

Introduction

Information is not knowledge.

Knowledge is not wisdom.

Wisdom is not truth.

Truth is not beauty.

Beauty is not love.

Love is not music.

Music is THE BEST.

– Frank Zappa, 1979, “Packard Goose”

This research aims to examine the relationship between music and social conditions within the context of apartheid. The focus area is the city of Durban, specifically 1960-1970. A case study of the multi-racial Durban-based band, *The Flames* (1963 – 1972) will be used to rigorously assess the extent to which social conditions and music can affect each other in both directions. This will also be the first coherent and historical narrative of the band, *The Flames*. As such, the thesis aims to make an original contribution to this field of music history, while it will provide the very first academic discussion of *The Flames*.

South Africa during apartheid, with its racialised legislation provides an ideal context to scrutinize the effects (both potential and real) of music on social conditions. *The Flames* provide a particularly relevant case point; being a collective of “mixed-race” individuals classified as Coloured¹ performing for a multi-racial fan-base. This means that at their concerts, audience members would have frequently been from a variety of different racial backgrounds. This would have been in direct contravention to the National Party’s (NP) Separate Amenities Act as well as the policy of “separate development”, the cornerstone of apartheid.

¹ The racial categories used in the paper, African, Coloured, Indian and white, are used as designated by the apartheid government’s 1950 Population Registration Act. Although the author does not prescribe to such racial categorisation, these terms came to be commonly used by the South African public and remain the normative lexicon to understand and describe one’s own and other racial identities.

The thesis will firstly contextualise the research within the broader, global historical context, as well as in the existing theoretical literature which focuses on the relationship between music, politics and society. Firstly, this will entail a brief historical account of popular music around the world during the twentieth century. Through this we will observe both the ways in which the development and popularisation of various forms of popular music came to be shaped in a particular way, as well as the ways in which the public received this music. This will include an examination of positive responses to certain kinds of popular music which resonated and became popular with various sectors of society. Conversely, it will also closely examine the backlashes against these musical forms, and attempt to identify why certain sectors of the public were deeply opposed to particular kinds of popular music which may have been perceived to embody certain values and meanings. This will be conducted by studying various forms of popular music from the turn of the twentieth century into the early 1970s with a cross-cultural, global perspective, examining particular historical instances and existing theories relating to these instances.

Chapter one will then shift from a global perspective and will situate the research within the South African musical context specifically. This will include an account of the development of South African popular music through the twentieth century in relation to the country's politics. Through examining this relationship, the dialogue between historical case studies and theoretical literature will continue, in which existing theories relating to the relationship between music, politics and society will be discussed. This theoretical literature will be made use of in the final section of the paper in order to make sense of *The Flames* and their role in South African history.

The second section of this thesis will focus on the socio-historical context of the city of Durban under apartheid. The author will contextualise the research through a narrative historical retelling of Durban's social history, focusing on both political and social public mobilisation and the role of cultural spaces and practices within these historical moments and their relevant structures. Attention will be paid to the development of segregation and apartheid within Durban specifically, while racial relations will also be focused upon. This will provide the reader with the necessary background required in order to meaningfully understand how the band, *The Flames* came into existence, became popular, and whether or not they had any meaningful effect on their historical context.

The section on Durban's history will be followed by a brief account of Durban's Coloured community's history, as well as a discussion around Coloured identity more broadly within the South African context. This will be vital to the research due to the fact that the musicians of *The Flames* were classified as Coloured under apartheid, and such an historical background will be critical to understanding the social, political and economic context of the band.

Finally, the thesis will end with the written history of *The Flames*. This final section will provide an account of *The Flames*' history in which the band will be made sense of within the context of Durban during apartheid, as well as within the context of South African music, and the globalised context of popular music. By situating the band within these three contexts, we can truly assess both how they were shaped by their contexts, and whether they had any effect on these contexts of which they were a part. In this section those existing theories around the relationship between music, politics and society will be discussed and assessed in order to determine how useful a framework they may be for understanding popular music in certain historical contexts.

In this way, the research aims to make a meaningful contribution to the study of music and its socio-political role throughout history, as well as to the broader understanding of Durban's history. Specifically, the role of music in Durban's history is being examined, and the researcher hopes that this work can begin to open up new discussions around the importance of studying music in Durban, and South Africa's history. Additionally, this thesis will open up a new area of research into a band which, until this point, has not been engaged with in the field of music history whatsoever.

1. Methods, Procedures and Techniques

Conducting a socially rooted study of music history follows a similar pattern to conducting any social history. The research must firstly draw on what existing literature there may be relating to the particular topic so as to situate the work within the pre-existing field. This process, the author has found, reveals significant gaps in existing bodies of work and opens up new questions which may come to shape the trajectory of one's research. Following this theoretical analysis, the work must then be situated historically. It is important here to make use of both secondary and primary sources to create as coherent an historical narrative as possible, so that your work may rest upon a strong historical foundation. Primary sources such as newspapers, songs and interviews are vital in capturing any *social* history. It is only through the words of the people who experienced any historical instance that the researcher may start to piece together an understanding of the historical experience around which the work is based. The researcher found interviews to be the most vital part of the formulation of this thesis. The participants who shared their histories and experiences with the author came to paint the clearest vision of the socio-historical climate which this thesis aimed to capture.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources were used to construct both the literature review of the existing theories of the relationships between music, society and politics, as well as the socio-historical account of Durban which contextualises this research historically. This consisted largely of mining through a range of texts which focused on global histories of popular music from a variety of different perspectives, and finding those segments within the texts which were relevant to the context of this research.

There exists an immense range of academic opinions on the subject of music and the process of selection in finding the appropriate work to draw on for this thesis was indeed an arduous and difficult task. In the end, only literature with the strongest theoretical insights for the purposes of this thesis, and which contained the most relevant historical content was used.

The work used to contextualise this thesis in Durban's historiography was drawn from a similarly diverse range of sources with varying, and at times, vastly different historical perspectives, insights and conclusions. One problem faced by the author was the issue of Durban's written social history existing as segmented bodies divided along lines of race. The vast majority of texts on Durban's social history focus only on a single racial group as

defined by the apartheid government's 1950 Population Registration Act.² However, in the historiography on Durban which this thesis provides, the author sought to emphasise those points of "racial overlap" in Durban's history so as to illustrate the problematic nature of writing racially exclusive histories. Physical markers of Durban's historical landscape, such as shebeens, shantytowns, community centres and churches have all been illuminated as points where there has been significant social contact and mixing between people of different racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. By making use of the vast number of existing texts on Durban's historiography, the author attempted to construct a simple historical narrative of Durban's history which was told from a perspective which was not racially exclusive.

The significant lack of secondary literature and various forms of archival documentation on *The Flames* meant that a large portion of this thesis came to rely upon interviews with founding band member, Steve Fataar. The interviews were used to recover some of the missing life stories of the band as well as their early experiences growing up in Durban. Interviews were also carried out with various other people who were involved in South Africa's record industry (such as journalists and radio disc jockeys (DJs)) to provide additional perspectives and insights on the musical context out of which *The Flames* emerged. Additionally, fans of *The Flames* were interviewed to find out what drew them to the band, and what effect the music (recordings and live performances) may have had on them. The interviews were primarily conducted as open-ended face-to-face conversations with specifically selected and consented individual participants.³

The Paradox of Interviews

Making use of interviews for one's historical research forces the researcher to confront a number of methodological and theoretical problems which have come to characterise the practice of oral history. Writing in 1975, Grele argued that 'there is evidence of scepticism about and doubt and distrust of oral history among professional historians', and quite simply,

² For example, note the titles of three key texts informing this research: *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban* edited by Paul Maylam & Iain Edwards; *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* by Bill Freund; and Sheldon Rankin's 1982 thesis, *A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems Facing the "Coloured" Community of the Durban Metropolitan Area*.

³ The manner in which I have conducted the interviews was strictly based on the guidelines laid in the writings of M. Frisch, 2003. "Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process", *The Oral History Review*, 30, 1, pp. 111-113; and V. Yow, 1995. "Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research", *The Oral History Review*, 22, 1, pp. 51-66, while my use of the information gathered from participants has been premised on their consent, and the data itself subject to rigorous cross-examination and analysis, guided by the works of D.W. Cohen, 1989. "The Undefining of Oral Tradition", *Ethnohistory*, 36, 1, *Ethnohistory and Africa*, pp. 9-18; and F. Cooper, 2000. "Africa's Pasts and Africa's Historians", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34, 2, pp 298-336

‘that oral history is not a respected practice of history.’⁴ He claimed that such criticisms stemmed from a perceived difficulty in determining the validity of oral sources. However, Grele goes on to claim that such difficulties are no different when making use of any historical source:

Sources should be checked, documentation should be provided, evidence must be weighed carefully. In this sense, oral history interviewing does not represent any major deviation from the methodology of other forms of historical research.⁵

What is made apparent here is not only the fact that oral sources should be compared with the supposedly “more reliable” written accounts, but that oral history holds the potential to challenge traditional written texts which have historically been taken to be definitively accurate factually. Indeed, in 1999 Field’s work, “Memory, the TRC and the Significance of Oral History in Post-Apartheid South Africa” championed the use of oral history in post-apartheid South Africa as a means to gather ‘the stories of oppressed, marginalised and economically poor people’.⁶ This was an immensely symbolic form of conducting research in a country with a notorious history of dissenting public voices being silenced through violence.

Conducting such research in oral history can be understood as a direct challenge, or even a political, oppositional statement against the assumed validity of the conventional written text and its inherent assertion and perpetuation of historical power relations. Indeed, oral history has opened up a wealth of opportunity for the researcher to discover formally undocumented histories. The mere fact that these previously unwritten and unrecognised histories have now provided revelatory perspectives and insights to the academic arena, illustrates not only their importance as a source, but their vitality as a challenge to the conventions of written texts.

Who Writes History?

Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s Book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* offers a brilliant analytical discussion around the ways in which history has been constructed, imagined and produced both within and without the formalised realm of academia.⁷ In the book’s preface it is stated outright: ‘... the production of historical narratives involves the

⁴R.J. Grele, 1998. “Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History”, in R. Perks & A. Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*, London: Routledge, pp. 38 & 39

⁵Grelle, “Movement”, pp. 41

⁶S. Field, “Memory, the TRC and the Significance of Oral History in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, Paper presented at a history workshop entitled *The TRC: Commissioning the Past*, held at the University of Witwatersrand (11-14 June 1999), pp. 2

⁷M.R. Trouillot, 1995, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press

uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production... History is the fruit of power'.⁸ Trouillot goes on to discuss the positivist history of western scholarship which has historically asserted that

...the role of the historian is to reveal the past, to discover or, at least, approximate the truth. Within that viewpoint, power is unproblematic, irrelevant to the construction of the narrative as such. At best, history [in this framework] is a story about power, a story about those who won.⁹

With this predominating understanding of what "history" is, until as late as the 1970s the absence of linear narrative was equated to a lack of "real" history. However, very rarely do people come to learn or understand history through the academic production of historical texts. Trouillot argues that those historians who feel that all histories produced outside the sphere of academia are irrelevant to the study of history 'grossly underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia.'¹⁰ Thus, historians must now extend their research to source material beyond only academic journals and books to truly examine how certain historical moments are popularly remembered or understood.

To drive home this point, Trouillot makes the following example which the author feels is worth quoting at length:

From the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, Americans learned more about the history of colonial America and the American West from movies and television than from scholarly books. Remember the Alamo? That was a history lesson delivered by John Wayne on the screen. Davy Crocket was a television character who became a significant historical figure rather than the obverse. Before and after Hollywood's long commitment to the history of cowboys and pioneers, comic books rather than textbooks, country songs rather than chronological tables filled the gaps left by the westerns. Then as now, American children and quite a few young males elsewhere learned to thematize parts of history by playing cowboys and Indians.¹¹

This passage emphasises the ways in which we learn, produce and perpetuate history not only through written texts, but also through films, songs, pictures and games. If the academic historian treats the production of knowledge and history outside of academia as inconsequential, then soon the academic historian will become inconsequential to the public for which the historian theoretically writes.

⁸Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, pp. xix

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 5

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 19

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 21

Indeed, it is only through the production and exploration of various narratives that history begins to reveal itself.¹² What defines and differentiates these historical narratives are the silences each one contains.

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance). [Emphasis in original text]¹³

These silences are vital to reproducing power through history. The historian is granted unprecedented power in selecting what to include or omit, but it is the source that ultimately determines the form of the final written narrative; ‘In history, power begins at the source.’¹⁴ Sources which are made use of by historians to this day (historical archives, newspapers, diaries of colonists, government gazettes, etc) are more often than not written from a position of power and therefore present a specific narrative, silencing contending narratives and perpetuating a hegemony inherent within those texts. Thus, the power relations inherent in those sources are perpetuated through histories which draw on them.

Edward Said, making use of the work of Gramsci, has argued that in any society ‘certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others’, and that this form of ‘cultural leadership’ is what can be understood as hegemony.¹⁵ Cultural artefacts produced within a given hegemonic discourse, such as writing, are therefore produced in such a way as to reassert the overarching hegemonic order, structure and ideology. This means that whatever cultural hegemony may hold power over a particular society is constantly reproducing and reasserting itself through cultural production within that society.

