnicity or nationality in universally relative terms: some Africans, or Europeans – like Zulus or Frenchmen or Germans – may at times be ‘bad’, but other Africans, or Europeans – like Shaka's neighbours or the British – may be innocent, the unlucky victims or lucky beneficiaries of historical circumstance. Race is certainly present, however, given the text's historical and geographical context and the positions of its author and his subject within the dominant political field. The presence and simultaneous submersion of race means this is racism of a type which presents its own alibi, which disguises even as it expresses itself.

Published by a white person about black people, in the year the National Party assumed power, the Nazi comparison is a particularly offensive attack. In terms of the definition of racism as exclusion, it excludes the Zulus of Shaka's time from the realm of morality (by portraying them as evil in terms of the most extreme example available in the immediate post-World War II period), and taints their descendants by implication. Given the European invention of race, it is self-evidently ironic to apply an extreme example of European racist practice to black victims of racism in South Africa at the dawn of apartheid.

Alongside the recurring images of Zulu violence throughout *Zulu Paradox*, there are opposing passages which would seem to cast doubt on the image of Zulus as blood-thirsty warriors. After stating that “authorities have estimated up to a million persons” were killed by Shaka's “standing army of not more than 14,000 soldiers”, Tracey remarks that these soldiers

“were kept busy indeed if each man, in his time, had to catch and kill an average of between seventy to a hundred victims” (30). A little later, we read the following:

In spite of popular opinion to the contrary, there is little to suggest that the Zulus, as a nation, were any braver in fighting than many another tribe. Individuals were undoubtedly brave and skilled fighting men. But their genius lay in their discipline and in the tactics they employed. Many of their battles, it is said, were won before they were fought. Their panoply and the singing of their regimental songs would terrify their opponents, who would beat a retreat if they estimated the odds were too great. Modern Zulu songs still show that in recent faction fights among themselves, the smaller or more timid group will often decide it would rather live to fight another day. Besides, old accounts indicate that fighting amongst them was more of a gladiatorial game than a pitched battle and it has been known for the opponents to stop fighting and all go home together to join in the dancing with the young women. (31–32)

How the followers of the mighty “Black Napoleon” would seem to have fallen. Yet, on the same page, we read that “[fighting]” is their favourite “recreation” and that the “Zulu regiments were indeed a force to be respected”, and we are again told of Shaka’s “cruel excesses” and “tyrannical discipline”, which taught men “to fight without mercy” (32). In the next chapter (“Modern Foreground”), we are informed that Zulu policemen are “astonishingly brutal”, and it is suggested that Zulus are attracted both to the police and to crime because of “an inherited streak of sadism from their violent past” which “can be sinister indeed in the lawless slums” (36).

Just as he simultaneously advances and casts doubt upon the warrior image, so too Tracey deploys yet undermines the ‘mfecane’ narrative. His account of Shaka’s rise to power is preceded by an introductory section which frames a broader “conflict” between the “materially successful invader” (the “race of white men from the distant north”) and the “nomadic peasant” (the “slow-moving Kaffirs, as they were then called”). Both groups, Tracey asserts, “advanced armed into the unknown, but the weapons of the wandering tribes, effective enough against their own kind, were no match for the muskets of the seaborne adventurers” (18). He then recounts the legend that travels to Portuguese Delagoa Bay with “a single white man” influenced Dingiswayo (Shaka’s patron). Tracey surmises that Dingiswayo “seems to have confided in his protégé and no doubt, amongst other subjects, one they discussed was the old military preoccupation, tactics and “fire power” as we would call it, and, more particularly, the methods Dingiswayo had seen adopted by white soldiers, both English and Portuguese” (20). Thus the possibility is raised that Zulu successes in warfare were not fully African, but a hybrid result of European influence. Tellingly, the



possibility of white influence is phrased in the neutral (or even positive) terms of “tactics” and “methods”, rather than as sadism or cruelty.

*Zulu Paradox* presents a similarly mixed picture of Zulus in other spheres of life. The chapter “Modern Foreground” begins by highlighting a rapid, externally-driven transition to modernity and by noting that black responses have been varied, containing “all the ingredients from precious metal to dross”. Tracey continues with a positive acknowledgement of success:

It has frequently been said that no nation of the world lags so far behind the others that some of its best members may not be compared to the better, if not the top classes of the leading races. And so it is with Zulus. Their best are already showing what they can achieve in scholarship, in politics and in trade, and many notable names have already been thrown up in these fields. The general run of Zulus who have had some schooling are to be found all over South Africa, teaching in kraal schools, working in shops and offices where they are often given, and take, responsibilities far beyond their station, serving in the police force and overseeing labouring gangs on the farms. (34)

It is interesting to note how this passage blurs the edges of ideas of nation, class and race, without, however, questioning the concept of “leading races” and its implied opposite. The above quotation also demonstrates a tacit acceptance of the racial hierarchy imposed by whiteness: Zulu *reactions* to colonial modernity (here extolled as positive achievement but elsewhere defined as deficient) are subject to question, but not the socio-political order which so severely limits the employment possibilities open to “their station” (34). Tracey goes on to list other common labour options: the “peasant backbone in the reserves of Natal and Zululand”, domestic service, security “watchmen” and policemen (34–36).

Outstanding achievement within the matrix of modernity is respected yet portrayed as exceptional. More modest achievement by those who are semi-educated also receives some acknowledgement. The text then offers a revealing passage (for settler whiteness) in which black domestic workers are fetishised:

Young Zulu men who, two or three generations ago, would have lived and fought in their colourful *impi* or regiment, are now dressed in a peculiar uniform of cotton shirt and trousers trimmed at the knees with red or blue, the shirt shapeless and colourless, the trousers, neither short nor long, flapping around their knees. It is the South African badge of domestic service, and the Zulu men who wear it look faintly ridiculous when short, but fantastic when they are large and bewhiskered. Polishing floors or tending babies is their lot, and many a white family, especially in Natal, has almost adopted a Zulu family which has worked for them, nursed them and cooked

for them for two or three generations. The Zulu woman, also, has taken to domestic service in the towns and her foursquare form is the nearest African approach to the traditional Negro Mammy of the Southern States. There are, of course, no means of telling, but it would be interesting to learn how many white South Africans have had a small Zulu girl or Zulu boy as their first friend and only nurse. It would be, I expect, a surprisingly large proportion of all those brought up either in Natal or the Transvaal. (35)

Here we have affection, certainly, and some respect too, if tinged with humour. The Zulu servant – always willing, ever smiling – is essentialised, fitted perfectly to the “lot” of perpetual subservience. Ostensibly focused on blackness, whiteness asserts itself with benign innocence in the text, while the sub-text proclaims and defends white entitlement, paternalism and ownership, along with a strain of stifling love (and, perhaps, a hint of desire for the “fantastic” image of “large and bewhiskered” black men in shorts).

From trusted domestic workers, *Zulu Paradox* swings back to violence – by way of “the silent overcoated figure of the Zulu guard” (35) – to dwell on police brutality, criminality and faction fighting (36–39). The work then takes another about-turn, to rural life in traditional mould. Here the reader is allowed to rest for some time, learning of simple virtues of culture and courtesy, fast disappearing in Western society. We are told that Zulu hospitality is “enjoyed for its own sake and for the dancing [...] singing” and feasting which accompany it (42). The semi-independence of “a Zulu family at home” in their kraal prompts “the realisation that here is a way of living, here a culture with both past and future. Here also with a minimum of material possessions is a community in which being is more important than having” (46).

After an impassioned depiction of the beauty and complexity of Zulu dance, which asserts its social and spiritual value, Tracey considers the position of whites in relation to such dancing:

The pity of it is that we white people remain ever the spectators, and so will never understand the greater joy of participation. We do not belong. We can only guess the spiritual effect of sharing in the dance. [...]

Dancing is a social ceremony. You take part in a dance and in so doing you ratify your participation in that society’s entity. We Europeans have almost forgotten that fundamental. No wonder, then, that we have also lost our faith in dancing, in the common rhythm which binds us to our fellow dancers, our fathers and mothers, our forebears and our ancient spirits, and to the High God himself. (76)

Europeans and Africans are positioned as sharing common origins. Yet, in this instance, common colonial assumptions concerning progress are reversed. African tradition is seen as retaining strengths which Europeans once also possessed but have now “almost forgotten”.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding its expressions of cultural admiration and admission that modern whiteness has something to learn from those it has othered, *Zulu Paradox* presents Africans as deficient in reason and tending towards idleness:

We Europeans are inclined to judge Africans by their behaviour when within the confines of our own environment. We laugh at their attempts to speak English or Afrikaans, at their clumsy efforts to cope with mechanical problems which take them by surprise, or curse their apparent inability to reason a line of action which leads naturally from cause to effect, and above all, their incorrigible laziness. (39)

Again, naturalism rears its head. It seems to be suggested that Africans are simply not suited to modernity, that they should retain, or be retained in, rural traditional lifeways as much as possible.

The broader trajectory of the text makes it plain that Tracey does not posit a kind of pristine essentialist arcadia as a viable alternative to economic and social engagement with the modern colonial order. He expects that “the twentieth century will, in time, be found to have been the proletarian interim between nomadic peasantry and full industrial emancipation” (99). According to Tracey, Zulus have potential to succeed within the new system imposed by the West. At the same time, the process of adaptation will be arduous and its outcome is not guaranteed. While adjusting to modernity, ‘they’ will also adjust modernity to themselves, however. We read that,

it is already clear that Zulus are adapting themselves to the new world and, wherever possible, circumventing and evading those sides of white law and authority which do not suit their inherent nature. They have much to learn in a short time, particularly in economics and in shouldering responsibility. (99)

Naturalism and historicism embrace within this odd text, and the inferiority assigned to blackness sometimes momentarily transforms into superiority. Similarly, the projected distance or difference between white and black races, generally assumed as a given, at times almost disappears. In comparing Zulu wedding customs to Western ones, for instance, Tracey

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<sup>39</sup> Tracey’s attitude is not unique, and may be related to a Western discourse of primitivism within the modern period. Such thought – which combines attraction towards cultures considered to be ‘primitive’ with romantic nostalgia for the European pastoral – affirms its commitment to modernity (of which it forms a part), even as it might purport to critique it, or aspects of it.

remarks that “there are few essential differences between us” (72). On the subject of magic, he states that it “may safely be claimed that not a single superstition or magical belief may be found in Africa which has not its direct equivalent, if not in modern European society, in our own countries in the last century” (88–89).

If the text at times exalts its subject, it soon cuts it down again. In its closing pages, *Zulu Paradox* employs gender to de-masculinise and infantilise the contemporary Zulu male:

One can feel for the proud “ex-warrior” in his lost prestige but with less sympathy for his unwillingness to think and work, to act and plan. Today, the man is the chatterer, the woman the worker. With little learning he becomes the snob, the shallow dandy, the schemer for small prestige, the resenter of success in others, the easy critic and the user of flowery adjectives. The hard worker and the disinterested leader of men is still the exception. Life was altogether too easy for the Zulu male, and his womenfolk were willing slaves. But today, one might be justified in thinking that matriarchy was about to replace patriarchy. (102–103)

Given Tracey’s general assumption of maleness in representing ‘the African’ as a singular construct, there is clearly more at play here than appreciation for “the Zulu woman”, whose “more loyal, more reliable character will yet see her man through the modern crisis” (104). A male, not female, “figure” is presented as the generic Zulu and subjected to the following string of adjectives: “fascinating, lazy, bloodthirsty, poetic, pathetic” (103).

*Zulu Paradox*

As the years of their heyday recede, the romantic colourful figure of the Zulu “warrior” shrinks with them to the proportions of a strutting puppet. At his back, behind the scenes, we find the significant person of the Zulu woman increasing in dignity, in poise, diligence and resourcefulness. It was a woman who collected the wits and directed the nation in the few chaotic weeks after the stabbing of Shaka. From that day onwards, the Zulu woman, not the man, has been the more stable factor, the backbone of family, village and tribe. Her more loyal, more reliable character will yet see her man through the modern crisis.

Our Zulus, as white South Africans would call them, our lovable incorrigible Zulus, are increasing so fast that in peace they are more fearful to politicians than in war they ever were to the soldiers. For every positive virtue they possess, they seem to provide the negative elsewhere. For every sin of commission, they atone with a hundred virtues of omission. Never a day passes under the “Blue Heavens” but some member of their famous infamous tribe supplies still further evidence of this Zulu paradox.



Ernest Ullmann's closing illustration (reproduced on the previous page) shows a large woman in domestic worker's uniform, holding a warrior puppet in one hand, pulling its strings with the other. The book ends by re-affirming white mastery and possession over "our lovable incorrigible Zulus" (104).

Tracey's portrayal of Zulus – and, by extension, Africans in general – contains opposing intertwining strands, yet no argument is overtly advanced above the others. Indeed, the contradictions seem to bolster, rather than weaken, each other. The text advances smoothly and smugly, with its breaches of logic seeming to cast no doubt upon its own rationality. Instead, Tracey's racial paradoxes are projected onto the people he purports to describe. Blackness, not whiteness, is portrayed as inconsistent, irrational, paradoxical.

How can one sum up Tracey's position with regard to race, racism and the racialisation of blackness as expressed in this text? Firstly, I would argue, *Zulu Paradox* provides an excellent demonstration of Goldberg's argument for the conceptual vagueness and fluidity of race as a highly flexible yet persistent category. Tracey often avoids the term 'race' altogether or invokes it indirectly. He employs it loosely in various contexts with a number of implied meanings. At times, he leans towards a biological basis for race, even as he aligns himself with ideas of race based in history and culture. Cloaked in the assurance of whiteness, he gives no definitions but suggests an underlying acceptance of race as an unquestioned 'reality'.

The second point, concerning Tracey's position on race, is that *Zulu Paradox* may be read as a multilayered example of racist exclusion, even as it grants concessions to blackness and includes aspects of black culture as enviable human products. Within the text, Zulu people are defined as deficient with regard to standards of conduct and rationality and thus excluded from full participation in white-controlled society. Zulus are depicted as fun-loving yet prone to outbursts of violence, loyal and reliable within bounds but often incompetent, arrogant and avaricious, lazy and unwilling to work. The accumulated effect of such description pronounces immaturity and thereby implicitly justifies political and economic racial inequality and white *baaskap* of one form or another. Furthermore, the grounds of possibility for the book's published existence include the author's position of power in relation to his subject, his presumption of entitlement to pronounce authoritatively on blackness, and the expectation that his words will be bought, read and believed by other whites. These contextual factors underline the work's immersion in a system of racial rule which assumes and enacts power to define people (granting and refusing recognition as it pleases) and to impose and manage boundaries of exclusion, inclusion and access.

Thirdly, with regard to Tracey and race, the nuances and complexities of this variety of broadly historicist (yet simultaneously strongly naturalist) racism will not fit a simple hierarchical model of black cultural immaturity versus white superiority. Progress is not assumed to involve a straightforward adoption of white ‘civilisation’ and rejection of black traditional culture. Rather, language and aspects of tradition should be retained and adapted, Tracey argues, and thus selectively incorporated into modernity. *Zulu Paradox* also suggests that whites would gain psychologically by understanding and adopting certain cultural attitudes associated with African music and dance, thus recuperating positive aspects of their own pasts. This form of historicist racism does not profess to aim towards the wholesale adoption of Western (or ‘universal’) culture. While assuming increasing and inevitable engagement between blackness and modernity, Tracey does not assume cultural inferiority of blackness, nor advocate its eventual whitening and erasure as the ultimate promise of progress.

Postcolonial theory recognises the attractiveness of racialised others for colonial whiteness, but often tends to present such attraction in terms of illicit sexuality, fetish and aberration (see, for example, Bhabha and Goldberg, among others). Desire for the other is the dangerous, fearful, submerged other-side of the official face of racial order and hierarchy, which, if unchecked, threatens whiteness from within, takes it to the heart of darkness, ‘goes native’. We have seen that Tracey is not immune from the fear of such desire, that he reacts against the ‘wildness’ (expressed in terms of ‘miscegenation’, promiscuity and violence) he associates with aspects of blackness, inferior types of whiteness and uncontrolled interracial contact. His positive evaluations of African culture operate on an entirely different level, however. Paternalism notwithstanding, there is admiration – declaring itself openly and assuming its own respectability – for customs and cultural forms which are *not* presented in terms of sexuality or violence.

Tracey actively asserts a leadership role (to which race, class and gender have helped assign him) as cultural expert, interpreter and knowledge-broker. Thus, embedded within structures of colonial power, his interventions on behalf of indigenous culture disempower as much as open access, stifle as well as enable creative expression. His selective valorisation of African tradition has mixed motives and effects. On the one hand, it seeks to overturn stereotypes and open spaces for expression and recognition. On the other, it prescribes, seeks to channel and confine, and becomes all too easily a weapon for attack.

For example, in *Zulu Paradox*, Tracey’s appreciation for the Zulu language – progressive in its way and consistent with current thought on language planning – turns into a

diatribe against the perceived inadequacies of those Zulus who would rather learn and use English:

Every year, the authorities in Natal receive several letters from Zulus begging them to cease the teaching of Zulu in Native schools and to use the single medium of English, the economic language. These people, with their eye on the main chance, appear to be prepared to put away the very roots of their cultural inheritance for a problematical share in foreign wealth. We find the same with their music. It would be understandable if Zulu were an undeveloped rustic tongue. But this is far from being the case. It is capable of great flights of poetic imagery, of oratory and of legal exactitudes – though, of course, it is deficient in technical jargon. Like English, it has the acquisitiveness of a magpie, absorbing with equal facility both English and Afrikaans words into its wide vocabulary. [...] What can one say of a people who are so uncertain of themselves that they would throw away this heritage for a mess of pottage? (101–102)

Here, a legitimate argument for isiZulu's importance, adaptability and suitability for modern use is undermined by Tracey's refusal to address the broader context of language inequality. He does not criticise the political system which imposes its languages and restricts what limited opportunities it allows to those who have acquired English or Afrikaans. Neither does he acknowledge the advantage of English, as an international language, for inter-ethnic black unity and resistance. Instead, he alleges greed as motivation for preferring education in English and implies that Africans should be content with subservient poverty: "wealth" is "foreign" to them, it would seem, and they should leave pursuit of "the main chance" to the whites who oppress them. In Tracey's hands, alleged alienation – "of a people so uncertain of themselves that they would throw away [their] heritage" – becomes not a symptom of colonial oppression but (yet another) sign of inferiority, which justifies tutelage by whiteness.

*Zulu Paradox* is directed towards a white, generalist readership. It could be said to pander to the mass of white South Africans of its time, with appeal for racists of different naturalist and historicist stripes. (National Party proponents of apartheid essentialism and 'liberal' supporters of the United Party would all find something with which to identify.) Whatever positive affirmations are included in its pages, its proprietary tone and accumulated insults are almost guaranteed to repel and outrage black (and other, genuinely non-racist) readers. I will now turn to a collection of unpublished texts, produced twenty years later in 1968, in which polite correspondence between Tracey and an official representative of the newly independent Kingdom of Lesotho also reveals racist exclusion, disguised as academic expertise.

## **Tradition as Tyranny: Correspondence on Mohapeloa**

In ILAM's Hugh Tracey correspondence files, there is a letter dated 24 April 1968 from T. Mashologu, Counsellor in the office of Lesotho's High Commission in London. It reads as follows:

Dear Dr. Tracey,

I am taking the liberty of writing to you as my High Commissioner, Mr. Kotsokoane, suggested that because of your acknowledged expertise in the field of African Music, you would be in a position to offer some advice on the following matter.

On the instructions of my Government, we are attempting to arrange a study tour for Mr. J.P. Mohapeloa, whose musical works you are undoubtedly acquainted with. A paper setting out the main areas of the proposed study is attached.

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your guidance on the content of a suitable course for Mr. Mohapeloa and your views on the suggested places to be visited by him. I would also be grateful if you would let me know of possible sources of financial sponsorship for study tours such as the one proposed for Mr. Mohapeloa.

The accompanying copy of Mohapeloa's proposal provides further detail. An established composer, who had studied with Percival Kirby at the University of the Witwatersrand, he had published "three volumes of choral compositions" and composed "all the songs for Lesotho Independence Celebrations [in 1966] and the new National Anthem".<sup>40</sup> He proposes to visit "Kenya, Italy, Germany, England and the United States of America". Through the trip, he hopes to "gain an insight into contemporary musical trends, to make contacts with some of the world's best musicians so that [he] and automatically Lesotho may profit by their greater experience".

In Kenya, Mohapeloa would "compare local published works by Africans with what we in the South have in a way achieved", and "with mutual advantage, exchange ideas with the local African musical elite". In Europe, he wants to focus on Western classical music and gain experience in the composition of "more elaborate vocal and instrumental forms". In the USA, he plans to focus on centres of study for black American music at "the Negro Universities of Hampton and Tuskegee" as it "would be of educational interest to observe how these descendants of ex-central African slaves are tackling the problems of self-expression through the medium of organised sound in the shifting scenes of their colourful and potent history" and "see to what extent this is adaptable in the new African situation". As

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<sup>40</sup> Mohapeloa's suggestion for a new anthem was not in fact adopted and Lesotho retained the nineteenth-century anthem by the Swiss-French missionary François Coillard after independence (personal communication from Christine Lucia, 5 February 2014).



well as strengthening his compositional technique, experience gained through his travels would assist him “to help reorientate and improve the teaching of music in Lesotho schools”.

It is important to note that Mohapeloa sees himself using, certainly not rejecting, traditional forms. He also wishes to promote ‘serious’ music, rather than commercial forms which he views as inferior. In line with many of Tracey’s statements, Mohapeloa’s proposal argues that

Lesotho has [an] important part to play in the integration of the African musical idiom through renewal of contacts with the folk song by those of her intelligentsia involved in the creative aspect of the art. Research work here is a must. Genuine gems are in danger of being replaced by spurious types of an inferior quality imposed on the public by the radio which, in conjunction with the pernicious cheap gramophone record, is a menace to our musical heritage.

With sad irony, given the outcome, the tour proposal even mentions Tracey: Mohapeloa intends to draw upon “Dr. Hugh Tracey’s guidance” in setting the programme for the European leg of the trip.

Tracey’s reply to Mashologu’s request for advice consists of a single-page letter, accompanied by a “private and confidential report”. Despite the fact that Mohapeloa’s arguments for the study, promotion and development of music rooted in traditional heritage appear to be allied with his own declared objectives, any expectation that Tracey would support the tour as proposed proves to be unfounded. In the letter, he requests firmly that his advice not be communicated with Mohapeloa: “Please make certain that this does not go any further than your office, as I would not like to wound his feelings, though I must make certain remarks with which he might not agree”.

The attached report, or memorandum, opens as follows:

I have known Mr. Mohapeloa, slightly, for many years, and have met and discussed music with him on two or three occasions. I admired his early compositions, which he did before he was trained at the Witwatersrand. Unfortunately, common consensus suggested that having undertaken a course of European music under Professor Kirby, he has never achieved the same degree of competence in composition as he did before being trained. In other words his training quite likely tended to destroy some of his natural talent. I discussed this with him at some length, and I had hoped that he would regain confidence in his own innate abilities. However, unless I am misinformed, none of his recent work approaches the quality of his earlier compositions.

This being so, any tour to be undertaken by Mr. Mohapeloa must take into consideration, firstly, his sense of taste and perspective in the music of Lesotho itself, before he is encouraged to venture into the far more complex realm of European or western music.

From his proposal which you sent me he would appear to be spreading his ambitions too widely, and it will first have to be determined in which direction his best interests lie. It is of little concern that his songs are extensively used by present day schools, church and independent choirs, on account of the strong European bias which such institutions continually propagate. On the other hand, I have always considered that Mr. Mohapeloa is perhaps one of the most promising of Sotho musicians I have met, and if the result of his tour is to strengthen his Sotho musical talents, rather than his tendency to imitate western styles, then a tour would be well worthwhile.

Some interesting observations may be made regarding the above extract. It is notable that European music is positioned as “far more complex”, notwithstanding Tracey’s considerable appreciation for, and major investment in, African music. Western music is placed beyond the understanding of Africans, at least at present. Grappling with its complexity will lead to unsuccessful imitation, the suppression of “natural talent” and the loss of authenticity. (By contrast, African music is not considered beyond the comprehension of, or a danger for, Europeans like Tracey himself.)

Tracey’s tone assumes his own expertise without question, as it does immaturity on the part of Mohapeloa. A close reading of the text, however, reveals that Tracey’s knowledge of the Lesotho composer is in fact extremely scant. He admits to knowing Mohapeloa “slightly”, having spoken to him only “on two or three occasions” and having “admired his early compositions”. With regard to the later works, which supposedly suffer the negative effects of study with Kirby, Tracey seems to be relying on hearsay, without any personal experience as basis for comparison. He refers to “common consensus” and precedes a strong statement – “none of his recent work approaches the quality of his earlier compositions” – with the phrase: “unless I am misinformed”.

Tracey then remarks that the “tour which he suggests [...] would be immensely expensive” and proposes his own alternative. Mohapeloa should first consult with John Blacking and himself, in Johannesburg. An African tour would be in order, but not to Kenya. Instead, he should visit “Rhodesia”, Zambia and Uganda, where “African musicians have been most active recently”. This “would be the right preliminary for Mr. Mohapeloa, as it would give him first hand experience of several African instrumental styles of playing”. He should then return to South Africa and undertake study “in Ethnomusicology” with Blacking at Wits, “where he would be welcome”. While a further tour, “overseas might then be justified”, Tracey does “not recommend Italy or Germany or any of the countries of Europe other than England, where he can get expert advice, particularly from the University of London at the School of Oriental and African Studies” and perhaps “obtain personal

instruction from the Reverend A.M. Jones”. Mohapeloa should not travel to Europe with the intent of studying European music. England is only recommended on the strength of SOAS, with its anthropological focus, and the African music expert, Jones.

The strongest reaction in Tracey’s report concerns the American leg of the proposed tour. Visiting the United States “too early” would “be altogether confusing for him, and indeed might undo any good work which he undertook on the African continent”. If Mohapeloa

first becomes steeped in the music of Africa, from both a scientific and artistic point of view and gains experience in instrumental music, freed from his present leanings towards the mixing of African and European musics in his compositions, then, I would be the first to encourage him to go to America and attempt to recognise in the work of the Negroes, some vestigial remains of African musical culture. However what remains in America is very slight, and Negroes have, for the most part, done what so many others have done in Africa, and that is, attempt to copy, as far as possible, the music of the Whites. It is clear that Mr. Mohapeloa is not in the nightclub, popular entertainment world which is the speciality of the Negro people, but is a serious musician.

It is telling that explicit racial references are made in this section, unlike the rest of the report. Black Americans are clearly perceived as threatening and are portrayed as rootless and decadent.

Mohapeloa’s expressed motivation for study in the USA is misread or ignored. He wishes to gain ideas and inspiration from contemporary black composition and performance, given the similar experiences of black southern Africans and their American counterparts with regard to racism and oppression and dawning possibilities of political liberation. Tracey, however, can only admit to the finding of meagre “vestigial remains” of African authenticity as holding any possible value.

For Tracey, becoming “steeped in the music of Africa, from both a scientific and artistic point of view” means submitting to epistemological direction within a field of study established and run by whiteness, and conforming to its racialised boundaries. Mohapeloa, however, is already immersed in a musical heritage which includes traditional folk song and various secular and religious forms with European origins. In Europe, he wishes to study in “some of the important centres which have cradled the music on which Africans have been fed since the first clash of our somewhat irreconcilable cultures”. The qualifier “somewhat” is significant. The academic orthodoxy to which he feels pressed to offer allegiance assumes difference as an absolute. Mohapeloa’s own experience suggests otherwise. He has already

“been fed” and absorbed Western influences, as well as African ones, and, since these elements have blended, they cannot be incompatible.

Despite its careful and somewhat hesitant tone and its conventional disparaging attitude towards popular music, Mohapeloa’s proposal conveys a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of culture and society. Tracey’s report, on the other hand, is based on limited experience, exhibits a narrow essentialist conception of culture and is saturated with paternalism. He excludes Mohapeloa from adult scholarly status and repeatedly relegates him to the role of a wayward, if promising, junior, in need of careful guidance to be taught “in which direction his best interests lie”. It is worth noting that, according to the professed standards of Western academia, it is Mohapeloa who should rather be accorded the status of expert with regard to the subject under discussion. Unlike Mohapeloa, Tracey has undertaken no formal study of music, or any other subject, at tertiary level. Furthermore, he is not a composer or performer in any musical genre. Nonetheless, it is Tracey’s report which wins the day in the uneven and secret exchange, which excludes the composer himself. The response from Mashologu (dated 9 May 1968) thanks Tracey for “very instructive comments” and states that he and his High Commissioner “are in agreement” with Tracey’s “recommendations”. Mohapeloa’s proposal does not materialise. ‘African Music’, managed by whiteness, becomes a stranglehold for the black musician-scholar.

There is a strong flavour of naturalism throughout Tracey’s report. The tone is consistent with apartheid policy in favour of each (ethnic or racial) group’s ‘development’ along its ‘own lines’. Musical advancement, for blackness, is directed firmly towards indigenous authenticity as the only valid route, at least for the time being. Western music, valuable in itself, is the property of whiteness and should not be ‘copied’. Historicist ideology is not altogether absent here, however. Modernity is still deployed as a promised destination, albeit under restrictions. Universalism, progress, development – these ideas appear in the guise of potential access to the ‘scientific’ epistemologies and methodologies by which fields of African culture have been demarcated and colonised by white exploration and expertise.

As successful explorer and as missionary for authentic development, Tracey justifies his colonisation of African terrain by undermining black maturity in the realm of scholarship. His recognition of cultural achievement is accompanied by the assumption that Africans lack understanding of their own works. Black intellectuals are mostly scorned as fake, and black success in terms of musical scholarship, which he professes to support, is depicted as still extremely rare, indeed barely to be found.

Tracey employs a similar rhetoric of reduction and exceptionalism in correspondence from the 1950s concerning the short-lived Cowell Award and the musicologist J.H. Kwabena Nketia. Unlike Tracey's intervention to reject Mahopeloa's proposal, which overtly favours exclusion, the correspondence involving Nketia involves the bestowal of an award, ostensibly an example of inclusion.

### **Paternalist Praise: Nketia and the Cowell Award**

There appears to have been only one bestowal of the African Music Society's Cowell Award, "for the African man or woman who is considered to have done the most for African indigenous music during the course of the year". The lone recipient (in 1958, for the year 1957) was "Mr. J. H. Nketia, a lecturer at the Legon University, Ghana" (Tracey 1957, 84).<sup>41</sup> The Cowell Award was initiated and donated by Jean Cowell (previously McCrindell), who had worked with Tracey and the African Music Society before her marriage and relocation to Vancouver, Canada. She initially proposed a local focus, on the Johannesburg area, but agreed to Tracey's suggestion that the award cover the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>42</sup>

Correspondence concerning the establishment of the Cowell Award reveals the importance of race in its design. Cowell's first criterion for the award was that it should be

given to the AFRICAN (not European) who has done most overall (i.e. in the way of composing, playing or singing or encouraging others) during the year to advance the cause of "African" Music, i.e. the meaning of "African" to be determined by the Sub-Committee dealing with the prize. Town life being now common to Africans, maybe "town" music should be included. (30 June 1955)

The meaning of 'African' music is open to question, but not the meaning of 'AFRICAN' ('non-European') people. Similarly unequivocal in terms of racial boundaries, Tracey's response (on 2 August 1955) combines openness in principle with orthodoxy in practice concerning the genre query:

I quite agree, the prize should be given to the African who has done most overall work during the year to advance the cause of African music. By African music we nowadays mean all music performed by Africans and we are trying to avoid odious

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<sup>41</sup> In its early years, the journal *African Music* appeared under the date of the year preceding its actual year of publication.

<sup>42</sup> Tracey motivated for a wider geographical area because "South Africa [...] is particularly poor in musicians and the stimulus for doing better we consider is likely to come from outside. The Society is particularly keen to give generous recognition regardless of territorial boundaries, and the fact that the Award is likely to come to several territories in the course of time will encourage inter-territorial thinking" (2 August 1955).

distinctions between different styles. It is still true, however, that the best musicianship is almost exclusively found in the country or performed by musicians with solid country training.

The “best” music is “country” or traditional: conformity to canonical boundaries policed by Tracey and his fellow white ‘experts’ is justified in terms of aesthetic standards, while the racialised nature of such judgements is elided.

The prize would be bestowed on blacks but decided by whites. Cowell’s initial proposal suggests management by a sub-committee of the African Music Society, to which organisations such as “Union of Girls Clubs, Adult Education, Jan Hofmeyr School etc.” would field pre-checked applications. “Individual Africans wishing to recommend friends” might do so “through such organisation, not direct to A.M.S” (30 June 1955). Tracey’s response to this point does not entirely preclude black involvement but justifies white control, again in terms of quality:

The recommendations for an Award would be submitted as you suggest by organisations or persons whose recommendations the Society could accept wholeheartedly. These would mostly be European at present as there are so few Africans as yet in our experience whose opinion we could accept unqualified. (2 August 1955)

Spending of the cash award of ten pounds would also be subject to white direction, Africans not being trusted to make such decisions alone. Tracey responds to Cowell’s anxiety in this regard: “I fully agree with you that to hand out cash would be quite wrong, and I will make it clear that the money is to be spent on books, records or something which in the opinion of the responsible persons recommending the recipient would benefit his work” (1 November 1955).

A fund was established in 1955 but there was no award the following year. According to Tracey, “we could not stir up the various officials into making recommendations” (for 1956). He also remarks on the “sad truth” that “white people are doing far more for African music than the blacks at present, but it is your kind of Award which will help to even this up” (25 February 1957). Early in 1958, Tracey informs Cowell that the award will be given to Nketia, presumably on the basis of his own recommendation. Tracey had “met this young man” in Ghana two years previously. He describes him as “quite an outstanding person and extremely keen on doing something about his own African music of the Gold Coast” (15 January 1958).

Appreciation for Nketia in Tracey's letters is accompanied by racialised rhetoric which taints him with one of the familiar vices attributed to blackness, namely tardiness. Tracey informs Cowell that he has asked Nketia to write to her personally and that he has "not yet heard from him acknowledging our announcement, but, as you know, with these Africans time is no factor". His praise is expressed in such a way as to raise doubts. Unnecessary embellishments, implied question marks and a patronising tone re-assert Nketia's junior status: in the same letter, Tracey remarks that he "is undoubtedly a most worthy recipient and I do hope he writes you a nice letter as he is very intelligent and has an excellent vocabulary" (11 April 1958).<sup>43</sup>

In this correspondence, the theme of exceptionalism is again evident. Later that year, Tracey describes Nketia having "made a great impression" at the International Folk Music Council Conference in Europe, but is "sorry that we have not several similar men working in Southern and Central Africa". On the subject of Nketia's scholarship to study in the USA, Tracey hopes the Americans "don't spoil him though I fancy he is rather beyond that stage and is sufficiently mature to discount American juvenilities" (24 September 1958).

The Cowell Award correspondence underscores the problematic conditions surrounding the bestowal of symbolic capital to blackness by bodies aligned to the status quo within white-dominated systems. An occasion for recognition, or inclusion, is hemmed with conditions and restrictions imposing notions of difference. It therefore simultaneously furthers exclusion. Being West African, Nketia, unlike Mohapeloa, had the fortunate advantage of geographical distance from Tracey's sphere of influence, and the latter's ambiguous assumption of patronage was largely immaterial to his success as a major musicologist. Nonetheless, I cannot help but wonder whether he would have accepted the Cowell Award had he been privy to the letters concerning it.

In a satisfying reversal of roles, Nketia would subsequently evaluate and critique the contributions of Tracey and others in their field. His careful critical response to whiteness (without explicitly naming it as such) provides a platform to consider strategies and forms of expression for blackness in the midst of ongoing racist constraints.

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<sup>43</sup> Nketia graciously thanked Cowell for the Award in a letter she received in May of that year, a copy of which she included in her next letter to Tracey. Presumably he also wrote to Tracey. I found no letters between Tracey and Nketia in the ILAM files, although I am certain they corresponded directly. (Letters from Tracey to Maud Karpeles reference such correspondence, for example.)

### **For Africa: Nketia's Perspective**

Nketia's article, "African Music and Western Praxis: A Review of Western Perspectives on African Musicology" (1986), provides a type of response to Tracey's racism, though it should not be taken as a simple, or personal, reaction to Tracey or any other individual. His focus is far broader than Tracey and he chooses not to deploy the language of race, although racism is implicitly invoked by his description of the colonial "eurocentrism" that has coloured his discipline, just as an active non-racialism (or anti-racism) is implicit in his arguments for its reorientation.

The article gives Tracey's work a prominent place and recognises its archival importance in providing documented primary material as a basis for further study. Nketia also appreciates Tracey's developmental intentions and his aesthetic focus on music as a practical art form. He separates Tracey – who drew inspiration mainly from the movements of "folk music and music education" and "viewed African music first and foremost as an artistic heritage to be shared, preserved, and promoted" – from those ethnomusicologists who viewed engagement with musicians within Africa as "peripheral" to their purposes (39). As an example, Nketia cites Alan Merriam, who defined ethnomusicologists as "outside" (in other words, Western) observers, studying (non-Western) musical cultures in order to communicate their findings to other Westerners (37).

Nketia is concerned with steering African musicology towards greater engagement with the interests of musicians, scholars and students in Africa, and correcting the neocolonial legacy which has tended to locate disciplinary outcomes in the USA and Europe. Aspects of Tracey's work and many of his development-minded assertions resonate positively with these postcolonial goals. In assessing Tracey's contribution, he seems almost to embrace him as a like-minded precursor. Almost but not quite. Only one phrase could be taken as overtly negative: he writes that Tracey's proposal for the collaborative production of textbooks for African countries "did not materialise not only because it was *too paternalistic* and premature but also because a working basis for such scholarly collaboration could not be firmly established" (47; my emphasis). Nketia nonetheless subtly marks Tracey's distance from the Africa-centred discourse and actions of himself and other black scholars, even as he notes his exceptionalism relative to other Westerners. He qualifies a reference to Tracey's "development-oriented" approach with the phrase "to some extent", for example (40). Without referring to race directly, he draws attention to the racial bias inherent in Tracey's recruitment of co-workers:



His field experience in the colonial period convinced him that contributions in the form of data to an “unchartered field” like African music could be made by a wide range of Westerners visiting or residing in Africa – educators, social workers, missionaries, and administrative officers as well as choreographers, musicians, linguists, and other scholars specializing in African studies. As far as he was concerned, contributions to knowledge of African music from whatever perspective and reports on musical activities should be welcome. [...]

Paradoxically, the list of the members of the African Music Society published in 1954 shows that it was practically a society of Western musicians, scholars, administrators, governors, and white settlers in Africa as well as musicians, musicologists, folklorists, and anthropologists in Europe, America, Canada, Cuba, and Mexico. Only five out of the 211 members listed in 1954 were Africans while more than forty percent of the membership were southern Africans who had no cultural affinity with this music. (46–47)

Here we see the verbal difficulties faced in trying to avoid racial terminology. The “southern Africans” with “no cultural affinity” are presumably the “white settlers” referred to earlier. The point is that just “five out of 211” were (black) Africans.

While Nketia’s treatment of Tracey acknowledges ways in which the latter created opportunities for racial *inclusion* (such as publication of work by black authors), it quietly demonstrates the extent to which he remained embedded in colonial thought:

To compensate for the imbalance in the membership of the society, Hugh Tracey tried to arouse general African enthusiasm and support for indigenous music by encouraging the formation of African music clubs. He lectured wherever he could, encouraged his African field assistants and others to contribute to the newsletter and journal of his society, instituted awards for African musicians, and sponsored the publication of a monograph on Yoruba Music (1953) written by Ekundayo Phillips, the Nigerian organist and composer. His articulate editorials were directed not only to musicologists with whom he disagreed on goals and emphasis or to scholars pursuing the study of African music “as a means of acquiring merit in the intellectual world of universities” but also to urban Africans who were on the brink of “cultural genocide” because of their apparent neglect of their own indigenous music. (47)

Nketia also emphasises Tracey’s lack of acknowledgement of African scholarship, but attributes this to ignorance. He refers to work by West Africans like Nicholas George Ballanta of Sierra Leone and Ephraim Amu of Ghana in the 1920s and 1930s, that is, the same era in which Westerners were beginning to take a serious interest in African music. He explains Tracey’s statement that “the African is pathetically incapable of defending his own culture” as resulting from a lack of interaction between West Africa and the South of the continent during the colonial period (47–48). Nketia seems to be erring on the side of generosity and does not mention (perhaps is not aware of) black initiatives in South Africa

during the same era. Ignorance cannot be cited as a reason for Tracey's refusal to acknowledge Reuben Caluza and Frieda Bokwe Matthews' promotion of African music scholarship in the 1930s, for example (Lucia 2005, xlii). Lucia remarks that "Hugh Tracey's claim that Africans in the early 1950s could not represent themselves when it came to valuing their traditional music is challenged by Caluza's eloquent plea for African music written 20 years earlier" (xxxviii).

The measured academic appraisal by Nketia takes the form of a positive intervention, rather than a reaction against the racism of Tracey and others whose assumptions, actions or omissions have influenced his discipline. It acknowledges material and intellectual contributions of whiteness to modern African scholarship while pointing to their shortcomings. By implication, these problems go beyond the pro-Western bias in white scholars' work: ignorance of – or refusal to recognise – their black contemporaries suggests a great loss of academic potential which could have broadened the discipline.

Nketia's critique is situated within a particular disciplinary context. The very subtlety and restraint of his approach indicates that the fields of African Music and Ethnomusicology were still largely unaffected by postcolonial criticism in the mid-1980s. His somewhat awkward avoidance of racial terminology also calls to mind Appiah's arguments against the deployment of race as a basis for African solidarity and resistance to racism (1992). Yet, while his reluctance to use the language of race may signal a rejection of racialised thought, it also impedes his ability to confront racism directly. It is important to remember that he did not have access to Tracey's correspondence and had probably not read *Zulu Paradox*, for instance: broader knowledge of the Tracey oeuvre might have produced a stronger response. Its careful stance notwithstanding, Nketia's work nonetheless clearly belongs within a movement of scholarship concerned with advancing African interests and reserving the right to assert its own definitions, rejecting narrow structures of authenticity and/or modernity.

### **Blackness, Tradition and (De-Colonising) Modernity**

I have noted Goldberg's observation that historicist racism defines 'progress' on its own cultural terms. According to him, this type of whiteness admits blackness to 'universal' history but temporally displaces it into the past. It denies its present – while promising and delaying its future – participation in 'civilised' modernity: that promised, deferred incorporation demands, by definition, the whitening and erasure of non-Western culture, the ultimate death of blackness by 'assimilation', the burial of 'authenticity'.

I then examined Tracey's variation on historicism, which encourages blackness to absorb indigenous nourishment, retain native customs and carry traditional luggage on its journey to civilised emancipation, provided the contents and destination are policed by the border-guards of white expertise. But I have also shown that Tracey's work cannot quite be reduced to such a glib summary. At their best, his texts provide glimpses of aesthetic appreciation and cultural understanding which exceed the hierarchical bounds of racialised thought.

Nevertheless, one certainly can recognise aspects of Tracey's methods in Fanon's description of colonial closure and preservation of "native culture": Fanon writes that

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. (1970, 44)

Fanon's analysis generally assumes negative attitudes on the part of colonialists towards "the pre-existing culture" of the colonised. By contrast, Tracey's project presents indigenous music as an object of admiration for both Africans and Europeans. Yet his enterprise undoubtedly operates as an exercise of colonial power. Tracey might profess to support change, development and openness, but his classificatory schema and aesthetic judgements tend to promote a white-serving vision of blackness. For example, his method of classifying musical items geographically according to the ethnic homelands of performers, even when the actual places of recording were distant mine compounds or plantations, promotes a myth of spatial fixity at odds with the lived experiences of labour migrancy and under-emphasises the oppressive conditions experienced by such musicians.<sup>44</sup> With regard to canonical boundaries, I have shown the effect of his prescriptions concerning African authenticity on Mohapeloa's plans.

In describing the black intellectual's rediscovery of his own culture, Fanon also provides a footnote on a late colonial phenomenon, which is particularly pertinent to Tracey's project:

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<sup>44</sup> Information concerning the place of recording is provided in the *SoA Catalogue* but not necessarily made available in the printed material accompanying records and CDs. Tracey also used the multi-ethnic mine compounds for marketing purposes, however, in his promotion of mine dancing and his book, *African Dances of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines* (1952) with its accompanying recordings.

Intellectuals, students, belonging to the dominant group, make 'scientific' studies of the dominated society, its art, its ethical universe.

In the universities the rare colonized intellectuals find their own cultural system being revealed to them. It even happens that scholars of the colonizing countries grow enthusiastic over this or that specific feature. The concepts of purity, naïveté, innocence appear. The native intellectual's vigilance must here be doubly on the alert. (1970, 48–49)

Fanon's calls for "vigilance" on the part of African intellectuals in the face of such colonial scholarship, not a total rejection of it. Though couched in more conciliatory tones, Nketia's work demonstrates a similar awareness of colonial constraints to be overcome, while taking serious account of Western contributions and ultimately advancing a conception of scholarly unity. For him, the work of Tracey and others cannot be ignored, but must indeed be approached with critical vigilance. Like Fanon, Nketia is concerned with defining "a new humanism", which is postcolonial, African and modern (Fanon 1970, 198). The question of modernity has undoubtedly been a vexed one for African scholarship, however.

As Goldberg demonstrates, the modern project is deeply intertwined with, and implicated in, European imperialism and racism. Yet, to define modernity as exclusively Western – the realm of whiteness – is surely to participate in racist exclusion, by relegating blackness and Africa to outsider or under-developed status in relation to global circumstances. While there is general agreement that none can escape its historical and material effects, modernity is still often portrayed as foreign to Africa, something borrowed or imposed, to which African blackness must adapt itself. Abiola Irele's inaugural lecture, "In Praise of Alienation" (first published in 1982), provides a solution to this impasse.

Irele first underlines the massive trauma and deprivation brought about by colonialism and stresses that, in Africa's "historical relationship with Europe, the master–slave relationship was exemplified in a very real sense, with not merely a metaphorical but a literal significance". As a result, Africans' "perception of Europe and the civilization we associate with that continent [...] is marked by a profound ambivalence" (2007, 599). Yet, Africans are also "conscious of the irreversible nature of the transformations the impact of Europe has effected [...] which are so extensive as to define the really significant frame of reference of our contemporary existence", and which provide "the paradigm of modernity to which we aspire" (600). This simultaneous repulsion and attraction towards cultural constructs associated with Europe and colonisation thus results in alienation, generally depicted as a negative force in African literature. Irele argues, however, that the emotional experience of alienation can be consciously harnessed as a creative force of becoming:

We need a new determination, a new spirit of adventure fired by a modern imagination: a new state of mind that will enable us to come to terms with our state of alienation and to transform it from a passive condition we confusedly endure into an active collective existential project. We need to take charge of our objective alienation by assuming it as an *intention* so as to endow it with a positive significance.

The direction this intentional focusing of energies should take, “as a practical necessity” is towards “Western culture and civilization” (601). So far, the argument seems to preserve conventional binaries in encouraging African development towards Western progress.

Irele’s argument then turns in a new direction, though. Describing the importance of the “deductive method” in advancing modern philosophy and science, Irele proceeds to demystify, historicise and relativise Europe’s achievements. In effect, he de-colonises scientific achievement from its European proponents, even as he recognises its importance. The “real distinction” between African and Western thought “is not a question of the absence of a rational mode of thought in the one, and its presence in the other, but rather that of its theoretical formulation. It is not rationality as such that distinguished Western civilization but its logic of rationality” or methodology (602).

He asserts that

Nothing I have said is meant to confirm the White man in his racial and cultural arrogance. The scientific and technological supremacy of Europe was a historical phenomenon that was both particular and contingent, marked by all the vicissitudes of human experience. European civilization did not spring forth fully formed from the brain of a providential God but was shaped over time, often under dramatic circumstances that could well have deflected its course in a direction other than the one it was eventually to pursue. (604)

The modern civilisation we think of as European was derived and assimilated from many cultural elements from different parts of the world, including Africa. Irele mentions various ancient and modern African contributions, in fields such as philosophy, art, music, aesthetics and design. He also reminds us “that African labor and resources” fuelled the “material prosperity of the West”. Therefore Africans

have a claim upon Western civilization, as well as a considerable stake in it, as the instrument for the necessary transformation of our world. It is in our interest to make good that claim, to adopt strategies that will make our stake in that civilization pay handsome dividends. We cannot do this if we continue to be burdened by the complexes implanted in us under colonialism, and which are only intensified by cultural nationalism. (605)

Irele's de-racialisation and historicisation of European culture re-positions 'Western' modernity as no longer just Western property, and no longer even necessarily Western. At a stroke, the need to agonise over cultural definitions is removed, and what matters instead is the uses to which culture is put and the interests which it serves.

While he emphasises the importance of modern science and technology, Irele does not under-value cultural products and expressions which have originated in Africa. He asserts that he has "not come to bury our traditional culture under a foolish scorn inspired by an alienated consciousness" (604). In discussing the influence of African art on modernist aesthetics and design, he remarks how strange it is "that your ordinary Westernized African cannot suffer the presence of an African mask in his sitting room, side by side with his videorecorder" (605). The value of traditional arts is emphasised rhetorically, by his use of Yoruba proverbs to advance his arguments (603–604). In Irele's hands, the mask and machine "side by side" signal neither a strained hybridity nor a bland synthesis, but rather an open-ended, creative process. His address asserts resilience, hope and agency.

It is interesting to return to Mohapeloa's document in the light of Irele's text. In seeking to develop new postcolonial works from African, European and American forms, Mohapeloa shares the spirit of Irele's arguments. Yet he is unable to express his ideas with the same assertiveness: the tone of his proposal betrays the need to subvert whiteness with subtle hints rather than direct attack. His position is analogous to the precarious geographic and economic location of his country in relation to apartheid South Africa. Counsellor Mashologu's first letter to Tracey shows a willingness to support the application, yet he and his Lesotho government colleagues were probably happy to follow the latter's advice, which relieved them of the need to raise funds. Mohapeloa's proposed travels would have allowed him to interact with scholars and composers like Nketia. Tracey's refusal to recommend freedom of movement (which he himself could take for granted) conspired with material conditions to isolate Mohapeloa from an international community of African scholarship and musicianship.

Considering Irele's address in relation to Nketia's article, the former overcomes the sense of uncertainty the latter seems to display in its approach to race. Irele confronts the existence of racism head-on, while undermining racialised boundaries. Differences in tone and style notwithstanding, however, the two have much in common. Both authors situate their primary concern with improving conditions in Africa within a global context and reserve the right to choose whatever paradigms and methods they consider most appropriate for their tasks.

Tracey died before the publication of the above-mentioned texts by Irele and Nketia. We can only imagine how he would have reacted to them. He would perhaps have been pleased to read Nketia's largely positive assessment of his own work, yet I am not sure whether he would have been comfortable with the very idea of a black scholar critically assessing his white counterparts. From available evidence, he might have responded to Irele with reactionary anger similar to that displayed in his marginalia directed against Braithwaite. For Tracey displays the "racial and cultural arrogance" which Irele's text refutes. Some of his own ideas – concerning the possibility of productively combining traditional and modern cultural elements, for instance, or the adaptability of indigenous languages for contemporary use – are not incompatible with Irele's arguments. Yet, acceptance of Irele's redefinition of modernity would entail overturning the hierarchical structure underlying his own performance of whiteness as authority on blackness. Racist assumptions of white superiority and black immaturity, and their corresponding exclusions, prevent Tracey from following certain of his own insights to progressive conclusions.

As we have seen with regard to *Zulu Paradox*, Tracey's position within the same text is often far from consistent with regard to race. Indeed, his racial ideas are neither formulated nor expressed with logical consistence or coherence, for Tracey's whiteness assumes an *idea* of its own superior rationality, without feeling the need to submit that idea to rational scrutiny. Contrasting naturalist or historicist views on race (or combinations thereof) emerge at different times and places, and may also serve different pragmatic purposes, in attracting either conservative or liberal white readers, for example. Furthermore, while racism pervades Tracey's work, it is often more or less disguised, depending on his audience and rhetorical context. For those wishing to commemorate a positive image of Tracey, consistent with their own non-racialism, selective quotation from certain of his texts may easily minimise, if not quite eradicate, problematic elements. A thorough assessment of his archive – encompassing inclusions and exclusions, contributions and constraints – requires full acknowledgement of his racism, however. Such acknowledgement participates in the work of epistemological decolonisation undertaken by Fanon, Mudimbe, Irele, Nketia and many others. It does not seek to erase Tracey's achievements. Rather, it hopes to ensure his work's ongoing relevance by giving due and proper attention to the voices and circumstances of the black authors and artists represented within his collections.

In this chapter I have shown Tracey's whiteness as exclusionary racism – in works like *Zulu Paradox* and in acts of writing with very specific material effects, such as the correspondence which prevents Mohapeloa's travels. Here, as in my first chapter, the texts

through which I have been reading Tracey have placed him mainly in the roles of explorer (or expert) and missionary (or secular philanthropist), while the settler has also been a constant, if less overt, presence. My next chapter will shift the spotlight to the roles of administrator and trader, and present Tracey as an entrepreneur accumulating forms of capital in various fields while *directly* promoting the interests of colonial commerce and government.



## CHAPTER THREE

### MANAGING CULTURE POSITIONS – CAPITAL – TRANSITIONS

I am glad to see that you are thinking of using songs for propaganda purposes as undoubtedly a good song can work wonders.

Even if the voice is the voice of Jacob the hand which writes the song must be the hand of Esau, if you remember the parable. In other words, the song must be composed by an African with easy flowing Nyanja words in the locally acceptable style. Your problem, naturally, will be to find a local African who is on your side and can express himself adequately in song. (Tracey 1960)<sup>45</sup>

It will be noted that although the headquarters of the I.L.A.M. are situated in South Africa on account of its developed technical resources which the operation of printing and the processing and pressing of phonograph records demands, the Library itself is a continent-wide organization with no political affiliations, and is concerned with the musics of all Africa south of the Sahara. (Tracey 1961 “International”, 2)<sup>46</sup>

Two assertions about Tracey are often repeated.<sup>47</sup> One of these describes him as ‘a man of his time’. This phrase tends to function as both alibi and disguise, allowing speakers to emphasise their own distance from the colonial period while explaining Tracey’s involvement in its processes as historical necessity. Once he is acknowledged as having been unavoidably subject to social conditioning there is usually no further enquiry into specific details of his alignment with, or participation in, oppressive structures of racist exclusion.<sup>48</sup>

The other commonly recurring statement, which affirms his *apolitical* distance from apartheid and colonial governments, echoes Tracey’s own denial of “political affiliations” for a scholarly readership in the second extract quoted above. By contrast, the opening quotation, from unpublished correspondence, undermines any such assertion of ‘neutrality’. Originating from the same period, the disparate contexts of these fragments evince contrasting political

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<sup>45</sup> These lines come from the opening section of Tracey’s letter of 20 January 1960, to Vernon Brelsford, Director of Information for the Central African Federation (then comprising Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe).

<sup>46</sup> This is the closing paragraph of a brief article describing ILAM’s services and systems, titled “The International Library of African Music”, which appears in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*, published by Indiana University, Bloomington (1961).

<sup>47</sup> I have encountered these statements in numerous conversations with people associated with ILAM. They also occur in commemorative texts such as Glasspiegel’s radio documentary and the exhibition *For Future Generations* (2010).

<sup>48</sup> Fred Hendricks used the phrase “a man of his time” very differently in his speech at the exhibition opening at the Origins Centre, to introduce, not avoid, a discussion of Tracey’s paternalism and problematic attitudes. Hendricks argues that, while honouring Tracey’s contribution, “we would be remiss in not also providing an accurate account of his attitudes and thinking about race” (2010).

standpoints. In the second chapter, I noted logical inconsistencies in Tracey's writings about race. Here, there are directly opposing self-representations: the public denial of affiliations expressed openly in private.

The patterns of colonial whiteness discussed in the previous two chapters are certainly political, broadly speaking. While the texts examined thus far already evidence Tracey's ideological alignment with ruling systems of his era, they retain a certain distance from the dirty workings of governance in the narrow, more conventional sense. As I shall show, correspondence with a representative of the Rhodesian Federation reveals rather more direct involvement. The letters between Tracey and Vernon Brelsford provide a glimpse of the practical *application* of Tracey's cultural product by colonial bureaucracy in the midst of the crisis preceding its demise.

What may be termed the dominant Tracey narrative not only claims disinterest with regard to politics, but also portrays him as a selfless figure, eschewing economic profit for the greater good. Here, a missionary narrative of sacrifice operates, somewhat at odds with the explorer proclaiming *his* "river". By contrast, Reginald Byron refers to Tracey as a "businessman" in his biographical account of John Blacking's career (1995, 5), a description that resonates with the impression of the entrepreneur advancing his enterprise gained from surveying his collected correspondence.

While my first two chapters foreground exploration and development, this one highlights administration and trade. I shall focus on the pragmatic workings of Tracey's cultural business and the degree to which it was structured to benefit from, and advance, objectives of the colonial political economy. Since power is of primary importance, Bourdieu's theory provides crucial tools for analysis. His key concepts (*habitus*, *field* and *capital*) enhance understanding of Tracey's positions within a complex social network at a time of conflict and transition. So too, Bourdieu's ideas of *practical logic* and *doxa* may help to explain Tracey's seemingly contradictory stances in rhetoric and practice.

I will begin by surveying Tracey's fundraising strategies for ILAM and the geographical vision to which they were aligned. Bourdieu's theory will then be explicated and applied. Thereafter, I will examine the correspondence between Tracey and Brelsford as a late-colonial case study. The final part of the chapter will consider political transition and reaction during the era of independence and apartheid.

## Colonial Geography and ILAM's Funding Trajectory

Tracey's enterprise set the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in its sights. The area in which he actually recorded, though only a portion of his ideal focus, is nonetheless impressive in its scope. Items from large parts of Southern, East and Central Africa are included in the sound archive, produced mainly in the late 1940s and 1950s, which forms the major core of ILAM's collections. Contemporary re-issues of sound compilations from the aforementioned period reference the names of the (now) independent countries represented. Yet to label this body of material 'international' is inaccurate in some respects, since all Tracey's recordings were produced under colonial or apartheid conditions.

As the Cowell Award correspondence demonstrates, Tracey's geo-political conception of Africa before independence tended towards a broadly unified collection of colonial *territories*, rather than a group of separate countries or quasi-states. These territories were ruled by different European governments – British, French, Belgian and Portuguese – and by more or less independent white settler administrations. Despite the variety of governing entities involved, comments on expeditions to different regions (in correspondence or published reports from the period) suggest a general commonality in terms of support provided for Tracey and his teams by officials. For example, an extract from Tracey's published account of his 1958 recording tour, describing part of the journey northwards to Malawi (then Nyasaland), reads as follows:

Our first call along the route was the Mtoko District in a Reserve of Sena/Tonga people who are good exponents of the local Mtoko music. We had an excellent session there staying the night at the Native Commissioner's camping site using our own camping kit, commissariat, etc. The music recorded here was very similar to music I had known in 1932 in the same region, singers, musicians and makers of instruments being still alive.

Our next move was across the Zambesi through Tete where I called on the Governor of the Province, Senhor Rodrigues who very kindly telephoned his Furancungo district office to warn them of our arrival and to ask them to arrange a recording session.

After a long delay at the Zambezi ferry we left for Furancungo arriving there after dark. The Administrator Senhor Batista welcomed us and gave us the hospitality of his house and arranged for recordings the next day, mostly among Ngoni people.

Senhor Manuel Albergaria, an agronomist of the Portuguese Scientific Mission to Zambezia very kindly acted as interpreter. We left for Nyasaland the following day crossing the border at Dedza where I made arrangements for our recordings in that district on our way Southwards, as I intended to work in each region starting from the North end of the Central Province.

This was duly arranged upon a visit to the Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Sharp, at Lilongwe before we set out for Dowa and Kota Kota.

Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, found us at the W.N.L.A. Headquarters at Dowa where we enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. W. R. Gemmill, the Nyasaland Director, and made arrangements to visit some of his W.N.L.A. stations in the Central Province. (1958 “Report”, 65)<sup>49</sup>

This account illustrates the ease with which Tracey moved between British- and Portuguese-controlled territory, receiving helpful assistance in both the Central African Federation and Mozambique.

Obtaining sanction from the relevant government authorities was a crucial first step in planning recording tours and Tracey’s requests were met with willingness and hospitality. Regardless of local differences, these official encounters involved similar customs of courtesy and respect for rank and hierarchy. Within a common colonial habitus, Tracey and the rulers’ representatives assumed mutual recognition without question.

With the transformation of colonial territories into new African states, the familiar political milieu in which Tracey operated altered irrevocably in the 1960s. Although the onset of independence in many of the regions with which he was concerned had a major impact on his project, it did not deter him from pursuing plans to expand his influence across the continent. The 1969 publication, *Codification of African Music and Textbook Project*, sets out a proposal for a large-scale cooperative venture consisting of research teams based in all the relevant areas. These teams would be associated with African universities, with support from universities in Europe and the USA. It was envisaged that research results would be published in diverse ways: as a “*complete reference work*” (the “Tome”); as educational textbooks; and in published sound recordings (1969, 6–7). ILAM would “co-ordinate results obtained by the various teams, and prepare them for publication under their particular sections”. It would also “be responsible for all business arrangements concerning the pressing of discs and publication of the recordings of representative items of music”. In addition, the “staff of the Library” would “include two consulting musicologists who will be available upon request to visit teams and thus to help ensure unanimity of action and purpose during the course of the five years of field work”. Accordingly, ILAM’s managerial role in the proposed project would include theoretical direction as well as practical “secretarial functions” (13).

Given the ideological and practical contradictions involved in seeking to obtain genuine input from independent states while continuing to operate under the laws of

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<sup>49</sup> W.N.L.A. – the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, which recruited migrant labour for South African gold mines.

apartheid South Africa, it is not surprising that this project was not realised. What is surprising is that it succeeded in obtaining initial funding (a two-year preliminary grant from the Ford Foundation) and proceeded as far as it did into the planning stages. Through providing ‘complete’ musical coverage of the geo-cultural area he had marked as his unit of study, that is, sub-Saharan or ‘black’ Africa, the Codification Project would have been a logical culmination of Tracey’s work in epistemological terms. It was also another in a series of attempts to raise sufficient finances to secure ILAM’s existence for the future.

In the years between 1948 and the establishment of ILAM as an independent entity in 1954, Tracey worked closely with Gallo Records, which provided premises and facilities and financed recording trips.<sup>50</sup> While its support was invaluable, Gallo could not provide sufficient funding to sustain an organisation on the scale he envisaged. Moreover, it was important for Tracey to establish independence and a certain distance from the commercial recording industry, in order to ensure a reputation for scholarly respectability. His construction of ‘authentic’ African music tends to exclude ‘town’ music from fully African status and to view the latter as a threat, with frequent assertions that commercially produced popular music with ‘Western’ characteristics undermines the survival and development of traditional forms. An overly close relationship with Gallo would thus have been inconsistent with the logic of the academic construction of his field.

The establishment of ILAM in 1954 as an independent “non-profit research organization” was funded by the British Nuffield Foundation and “the Mining industry of Southern Africa” (1973 *Catalogue* Vol. 1, 4–5). The Nuffield Foundation grant was obtained as a result of Tracey’s fundraising efforts on a visit to the United Kingdom in 1953, when he addressed the Royal African Society. As noted in my first chapter, the paper delivered on this occasion emphasised a link between promotion of traditional music and effective ‘native’ administration. Many of those concerned with the government of colonial Africa in the early 1950s had no idea that political change would be so sudden or so soon: the tone of articles of the period in *African Affairs*, for example, indicates a general confidence in colonialism’s survival, at least for the foreseeable future. When the Nuffield grant was made, Tracey and his sponsors were still comfortably ensconced in the same colonial space.

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<sup>50</sup> Although it changed substantially, the relationship between ILAM and Gallo did not end in 1954. Cooperation was maintained and ILAM continued to be housed on Gallo property.

Southern African mining industry funding matched the British contribution to ILAM in 1954.<sup>51</sup> Tracey had been personally involved in small-scale mining ventures during his Zimbabwe days. As large-scale employers of workers from many parts of the sub-continent, mines provided important points of contact with musicians from different areas, and a number of his recordings were made at mine premises. Another point of contact between Tracey and the mining industry was ‘mine dancing’. From his broadcasting days in Durban, Tracey had been involved with promoting public performances of traditional dancing. After his move to Johannesburg in 1947, he became a key figure encouraging the expansion of dancing facilities and the presentation of mine dances as regular, formalised events. (These performances combined audiences of black mine workers with mainly white visitors and tourists in racially segregated areas.) He designed a number of dance arenas and provided support and advice to management and performers.

As Badenhorst and Mather demonstrate, indigenous dancing had been an important activity on gold mines long before Tracey’s arrival on the scene. They note that “miners brought their dances to the compounds spontaneously and as early as the 1890s mine management sanctioned and even encouraged competitions between teams” (1997, 477). From the 1920s, mine management involved itself more strongly in promoting traditional dancing as a desirable form of recreation for both performers and spectators. Such dancing was an important aspect of an industry-wide coordinated programme which promoted ‘tribalism’ as a form of social control (477–479). Tracey played an important role in publicising and supporting mine dancing performances from the 1940s onwards. His ideal African was perfectly consistent with the mining industry’s valorisation of the ‘tribal’ or traditional in support of its migrant labour policy.

While he welcomed large financial grants from mining capital, Tracey’s vision for ILAM’s sustainability in the 1950s foregrounded ongoing commercial transactions rather than donor funding. For an annual subscription, corporate members received a supply of recorded music intended to entertain and benefit African workers, which might be played during work shifts or during periods of leisure for workers in hostels or mine compounds. Mini-record libraries were supplied with metadata such as catalogue cards and the service included training in selecting material and balancing programme content for appropriate ethnic and stylistic variety.

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<sup>51</sup> Mining capital would continue to provide some support for ILAM well into the period of its association with Rhodes University.

ILAM signed on a number of clients, mainly but not exclusively from the mining sector. The level of mining participation did not turn out as Tracey had intended, however. While he had lobbied for industry-wide membership, which would include *all* mines in the area for a much larger sum, the Chamber of Mines was not prepared to take this step. Instead, individual mines were encouraged to sign up on an ad hoc basis. Despite some initial promise, corporate membership did not expand as envisaged and existing members gradually fell away, not renewing their contracts. The recordings did not prove to be popular with many workers and management questioned the value of their investment.<sup>52</sup>

Nonetheless, Tracey obtained considerable financial support from mining capital for ILAM.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, there seems to have been little direct funding from the apartheid South African government. Contrary to McConnachie and Loble's statements that Tracey had no involvement with, and did not seek funding from, the apartheid government, however, correspondence files in fact contain copies of letters appealing for support, addressed to senior government representatives like H.F. Verwoerd.

ILAM's official constitution as a Section 21 (non-profit) company in South Africa was itself shaped by apartheid legislation. Correspondence concerning the registration process between the government and Tracey (via the legal firm of Webber, Wentzel, Hofmeyr, Turnbull and Company) is revealing in this regard.<sup>54</sup> A copy of a letter from the Registrar of Companies, dated 5 January 1956, opens as follows:

Referring to your letter of 29<sup>th</sup>. September, 1954, I wish to inform you that the application by the above-named Library for registration under Section 21 of the Companies Act has received the careful consideration of the Honourable the Minister of Economic Affairs in consultation with the Departments of Education, Arts & Science, and Native Affairs.

The Minister has now indicated that he is not prepared to grant the application in its present form. He would, however, have no objection to registration under section 21 if the committee referred to in Clause 33 of the Articles should consist exclusively of Europeans – assisted, if need be, by native counsellors. In any event, he sees no reason why the United Kingdom should have more representatives on the Committee than any of the other countries and would like to see that all countries have equal representation.

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<sup>52</sup> See Loble in *For Future Generations* (2010, 90).

<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to note that the bulk of this funding came from the copper mining industry in what was then Northern Rhodesia, with smaller grants from South African gold mining.