This means that when the historian writes through the lens of a particular hegemonic order, ‘logic [is] governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.’¹⁶ Said argues that the majority of material produced by the west relating to the Orient is loaded with distortions and inaccuracies, and ‘shot through with doctrines of European superiority, various kinds of racism, imperialism, and the like’.¹⁷

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 25

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 26

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 29

¹⁵E.W. Said, 1979, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, pp. 7

¹⁶Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 8

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 8

Considering South Africa's history of colonialism, European hegemony and the normalisation of white superiority, one could easily claim that similar distortions and inaccuracies exist within texts on South African history. Indeed the mere fact that most of the literature relating to Durban's history is divided along racial lines demonstrates how the overarching hegemonic order of apartheid and separate development determined the lens through which those histories were written.

If one is to follow this logic, it can be argued that oral histories of people within a society who form the cultural minority can challenge an existing history, or at least push our understanding of a given history beyond the paradigm of the hegemonic lens. Although the participant will certainly bring their own inherent biases, they will almost certainly be different from those of the researcher.

It may be useful here to return to the work of Trouillot. In *Silencing the Past* he refers to the Haitian Revolution of 1791, in which slaves exacted a calculated revolt and liberated themselves by seizing control of the French colony. Such a slave led revolt was simply unthinkable due to its incompatibility with the hegemonic understanding of the way in which the world worked.¹⁸

The events that shook up Saint-Domingue from 1791 to 1804 constituted a sequence for which not even the extreme political left in France or in England had a conceptual frame of reference. [Emphasis in original text]¹⁹

Within the hegemonic framework of European colonialism, any notion that slaves should so much as desire freedom was considered ludicrous, while in 1790 French colonist La Barre wrote to his wife that 'The Negroes [sic] are very obedient and always will be. We sleep with doors and windows wide open. Freedom for Negroes is a chimera.'²⁰ When the Haitian revolution had taken place news of it was met with outright disbelief. Years later, when it was impossible to deny the events had taken place, it was explained only in terms compatible with the hegemonic assertion that a calculated slave revolt, led and perpetrated by slaves was impossible; it was the fault of the plantation owners, or it wasn't actually supported by the majority of the slaves, or it was arranged by an external party, etc. Eventually, the occurrence of any such slave revolution came to be silenced. The events were denied any form of rational explanation beyond being treated as a bizarre, inexplicable phenomenon, and

¹⁸Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, pp. 72-73

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 82

²⁰La Barre, in Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, pp. 72

generalities were used to banalise and ignore Haiti's history; "it" didn't really happen, or wasn't important, or was the exception to the rule.

Even recent historians have refused to deal with the Haitian Revolution, which is largely omitted from key texts relating to the period of 1776 to 1843; what has come to be termed "the Age of Revolutions".²¹ As Trouillot expresses, 'historian Eric Hobsbawm, one of the best analysts of this era, managed to write a book entitled *The Age of Revolutions, 1789-1843*, in which the Haitian Revolution scarcely appears.'²² This phenomenon of historical silencing truly illustrates the extent to which academic, peer-reviewed written texts can be deeply problematic in the power-relations and hegemonic discourse which they frequently unknowingly assert and perpetuate. As Trouillot concludes: 'What we are observing here is archival power at its strongest, the power to define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention.'²³

Using this, Trouillot claims that we tend to base our popular understandings of historical occurrences not on empirical evidence, but rather on ontology: 'When reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs.'²⁴ Thus, we understand the world to work in a certain way, under a specific hegemonic order, and deviations from this are explained in a way to make sense within this framework of understanding, rather than used to shift any such hegemonic framework.

However, Trouillot points out that 'next to a discourse that claimed the contentment of slaves, a plethora of laws, advice, and measures, both legal and illegal, were set up to curb the very resistance denied in theory.'²⁵ This "paradox of the unthinkable", in which laws exist to prevent that which is theoretically not possible from happening, resonates deeply with South Africa under apartheid. Racial segregation and the policy of separate development was advocated through a positivist framework of a "natural order", and yet innumerable laws were passed to ensure that there would be as little contact between people of different races as possible. If we look at Durban's historiography or even the historiography of South Africa more broadly, histories documenting any form of socialisation between people of different races are incredibly scarce, simply because they were not written.

²¹Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, pp. 98

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 99

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 99

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 72

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 83

The Construction of a South African Past

To draw on Trouillot, we can claim that this void in South African literature exists because within the presiding hegemony of colonialism and apartheid such socialisation between races was unthinkable. Just because there are so few written historical instances of racial intermingling, does not mean that it did not happen. Indeed an example which proves otherwise would be a text from 1785, by Swedish doctor, Anders Sparrman (who had studied under Linnaeus) entitled *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*.²⁶ Sparrman arrived in the Cape in 1772 at the age of 24 and documented his travels throughout Southern Africa, emphasising the settlers' dependency on the Khoisan people and their environmental knowledge, and illustrating just how closely Afrikaans trekboers and indigenous South African people lived together.²⁷ The text paints a starkly contrasting picture to the one that the overwhelming amount of literature relating to colonial South Africa would lead one to believe.

For the purposes of this thesis, it would not be too far a stretch of the imagination to argue that the void of literature on the band *The Flames* may relate to the fact that under the hegemonic framework of apartheid it was unthinkable for music played by people of a particular race to be appreciated by people of different racial groups. It was “unnatural” for white audiences to be drawn to music being performed by a group of Coloured teenagers. As such, the band are simply omitted from the canon of South African popular music, while there remains, even online, a noticeable deficiency of any information relating to the band.

‘Built into any system of domination is the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy.’²⁸ Thus, formalised knowledge produced within any such system must adhere to this “normalcy”. Oral histories of those who were / are oppressed by, and are against the system will have different accounts and interpretations of the system and the historical occurrences which take place within it.

The justification for making use of oral history has largely been hinged upon claims of it providing a “voice for the voiceless”. Critiques of oral history commonly rest upon the positivist assertion that interview participants' accounts are blemished by subjectivity and the unreliability of memory. However, it conversely cannot be denied that ‘research that relies solely on written sources bears the risk of presenting only the views of the dominant groups

²⁶W. Beinhardt, 2003, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 28-39

²⁷ Beinhardt, *The Rise of Conservation*, pp. 28-39

²⁸Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, pp. 84

and classes within society’ and can therefore also be considered a product of a particular subjectivity, bias and hegemony.²⁹ More recently however, the belief that oral accounts are “untainted” by the dynamics of power which inhabit written sources, and that they represent some form of pure historical “truth” has also been subject to academic scrutiny.

It is important to understand that in conducting interviews, one is essentially using the memories of another as a source, and that

... [m]emories are not static blueprints of the past but are always shaped and filtered in complex ways... Memories are social constructions. Even when memories are experienced as being personal and intimate, they are forged through shared patterns of culture and language.³⁰

The ways in which both personal and collective memories are translated into stories that can be told with meaning and significance means that they must pass through a filter of ‘culturally accepted practices, rituals and rules that are learnt [to] guide people in how to respond to and make sense of their memories.’³¹ Ultimately, Field concludes that ‘[t]he ‘voices’ that tell these stories are always filtered through culture, language and ideology.’³² It must however be stressed that this should not be interpreted as a limitation of oral history, but rather as one of its strengths.

The Role of the Researcher

Indeed, in collecting the stories I required for this research I approached the participants on their terms, allowing them to designate the times, places and ways in which the interviews were conducted. As a result, the majority of the interviews I conducted were in bars around Durban, usually where there was live music. The author would claim this to be integral to the retelling of this particular history. Empty beer glasses became physical markers representing the layout of Greyville or Sydenham, while the bars themselves were used as props to express anecdotes from experiences in similar spaces during the 1960s. Much of the culture around being in a band involves being in public spaces and the sharing of stories is something which is done communally, most often with the accompaniment of cigarettes and alcohol. To a significant degree, this was the culture in which my participants tended to be most comfortable in telling their stories.

²⁹Field, “Memory”, pp. 3

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 4

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 4

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 5

Bearing the above in mind, through interviews with participants, the researcher can in fact glean valuable information beyond a simple retelling of historical events. Traces of the participant's social and cultural ideologies and values are evident in the ways in which questions are answered; how the participant understands and interprets historical occurrences, and what they emphasise or attach significance to, is revealed in their retelling. The importance of community was something which my participants seemed to stress to me constantly. They would go into great detail describing seemingly mundane events which had taken place within youth centres and churches (or often a single building which had been both); spaces in which the community was at its closest. The vitality of being part of a community was something that only occasionally seemed directly relevant to the histories I was being told, but was very clearly an integral part of the lives and upbringing of the participants. This went beyond their histories of being part of the music scene and stretched into the more personal realm of childhood and family.

Grele argues that if the researcher listens to the participant 'not just for facts and comments, but also... for insight and oversights, for the combination for vision and nonvision, and especially for answers to questions which were never asked, we should be able to isolate and describe the problematic which informs the particular interview.'³³ Here we can see how oral history can inform beyond a simple retelling of events. Interviews can facilitate a deeper understanding of the circumstances within which the events took place. It can illuminate the individual responses to their cultural or social value systems, and how the events are interpreted in hindsight according to these social values. Oral history in various ways forces these considerations to the fore as researcher are always wrestling with these questions.

William H. Sewell, Jr. in his chapter "The Concept(s) of Culture" makes the point that social historians are 'Convinced that there [is] more to life than the relentless pursuit of wealth, status and power', and indeed that history is *more* than a simple retelling of events.³⁴ Indeed, the very essence of this "more" can be found within these nuances of oral histories and the accounts that participants provide to researchers. Beyond the narrative of an historical moment, oral interviews with participants are vital to the researcher, as these narratives are framed within a specific socio-cultural framework of which the participant is a part. Indeed, Raymond Williams claims that what makes this elusive "more" so difficult for the researcher

³³Grele, "Movement", pp. 45

³⁴W. S. Sewell, Jr., 1999, "The Concept(s) of Culture", in V.E. Bonnell & L. Hunt (eds.) *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, Berkley: University of California Press, pp. 36

to discover is the fact that ‘culture is ordinary’; hence its influence is almost always left unsaid or unwritten.³⁵ However, the researcher must never take for granted the erroneous assumption that cultures are rigid and fixed, but always bear in mind that cultures are loosely integrated, highly contested, subject to constant change and weakly bounded. As Sewell, Jr. claims, ‘Cultural consensus, far from being the normal state of things, is a difficult achievement; and when it does occur it is bound to hide suppressed conflicts and disagreements.’³⁶ As such, while a participant’s account may indeed reveal significant insights of the broader social context of which they are a part, the participant must also be understood as an individual asserting their own agency, autonomy and interpretation.

The above point is of immense importance to any study concerning itself with cultural production. This thesis focuses very distinctly on the production of culture, specifically the music of *The Flames*. In analysing cultural artefacts such as songs or live performances, or indeed, the telling of stories, it is easy for the researcher to rely on one of two simple contesting theoretical binaries; that culture is an assertion of individual creativity and agency removed from any overarching structures, or on the other hand, that culture is determined by the broader societal framework of which it is a part.³⁷ However, the realities of cultural production are far more complex, and any study relating to such production needs to take a rigorous and nuanced approach in which both the agency of the individual, and the influence of a broader socio-cultural context are constantly taken into consideration.

Staying True: Writing up Interviews

The analysis of interviews carries with it a host of other problems. From conducting the interview to listening to it on tape, body language is lost. From listening to it on tape to transcribing it as text, tone is lost. Whilst writing up the final paper further meaning can even be lost from the transcription. Faced with this problem, should the researcher simply replicate the interview verbatim? Portelli argues that simply reproducing statements can be deeply problematic, as intonation and body language can alter, or even completely invert their meaning.³⁸ With such limitations, Portelli claims that ‘The most literal translation is hardly ever the best, and a truly faithful translation always implies a certain amount of invention.’³⁹

³⁵R. Williams, 1989, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, London: Verso, pp. 3-18

³⁶Sewell, Jr. “The Concept(s)”, pp. 54

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43

³⁸A. Portelli, 1998. “What Makes Oral History Different”, in Perks, R. & Thompson, A. *The Oral History Reader*, London: Routledge, pp. 65

³⁹Portelli, “What Makes”, pp. 66

Indeed, there is no universal blueprint for deciphering tone, pauses and body language, and yet this is essentially the task of the researcher. It is however through seeking to understand these elements of oral history that sets it apart from other historical methodologies. Oral history ‘tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*... they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the nonhegemonic classes... [while] oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.’⁴⁰

However, the researcher asserting their own interpretation on the words of a participant can also be deeply problematic. Writing in 1989, David Cohen provided an intriguing and vital criticism of the ways in which researchers’ interpreted oral sources.⁴¹ In essence, Cohen argued that oral history defies any singular conceptual definition and can appear in many different forms which researchers should not force into their own pre-existing lexicons of social understanding. This means that oral history exists not only as a simple retelling of historical events or fables, but also as more subtle social processes. Making use of the Busoga people of Uganda as a case study to articulate his point, Cohen claims that:

...the knowledge of the past... involves critical, lively intelligence which surrounds the status, activities, gestures, and speech of individuals throughout Busoga. Offices, land titles, inheritance, belief and ritual, clientage, debts, marriages – all this has rested on the active deployment of detailed knowledge of the past... [to the extent that] every person carried, and carries, an important knowledge of the past. This knowledge includes matters of immediate concern to the individual: knowledge of self, of belief, of ritual, of sacred, of household, of burials of kin, of lands and lineage estates, of the lives and works of antecedent kin, of affines, of neighbours and neighbourhood.⁴²

The point Cohen is making is that oral history exists beyond the words of participants and is rather an inherent part of the social processes of everyday life. This means that members of a community are most likely endowed with an understanding of their past that extends beyond the events they personally experienced, and that this past is understood and made use of in very specific ways. This can become problematic when the researcher attempts to force their own socio-cultural values and understandings when attempting to analyse the histories and social processes of the participants.