<sup>54</sup> ILAM applied for Section 21 status in 1954 but only received final approval in May 1957 (HTC-W011 and HTC-W012-01).

The “countries” referred to above are South Africa, Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal. To facilitate registration, ILAM was prepared to compromise and reduce the proposed number of British representatives from two to one, according to Tracey’s response, dated 9 February 1956.

Tracey’s letter also makes it plain that the Minister’s concern about the racial composition of the organisation’s governing body was based upon a misunderstanding. He quotes an extract from minutes of an ILAM meeting a few days earlier, which includes the following statement: “It appeared from the letter that the Minister’s office was under the impression that the African Music Society and the Library were organisations composed of African native members. This was not so, and the assurance that the affairs of the Library were in European hands would be confirmed.” This is reiterated in Tracey’s own words: “With regard to the comment by the Minister on Clause 33 of the Articles of Association, would you kindly assure him that the Library is controlled solely by Europeans.”

In fact, the African Music Society did have a minority of “African native” members, but had been managed by whites all along. The ‘requirements’ of apartheid racial policy did not pose an ideological barrier for Tracey and his associates. Rather, the tone of the letter suggests annoyance that the Minister had thought it necessary to raise the issue: as if it were ridiculous to assume that an organisation which purported to study and encourage African arts might want to include African people in its governing structure.

Accordingly, ILAM was formally established as white, by definition. As its racial structure under apartheid legislation did not provide for representation from independent African states on the basis provided for colonial powers, it would no longer be properly “international” after European withdrawal from the rest of Africa. Tracey’s public statement that, despite its South African location, his Library was a “continent-wide organization with no political affiliations”, is self-evidently absurd, according to its own constitution.

Unsuccessful attempts to sell membership deals to South African government departments and municipalities featured largely in Tracey’s approaches to apartheid officials in the 1950s. Prior to ILAM’s establishment, he had already attempted to sell a full set of records to the Department of Native Affairs. A letter to H.F. Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, dated 12 November 1951, reads as follows:

Dear Dr. Verwoerd [sic],

I expect you will be interested to see the result of my first issue of African records. Many of those which I used in the lecture which you attended in Pretoria on my return from East Africa have been included.



I would like to think that the Department of Native Affairs would care to have a copy of my Transcription Library, which is, as you know, an entirely South African effort towards the study of the greater African problems. It would be most encouraging to myself and my staff if the Department were to order the Transcription Library as one of their works of reference.

A response seven months later (4 June 1952) – not by Verwoerd himself – informed Tracey that the Minister had “decided not to acquire a copy of your Transcription Library” although the Department would consider “the purchase of selected records from your Library when such records are required for use by Departmental cinema units”. In 1954 there was correspondence with the Secretary for Native Affairs, W.W. Eiselen, eliciting his support for ILAM’s non-profit registration, and appeals for journal funding for *African Music* in 1955 resulted in a research grant from the Department of Education, Arts and Science.

Attempts to enrol apartheid government departments and municipalities as corporate members seem to have begun in 1956. ILAM’s correspondence files contain copies of a number of letters addressed to various officials in Native Affairs, the support of which was critical to pave the way for other departments and municipalities. An extract from a letter dated 20 April 1956 provides a good example of Tracey’s sales pitch:

We would like to invite the Department of Native Affairs and the Department of Native Education to participate in this important work now being undertaken by the Library, by becoming Corporate Members of our Library service.

Membership will ensure that both Departments will be in full touch with developments all over Africa in the realm of *recreational material for native administrative purposes* everywhere, in Municipal native locations, in industrial locations, in educational institutions, and elsewhere.

The Library service scheme has been accepted, amongst others, by the Chamber Of Mines, which has recommended all the Gold Mines to join the service. The three de Beers Diamond Mines have already joined and we expect the Copper Mines of Northern Rhodesia to do so also. The list of Corporate Members attached will indicate the breadth of the response which we have already received from the country.

We attach copies of our Memorandum, which will explain in detail the operation of the Library service and the financial requirements to make it effective.

It would be particularly encouraging to all those who have social service responsibilities towards Bantu employees if your two Departments were to enroll [sic] as Members. It would also greatly assist your Education Officers to frame practical recreational policies for native schools, based upon authentic African compositions, and activities connected with music. (my emphasis)

The italicised section marks a key phrase: “recreational material for native administrative purposes”. Here Tracey states plainly what he implies euphemistically elsewhere.

Foregrounding the use of African music to facilitate administration, his argument promises benefits for administrators in the first instance, rather than dwelling upon potential benefits for those being administered.

In the same letter, he writes that “participation by the larger South African Municipalities is assured provided your Department indicates its approval of the work to be undertaken, recommending membership” and cites assurances received from “Town Clerks and/or Managers of Municipal Native Administrations” in the cities and towns of “Johannesburg, Pretoria, Benoni, Springs, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth” that “a circular from you will immediately ensure their enrolling as Corporate Members”.

Another letter to Native Affairs, dated 28 June 1956, describes membership success in colonial territories outside South Africa:

You will be glad to hear that since I last wrote I have visited the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa. All three territories have officially recognised the Library and we have managed to enroll [sic] a further twenty Corporate Members and are expecting their confirmation in the near future. Amongst these are the Municipalities of Salisbury and Bulawayo, the Department of Native Education of Southern Rhodesia, the Radio Stations of all three territories, and the majority of the Copper Mines both in Northern Rhodesia and Katanga.

Again, on 29 August 1956, Tracey informs the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs that “we expect that most of the Native Education Departments throughout the whole continent will be joining us as Corporate Members”.

On 29 August, he also provides the following motivational statement concerning his project: “Our work is devoted entirely towards the improvement of social and industrial relations between black and white and the development of character amongst Africans through a proper appreciation of their own arts”. Given their addressee and their purpose in eliciting support, these words are surely not innocent. Contextualised and taken to its logical conclusion, this quote hints at an eagerness to support the architects of grand apartheid with a programme of psychological engineering, promoting African submission to labour exploitation under white supremacy.

These appeals to the Department of Native Affairs did not work. I found no evidence of any major apartheid funding for ILAM, besides the research and publication grant already mentioned and a grant for Blacking’s research referred to in Lobley’s thesis (2010, 159). (Tracey did, however, publish a number of articles in government propaganda publications.

He also made government-sponsored educational films and individual departments made use of ILAM material on an occasional basis.)<sup>55</sup>

Reasons for the lack of response are not clear from the correspondence. It is quite likely that Tracey's British connections provoked a level of suspicion. And the fact that South African music comprised only a portion of the archive might have led officials to consider it of limited relevance. Furthermore, while Tracey's world view was quite compatible with the ideology of 'separate development',<sup>56</sup> apartheid rulers were reluctant to spend more than meagre amounts of money on services related to the majority of its citizens, even on projects with propaganda value.

Given the coming of independence to many countries in Africa, the failure of the corporate membership scheme and the apartheid government's refusal of appeals for support, ILAM's financial position was in danger by the 1960s. Tracey's attention then focused on the USA and Ford Foundation funds provided some interim relief. As already noted, however, the Codification Project was not realised, despite a series of lecture tours and intense lobbying of universities and foundations with the support of some powerfully connected friends. Tracey's colonial outlook would have offended some, while those who wished to support him could not necessarily afford to be seen to do so in a changing political context, with the rise of the anti-apartheid and Civil Rights movements. Thus, by the last few years of Tracey's life, in the 1970s, the only viable option for ILAM's future (barring relocation to another country, which he consistently rejected) was incorporation into a South African university. By this time Andrew Tracey had joined his father and was playing an active role in running the organisation. Negotiations with various institutions were undertaken, culminating in the move to Rhodes University in Grahamstown in 1978, after Tracey's death.

Cooperation with universities was important to Tracey, but he had wished to maintain ILAM as a separate, independent entity, rather than be amalgamated into an academic institution. This is understandable, since 'African Music' did not exist as a subject within universities in the mid-twentieth century, neither on its own nor as a significant part of

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<sup>55</sup> Further evidence for ILAM's attempts to obtain apartheid government funding is provided in a letter from Tracey to Joane Pim and members of the ILAM Interim Committee dated 9 March 1959, where it is stated that "the Library has approached the Government of the Union of South Africa for a grant which will make up, as far as possible, the balance between the present number and the ideal figure of 100 Corporate Members". A later letter, from Pim to Gavin Relly on 24 June 1971, suggests that many such unsuccessful attempts were made over nearly two decades. Pim writes: "The Department of Bantu Affairs, in spite of numerous approaches by various categories of people, have not subscribed 50 cents, in spite of their repeated assertions in public that they seek to uplift the Bantu people".

<sup>56</sup> Remarking on affinities between Tracey's views and those of apartheid proponents is not to say that he was entirely comfortable with the hyper-legislation of apartheid racial policy.

‘Music’, which still tended to be considered as Western classical by definition.

Ethnomusicology was just being established in South Africa. (Tracey was not in favour of the ‘ethno’ prefix in any case, preferring to describe his work as ‘musicology’.) Moreover, ILAM would not fit easily into a university environment: the hybrid nature of its activities was unconventional in comparison to most academic research institutes. Commercial and colonial administrative interests had had an unusually *direct* influence in ILAM’s formative years.

Tracey’s personal attitude towards the academic world seems to have been somewhat arrogant and perhaps a bit defensive. In a letter to his brother Leonard, concerning possible involvement with the (then) University of Rhodesia, he wrote the following:

Universities in Africa have been fast asleep insofar as African arts are concerned, and I have had practically no support at all and in some cases hostility from them. So I am rather wary of trusting them. They would like to get my collection for next to nothing, and as I have no university degree they make it pretty plain on all occasions that they are far superior and that I am just not in their class. If I was to be associated with Salisbury University they would have to make it well worth my while with firm guarantees that I would not be at the beck and call of just any department. I have been doing the work which they have neglected, or have been far too pedantic to consider. On the other hand if they would put up the money for my staff for a given period of time, I would produce the text books which would become the standard works of reference from primary school level right up to honours degree in the aural arts. (28 October 1964)

He himself had never studied at a university, yet *he* was an acknowledged expert in a field of knowledge universities had only recently begun to recognise. Receiving an honorary doctorate in music from the University of Cape Town in 1965 was significant for Tracey: his subsequent use of and references to his title demonstrate both its symbolic importance and a certain self-consciousness with regard to it.<sup>57</sup> He visited universities on three continents as a guest lecturer, but had not been socialised into the everyday rituals of academic life.

It is also important to consider the company established by Tracey, African Musical Instruments (AMI), in relation to ILAM. AMI manufactures standardised musical instruments with African origins. In the early years, with which we are concerned, its products were mainly of the mbira (or lamellophone) type, starting with the ‘Hugh Tracey kalimba’, which Tracey patented. While ILAM was an independent non-profit research organisation, AMI was (and still is) a privately owned, for profit, commercial company. Legally separate, in

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<sup>57</sup> For example, in a letter to M. Davidson, a researcher in Zambia, about the possibility of her enrolment for a postgraduate degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Tracey writes: “In my case I was lucky because they gave me my Doctorate without submitting a special thesis as they considered my published work was adequate for that purpose” (8 May 1967).

practice there seems to have been a high degree of symbiosis between the two bodies during the Roodepoort days, in Tracey's life-time. They were both managed by Tracey and they were both concerned with African music, albeit with a difference in scale and focus. He made use of opportunities offered by official ILAM business to promote AMI, and vice versa. During tough financial times at ILAM, earnings from AMI were used to subsidise the Library.

Clearly, the accumulation of economic capital was not Tracey's primary motivation. Had that been so, he would have put his considerable talents to work in other ways and followed a different path. I would argue that he *did* profit through his work in African Music, however, though the capital sought and accumulated was largely cultural and symbolic, rather than economic. Conventional financial capital was obviously also essential to further his vision and ILAM's independence from state and academic structures meant that securing economic sustenance consumed a considerable amount of energy. People and organisations must eat, and money was needed both to support his institution's work and to secure a comfortable existence for himself and his family. In addition to running ILAM and AMI, Tracey was also engaged in farming to supplement income. (Without undermining his skills and enterprise, it should be noted that, like most white ventures in the Union and apartheid Republic days, his business interests were subsidised by underpaid black labour.)

An overview of Tracey's economic concerns during the ILAM years provides a sense of the variety of structures with which he was connected in one way or another, whether governmental, commercial or academic. His work itself may be seen to be structured by various overlapping social fields characterising his time and place. Tracey's performance of whiteness and his representations of race and blackness (as discussed in the two previous chapters) embody aspects and expressions of a particular colonial habitus. According to Bourdieu, the agent, informed by his or her habitus, enacts strategies and occupies positions in relations of cooperation or competition with others within particular fields of activity, in response to opportunities and constraints presented by changing circumstances. Agents' position-takings are enabled by the possession of capital in various forms, and driven by strategies for its reproduction and accumulation. Tracey's trajectories within a number of fields are concerned with different forms of capital: cultural, social and symbolic as well as economic.

Already touched upon in previous chapters, the concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* require further elaboration. The following section provides an overview of Bourdieu's theory in order to clarify its relevance to Tracey's work-performance.

## **Bourdieu: Individuals, Groups, Structures and Power in Time and Social Space**

At the core of Bourdieu's sociology lies a concern with overcoming what he considers a false opposition between objectivism and subjectivism in the social sciences. He characterises his work as "constructivist structuralism" or "structuralist constructivism", explaining these terms as follows:

By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there exist, within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems (language, myths, etc.), objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notably those we ordinarily call social classes. (1989, 14)

In the introduction to Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), Randal Johnson comments that "Bourdieu sought to develop a concept of agent free from the voluntarism and idealism of subjectivist accounts and a concept of social space free from the deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many objectivist approaches" (4). For Bourdieu, structures and human agents are mutually constitutive and "the two moments, the objectivist and the subjectivist, stand in a dialectical relationship" (1989, 15). *Habitus* is key to this dialectic, as both product and creator of social structures.

*Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) provides an extensive explanation of the workings of habitus, which Bourdieu defines as follows:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (1977, 72)

The notion of habitus does not exclude consciousness, but is not reliant upon it. The individual habitus is formed from early childhood onwards in an ongoing process of education which is only partly formal and explicit. Dispositions generated by habitus are embodied in physical postures, habits, accents of speech, ways of moving and performing

tasks. Thus, “body *hexis*” (82) is an important component in habitus formation and expression. Dispositions of the habitus also function as mental structures, shaping both the realm of explicit discourse and, more significantly, the “commonsense world” of *doxa*, that which “*goes without saying because it comes without saying*” (167).

Doxa is aligned to “practical logic”, which is opposed to the logic of theory because it requires a minimal “economy of logic” to ensure functional coherence and presupposes “a loss of rigour for the sake of greater simplicity and generality” (109–110). The logic of social practice is enacted in relation to specific situations without recourse to the totalising and systematising logic which academic study might bring to bear upon it. (Though Bourdieu also reminds us that any such study emerges from an epistemological habitus and displays its own type of doxa in the form of unexamined assumptions.<sup>58</sup>) Similarly, the meaning of actions tends to exceed the conscious understanding of individual agents:

It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know. The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent’s practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less “sensible” and “reasonable”. That part of practices which remains obscure in the eyes of their own producers is the aspect by which they are objectively adjusted to other practices and to the structures of which the principle of their production is itself the product. (79)

Bourdieu also describes habitus as “the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” (78). Regulation occurs through the two-fold conditionings of environmental circumstances (such as the degree of access to resources) and socialisation (which is itself structured in accordance with prevailing conditions). Improvisation is ongoing because practice takes place *in time* and situations are always subject to flux. In Bourdieu’s words, habitus “produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions [...] while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation”. Because they are subject to variation, practices are never entirely mechanistically determined, as, conversely, they are never completely ‘free’ or disconnected from context. Thus, practices “can be accounted for only by relating the objective *structure* defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating, that is, to the *conjuncture* which, short of a radical transformation, represents a particular state of this structure” (1977, 78).

Improvisation occurs in response to historical developments, but also as a result of variations

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<sup>58</sup> *Homo Academicus* (1988) presents Bourdieu’s research on the academic field to which he belonged.

within social space. No matter how cohesive the group, separate individuals are never exactly alike. Within commonly structured macro conditions, countless different configurations occur at the micro level. In the same family, for instance, the number of children and their gender, order of birth, and age gaps will impact each one in different ways. Differences are often associated with hierarchy and every person has a particular position in the social structure, which is reinforced through his or her habitus:

In fact it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions which are so many marks of *social position* and hence of the social distance between objective positions, that is, between social persons conjuncturally brought together (in physical space, which is not the same thing as social space) and correlatively, so many reminders of this distance and of the conduct required in order to “keep one’s distance” or to manipulate it strategically, whether symbolically or actually, to reduce it (easier for the dominant than for the dominated), increase it, or simply maintain it (by not “letting oneself go”, not “becoming familiar”, in short, “standing on one’s dignity”, or on the other hand, refusing to “take liberties” and “put oneself forward”, in short “knowing one’s place” and staying there). (82)

The actions of individuals, then, are largely determined through habitus, which works as a conservative force and tends to reproduce and maintain existing power relations and hierarchies. Bourdieu’s model is not entirely deterministic, however. He does leave some room for individual subjectivity and agency. Conscious understanding and intent, while not considered necessary or major components of much social practice, are not excluded. So, although Bourdieu stresses that we should not “reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors” (1977, 73), the implication is that authors have intentions. He also concedes that it is “never ruled out that the responses of the habitus may be accompanied by a strategic calculation” (74) and recognises that “individuality [...] can never entirely be removed from sociological discourse” (86).

*Outline of a Theory of Practice* emphasises the structural aspects of habitus and places little overt emphasis on individual agency and the power of consciously driven action. Yet the ethnographic examples of Kabyle practice in Algeria, which inform the work’s theoretical structure, convey an implicit awareness of intent in describing manoeuvres and manipulations constantly occurring within conformity to custom.

Elsewhere, and increasingly in later publications, Bourdieu places more emphasis on consciously motivated, intentional action as a force in its own right, capable of changing



society. In “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, for example, he discusses the danger of confusing analytically constructed “classes on paper” with “real classes” or “*corporate bodies*, permanent groups endowed with permanent organs or representation”, in relation to which members feel loyalty and an awareness of belonging (1989, 17). Classes in the latter sense are constructed through “work” and not “given in ‘social reality’” (17–18).

Nonetheless, “this in no way means that one can construct anything anyhow, either in theory or in practice” (18). The work which aims to create groups as active social bodies “is all the more likely to succeed when the agents that it seeks to assemble, to unify, to constitute into a group, are closer to each other in social space (and therefore belonging to the same theoretical class)” (17). Moreover, the agents undertaking such work are themselves subject to the determinings of habitus as well as external conditions.

Ongoing actions, or position-takings, enabled and constrained by habitus, occur within particular *fields* and are endowed and concerned with forms of *capital*. Fields are dynamic social spaces coinciding with particular areas of activity. Depending on the broader context, they may be more or less clearly specialised. In fairly homogenous societies where overall resources and the range of occupations are limited, such as traditional Kabyle, fields are loosely structured, relatively undifferentiated and tend to be more closely regulated by an overarching communal habitus. (Nonetheless, in these types of societies, practices are often strictly and hierarchically divided by gender, age and sometimes hereditary caste.) In any society, however, separate types of practice also carry their own intrinsic logic – different kinds of activity (such as farming, weaving or cooking, for example) require specific tools, materials, movements, postures and skills. The type of activity undertaken therefore also influences the manner in which work is ritualised and the way in which conceptual schemes are applied in each area.

In modern, wealthy, capitalist states, such as Bourdieu’s France in the twentieth century, fields are more diverse, differentiated, specialised and often institutionalised. Influential fields are situated within, and affected by, the broader “field of power” which is “situated at the dominant pole of the field of class relations” (Bourdieu 1993, 37–38). Yet fields may also be relatively autonomous and exhibit trends and values which are at odds with norms elsewhere in the same society. External forces are not experienced simply and directly, but filtered through the rules, beliefs and forms of capital dominant within a particular field. According to Johnson,

External determinants can have an effect only through transformations in the structure of the field itself. In other words, the field's structure *refracts*, much like a prism, external determinants in terms of its own logic, and it is only through such refraction that external factors can have an effect on the field. The degree of autonomy of a particular field is measured precisely by its ability to refract external demands into its own logic. (1993, 14)

As such, different fields exist in homologous relationships with one another and the field of power within which they are situated: in Johnson's words, "the structural *homology* between fields does not imply structural *identity*" (8).

A significant part of Bourdieu's research focuses on the cultural fields of literature, music and art. He historicises these by demonstrating that their establishment as independent spheres of artistic production is a recent development in Western modernity. During the nineteenth century, the increasing autonomy of artistic fields became associated with the idea of 'art for art's sake' and "the professional ideology of the uncreated 'creator'" sustained a romantic vision of the artist as individual genius (Bourdieu 1993, 259). The French artistic field of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Bourdieu defines it, is homologous with the subordinate ("dominated") section of the dominant class (38). It is most autonomous in the symbolically dominant "sub-field of restricted production" (53), which conveys the idea of an "economic world reversed" in that cultural capital is valued more than economic capital (29). The sub-field of mass production and sales, which obeys capitalist economic logic, is less autonomous. Characterised by a relatively high degree of autonomy, the field of cultural production has a low degree of institutionalisation compared to fields associated with formal professions which impose strict criteria for entry. Therefore,

one of the most significant properties of the field of cultural production, explaining its extreme dispersion and the conflicts between rival principles of legitimacy, is the extreme permeability of its frontiers and, consequently, the extreme diversity of the 'posts' it offers, which defy any unilinear hierarchization. It is clear from comparison that the field of cultural production demands neither as much inherited economic capital as the economic field nor as much educational capital as the university sub-field or even sectors of the field of power such as the top civil service – or even the field of the 'liberal professions'. However, precisely because it represents one of the *indeterminate sites* in the social structure, which offer ill-defined posts, waiting to be made rather than ready made, and therefore extremely elastic and undemanding, and career paths which are themselves full of uncertainty and extremely dispersed (unlike bureaucratic careers, such as those offered by the university system), it attracts agents who differ greatly in their properties and dispositions but the most favoured of whom are sufficiently secure to be able to disdain a university career and to take on the risks of an occupation which is not a 'job' (since it is almost always combined with a private income or a 'bread-and-butter' occupation). (Bourdieu 1993, 43)

The artistic field encompasses not only the artists directly responsible for works but all those involved in establishing and maintaining belief in the value of these works as art. These agents would include people in positions such as sponsors, publishers, concert producers and promoters, gallery owners, reviewers, academics, cultural archivists, members of state-funded arts bodies, and, of course, consumers. Artistic productions do not appear in a vacuum, but are related to existing works in the field. Similarly, artists are situated, and position themselves, in relation to the positions occupied by others at a particular moment, whether in opposition or solidarity. While a common, underlying belief in the existence and value of ‘art’ is a prerequisite for participation in it, the field is characterised by ongoing contestation for legitimation. As Bourdieu defines it,

*The space of literary or artistic position-takings*, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field – literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics, etc. – is inseparable from the *space of literary or artistic positions* defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. (30)

The value and possibilities of artistic standpoints relate to the “*space of possibles*” currently existing within the field, and shifts within the field – changes “in the universe of options [...] simultaneously offered for producers and consumers to choose from” – alter the meanings attached to existing works (30). Artistic struggles find expression not merely in explicit, publicly oriented discourse, but also in doxa, “self-evident givens”, which therefore “remained unremarked”:

It is difficult to conceive of the vast amount of information which is linked to membership of a field and which all contemporaries immediately invest in their reading of works: information about institutions [...] and about persons, their relationships, liaisons and quarrels, information about the ideas and problems which are ‘in the air’ and circulate orally in gossip and rumour. (1993, 31–32)

With regard to critical theory and analysis, Bourdieu seeks to overcome the limitations of both internal readings (which locate artistic meaning entirely within decontextualised works, or systems of works) and external readings (which assume direct, unmediated causality between works and dominant political or economic forces in the broader society, viewing artists and works as straightforward reflections of class, for

example). He does not entirely reject either form of analysis, but advances his theory of field as the vital mediation between the two types.<sup>59</sup>

In summary, therefore, *habitus* may be defined as the accumulative embodiment of a sense of social place, by which individuals and groups are located and interrelated. *Field*, meanwhile, represents the dynamic space of positions and position-takings in which competing agents are nonetheless united by forms of common action and belief. Bourdieu's third key term, *capital*, refers to the resources which enable agents within the field and which they struggle to retain and accumulate, whether by competition or cooperation. Viewed broadly, capital is only partly material. As Bourdieu defines it in "The Forms of Capital",

Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its "incorporated," embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. It is what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle. (1986, 46)

Capital "takes time to accumulate" and, in its "potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being". It therefore tends to promote inertia and reinforce inequality: it "is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible" (46).

Bourdieu proposes a "general science of the economy of practices, which would treat mercantile exchange as a particular case of exchange in all its forms" (47), and rejects narrow economic theory "which is the historical invention of capitalism" (46). Limiting the notion of capital to the overtly self-interested quest for monetary profit, capitalist ideology "has implicitly defined the other forms of exchange as noneconomic, and therefore *disinterested*" (46). Yet there are particular interests at play in this very definition. Prestigious spheres of 'non-economic' activity are dominated by members of the dominant class. In protecting aspects of the broader economy from economic scrutiny, Bourdieu argues, capitalist theory protects dominant trends in the accumulation of capital in all its forms and thus reproduces social hierarchies. Apparent disinterest is the hidden underside of the official economy:

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<sup>59</sup> For example, in *In Other Words*, Bourdieu refers to various types of internal and external analysis and argues that "what we have to do is all these things at the same time" (1990, 147).

The class of practices whose explicit purpose is to maximise monetary profit cannot be defined as such without producing the purposeless finality of cultural or artistic practices and their products; the world of bourgeois man, with his double-entry accounting, cannot be invented without producing the pure, perfect universe of the artist and the intellectual and the gratuitous activities of art-for-art's sake and pure theory.[...]

It is remarkable that the practices and assets thus salvaged from the “icy water of egotistical calculation” (and from science) are the virtual monopoly of the dominant class – as if economism had been able to reduce everything to economics only because the reduction on which that discipline is based protects from sacrilegious reduction everything which needs to be protected. (46–47)

The three major types of capital are economic, cultural and social. While only economic capital has a straightforward equivalence with monetary wealth, there are ways in which cultural and social capital may be converted to economic capital. Similarly, economic capital may buy other kinds of capital in certain forms and provides conditions for the accumulation of cultural and social capital over time.

Cultural capital in its “*embodied* state” coincides with the workings of habitus in that it takes the form of “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”. In the “*objectified* state”, it takes the form of artistic works or “cultural goods” which are the “trace or realization” of embodied cultural capital (47). Finally, it may be institutionalised in the form of qualifications such as university degrees. Institutionalisation attempts to fix and de-personalise cultural capital and enables “conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital” (1986, 51).

Embodiment is “fundamental” to the notion of cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital (“culture, cultivation, *Bildung*”) takes time, which “must be invested personally” and “cannot be done at second hand”. Since this type of wealth becomes “an integral part of the person”, it “cannot be transmitted instantaneously [...] by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange” (48). Its acquisition may be intentional, but (in its most secure form) it may be concentrated “without deliberate inculcation” and “quite unconsciously” (48–49). Embodied cultural capital

always remains marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition which, through the more or less visible marks they leave (such as the pronunciations characteristic of a class or region), help to determine its distinctive value. It cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent; it declines and dies with its bearer (with his biological capacity, his memory, etc.). Because it is thus linked in numerous ways to the person in his biological singularity and is subject to a hereditary transmission which is always heavily disguised, or even invisible, it defies the old,

deep-rooted distinction the Greek jurists made between inherited properties (*ta patroa*) and acquired properties (*epikteta*), i.e., those which an individual adds to his heritage. It thus manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition, e.g., in the matrimonial market and in all the markets in which economic capital is not fully recognized, whether in matters of culture, with the great art collections or great cultural foundations, or in social welfare, with the economy of generosity and the gift. Furthermore, the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic profits for the possessors of a large cultural capital: any given cultural competence (e.g., being able to read in a world of illiterates) derives a scarcity value from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction for its owner. In other words, the share in profits which scarce cultural capital secures in class-divided societies is based, in the last analysis, on the fact that all agents do not have the economic and cultural means for prolonging their children's education beyond the minimum necessary for the reproduction of the labor-power least valorized at a given moment. (1986, 49)

Since embodied capital is the greater the longer the period available for its inculcation, transmission of the most valued cultural capital within the family tends to trump transmission by other means (such as formal education) alone. Cultural capital therefore plays a key role in the social reproduction of existing inequalities.

Turning to objectified cultural capital, Bourdieu notes that cultural objects may be accessed in two ways. Monetary purchase obtains material and legal ownership but does not necessarily provide the means to access works symbolically. Cultural consumption, by contrast, requires the means to interpret the codes of particular works – in other words, symbolic appropriation requires a particular type of habitus and possession of the appropriate embodied cultural capital (50).

Social capital is capital based on human relationships. As Bourdieu defines it, it

is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition [...] which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them [...]. Being based on indissolubly material and symbolic exchanges, the establishment and maintenance of which presuppose reacknowledgment of proximity, they are also

partially irreducible to objective relations of proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space. (1986, 51)

The social capital possessed by individuals depends on the number of people with whom they are effectively connected, who may be called upon, and the volume of (all forms of) capital collectively possessed by the network or group.

Social networks require ongoing energy to build and maintain. Their existence “is not a natural given, or even a social given” but rather “the product of an endless effort of institution” (52). As with cultural capital, strategies for the accumulation of social capital and profits ensuing from it often deny their specifically economic logic. While membership of groups may be extremely profitable, profit in whatever form need not be a conscious motivation for members, since social alliances tend to rely upon affinities of habitus. The exchanges on which social capital is based may subjectively rely upon feelings of altruism or solidarity but nevertheless secure material and symbolic benefits. In Bourdieu’s words, “investment strategies” which produce social networks establish or reproduce useful relationships by

transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights). This is done through the alchemy of *consecration*, the symbolic constitution produced by social institution (institution as a relative – brother, sister, cousin, etc. – or as a knight, an heir, an elder, etc.) and endlessly reproduced in and through the exchange (of gifts, words, women, etc.) which it encourages and which presupposes and produces mutual knowledge and recognition. Exchange transforms the things exchanged into signs of recognition and, through the mutual recognition and the recognition of group membership which it implies, reproduces the group. By the same token, it reaffirms the limits of the group, i.e., the limits beyond which the constitutive exchange – trade, commensality, or marriage – cannot take place. (1986, 52)

As we have seen, Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as capital which is “unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition” (49). Or, as he writes in “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, it is “capital when it is known and recognized [...] through the categories of perception that it imposes” (1989, 21). Symbolic capital, then, is capital perceived as legitimately embodied: that is, publicly elevated, naturalised and apprehended in positive terms such as leadership, honour, fame or excellence. While primarily economic capital may attain symbolic status, this presupposes the addition of cultural and social elements.

Bourdieu argues that all forms of capital are ultimately based on economic capital, “but only in the last analysis”. The “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital” are “never entirely reducible” to straightforward economic definition (1986, 54). Mercantile exchange occurs instantaneously and transparently. By contrast, “the essential ambiguity of social exchange, which presupposes misrecognition, in other words, a form of faith and of bad faith (in the sense of self-deception), presupposes a much more subtle economy of time” (54).

Although he does recognise other forms of division, Bourdieu’s work on social reproduction relies heavily on class as a major structuring force and pays relatively little attention to race. His broad, empirical sociological studies are based in metropolitan France and, despite his ethnographic work in Algeria, he does not provide substantial sociological analysis of the colonial political economy. Nonetheless, Bourdieu’s concepts may productively be applied to colonial space and enrich the theories of race discussed in the previous chapter.

### **Race and Colonial Space: Tracey’s Habitus, Fields and Capital**

According to the standard three-fold division of economic classes, Tracey would be situated in the middle class. Or, using Bourdieu’s two-part division, he would fit within the “dominated section of the dominant class”. As the son of a country doctor, his background was one of relative privilege, yet money was in fairly short supply. He had the status of masculinity, yet, as one of the younger among his siblings, occupied a somewhat subordinate position within the family context. His family habitus would thus have provided a sense of entitlement and possibility while emphasising the need for hard work to prove himself. That he would find opportunities could be taken for granted, as could his own potential to succeed, yet no ready-made position existed for him to occupy.

There was a flourishing market for all kinds of affordable reading matter in early twentieth-century Britain, including established genres designed for young readers. Empire was at its height and popular print culture was saturated with racial and gendered imagery presenting white males as the apex of humanity. ‘Culture’, in the sense of an appreciation for ‘good’ art, music and literature, was widely presented as a vehicle for self-improvement and a necessary component of any well-rounded, ‘civilised’ person. Sport and physical education in



schools had been institutionalised.<sup>60</sup> It was also a time when new technologies in areas such as transport, film and recorded sound were being experienced with spectacular immediacy.<sup>61</sup> In the age of boy scouts and ‘boys’ own’ adventures, the young Tracey would most certainly have absorbed stories and participated in games which promised excitement and victory, provided one exerted the required effort. His upbringing, education and the general cultural milieu inculcated values and attributes such as good manners, broad general knowledge, physical fitness, endurance, curiosity, independence, hard work, a good set of practical skills, an appropriate reverence for science and a bourgeois cultural sensibility. The ideal embodiment of such cultural capital would produce a ‘gentleman’ with confidence in any social or geographical setting: capable of enduring physical hardship, commanding social inferiors without excessive force or unnecessary bluster, surviving in the wilderness or the city, conversing intelligently with social equals and superiors, and adapting to new situations, all with a certain sense of style.<sup>62</sup>

The colonies provided ample opportunities and advanced potential status for young white men of the kind of background which encouraged such a vision of selfhood. It is interesting to note affinities between the colonial field of the period and the artistic field as Bourdieu describes it. The numerical scarcity of whiteness in physical colonial space magnified its ‘value’ as human capital. Accordingly, less economic and educational capital was necessary to enter positions in the colonies than their equivalents in the metropole. Like the field of cultural production, the colonial field for white men was “one of the *indeterminate sites* in the social structure, which offer ill-defined posts, waiting to be made rather than ready made” (Bourdieu 1993, 43). In Tracey’s case, the effects of indeterminacy, in terms of uncertainty, flexibility and potential rewards, would be compounded by his choosing (to some extent making) a field of cultural production within the colonial field of power.

Given the historical juncture and his particular background with its blend of privilege and constraint, Tracey’s initial habitus could be defined as predisposed towards exploration

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, a special issue of *The International Journal of the History of Sport* (2010) containing articles by J.A. Mangan, who traces increasing official emphasis on team sports and athleticism in British education from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and argues for the symbolic importance of sport in British imperial culture. In this regard, it is also worth noting that Tracey was offered a rowing scholarship to Cambridge, which his mother decided he should not take up.

<sup>61</sup> In later life, Tracey published a humorous memoir about his father’s motor car, the first in their district (1966).

<sup>62</sup> The underside to this image of imperial confidence, as Mangan also demonstrates, was an atmosphere of extreme violence and deprivation, in which ‘punishments’ akin to torture were routinely administered to young children and the grown survivors of such assumed the ‘right’ to wield the whip or the cane in turn.

and mobility. How, then, should we consider the next stage of his trajectory? Or, what were the conditions underlying the formation of his habitus in specifically colonial space?

As discussed in my first chapter, Tracey's early experiences in Africa involved interactions with Africans which combined prolonged physical proximity, cultural engagement at the level of learning songs and a new language, and an unquestioned sense of masterhood based on racialised hierarchy (at least on his own part). He seems to have had an aptitude for social adaptability that would have been reinforced by the kind of background I have described. It should therefore not seem surprising that he was able to develop an awareness of appropriate customs and protocol which combined friendliness and formality, conveying a level of respect without being too familiar, when interacting with African people in their home or work contexts. Some of his advice to potential researchers is worth noting in this regard. In the Codification project booklet, the following appears under the sub-heading of "[activities] to be avoided":

Initial over-familiarity, either in conversation or in behaviour. The decorum of good social behaviour is the rule rather than the exception in most of Africa. Participation in song, dance or instrumental performances before reasonable proficiency has been attained. Such *gaucherie* in public may prove mildly amusing, but deplorable. One's eventual participation is one of the most valuable ways of learning, but it should never be done so as to be assertive or exhibitionistic. It is essentially a matter of good manners. (1969 *Codification*, 19)<sup>63</sup>

The above quotation justifiably criticises a kind of arrogance associated with a type of liberal whiteness in its over-eager interactions with 'primitive' culture. Yet, it should not be forgotten that Tracey himself always retained his status as one of the dominant, among the dominated, while out 'in the field'. Whatever sense of *rapport* was established, the colonial hierarchy remained. What Bourdieu terms "strategies of condescension" operate in a subtle manner. These are defined as

those strategies by which agents who occupy a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance between themselves and others, a distance which does not thereby cease to exist, thus reaping the profits of the recognition granted to a purely symbolic denegation of distance ("she is unaffected," "he is not highbrow" or "standoffish," etc.) which implies a recognition of distances. (The expressions I just quoted always have an implicit rider: "she is unaffected, for a duchess," "he is not so highbrow, for a university professor,"

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<sup>63</sup> Andrew Tracey and Gerhard Kubik assisted Tracey as junior co-authors of the *Codification* publication. The tone and style would seem to indicate Tracey's responsibility for this section, however.

and so on.) In short, one can use objective distances in such a way as to cumulate the advantages of propinquity and the advantages of distance, that is, distance and the recognition of distance warranted by its symbolic denegation. (Bourdieu 1989, 16)

I believe that Tracey was most at ease with blackness in situations where the “objective” social and economic distance was clear and unquestioned. By contrast, correspondence and marginalia discussed in the previous chapter reveal an uneasy defensiveness in situations where black people market and manage their own cultural capital, particularly if this appears in symbolic and institutionalised forms approved by ‘Western modernity’. His reactions appear in a range of patronising tones, from obvious condescension to overt hostility, when blackness performs its own equality.

White settlers were spread rather thinly in rural Zimbabwe in the 1920s. Whether in tobacco farming or mining, most of Tracey’s daily human contacts at that time would have been with blacks rather than whites. Yet these very interactions, with those he supervised or employed personally, were overdetermined by both race and class as hierarchical and utilitarian. His musical research developed in the same context: the first singers and instrumentalists he met were ‘his’ labourers who then introduced him to others. Notwithstanding his interest in and affinity for the music, Tracey’s musical project always also carried the weight of *interest* in the sense of profit. With a pre-developed disposition for exploration, he was looking for gaps on the map and claimed an opportunity which became his “river” and ‘made his name’. So too, even if it also involved goodwill and affection, the network of human relationships on which his work was based always bore the marks of capital.

The nascent field of ‘African Music’ was not yet clearly differentiated. Anthropology, however, was already well established with official sanction and direction from government structures, although not yet so institutionalised as to exclude amateur scholars.<sup>64</sup> There was thus an existing launching base and reference point for Tracey’s early studies. In epistemological terms, his research did not emerge from the ether.

Whether fully institutionalised or not, the position of researcher always connotes expertise and relative dominance vis-à-vis the researched. Similarly, the roles of artistic manager, archivist and sound recordist imply the possession of cultural and technological capital. Thus, in Tracey’s case, structurally dominant roles, in terms of cultural capital, were

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<sup>64</sup> Tracey published several articles in the Rhodesian government anthropological journal, *NADA*.

superimposed upon a position of stark economic power, within a broader field of whiteness, on physical territory claimed, and segregated, by conquest.

In summary, then, Tracey's childhood in a middle-class family in early twentieth-century Britain produced a particular type of habitus which developed under colonial conditions during a decade in Zimbabwe, in the 1920s and early 1930s. The next stage was his South African broadcasting career, from 1933 until about 1947, beginning in the era of the privately-owned African Broadcasting Company Limited (ABC). Formed in 1927, ABC had amalgamated the three then-existing regional stations in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Tracey experienced the transition from private to state-owned radio in 1937, when the Broadcasting Act was promulgated (on 1 August) and the newly-established South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) took over from ABC (see Logan 2009, 59 and 66).<sup>65</sup> After an initial year in Cape Town, the period from 1934 to 1947 was spent in Durban, where he became the regional head.

Liz Gunner (2000) and Margaret Logan (2009) emphasise Tracey's role in initiating the first SABC broadcasts in isiZulu and encouraging the development of isiZulu radio drama. Tracey also furthered his work in African music during his radio years, with research and recording trips in Zululand and visits to Chopi musicians in Mozambique. As manager of the Durban studios, however, he was responsible for *all* aspects of radio work, of which isiZulu-language programmes and indigenous music formed only a small part. His autobiographical reminiscences about this period suggest he was as enthusiastic about the 'mainstream' programmes for white English-speaking listeners (including Western musical ones) as he was about the small sector aimed at Africans. Furthermore, it should be noted that he also produced radio programmes aimed at educating the white audience about African music and culture. Radio was still a young developing medium during this time and, as production budgets were small, jobs were not highly specialised. Practitioners tended to be jacks of all trades. As director, Tracey did not confine himself to management but wrote, produced and presented both pre-recorded and live broadcasts. He also gained practical experience in the technicalities of recording.

During his employment in the radio field, Tracey amassed considerable cultural, social and symbolic capital: in the form of skills, knowledge, contacts with influential people from different spheres of society, and recognition. In this very public role, he consolidated a particular "body *hexis*" by polishing a physical sense of timing and poise – expressed in

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<sup>65</sup> Margaret Elaine Logan's MA thesis, "The Whiteness of South African English Radio Drama" (2009), provides detailed information on the early history of broadcasting in South Africa.

voice, gestures and appearance – which was both conventional and personal (see Bourdieu 1977, 87). The accent one hears when listening to Tracey’s recorded speech, for example, is classic broadcasting English of the early BBC-type era, with few regional traces. I believe that Tracey’s voice and physical presence embodied a form of distinction which personified a general mood inseparable from the media of broadcast sound, cinema and photography.<sup>66</sup> His photographic postures and stances – in details like the tilt of a hat, the height and shape of a raised arm, a straight back, a slight bend, or the hint of a smile – convey a sense of individuality while also transmitting a prestigious yet generic style of the type that dominates representations from his era. This form of physical expression was built upon an innate awareness of its own representation, transmission and preservation via technologies that seemed to offer direct and unmediated accuracy, at a time when such media were becoming widespread, yet still being experienced as novel and remarkable.

Tracey’s command of ‘standard’ metropolitan English and a visual mode of dress and stance similar to that of a Hollywood male lead denoted a form of power which would earn dividends in amassing further social capital during the ILAM years. This habitus of manners, which appears to combine ease and formality, simultaneously conveys and denies its own status through its emphasis on the conventional. It thus holds a form of cultural capital particularly prone to misrecognition (perceived in doxic terms, in its own day, as simply a ‘good’ expression of the current fashion, or appropriate politeness) and therefore of heightened symbolic efficacy. This form of capital includes associations with whiteness and bourgeois respectability, yet its widespread transmission provides broader accessibility: in its moment, therefore, it has broad general currency, across lines of race, class and region. The following undated photograph, of Tracey recording women musicians, provides an example of his visual style.

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<sup>66</sup> In the case of cinema, regular attendance at the ‘bioscope’ was common social practice among southern African whites in urban and semi-urban areas in the 1920s and 1930s. The diary-based material from his Zimbabwe period, in Tracey’s draft autobiography, references films he had seen in a way that makes it plain that cinematic consumption was normal recreational behaviour when he was in town.



Tracey's colonial and metropolitan habitus, and the cultural capital it embodies, is intimately bound up with whiteness, masculinity and bourgeois identification with the dominant economic class, with a dose of generic modernity to smooth the rough edges of these categories. Summarising the various fields he occupied, at the macro level there is, firstly, the field of racial power, or whiteness, which is situated at the dominant pole of the structure of racial hierarchy.

Within colonial space, the field of whiteness institutionalises and enforces its own exclusive access to capital by denying access to those it defines as 'non-white'. Material inequalities arising from the history of conquest are maintained and exacerbated through customary practice and legislation; power concentrated in white hands is primarily stark economic power, in the *first* instance, although it also takes other forms. To a large extent, therefore, the field of racial power is also that of the dominant economic class, although race and class do not exactly coincide and their operations cannot be reduced to each other.

Secondly, there is a field of gendered power or patriarchy. In Tracey's texts, this never takes the form of overt sexism and he is quite willing to accept (white) women as equals, colleagues and even mentors when they occupy positions of expertise.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, he always uses masculine terms in the abstract, suggesting that successful women are viewed as exceptions to the male norm. As noted in the previous chapter with regard to *Zulu Paradox*, he also brings a gendered perspective to his representations of blackness.

Concerning gendered power, it is worth considering Tracey's marriages. His first wife, Ursula, was the mother of his sons, Andrew and Paul. As it turned out, these children

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<sup>67</sup> I am thinking here of his long and close relationship with the English folk music expert, Maud Karpeles, his senior in years and, initially, experience.

would not just inherit his name and genes but would promote and further his work. His second wife, Peggy, whom he married around the time of his shift to full-time musical research, provided another form of matrimonial capital. As an enthusiastic supporter of her husband's project, she did not merely accompany him on many of his major recording tours but was an active worker during these expeditions, performing tasks such as transcribing information on field cards. As well as contributing practical unpaid labour, she also seems to have played an important social role: letters to Tracey from influential people during the period of their marriage often include positive references to her. For a time, Hugh and Peggy worked very much as a team, yet the patriarchal structure within which they operated ensured uneven spoils: capital arising from her efforts accrued to him rather than to her.

Thirdly, with regard to broad fields of power, there is the dominant economic class situated *within* the field of whiteness and the wider field of class. Tracey's position in this social space was fairly ambiguous: possessing little money in comparison with the most powerful, he was nonetheless able to command a certain status. Ideologically, he seems to have accepted capitalism as a social good without question. While his texts include negative comments about the effects of commercialised entertainment (notwithstanding his own connections in this area), they never direct criticism towards industrial mainstays like mining, manufacturing or agriculture. Expressions of vehement anti-communism are not accompanied by any overt defence of capitalism, which occupies the realm of doxa rather than of discourse.

Within broader fields of power, the particular artistic sub-field with which Tracey associated himself was that of music by black Africans produced in traditional or quasi-traditional cultural contexts, which used instruments and forms originating in the pre-colonial era or included elements of continuity with that era. When speaking to academics and amateur scholars – in the pages of *African Music*, for example, or at folk music conferences – he foregrounds aesthetic value alongside social utility. His introduction to the *Sound of Africa* catalogue mentions “musical genius” which should be granted a place among “the great folk musics of the world” (1973 Vol. 1, 5). As cultural explorer, Tracey exhibits a ‘discovery’ to be recognised as music, in the first instance. Within the Western construction of music as a global field, he positions ‘his’ area within the sphere of folk music, while also declaring its potential future development into a new form of classical, or art, music. Connections with commercial popular music and jazz are generally discouraged, disparaged and held at arm's length. According to him, the entertainment market cannot be trusted to ensure continued production and consumption of the most authentic, and aesthetically valuable, kinds of

African music. Moreover, the best indigenous music should be recognised as bearing the qualities of ‘serious’ music.

As such, if one applies Bourdieu’s model of the modern artistic field, Tracey’s sub-field (as situated within broader academic and cultural fields dominated by, and oriented towards, Europe and the United States) has some of the characteristics of the area of restricted production with its reversed economy professing material disinterest. Despite such commonality, the colonial construction is also very different from its metropolitan counterpart. As a nascent field in-the-making, struggling for recognition and structural differentiation, ‘African music’ is relatively under-resourced and lacks autonomy. As a product of blackness, defined by whiteness within global and local structures of racial power, it is also an intensely artificial construct, presented for ‘international’ consumption at second hand, with little direct input from its primary practitioners. Tracey’s commentaries on his subject justify his own involvement because of the ‘inability’ of African artists to understand and represent their own works in global terms. According to him, in other words, authentic indigenous artists are as yet unable to make the shift from the doxa of practice to self-conscious discourse. This justificatory rhetoric reinforces and reifies racial exclusion and thus legitimates its own discursive practice.

Profound inequality at the very heart of Tracey’s construction of ‘African music’ affects the distribution of symbolic cultural capital, or distinction, within it. In the European cultural field, the myth of the artist as sole creator, or inspired interpreter, holds sway. There, the roles of individuals such as collectors, promoters, recordists and producers tend to be viewed as minor or secondary – as offering necessary but unremarkable facilitation and technical assistance – and elided from critical consideration as agents with effects on the field.<sup>68</sup> In the field surrounding Tracey, by contrast, the opposite applies.

Tracey’s work does not deny the importance of African composers and performers. As Nketia remarks, he “identified the music makers of Africa, and recognized them by name so that they could be given credit” (1986, 39). Nevertheless, these names tend to be published in the small print of catalogue entries for individual items. Moreover, musicians’ names do not normally appear on record covers. While artists receive some personal acknowledgement, ILAM’s cataloguing system privileges communal categorisation by ethnic group, language, region, instruments and social function. The *SoA Catalogue* allows one to search for items under the aforementioned categories but does not provide an index of musicians. By contrast,

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<sup>68</sup> Bourdieu’s theory seeks to overturn this elision.



Tracey's name is foregrounded. For example, the full title of the *Catalogue*, appearing on the covers and title pages of both volumes, reads as follows: “*CATALOGUE: THE SOUND OF AFRICA SERIES: 210 Long Playing Records of Music and Songs from Central, Eastern and Southern Africa by HUGH TRACEY*”. Instead of “recorded by”, the music is simply “by” Tracey. Accordingly, the archivist and recordist also usurps the status of authorship. Instead of being acknowledged as technical support, his roles of locating, reproducing, storing and disseminating musical products are publicly magnified to appear (almost) as if responsible for the very production of the music itself.

This tendency to focus recognition on the image of Tracey as individual has continued up to the present. For instance, the 2008 compilation album, co-issued by Michael Baird of Sharp Wood Productions (SWP Records) and ILAM, is titled *The Very Best of Hugh Tracey*. (The sub-heading in smaller print reads “from the monumental cd-series ‘Historical Recordings by Hugh Tracey’”.) The album cover is illustrated by a colour version of the following photograph, which visually codes Tracey's whiteness and size relative to the crowd he faces.



Tracey's position-takings in his specifically colonial artistic field therefore consolidate forms of cultural capital associated with different agents in conventional metropolitan contexts. Academic capital associated with knowledge-production and commentary, technical capital linked to mastery of recording machinery and practice, archival capital of collection and categorisation *and* some of the prestigious creative capital associated with a romantic vision of the artist are all concentrated around his individual persona.

With regard to social capital, Tracey's stock extended well beyond the cultural fields of art, education and entertainment. He also interacted with the political fields of territorial and state governance by virtue of his involvement with colonial and apartheid officialdom, and with commercial and industrial fields, particularly mining. With regard to government and industry, his preferred approach to fundraising presented his cultural work as a strategic investment, rather than a charity to be supported. As I have demonstrated, in these contexts he placed less emphasis on aesthetic or academic qualities that would position African music research as a cultural good in itself. Instead, his main argument was that traditional music served 'moral' and practical purposes in cementing social stability and reducing political dissent. Its promotion would therefore accrue material benefits in the form of smoother administration and increased profit. He thus demanded recognition for 'his' product's monetary value and attempted to position funding exchanges as transactions within the bona fide economy rather than submit to the subtleties of misrecognition associated with gift-giving. When dealing with administrators and traders, Tracey's own position in these roles (or variations of colonial habitus) is foregrounded. He seems to locate himself as a hard-nosed manager among managers, rather than a cultural emissary from a different, softer field.

It is interesting to note that the *interested* model, based on economic capital, dominated Tracey's fundraising attempts in the colonial period. The advent of independence signalled the end of this business model and precipitated a shift towards the global academic field as primary means of support. Bourdieu's concept of the minimal logic of practice can explain the apparent contradiction between the differing positions Tracey occupies with regard to his subject. His declaration of political and economic *disinterest* (itself a form of cultural capital required for certain fields) shifts to *interested* participation when interacting with representatives of the colonial political economy in fields where other rules apply. His involvement with institutions of capitalist and imperial power extends beyond merely pragmatic and functional cooperation to achieve cultural aims, however. The following section examines correspondence which reveals Tracey as an active agent *for* colonial governance.

### **Confidential Reports and Propaganda Songs: Correspondence with the Federal Information Office, 1958 – 1960**

A letter from Tracey to Vernon Brelsford, dated 3 October 1958, refers to accompanying reports on his recording tour of Malawi, then Nyasaland, earlier that year. Brelsford was Director of Information for the Federal Information Department of the Central African

Federation and Tracey had heard via a contact in radio broadcasting that he was “looking for Nyasaland items for [his] information work”. The letter’s first paragraph refers to a general report on the tour which provided information on “the numbers and types of items recorded”. Tracey also requests Brelsford’s comments on “two confidential reports [...] written for exclusive distribution only”.

I found only one item in the relevant correspondence file which seems to fit the latter description. This is an undated four-page account of the 1958 Nyasaland tour, simply headed “International Library of African Music”.<sup>69</sup> Its contents and tone suggest something in the nature of an intelligence report for specific and limited distribution to the governing authorities, as evident in the following extract:

It was remarkable, in the face of so much political noise which is featured in the newspapers, that of the 300 songs recorded none whatsoever was pre-occupied with Federal politics. This was not for lack of asking as I made a point of indicating that I would like to hear all kinds, including songs of a topical political nature. One can but draw the conclusion that Federal and Territorial politics do not percolate down to the common people and are restricted to a minority class. On the other hand, the non-co-operation of the Clerk class, members of which were conspicuous by their absence at recording sessions, might have accounted for the fact that we were not offered such songs for recording. We did not find this reticence elsewhere in such places as the Copperbelt. Indications of intimidation by National Congress Members were apparent in a few cases, one of our interpreters stating that he would be closely cross-questioned by local Congress Members and asked why he had taken us to the villages to record.

One thing is fairly clear in the light of experience elsewhere... that although political use is not being made of indigenous music to any extent at the moment, in Nyasaland, that it will not be long before subversively minded persons will turn to this means of political solidarity as had been done in Kenya, Ghana and elsewhere. Sympathetic knowledge and understanding of all indigenous art forms and especially of music, bringing it into the light by making it a normal subject of school curricula would have the effect both of increasing the understanding of the actualities of African society and preventing its being used as a secret political weapon. (2–3)

Whereas the first paragraph above is similar to the closing section of Tracey’s report on the same tour in *African Music* (1958, 68), except for the specific reference to “intimidation by National Congress Members”, the second paragraph differs markedly from similar material for general publication, by its openly partisan advancement of political motives for support of his work. Better understanding and wider dissemination of information about traditional music, Tracey claims, would assist the Federation in ‘intelligence’ gathering

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<sup>69</sup> Its reference to the 1958 tour is corroborated by similarities to Tracey’s article in *African Music*, “Report on the I.L.A.M. Nyasaland Recording Tour (May 7<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1958)” (1958, 2.1: 65–58).

by providing information on “the actualities of African society”. Even more crucially, official sponsorship could improve ‘security’ by “preventing” the deployment of indigenous music “as a secret political weapon” of resistance. On the one hand, he promises that there is still time for the minority white government to retain, and win, simple African hearts and minds – arguing that the national liberation movement does not (yet) seem to enjoy widespread support among ordinary black people. On the other hand, he underlines the threat of ‘subversion’: the opportunity to use traditional culture as a *colonial* weapon, he clearly implies, will pass quickly if not promptly taken.

Historical sources on the period stress the extent and strength of opposition to Federation in Malawi at the time. One would think, then, that Tracey’s argument of political neutrality on the part of the African majority might have been met with some scepticism as unduly optimistic by representatives of the governing power. Nonetheless, whether or not there was an element of wishful thinking involved, his rhetoric of reassurance and warning provoked a positive response.

Brelsford’s response to Tracey, dated 16 October 1958, reports that “your confidential report on Nyasaland” has prompted “enquiries concerning what it would cost to purchase pressed records in fair quantity for use in the mobile vans”. He offers his personal opinion on the report as “a very fine and very useful piece of work”. Moreover, he thinks “it has given the Nyasaland Government cause for thought”. Brelsford requests a quotation of costs to purchase records from ILAM but cautions that the enquiry may come to nought: “When the time comes to put up a concrete proposal I have no doubt there will be the usual loud cry of no money”.

Tracey promptly provides the requested financial details (21 October 1958). He explains that the Federation would need to purchase corporate membership, at £100 per year, to obtain recordings for public use, and provides a detailed description of the service on offer, with accompanying catalogues. Notwithstanding Brelsford’s pessimistic caution concerning funding, his next letter to Tracey announces that his government will be taking up corporate membership in July of that year: “The Federal Government has agreed to become a member of the Society on behalf of the Nyasaland Government” (27 January 1959).

The Central African Federation (CAF), also known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, began on 1 August 1953 and officially ended on 31 December 1963, though it had effectively collapsed before then. The settler colony of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), self-governed by whites since 1923, and the former protectorates of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) were combined by the British government to form a

largely independent federal state. Its constitution included a minority of black parliamentary representatives but was structured to guarantee white, and Southern Rhodesian, dominance. Liberal white supporters made much of its avowed principle of racial ‘partnership’ and promoted the CAF as a ‘moderate’ alternative to either apartheid or ‘premature’ black majority rule: for example, Kenneth Kirkwood described it as a “zone where Britain might hope to avert the dangers of extreme nationalism and racism” (1955, 131). Vague promises concerning African development could not disguise its inherent white supremacy, though. As Guy Arnold recounts:

There was no attempt on the part of the Federation’s white founders to hide their contempt for the Africans who were supposed to be their ‘partners’ in a new imperial venture. Sir Godfrey Huggins (later Lord Malvern) the long-time Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia dominated the two-day conference of white politicians who met at Victoria Falls in February 1949 to consider the proposed Federation of the three territories. He left no doubt in the minds of the delegates from Northern Rhodesia about how the Federation should be implemented. He said, among other things, ‘The natives must be ruled by a benevolent aristocracy in the real sense of the word... Our democratic system does not embrace mob law.’ Later, for good measure, he added: ‘The history of the world suggests that there is *prima facie* evidence that there is something wrong with the Bantu branch of the family.’ It was Sir Godfrey Huggins, the principal architect of the Federation, who propounded the concept of racial partnership as ‘the rider and the horse’ and the Africans were to be the horse. (2005, 285–286)

Roy Welensky, who took over from Huggins as Prime Minister of the Federation in 1956, clearly propounded his racist views in an election meeting speech in March of that year:

We Europeans have no intention of handing over the Federation to anyone, because we have no intention of getting out. We believe that the African should be given more say in the running of his country, as and when he shows his ability to contribute more to the general good, but we must make it clear that even when that day comes, in a hundred or two hundred years’ time, he can never hope to dominate the partnership. (qtd. in Arnold 2005, 286)

The black majority was strongly opposed to Federation all along. Ronald Hyam’s research of metropolitan government sources makes it clear that British politicians were well aware of this opposition when they legislated its formation (1987). Resistance was greatest in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which had much smaller white populations than Southern Rhodesia, and where the imposition of Federal control meant a step away from, rather than towards, independence. In particular, the people of Malawi were threatened by increased

segregation and racial discrimination on a scale not previously practised there. Writing in 1957, Elias M. Mtepuka explains as follows:

[T]he most terrifying thing to Nyasas is the fact that Rhodesian settlers, with their inflexible attitude to colour, have now begun running Nyasaland's affairs. Nyasaland's health services, postal services, railway services and others are now controlled from Salisbury. Appointments of Africans to jobs in these departments are now subject to the racial ideologies of those at the top. And there is a great deal of talk among Rhodesian settlers about the need for unifying the native policies in the three territories, in other words, adopting the Rhodesian one. Such unification of policy would obviously lead to the introduction of segregation in Nyasaland's post offices, banks and cinemas, where members of different races use the same entrances and stand in mixed queues. Only in Nyasaland can an African be served in a railway dining saloon together with whites, or sit beside a European on a bus. And only in Nyasaland could a pub open its doors to Africans, Europeans and Asians at the same time. All that will be a thing of the past. Much of it already is. (81)

Events in Nyasaland sparked a crisis period of intensifying resistance and extreme repression in the late 1950s, which culminated in Malawian and Zambian independence processes (completed in July and October 1964 respectively) and Federation's dissolution.<sup>70</sup> Hastings Banda returned to Malawi from Ghana in mid-1958 (the time of Tracey's tour) to lead a campaign of non-cooperation as President of the Nyasaland African Congress. Mass protests occurred in March 1959. That same year, colonial authorities declared a state of emergency, imprisoned Banda along with 200 other Congress members and deployed military troops. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan appointed a commission of enquiry into the causes of the Nyasaland riots, under Justice Devlin.

The Devlin Commission found no evidence to support allegations by the colonial government that Congress was planning to massacre white settlers. Instead, Devlin reported that Nyasaland was "no doubt temporarily – a police state" where it was "not safe for anyone to express approval of the Congress Party" (qtd. in Twaddle 2003, 243 and Arnold 2005, 47). The Commission also noted that violence, which had resulted in the deaths of 52 Africans, had been largely due to government forces. Initially rejected by the Nyasaland, Federal and British governments as inaccurate, the Devlin Report nonetheless demanded a response. Macmillan then appointed the Monckton Commission, which completed its work in 1960. Congress Party members in both Malawi and Zambia refused to cooperate with it. Nonetheless, interviews with those 'moderate' Africans who were prepared to talk were

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<sup>70</sup> My summary in this and the following paragraph draws upon Michael Twaddle's chapter in *Africa Since 1935* (2003) along with Arnold (2005).

sufficient for the Monckton Report to confirm that African opposition to Federation throughout the two Northern territories was “widespread, sincere and of long-standing” (qtd. in Twaddle 2003, 243).

1960 was also the year of (British Prime Minister) Macmillan’s “wind of change” speech, during his African tour in January and February. Ghana had achieved independence in 1957 while Nigeria was due to become an independent nation on 1 October 1960. Colonial rule could no longer be maintained without the use of extreme, and costly, force. The strength of liberation movements throughout the continent had prompted a shift in policy and a process of rapid decolonisation had been embarked upon. Support for independence was certainly not unanimous, however. British social space was still saturated with racism and paternalism. With due regard for the complexity of the historical moment, it is fair to argue that Britain’s rapid political withdrawal from Africa was largely a strategic decision designed to protect the economic status quo, that is, to preserve extractionist profit-taking for as long as possible. Within settler-dominated regions like the Federation, by contrast, white colonists were becoming more reactionary and determined to retain exclusive political power. While increasingly critical, metropolitan attitudes towards the settlers continued to be ambiguous, with a great deal of covert, and often overt, sympathy. Certainly, Britain refused to deploy any kind of military action against whites in Africa, even when legally mandated to do so, in clear contrast to the willingness with which it deployed force against Africans on numerous occasions.<sup>71</sup>

Tracey’s musical expeditions must be read within their geo-historical context. Undertaken with sanction and protection from repressive authorities, excursions such as his 1958 visit to Malawi were neither innocent nor disinterested. In the kind of “police state” described by Devlin, seemingly casual questions or observations about the prevalence of resistance music, or allegations of “intimidation”, had sinister implications. Consider, for example, Tracey’s reference to an interpreter’s alleged statement “that he would be closely cross-questioned by local Congress Members and asked why he had taken us to the villages to record”. Admittedly, the written report does not identify the person concerned. Nonetheless, since Tracey’s tours were conducted in circumstances of close cooperation and sociability with colonial administrators, further information may well have been shared on the spot, with possible repercussions for individuals.

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<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Arnold’s account of Britain’s weak stance towards white Rhodesia in the period preceding and following its unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in 1965 (2005, 288–297).

There is no way to measure the number of musicians who stayed away and refused to record for Tracey in Malawi in 1958. Since opposition to Federation was strong and widespread, and he was clearly connected with the government, it seems remarkable that a substantial number did indeed present themselves and their songs. Federal-aligned authorities may have provided some official pressure to participate, particularly in institutional contexts such as employment premises and schools. Since musical activity cannot easily be feigned or forced, however, involuntary involvement seems an unlikely explanation for participation in Tracey's recording project. Furthermore, large-scale resistance campaigns were gathering momentum during the same period, when many people were willing to express oppositional political agency publicly, notwithstanding the consequences.

Rather than label participating musicians as victims or collaborators, I think it makes more sense to explain participation by reference not to the political field, but to the simultaneously existing cultural fields of music and recorded sound. As Malawian nationalists, affected individuals may have been reluctant to associate themselves with Tracey, but as *musicians* they would have welcomed the chance to perform and record, particularly since a few of those first recorded by ILAM subsequently achieved greater fame or even commercial success. For some, the chance to increase their musical capital would have outweighed the corresponding potential loss of nationalist political capital.

Nonetheless, these loaded circumstances meant that participation was neither simple nor straightforward for the artists involved. Moreover, awareness of Tracey's standpoint and alliances would surely have influenced selection of material to be presented. His conclusion that "Federal and Territorial politics do not percolate down to the common people", based on the absence of "political" songs, assumes naivete and minimal intelligence on the part of performers. The confidential report makes it clear that Congress leaders – largely drawn from what he offensively terms the "Clerk class" – were not supportive of the tour. Given the general climate of repression, those who did choose to participate would have been aware of the likely presence of informers for the government's security apparatus. Thus, they would have been foolish to perform items which were likely to draw the wrath of authorities and possibly also provoke unwelcome attention from the leadership of the movement many of them supported.

According to historical evidence concerning the very broad extent of African opposition to Federation, only a minority of those who recorded for Tracey in 1958 would have been *willing* collaborators. Nonetheless, as a consequence of recording, performers were positioned within a political structure of collaboration. I say this because of the manner in



which the published recordings were later purchased and used by the same authorities who had supported their production. Brelsford and his colleagues were most interested in local material. Many of the audio items provided to the Nyasaland government under its corporate membership contract with ILAM would thus have been those recently recorded in the same region in which they were then deployed on behalf of the Federation. In facilitating the membership deal, Brelsford was not concerned with music for entertainment or edification. Simply put, the business of his Federal Information Department was pro-Federation propaganda.

Brelsford's letter of 27 January 1959, informing Tracey of the decision to purchase ILAM's records, indicates one of the ways in which they were intended to be used. He asks whether "your records" could legitimately provide "background music in the films our Central African Film Unit make for Africans [sic]". On 2 February 1959, Tracey responds that the contract includes permission for inclusion in films made for use within Federal territory although copyright fees would apply for showing or sale elsewhere.

The Central African Film Unit (CAFU) had been established in 1948 as a joint venture by the governments of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. According to Rosaleen Smyth, its initial priority was producing "instructional films for African audiences", though it also made films for white settlers and "tourist and publicity films for overseas". During the Federation period, CAFU was incorporated into Brelsford's Federal Information Department and the focus shifted. Smyth affirms that "the main concern of the unit now became the making of publicity and propaganda films to popularise the Federation at home and abroad" (1983, 131).<sup>72</sup>

Assuming the folder is complete, there is a year's gap in official correspondence between Brelsford and Tracey. The interlude covers most of 1959, that year of protests, emergency rule, the banning of Congress, mass political detentions, military deployment and the Devlin Commission. As I have already noted, elsewhere in British-dominated Africa, countries were newly independent or about to become so. The Federation, meanwhile, was increasingly reliant on blatant physical force to maintain power. To think of white rulers attempting to convert black nationalists into willing colonial subjects at such a time seems incongruous, even ridiculous. Yet members of the Information Department continued their work with determination and some desperation, judging by the rushed tone of Brelsford's next communication, dated 16 January 1960:

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<sup>72</sup> Smyth's article analyses CAFU's educational productions for African audiences. Unfortunately, I have not come across any description of the pro-Federation propaganda films.

As you know during the pre-emergency days in Nyasaland the Africans in schools were singing songs attacking Federation and even now in songs there appears almost incidentally the name of Dr. Banda.

We have been trying to get a song or songs written that would have catchy African music that would bring in some good cracks on behalf of Federation. I wonder if you could help in this. We would of course be willing to pay for anything we get.

It also struck me too that if the song was good enough to put on records you might be able to do that also.