Such sentiments are elaborated upon by Anderson & Jack, who claim that for the researcher, oral history is precariously paradoxical in that while we must explore the meaning, values

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 67

⁴¹Cohen, “The Undefined”, pp. 9-18

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 12

and overarching unspoken attitudes behind the participant's words, we cannot speak for the participant or manipulate their meaning.⁴³ Yet it is impossible for the researcher *not* to inflect their own social values and interpretations upon the oral sources they make use of. Ultimately the voice of the "disenfranchised" participant is always filtered through the historian. As Portelli states,

...the control of historical discourse remains firmly in the hands of the historian. It is the historian who selects the people who will be interviewed; who contributes to the shaping of the testimony by asking the questions and reacting to the answers; and who gives the testimony its final published shape and context.⁴⁴

If the researcher can accurately interpret the oral source, then an 'exploration of the language and meanings [participants] use to articulate their own experiences leads to an awareness of the conflicting social forces and institutions affecting [the participants'] consciousness.' However, such analysis and interpretation simply cannot be taken lightly. The historian carries the immense responsibility of representing not only the participants, but their broader social context, value system and understanding of their past. The researcher can only interpret the oral source through their own socially and culturally determined value system and understanding of the world, but cannot misrepresent the participants and their broader social context.

For this thesis, the author attempted to spend as much time as possible with the research participants so as to gain as thorough an understanding of their social contexts and individual personalities, in an attempt to forge at the very least a basic understanding of their value systems and worldviews. I do not claim to have attained an absolute or definitive, or even realist account of the thesis's historical context and the events described herein. I acknowledge the impossibility of such an undertaking, and that spoken accounts, such as those oral sources which have informed this thesis, are not stable, repetitive or definitive. Were I to ask my participants the very same questions in ten years' time I would almost certainly receive different answers. However, through rigorous analysis of oral sources, and what available literature exists on *The Flames*, I have sought to construct as complete an account as possible of the history of *The Flames* in Durban during the 1960s.

Ultimately, the research came to depend largely upon two key research participants: Steve Fataar, the founding member of *The Flames* who currently resides in Durban, and Rafs

⁴³K. Anderson & D.C. Jack, 1998. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses", in R. Perks & A. Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*, London: Routledge, pp. 158

⁴⁴Portelli, "What Makes", pp. 72

Mayet, a former radio DJ for Capital Radio 604 in the former Transkei, and freelance photographer who is also Durban-based. Rafs Mayet grew up with *The Flames* in Durban and worked as a “roadie” for various South African bands across the country from the late-1960s well into the 1970s. Several face-to-face interviews were conducted between the participants, some of which were recorded and consisted of prepared questions, and some of which were casual conversations, lubricated by significant quantities of tequila and beer. In addition to these two key participants, a few close friends and fans of the band were also briefly interviewed, but have wished to remain anonymous. The research will not draw on fan interviews explicitly, but these were rather used by the author to ascertain the atmosphere, social context and public opinion which surrounded *The Flames* during the 1960s.

In analysing these interviews, the author has attempted to remain as objective as one can be after spending so much time and making friends with the participants. I have sought to describe the situations in which the interviews were conducted and translate the mannerisms of my participants to the reader, so that the words can be read with at least a vague concept of the situations out of which these conversations emerged. I hope that Steve Fataar’s jovial and excitable personality has carried over into this thesis through his charismatic retelling of events, littered with profanities and breaks for more tequila. Similarly, I hope that Rafs Mayet’s laid-back, yet somehow stoic and serious accounts of the past provide the necessary balance to Steve’s, at times over the top, storytelling.

In addition to interviews, I have attempted to draw on what few newspaper articles there are available relating to the music scene in Durban and South Africa broadly in the 1960s. I have used these in an attempt to establish a basic understanding of what common public opinions around popular music were, and whether music was at all associated with politics. My research recognises the potentially problematic nature of newspaper reports, stemming from their variously held political and economic biases, and draws on them in a critical manner. In particular, the extensive archive of the Natal Mercury newspaper at the Killie Campbell Archive in Durban was made use of in order to find contextual documents referring to both the local music scene, and the social construction and composition of Durban during the 1960s.

2. On Music

The Value of Music as a Field of Study within Historical Discourse

‘...music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does. It does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history...’⁴⁵

Music, and cultural production and consumption more generally, is not only a useful lens in the study of history, providing a wide variety of perspectives on “ground level” social issues within specific historical contexts, but also holds the potential to influence historical contexts. Music has been an usher for certain socio-political shifts; a reflection of and contributor to moments of historical change. Historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and Brendt Ostendorf have written about how the rise in the popularity of jazz music during the first half of the twentieth century was both facilitated by (and is therefore a historical indicator of) Roosevelt’s New Deal radicalism in America,⁴⁶ and acted as a catalyst for global modernism.⁴⁷ Histories such as these demonstrate how the production and consumption of music are inextricably entwined with not only social conditions, but also broader political and economic contexts.

Music is also hotly contested in the social arena, uniting and polarizing certain sectors of society; simultaneously met with venomous hostility by some, and intense appreciation by others. This facet of music – its ability to both deeply offend and be deemed dangerous by certain circles in society, while others remain its ardent devotees – has resulted in governmental organisations deeming censorship a necessity, and even the assignment of certain artists under state surveillance. Indeed, it is common knowledge that John Lennon

⁴⁵J. Attali, 1985 [1977], *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (trans. Brian Massumi). Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 10, quoted in C. Lucia, 2008, “Back to the Future? Idioms of ‘Displaced Time in South African Composition”, in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 30

⁴⁶ Although jazz had been around for at least two decades before the 1930s, it was during this time that it was catapulted to the fore of popular music in America and then globally, especially during and after World War II which brought with it a spike in trans-Atlantic cultural exchange.

⁴⁷E. Hobsbawm, 1998, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion & Jazz*, London: Abacus, pp. 324, 330, 354-365, &368-375; and B. Ostendorf, 2001, “Subversive Reeducation? Jazz as a Liberating Force in Germany and Europe”, *Revue française d’études américaines, Hors-Série: Play It Again, Sim... Hommages à Sim Copans*, pp. 53-71

was closely monitored by the FBI and CIA, while even seemingly harmless jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington were also subject to such measures.⁴⁸

On the other hand, music has been mobilised historically by governments to further their own agendas or to promote nation-building projects. Former chair of the Harvard Music Department who also served on the National Committee on Army and Navy Camp Music, Walter Spalding, wrote in 1918, ‘Our government... wisely holds that music should be just as much a part of the equipment [of war] as weapons, uniforms and rations.’⁴⁹ The First World War also saw an immense surge in the public consumption of phonographs, pianos and sheet music in the USA, while the music record label, Colombia made references to ‘musical ammunition’ in their advertisements.⁵⁰ In the ranks of the USA’s army, officials were hired to lead the troops in song, while phonographs were commonplace in YMCA huts and even in the trenches.⁵¹ Most of this music was written to explicitly valorise the war that young men were being sent to, and to build a united nation in its support of the American army and its role in World War One. Meanwhile, emergent musical forms which did not adhere to, and even challenged normative white American culture were fervently vilified by the pro-state media.

In regards to jazz, Ostendorf remarks that the hostility it was met with was largely due to a fear of the modernisation that the music was certainly a central part of, and thus jazz was perceived as an indicator of significant cultural and social change.⁵² He explains:

...jazz derived music involved a radical break concerning the rules of performance and reception in Western music-making. This break had first occurred in America when the African American idiom entered the musical mainstream between 1896 and 1910 under the name of ragtime. The introduction of African elements into European music was not just another case of selective borrowing and exchanging; it had more to do with a paradigm change in music... a confrontation of dissimilar, even antithetical musical cultures that would continue to have repercussions on an international scale... Although a child of the gutter, jazz satisfied more of the desires of the avant-garde and high cultural prophecies of futurism and desires of modernism than any of the other arts. It

⁴⁸ To the extent that movies such as *The U.S. vs. John Lennon* have been made on the topic, while there is even a website called *The John Lennon FBI files*, at www.lennonfbifiles.com/; with regards to Duke Ellington, see Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp. 370-371

⁴⁹ W. Spalding, 1918, quoted in C. Gier, 2010. “Review: The Great War: An American Musical Fantasy. Archaeophone Records ARCH 2001, 2007”, *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 4, 1, pp. 119

⁵⁰ Gier, “Review”, pp. 120

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120

⁵² Ostendorf, “Subversive Reeducation?” pp. 54-56

carried within it the agendas of surrealism, primitivism, radical democracy, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and a new way of being, all at once.⁵³

This passage not only emphasises the modernist tenets of jazz music, but also identifies the cross-cultural importance of this modernism in the musical sphere. Although America was still a largely segregated and highly unequal society in the first half of the twentieth century, jazz was an arena in which musical idioms attached to race became more fluid, and previously defined racial lines within music became blurred. There were black and white members playing in the same bands, whites listening to “black” music and vice-versa. Jazz appeared to be void of racial segregation, implying that coexistence was plausible, and its popularity amongst both black and white Americans undermined suppositions arguing for racial incompatibility.

While some societies may be racially segregated legislatively, very rarely does such legislation manage to meaningfully control the production and consumption of culture. Cultural products which become popular are a phenomenon which is exceedingly difficult to control through social manipulation, and is therefore a phenomenon which can challenge such discourses. Jazz was music which was both a product of black and white musical contribution, indicating interracial contact and communalism and thereby directly challenging segregationist discourses.

As a result, jazz was subject to hostile criticisms, decrying it as extravagant, sexual, degenerative, dangerous and downright evil. Ostendorf’s paper includes a quote written by a New England critic in 1913 as an example of the hostility to which ragtime music was subjected:

Ragtime is a mere comic strip representing American vices. Here is a rude noise which emerged from the hinterlands of brothels and dives, presented in a negroid manner by Jews most often, so popular that even high society Vanderbilts dance to it. All this syncopated music wasn’t American, it is un-American. The Jew and the Yankee stand in human temperance at polar points. The Jew has oriental extravagance and sensuous brilliance. However, ragtime is a reflection of these raucous times; it is music without a soul.⁵⁴

While another example from the *New York Herald Tribune* claimed that

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 54

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 56

The American “rag time” or “rag time” evolved music is symbolic of the primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the Negro type. With the latter sexual restraint is almost unknown, and the widest latitude of moral uncertainty is conceded.⁵⁵

These examples are followed by Ostendorf’s own explanation that

These apocalyptic metaphors of decline are by now familiar stuff in the history of jazz and popular music: Orientalism, intoxication, pollution and blatant sensuality at the gates of Western culture whose door keepers react by strengthening its cultural defences with a strong dose of racism. They articulate a latent fear of instability and libidinal freedom that White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant cultural custodians associated with the threatening Other, represented at this time by Blacks and Jews.⁵⁶

Such reactions are indeed common to music which carries inherent indicators of social change; not only in America, but across the globe. The blatant racism and the spectre of moral depravity is something highly characteristic of South African social and political mentalities throughout the twentieth century with regards to any form of interaction between races. With concrete legislation set up to prevent any scenario where people of different races could interact on any kind of equal plane, such as the Group Areas and Immorality Acts of 1950 and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, apartheid South Africa is an example of a society where these fears of “racial degeneration”, “immorality” and miscegenation had reached such levels of intensification, that legislative strictures on a national level were deemed necessary in order to maintain social stability. As a result, apartheid South Africa, being an extreme example of an unequal and highly racialised society, provides an optimum focal point for the study of the effects that music can have on the ideologies and opinions of individuals and collective groups of people in a highly conservative and restrictive society.