Interestingly, this request casts doubts on Tracey's reporting on the prevalence of political material "during the pre-emergency days". Brelsford's opening phrase – "As you know" – suggests that Tracey had been aware of anti-Federation songs which he had chosen not to mention. If the 'natives' were already too far gone towards mass mobilisation, money which could be spent on more lethal weapons would not have been wasted on music. Evidently, Tracey's sales pitch to colonial funders had required the mythical promise alongside the all-too-real threat. Brelsford's department had also needed at least the semblance of a hope of success in order to maintain symbolic standing within its field of government administration and justify its continued existence. Downplaying the incidence of resistance performance would thus have been strategically advantageous to both men, in 1958.

The letter dated 16 January 1960 makes it plain that the Information Department had already been attempting – albeit without success – to co-opt local musicians for propaganda purposes. Brelsford is clearly asking Tracey to step in, produce and deliver something suitable. (As there were many Malawians among the migrant labourers working in South African mines, this might have been possible.)

ILAM's director did not agree to attempt to solicit and record the kind of song for which his correspondent was practically begging. Regardless of the specific reasons, such an overt move would have been a threat to his cultural and social capital within the fields of art and academia. Nonetheless, he did offer detailed advice and agreed to arrange pressing and production of 78 r.p.m. records, using the Gallo factory, should a recording materialise. The full body text of Tracey's letter to Brelsford dated 20 January 1960 reads as follows:

Many thanks for your letter of the 16<sup>th</sup> January.

I am glad to see that you are thinking of using songs for propaganda purposes as undoubtedly a good song can work wonders.

Even if the voice is the voice of Jacob the hand which writes the song must be the hand of Esau, if you remember the parable. In other words, the song must be

composed by an African with easy flowing Nyanja words in the locally acceptable style. Your problem, naturally, will be to find a local African who is on your side and can express himself adequately in song. I rather think that the Malipenga singers of Central Nyasaland would be the fellows for the job.

There is still in Salisbury, to the best of my knowledge, a very articulate Nyasa who made many records for me 8 or 9 years ago by name Barry Passeli. He used to be a taxi driver and composed many rousing songs accompanied by guitars, banjos and drums which he performed with his brother and other relatives. He is a well known character and the Harari location people should be able to tell you where he lives these days. His familiar voice would be recognised by thousands of Nyasas.

If it is a local musician you want then the best man I know is Chabarwa Masunda Moya a very gifted Mbira player whom I lost sight of some years back when he went to live at Mtoko. He was born somewhere near Wedza and composes and sings excellently, if only you can find him.

Another man whose work is quite brilliant is to be found in Fort Victoria under the name of Maridzembira – proper name Stephen Runeso Gumbo – in the Gutu District, working for the Rhodesian Railways in Fort Victoria and living in the Railway Location there. He might well fill the bill, in Chikaranga. Actually this is exactly where the Broadcast boys should be on their toes and be able to put you in touch with a number of people who could do such a job if they have not been frittering away their time. I would if John Hooper would be able to help? [sic]

We have recently presented a set of our records to the local Native Education Department, Salisbury, through a grant we obtained from the Ndola Lotteries. Some of these records might well inspire the style of music which might be effective though not necessarily providing the melodies which would have to be adapted to the lyrics composed about the Federation. I fear this throws the ball back to you but is, undoubtedly, the right procedure. If the F.B.C. [that is, the Federal Broadcasting Corporation] can record the song or songs I can have them pressed for you on 78 r.p.m. discs without delay through the Gallo factory here. We would cut the master for them from your magnetic tape and get them delivered back to the Federation in a matter of a couple of weeks if you do not need printed labels as well.

This letter names four groups and individuals as potential candidates for the propaganda “job”. Having diagnosed Brelsford’s “problem”, Tracey implies that the musicians he suggests are “on your [that is, Federation’s] side”. It is clear that the information is provided without permission from the people identified which shows complete disregard for their wishes and safety, whatever their actual political affiliations.

I do not know what became of Brelsford’s propaganda song project. The difficulty of securing collaboration very likely delayed its achievement until political developments towards the dissolution of the Federation rendered it redundant. Notwithstanding the practical outcome, if any, the correspondence concerning the proposed song is revealing. At a moment of historical crisis for the colonial system, euphemistic niceties are dispensed with and the plain purpose of its cultural investment is unmasked.

The Brelsford-Tracey correspondence highlights the extent to which ILAM's operational strategy was geared towards colonial politics in the 1950s. Contextualised, and read with hindsight, it also demonstrates the implicit, and impending, failure of that strategy. By 1960, Britain's policy of decolonisation was underway. The propaganda request and reply mark a shift in social capital between the two writers. Earlier, Tracey was courting Brelsford's influence to secure another corporate client. In the later letters, Brelsford begs for help while Tracey responds with an attitude of calm, somewhat detached, superiority. Detailed advice notwithstanding, the latter's text is also a subtle refusal. His use of the second person declares his own distance from Brelsford's "problem", despite his simultaneous expression of ideological support and sympathy. With its polite and condescending apology, the sporting metaphor – "I fear this throws the ball back to you but is, undoubtedly, the right procedure" – could be taken to mark the end of this particular game. Its days clearly numbered, the support of Brelsford's government now has little practical value.

### **Transition and Reaction: Colonial Doxa and Apartheid Discourse**

Tracey's initial financial plan for ILAM was premised upon essential unity between South Africa and the rest of Africa and relied upon sustainable support from colonial governments for its success. Why did he bargain on a colonial future during the nineteen-fifties, a decade of intense political activity and growing mobilisation of liberation movements in South Africa and elsewhere? The signs of change were there, yet he seems to have ignored them until the last moment. Particularly in private correspondence, his texts indicate reactions of shock, anger and betrayal to the political withdrawal of Britain, France and Belgium. Certainly, much of his published writing of the post-independence period maintains a calm tone, attempts a neutral attitude and shows some rhetorical adjustment. Through the codification project and other initiatives, Tracey also attempts to sell his products to Africa's new rulers, stressing the importance of traditional music in nation-building.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, these efforts remain half-hearted at best, in terms of promoting genuine exchange. Tracey was hardly shy to express his opposition to independence in publication, as his editorials in *African Music* attest. Furthermore, the codification project was itself conceived upon neo-colonial lines and most of the energy spent promoting it was directed towards the USA and

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<sup>73</sup> Considering the perspective of African countries, the ironies are obvious. Of course, there were major movements promoting authenticity and indigeneity, but the whole point of such expressions was that they should be *African*. Tracey's archive was certainly not rejected, but ongoing interaction of the kind that characterised his colonial practice was no longer possible. His style and history were anathema to the new mood.

Europe. There are virtually no letters to or from African representatives of independent states in ILAM's files.<sup>74</sup> Allowing for the fact that material may have gone missing, I think it is likely that such contact was minimal, through mutual distrust or aversion.

In private correspondence with like-minded whites, Tracey expresses himself a lot more forcefully. A 1965 letter to F.S. Joelson, editor of the journal *East Africa & Rhodesia*, shares his admiration of James Burnham's *Suicide of the West*, which he had just read. Since Burnham was considered too right wing by his cold war colleagues in the CIA, Tracey's enthusiasm for his attack on European decolonisation and support of Rhodesia is telling. An extract from the letter reads as follows:

The last few chapters in particular, give a most satisfactory explanation of the type of political mind, both conservative and labour in regard to their attitude towards Southern Rhodesia, not only anti-colonial, but anti- any progress which is initiated by Whites, and their indifference towards the encroachment of Communism. (20 April)

Clearly, Tracey laid the 'blame' for Africa's transition on wilful abandonment by Europeans, rather than recognising it as a political victory by and for Africans. In line with his presumption of African immaturity, he was unable to take African politics seriously. His argument that political engagement was limited to an inauthentic minority of 'subversive' agitators could not be abandoned without casting doubt upon the 'knowledge' on which his own reputation had been built. It may, however, be misleading to use a term like 'argument', which implies fully conscious rationality. Tracey's continued investment in the attitudes of colonial whiteness was an inseparable aspect of his habitus, with its embodied cultural capital. Accordingly, his position was surely governed largely by the logic of colonial practice, rather than theory, and functioned more within the realm of doxa than that of discourse.

For Bourdieu, "the class of that which is taken for granted, doxa, the sum total of the theses tacitly posited on the hither side of all inquiry" only becomes apparent retrospectively, once "suspended practically" and "negatively constituted by the constitution of a *field of opinion*, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses" (1977, 168). Tracey's refusal to acknowledge African discourses of liberation amounts to more than a rejection of the validity of such discourses. Rather, it signals a rejection of African opinion, as such. It also reveals a reluctance to shift his own version of social reality from the "universe of the

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<sup>74</sup> The Mohapeloa correspondence with Lesotho is an exception.

undiscussed (undisputed)” to the “universe of discourse (or argument)” (Bourdieu 1977, 168).

Bourdieu also writes that

the drawing of the line between the field of opinion, of that which is explicitly questioned, and the field of *doxa*, of that which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention, is itself a fundamental objective at stake in that form of class struggle which is the struggle for the imposition of the dominant systems of classification. The dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of *doxa* or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, *orthodoxy*. (1977, 169)

For Tracey, colonial practice (with its attendant racism) was indeed a matter of “social convention” – deeply entrenched and unexamined to a large extent. For that reason, he was discomfited by the extreme expressions of apartheid. By codifying, totalising and legislating already existing segregation on a massive scale with minute detail, the apartheid state proclaimed its racism as orthodoxy, in reaction *against* the shifting tides of opinion which were pushing towards liberation. Bourdieu defines orthodoxy as

straight, or rather *straightened*, opinion, which aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of *doxa*, [and] exists only in the objective relationship which opposes it to heterodoxy, that is, by reference to the choice [...] made possible by the existence of *competing possibles* and to the explicit critique of the sum total of the alternatives not chosen that the established order implies. (1977, 169)

The very violence of apartheid’s attempts to destroy opposing ideas through bannings and detentions reveals an awareness of the existence and danger of competing discourse. Tracey, on the other hand, tended to deny such awareness by relegating it to the “universe of the undiscussed”. Without implying that his colonial *doxa* ever approached the unassailable comfort of a “primal state of innocence”, it is significant that Tracey’s texts never seek to define or assert his support for colonialism. Despite some disagreement over details, for him, the broader project of white conquest and domination would not be questioned, even in the negative sense implied by mounting an overt justification or defence.

This reluctance to abandon a doxic mode of whiteness had certain strategic benefits in a climate of global transition. What remains undeclared may be taken for granted by those of a similar habitus, who play by the same rules. Yet silence is also subject to misinterpretation

by those in different fields with varying shades of doxa and opinion. Tracey's tendency to avoid overt expressions of white supremacy made it easier for international sympathisers to grant him the benefit of the doubt, at a time when public condemnation of apartheid was becoming mandatory even for those whose political and economic practice remained decidedly neocolonial. Ironically, the failure of his fundraising approaches to the apartheid government also translated into cultural capital for universities and funding organisations outside South Africa. ILAM's lack of direct state support could be taken to imply ideological distance, or even opposition.<sup>75</sup> While the codification project did not succeed as planned, Tracey and ILAM certainly amassed and sustained academic capital during the 1960s and seventies, particularly in ethnomusicology programmes in the USA. The generally polite style of Tracey's racial habitus, combined with the contingent fact of his rejection by the masters of apartheid orthodoxy, helped foster an image of him imbued with a kind of innocence: yes, a 'man of his time', but one unsullied by the violent extremes of oppressive rule.

While proclaiming his political and economic disinterest, the dominant Tracey narrative also portrays his involvement with African traditional music as something unique and misunderstood within his colonial milieu.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, his early research work in Zimbabwe in the 1920s was rather unusual at the time and he was unable to attract sufficient support to continue without interruption. His experiences during the 1950s suggest something different, however. Tracey's major recording expeditions and ILAM's establishment were made possible by support from various sectors of the ruling establishment: the entertainment industry, academia, mining capital and government. Of these, it was sectors *directly* within colonial fields of power – that is, mining and various colonial administrations – that initially dominated as funders and clients. Far from promoting the image of a lone crusader, the early institutional history of ILAM, Tracey's major project, demonstrates substantial enthusiasm for his ideas and plans from within the network of white social capital which then still controlled most of the African continent.

The choice of 'Library' over 'Archive' in naming ILAM is significant. Tracey wanted his recordings to be widely used, rather than preserved for a select group of specialists. Moreover, his plans envisaged Africans as the largest group of listeners for his records.

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<sup>75</sup> Of course, if the apartheid government *had* chosen to fund ILAM, Tracey would not have needed to focus his energies on American universities and Foundations as his major hope of support during the 1960s.

<sup>76</sup> For a recent example of this narrative, see an online article in the *Bangkok Post* (16 October 2012), which quotes Andrew Tracey saying that his father was regarded as "eccentric" because "people thought that Africans had no culture and they were despised". (Clearly, "people" stands for white, colonial people.)

Nonetheless, his distribution strategy relied more upon supplying white employers and authorities, who would provide ‘their’ workers and charges with what was good for ‘them’ (and by implication, themselves), than on providing recordings to African people directly. Allowing for some exaggeration, Tracey’s letters to apartheid officials, along with the Brelsford correspondence, attest to a growth in corporate membership among various colonial administrations in the last few years of their rule. Rather than set him apart, the success of Tracey’s project places him within a broader late-colonial movement which sought to marshal and manipulate indigenous culture as an ally against African nationalism.

This chapter has examined Tracey’s management of the *business* of ‘African Music’ and the various forms of capital deployed and accumulated in the process. My analysis of Tracey’s social capital has concentrated on his clientele within fields of whiteness and power. As such, relatively little attention has been given to the social exchanges which produced the sound items comprising the archive. This imbalance will be addressed in my next chapter, in which music and musical interactions will be the primary focus.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONSIDERING MUSIC

#### PLEASURE – PRACTICE – POLITICS

[T]he work of art always contains something *ineffable*, not by excess, as hagiography would have it, but by default, something which communicates, so to speak, from body to body, i.e. on the hither side of words or concepts, and which pleases (or displeases) without concepts. (Bourdieu 1977, 2)

At the turning of Ridge & Berea Rd – Hugh starts singing a Chikaranga song, he is teaching them – the one about the owl [...]. We sing this, Hugh keeping up the solo chant, R, R and I singing the other parts, chant & refrain – Then I reminded him of the baboon song [...]. We sing this, & arrive at Gallo's, where we sit, in deserted West St, singing hard. (Peggy Tracey 1943)<sup>77</sup>

The photograph of Zimbabwean singers and Tracey in 1929, discussed in the second chapter of this study, displays racial hierarchy and inequality even as it portrays a moment in a process of musical cooperation that involves all the individuals depicted as active participants. Tracey's recordings were produced within and for social structures of division and repression. Yet their very existence attests to a certain unity, a common musical language, in the actions associated with performance and its 'capture' that transformed particular sequences of sounds in time to recorded tracks. These aural texts would not have been possible without a degree of partnership, however circumscribed and fleeting, between Tracey as recordist and those he recorded.

Texts associated with Tracey's recording practice explicitly counter notions of such production as simple reflections of objective reality: for instance, his writing promotes an understanding of recording as representation, involving unavoidable decisions of selection (of and within musical items) which influence the results. Recognition of Tracey as an active agent in aesthetic endeavours should not, however, lead us to exaggerate his role and undermine the musicianship of the primary creative actors in these processes. Listening to examples from his archive, I and others are struck by the vitality and specific qualities of each individual item in a highly varied collection. For me personally, encounters with many of these songs evoke a powerful range of emotions and physical enjoyment. These felt

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<sup>77</sup>This is an extract from Peggy Tracey's diary entry dated 4 November 1943, describing the return from a privately hosted performance by "R" and "R", Mozambican Chopi musicians then staying in a room behind the Gallo record store in Durban, with whom Tracey was conducting research at the time.

responses to particular music by individual musicians are enabled and partly shaped by the producer's role played by Tracey, yet they certainly also exceed it.

Thus far, I have examined Tracey as cultural explorer and missionary, investigated the racial conceptions underlying his representational project, and situated his work within the pragmatics of the colonial political economy. This chapter will focus more closely on musical fields. I will foreground his representations of African music and consider the multiple musical encounters involved in the formation, distribution and reception of Tracey's archive. As in previous chapters, I will give attention to the racial politics of his cultural project. However, I would also like to express awareness of the archive *as music*, with characteristics which escape or exceed language and cannot be reduced to social forces just as they cannot be separated from them. This is not a musicological study and technical analysis of musical examples is thus beyond its scope. Nonetheless, I hope at least to gesture towards that mysterious form of creative communication which certainly pleases and, whatever else it also does, seems to occur primarily and most powerfully through *feelings*, or – in Bourdieu's words – “from body to body [...] on the hither side of words or concepts”.

A large part of the chapter will consist of an examination of Tracey's definitions and descriptions of African music in his book *Ngoma* (1948). Theoretically, these sections will draw upon Kofi Agawu's discussion of difference in Africanist ethnomusicology. Thereafter, the focus will shift to Tracey as recordist and producer: I will look at representations of his practice in the field and assess the attitudes and methods indicated by these texts. Finally, I will examine a piece of correspondence that reveals a willingness to market recordings for a purpose which exploits white myths of, and desires for, African wildness, and thus contradicts Tracey's statements on the aims of his work.

### **Constructing and Resisting Difference: Tracey and Agawu**

What did Tracey actually say about African music and its relationship to music in general? A clear distinction between African and Western music is fundamental to his project's very existence. Yet, while his texts tend to assume difference as an abstract principle, defining it proves to be rather difficult. Certainly, his descriptions do not conform to standard myths of African musical difference, such as those enumerated by Kofi Agawu in *Representing African Music* (2003). As demonstrated in previous chapters, Tracey's representations of African people often diverge from images conventionally associated with Eurocentric racism. Similarly, his musical definitions locate difference quite differently from many familiar

stereotypes. In fact, some of his statements show remarkable agreement with aspects of Agawu's analysis. Consider the following comment on rhythm, for example:

I would like finally just to mention this question of rhythm. We hear a lot about African rhythm; and, it seems to me, African rhythm is not so extraordinary as it is sometimes made out to be. They have *a genius for combining simple rhythms into one magnificent complex cacophony*, and in other instances of combining *a nice sense of orderly rhythm with utter chaos*. It is this balance of consequential with inconsequential sounds which undoubtedly creates their most exciting music and makes strong men putty in their hands if they attempt to write it down on paper.

But the discipline of the dance, and the regularity of dance routines demand *order* however chaotic the dance music may appear to be upon casual acquaintance. (1954 "Social Role", 240)

Here Tracey questions the "extraordinary" complexity often assigned by scholars to rhythm in African music, in a way that seems to undermine difference. His pointed repetition of the term "African rhythm" might even be seen as irony undermining its "invention" (Agawu 2003, 55). Furthermore, his attention to the role of dance seems to anticipate Agawu's comment that "(even African) dancers need a regular, recurring beat to guide their negotiation of movements" (67).

Nonetheless, despite its emphasis on "discipline", "regularity" and "order", the quotation above simultaneously flirts with notions of difference while repudiating them. Phrases like "complex cacophony" and "utter chaos" show that wildness has not quite been banished from Tracey's conception. While claiming an underlying organisation which is relatively simple and straightforward, he admits that the *impression* of impenetrable complexity, or "chaos", creates "exciting" results. He also alludes to the difficulty of capturing African rhythms in writing, and thus defers, here, to the ethnomusicological wisdom which declares standard Western notation unsuitable for African music.<sup>78</sup> While the same argument with regard to notation is made in *Ngoma*, he advances an opposing opinion on this point in the question and answer section at the end of his paper "The Importance of African Music in the Present Day": "The whole question of the writing of African music is under serious study and of course there are going to be a number of different opinions on it. I personally feel that it is going to be written successfully – reasonably successfully – with minor adaptations of our own staff notation" (1961, 162).

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<sup>78</sup> Agawu discusses and critiques attitudes towards notation in the discipline (2003). Also see Thomas Pooley's review of Lucia's *Music Notation: A South African Guide* (2012).

It is insightful to compare the extract from “The Social Role of African Music” (on the previous page) with Tracey’s unpublished and undated fragment, quoted in the first chapter, part of which reads as follows:

[T]he popular western idea of African music is associated with a kind of chaotic orgy of percussive music – the more it appears to them to be chaotic, the more it pleases the uninitiated, who imagine that truly represents real African music – ‘wild’ – ‘primitive’ – ‘savage’ – magically possessed and so on. But to associate music with chaos is a contradiction in terms – music is a closely regulated art – an orderly art – if it is not measured and ordered, it is not music.

While the unpublished text makes a similar point to that made in the published article, there is a very different emphasis. The shift in pronouns is significant: in the public text, Africans are othered as “they” and distinguished from the author and implied white readers, who are collectively identified as “we”. In the private fragment, meanwhile, “they” are not Africans but “uninitiated” Westerners who seek out African music to satisfy their own preconceived ideas and desires. Tracey’s attitude towards these sonic tourists is plainly disapproving. Perhaps he protests too much, though, since words like “chaotic orgy” may suggest his own racist reaction to the ‘threat’ of ‘miscegenation’ (or the fear of whiteness and blackness combining in uncontrolled ways to produce wildness). Whatever its tone and motivation, however, his observation has some validity as a criticism of those who exploit and consume African cultural products to satisfy their fantasies of inequality – although, one could argue, perhaps, that he himself catered for this market to some extent with his *Music of Africa* series. (In the light of the perception and disapproval expressed here, it is strange to note yet another Tracey contradiction: as will be seen when I examine his letter on the film, *The Naked Prey*, later in this chapter, he was happy to provide sound material to be used in a production which harnesses the most extreme stereotypes of savage violence without the slightest reference to historical veracity.)

Countering Western stereotypes of African exoticism, Tracey’s unpublished fragment makes a statement which is far less equivocal about challenging myths of musical difference than that contained in his published text. The latter admits a degree of rhythmic “chaos”, while the former repudiates it entirely. Moreover, part of the unpublished piece seems to go beyond merely redefining the terms of difference (as Tracey commonly does) and perhaps even tends towards the presumption of musical sameness which Agawu advocates (2003, 169). The sentence that refutes “their” mistaken ideas of African music does not use the word ‘African’ once. Music’s universal qualities are emphasised. According to Tracey, *all* music is

“closely regulated” and “orderly”, by definition. African music may have unique qualities, but belongs to a broader category with certain fundamental characteristics. Sameness, rather than difference, would seem to be the underlying idea.

Of course, there are many more texts by Tracey where the accent is placed firmly on difference. The unpublished fragment discussed above goes on to emphasise “this distinctively African music”. Indeed, the overall logic of his project rests on difference: were African music not distinctive from other musics, there could be no motivation for its special study, protection and preservation. But I must tread carefully here. Since differences and similarities are not mutually exclusive but co-exist within the same frameworks of perception and construction, there is a danger of setting up a false opposition. It would also be misleading to imply that Agawu denies difference per se. Rather, his work questions “theories born of a will to difference”, which impose alterity in advance and have the effect of distorting focus on specificity in all its variety (2003, 169). In order to proceed with more clarity, we need to examine his theoretical position in greater detail.

The main focus of *Representing African Music* is scholarly musical discourse. Agawu sets out his intentions in the introduction:

My aim, quite simply, is to stimulate debate about modes of knowledge production by offering a critique of discourse about African music. Who writes about it, how, and why? What assumptions and prejudices influence the presentation of ethnographic data? To what orders of authority do scholars appeal? What ethical considerations motivate individuals? How different is African music from other world musics, and how can we best construct difference? What obstacles are there to the emergence of a fruitful critical practice within Africa itself? What role has ethnomusicology played in promoting as well as inhibiting the development of African music? These are the sorts of questions that motivate the book’s arguments. (2003, xii)

As can be seen from the questions he poses, Agawu is concerned with critiquing scholarship within the area of African music studies in terms of its ethics, motivations, methodologies and knowledge constructions. Since ethnomusicology has dominated studies of the continent’s music, much of his attention is focused on that discipline, which he characterises and contextualises as follows:

Ethnomusicological knowledge may be defined as knowledge produced by scholars from the metropolis (Europe or America) about the musical practices of less-privileged others (in Africa, Asia, or Australia) often (but not always) on the basis of (brief) periods of so-called fieldwork. This is neither the customary definition nor a comprehensive one, but it has the virtue of compelling attention to the confluence of

knowledge, difference, and power. Like anthropologists, producers/owners of ethnomusicological knowledge stand in a relation of power to those represented. The acts of naming, representing others in our language and notational systems, and laying down the terms for subsequent discourse betray ethnomusicology's collusion with colonialism. For colonialism sought justification in part from an imagined difference between Europe and geocultural spaces variously called the Orient, the non-West, Africa, and so on. Colonial domination served as an enabling condition for the cultivation of anthropology and later ethnomusicology. Understanding ethnomusicology as a discipline nurtured by colonialism is not the same as branding every ethnomusicologist a colonialist. But acknowledging the link between a decisive set of historical events in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the discourse of an academic discipline is a precondition for adequate historical analysis. Africanist ethnomusicologists have so far shown little interest in thematizing their colonial filiations and affiliations. Nor have they rushed to work toward the transformation of the very conditions of political society so as to liberalize, for example, the movement of global labor. (2003, 155)

It is interesting to consider Tracey in the light of the above quotation. As knowledge explorer, he interacted with the type of scholars Agawu scrutinises, though his connections with the emerging discipline of ethnomusicology, and indeed with academia in general, were somewhat tenuous. (As I have already noted, one could argue that he did not enjoy full membership there, his presence being more that of occasional guest than permanent insider.) An Africa-based settler with strong interests beyond the academy, his involvement with colonialism was more direct (indeed, more self-evident) but also more complex than that of the average ethnomusicologist based in the USA or Europe. Though Tracey's investment in difference was as great, if not greater, than that of the metropolitan scholar, the complexities of his social positioning made him less concerned with constructing coherent theories of alterity and more concerned with manipulating shifting ideas of difference to suit the practical contingencies of the various fields of power within which he operated. Within circles of colonial administration, for instance, images of music evoking impressions of simplicity and discipline would be more desirable than images of passionate complexity, which might suggest liberatory forces beyond the orderly confines of governing structures. For sections of Tracey's market, domesticity enjoyed greater currency than wildness, whereas for Western scholar-adventurers (who also formed part of his network of social capital) the opposite would tend to apply. It should not be surprising, therefore, to find inconsistencies and variations from expected norms of metropolitan whiteness, when examining Tracey's stance towards difference. By contrast, I would argue that his statements on musicological aspects of African music, while underdeveloped and lacking in scholarly depth, *do* display a fair degree of coherence and consistency. Indeed, these observations on musical features

often tend to support the assumption of musical commonalities. Despite his frequent reiteration of it as an abstract principle, then, Tracey does not really support or theorise the difference he declares. In turn, this suggests a kind of conflict, with his musical and political position-takings sometimes pulling in opposite directions. I digress, however. Before returning to Tracey's texts, I will continue to examine Agawu's analysis.

Agawu devotes two chapters of his book to analysing the ways in which rhythm has featured in Africanist music scholarship. He observes that "rhythmic structure" has been marked as "the distinctive quality of African music". This focus on rhythm has been so extensive that it "has by now assumed the status of a commonplace, a topos". (In other words, using Bourdieu's terminology, the discursive focus on rhythm has become doxa, unquestioned because it "goes without saying".) This belief in "African rhythm" includes "related ideas that African rhythms are complex, that Africans possess a unique rhythmic sensibility, and that this rhythmic disposition marks them as ultimately different from us" (2003, 55).<sup>79</sup> Agawu supports his observation with numerous examples across a broad historical period and notes that the tendency to elevate rhythm is not confined to Western scholars but also characterises the works of African musicologists such as Francis Bebey, Philip Gbeho and Nketia (2003, 57–58). The emphasis on rhythm extends beyond music studies, as he observes:

Léopold Senghor, principal architect of the *négritude* movement, devoted several publications to demonstrating a specific and uniquely black rhythmic sensibility. He identifies "imagery and rhythm [as] the two fundamental characteristics of the African-Negro Style," arguing that "nowhere else has rhythm reigned as despotically [as in Black Africa]". (2003, 57)

"African rhythm", then, has not merely been promulgated by outsiders, but has also been adopted by many as part of an African self-image. Nonetheless, those who have embraced the myth, whether Western or African, have done so "within a field of discourse" demarcated by colonialism and "defined by Euro-American traditions of ordering knowledge" (58). (Or, one could say, the terms have been set and the ground laid by whiteness.)

The attribution of unique qualities to "African rhythm" occurs within an implicit comparative framework yet avoids explicit comparison which would give thorough attention to both sides of the binary divide. Instead, Agawu argues, the image of unsurpassed

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<sup>79</sup> Agawu uses the first- and third-person plural in opposing ways throughout his book, with irony and playfulness, self-consciously and strategically declaring the ambiguities of his position as an African scholar based in the Western academy.

complexity assigned to rhythm in African music is achieved through simplifying rhythm in European music (60–61). He makes a similar point concerning (the lack of) comparison with regard to theories advanced by John Chernoff and Peter Cooke, which declare that Africans and Europeans listen to music very differently and Africans experience hearing through movement. Backing up his argument with a number of examples on the reception of European classical music, Agawu contends that Cooke does not satisfactorily demonstrate his assertion of a “‘basic difference’ between the way Africans and Europeans listen to instrumental music” (162). He then summarises the heart of his objection:

[T]o undercomplicate European practice in order to show Africa’s uniqueness is to deprive Africa of full participation in global critical acts; it is to confer a sham uniqueness on Africa. This patronizing and pernicious form of conceptual violence is designed to keep Africa away from center stage. Africa deserves full recognition of whatever unique attributes it possesses, but it does not need fake attributions. (2003, 163)

Agawu provides detailed technical analysis to demonstrate the doubtful and unwieldy qualities of theories such as polymeter and additive rhythm, which mystify and over-complicate rhythm in African music. In doing so, he stresses the importance of dance, contending that “many misinterpretations of African rhythm and meter stem from a failure to observe the dance” (73), and emphasising “that dance feet are usually regular rather than irregular (Africans have only two feet!)” (74).

One of the unfortunate consequences of the over-emphasis on rhythm in scholarship on African music, according to Agawu, is the corresponding tendency to under-emphasise the importance of harmony and melody. To illustrate this trend, he quotes William E.F. Ward – who offsets “the fascination of [African] rhythms” against “the splendor of [European] harmonies” (56) – and refers to Nketia’s argument that “rhythmic interest [in African music] often compensates for the absence of melody or the lack of melodic sophistication” (58). Against these types of generalisations, Agawu underlines the richness and variety of indigenous harmonic and melodic resources.

Agawu’s discussion of harmony (in his first chapter titled “Colonialism’s Impact”) is interesting in revealing a rather different stance on difference to that found in his broader argument and his treatment of rhythm in particular. The section subtitled “Tonal Harmony as Colonizing Force” begins as follows:



There is no simple formula for determining the net result of Western and African musical influences, because there are affinities as well as differences. In terms of the three basic dimensions of European music – melody, rhythm, and harmony – we might say that the one with the greatest colonizing power is harmony. African melodies, especially those generated by the proto-musical essence of spoken language, are able sometimes to resist the blandness and squareness of certain European diatonic melodies. And African rhythms, given their sharp and characteristic edges, rarely sell their birthrights to Europe. But harmony is a different kettle of fish. Of all the musical influences spawned by the colonial encounter, that of tonal-functional harmony has been the most pervasive, the most far-reaching, and ultimately the most disastrous. (2003, 8)

Agawu provides some examples of contemporary African music in which European-derived “tonality in a restricted form provides the harmonic ground of composition” (9). He argues that one cannot quite equate the “pervasiveness of functional harmony in Africa” with the pragmatic use of colonial languages as unifiers in communication, since “[musical] language does not have the same primary communicative obligation in society that verbal language does”. Yet, he suggests that the cultural significance of using foreign harmony may be greater than that of using a foreign language, since “the symbolic residue of musical language is greater than that of verbal language” and “[music] is, in that sense, more *marked* than literature” (9).<sup>80</sup> Agawu goes on to emphasise the value and interest of indigenous harmonic forms, as opposed to the limiting chordal structures imposed through Christian worship in particular:

The vast harmonic resources available in traditional African music, resources that include many viable alternatives to the Soprano-Alto-Tenor-Bass (SATB) texture of European hymns, for example, also remain underappreciated. The hierarchic SATB arrangement that churchgoers encounter on Sundays and that boys and girls are forced to endure as members of community and school choirs does not occur in traditional African music. Indigenous multipart singing is idiomatically quite varied, and there are some spectacular examples. [...]

These and numerous other indigenous harmonic/contrapuntal practices remain to be explored creatively and on a large scale. But such exploration is not likely to happen any time soon if, as too often happens, we remain deaf to local harmonic systems, refuse to standardize harmonic resources for compositional and pedagogical purposes, and succumb to the superficially intoxicating harmonies of European hymns and American pop songs. In conceding harmonic ground so readily, Africans unwittingly reinforce the impression that strongly implicative and cogent harmonic systems are simply not part of their traditional heritage. William Ward’s claim, made at the end of a 1927 article surveying the basic elements of African music, that “if it could learn from Europe modern developments in form and harmony, African music

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<sup>80</sup> Many would question this statement and argue that Agawu should reflect more deeply on the nature of linguistic signification.

should grow into an art more magnificent than the world has yet seen,” is possible only against the background of such concession. And yet, the number, variety, and intricacy of multipart techniques suggest that, contrary to what Ward imagined, Africa perhaps has a lot less – if at all – to learn from Europe in the house of harmony. Of the many legacies of colonialism, the consequences of an uncritical acceptance of a limited form of functional harmony have yet to be recognized, let alone resisted actively. (2003, 9–10)

Agawu’s argument, here, seems to rest on a prior assumption of difference since he evokes European harmony as an alien force stamping roughshod over superior African harmonies which were nonetheless peculiarly vulnerable, unlike melody and rhythm. Without denying the extent of colonial influences and coercions or the existence of specific harmonic differences, one could take a different perspective on harmonic ‘colonisation’. Certain questions come to mind. If indigenous melodic and rhythmic characteristics could survive in the face of colonial onslaught, why not harmonic characteristics also? And does not the archive of recorded music by Tracey and others, including examples cited by Agawu himself, in fact demonstrate the resilience of African harmonies? Concerning the undeniable and widespread existence of European-style harmony in contemporary African music, it could surely also be argued that the readiness with which certain harmonic features were found to be attractive and adopted by African musicians resulted in part from prior affinities. The tone of the above-mentioned section on harmony seems to contradict Agawu’s call to interrogate theories of difference and the spirit of his celebratory chapter on popular music, where he writes that highlife music “maintains conflicting [harmonic] procedures at its most fundamental level” as a result of combining “the pressures of a [European] closed I-V-I progression with various [indigenous] open modal structures”. With regard to highlife, this combination of influences is not depicted as negative but rather as producing an enriched “complex outcome” (2003, 131).