Music has been seen as a threat in both hypothetically “free” societies, as well as those which are unabashedly totalitarian. Again, with regards to perceptions of jazz music in history, Ostendorf writes that due to the anti-repressive nature of jazz (which was music known for wild dancing, racially mixed bands and audiences, an inherent sensuality as well as being strongly associated with alcohol and other intoxicants), it was essentially considered to be in direct ideological opposition (and therefore a malevolent enemy) to the conservative, “traditional” values upon which nineteenth century and early twentieth century Anglophone and colonial society had been founded:

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 56

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 56

...it comes as no surprise that not only Stalin and the communist nomenklatura, *Reichsführer der SS* Heinrich Himmler and his Nazi thugs, but also American religious fundamentalists and the FBI were united in their resolve to combat this evil, each of them identifying it as a sly and subversive invention of the enemy. Christian Crusade Publications of Tulsa, Oklahoma, a fundamentalist publishing house, argued toward the end of the Cold War that jazz was part of a Communist master music plan, using the instrument of (Pavlovian) dance to brainwash American youth. Conversely Stalinists called it a Trojan horse of capitalism smuggled into the clean and safe world of communism to indoctrinate its youth with African rhythms and new desires, and Nazi's referred to it as degenerate Jewish art. The fundamentalist international clearly recognized the liberating potential, the subtly subversive power and seductive charm of jazz – particularly for the young – and found its antidogmatic, anti-establishmentarian drive threatening to the system.⁵⁷

The legendary jazz pianist, Thelonius Monk, went so far as to claim that 'The best thing about jazz is that it makes a person appreciate freedom. Jazz and freedom go hand in hand'.⁵⁸ The fear of jazz in Nazi Germany led to it being criminalised and then forbidden in 1938, while Himmler even wrote that 'all teachers that are hostile to the Nazi movement and supportive of swing [a style of jazz music] are to be put in concentration camps.'⁵⁹ The liberating, anti-authoritarian power of jazz was undeniable; a loud and wild sound projecting a culturally (and racially) hybrid lifestyle.

Rock 'n roll and, in South Africa, kwela music were met with similarly hostile responses, especially as these musical genres had even more obvious sexual connotations and were sonically wilder and faster styles of music than jazz. Additionally to this, by the 1950s, when electric blues and rock 'n roll had all but stamped out jazz as the west's most popular commercial music, jazz had been subsumed into the very culture by which it was vilified; absorbed into the music of governmental and military marching bands and the "easy listening" music of elitist "high society".⁶⁰ Rock 'n roll was also, according to Hobsbawm, the very first type of music that was specifically aimed at, and made by, the youth, and was 'a conscious manifesto of immaturity.'⁶¹ This boom of rock 'n roll was made possible by the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s, which

...not only created a Western world full of employment, but also, probably for the first time, gave the mass of adolescents adequately paid jobs and therefore money in the

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 59

⁵⁸Thelonius Monk, quoted in Ostendorf, "Subversive Reeducation?" pp. 59

⁵⁹Ostendorf, "Subversive Reeducation?" pp. 63-64, containing a quote by Heinrich Himmler, 1942.

⁶⁰Ostendorf, "Subversive Reeducation?" pp. 60-61; and Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp. 379-380; although it must also be added that at this point, some jazz musicians began to make more experimental, less accessible music, eventually leaning into the avant-garde in the 1960s, in which the objective was musical progression and technical virtuosity rather than commercial viability.

⁶¹Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp. 364

pocket, or an unprecedented share of middle-class parents' prosperity. It was this children's and adolescents' market that transformed the music industry. From 1955, when rock-and-roll was born, to 1959, American record sales rose by 36 per cent every year. After a brief pause, the British invasion of 1963, led by the Beatles, initiated an even more spectacular surge: US record sales, which had grown from \$277 million in 1955 to \$600 million in 1959, had passed \$2,000 million [two billion dollars] by 1973 (now including tapes). Seventy-five to 80 per cent of these sales represented rock music and similar sounds. The commercial fortunes of the record industry had never before depended so overwhelmingly on a single musical genre addressed to a single narrow age-band.⁶²

As a result of this economic prosperity, a genuine youth culture had developed (albeit musically rooted in African American delta blues), creating a previously nonexistent arena for expression, exclusively for the youth.

Almost immediately rock music thus became the all purpose medium for expressing the desires, instincts, feelings and aspirations of the age-set between puberty and the moment when adults settle down in some conventional social niche, family or career: the voice and idiom of a self-conscious 'youth' and 'youth culture' in modern societies. It could express anything and everything within this age-range, but while rock clearly developed regional, national, class or politico-ideological variants, its basic idiom, like the equally demotic-populist costume associated with youth (notably jeans) crossed national, class and ideological barriers. As in the lives of its age-groups, in rock music the public and the private, feeling and conviction, love, rebellion and art, acting as doing and as stage-behaviour, were not indistinguishable from each other. Older observers, for instance, used to keeping revolution and music apart in principle and to judging each by its own criteria, were apt to be perplexed by the apocalyptic rhetoric which could surround rock at the peak of the global youth rebellion.⁶³

Rock 'n roll as a form of expression allowed a previously "voiceless" sector of society, the youth, to articulate themselves freely, resulting in rock 'n roll's fervent cries for personal and political liberation – most blatantly personified in the 1969 Woodstock music and arts festival. Questions were asked and freedom demanded through rock 'n roll, while it was a blatantly sexual and racially mixed musical style, with multiracial performers and fans, posing an even greater threat to conservative values than jazz.

Through its cries for personal liberation, rock 'n roll also smashed the puritanical characteristic of previous revolutions. Marxist and even anarchist-libertarian movements were highly conservative within the paradigm of the ideologies to which they were pledged. Hobsbawm even claims that

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 379-380

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 380-381

Anyone who believes that the morality of the old anarchist militants was free and easy does not know what he or she is talking about. Free love (in which they believed passionately) meant no drink, no drugs and monogamy without a formal marriage... those closest to the spirit of the old revolution also tend to be the most hostile to the taking of drugs, advertised indiscriminate sex, or other styles and symbols of personal dissidence: the Maoists, Trotskyites and communists... it can hardly be denied that [such behaviour] consumes time and energy and is hardly compatible with organization and efficiency.⁶⁴

The “youth revolution” of the 1950s and 1960s, articulated through rock ‘n roll music, smashed the conservative, puritanical facet of revolutionary politics to pieces. It included personal revolution and liberation in its politics, while simultaneously condemning exclusivism. Playing music in a band is a democratic art, ‘shaped by those who play together’, while rock ‘n roll (as well as jazz and kwela) ‘considers no class distinction’, and playing music, particularly rock ‘n roll, ‘became a symbol of generational self-assertion.’⁶⁵ Formed in 1963, *The Flames* were one of the bands that emerged during this global eruption of rock ‘n roll.⁶⁶ The information provided by participants in interviews have allowed for the above claims made by historians such as Hobsbawm and Ostendorf around rock ‘n roll in a globalised context to be scrutinised and assessed in relation to the music of *The Flames* later in this paper.

The Value of Music within South African Historical Discourse

‘...art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it...’⁶⁷

On South African choral music, many of the songs written by South African composers act as ‘allegories of a personal or collective experience of history, notable examples from different periods being Caluza’s ‘iLand Act’, Tyamzashe’s ‘Zweliyananzi’, Matyila’s ‘Bawo, Thixo

⁶⁴Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp. 310

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 319 & 363

⁶⁶ Soul Safari, entry dated 26/08/2010 <http://soulsafari.wordpress.com/2010/08/26/the-flames-soulfire-south-africas-soul-super-group-the-beach-boys-psych-soulbeat/>; & *THE FLAMES*, “about”, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/THE-FLAMES/176559827462?id=176559827462&sk=info>

⁶⁷ B. Brecht, Quoted in A. Schumann, 2008. “The Beat that Beat Apartheid: The Role of Music in the Resistance against Apartheid South Africa”, *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien*, 14, 8, pp. 17

Somandla’, or Madlopha’s ‘Kwenzenjani maAfrika’.’⁶⁸ However, according to Christine Lucia, examples of South African music written by black composers dating ‘back more than 125 years’, have, since their conception, been perceived by white academics of the European-rooted musical institution ‘as a poor imitation of Western music’, resulting in the study of choralism being relegated to the confines of ethnomusicology (in fact, the vast majority of literature published on South African music to this day tends to be of an ethnomusicological orientation),⁶⁹ while its potential contributions to both the academic study of music and history have for too long been ignored and neglected.⁷⁰

Similarly, Scott argues that there is a void in literature relating to the role of oral traditions in the resistance arts of South Africa.⁷¹ He asserts that this hole in existing literature is significant as ‘oral traditions, due simply to their means of transmission, offer a kind of seclusion, control, and even anonymity that make them ideal vehicles for cultural resistance’.⁷²

My own work in this paper will not include a study of South African choralism or an ethnomusicological account of South African music or oral traditions. However, this is an aspect of South African history which highlights both the neglect that music in this country has been subject to within academia, as well as the rich potential it holds as a source for new perspectives on South African historical contexts. Similarly, the notion that a collective or personal experience of history exists within music is something that can be pushed beyond the confines of choralism; all music comes out of specific contexts, and therefore all music can provide insights and new perspectives on its particular historical context – perhaps even perspectives that were never officially documented and are yet to be incorporated into, or seriously considered within academic historical discourse. This paper shall indeed make use of the music of *The Flames* as a source in seeking to understand the historical context out of which the band emerged.

⁶⁸ C. Lucia, 2008, “Back to the Future? Idioms of ‘Displaced Time in South African Composition”, in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 13

⁶⁹ See for example L. Levine, 2005, *The Drum Café’s Traditional Music of South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jacana, in which the chapters are divided according to the various “ethnic groups” of South Africa, each accounting for a group’s (apparently separate) “traditional” musical development.

⁷⁰ Lucia, “Back to the Future?”, pp. 11-14

⁷¹ J.C. Scott, 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁷² Scott, *Domination*, pp. 160

Another area of focus in literature relating to music during apartheid South Africa is that which focuses on international artists who sought to raise awareness about the injustices of apartheid, thereby applying international pressure on the NP to end its discriminatory politics. Apartheid's injustices became part of Western pop culture through songs such as *Biko* by Peter Gabriel, *Nelson Mandela* by The Special AKA, and campaigns such as Sun City by Little Steven's Artists United Against Apartheid and the Mandela Concerts at Wembley Stadium in London in 1988 and 1990 (the 1988 concert was watched by an estimated 600 million viewers worldwide).⁷³ Although significant to the history of music and its role in South Africa, this paper lacks the scope to touch on this historical moment.

In terms of the relationship between South African music and historiography, reflections of the imperialist capitalism upon which contemporary South Africa was built can be identified through the study of the relationships between musical production, commoditisation and consumption in South Africa. Grant Olwage argues that while there has been an extensive body of literature written around the growth of segregationism in South Africa and its direct link to British (and later, Afrikaner) interests of capital from a macro political-economic perspective – specifically in relation to the processes of initial accumulation, commencing with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and the subsequent discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand which resulted in the systematic (and increasingly rigid) disenfranchisement of black South Africans in order to secure a vast reserve of cheap labour, which was then perpetuated and solidified through government legislation over the course of the twentieth century⁷⁴ – there is a need to study the 'clear (ongoing) relationship between capitalism and culture [which in the case of popular music] is, of course, the recording industry.'⁷⁵

In his 2008 study, *Apartheid's Musical Signs*, Olwage reveals that field recordings of black South African musicians began as early as 1912, while already in the first decade of the twentieth century black listeners were buying gramophones and records.⁷⁶ Music, from the moment it entered the global market as a publicly available commodity, was racialised. In both the USA and South Africa there was the emergence of the 'race records' industry, in

⁷³ Schumann, "The Beat", pp. 18

⁷⁴ See for example G. Mbeki, 1991, *Learning From Robben Island*, Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, pp. 16-48

⁷⁵ G. Olwage, 2008, "Apartheid's Musical Signs: Reflections on Black Choralism, Modernity and Race Ethnicity in the Segregation Era", in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 35

⁷⁶ Olwage, "Apartheid's Musical Signs", pp. 36 & 48

which ‘specific genres were pitched at different racial audiences... ‘black’ music was produced by black artists with black consumers in mind by white capital.’⁷⁷

However, what differed between the USA and South African models was that in South Africa, the industry was not simply racialised, but was one ‘which operated also, and from the outset, as an industry of ethnicity.’⁷⁸ Essentially, Olwage goes on to explain how in South Africa, record companies such as the Singer Gramophone Company and Colombia classified their releases for South Africa’s “black” consumers according to ethnicity, such as ‘Zulu, Xosa, Sesutu [sic]’; ethnic classifications that were becoming increasingly intertwined with the interests of capital, for which ethnic categorisation was ‘crucial to the migrant labour system that characterised early industrial South Africa.’⁷⁹

Additionally to record labels categorising their releases according to ethnicity, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in the 1950s (just after the 1950 Group Areas and Immorality Acts were passed) was ‘aggressively dispatching recording teams to the native reserves’ in a frantic attempt to produce as much “ethnically authentic” music as possible, ‘and by the late 50s, with the establishment of Radio Bantu, building ethnicity into its policy and developing separate ethnic radio stations to broadcast it.’⁸⁰ In this way, both record companies and the SABC used a manufactured musical “culture” to normalise the state-sanctioned policy of separate development – the cornerstone of apartheid logic.

Olwage provides examples of songs which were recorded and marketed as “authentic” miners’ songs in which the ethnicity of the miners would be the topic of the songs’ lyrics, which emphasizes the lengths to which record companies and the SABC would go in order to produce ethnicity. The SABC even barred airplay from any songs in which languages were mixed, due to the fact that this would have contradicted notions of ethnicities being fixed, distinct and separate, thereby compelling record companies to conform to apartheid norms in order to secure airplay as a means to promote their releases commercially.⁸¹ SABC radio broadcaster, Clarence Ford goes so far as to claim that ‘SABC was state-run, it was really the

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 36

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 36

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 36

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 39

⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp. 40

voice of the government... Radio was a very powerful tool. It was manipulated, very seriously, to assist with the social engineering process in apartheid South Africa'.⁸²

Similarly, stereotypical representations of black South Africans as “primitive” and “tribal” were what those recording teams of the SABC primarily sought. This was not only reflected in musical content, but also in posters promoting the music, as well as album covers, one example of which Olwage describes as an image of ‘five animal skin-clad and beaded auditors beside a mud and thatch hut huddle around a gramophone, enthralled, we are to believe, by sounds emanating from the magical music box.’⁸³ In such ways, cultural commoditisation was utilised as a means to normalise the notions upon which South Africa’s relations of capital and labour relied; those notions which were the foundation of racial and ethnic separate development.

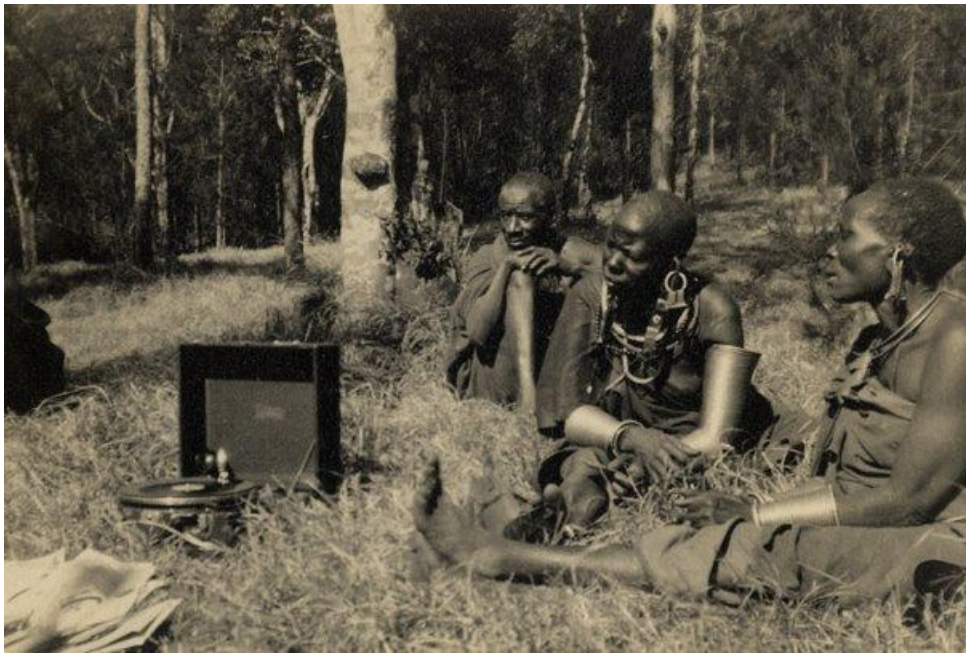


Figure 1: This is not the album cover Olwage refers to, but a similar promotional photograph used by record companies. Taken from "Opika Pende: Africa at 78 RPM (Recordings from 1909-1960s)" at <https://oldtimeparty.wordpress.com/2012/0/page/5/>

The role of record companies in apartheid’s project of normalising racial and ethnic separation stretched beyond simply producing ethnic caricatures. Michael Drewett’s essay, *Packaging Desires*, which focuses on the images on record covers specifically, shows how (especially after 1974 when Section 47(2) of the Publications Act was passed) state censorship essentially forced both record labels and musicians to normalise apartheid ideology, by only producing album covers, and musical content which were deemed “not

⁸² C. Ford, 2004, quoted in Schumann, “The Beat”, pp. 20

⁸³ Olwage, “Apartheid’s Musical Signs”, pp. 40

undesirable” by state censors.⁸⁴ Every musical release in South Africa needed to be approved by state censors, and “undesirability” went beyond only racial and ethnic representation. Anything that was deemed ‘indecent obscene, offensive, damaging to public morals, blasphemous, brought any section of the inhabitants of the republic into ridicule or contempt, caused conflict between South Africans, or posed a threat to the security of the state’, were firmly placed outside the boundaries of “desirability”, ‘to be brought into line by coercive state power.’⁸⁵

In this way, the apartheid state attempted to engineer cultural production and consumption so as to perpetuate, solidify and promote apartheid logic and its premises by inculcating certain ideals to the South African public through the images and words which were and were not allowed to be produced by record companies. Thus, in order to secure the commercial viability of their records, record companies conformed to such regulations and therefore played a part in the normalization and perpetuation of apartheid’s ideological hegemony.

Olwage also presents the counter reaction to such a blatant attempt to normalise tribalism. Quoting the newspaper *The Bantu World*, Olwage explains how ‘the Demon of tribalism’ was seen as something to ‘fight against and destroy’, a sentiment which he claims was part of ‘a hangover from missionary and colonial government proscriptions against ‘the savage’, and black, largely middle-class, aspirations in the name of a ‘civilisation’ that for the most part took Western bourgeois culture as its measure’.⁸⁶ In many ways, this appears to be part of a moment of prototypical black nationalism in the 1930s – a movement seeking to foster racial pride that was not ethnically based, through the celebration of both “black” American music and culture (primarily jazz and cosmopolitan fashion) and “traditional” South African culture, which was understood as not being inherently ethnicised, and encouraged overlap between various musical traditions; emphasising cultural commonalities, celebrating diversity and blurring divisions of cultural distinction.

In retrospect, this moment of early African nationalism (or “Afro-modernism”) of the 1930s has been criticised, as it sought to minimize racial difference through black assimilation of “white” western culture (trendy suits, drinking cappuccinos, speaking English, etc), while it used music as the primary cultural medium for black South Africans to make significant

⁸⁴M. Drewett, 2008, “Packaging Desires: Album Covers and the Presentation of Apartheid”, in G. Olwage, (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 115-135

⁸⁵Drewett, “Packaging Desires”, pp. 117

⁸⁶Olwage, “Apartheid’s Musical Signs”, pp. 41

cultural contributions that white South Africans would find accessible (at this time jazz was enjoying popularity on a global scale).⁸⁷

Essentially, Olwage argues that the process of a deliberate and calculated ethnicisation of South Africa's inhabitants into distinct, fragmented categories was in the interest of white capitalism. Ethnicity was produced by white capital in the form of records, which marketed ethnicity as a popular product for public consumption, normalising both the highly ethnicised industrial sector of South Africa, and the policy of separate development upon which apartheid was constructed.

However, despite these strict measures which were imposed on the South African music industry, Lara Allen argues that 'the reality of South African cultural production and consumption was far more complex than the social engineers acknowledged.'⁸⁸ Her article, *Kwela's White Audiences*, traces a moment in 1950s Johannesburg in which "kwela", a musical style 'Initially... played on penny whistles and guitars' by black adolescents, which had 'evolved on township streets, in shebeens and at stokvels', became immensely popular amongst white South Africans.⁸⁹ 'A fusion of American big band swing with local compositional elements', which also incorporated elements of American rock 'n roll and fast-paced 12-bar blues, kwela became the first genre of "black" music which record companies specifically targeted to a white audience.⁹⁰ Allen elaborates:

The conflicts and contradictions raised by the reception of *kwela* amongst different white audiences not only reveal the generally unacknowledged complexities of cultural politics in the early apartheid era; they also expose the gaps and slippages that arise within individual processes of identification. Most importantly these contradictions uncover the politics of pleasure, the politics of identity, and the politics of the relationships between the two.⁹¹

Allen argues that white South Africans listening to kwela was problematic for the "stability" of apartheid's separated society, as when white South Africans listened to kwela music, '*the self was recognized in the music of the other*' [emphasis added].⁹² Strange as it may seem,

⁸⁷ Olwage, "Apartheid's Musical Signs", pp. 41-43; and see B. Ostendorf, 2001, "Subversive Reeducation? Jazz as a Liberating Force in Germany and Europe", *Revue française d'études américaines*, *Hors-Série: Play It Again*, Sim... Hommages à Sim Copans, pp. 53-71

⁸⁸ L. Allen, 2008, "Kwela's White Audiences: The Politics of Pleasure and Identification in the Early Apartheid Period", in G. Olwage, (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 80

⁸⁹ Allen, "Kwela's White Audiences", pp. 79

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 79 & 83

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 80

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 81

simply being white and a fan of kwela in South Africa in the 1950s, became a political act. This is important, as it illustrates how a seemingly apolitical act can become deeply politicised given its context. Simply being who you were, and enjoying a particular type of music could become political in apartheid South Africa. This is the essence of what Allen terms the ‘politics of pleasure’: pleasure becomes political when it defies the status quo; white South Africans being able to appreciate and identify with “black” kwela music was directly contradictory to the apartheid logic of separation and racial incompatibility, and therefore undermined such logic, making it seem ‘not only unjust, but also unrealistic’.⁹³ In the situation of kwela being marketed to white audiences, we have an instance in South African history where the immediate interests of capital can also be a means by which racial barriers are broken down.

Liberal patronage of “black” music was perceived by both state officials and South African “leftists” as an act of defiance. In the case of kwela music however, the music was not only listened to by a small cognoscenti of progressive liberals, it was hugely popular with people from all sectors of society; from being played in township shebeens and on Johannesburg street corners, to the bedrooms of teenagers and students of white, middle-class families, and even to parties held by white policemen.⁹⁴

However, that is not to say that everyone was a kwela fan. There was a highly concerned sector of conservatives who were terrified by the increasing popularity of kwela music. *The Star* newspaper claimed that rock ‘n roll and kwela audiences were nothing but ‘hordes of sloppy, aggressive, be-jeaned louts and their girlfriends who cause so much trouble in South Africa’, while in 1958 the paper published an angry letter which claimed that in relation to the way in which those fans of kwela and rock ‘n roll were dancing to such music, ‘The exact same ritual and war dances may be seen at less cost, and in greater safety, at our own mine compounds’, emphasising the racist connotations of kwela and rock ‘n roll music being perceived as “primitive” and “savage”’.⁹⁵

American rock ‘n roll was closely associated with local kwela music in South Africa’s public imagination. Indeed, many kwela musicians openly stated their love of rock ‘n rollers such as Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley and Little Richard, while the white kwela fan, ‘Elsa Nell, secretary of the Elvis Presley Fan Club of South Africa in the early 1990s, remembers: ‘We

⁹³*Ibid.*, pp. 83

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 84-92

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 85

all used to go to Zoo Lake in our stove-pipes [jeans], and we would get up on tea boxes and play penny whistles with the black guys there’.⁹⁶ This implies that the South African craze for kwela music could probably be better understood to have been part of the ‘international youth movement’ of the 1950s ‘that desired greater sexual and personal freedom.’⁹⁷

The sexual implications of rock ‘n roll and kwela probably exacerbated concerns over white listeners of such music, as the spectre of “immorality” loomed heavily over 1950s South Africa. The Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 had recently been passed, leading Allen to ‘suggest that it was fear of miscegenation that fuelled the most virulent public outcry against youngsters enjoying *kwela* music.’⁹⁸ A brief glimpse at the public reception of jazz around the world in the early twentieth century reveals that such concerns were nothing new. In South Africa in the 1950s, the fact that black and white people were ‘jiving disgustingly’ together in public spaces, such as parks, on street corners and at parties, was incompatible with the political ideology that was apartheid, leading to the rapid suppression of kwela in 1958 when penny whistlers and buskers became specific targets for police harassment and intimidation.⁹⁹

Allen’s study of kwela highlights the importance of music as an historical lens, as music is a transnational cultural commodity which spreads around the globe, oftentimes facilitating cross-cultural exposure and identification, emphasising the realities of the globalised society in which we exist, where domestic affairs can only truly be understood against, and are influenced by, the backdrop of a global context. Similarly, music, although historically marketed by record companies as racialised, is far more complex than simple racial or ethnic classification. Musical exchange across cultural, class and racial boundaries has been a long-standing affair, and the hybridity in all musical types over the twentieth century is undeniable.¹⁰⁰

More often than not, musical exchange is purely sonically based, for sound aesthetic and pleasure, rather than a political manoeuvre. However, such cultural exchanges and interactions which take place on the “ground level” of society are part of the cultural negotiation that ultimately shapes that society’s culture, and can become highly politically

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 84; 87 & 88

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 84

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 86

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86 & 94

¹⁰⁰ Allen, “Kwela’s White Audiences”, pp. 90; also see E. Hobsbawm, 1998, *Uncommon People*, pp. 369-371; & G. Born & D. Hesmondhalgh (eds.) 2000. *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*. Berkley: University of California Press

charged when such exchanges are in opposition to a given society's protocols (such was the case with kwela fans during apartheid South Africa). Cultural dynamics such as these are invaluable to historical research, especially in such an intensively socially engineered country like South Africa, as the effects of the macro political discourse can be examined under specific circumstances, allowing for a more thorough understanding of the society within that context to be reached.