Admittedly, Agawu himself concedes that the positions he takes are sometimes contradictory, in tune with “the contradictions, incongruities, anachronisms, and antinomies that animate postcolonial life and thought” (222), and “overstated where appropriate” (xii). In the context of my study, what is most interesting about his arguments on indigenous and colonising harmony is the way in which they echo many of Tracey’s statements. Indeed, a phrase like “superficially intoxicating harmonies of European hymns and American pop songs” could easily have been written by Tracey.

Another theme which Agawu raises is the need to focus greater attention on the use and study of African languages in relation to music. Here too there are some synergies with

Tracey's work. Agawu also argues for a stronger focus on "music as text", explaining his use of the term to encompass more than "the words of a song or the written trace of a composition" and include "performances of any sort". Texts are understood as "not given but made" and "the conferral of textual status" is "a critical act" (97). He motivates this call as follows:

Designating African music as text has the advantage of liberating it from the yoke of ostensibly contextual explanations advocated by ethnographers and ethnomusicologists. This is not to say that we must gleefully ignore all matters of context and origin. But because context implies more text, and given that we can never be outside text, the work of interpretation is most fruitful when it proceeds in full awareness of this foundational impossibility. Registering the textuality of African music is in effect a way of foregrounding its essence as a performed art. It is a way of restoring a composition's fluid ontology by acknowledging its continuing life in reinterpretation. It is a way of "disprivileging" origins and first performances and coming to terms with the necessary acts of creative violation that must attend each new performance. For too long, the development of strong interpretations of the products of African musical genius has been hampered by overemphasis on the ethnomusicologists' classificatory schemes. We read of musical types, repertoires, and genres – always in the plural, as if the individual products were unworthy of analytical attention. Yet the aesthetic experiences of many Africans are shaped most memorably by a certain dirge, a certain song, a certain poetic text, a certain singer, a certain drummer, a certain occasion – in short, by specific performers, works, or performance situations. We recall specific moments of intensity, not necessarily complete configurations. It is appropriate, therefore, to fashion a critical approach that is more concerned with moments than wholes, and that draws strength from the wider range of possibilities made available in the pursuit of the textual status of African music. (2003, 97–98)

Agawu's promotion of an approach to the study of African music "as text" is a political act. As a musicologist working across epistemological borders on different types of music, he is intensely aware of inequalities between fields. For example, the field of Western classical music had focused largely on *works* (or texts, albeit often narrowly conceived as static rather than performative) with a tendency to downplay their social embeddedness. By contrast, the field of African music studies, as constituted largely by ethnomusicology, has tended to focus on music as collective ethnological product, linking functionality to (narrowly defined) social context and tending to deny, or downplay, specific aesthetic status to artists and works.<sup>81</sup> Agawu's concern with correcting this imbalance occurs within a broader analysis which highlights the role and structure of the *field* itself. Again, the "conferral of textual status"

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<sup>81</sup> The fields of musicology and ethnomusicology have both changed considerably in the last two decades and broadened conceptually and methodologically. At the time when Agawu was preparing his manuscript for publication, however, the generalisations above were still largely accurate.

takes a stand against assumed difference, claiming an equal ontological status for African artworks alongside any others.

Affirming the textual status of musical items establishes them as objects for contemplation. Agawu challenges the frequently asserted “distinction between functional and contemplative music”, which associates Africa with the former and Europe with the latter:

Traditional African music is not normally described as contemplative art; it is thought rather to be functional. Functional music drawn from ritual, work, or play is externally motivated; it has a direct purpose. Thus funeral dirges sung by mourners, boat-rowing songs sung by fishermen, lullabies performed by mothers, and songs of insult traded by feuding clans are utilitarian musics that are said to be incompletely understood whenever analysis ignores the social or “extramusical” context. This music is then contrasted with elite or art music, whose affinities with European classical music are for the most part unmediated. Such contemplative or autonomous music is not tied to an external function; it is functionless. Although it is in principle consumed in a social setting, it demands nothing of its hearers save contemplation, meditation, an active self-forgetting. According to this distinction, then, analysis of traditional music, which is sometimes generalized to encompass all African music, must always take into account the particular activity to which the music is attached, whereas analysis of European music, unburdened of attachment to external function, can concentrate on the music itself, its inner workings, the life of its tones. (2003, 98)

This division is “deeply problematic” (98), indeed false, since *all* kinds of music (even so-called “autonomous” genres) are implicated in the social, with functional attributes.

Nonetheless, even types of song which are most closely linked to particular occasions and activities also always provide opportunities for musical enjoyment and contemplation and may always *also* be studied simply as music. Agawu wishes to redirect African music studies away from definitions and practices which effectively limit serious attention to the “inner workings” of “the music itself”.

When he proposes that researchers substitute an attitude of “carefully defined sameness” for the “differencing” which “has produced such distorted, ideologically one-sided, and politically disadvantageous representation”, he is aware that ultimately one cannot “escape the regime of oppositions”. Nonetheless, Agawu wishes to “attempt a critique in the spirit of a deconstruction” and “resist the naturalized oppositions on which knowledge of African music has been based”. Ethnographic fieldwork conducted under the assumption of human commonality would presume “translatable impulses behind performance”, while recognising the specific ways in which musical practice is shaped by “the materiality of culture” (168–69). Furthermore,

Contesting difference through an embrace of sameness might also prompt a fresh critique of essentialism. Such a critique should facilitate a better understanding of the peculiar juxtapositions of cultural practices that define modern Africa. As argued in the introduction, it would explain how a Sierra Leonean, Nigerian, or Ghanaian can be equally moved by a hymn, a traditional dance, a local proverb, a quotation from Shakespeare, a piece of reggae, the Wedding march, and the latest highlife music. To eliminate the will to difference is to highlight the precarious grounds on which contemporary African reality stands, grounds shaped by religious, political, and ethical impositions that are layered at various levels of depth in various places. Sameness prepares an understanding of (modern) African culture as a form of improvised theater. African culture, in this view, is a makeshift culture whose actors respond to specific pressures on an ad hoc, ongoing basis. It is not a culture of frozen artifacts imbued with spiritual essences. (2003, 169)

Significantly, Agawu uses Tracey as one of his examples of theorists with a “will to difference” (157 and 169). Unlike quotations he uses from other scholars, the illustration chosen for Tracey – from the opening paragraph in “The State of Folk Music in Bantu Africa” (1954, 32) – references *people* directly and music only by implication. In it, Tracey refers to Africans as “a people radically unlike ourselves” (a phrase which Agawu emphasises), and justifies his representation of their music because of their supposed inability to do so themselves, or to protect their own cultural products. With Agawu’s critique in mind, I will now examine Tracey’s representation of music in *Ngoma* (1948), a work which attempts to speak *to* those he defines as “radically” different, rather than about them.

### ***Ngoma* and Tracey’s Dance with Difference**

The book’s full title is *Ngoma: An Introduction to Music for Southern Africans* and it provides the most extensive and comprehensive expression of Tracey’s thoughts on music. Since it is an introductory, pedagogical text aimed at Africans, it also reveals the type of understanding he thought it was important for them to have. Tracey explains his intention in the opening paragraph of the foreword: “This is a book about African music for Africans. It has been written in the idiom and from the point of view of the African at home in his own village, and the words and phrases have been framed with a view to their translation into Bantu languages” (1948, ix). Accordingly, the narrative stance chosen positions the author as an African. With the exception of the foreword’s framing commentary, which implies a Western readership, the first-person plural is used throughout the rest of the text – “we” Africans; “our” music.

In the foreword, Tracey explains the collaborative method used in constructing the work:

This is how it came to be written. A Rhodesian native, Zakia Chihota, saved enough money to come down to Natal from Southern Rhodesia to learn African music from a Zulu teacher. He was disappointed in his hopes and turned to me for assistance as we had met some ten years before in Salisbury. I undertook to teach him what I knew of the music of his own people, and to try and place it in its true perspective with other musics of the world. So as to make the knowledge of use to others I decided to write it in book form, which he would translate as we went along into *Chizezeru*, one of the Shona dialects. Chihota's progress was a check upon the gradual unfolding of the theory of music from the African angle, and any sentence he did not fully understand was rewritten more clearly. In this way we evolved all the phrases we needed and from a glossary of musical terms collected during my previous research under the Carnegie Corporation we found that there were ample words in the vernacular to describe most musical phenomena, provided we made full use of the terminology in common use among the more musical of them, that is among their recognised minstrels. Two years later I had the opportunity of testing out the manuscript by teaching another keen African musician, this time from Northern Rhodesia. He also had little difficulty in following the text, and found the theories expounded in this book applied also with accuracy to his own people, the Mtumbuka, some five hundred miles further north. (ix-x)

The methodology involving translation and indigenous terminology described above stands out in the light of Agawu's observation that Western scholars of African music generally have "not made language study a priority" (2003, 108). Whatever the limitations of his attempt, Tracey must at least be given credit for paying serious attention to language, something which Agawu finds it necessary to call for almost sixty years later.

Like his publications in *African Music* and other journals, the remainder of the foreword gives Tracey's standard pitch on African music. Africans are showing "increasing interest in their own music", reacting against "the dark days of intolerance which threatened to extirpate all indigenous arts and replace them with the distorted imitations of others". With "careful guidance" from such as Tracey himself,

their musicians may yet have the opportunity of bringing to light one of the last untouched folk musics of the world, a music which should have wide significance beyond their borders, and grow into an established culture as easily recognised for example as the Hungarian, Hebridean, Georgian or South American musics. (x)

It is clear that conflicting logical strands are at play here. To speak of an "untouched" folk music was somewhat ludicrous at a time when the music-makers concerned had been living under colonial rule for periods ranging from several decades to more than a century.

Nonetheless, the label "untouched" betrays the preservationist impulse with a sense of

something static and unchanging. The reference to “[growing] into an established culture”, by contrast, displays the developmental imperative which is strong throughout the book.

In line with modernist development, rather than essentialist preservation, Tracey goes on to predict, or promise, “that the day is not far off when African musicians will come into their own again – but this time with modern science to back them up” (x). He calls upon “many” to “lend a hand” in research which would

dispel the present fog of misunderstandings and fears, and the false idealising of western music, which between them have contrived to drive African music underground or into illicit and unnatural union with the most simple elements of our own – the salt of African country music with the sugary sentimentality of cheap ballads and revivalist hymns. (xi)

Again, there is a shadow of ‘miscegenation’ in the characterisation of musical hybridity as “illicit and unnatural”. It is also important to note that Tracey’s reference to simplicity with regard to Western music does not imply a general judgement on it. Rather, he is saying that it is only “the most simple” and “sugary” (obviously inferior) types of Western music which have thus far been mastered to any extent by Africans. As noted in my second chapter, he presents European music as “far more complex” than African, in his correspondence concerning Mohapeloa, where he also implies that even the most “promising” African musicians are not yet ready to engage with its (superior) complexities. Despite all the positive attributes he assigns to African music, there is nonetheless in Tracey’s texts the implication of an historicist hierarchy, a ladder of musical development on which European music takes the lead. In *Ngoma*, this developmental assumption is made explicit in the first chapter, where he argues as follows, in ‘African’ voice:

There are few things which foreign musicians can do that we could not do also if we attain the skill. And if we manage to develop our own music as Europeans and Asiatics have developed theirs, by attention to the smallest detail and by thought and skill, we Africans will have as great a music as that of any other people; and, moreover, it will be a music flowing from the hearts of our own people through the skill of our own musicians. No foreign art could give us as much pleasure as this. (13)

The foreword ends with the promise of “remarkable results” from the research undertaking Tracey was encouraging. “For Europeans”, it would mean merely “another music to study and appreciate”. For Africans, however, “it will mean a revelation of their

own individuality which will not only bear the hard light of comparison but unite them in the knowledge of their original contribution to Music, vital at home and applauded abroad” (xi). It would be a mistake to read Tracey’s intent to “unite” Africans in celebration of their musical “individuality” as an argument for their political liberation. As demonstrated in previous chapters, late-colonial administrators and industrialists were attracted by the idea of encouraging culturally based contentment among African workers, in the hope that this would dissuade them from pursuing nationalist revolution. Yet, as we will see, the practical *musical* activism which Tracey hoped to promote among his young African readers could conceivably have potential for translation into other spheres of activity. From a musicological point of view, his wish to pursue scientific study which would “bear the hard light of comparison” is significant in the light of Agawu’s observations on a general tendency to eschew comparison within ethnomusicology.<sup>82</sup>

Turning to the main body of *Ngoma*, Tracey begins with difference and commonality, situating particular musics within music-as-universal:

Music is common to all races of mankind. In this respect it is like language: we all express our thoughts in words, but use a great number of different languages. So it is with music. There are a great many musics, but we are most at home when we sing or play our own mother-music, the music which we, only, are able to compose and which we can perform better than anyone else.

Each of the hundreds of musics in the world is designed for some special purpose and satisfies special people. It is possible to study and to make comparisons between the various musics, and in so doing, we find certain characteristics common to them all and other characteristics peculiar to each. We find that tribes which have similar languages (or are nearly related to each other), have similar musics, whether they are African tribes, European tribes, or Asiatic tribes. We may say that the sum of the musics of the many Bantu tribes forms the great music of the Bantu race; and all the musics of the many tribes of Europe form the great music of the European races. Each race has its own great music which is unlike the other great musics in national detail, but like the other great musics in social purpose. (1)

Both ‘races’ and ‘tribes’ are prominent here and there are hints of both historicist and naturalist conceptions of ‘race’. On the one hand, distinctions between musics seem to be culturally based, coinciding with distinctions between languages. On the other, there is the suggestion that musical characteristics may have a biological basis in the parenthetical reference to “related” peoples. Notwithstanding this confusion, within the overarching dome

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<sup>82</sup> Later, in the *Codification* publication (1969) by contrast, Tracey and his co-authors argue that “[there] should be no unnecessary comparisons with non-African musical concepts, and one should avoid as far as possible any pre-occupation with *comparative* musicology before the basis of African musicology itself has been firmly established” (11).



of the human universal, the drum of difference beats loud and clear. But what are the details of these differences with regard to African music, according to Tracey?

Looking at *Ngoma* as a whole, difference is frequently asserted in rhetoric, but rather slippery to locate in terms of specifics. Despite the clear presence of a “will to difference”, alterity is not defined in the kind of categorical terms which have dominated many analyses of African music. For instance, Agawu provides a number of examples of binary oppositions that are commonly used to inscribe otherness:

There is nothing self-evident about the categories, borne of difference, put forward to distinguish African musics from Western music: functional as opposed to contemplative; communal rather than individualistic; spontaneous rather than calculated; rhythmically complex rather than simple; melodically unsophisticated rather than ornate; improvised rather than precomposed; and based in oral rather than written practices. These binarisms range from the real to the irrational. Each subtends an asymmetrical relation in which one term is marked, the other unmarked. As ideology, these enduring characterizations speak to meaning as difference constructed by particular individuals for particular purposes. (2003, 165)

In selective summary, then, within the broader archive of Africanist ‘knowledge’, the following opposing terms are commonly applied to distinguish between African and Western music respectively: oral/written; improvised/composed; functional/contemplative; physical/cerebral; communal/individual; unchanging/innovative. In general, Tracey seems to work against these oppositions or present them as relative rather than absolute, denoting differences of degree rather than of kind.

Concerning “the writing of music”, Tracey argues that “[a]s soon as we have learnt to understand our African music we shall be able to write it down just as easily as Europeans write their European music or the Asiatics their music, but we shall need to devise our own special symbols for our music, just as they have done for theirs” (1948, 1). After defining types of music which have not been represented in writing as “folk musics”, he historicises the shift towards written scores as recent and far from complete in the European context:

European music was nearly all Folk Music only a few hundred years ago. The writing of European music was perfected in its present form only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, long after the first Europeans came to Africa. There still remains much Folk Music in Europe that has never been written down, and much of the new music that is being composed to-day [sic] is based on the folk music of the people. (2)

Tracey does not provide any real explanation for his insistence that existing notational systems are not suitable for African music.<sup>83</sup>

*Ngoma* takes issue with tonic solfa, which had been introduced by missionaries in the nineteenth century, was taught in many schools and churches and was being used by composers like Mohapeloa and others within the choral tradition. (See Lucia 2011, for a detailed discussion of Mohapeloa's creative use of tonic solfa.) Tracey declares it only fit for "foreign songs" but "not suited to the writing of our own" without specifying the "number of reasons" why this should be so (15). Predictably, he makes no mention of contemporary African composers who were currently deploying this method. He thus silently erases their works in a text that itself calls for composition and "musical development" (14), or else declares their compositions un-African by implication. Racism as exclusion is clearly at work here. Notwithstanding his insistence that a new and unique form of notation would be required, however, the important point is that African music could and should be represented in written form, according to him. Since written music is presented as a recent phenomenon in Europe and Africans are encouraged to move in this direction (leaving aside the fact that they were already doing so), it is clear that a divide between orality and writing is not being deployed as an essentialist mark of difference.

As with the opposition between orality and written scores, African music is often described as improvised while composition is reserved for Europe. Throughout his career, Tracey's texts recognise African composition. The unpublished report on Shona music for the Carnegie Corporation (1933) includes a section titled "The Shona Composer", for example, while the introduction to the *Sound of Africa* catalogue speaks of "the unwritten compositions of genuine African musicians" (1973 Vol. 1, 4). In *Ngoma*, Tracey exhorts musician readers to "compose your own music" (1948, 84). In fact, his discussion of improvisation shows that he views composition and improvisation as mutually compatible aspects of the same creative process, rather than opposites. He does, however, argue that narrow approaches to music as written text can have a negative impact on improvisatory practice.

According to Tracey, both Europeans and Africans improvise, or have done so. Yet Africans are portrayed as particularly gifted in this regard. This somewhat ambiguous treatment of improvisation is evident in the following quotation:

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<sup>83</sup> As noted earlier, in 1961 he would suggest the opposite – that staff notation might in fact be used. It is also important to note that Tracey was somewhat out of his depth with regard to notation, being neither highly skilled in reading music nor possessing the necessary knowledge to produce his own musical notations using any system.

One of the results of writing music is not altogether good. It might lead us to give music boundaries, to think of it as a fixed art and not as we do now, as the outpouring of the skill of the musician. Europeans do not readily understand our free flowing music which is not written, because they look upon much of their music as fixed and unalterable, penned up by the symbols of writing as if by the encircling sticks of a cattle kraal.

Only two hundred years ago, improvisation was part of the skill of European musicians as it is with ours to-day [sic]. Musical examinations in those days always included a test of improvisation upon a set theme. But nowadays only a few European musicians are able to improvise successfully and this is a great loss to their art. It comes from relying too much upon what is written and not enough upon the spirit of the musician. If one of our musicians starts a tune upon the *Mbira*, others can take it up and add their own variations to it as the music goes along. But if it is written down, the players may be too busy playing the notes that have been fixed for them to put in new variations of their own. Even if we do manage to write our music, it is unlikely to become as fixed as European music because our people are better at improvising than they are, and this may well remain a feature of our skill. (15)

Although the will to essentialise difference is not altogether absent, the passage above speaks more strongly of similarity.

What about the frequent characterisation of African music as functional rather than contemplative? The titles of articles such as “The Social Role of African Music” (1954) and “African Music within its Social Setting” (1958) evidence Tracey’s general emphasis on music’s functionality. In “The State of Folk Music in Bantu Africa”, he declares “practicality” to be a common characteristic of “all African musics” and states that “[every] piece of folk music works for its living” (1954, 33). Yet, while acknowledging that different types of music are linked to particular occasions and occupations, *Ngoma* places a strong emphasis on the contemplative aspect of musical reception. Consider this extract on “the artistry of music”, for example:

It is a mystery why we enjoy the regular notes and rhythms of music instead of the jumble of sounds which we call noise. And it is not easy to understand why we want to make music at all: there is no need for us to do so. But neither is there any need for us to decorate our sticks with wirework, to wear beads, to make patterns on the walls of our huts, to carve wood or to tell stories. Yet we are happier through doing these things. We spend a lot of time making music and learning to sing, to dance, or to play instruments, and we will walk a long way to hear others making music. The right music, well performed, gives us a feeling of well-being.

It is these two things – the choice of the right music and the correct manner of performing it which constitute the artistry of any music. If we choose the wrong kind of music for the occasion, or if we perform it badly, the people for whom we are making the music will not have that sense of well-being which our performance was intended to create. There are good reasons why this is so, and we can discover the secret ourselves if we study our music deeply and carefully.

It is clear that any one of our musicians can be judged by the skill he shows in making music. A musician well knows if one song is more pleasing to him than another. The listener, too, knows if a musician plays well, for a skilful musician pleases the people very much and a clumsy musician very little. (1948, 2–3)

Here the emphasis on aesthetic rather than utilitarian qualities foregrounds contemplative dimensions. Listeners are portrayed as actively seeking out music for pleasure rather than merely consuming it in accordance with custom. Performance quality varies and better quality performances elicit more satisfactory responses. Moreover, while social appropriateness – the “kind of music for the occasion” – is important, it is interior, musicological characteristics which seem to be emphasised in the encouragement to “study our music deeply and carefully”.

A contemplative emphasis is also clearly apparent in Tracey’s concern to distinguish “between religion and the music used for religious ceremonies”. He tells his readers:

It is possible for us to play religious music when we are not in Church or not worshipping the Spirits. We then do not apply ourselves to the religious thoughts that go with the music but enjoy it for the skill of the minstrel, the complexity of the music, or the movements of the melody, and so on. (7)

Africans are encouraged to emulate “Europeans” and “the Negroes of America” who “often use religious songs for secular purposes”. Citing the indigenous example of the Zimbabwean *mbira*, Tracey also argues that the same musical instruments may be used for “both religious and secular music” (7), and warns his readers to “be careful not to associate an instrument with one kind of music only” (8). Comparative examples of religious and secular music from Europe, America and Africa stress the co-existence of functionality and contemplation and emphasise similarity rather than difference. Aware of the extent and influence of Christianity, Tracey hopes to win Christian converts to the cause of traditional music with his arguments that one can “be a Christian and yet play African instruments”, and that condemnation of music “associated with the religion or customs of our Ancestors [...] is foolish” (8). His encouragement to separate styles of music from familiar contexts surely supports the contemplative reception of music and the study of music as text, in Agawu’s sense.

I will now consider the opposition between mind and body which associates mental attributes with European ‘civilisation’ and physical ones with African ‘primitivism’. In studies of African music, a focus on physicality and movement is usually aligned with a focus on rhythm. We have seen Tracey challenge common characterisations of “African rhythm” in

the texts discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In *Ngoma*, this questioning of rhythm's prominence is apparent through understatement. There are no headings using the term and rhythm is defined as one of the qualities of music, along with melody, harmony and timbre (8). Tracey's emphasis on the mental application necessary for mastery of any kind of musical performance, along with his treatment of dance, makes it plain that he wishes neither to separate body and mind nor to associate African performance with instinctive physicality. In a section called "Musical Skill and Study", he writes:

If we want to sing we must first learn both the words and the notes. The boy who plays upon his flute must first learn how to move his fingers to make the notes when he blows with his mouth; and the man who plays the *Mbira* must first practise for a long while before his thumbs will strike the keys in the right way to make the complicated music of the minstrel. When we hear his music we enjoy it generally through *our* emotions; but it is not made only through *his* emotions – it is the result of many days of thought and practice in which his active emotions hardly emerge. Why? Because the musician must think music with his mind and exercise careful control of his body, his fingers, hands or mouth. He cannot let his emotions "run away with him." This control of mind, muscles and emotions is called "technique" (skill). To achieve skill is the aim of every good musician, for in this lies his ability to make music and to entertain others. (11)

African musicians, like all others, must "think music" with their minds while exercising discipline over the controlled movements of their bodies.

With regard to dancing, Tracey is keen to stress its compatibility with religious worship and to guard its respectability against associations with sexuality. On the first point, he informs his readers that "dancing in churches" had once been common in Europe. On the second, he says that "the fear of sexual excesses has led religious people in all countries and in all ages to condemn dancing, yet everywhere in every race the young people continue to dance", and goes on to refute the association of Africans with promiscuity:

There is no reason to suppose that young Africans are any less moral than young Europeans or that they are less capable of curbing sexual desires. To prevent the abuse of dancing for promiscuous ends is the concern of all societies, black or white. European music is full of tunes which are based directly upon one or the other dance: it is said that the regular lines and verses of Christian hymns were probably largely due to the influence of the dance. Musicians of every race have used dance music upon which to base their new compositions, and we cannot fully understand the music of any tribe without knowing something about its dances.

We must be careful therefore not to let the possibility of sexual excesses blind us to the importance of the art of dancing. It is a most valuable form of social

recreation all over the world, and in most countries it is also the normal accompaniment to religion. (9)

Again, Tracey's moralistic tone underlines commonality rather than difference. Whatever unique qualities African music may possess are not placed in any *special* relationship with physical movement, instinct, emotion, sexuality or dance.

Neither is African music represented as a particularly communal, rather than individual, activity. Throughout *Ngoma*, there is an emphasis on individuals as artists and students of music. Although music is made in and for communities, everyone is not equally musical. Composers and performers have and develop particular talents and skills: though "all" may participate, "the musicians lead us along the way" (3).

Finally, from the list of common oppositions, there is a distinction between fixity and change which binds African music to static tradition and allows European music free participation in innovative modernity. As with the other binaries discussed above, Tracey does not simplistically define difference between African and Western music in this way. Despite his preservationist tendencies, his texts generally present his subject as constantly changing, rather than frozen in time. So, for instance, we recall his comment that folk music "evolves" and "can never be static" (1954 "Social Role", 235). He accepted that variation and innovation are vital for all types of music and promoted the *development* of African music. At the same time, he wished to prevent or limit the effects of certain musical influences which he considered harmful to African aesthetics and authenticity. In writing *Ngoma*, moreover, he was writing for African *readers*, which at the time meant people influenced by colonial (government or missionary) schooling. He wished to encourage, or rekindle, their interest in traditional arts without in any way undermining their (supposed) loyalty to the system he represented and supported. All this means that *Ngoma* performs a careful, often awkward, balancing act with regard to musical change.

In the first chapter, Tracey writes of the importance of maintaining familiarity in the face of novelty:

If music is to give the greatest pleasure [...] it must be expressed in terms familiar to the listeners. This does not mean that music can never alter; it means that new styles of music can be introduced only slowly, so that people may get used to them gradually, a little at a time. Even then, the new music that springs from the old music of our ancestors will always have a deeper effect upon our emotions than new music which reflects the hearts and minds of foreigners. (1948, 4)

Foreign music, then, should not be banned entirely, but carefully rationed. Change should be managed to ensure that the new “springs from the old”.

A passage near the end of the book plays a variation on the same theme with a stronger emphasis on innovation:

In these days, when our lives in Africa are changing so much from contact with Europeans (under their rule, learning a religion from them and buying their goods) the value of our traditional kind of music has been questioned. Many of our people are violently opposed to our music, as we know, because they say it drags us back. Others gain much comfort from old music and old songs. Both opinions are partly right. Everyone who wishes to make something new, who wishes to build a hut in a new way, who wishes to use a new kind of pot for cooking and who wishes to sing a new song, must break away a little from tradition. But because we are the sons of our forefathers, and can be no one else's sons, we must also inherit our traditions: our ways of life, our ways of thinking, and our ways of enjoying music. We cannot throw off our inheritance, it is within us. But we may add to our inheritance by making new traditions to be handed on to our children. So although we rebel against our traditions we must at the same time accept our birthright and do with it what we can.

Our music is important to us because it is one of our chief means of producing a sense of well-being within us, a means of enjoyment and a comfort in adversity. Our studies have shown us that this feeling of well-being will be obtained only if we use old tools to make new music. We study our music and the minds of our musicians to find out just what tools they have been using. We do *not* study in order to hold fast the past and hold back the future, but rather to sharpen those tools and with them find new satisfaction for the future. Then, and only then, will our people be able to follow us along the path into our unknown future, singing as we go. (91)

Tracey's political motives may be discerned in the extract above. Music is promoted to provide “enjoyment” and “comfort in adversity” for those “under their [European] rule”. As such, it is intended to encourage acquiescence, not rebellion. Furthermore, the kind of music best suited to smooth the passage from past to future and to serve as a soothing balm for the indignities of subservience under colonialism would be “new music” made with “old tools”. Here, it would seem, is where this music's unique character is taken to reside. But what are these special “tools” that must be used in order to guarantee authenticity? Difference is vehemently declared, but where exactly is it located?

As I have demonstrated, Tracey does not define African music's alterity in the familiar binary terms of much of the Africanist discourse which Agawu critiques. According to *Ngoma*, music from *all* types of places and peoples may be disseminated orally or in writing, involves original composition as well as memorised performance, potentially and ideally includes improvisation, is functional and contemplative, requires sustained mental and physical activity, has a close relationship with dance, is made by individuals and groups

within social settings, and is subject to change. So, in examining these categories in turn, we have found universal similarity rather than difference. Music seems much the same in essence, though it varies in detail. To find the particular characteristics by which Tracey divides, or racialises, music, we need to turn to his writing on scales, the impact of speech tones and stress on melody and rhythm, and musical instruments.

### **Tools and Particulars: *Ngoma* on Scales, Language Effects and Instruments**

Tracey writes as follows on “the pleasure in familiarity” and the strangeness of musical difference:

All of us must have noticed that certain kinds of music, which make us very excited and eager to dance, only annoy Europeans or even Africans of other tribes. Similarly, certain pieces of European music, which are considered very excellent to them, may not please us at all. Asiatic music is usually so shrill that it pleases neither Africans nor Europeans; yet it may be very pleasing to Asiatics.

So we can draw this conclusion: that our African music is pleasing to us primarily because we are already familiar with this kind of music from the time when we were small children, and because it has grown out of the hearts and minds of generations of our own people. And so it is with other races. We associate the sound of our scales and the intonation of our language with our own homes, we are at home with them, and our feelings are set at ease. We do not feel we are in the presence of strangers and it is simple for us to take part in the music as we know what to expect. But when we hear foreign music, we find it is not so easy to take part, as *the notes of their scales are different from ours and our African words do not fit well into their tunes*. (3–4; my emphasis)

The words I have emphasised above seem to underline the crux of musical difference for Tracey: different scales and the relationship between language and melody. After having explained the scientific basis of musical pitch and harmonics (19–30), he introduces scales in the following way:

Now that we have seen how complex one note is, we must consider how we make a collection of notes called scales. We usually choose some of the Harmonics to help make up our scales but not all. We choose other notes as we please.

Let it be clearly understood that all races of the world choose different notes to make up their scales. Each tribe is entitled to choose what notes it likes. There is no right scale for everyone. The only right scales are the scales which are chosen by the minstrels to suit their own purposes. (30)

In assessing this comment, it is important to remember the colonial background. Colonisers did indeed attempt to impose their musical scale as the only correct tuning model, labelling



others 'out of tune'. Yet Tracey's revisionist approach comes with its own problems. While he seems to offer freely chosen diversity with one hand, with the other he divides scales in terms of "races" and "tribes" (undefined terms which seem to be used interchangeably here). Against the recognition of the arbitrariness of scales and the suggestion that musicians may choose "to suit their own purposes" is the stricture that each racial or ethnic group should stick to their 'own' scale and that others are wrong for them.

Any desire Tracey may have to neatly divide musics on racial grounds according to scales (one race, one scale) is complicated by the technical explanation he proceeds to offer, which provides as many points of similarity as it does points of difference:

As a general rule we Africans have either a six- or an eight-note scale, the sixth or eighth note being the octave of the fundamental. The Europeans also have an eight-note scale (the white notes on their pianoforte) but they have added other notes to it (the black notes) in order to play some of their more complicated music.

A six-note scale (which had five steps or intervals between the notes) is called Pentatonic (Five Tone) and the eight-note scale is called Heptatonic (Seven Tone).

With some instruments, such as the Musical Bows and the Horns, the scale is wholly dependent upon the Harmonic family except for those notes we make by altering the pitch of the Fundamental, either by stopping the string with a finger to make it shorter, or by placing a hand partly over the mouth of the horn and so on. But with instruments such as the *Mbira*, the Pipes and the *Timbila*, where we can make the pitch of the notes what we please and add as many as we like, we may choose the scales we prefer.

In Africa we usually speak of "the scale of the strings," or "the scale of the pipes," or "the scale of the *Mbira*." The voice is most flexible. With practice, we can sing many scales to suit the instrument with which we are singing, though we always find it difficult to sing to foreign scales, European or Asiatic.

It is said that the very first scales came from the note of the speaking voice. It is certainly true that in Africa, a change of language means a change of scales too. The peoples of Europe have recently agreed upon one scale to suit all their instruments; but in order to achieve this common scale they had to alter the pitch of all their notes, making some greater and some smaller.

When we choose a scale, we usually take our "tone centre" (the starting note) and add to it the octave (2:1) the fifth (3:2) and the fourth (4:3), and divide up the spaces that are left into intervals of major or minor tones (9:8 or 10:9) whichever fits in best. (This will be discussed later). The European scale is now based upon twelve equal intervals of small Semitones (approx. 19:18) not the 16:15, the Just or large Semitone. It is like fitting the rungs on a ladder. The Europeans have taken a ruler and marked out 13 equal notes (12 divisions) to the octave. We have put the eight rungs of our ladders where we please but we have not marked them off regularly with a ruler.

Our scales are often similar to the white note scale of the Europeans (Diatonic) but never quite the same. The matter of scales is very complicated and it will be many years before we have discovered just what our scales are and how they are made.