Allen's chapter on white kwela fans also brings to light a vital discussion for the purposes of this thesis; that of the political nature of music. In the case of kwela music in South Africa, simply being a fan became a political act, whether the fan intended it to be so or not, as simply engaging in the cultural activities of different races was all but illegal in apartheid South Africa. It was in total opposition to the foundational ideologies upon which apartheid rested, and as a result, kwela music, insofar as white people had access to it, was deliberately crushed out of the white social and cultural sphere of apartheid South Africa. But this begs the question of whether or not fans of kwela even knew that by simply being a fan of the music, buying kwela records and going to kwela shows, they were engaging in what were, by default, highly politicised activities.

The above discussions raised by Allen will be hugely informative to the study of *The Flames* later in this paper. *The Flames* provide a particularly relevant case point; being a racially diverse collective of individuals playing music together, they were challenging apartheid's cornerstone policy of separate development. Similarly to 1950s kwela music, the band had a multi-racial fan-base, with people of different races socializing on an equal plane in the same space at their live shows, thereby defying the National Party's (NP) Separate Amenities Act. The lyrical content of the music they played and intentions as a band were not in any way overtly political, but the circumstance that the band and their fans happened to be multiracial meant that under apartheid *The Flames* were an inherently political entity.

A study of *The Flames* thus also allows for a more detailed analysis of the way in which cultural activities, and audience negotiation thereof, can impact public perceptions and opinions of existing political and social structures. If people are attending shows with multiracial performers and audiences, then segregation and racialised social, political and economic hierarchies are exposed as being both unjust and unrealistic. This potential to publicly undermine apartheid ideology that music held was no doubt one of the central concerns which led to the implementation of Section 47(2) of the Publications Act of 1974,

which essentially forced both record labels and musicians to conform to apartheid ideology, and only produce album covers, and musical content which was deemed ‘not undesirable’ by state censors.¹⁰¹

Theories around Music, Politics, Culture and Identity

The academic tradition of writing about the relationship between music, politics, society, individual and collective ideologies has shifted in its perspective over time, giving rise to a range of fundamentally different, and at times oppositional, theoretical frameworks. Teer-Tomaselli argues that until the 1980s, studies of popular culture were located in both the Marxist and structural-functionalist traditions, premised on the assumption that audiences consume pop-culture passively, and that ‘the ‘cultural industries’ have been denigrated as tools of the hegemonic classes to impose a passive subservience on the majority of people.’¹⁰² However, since the late-1970s, the academy has seen a shift from focusing on the production of pop-culture, to its public reception.¹⁰³ As a result, the Marxist assumption of audiences being passive has been rejected in favour of a model in which audiences are understood as active participants in their consumption of popular culture, constructing and ascribing their *own* meanings to that which they consume.¹⁰⁴

This has resulted, very broadly, in two opposing schools of academic opinion around whether or not pop-culture (or in the case of this research, popular music) can actually influence or shift individual or collective ideologies. On the one hand, there are those, such as Teer-Tomaselli, who claim that ‘While the producers [of popular culture] may want viewers to procure specific predetermined meanings, the results are frequently different – and depend

¹⁰¹M. Drewett, 2008, “Packaging Desires: Album Covers and the Presentation of Apartheid”, in G. Olwage, (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 115-135

¹⁰²R. Teer-Tomaselli, “Shifting Spaces: Popular Culture and National Identity”, *Critical Arts: South North Cultural and Media Studies*, 11:1-2, pp. ii

¹⁰³See for example: Teer-Tomaselli, “Shifting Spaces”, pp. iii-iv; Born & Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music*; S. Frith, 1996. “Music and Identity”, in S. Hall. & P. du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage. pp. 108-127; & I.B. Byerly, 2008. “Decomposing Apartheid: Things Come Together. The Anatomy of a Music Revolution”, in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 257-280

¹⁰⁴Teer-Tomaselli, “Shifting Spaces”, pp. iii-iv

more on social and cultural factors.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, writing about music in particular, Born and Hesmondhalgh argue that ‘because music lacks denotative meaning, in contrast with the visual and literary arts... it has particular powers of connotation’, meaning that it is open to different audience interpretations.¹⁰⁶ By this logic, the intentions of the producers of pop-culture are to a large extent rendered meaningless, as consumers construct their own meanings to the final product they consume, implying that popular culture, and music in particular, lacks any meaningful capacity to influence or transform individual and collective ideologies.

To return to the case of kwela music in South Africa, the abovementioned theoretical perspectives account for the fact that both South African “leftists” and conservative agents of the apartheid state (specifically white policemen), could be fans of kwela music. Even Allen argues that while elements such as the banjo (which was commonly used in Afrikaans *boeremusiek*) were incorporated to kwela music merely for aesthetic purposes,

...the presence of such elements is likely to have increased the appeal of *kwela* for *boeremusiek* followers... Indeed, tales abound of an appreciation of sorts demonstrated by a sector of the population iconic of conservative Afrikaans values: white policemen.¹⁰⁷

Here we see an example where consumers of kwela would engage with the music on their own terms, identifying with elements of the music which were familiar to them. Thus, music’s interpretive nature allowed white South African policemen to negotiate two seemingly contradictory aspects of their identities; agents of the highly racialised and chronically unequal apartheid state on the one hand, and consumers of “black” kwela music on the other.

If meaning in music is then constructed purely by the interpretation of its audiences, then surely it lacks any ability to even marginally influence personal or collective ideologies, opinions or perspectives. But if this is the case, then what is it about music that has compelled various governments around the globe to deem censorship a necessity? Why do countries bother with national anthems? Surely this is because musical and lyrical content, as well as its performance, can, in fact, contain clear messages.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. iv

¹⁰⁶ Born & Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music*, pp. 32

¹⁰⁷ Allen, “Kwela’s White Audiences”, pp. 91

Although open to individual interpretation, songs do transmit ideas, and at times even act as a point around which a collective rally for a common cause. Indeed, popular protest, especially in South Africa, has tended to be an arena in which singing or chanting is an integral aspect. The role of music in other social arenas, such as football chants and national anthems, demonstrates the power and importance that music holds around the globe, especially considering that such modes of musical engagement are almost certainly enacted every day. The act of singing along (whether a hymn, a national anthem or a popular song at a party) according to Cook, ‘involves communal participation and interaction. Everybody has to listen to everyone else and move forward together. It doesn’t just symbolize unity, it *enacts* it...’ [emphasis in original text]¹⁰⁸

The importance of music in contemporary society doesn’t end at national anthems and protest songs. It is an integral aspect of many smaller social engagements or rituals; to solemnize events such as funerals or memorial services, an expression of love at weddings, a declaration of faith in church, a means of “breaking the ice” when guests come to your house for dinner... and the list goes on. In all of these engagements, music is central to a social process. At times music can even define the nature of the social occasion – its emotive powers can determine whether we, as humans, dance joyously in celebration or sit quietly in solemn contemplation.

Frith claims that contrary to existing homology models, the values of social groups are not expressed through cultural activities, but rather, values are determined and negotiated through *engaging in* cultural processes or activities.¹⁰⁹ Through the process of performing music, be it playing the instruments, dancing to the sound, or singing along, both individual and collective values are enacted, explored and renegotiated. As such, Frith claims that ‘music isn’t a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.’¹¹⁰

In regards to popular music and processes of personal or individual musical appreciation, Frith claims that ‘musical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical

¹⁰⁸N. Cook, 1998, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 75-76, and quoted in D.B. Coplan & B. Jules-Rosette, 2008, “‘NkosiSikelel’ iAfrika’: Stories of an African Anthem”, in G. Olwage, (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 200

¹⁰⁹Frith, “Music and Identity”, pp. 111

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 111

identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement.’¹¹¹ He continues:

We absorb songs into our own lives and rhythm into our own bodies; they have a looseness of reference that makes them immediately accessible. At the same time, and equally significantly, music is obviously collective.¹¹²

Music in this instance, although appreciated on an individual level and in very personal terms, can act as a point of solidarity, as fans of the same music are “drawn into emotional alliance” with one another.¹¹³ While most of these theories only imply that music has the capacity to influence or guide individual or collective ideologies (or at least provide a space for the individual / collective to enact, explore or renegotiate their values), Byerly deals with the question directly with her notion of “musical markers”:

Musical markers punctuate people’s lives, whether consciously or not. These markers entertain, inform, influence, and instil personal memories that serve as symbols of meaningful demarcations in any life history... musical markers define cognitive awakenings that alert them to social realities they were previously unaware of. The latter case has the ability to influence thinking subtly or blatantly, drastically change minds, or even dramatically alter worldviews.¹¹⁴

Such an argument makes provision for the possibility, to refer once again to kwela, that the white policemen who were fans of the music – possibly because they could identify with certain musical elements of kwela – would have experienced the instillation of a “musical marker” in their individual lives when they first identified with kwela music; a moment at which they would have identified something of themselves in the music of “the other”, “the enemy”,

...potentially leading to ‘moments of truth’ and consequential ‘changes of heart’. Many South Africans would be able to trace their own path and find parallels in the maze of music that challenged their thinking, changed their minds, and expanded their tastes in song during the height of the apartheid era.¹¹⁵

Byerly’s argument, although compelling, raises a number of questions. How can these markers be identified? How can their effects be measured? Due to their highly personalised nature, can these markers have any effect on groups of people, or are they purely individual

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 114

¹¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 121

¹¹³N. Cook, 1998, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 75-76, and quoted in Coplan & Jules-Rosette, “‘NkosiSikelel’ iAfrika”, pp. 200

¹¹⁴I.B. Byerly, 2008, “Decomposing Apartheid: Things Come Together. The Anatomy of a Music Revolution”, in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 255-256

¹¹⁵I.B. Byerly, 2008, “Decomposing Apartheid”, pp. 260

(perhaps here we could apply Frith's argument on musical appreciation to Byerly's theory)? By failing to address such issues, one cannot help but feel that Byerly has rehashed the old structural-functionalist premise that audiences passively consume popular culture, internalising the inherent "messages" of its producers.

However, perhaps one should not attempt to understand theories of popular culture or music in terms of simple and opposing dichotomies. Is it too great a stretch of the imagination to conceive of the possibility that when audiences consume popular culture, they can procure (or at least identify, understand and acknowledge) the producers' intended meanings for the cultural object, as well as attach to it meanings of their own?

Phillip V. Bohlman argues that music is a means through which a distinct culture or community of people can participate in their broader society or public sphere.¹¹⁶ Performances of a culture's "traditional" music in public spaces open that culture up to other members of a society, and its presence thereby asserts it as part of that society. Bohlman argues that this in turn demystifies that culture and removes the distancing that is required in order for members of that culture or community to be othered, resulting in that culture becoming an accepted and normalised part of its society.¹¹⁷ The music itself remains distinctly in the hands of its producers, but it is now considered to be part of the broader society in which it exists. Listeners are fully aware of the fact that this music is that of a distinct culture, and that it may well have specific meanings, but this does not prevent them from enjoying the music and feeling an attachment to it, possibly ascribing their own additional meanings to it. Here we have a coherent model in which the seemingly opposing academic traditions on music and its relationship with individual or collective ideologies can exist compatibly – listeners can both procure meaning from music, as well as ascribe their own meanings to it. One cannot help but draw links between Bohlman's argument, and the case of kwela buskers in 1950s Johannesburg. White listeners knew that this music came from a reality they knew little about and could not personally relate to (black South African urban townships), but felt an affinity with it, as it was certainly a part of their broader social environment and lived experience.

¹¹⁶P.V. Bohlman, 2000, "Composing the Cantorate: Westernizing Europe's Other Within", in G. Born & D. Hesmondhalgh (eds.) *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*. Berkley: University of California Press, pp. 187-212

¹¹⁷Bohlman, "Composing the Cantorate", pp. 188-192

Also illuminated in the work of Bohlman is the fact that “internal others” require constant mystification and systematic processes of differentiation and separation in order to maintain a sense of “otherness”. If the cultural products of the “internal other” become normalised within the broader society of which they are a part, the people themselves become a normalised part of that society. It is for this reason that the SABC had separate “ethnic” radio stations and kwela music was stamped out in Johannesburg; if the music of the “internal other” were to be demystified in public imaginations, then the music, as well as the people who made it, would become a normalised and accepted part of that society. Surely then, the music of *The Flames* was part of a similar process of demystification, in which groups of people who were legislatively classified as being inherently different from one another (groups of people who were taught to understand one another as the “internal other”) came to identify with each other through the common experience of enjoying the same music and attending the same shows, where the performers, as well as the audience were comprised of racially diverse people.

The fact that music, being sound, has the ability to transcend such politically defined social and physical boundaries means that in socially engineered contexts it can pose a significant threat to hegemonic discourses of racial, cultural and ethnic separation – which brings us to the context of this paper: Durban under apartheid.

3. Durban: From Inception into the 1970s

Introduction

The context in which this paper shall explore and attempt to assess existing theories around the relationship between music, politics, society, individual and collective ideologies shall be Durban during the 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on the years in which the band, *The Flames* was active. As such, a brief historical account of Durban, with a focus on Durban's social composition, will have to be included.

The centrality of race in Durban's history is plainly reflected in its historiography. Key historical texts focusing on Durban tend to provide racially exclusive accounts of the city's formation and development. For example, note the titles of three key texts informing this research: *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban* edited by Paul Maylam & Iain Edwards; *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* by Bill Freund; and Sheldon Rankin's 1982 thesis, *A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems Facing the "Coloured" Community of the Durban Metropolitan Area*.¹¹⁸ To a certain extent, the racially segregated nature of Durban's past has produced racially distinct histories of the city. However, even though existing historical texts on Durban tend to focus on a specific racial group, they all have a propensity to emphasise moments of "racial overlap" socially, politically and economically.

The Flames were classified under apartheid as coloured¹¹⁹ and came from the coloured group area, Sydenham. As such, this broader social history of Durban will be followed by a section on the history of Durban's coloured community, and a discussion around coloured identity in South Africa more broadly. The paper will primarily use popular culture and music as the central lens through which to reach an understanding of Durban's social history. Cultural

¹¹⁸I. Edwards & P. Maylam (eds.) 1996. *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; B. Freund, 1995. *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann; & S. Rankin, 1982. "A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems Facing the Coloured Community of the Durban Metropolitan Area" *Occasional Paper No. 4*, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Durban: University of Durban-Westville

¹¹⁹As previously stated in this thesis, the racial categories used in the paper, African, coloured, Indian and white, are used as designated by the apartheid government's 1950 Population Registration Act. Although the author does not personally prescribe to such categories, these terms came to be commonly used by the South African public and remain the normative lexicon to understand and describe one's own and other racial identities.

points such as beerhalls, sports clubs, jazz halls and market spaces will be used as vectors for understanding points of cultural and racial overlap between Durban's different social groups. Additionally, there will be a focus on the history of Durban's popular protests and political activity in the public sphere, much of which was centred on issues relating to race.

In linking the themes of popular protest and popular culture in a racially segregated society, *The Flames* provide a particularly relevant case point – a racially diverse collective of individuals defying apartheid's cornerstone policy of separate development simply by playing music together. Similarly, the band had a multi-racial fan-base, with people of different races socializing on an equal plane in the same space at their live shows, thereby defying the National Party's (NP) Separate Amenities Act. It must however be stressed that *The Flames* were *not* a politically oriented protest group of any kind. Steve Fataar has gone so far as to claim that, 'We didn't even know what was going on with politics, honestly.'¹²⁰

While the members themselves may not have been politically oriented, and their music may not have carried a specific political agenda, the fact remains that by simply being a multiracial band playing to multiracial audiences during apartheid, *The Flames* were making a bold statement against racial segregation. However, the extent to which the music and live performances of *The Flames* actually influenced social relations and individual or collective opinions around race and segregation can only be assessed against an understanding of the social, political and economic context in which *The Flames* emerged and actively performed.

Origins: Durban 1824-1916

The region in which Durban now stands has been inhabited by humans for thousands of years. However, the year of Durban city's origin is widely considered to be 1824 when the first group of European settlers arrived and established a small coastal community.¹²¹ In 1856 the Royal Charter of Natal declared Natal a British colony, allowing it a limited form of representative government.¹²²

¹²⁰S. Fataar, Personal communication over the telephone, 21/02/2015

¹²¹ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 4

¹²²*Ibid.*, pp. 5

Rankin argues that already by this early stage in Durban's history the coastal town was racially diverse, with a growing coloured population who were either descendents of the 1824 settlers, or French-speaking artisans from Mauritius who had come to Durban to find work in the fledgling sugar industry during the 1850s.¹²³ The 1860s saw the emergence of the indentured labour system that Durban's initial industry was built upon. This entailed immigrant Indian labourers being brought to South Africa on five-year work contracts which upon completion were either terminated, or could be renewed for another five years.¹²⁴ Additionally, from 1874 free passengers who were primarily Gujarati speaking Hindus or Muslim traders began arriving in South Africa from India.¹²⁵ It is worth noting that the vast majority of South Africa's Indian population arrived in South Africa through this Natal indentured labour system from 1860 to 1911 (when the system was abolished).¹²⁶

1865 saw further growth in Durban's social composition as economic pressures in St Helena resulted in the migration of another "coloured" community to South Africa, who were mainly English-speaking domestic workers who primarily settled in the Cape (although a significant number did settle in Natal).¹²⁷

During this time of Durban's formation there was only a very small African population living in the town, primarily consisting of male industrial and domestic workers. Despite the ravages of colonialism and settler expansion in South Africa during the 18th and early 19th centuries, Africans were yet to be stripped entirely of their rights to land ownership on a national scale. Thus, to a certain extent, Africans were able to engage in subsistence livelihood reproduction, and were not yet barred from engaging in independent commercial ventures.¹²⁸ As such, it was not yet a necessity for employment to be sought in white urban centres. Only when state legislation such as the Natives Land Act of 1913¹²⁹ was passed did urban wage labour become a necessity for most African households.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4

¹²⁴ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 1-11; L. Kuper, H. Watts & R. Davies, 1958, *Durban: A Study In Racial Ecology*, London: Jonathan Cape, pp. 30-31; & S. Jithoo, 1991. "Indians in South Africa: Tradition Vs. Westernization", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 22, 3, pp. 344-345

¹²⁵ Jithoo, "Indians", pp. 345

¹²⁶ The term "Indian" in this paper refers to all South African indentured, merchant and colonial born Indians.

¹²⁷ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 5

¹²⁸ See for example C. Bundy, 1972 "The Emergence and Decline of an African Peasantry", *African Affairs*, 285 (71), pp. 369-388

¹²⁹ Which forbade African people from buying or owning land outside of demarcated reserves (a mere seven per cent of the land under the South African Union) as a means to disenfranchise and ensnare the African population as a secure source of concentrated cheap wage labour for the blossoming diamond and gold mining industries.

However, this is not to say that segregative measures were not imposed in the Natal colony during the 19th century. Already in 1846 and 1847 the Natal colonial administration had set aside segregated areas for the one hundred-thousand Africans living in the colony to be governed by a system of indirect rule.¹³⁰

The growing racial diversification of Durban's population was met with hostility by the white inhabitants. 1883 and 1896 respectively saw Africans and Indians being excluded from the right to vote, although no efforts were made to legislatively curtail the rights of the coloured population.¹³¹ Rankin however argues that despite the lack of a formalised legal framework denying coloureds equal rights to white South Africans, there are numerous records of white acrimony towards Durban's coloured population in everyday interactions, such as coloured children being excluded from government schools.¹³²

Indeed, in 1910 when South Africa was declared a Union, while the former Boer Republics denied coloured people the vote, there remained no constitutional distinction between whites and coloureds in both Natal and the Cape. Natal delegates to the National Convention did however express that they gave no support to retain a "colour-blind" franchise.¹³³ Regardless of this, only during the First World War were schools and military regiments segregated for coloureds and whites. Additionally, it was only in 1948 when the National Party came into power that the coloured vote was sought to be completely abolished. 1956 saw the end of coloured South Africans being able to register to vote, while 1960 brought with it the outright removal of all coloured voters from the roll.¹³⁴

Indian life in early Durban, according to Freund was characterised by an 'inseparable mixture of oppression and opportunity', and that 'the one positive aspect of indenture was the possibility of a free life in a new country at the end of their servitude.'¹³⁵ The harsh conditions and inherent violence of indentured labour cannot be overstated. One former general manager of the Tongaat Sugar Company remorselessly wrote that 'flogging... was accepted as the traditional and most effective method of getting work out of coolies and

See L. Ntsebeza, 2006 *The Land and Agrarian Questions - What Do They Mean in South Africa Today?*

Keynote address on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Surplus People's Project, Cape Town. pp. 5 & 6

¹³⁰ T. Metcalf, 2007, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*, University of California Press: Berkley, pp. 138

¹³¹ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 5

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 6

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7

¹³⁵ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 10-11

kaffirs and of maintaining plantation discipline.’¹³⁶ On the other hand, during the 19th century, Durban’s nascent industrial sector was yet to develop to the point where a proletariat labour reserve was desired or required. For Indians who had completed their indenture, this meant that ‘the possibilities of avoiding or modifying the circumstances of proletarianisation were in fact very considerable... in early twentieth-century Natal.’¹³⁷

From 1886, when mining agglomerations began to consolidate on the Witwatersrand, there was a sudden and immense demand for services, commodities and raw materials. This created significant prospects for petty and larger entrepreneurs of all races. It also facilitated considerable industrial growth in Natal. Growth in the coal mining industry in northern Natal fuelled the emergent Natal Government Railways, which was essentially dependent on the Witwatersrand. Gold was evacuated from, and supplies taken to the interior of the country; such was the economic backbone of the Natal colony.¹³⁸ In the 1890s Durban opened up as a safe harbour to ocean-going ships, while simultaneously there was the emergence of the city’s manufacturing industry and steady growth in Natal’s long-standing sugar industry. With industry booming, so did the city’s residential population. Between 1877 and 1910 Durban’s population grew from 10 000 inhabitants, to 148 000.¹³⁹

This economic boom during the turn of the 20th century provided an abundance of work for Durban’s indentured Indian labourers. However, it was becoming increasingly desirable for the interests of capital to replace indentured labour with ‘the labour of indigenous and contracted Africans on a partially free and partially coercive basis’, ending the indentured labour system in 1911.¹⁴⁰ Prior to 1911 there was a need for a constant supply of new labourers in Natal due to the termination of indentured labour contracts after five years (although many were in fact renewed). Subsequently, the Indian population was constantly growing and creating greater economic competition for white residents, prompting the advent of a mythic “Asiatic danger”.

The lifestyles of those Indian indentured labourers who completed their contracts and remained in South Africa generally followed two distinct paths. Some moved beyond the city borders and integrated themselves into a rural economy as highly effective market gardeners,

¹³⁶ R.G.T. Watson, 1960, *Tongaati, an African Experiment*, Hutchinson: London, pp. 149

¹³⁷ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 10

¹³⁸ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 11

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10

while others moved into the city and built their lives around the urban economy.¹⁴¹ However, in the 1900s rural Indian networks began to shrink and support collapsed as sugarcane farms bought up tracts of land and conglomerated. From the 1920s, with the expansion of the industrial zone south of Durban harbour, industrial work was increasingly available for Indian men.¹⁴² Hereafter market gardening would only continue at home as a means to supplement wage labour earnings while the Indian population rapidly urbanised. Market gardens gave way to shack renting; wage labour replaced previous livelihood reproduction strategies; and by the 1960s, industrial growth rates had mopped up almost all Indian unemployment.¹⁴³

Indeed, Indian communities are frequently represented in historical texts of Durban as tight-knit, exclusive communities.¹⁴⁴ Freund, although somewhat supportive of this perspective, also admits to complexities in this structure and claims that there was ‘some possibility of escape from these tightly woven webs.’¹⁴⁵ He explains that there exist historical instances of Indian men who would gamble and drink with Africans, especially in peri-urban areas.

There emerged a distinct South African Indian identity, which clung to notions of India as “home”.¹⁴⁶ Caste however became almost irrelevant due to the dependency on networks in the production of Indian livelihoods. Religion and language, although still a central factor in establishing economic networks, became increasingly less important. Individuals and families from north and south India came to identify a cultural affinity between one another in an increasingly diverse and different Durban.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Durban’s Indian community seems to have been close across classes, with Indian run charities helping lower-class Indians out of destitution by providing credit or employment (by 1953, 44 such organisations were in existence).¹⁴⁸

Africans living in Durban were largely, from the inception of the city, a population of poor, unskilled, migrant male domestic and industrial workers who lived in ‘the “living hell” of

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 24

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25

¹⁴⁴ B. Freund, 1991, “Indian Women and the Changing Character of the Working Class Indian Household in Natal 1860-1990”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17, 3, 1991, pp. 414-429; Freund, *Insiders*; H. Southworth, “Strangling South Africa’s Cities: Resistance to Group Areas in Durban During the 1950s”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 1, 1991, pp. 1-34

¹⁴⁵ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 37

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 37

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38

backyard sheds, stables and other informal accommodation'.¹⁴⁹ Prior to the 1920s there was no formal racial residential segregation in Durban, allowing for mainly white and Indian rentiers to lease rooms and backyard premises to African tenants. This means that there existed a number of racially diverse communities in Durban during the early 20th century, albeit of a lower economic bracket.¹⁵⁰ Records even exist of white men living with African women as late as the early 1900s, bringing "shame" and "disgrace" to their race.¹⁵¹

Despite the existence of some racially diverse communities in early Durban and its outskirts, Soske claims that 'By sharply restricting African landownership and struggling to prevent the formation of an African proletariat in the cities, the colonial state – largely by accident – created the conditions for social differentiation between African migrants and a more settled, urbanised Indian population.'¹⁵² Additionally, migrant Africans usually rented dilapidated backyard shacks from Indian, white or coloured landlords, which engendered a process of race based class differentiation amongst Durban's working classes.