The Asiatic peoples also have a great number of scales, the Arabs, for example, have over ninety, each with a name. Some of the Europeans who have come

to Africa have tried to persuade us to use their scales only. So far only very few Africans have come to use them; they are not suitable for our African music. (30–33)<sup>84</sup>

In Tracey's discussion of scales, points of similarity can be ascribed to the unifying effects of a single harmonic system: all strings react in the same way when plucked; all voices of a particular type can theoretically produce any number of notes within a prescribed range. Within a common acoustic frame he therefore recognises the essentially arbitrary nature of the choices – how many notes and the pitch ratios between them – resulting in a great variety of scales in use. He refers to the collective musical compromise by which European musicians gradually agreed to adopt the tempered scale (rather than just intonation based on the harmonic series) in order to combine large numbers of different instruments and allow greater harmonic range, thus making modern orchestral music possible. However, he neglects to mention that (pentatonic and heptatonic) scales very like those used in Africa are used in European folk music. The admission that African “scales are often similar” to the standardised European diatonic scale surely points to affinity rather than difference. Since the European version has been scientifically (some would say artificially) devised in a manner in which the African ones have not, one would certainly not expect them to be “quite the same”. In fact, Tracey provides a comparative diagram which shows quite remarkable similarity between two *mbira* scales and the diatonic, with some intervals agreeing exactly and others being fairly close (32).

Examples which show that different scales are found among the same groups of people and that scales from different groups may be similar undermine Tracey's determination to use scales to illustrate a racially based distinctiveness for African music. As we have seen, Tracey links differences between scales – which then determine the combination of notes used together, or harmony – with differences in language. Language is also connected to musical features of melody and rhythm by the impact of tone and stress. He argues that the tonal quality of African languages creates “*a fundamental principle of African music*” (55) and provides the following explanation:

When we sing the words of our language in songs, we naturally try to maintain the correct tones of the words and sentences. In fact, the minstrels who compose our songs, as a rule, follow the tones of the words in making up their melodies. For if they

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<sup>84</sup> I am not qualified to evaluate the scientific data or explanations which Tracey offers as an introduction to acoustics and “the physical basis of music” (the title of *Ngoma*'s second chapter).

failed to express their feelings correctly, or even used the wrong significant tones in what they sang, we should not be able to understand them.

This is what happens to the words of our language when they are sung to foreign tunes. They are so distorted by the foreign melodies that anyone who has not previously heard foreign songs with our words might not be able to understand what was being sung.

This is also true to a certain extent even in Stress languages such as English. English musicians know that the best songs are those in which the melody of the music and the tones of the words are similar. When the melody goes against the natural tones of their spoken language, they do not mind very much, as they believe that the fixed melody of the music is more important than the tones of English words. So they retain the same melody in each verse if they can. With us, and with any speakers of Tone Languages, we believe that the tones of the words are more important than merely keeping the melody exactly the same. So if we use words whose tones do not quite fit the melody, we alter the melody to suit the new words. (55)

Although the tone of the extract above is quite emphatic, there is a measure of hesitation in the qualifying phrase, “as a rule”. The comparative comments on English musicians imply degrees of similarity as much as absolute difference. A little further on, Tracey admits that “[i]t will be understood that we cannot expect to have perfection in the singing of our words in song; there will always be some little mistakes which do not matter very much” (56). If this is so, may it not be overstating the case to elevate tonal influences on melody to the status of a cast-iron rule?

In his discussion of the musical impact of speech, Tracey makes his most detailed statement on the musical differences between Africans (‘us’) and Europeans (‘them’):

So in music we stress certain notes to make the song flow along easily. We very much enjoy the uneven stressing of notes although we like to keep the main pulse of the music in strict time. But Europeans, except in their dance music, prefer the opposite. They usually like to keep a fixed way of accenting their notes and the words of their songs but do not mind singing them without keeping strict time in the main pulses.

But on the whole these distinctions are correct:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| We prefer   | (1) Uneven rhythm,   |
|             | (2) In strict time,  |
|             | (3) With loose melody which follows the <i>tones</i> of the words.   |
| They prefer | (1) Even rhythm  |
|             | (2) In loose time  |
|             | (3) With strict melody which follows the <i>stress</i> of the words. |

(Neither statement is entirely correct but they are a guide to the essential difference between African and European songs.) (57)

Qualifications, repetitions and awkward syntax betray some anxiety in the text above. The desire for accuracy and the simultaneous urge to make definite and categorical distinctions

create a clear conflict, culminating in Tracey's comment in parenthesis. Difference would seem to be on rather shaky ground here.

Finally, Tracey associates the uniqueness of African music with traditional instruments. *Ngoma* encourages the use of local instruments – though also calls for their “improvement” (68) – and discourages the use of foreign ones. He writes as follows about the impact of different types of instruments on music:

In the course of a great number of years, the constant use of one kind of instrument has a deep and lasting effect upon the music of the people who use it. The manner of playing instruments is also most important. For example, the drums which are played with the palms of the hands make quite a different sound from those played with beaters. The quick vibrations of a light beater on a tight drum head (kettledrums) are much used by European military bands, but you rarely hear this sound from our drums. But on the other hand they cannot achieve so great a variety of blows as we do on our drums.

Each instrument that we use helps to make up the character of our music. If we changed our instruments our music would also change. Centuries of work and skill would be lost if we ceased to play our own instruments. The music of the *Mbira*, for instance, if played on a European piano would soon lose all the special character which is part of its charm. (69)

Tracey's plea for the continued use of instruments such as African drums and *mbira* is valid and compelling. Anyone who plays or listens carefully to music knows that each type of instrument creates unique sounds which cannot be duplicated exactly by another. Even the most advanced electronic keyboards do not sound quite the same as pianos, for instance. Yet keyboards are instruments in their own right and may be just as, or more, attractive than pianos for some listeners or purposes. Their use need not necessarily mean the end of piano playing. There seems to be no good reason why people should have to choose between instruments. Surely there is room for any number to co-exist?

While his call to continue making and using African instruments is important, Tracey does not demonstrate an essential link between the Africanness of music and the instruments on which it is played. The attempt to exclude non-African instruments contradicts the spirit of his argument that traditional instruments should be used in novel ways and not restricted to customary cultural or religious contexts. If familiar instruments may be used for new purposes, surely new instruments may be used for familiar purposes? Tracey also fails to provide compelling reasons as to why traditionally African instruments should be played only

by Africans or why Africans should not play any instruments they please.<sup>85</sup> (He recorded many songs using ‘non-African’ instruments, including Jean Mwenda Bosco’s guitar masterpiece “Masanga”, which received an Osborne award from the African Music Society.) In *Ngoma* he grudgingly admits that African (or at least semi-African) music can be made on foreign instruments:

Europeans have brought with them many of their musical instruments; and they have not learnt to play ours but have sometimes taught us to play theirs. Many Africans have begun to play them and some play them quite well. But as you would expect, the change to any foreign instrument has its effect, and in many cases people have already developed a style of playing which is neither African nor European. When the white people hear it they think it is African, and when we hear it we think that it is European. It is a mixture of the two, but more African than European, because our minds cannot think music quite like Europeans even though our fingers play upon their instruments. (73)

So, then, it would seem that musical difference exists in the African mind, rather than in African instruments, according to Tracey. Nonetheless, he insists that “our own instruments must claim our first and immediate attention as long as we continue to speak and sing in our own African languages” (72–73). Later, African instruments are promoted in terms of their affordability: “There are no European instruments that can compare with African instruments in price, while the music of the *Mbira* and *Timbila*, the drums and the Pipes, is the finest music in Africa, as good as any we can play with the instruments of the Europeans” (77). Perhaps the introduction of an economic argument suggests some doubt regarding the motivation based on authenticity.

In summary, Tracey’s analysis of the “tools” with which music is made – scales (and harmonic systems), melodic and rhythmic features, and musical instruments – produces rather modest results in terms of his quest to define musical difference on racial grounds. He assumes (though cannot define) racial differences between people, and therefore racialises musical variety. Yet his limited engagement with the structure of music actually supports similarity more than difference, despite declarations to the contrary.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Actually, *Ngoma* discourages Africans from playing ‘foreign’ instruments but does not argue that whites should not play African instruments. This points to racist inequality – Africans should stick to their own but whites may follow any leads they please. Tracey’s sons have both played African instruments very successfully. Moreover, his *kalimba* and its variants have been distributed throughout the world.

<sup>86</sup> Tracey did not possess the necessary technical skill to provide serious musicological analysis of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic features. Influenced by the type of comparative musicology which dominated studies of ‘primitive’ music during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, he was on firmer ground when it came to measuring the pitches of different scales and comparing the structure and sound quality of different instruments.

*Ngoma* and *Zulu Paradox* were published in the same year and both are strange and contradictory texts in which authoritative-sounding rhetoric belies the failure to combine various impulses with logical coherence. The important difference between them lies in implied readership and authorial voice. In the next section – in the nature of an interlude – I shall briefly consider the whiteness of Tracey’s African ventriloquism in *Ngoma*. I shall also examine an important part of the book: the practical advice Tracey gives prospective African activists for African music. This will be followed by sections on Tracey’s recording and entrepreneurial musical practice.

### **Ventriloquism and Advice: *Ngoma* as Musical Training Manual for Africans**

How does one evaluate the effect of *Ngoma*’s ventriloquism, the white man assuming the voice of an African to educate Africans about their music? It is not a masquerade as such, since the book’s foreword declares Tracey’s whiteness for those readers who do not already know him by name and reputation. Reading the text is an odd, almost schizophrenic, experience. Sometimes the flow of its narrative reads quite seamlessly. At other moments it comes across as incredibly patronising. Tracey’s arrogance should not really surprise us, since an attitude of entitlement was part and parcel of the oppressive structures within and for which he operated. Nonetheless, I cannot help feeling astonished by the presumption of his use of white power to deliver colonial propaganda to oppressed people in this way: adopting the narrative strategy of being part of the dispossessed group to whom his text is addressed, while also declaring this stance to be fictional and temporary, Tracey claims insider knowledge in a manner which asserts ownership rather than empathy.

Certainly, *Ngoma* does convey Tracey’s enthusiasm for his subject and, on one level, it provides a useful and accessible basic introduction to the physical basis of the patterns of sound which create music. To his credit, he does not talk down to his readers while providing scientific information. If parts of the book are innocuous, however, others are anything but. The ventriloquist effect becomes most galling when Tracey attempts to prescribe musical behaviour (assuming the stance of expertise with sweeping, unsubstantiated claims) and whenever he refers to the colonial situation. For instance, *Ngoma*’s final chapter – “Past and Future” – has a section dealing with ‘race relations’ titled “Misunderstanding”, which Tracey introduces as follows:

When so strong a people as the Europeans come to live amongst the Bantu there are bound to be changes in the way of living on both sides, many of them to our great

advantage, though some to our disadvantage. Everyone can see the immense benefits which come from the skill of the white people: tools, clothes, medicine, education... and these overshadow the less apparent disadvantages. But when two races meet in this way, there must be a period of adjustment when they try to understand each other, their different languages, customs, pleasure and religions.

Many Europeans who have come here are so sure that their languages, customs and pleasures are better than ours that in the kindness of their hearts, they have tried to make us share in them all. But our acceptance of too much kindness may be harmful if we begin to rely upon *them* rather than *ourselves*, and if we, for our part, fail to understand them. (77)

It must be said: this passage is offensive. The adoption of an African persona to express its lies makes it even more so. Tracey's words glide smoothly and smilingly over battlefields of corpses, erasing from his text the violence of conquest and the subsequent poverty and humiliation resulting from economic exploitation and political subjugation. He beats the drum of whiteness while presuming to play the part of one of the very people for whom the recent memories and continuing lived realities of colonial violence are constantly and painfully present. The extract is incontrovertibly racist. The fact that Tracey may genuinely believe in his (conveniently self-serving) image of Europeans as benign and superior does not make it any less so.

Having sketched his version of colonial 'contact', Tracey proceeds to offer a list of reasons for the "damaging" effect of "foreign influence" on African music:

(a) On the European side

1. Because most European teachers do not understand any music except their own;
2. Because they were afraid of our music, which was strange to them, and the customs with which we use music;
3. Because our music is not written down like theirs and so is not easy to study;
4. Because they were not attracted by the sound of our music and so thought it not worth studying;
5. Because African students were so quick at picking up the simple kinds of foreign music they were encouraged to believe that they would soon become great musicians in the foreign style.

(b) On the African side we accepted what the Europeans did and said about music:

1. Because they were a strong people who ruled the country and made laws for us;
2. Because they were so much cleverer than us in making tools, machinery, clothing and food;
3. Because we wished to improve ourselves by becoming more like them with greater skill in these things;
4. Because we were taught by them how to read and write and how to acquire the knowledge which leads to these benefits;
5. Because we think of music as a means of obtaining certain results. So, when we wanted to be more like the Europeans in both skill and property, we thought it

right to use the music which went with their education and their religion, rather than our own music which was associated with the past before they came to Africa;

6. Because some missionaries forbade us to sing and play our own music, saying it was primitive and evil, and that it accompanied our old customs which they also forbade.

Now these reasons on both sides are very strong indeed and they have led to our losing much of our arts already. But they all forgot one thing, our heritage, both of mind and heart. (77–78)

Note the implication that Africans are not capable of becoming “great musicians in the foreign style”. We see how Tracey maintains an idea of European superiority, despite his assertion that colonial agents were ‘mistaken’ in their attitude to African music. Furthermore, presenting negative colonial attitudes towards African people and cultural practices in the guise of fear and “misunderstanding” absolves colonists from needing to take ethical responsibility for their prejudices. With regard to his analysis of “the African side”, Tracey leaves no room for resistance in presenting people as overcome by admiration for white people’s ways. He will not let himself see that the colonised are forced to wear masks when interacting with whiteness, and makes no allowance for the “double-consciousness” of which W.E.B. Du Bois writes in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903, 9). Certain of his own special knowledge of Africans and wishing to bask in the light of their supposed admiration, Tracey seems to accept everything that black people may have told him at face value. He thus ignores survival strategies necessitated by an extreme imbalance of power, which may involve ambivalent nuance, flattery or duplicity.

*Ngoma*’s next section turns towards “a beneficial side” to colonialism, “which can help put everything right again”. The positive effect lies in education – “great opportunities for us to learn new skills and to add them to the skill which we already have” (1948, 78). Tracey encourages his readers to compare musics with the aim of better understanding and improving their own. In a passage which presents the myth of pre-colonial Africa as a brutish continent of constantly warring ‘tribes’, he writes:

One of the best results of European contact should be the opening it gives us for the study of music rather than its destruction. Before they came, we were hemmed in by hostile people who would not let us move away from our own piece of country even if we wished to do so. Now it is possible for some of us to go and see other countries and other peoples. And when we hear other men’s music we can compare it with our own. The careful study which comes from comparing musics gives us greater skill for composing new music. We may find that we can use some of their methods to



improve our own playing and singing, and by studying their instruments find better methods of making ours. (79)

It is clear that Tracey did not necessarily practise ideas he promoted in principle. We should remember his refusal (some twenty years later) to support Mohapeloa's wish to do exactly what is encouraged here – to travel for the purpose of studying music and drawing inspiration from musicians. Nevertheless, in *Ngoma* the extract above leads to a series of sections giving practical advice to African musicians and students of African music. The section headings are instructive: "Recording Instruments"; "Work for Music"; "Keep a Note Book"; "Make Instruments"; "Write Poetry and Lyrics"; "Watch Your Speech Tones"; "Compose Your Own Music"; "Encourage Group Playing"; "Encourage Dancers and Drummers"; "Arrange Performances"; "Avoid Unnecessary Foreign Habits"; "Students and Teachers"; "Country Music"; "Fellow Workers"; and "Reading" (79–91).

On "Recording Instruments", Tracey states that the gramophone "is a fairly expensive machine but not too expensive to be used as one of the greatest friends of the student of music" (79). In "Work for Music" he argues that

We must *work*. We must devise methods whereby we may both protect our music from outside attack and from inside laziness. We must have a plan which all of us can follow and by which even the most humble student can assist wherever he may be, in town, at an institution, or in the remotest village. (80)

Clearly, he was looking for willing disciples to assist in the recording and documentation project he was preparing to undertake. In "Keep a Note Book" he writes:

Although we shall not be able to write down our music in notation at present, until research work is more advanced, we can prepare the ground. A complete list of songs of your village or area, with words written out in full, the names of their composers (if they are known) the name of the people who sing them, where and upon what occasions, and for what purpose... all this kind of information will make the final work much easier and more accurate. A recording apparatus will do much of the work which we cannot do on paper, but the paper work is essential for our studies and for the studies of those who will in time take all our contributions and make from them a complete book or books of African music. Remember, you must write clearly and follow a plan in all that you note down.

As you know, music and customs change. So always remember to put the date, and the place against every note you make, and also the name, address, and tribe or clan of the person who gave you the information, and his approximate age.

If you are able to draw, make sketches of the instruments or of the clothing or any of the special dress used by musicians. You will find that a good picture may recall to mind an object or an occasion even better than words.

At the end of each year it is a good idea to transfer your notes from your pocket note book into a loose-leaf book, or album separating out all the different kinds of information you have collected under their appropriate headings. This will show more clearly than anything else how you are progressing. (81)

The next few sections focus on making music and on making *authentically African* music. As such, they are a blend of sensible advice and prescriptive admonishments. Then there is the part titled “Fellow Workers”, which contains an interesting piece on creating small cells of committed musical cadres:

It is a good thing to collect around you fellow workers who feel about music as you do yourself. Even if you know only one other person who is prepared to work for African music, meet together and discuss music and compete with each other in collecting interesting information, lyrics, and examples of musical instruments which may be useful later on. If there are enough of you who are genuinely interested, form a small group at your school, institution or village, wherever you may be. Be warned against making a large group. Admit only those who have proved by deeds that they would qualify to become African musicians. Far better to have a very small group of three or four good musicians than a large group or the whole school, most of whom would never be skilled enough to be musicians.

This group should be concerned with compositions, the organisation of performances, and with constant searching for information and material. It should be a research group. You should try to find a small room or hut where you could keep your instruments, drums, dancing kit and books. If music or songs were needed at any time, you should be the ones to whom the people would turn for information and action. You should pool your knowledge and prepare for recording should a recording apparatus be available sometime in the future. You should have lists of the works which they could perform. You should help young musicians to make their own instruments and encourage them to compose new music, and become more skilled in singing, playing or dancing. You and your group should become the “guild” or council of musicians in your district. You should try to search out and understand all there is to know about African music and so prepare yourselves for the responsible task of being the composers and musicians of your people. (89–90)

There is a definite touch of revolutionary fervour here, with Tracey getting quite carried away by the idea of creating guerrilla-style units throughout the countryside to fight for African music. As noted in previous chapters, his promotional message to administrators argued that the practice and consumption of traditional music would promote ‘stability’ and counter the effect of political ‘agitators’. In the light of his own colonial politics, his failure to recognise the rising political mood among the educated youth of the 1940s (also his target readers of *Ngoma*) makes the militaristic tone of his call to musical duty rather amusing. Tracey seems blissfully unaware of the irony, yet the organisational methods he advocates bear a striking similarity to those used to build leadership in, and promote the goals of, political liberation

movements. If readers followed his advice, they would certainly gain easily transferable, practical skills.

Finally, on *Ngoma*'s penultimate page, comes a short and significant section titled "Reading". In it, Tracey encourages his ideal reader to "read as much as you can about music" in order to become "a good African musician". He proceeds to note that "very few books [are] available on the subject of African music and only a few articles in local magazines", and these have mainly "been written either by foreigners or by Africans under the influence of foreigners" (90). Since most of the available reading matter on the subject of music would be about "one kind" of "European music", Tracey advises his readers to keep the ethnographic context of such metropolitan readings in mind. He then continues:

We must remember that music is always a very difficult subject to write about and that writers disagree. It is a good rule to distrust all writers on musical subjects until you have proved for yourself the truth of what they are saying. This is very necessary with articles on African music, some of which are misleading and often only half true. Distrust even this book, too, until you have found for yourself what truth there is in it. (90)

This piece displays quite unusual reflexivity, compared to much of what we have read from the same book. The advice to read academic texts with an attitude of critical scepticism is sound in general and particularly pertinent for his subject, if one considers Agawu's historical outline of the state of the Africanist (ethno)musicological field. Tracey's closing sentence above can be read in two ways: as a rhetorical flourish to ironically emphasise his text's value in comparison to others (with belief in his authorial exceptionalism shown in the word "even") or as a genuine gesture towards the possibility of his own work's fallibility. In line with other contradictory tendencies we have noted in his texts, perhaps it somehow combines these two opposing strands.

As noted in the preceding discussion, Tracey's practical advice to musical readers would, if followed, assist in facilitating the large-scale recording enterprise he was then preparing to undertake. In the following section I will leave *Ngoma* and examine his practice and understanding of recording African music.

### **Recording as an “Art which Conceals Art”: Tracey on his Field Recordings**

His 1955 article, “Recording African Music in the Field”, gives a valuable account of Tracey’s ideas about recording and his practice as recordist.<sup>87</sup> He argues that it is of primary importance to acknowledge “that any sound recording is only a partial statement of the whole event”. Technical limitations make it impossible to reproduce the sounds exactly as they are experienced in live performance. “The microphone, therefore,” says Tracey, “must be ‘focussed’ like a camera to select the salient features of the music and to present them in such a way as to suggest a complete representation of the occasion” (1955, 7).

Rather than view limitations on perfect verisimilitude as a problem to be endured and fought against, Tracey embraces the opportunity to become a musical co-creator in the recorded products of particular performances. He calls recording “an art form operating within the limitations of a frame which demands its own set of rules” and thus also declares himself an artist. However, his is an art which works through illusion, and which sounds most successful when its own artistry goes unnoticed:

The very success of a good recording is perhaps inclined to hide the fact that it is an art which conceals art. A recording, however good, is never the real thing, but a *representation* of the original. The problem, therefore, is how to make good recordings which will do justice to the original music, and, in some cases, do more than justice, by bringing out nuances which in the ordinary way might not be noticed by the audience. (7)

A good recording will seem complete and accurate and may even improve upon the listening experience by enhancing aspects of the music through emphasis. Besides using the best possible equipment with the necessary expertise, the “personal” requirements to practise this art effectively are listed as “a high degree of sensitivity towards the music, a rapport with the performers and an artistic discrimination which will bring out the essential characteristics of the music within the limitations of time and space dictated by the medium” (7). The article’s vantage point is advisory, sharing its secrets with aspiring others. In giving his formula for success, Tracey simultaneously asserts his own possession of recording capital and raises its status from technique to artistry. As such, he spotlights his own share in the *creative* capital he most values.

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<sup>87</sup> Much of this article’s material is reproduced in the *Codification* booklet (1969) but the rhetoric is toned down somewhat, possibly under the influence of Tracey’s assistant co-authors.

The definition of recording as an “art which conceals art” is applied universally. Yet Tracey also takes pains to show that the recordist’s role is magnified when recording traditional musicians away from a professional studio. He writes that:

African folk musicians and singers cannot be expected to learn the tricks of the trade which any successful recording artist must employ instinctively or under the direction of a professional producer. Consequently, the person who attempts to make recordings of African musicians must so employ his apparatus that he contributes the necessary finesse at the microphone of which his simple performers will be hardly aware, and quite unable to provide. (1955, 7)

Presenting himself as “the man at the microphone”, interacting with performers who follow his direction with “complete confidence”, Tracey performs his own role as one akin to the prestigious position of an orchestra conductor in the Western classical genre. Clearly, this job is seen as superior to that of the other member of the required two-person team, whose duties are “operating the controls, watching for peak points and avoiding over-modulation” (9).

Though he was keen to follow usual patterns of setting and arrangement as far as possible in order to make the result seem natural, producing good quality recordings was Tracey’s top priority. Accordingly, matters of context and custom would be compromised in order to satisfy recording requirements, not the other way around. The *Codification* publication, for example, while advising researchers to prepare for the fact that some types of music are “associated with a social activity performed only at one time of the year”, declares that “in practice it is frequently possible to persuade local musicians to perform out of season when it is recognised that it is for a musically scientific and not a social purpose” (1969, 16).

Performance spaces would be chosen and adapted to allow for weather and acoustic surroundings. Tracey explains as follows:

It will be remembered that the question of ‘balance’, that is the perspective between the various sounds produced by the performers, tempered by their surroundings, will largely determine the success or failure of a recording. Thus a recording of an outdoor working song in a hall with high reverberation, out of its normal context, is usually unsatisfactory. On the other hand, hymns sung in the open air by few voices with no appreciable assistance from reverberation may sound out of place on the finished recording. The degree of reverberation which creates the background out of which the item emerges is most important. A subtle balance between direct and indirect sound has to be considered, that is, the proportion of sound which arrives at the microphone directly from the voice or instrument and that which arrives by a longer route by reflection off walls, the ground or other bodies. The distance at which the microphone is held or placed from the source of the sound must be carefully assessed. Some items require no help at all from reflected sound. For them the open air is the best studio

possible. Others may need it, in which case a plain wall, or a sheltered verandah makes an almost perfect studio in which one can alter the degree of reverberation at will by placing the performers nearer or further away from the surface of the wall, or even facing the wall, or alternatively facing outwards, away from its surface. (1955, 9)

As the above extract shows, most of Tracey's field recordings were staged and produced under carefully managed conditions. Furthermore, his direction extended beyond factors like spatial setting and arrangement of performers to intervene directly in the shape of musical items themselves, particularly in terms of length. He intended his tracks to be available for commercial reproduction as well as scholarly study and therefore generally recorded within the three-minute time limit per side for 78 rpm records. (Though long-playing discs were available, 78s still dominated the market in the 1950s, especially among African consumers.)

In a manner which recalls his comment to Cowell on Nketia, Tracey motivates and explains his method of ensuring time compliance:

Anyone who has intimate experience of African musicians soon discovers that to most of them time is no object. A musician under uncritical conditions may take a minute or so to introduce his main subject or to start a song. At this rate of progress it may be time to end the recording after a single verse. This is where the recorder must quickly make up his mind on the relative significance and importance of the repetitions of a phrase. I have heard many otherwise excellent recordings ruined by a dilatory performer who got himself into a rut and employed endless repetitions of a dull phrase while he slowly recovered his wits to change to another variation or to introduce a new verse. How to keep a musician's mind on his job of recording actively without sinking back into an easy doze of repetitions has always been a problem without issuing spoken instructions which would spoil the recording. Over many years I have evolved a few signs and signals which often help, and with the more active and aware musicians achieve instant response. Slow thinking musicians, however, are often good players, but within the frame of a record's time limit cannot do themselves justice unless prodded into activity. To prevent over-long intervals in between verses of a song making a sign by plucking at your own lips has the right effect. To one who is singing too much so that his accompaniment cannot be appreciated holding one's hands across one's mouth is generally enough, or a sign to concentrate on the instrument may help. Turning the outstretched hand over may help to bring on another variation in a tune which is stuck in a rut. The recorder will soon find a number of miming gestures which will suit his performers who need this kind of friendly direction. (1955, 8)

There is also description of gestures employed to ensure that pieces started "cleanly and firmly [...] at the correct tempo and with the right attack" and had "the correct musical ending" (8).

By Tracey's own account, his personal preferences significantly influenced the particular versions from established repertoires which were then selectively archived and published under his name as collector. From an anthropological perspective the problems are obvious. In fact, Tracey acknowledges the objections of those who argue for objective neutrality when collecting musical data:

It has been argued that in order to obtain a scientifically exact account of the music for anthropological purposes no control of the performers, either in time or space, should be allowed. However much one may sympathise with this point of view it would be the equivalent of demanding that every photograph taken for ethnological research should be a complete panorama. (1955, 7)

As I have shown, however, descriptions of his recording practice show him going beyond minimal control to satisfy technical demands. The recognition that complete reproductions are impossible and that pragmatic constraints necessarily affect results would not sufficiently justify his methods for most fieldwork practitioners rooted in the social sciences. Those of a more positivist persuasion would likely retort that recognition of the difficulty (even ultimate impossibility) of achieving fully objective accuracy should not preclude attempts to approximate it as closely as possible. Those more influenced by post-structuralist and postmodernist currents, meanwhile, would surely demand greater reflexivity and an honest accounting of one's own subjectivity. Tracey attempts to have it both ways – claiming the mantle of scientific objectivity while openly displaying the impact of his personal influence without any agonising over it. His outsider status on the fringes of organised scholarship allowed him to take eclectic approaches without much concern for disciplinary protocols. The academic field was only one of several social spaces in which he operated, and not one in which he felt most welcome or comfortable.

Though he promoted his work in terms of its social benefits for Africans and called for support from scholars of society and culture, Tracey's practical approach to field recording was certainly at odds with conventional goals and methods of anthropology and ethnomusicology. His practice might also be considered problematic from a musicological perspective because of his failure to acknowledge fully and account for the co-existence of his goal to produce descriptive representations for analytical study with his prescriptive participation in performances. If, like Agawu, one presumes musical sameness and embraces a multiplicity of musical texts, this alignment of analytical and creative goals need not necessarily be contradictory or problematic in itself. The real problem here is that Tracey

asserts musical difference (even if his practice speaks differently) and claims to study it objectively while simultaneously advertising his creative involvement in music he claims to be authentic and unsullied by Western influence, without interrogating his own position. With him, the explorer's desire for discovery is accompanied by the missionary's zeal for intervention and improvement. According to his writing on recording, it would seem that in the moment of performance the developmental – or creative – urge dominates.

“Recording African Music in the Field” does not problematise aesthetics and assumes synchronicity between the musical standards of musicians and recordist (with the latter person presumed to be white). The assumption that a non-African is able to exercise “artistic discrimination” (1955, 7) with regard to indigenous performance implies shared or translatable musical concepts. Here, Tracey's treatment of recording as creative process suggests a practical understanding of African music as less unique than he often makes it out to be. (Though it may also indicate his belief in a superior capacity of certain discerning whites like himself to understand ‘other’ musics, an ability he is not prepared to grant Africans.)

In comparison to the earlier article, the *Codification* publication shows greater awareness of the complexity of aesthetic questions and places more emphasis on ascertaining and following the musical values of the relevant musicians and the communities to which they belong. There, Tracey advises that “[c]are will have to be taken not to prejudge any musical situation in Africa until its local value has been reliably assessed. This is particularly necessary where music may appear uninteresting to an outside observer, or fail to arouse his enthusiasm as a non-participant” (1969, 10). Detail on how to assess “local value” is given in the chapter titled “Territorial Preparation”. Through “contact with representative groups of people and heads of villages”, researchers must attempt to ascertain “who are the most musically gifted persons within their communities” (15). As the section proceeds, however, it is clear that decisions on whom or what to choose are ultimately decided by the views of the recordists rather than the people to be recorded. Finding the real musicians “is not always easy”, according to Tracey, “as non-musicians or educational and political groups may tend to be secretive or misguide the researcher simply through ignorance” (15). Furthermore:

Once the first contacts are made and enough music has been heard, the researcher will be in a better position to assess the incidence of local talent and discriminate between good and poor performances by noting the audience response. Villagers wishing to compliment and oblige a stranger may try to please by volunteering foreign inspired



songs or hymns, and have to be gently dissuaded and encouraged into other more scientifically rewarding directions. (15–16)

This passage raises a number of questions. On what grounds, for instance, were the claims of “non-musicians” to be falsified and what role would the researcher’s politics play in deciding he or she had been misguided? What if music that was deemed to be “foreign inspired” was most valued and felt most authentic for the musicians concerned? How much music was discarded by Tracey because he considered it to be inauthentic or inferior? I also wonder how many people he misled into thinking their contributions would be archived, given his recommendation to deal with unwanted music by making “short ‘complimentary’ recordings which can be played back to them and then wiped off the tape [...] to resolve a difficult situation and please your hosts, without wasting too much time” (19).

Although he had a clear bias towards traditional music and preferences for certain styles and people over others, Tracey’s desire to achieve representivity meant that he did record kinds of music he disliked or considered un-African. Items were ranked for further selection at the time of recording, as shown in the following list:

- T – of territorial interest only
- C – of wider, possibly continent-wide interest
- A – of genuinely African origin
- U – of urban, industrial, or non-folk origin
- I – of institutional origin
- F – of patently foreign origin
- M – of special musical value
- m – of normal musical value
- L – of interest to linguists (1969, 40)

Lizabé Lambrechts describes the primary system of classification developed by Tracey (which I have touched upon in previous chapters) as “based on three main descriptive groups: ‘language and dialects’, ‘musical instrument’ and ‘type of performance’” (2012, 80). She notes that the set of symbols quoted above comprises a “second level of classification” which was “completely based on [Tracey’s] subjective judgement” (81). Though its framework reveals colonial underpinnings, the complex primary system was clearly devised with the ideal of scientific objectivity in mind and does not overtly inscribe value to particular types or works. The plain purpose of the secondary system, by contrast, is to assess the worth of items according to four different scales of importance: geographical “interest”, African ‘authenticity’ or “origin”, aesthetics or “musical value”, and linguistic significance.

Lambrechts expresses concern that Tracey's subjective rankings "could become naturalised in processes of objectification [...] without consideration of [their] genesis", thus further reifying the archive "as a structure of power and control" (2012, 81 and 84). I think that we should be grateful for access to this list of symbols, however. Although the absence of clear definitions for the various categories renders it somewhat opaque, publication of the shorthand value-judgement system nonetheless makes explicit what could have remained private and implicit. As such, it becomes a potential tool for its own deconstruction, enabling us better to identify and challenge preferences and choices.

Curiously, the distinction between "territorial" and "wider, possibly continent-wide interest" appears to be meaningless in terms of the *Sound of Africa Catalogue*: paging through it repeatedly, I have not been able to find a single example of the "C" symbol being used. All *SoA* items were selected by Tracey for publication in a series which was distributed internationally – which would seem to imply broader "interest" by definition – yet at the time of recording he had labelled them as having regional importance only. Even the beautiful flute tunes by Katsuba Mwongolo (*SoA* TR-127, 7–14), for example, were given the "T" classification, although Mwongolo would receive an Osborn Award. Tracey did not define what he meant by "interest" in this regard, however. In the 1950s, when most of his recordings were made, he was preoccupied with attracting and supplying corporate members. Perhaps, then, he was thinking in terms of expected popularity among black workers, rather than appeal for musicians or (mainly) white scholars. (The fact that symbol C references the African continent, rather than the wider world, would seem to support this interpretation.) If so, Tracey's regional value classification implies a negative judgement on the aesthetic perception of ordinary African listeners: that they would not appreciate fine examples of musicianship from beyond their own ethnic or linguistic borders.

Concerning classification by "origin", it is interesting to note the ambiguous categories "U" (for "urban, industrial, or non-folk") and "I" (for "institutional"), which for Tracey were neither "genuinely African" nor "patently foreign". When one compares particular items from the *Catalogue*, it is difficult to trace the logic behind his designations, which often seem arbitrary. One of my personal favourites from ILAM's collection, "Koras" by Johnnie Murithe Wambu and Kibunga Waita (TR-159, 18), has the code "TUm". If Tracey denies it fully African status because of the instruments used – "accordion and struck iron" – why, then, does he assign the symbols "TAM" to another of my favourites, "Molweni

Nonke” (TR-26, 13), which is accompanied by the harmonica?<sup>88</sup> To me, these two songs, from Kenya and South Africa respectively, have strong similarities. Both seem to reference the sounds of trains and parody the coercive rhythms of enforced labour, though “Koras” is more serious and “Molweni Nonke” more playful. I think the labelling of “Koras” is influenced by Tracey’s negative attitude towards Kikuyu people, whom he wrote off as “unmusical” en masse (“Recording Tour” 1951, 48). He comments on Wambu and Waita’s performance that “[l]istening to this kind of Kikuyu song is more a feat of endurance than an aesthetic pleasure” (1973 Vol. 2, 360). I find the track compelling, yet Tracey gives “Koras” a low mark on the scale of musical value as well as questioning its authenticity.

Leaving aside larger matters of political and economic inequality, there are considerable problems associated with the construction of Tracey’s sound archive, both in terms of ethics and scholarship. Nevertheless, despite these problematic foundations, the processes of production of sound texts which are now the property of ILAM *also* involved genuine interactions and expressions of creativity and artistry. Furthermore, to recognise the likelihood that Tracey’s aesthetic judgements were sometimes unfairly prejudiced and mistaken does not cancel out the fact that his musical choices were very often right. The quality of his recordings has received widespread acknowledgement and the songs have been enjoyed by a broad variety of listeners, within and beyond the borders of academic study.<sup>89</sup>

My impression from listening to many of these tracks is that they sound alive and genuine. It feels that the performers were fully engaged with the process, enjoying themselves and giving of their best. As argued in the previous chapter, Tracey’s social interactions with African people, however well-mannered and charming, were over-determined by the colonial hierarchy of race. Yet, once within a performance context, the musical field seems to have taken precedence (at least momentarily) over the field of racial power. Of course, musical interactions have their own hierarchies. Tracey’s position as director-recordist was one of considerable influence, but only in so far as those playing and singing were prepared to cooperate. Without their willing input there would be nothing much worth collecting or publishing. Unlike at other times, I do not think Tracey was condescending in the moment of recording. Rather, I think his perfectionism took over and communicated a sense of respect to the performers for their art. Wherever and whoever they were, they could sense that he was approaching his task with the same degree of

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<sup>88</sup> The “young men” who performed “Molweni Nonke” are not identified by name.

<sup>89</sup> Lobley’s thesis mentions several testimonies to the quality of Tracey’s recordings, citing A.M. Jones, Michael Baird and Garry Kling on their “technical excellence” (2010, 205–206).

professionalism he would employ with musicians in a studio, and responded accordingly. This momentary immersion in a shared musical endeavour was made possible by the aesthetic rather than ethnological focus. In emphasising music in itself, he was also recognising musicians in themselves. As my survey of Tracey's racial and political position-takings makes plain, he did not consider Africans with the respect due to mature, equal human beings. I would argue, however, that he did grant certain artists an equal or superior status *as musicians*, particularly instrumentalists whose proficiency was on a level he would have liked to but could not attain himself. (That equality or admiration of musicianship would only operate when the musical field held sway. I am not saying that it ever cancelled out Tracey's racism, but merely that, under the spell of musical time, his whiteness was temporarily superseded.)

The following two photographs – from early and late in Tracey's career respectively – may capture something of the mood of concentration and musical immersion which I have been trying to convey in the previous paragraph.



The first picture shows Tracey recording a Zulu *makhwenyana* bow player in 1939. The second, which appears to be from the late sixties or early seventies, shows him recording a *nyonganyonga* mbira player. His spatial stance relative to the performers in both photographs seems to support the idea of a temporary victory for music over whiteness. Tracey was a tall man, who usually displayed his height to good effect. These images suggest an intense focus on the creative process overwhelming his more usual visual performance of self-importance.

Musicians singled out as outstanding artists by Tracey have also been independently recognised as such by others. Mwenda Jean Bosco, the Congolese guitarist who was first recorded by Tracey in 1950 and became highly successful in eastern and central Africa and well-known abroad, is one of the most famous examples. The Tanzanian *enanga* bard, Habibu Selemani, also recorded by Tracey during his 1950 expedition, is another. M.M. Mulokozi comments as follows on Selemani and on Tracey's description of his performance:

This assessment of Habibu Selemani by a man who only met him once and was, moreover, a stranger to the culture that Habibu Selemani represented, is a good indication of Habibu Selemani's stature as a musician even at that early stage in his career – there was no mistaking the fact that here was a great, budding artist. And Tracey was well-placed to make an informed judgment: he and his team had traveled all over eastern and southern Africa recording traditional music, and Bukoba was among their last stops in their musical odyssey. Tracey's assessment of Habibu Selemani is still true today – two years after the latter's death in 1993. As I look back on his repertoire and listen to his many surviving records, I realize that Selemani was a talented master of *enanga* epic performance who was hardly surpassed during his lifetime, and is unlikely to be surpassed later (since the tradition itself is now dying out and is no longer attracting youthful talent). (1997, 159)

The same article provides insight into the reception of records produced from Tracey's recordings. In a passage which also refers to an incident touching on the ethics and legalities of Tracey's practice, Mulokozi describes how his own first contact with the music he would later study was through such records:

My first contact with Habibu Selemani was through the gramophone records made from the Hugh Tracey recordings. It was in the mid-1950s; the gramophone was then the fashionable home entertainment gadget among the more sophisticated villagers in Bukoba. One of my paternal aunts, who was living in Nairobi, Kenya, had brought one back with her, and people used to gather around it in the evenings to listen to recorded traditional and modern music. Tracey had recorded several leading bards of the day, including Habibu Selemani's Kiziba teacher, Rutahindurwa Lukuuka (who was recorded without his knowledge and raised havoc afterwards), and the accomplished zither player and reciter Abdallah Feza Ibrahim (who was born in 1915, and is still around today, though he no longer performs). I remember, as a child,

sitting for hours among eager adults listening enthralled to the bards' recitation of *enanga* epics and ballads. (162)

It would seem, then, that just as Tracey was prepared to mislead certain people into thinking they were being recorded for posterity, so too would he not by-pass an opportunity to record a recognised musician even if prior permission had not been obtained. Concerning the recordings, however, it is interesting to note Mulokozi's account of their significant impact in his childhood community and their role in supporting transmission of the *enanga* tradition. In his contribution to *For Future Generations*, Lobley comments on a lack of demand from Africans for ILAM's recordings, despite the fact that Tracey "explicitly strove to make connections with contemporary and future generations of indigenous African musicians" (2010, 91). Mulokozi's description above, by contrast, suggests that there were at least certain instances of considerable consumption, when Tracey's avowed goal of reaching African audiences was being achieved.

Certainly, there were many barriers to distribution of the ILAM recordings among Africans. In noting "difficulties, both financial and practical, which often prevented the development of such connections" (91), Lobley neglects to mention either colonial/apartheid structures or Tracey's own racist attitudes as being among these difficulties. The following example of correspondence, from and concerning Luwis (or Louis) Sithole, a black worker at President Steyn gold mine in Welkom in 1963, shows the kind of response that individuals attempting to order records could face. Sithole wrote to ILAM with an order for TR 8 of the *Sound of Africa* series, which included the Shangaan songs in which he was interested, and specified the "33 $\frac{1}{3}$ " long-playing format.<sup>90</sup> Tracey's reply, dated 23 July 1963, is not directed to Sithole himself, despite a full address having been provided, but to the mine's white compound manager. The letter reads as follows:

One of your employees, Luwis Sithole, of No. 1 Hostel Room 37 B has written to us asking for a certain record. This is No. TR-8 in our "Sound of Africa" Series.

We would gladly send him this record C.O.D., but I do not think he realises that this is one of the more expensive records costing 56/6d, as against the normal Long Playing 12" of £2. The extra cost is on account of the fact that all our special study records are accompanied by the Card Index. Would you please explain this to him and say that we shall be delighted to send him the record, but he must realise that the cost will be about 58/- with postage.

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<sup>90</sup> Sithole's first letter is not dated. Since Tracey normally dealt promptly with correspondence one can assume the letter to have been written in June or July of 1963.

The anonymous compound manager presumably passed on Tracey's letter or at least verbally communicated its contents to Sithole. The latter wrote again (on 8 August), repeating his request for TR 8, marking it "urgent" and including a R2 cash deposit, promising to pay the balance on delivery as per the usual terms.<sup>91</sup>

Though it comes across as patronising, Tracey's concern that Sithole might not be able to afford the record could be excused on the grounds of an awareness of the systemic poverty affecting most black South Africans. His refusal to engage directly with Sithole and the insult of voicing his concerns to the white boss instead cannot be excused, however, or explained on any grounds but racism. He denies his client's adult status and shows him utter contempt. While the fact that he did not lose the sale after that points to the strength of Sithole's desire for the music, it is no testimony to the quality of ILAM's service to African customers.

I have suggested that the practical and aesthetic logic associated with Tracey's actual recording practice entailed a common purpose, respect for artistry and for artists, and thus a level of musical equality in the moment. Clearly, though, when dealing with the business of distributing and marketing his musical product he was operating according to the racialised politics of inequality. And Tracey's recording expeditions themselves, while they may have transcended his whiteness at certain times of music-making, were directly implicated in colonial structures of thought and practice in terms of logistical organisation and arrangement. As noted in the previous chapter, tours were arranged under official approval and undertaken according to the regulations of colonial and apartheid administrations. The effects of colonial power are also visible in the manner in which performers were rewarded for their participation and the issue of copyright.

Correspondence from 1953 with staff of the Gallo office in Nairobi, Kenya, at a time when Tracey was still operating under Gallo's auspices, refers to fulfilling promises of providing free copies of recordings to performers and the question of payments to artists. According to these letters, an initial strategy of offering copies of recordings was discontinued in favour of paying a set fee to performers. Later correspondence states that cash was only paid when performers were established working musicians. In 1961, Tracey writes as follows in a letter to Douglas Fuchs, Head of the Bantu Service of the SABC:

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<sup>91</sup> South African currency had been changed to rands and cents in 1961. Tracey was still using the old British system (of pounds, shillings and pence) while Sithole had adapted to the new.

In our own work I have always paid in cash any folk artists who can be shown to be ‘professional’ performers and who earn their livelihood solely by their art. This is usually about £1.0.0 per item. Other folk performers are usually rewarded by the gift of cigarettes, sweets, small presents, food and sometimes local kaffir beer. This latter, however, usually gives rise to complications and considerable delays in arranging recording sessions. (19 July)

The *Codification* publication discourages monetary payment and removes alcohol from the list of acceptable rewards. There, Tracey advises prospective recordists as follows:

“Occasional small gifts may be a part of local etiquette, though payment of money usually proves to be unwise. Sweets, tobacco, salt and sugar, for example, are immediately welcome and realizable presents” (1969, 18). Being the savvy businessman he was, Tracey would no doubt have been happy to have obtained recordings without any outlay whatsoever. The fact that payment of any kind was undertaken shows that performers recognised the value of their musical product and demanded something for sharing it. That substantial numbers of people were prepared to accept such meagre rewards points to their poverty and the position of economic and political disadvantage under which they were forced to barter the exchange. Under the uneven terms in which musical contributions were negotiated, copyright of all Tracey’s recordings rested with ILAM and no further royalties were paid to artists.<sup>92</sup>

The subject of copyright is extremely large and complex and its examination is beyond the scope of this study. In this regard, I would refer readers to McConnachie’s MA thesis (2008). Though her version of his history reveals a rose-tinted impression of Tracey’s aims and practice, McConnachie provides an admirably detailed account of copyright issues affecting ILAM, encompassing legal, musical and ethical perspectives with a view towards implementing acceptable strategies for the archive in the future.

Leaving aside the question of financial compensation to artists for the ongoing use of Tracey’s recordings, their loss of copyright to their own work meant that they had no control over the ways in which their songs would be used. ILAM’s position with regard to copyright is usually justified on the grounds of it being a non-profit organisation devoted to the study, appreciation and encouragement of African art for the ultimate benefit of African people. Recordings from the archive have been sampled for a wide variety of purposes, however. One of ILAM’s many sources of funds has been the provision of tracks to be used as background music for commercial films and television programmes. The concluding section of this

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<sup>92</sup> To be fair to Tracey, one must point out that he was not acting in an unusual manner in this regard. General practice in both commercial and academic recording projects of his time was highly exploitative.



chapter will examine an example of one of these transactions, in which Tracey seems to have provided music and yet kept his archive's contribution hidden from public view.

### **Sounds of Savage Africa: *The Naked Prey* Soundtrack**



Released by Hollywood film company Paramount Pictures in 1966, *The Naked Prey* was directed and co-produced by Cornel Wilde, who also took the leading role in the film. The movie is currently available for sale, thanks to a re-release on DVD by Criterion in 2008, and the trailer and various clips are available on YouTube. The plot may be summarised as follows. In an unspecified setting in nineteenth-century Africa, a white party out hunting elephants upsets some local ‘tribesmen’ with their refusal to provide compensation for invading their land. They are later surrounded, captured and all put to death by lurid torture, with the exception of the hero played by Wilde and known only as “Man”, who is given a slim chance of survival because he had earlier sided with the ‘savages’ against the expedition leader. After a brief start he is hunted like an animal and survives, of course, against all odds. The voice-over to the movie trailer (deep-voiced, with long significant pauses for violent action) reads as follows:

Africa. A hundred years ago, a trackless land, majestic, savage, bloodstained. Life here was at its most primitive. Africa's wealth attracted the greedy. In such a land, in such a time, vengeful African warriors would attack a safari with unbelievable cruelty. Man became the Naked Prey. Africa, land of aboriginal tortures. Only the honoured brave are given a chance to live. *The Naked Prey*, an epic tale of pursuit and survival as one courageous man is singled out to be hunted like a lion. He must survive all the ordeals and terrors of the wilderness. He must use every device at his command to confound and delay his pursuers. He must always be ready to kill or be killed. He must live like the beasts in the jungle. And when he crosses the path of slave traders, who destroy native villages to ravish and seize their captives, he faces a new terror of survival. This extraordinary motion picture was filmed entirely in the primitive areas of Africa where no other motion picture was ever made.

The historical event on which the film is very loosely based – the gruesome and imaginative tortures are entirely fictional – did not occur in Africa but in North America in 1809, when John Colter was chased by Blackfoot Indians in what is now Montana, USA. Shifting his version of the story to Africa allowed Wilde more freedom to play with primitivist fantasies. Filming in South Africa was also cost-effective: Michael Atkinson remarks that the film obtained “substantial tax breaks and material assistance from the [apartheid] government of South Africa” (2008). Besides Wilde himself, the rest of the small cast consisted of South African actors – Gert Van den Bergh, Ken Gampu, Patrick Mynhardt, Bella Randels and Morrison Gampu.

According to Jeff Stafford, the films directed by Wilde are now “being reappraised as some of the most original and compelling work in the American cinema” and *The Naked Prey* is considered “his finest achievement” (2014). Some critics have made rather unconvincing attempts to whitewash the movie's racism. Stafford, for example, writes that Wilde “devotes equal screen time to humanizing and developing his pursuers who are given moments of emotional expression that the safari guide rarely displays”, while David Del Valle speaks of “the masterful way Wilde gives us a humanized characterization of the African warriors [...] who must protect their way of life the only way they know how, no matter how brutal it may seem to western eyes” (2008). Atkinson, meanwhile, expresses his justification as follows:

Not quite politically correct, Wilde's film is nonetheless scrupulously nonjudgmental – no effort is made to heroize the ivory-hunting Man, and his Zulu “pursuers” live in three full dimensions, grieving, bickering, joking, growing despondent, and entertaining self-doubt. Of course, the unarticulated historical context of the hunt is unavoidable: by whatever unspecified nineteenth-century date *The Naked Prey* portrays, the African subcontinent had already been subjected to hundreds of years of Euro-colonial invasion, butchery, and slavery. No Zulu of the time could be

condemned today for giving a great white hunter a prey animal's fighting chance on the veld. The ethics of the film are not political; in Wilde's world, it's every man for himself, every warrior for his own justification, and God against them all. (2008)

I am reminded of Jane Smiley's comment on white Americans who "underwrite a very simplistic and evasive theory of what racism is" (1996, 63). If the black characters appear as recognisably human, Stafford, Del Valle and Atkinson seem to say, the film cannot be racist. Moreover, despite their awareness that the film was not based on an actual incident in Africa, these critics seem very ready to believe that similar things happened here.<sup>93</sup> Though they profess sympathy for the 'other', images of 'darkest Africa' as backdrop and playground for white masculine heroics are not far from the surface of their (twenty-first century) reviews.

A more honest – if frightening – appraisal of *The Naked Prey* is given by Andrew Hamilton, writing for the "North American New Right" on the Counter-Currents website (2012). Being openly white supremacist, Hamilton can detail its tortures with relish and celebrate the film without any qualms or apology. His conclusion reads:

*The Naked Prey* is relentlessly Darwinian in its pitting of white man against black in an unflinching, lightning-fast tale of action, adventure, mortal combat, and survival.

It is a stripped-to-the-bone story of man against nature, tested to the limits of his strength, endurance, resourcefulness, and cunning.

The movie can be interpreted as portraying the fierce resistance of the human spirit to the forces of primitivism, darkness, savagery, and disintegration engulfing our world and devouring the heart of Western civilization.

In this light, it is about the primal, unflinching determination of whites to survive by any means necessary against any mortal foe. (Hamilton 2012)

Nothing more need be said, except that one must pause to wash the bad taste from one's mouth.

Now I shall introduce *The Naked Prey*'s soundtrack. In the film's credits, Wilde and Andrew Tracey are co-credited for the music. According to the Criterion DVD menu screen, the "soundtrack to *The Naked Prey* features authentic South African tribal chants recorded by Cornel Wilde, and instrumental cues directed by Andrew Tracey" (2008). A review by Michael Crumsho of the CD (re-released by Latitude's Locust Music series in 2005) makes no mention of Andrew Tracey's contribution but refers to the film's music as having been "collected" by Wilde, although no specific detail is available. Crumsho writes:

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<sup>93</sup> To my knowledge, there have been no recorded incidents in Southern African history which resemble the movie's plot.

No one is entirely clear as to how Wilde collected the performances amassed here – the notes indicate a slightly exploitative tactic of simply showing up to particular villages and encouraging inhabitants to perform for his tape recorders. Whatever the case may be, the tracks contained herein were recorded in a variety of Nguni villages (on the Southeast coast of Africa), and as such are comprised almost entirely of vocal choruses and some spare percussion (drums, handclaps, and the like). (2005)

When interviewed by Del Valle in the 1980s, Wilde (who died in 1989) did not actually claim to have personally recorded the music, however. Instead, he said, “[w]e used a great deal of music and dances from the N’guni clans [sic] – Venda, Xhosa, Tshangaan and Zulu. The music in the film has a history that has been lost in the deepest recesses of tribal memory” (2008). Though Crumsho has some doubts about the soundtrack’s value as “actual ethnographic work”, given its vague provenance, he praises the music as “quite simply outstanding”. He calls the album “an excellent collection of [...] rarely heard song forms that are rousing, touching, funny, and often beautiful, sampling from a variety of different every day [sic] uses” (2005).

None of the reviews of *The Naked Prey* which I have encountered question the possibility that Wilde, who had no background experience in Africa and was not a music specialist, personally recorded the tracks. ILAM’s correspondence files provide another perspective. A letter from Tracey to Andrew Tracey, dated 27 August 1964, reveals his archive as Wilde’s most likely source. Addressed to London, where his sons were on tour with the stage show *Wait a Minim*, Tracey’s letter reads:

My dear Andrew,

This is to let you know that I am now in touch with a Film Company which is out here photographing a Wild West Show which has slipped across the Atlantic into a ‘Wild East Show’ and relates to an alleged incident in East Africa during slave raiding times of about 100 years ago. You will see from this information that “this is Africa as Kansas City knows Africa to be.” It is full of blood and murder, with the White hero, who is in real life Cornell Wild [sic] a renowned movie hero who is in Pretoria at present; who gets himself into trouble and is interminably chased throughout the picture by savage Africans. Eventually, of course, at the last gasp making the safety of an old fashioned type of white-walled fort. The kind of Beau Geste building. I hope to provide most of the background music, of which the Luba seem to give the most hectic and hilarious noises, but Mr. Wild particularly wants to have drumming dubbed onto the finished film in tempo with the running and punctuated by various climaxes. It has been suggested, from your reputation with Paul, that you two and possibly the men in the cast as well will be able to build up climaxes on drums, xylophones, and for quiet passages on the mbira. This would have to be done in London and would take you a number of hours, how long I have no idea. What Mr. Wild would like to know is what you would charge for dubbing approximately 50 minutes of such background stuff onto his film; the film will last

approximately 100 minutes, of which a total of not more than 80 would have music of which a proportion would be the synchronized drumming.

I feel sure you can do this. It would be quite interesting for you and would be rather fun into the bargain and earn you quite a bit of extra cash. Could you reply by return if you would care to tackle it in your off-time and let me know what sort of fee would be paid for this work? I expect you could get pals in the B.B.C. or the film world in London to give you an idea of the sort of fees which would be appropriate.

Wild and his party came over to a mine dance at E.R.P.M. last Sunday where I met them, took them to Saronde for lunch and I saw him again today in Pretoria. I now have to go over to Pretoria again with music for him to select tomorrow and the tricky business of dubbing in tempo with the hero running away and the Africans running after him has to be done by you. Naturally he wants urgently to know whether you would feel like tackling it. I suggest you do.

This matter requires further research to establish definitively whether ILAM recordings were used in *The Naked Prey* and which ones if so. Nevertheless, Tracey's letter certainly proves his willingness to provide tracks and, I believe, establishes a very strong likelihood that most, if not all, of the film's music (besides the sounds produced by Andrew and company) came from his collection.<sup>94</sup> Assuming this is so, why did he presumably negotiate the sale for a once-off fee and eschew any public credit for himself and his organisation?

Tracey's own letter provides the answer to this question. His description of Wilde's film in the first paragraph makes plain his awareness that involvement in *The Naked Prey* would be in conflict with the image of social responsibility and academic respectability he wished to promote and maintain for his life's work. The film's stance is also diametrically opposed to his public and private statements expressing his understanding of African music. In this regard one remembers, for example, his unpublished argument against musical chaos quoted earlier. Wilde's film inhabits the same imaginary of wildness and primitive savagery that Tracey refutes as "the popular western idea of African music [...] associated with a kind of chaotic orgy".

Besides its conflict with declared principles, there were also good pragmatic reasons against association with Wilde's creative product. At a time when Tracey was trying hard to garner support from newly established black studies and ethnomusicological programmes in the USA, for instance, a known link to such a film would not have been wise and might have raised uncomfortable questions about copyright and royalties that Tracey was anxious to avoid.

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<sup>94</sup> Since not all of his recorded output was published in the *Sound of Africa* and *Music of Africa* series, Tracey could quite easily have offered Wilde unpublished archival material which was unlikely to be recognised as originating from ILAM.

Was it just the much-needed funds for ILAM, then, that led Tracey to pursue this transaction with such enthusiasm? The tone of his letter to Andrew expresses amusement rather than disapproval at Wilde's depiction of "Africa as Kansas City knows Africa to be". It also has quite an air of exhilaration about it. Perhaps he had fallen under the spell of Wilde, who is described by Atkinson as a "man-of-action athlete" and "buckleswashed leading-man" (2008). Something about this letter reminds me of Tracey's early Zimbabwean diary entry in his draft autobiography (discussed in the first chapter) recounting his visit to Arthur Shirley Cripps. Once again, we have an encounter with masculine whiteness-as-wildness, but this time, instead of appearing as a half-crazed, dirty missionary, it takes the glamorous (and less disturbing) guise of a Hollywood movie director and former matinee idol. Perhaps, too, Tracey's whiteness has a lingering longing for African 'wildness' after all, as something to be both "claimed" and "tamed". Or, maybe, Wilde's colonial fantasy simply provides a welcome diversion from the gloom induced by the European powers' political withdrawal from Africa.

Nevertheless, whatever Tracey's personal reactions may have been, his political and economic power as white trader and archivist allowed him to dispose of recordings without any consideration for the human rights of the musicians who had made the music, in a manner which surely betrayed their trust. Unlike the black actors who at least chose to participate and were paid for their efforts, the African musicians whose songs may have been used to boost the film's 'authentic' atmosphere would not be consulted for permission and would receive no payment. It is hard to imagine how providing anonymous background illustrations for Wilde's primitivist adventure could be said to enhance appreciation of "the social and artistic value of the music for future generations of Africans", as Tracey claimed his project would do (1973 Vol. 1, 3).

Looking back over this chapter, and indeed over this study as a whole, there are many cases where Tracey's position-takings (in different roles or fields, or within the same field) seem to pull in opposite directions, with doxa or practical logic opposing rhetoric and discourse. Across these contradictory stances, however, an attitude of entitlement remains fairly constant. Late-colonial whiteness such as Tracey's might indeed be characterised by such contradictions, both sides of which express racial power to a greater or lesser extent in different ways. It nonetheless remains difficult to square the cavalier attitude towards crass exploitation in the letter about Wilde's film – in the description of the Luba's "hectic and hilarious noises", for example – with Peggy Tracey's description of singing together in the car (which opened this chapter), or with Tracey's calm expression of intense focus in the photographs of him recording musicians. The stark contrast between these opposing

representations reveals Tracey's betrayal and manipulation of the musicians with whom he shared moments of musical connection and enjoyment.

I would venture the following generalisations concerning contradictions associated with the "will to difference". Tracey's *musical* stances tend more towards an assumption of sameness than his *political* positions, which usually emphasise difference in a way which supports inequality. In the musical field, meanwhile, his discourse tends more towards a will to difference in the abstract and yet often assumes commonality in the concrete. In general his statements on music focus on alterity to a greater extent than his specifically musical practice (or doxa), which tends towards sameness. There is also an added complication, since Tracey's writing on music applies ideas of difference in two different ways, sometimes with confusion between them. On the one hand, there are different (national, racial or ethnic) musics of equal value, which ideally should not mix, or only in certain ways. On the other, racialised musics may be considered on a single developmental hierarchy. As we have seen, there are signs of this latter sense in *Ngoma*. Generally, Tracey's overt discursive position presents the former option, however, while his musical practice sometimes tends towards the latter, no doubt influenced by extra-musical colonial doxa. Furthermore, as I have speculated, doxic moments of musical interaction, for Tracey, can fleetingly produce flashes of time when political inequality is overcome by equality in and for the music. Such experiences are always over almost before they have begun, as soon as whiteness reasserts itself. Since special musical moments are interspersed with other moments and performance is always complex and multifaceted in any case, his musical practice is incontrovertibly mixed.

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Tracey's recording project was politically and ideologically loaded: it was not merely undertaken within an oppressive historical context but was actively conceptualised and structured to advance a colonial capitalist agenda. It was initially marketed as a commercially oriented enterprise, producing records to sell to industrialists and government administrators with the promise of increasing profit by producing contented workers who would not be inclined to struggle for political rights or higher pay. Furthermore, ILAM was built on Tracey's name and was in effect his personal business through which he successfully accumulated symbolic cultural and social capital (which was not proportionately shared among those whose musical labour formed his means of production). Though the terms were highly uneven and material rewards extremely limited, one must remember that recording sessions with Tracey were also commercial transactions for musicians: most played for sweets or beer, some for a small fee and a few – like Bosco – for fame and recording contracts. These points should serve as a corrective

against sentimentality with regard to Tracey's recordings. Nonetheless, in the midst of the situation described above, musical communication was also taking place. (Since pieces from the archive continue to attract listeners, that communication has not ended.)

I agree with Bourdieu that works of music, like other works of art, contain "something *ineffable*" (that some would view as "excess" or transcendence) which communicates bodily (or, for some, emotionally or even spiritually) and "on the hither side of words or concepts" (1977, 2). As is clear from his work in general, Bourdieu's comment must contain an implied "also", however. Music always tends to escape narrow political capture. At the same time, it is also never unconnected to material, social and mental structures.

Tracey's recordings were made at a time when people were disenfranchised, dispossessed, impoverished and subjected to routine humiliation and frequent torture. That is what happened under colonial and apartheid power. Moreover, he himself was always a master in the field, never in fact a worker alongside, and, as such, intrinsically (and unashamedly) attached to the forces which inflicted great suffering. In approaching the archive of these sounds of Africa, the listener should therefore beware that amongst and within creative works which can bring much pleasure, there is also much pain.



## CONCLUSION

The works of many mid-twentieth century composers, poets, story-tellers, lyricists and performers from different parts of Africa are included (or at least represented in fragments) in the archive collected by Tracey. These recordings cover a wide range of genres and styles, ideas and emotions. Among them are songs which comment on conquest and dispossession – inviting readings in terms of protest and liberation – despite the fact that they were recorded by a white man who represented and supported colonial authority. There are also many items in ILAM’s archive that undermine constraints concerning ideas of African authenticity, which have been imposed upon musical fields. The type of material I have been describing resists containment and challenges myths and structures which have shaped its archival existence. Yet the archive’s disruptive, emancipatory potential remains largely latent and under-recognised while commemoration of its founder continues to reinscribe old colonial constructions.

At the end of her introduction to *For Future Generations*, Thram introduces the theme of repatriation as a current concern for ILAM:

Our present vision is to undertake a re-study of selected Hugh Tracey recordings by re-visiting the places he recorded to record what is being performed there now. To fulfil his dream to develop teaching materials for schools, we have undertaken the ILAM Music Heritage Project. This project is developing materials for the South African schools Arts and Culture Curriculum that utilise ILAM’s archived recordings and images. Plans include an effort to repatriate Hugh Tracey’s field recordings to their communities of origin through the teaching materials being developed. That repatriation effort, like this travelling exhibit, is intended to assure [sic] that Hugh Tracey’s recordings are heard and serve to inspire future generations. (2010, 17)

These are laudable aims yet they require expansion in order to break the old development mould. The term – “repatriation” – is a powerful one, which admits that something has been wrongfully taken and ought to be returned to its rightful owners. Yet it also implies a one-way process – a giving back by those in charge to passive recipients. I would like to see a *taking* back process to counter the giving, which reclaims rather than waiting to receive. Reclamation would necessarily involve deconstruction as well as reconstruction and could not leave the archive unchanged. If those associated with ILAM would like to enable such a process and open the institution to equal, active and voluntary ownership on the part of the (biological and political) heirs of those whose songs and images were appropriated to build its collections, then it cannot be business-as-usual in terms of representation and outreach.

Instead, there should be full acknowledgement of the ways in which Tracey's methods and assumptions conspired with broader forces of inequality to *exclude* those he claimed were his project's beneficiaries.

Through my examination of Tracey's whiteness in performance as authority on blackness, his positions within colonial fields of power and his accumulation of various forms of capital via his work on African music, I have shown how his project was largely shaped by and for ruling structures of race. At the same time, I have acknowledged his work's complexity: texts by Tracey encompass a variety of perspectives, including certain insights which challenge racism. Sadly, however, hints of alternative possibilities within his writings are overwhelmed and restricted by a stronger conservatism. My thesis also highlights the potential of Tracey's multi-authored archive as a site for historical readings of resistance and struggle, as well as enjoyment and study of music. I hope my study will encourage further critique and reflection to overturn myths and hierarchies associated with ideas of whiteness and blackness and thus help to remove obstacles to transformation and celebration.

Having reached the end of this thesis, I am aware of the extent to which it remains incomplete. From material in ILAM's archive I collected a fraction of texts and from that selection I was only able to use a portion. There is far more that could be done. The collection contains multiple authors, standpoints and genres and even the texts on and by Tracey himself are extensive and varied. Since no single work could encompass the archive's potential, there ought to be many more. I will indicate some possible directions for future study, in the hope that these will be taken up.

As noted earlier, I would have liked to provide literary analysis of song lyrics from the archive. I soon realised, however, that a worthwhile examination of even a modest selection of these would be a thesis on its own. Moreover, such work should ideally be undertaken by people with knowledge of the different languages represented, or at the very least with thorough attention to obtaining fresh and full translations wherever possible. There are of course also many possibilities for musicological analysis which remain to be explored. While I have commented on a few of the photographs from the archive, there is much more that could be done there. Then there is film and radio broadcast material, most of which I have not begun to access due to time constraints. Even with regard to correspondence, which I surveyed as fully as I could from A to Z, and used extensively, there are some interesting sets of letters which I planned to include but which would have taken up too much space to fit comfortably into this work. Another avenue I found myself unable to explore properly is Peggy Tracey's diaries, which cover many of Tracey's field trips. She was an interesting

person in her own right and a study of her unpublished texts would make fascinating reading.<sup>95</sup> These are some of the possibilities in terms of archival material. There is also much potential in terms of different theoretical approaches.

Although I appreciate the immense value of the material he collected, I have taken a position on Tracey (through selecting and responding to texts associated with him) that is rather different to that taken in much of the other work I have encountered on him. I have not done this because I set out to undermine or harm his image. A frank appraisal of Tracey's position – encompassing complexity, achievements and problems, through engagement with the textual traces that remain of him – is a necessary first step towards redressing the history of his collection and allowing its full potential to be realised. I believe I have contributed towards that process. I also hope this study will prove to be useful in an important and more general sense and contribute towards a better understanding of colonial whiteness in order to counteract its lingering effects and thereby further the ongoing cause of human liberation.

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<sup>95</sup> As far as I know, most of Peggy Tracey's diaries have not yet been transcribed from her sometimes barely legible handwriting. Accessing them would thus be a major project in itself, though worth the effort.

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