Outside of formalised industrial and domestic wage labour, Durban in the early 20th century had a flourishing informal economy in which autonomous livelihood reproduction strategies could be engaged. The sale of liquor was the heart of this informal economy.¹⁵³ The informal economy was also hugely multiracial, with African, Indian, coloured and white traders catering for an equally diverse clientele. Spaces such as informal markets, shebeens and the shacklands on the outskirts of Durban facilitated this scope for economic autonomy amongst Durban's multiracial working and lower classes. Similarly, such spaces opened up opportunities for cultural exchange – the formation of "creolised" musical forms and the emergence of a working class consciousness. La Hausse asserts that shebeens were the most significant of Durban's autonomous cultural spaces, where free, unregulated and oftentimes politicised cultural ideas and activities would emerge and circulate.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹P. Maylam, 1996. "Introduction: The Struggle for Space in Twentieth-Century Durban", in I. Edwards & P. Maylam (eds.) *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, pp. 1-5

¹⁵⁰Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 4

¹⁵¹P. La Hausse, 1996. "Alcohol, The Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936", in I. Edwards & P. Maylam (eds.) *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, pp. 61

¹⁵²J. Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again': *African Nationalism, The Indian Diaspora, and KwaZulu Natal, 1944-1960*, PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto, 2009, p. 270

¹⁵³Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 5

¹⁵⁴P. La Hausse, 1989. "The Message of Warriors: The ICU, the Labouring Poor and the Making of a Popular Political Culture in Durban", in P. Bonner; I. Hofmeyer & T. Lodge, *Holding Their Ground*, Ravan Press: Johannesburg, pp. 23

1908 brought with it the beginning of a process whereby such autonomous spaces were steadily snuffed out and brought under municipal control. The 1908 Native Beer Act criminalised petty liquor dealers and producers, and municipal beerhalls replaced informal shebeens. The revenue streams derived from the municipal monopoly of beer halls funded the establishment of the Native Affairs Department in 1916.¹⁵⁵ In doing so, Durban's African population paid for the operations of the city's Native Affairs Department, and generated the required revenue to fund the structures of the department.¹⁵⁶ This system in which the African population essentially paid for their own administration (which hugely appeased white taxpayers) was adopted on a national scale in South Africa and was termed by Swanson in 1965 as the Durban system.¹⁵⁷

The remnants of the informal economy in the centre of Durban were systematically shut down by a series of 'state legislation, infrastructural development, capitalist expansion, and proletarianisation' in the early 1900s.¹⁵⁸ Public beer halls and eating houses that existed informally in the city and private establishments which were not shut down were brought under municipal control. This pushed the informal economy into peri-urban areas such as Sydenham, Greenwood Park and Mayville; areas which also increasingly became densely populated by shack-dwellers. These peri-urban areas remained economically and culturally autonomous; spaces in which ideas and culture remained free, while livelihoods were not dependent on wage labour.

The money generated by the municipal beer monopoly was, in 1916, sufficient to not only establish a Native Affairs Department, but also to implement and enforce a 9pm to 5am curfew for all Africans, as well as introduce stricter contractual and registration controls on African workers. Maylam claims that the impact of the national government's first social intervention, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, was hardly noticeable in Durban due to the existing structures of the city's Native Affairs Department.¹⁵⁹ Kuper, et al assert that the Durban City Council's early legislation and enthusiasm for compulsory segregation contributed to the planning of Group Areas legislation on a national scale through the structures of its Native Affairs Department.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 6

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 3 & 6

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 3

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 6

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 3

¹⁶⁰Kuper, Watts & Davies, 1958, *Durban*, pp. 34

A Divided City: 1917-1930

Maylam argues that wartime has historically facilitated growth in the Durban economy and its industrial sector.¹⁶¹ Indeed, World War I saw the emergence of Durban's secondary industrialisation due to the boom in wartime shipping which required a larger engineering industry. With this boom in industry, there was an influx of Africans to the city in search of employment, and between 1900 and 1921 Durban's African population grew from 14 600 to 28 400.¹⁶² This growth in population no doubt contributed to the formation of the Native Affairs Department in 1916. Additionally, this industrial growth facilitated infrastructural growth, which in turn forced out many African and Indian service providers as they were replaced by public services (eg: rickshaw-pullers replaced by public transport). While economic opportunities disappeared, the depression which followed in the wake of the First World War resulted in lagging wages and price hikes. Unsurprisingly, 1918-20 were years of protest. Popular protest and worker mobilisation in Durban have been organised historically along racial lines. Very rarely are there instances of multi-racial unions or protest movements in the history of the divided city. These early occasions of mobilisation and protest are no exception to this phenomenon.

Rickshaw-pullers went on strike against vehicle rent increases, togt workers demanded their wages be doubled, and the Natal Native Congress demanded a general wage increase for African workers.¹⁶³ Coaling workers, municipal togt workers and, in 1920, about one thousand dock workers went on strike.¹⁶⁴ Most of these struggles were unsuccessful, with ringleaders being victimised and fined, but they did instigate a greater culture of popular protest and political mobilisation, while in 1920 wages were indeed raised.

The 1920s saw the emergence of a developing proletarian consciousness and political organisation. 1919 saw the formation of the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU), and 1925-27 saw another wave of collective action on a much larger scale, often without monetary incentive.¹⁶⁵ 1926 saw the ICU successfully have compulsory annual "dipping" abolished (a humiliating process which 35 000 African workers were subject to, whereby African workers

¹⁶¹ Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 3

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10

would be forced to pass through disinfectant tanks like cattle), while the ICU's other successes included lifting the curfew on Durban's African residents, having African women exempt from carrying night passes, and removed from the police the power to arbitrarily arrest Africans.¹⁶⁶

La Hausse argues that the ICU developed a culture of political militancy which rubbed off onto popular culture; a mixture of Zulu-nationalism, Garveyism, anti-white, anti-Indian and anti-clerical ideas, creating a prototypical African nationalism.¹⁶⁷ Famously, the ICU rejected any affiliation with the ANC due to their elitist standpoint rooted in missionary school discourses of white cultural assimilation. Most political organisations during the first half of the 20th century, including the ICU, tended to also function as cultural hubs which organised music and dance performances. In South African liberation ideology broadly, it appears that music and dance were understood as legitimate forms of articulating political desires and ideas.

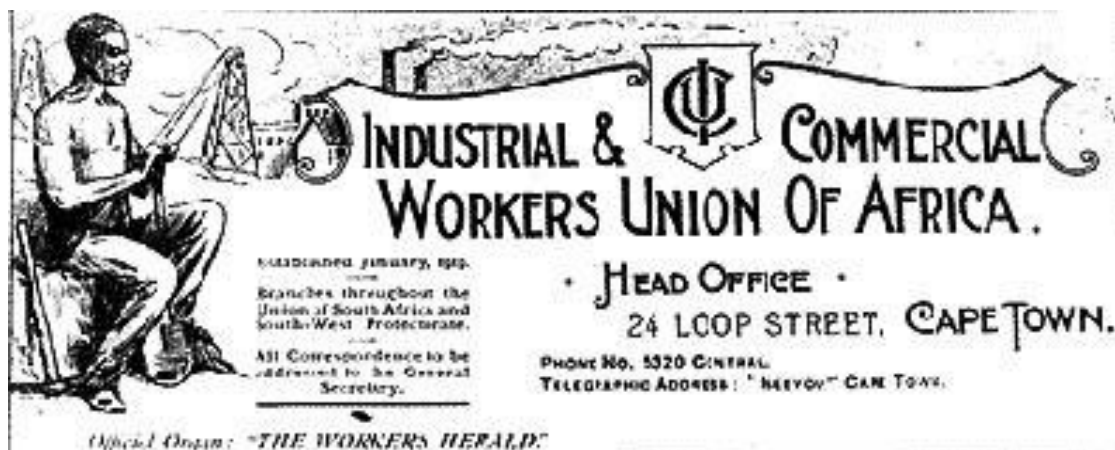


Figure 2: Taken from South African History Online, "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU)", at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/organisations/industrial-and-commercial-workers-union-icu>

Indeed, liberation movements often understood themselves as not only being liberatory in a political sense, but also culturally. African political organisations tended to promote cultural forms which drew from "indigenous" traditional practices and international trends like jazz to form new and unique urban South African styles. Importantly, such cultural forms were fervently uninfluenced by and even oppositional to white South African colonial culture. Cultural activities still remain closely entwined with political action in South Africa, such as singing and dancing during protests. This facet of anti-colonial, anti-segregation political activity in early 20th century South Africa was no doubt reinforced by the fact that 'policemen

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 10

¹⁶⁷ La Hausse, "The Message of Warriors", pp. 27

had to monitor public assemblies to keep proper distinctions in place: meetings had to be religious, or cultural, or tribal, but never political, never concerned with changing people's situations in this world.'¹⁶⁸

As such, it is unsurprising that moments of collective action in Durban's history have been recorded as oral histories in the form of song. Erlmann writes about this phenomenon, pointing out the work of Durban's prominent African composer, Reuben Tholakele Caluza.¹⁶⁹ Caluza wrote the song *Idiphu eThekwini* (The Dipping in Durban) as a protest song to the above mentioned mandatory "dipping" of dockworkers, as well as *Sixotshwa Emsebenzini* (We Are Being Expelled From Work) about the 1924 Industrial Coalition Act.¹⁷⁰

Indian resistance has historically tended to be solely in the interest of Indian workers, with the exception of a few historical instances. Key moments in the history of Indian mobilisation in early 20th century Durban include the 1913 campaign against the £3 tax increase; the 1917 tobacco worker's strike (which spread to almost all sectors where Indians were employed); and the 1920 strike against overworking.¹⁷¹ During this time a number of attempts to establish Indian worker's unions were made, but these were broadly unsuccessful until the late 1930s. The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) was established in 1894 by Mohandas Gandhi to fight discrimination against Indian traders in Natal. From the 1920s the organization functioned under the umbrella organization, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). These organisations, for almost the entire duration of their existence, sought to further the interests of Indian workers alone, at times at the expense of other races.

On the other hand, outside of the political sphere during this time, Durban's Indian community embraced hybridity in a modernising world. Soccer, cinema, boxing, jazz, dancing, gambling and billiards were all characteristic of social life in Durban during the first half of the 20th century, and indeed, the Indian community engaged in such activities.¹⁷² From

¹⁶⁸P. Landau, 2010. *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. xii

¹⁶⁹V. Erlmann, 1996. "But Hope Does Not Kill: Black Popular Music in Durban, 1913-1939", in I. Edwards & P. Maylam (eds.) *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, pp. 78-79

¹⁷⁰Erlmann, "But Hope", pp. 78-79; The 1924 Industrial Coalition Act was passed in response to the 1922 Rand Rebellion by the newly elected National Party and the South African Labour Party coalition government. The act recognised white trade unions and reinforced the industrial "colour bar" which prioritised and reserved jobs for whites at the expense of African workers. Africans were excluded from trade union membership and the registration of black trade unions was prohibited. The act 'threatened to push black artisans, shop assistants, nurses and other black professionals into the army of jobless or underpaid labourers.'

¹⁷¹ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 42

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 39

1880s, Indian soccer clubs were established, and sports clubs became important social hubs for the Indian community.¹⁷³ The popular Indian cinema, the Rawat was established during the 1920s. Durban city centre's Grey Street area was surrounded by jazz clubs, dance halls and boxing rings which were attended by a multiracial clientele where interracial socialising took place every day.

In spite of this, such interracial social contact was largely recreationally based, and multiracial amicability only really happened in the more cosmopolitan city centre. Outside of Durban city's consumer culture context, in peri-urban areas where the majority of both the Indian and African populations of Natal resided, the situation was notably different. Africans were usually tenants to Indian rentiers, customers to Indian owned shops and occasionally neighbours to Indian households. As already mentioned, racialised social hierarchies began to emerge.

Indian life was based around the family and familial economic activities. Most of the African population consisted of single male wage labourers. As such, most Indian and African residents of the peri-urban areas lived very different lifestyles. Indeed, there exist almost no instances of Africans or Indians assimilating to one another's cultures or social structures, while there are very few occasions of intermarriage.¹⁷⁴ Instances of interracial marriage seem to only have occurred frequently (or were only documented) between people classified as Indian and coloured; primarily between Christians or Muslims who shared a bond of faith and were frequently of the upper class bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁵

1929-30 saw even larger scale mass mobilisation amongst Durban's growing African community with the 1929 beerhall boycott and the Dingane's Day pass-burning campaign of 1930. Maylam argues that this marked a national move 'away from a formal, "bureaucratic" organisational style of opposition towards more popular, militant forms of protest' characterised by a 'growing participation of workers themselves in urban struggles'.¹⁷⁶ For example, the 1929 beerhall boycott originated amongst dockworkers themselves, and was not organised by external bodies such as the ICU.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, pp. 39

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 38

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 40

¹⁷⁶Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 11

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 11

These movements were characterised by mass participation and solidarity. Thousands attended meetings opposing the municipal beer monopoly in 1928-29, while the plummeting beer sales legitimately threatened the financial basis of the native revenue account.

After the pass-burning campaign, the remainder of the 1930s appears to have been a much quieter time in Durban in terms of political action, until the end of the decade. This was probably due to number of factors, one of which would have been the state's response to the 1929 beerhall boycott. The boycott resulted in an enquiry which concluded that social conditions for Durban's African population needed to be improved and that specifically, there was a lack of recreational facilities.¹⁷⁸ This led to the appointment of a white Native Welfare Officer in the Native Administration Department in 1930, who quickly organised facilities for African recreation, sport and entertainment.¹⁷⁹ Films were screened for hostel dwellers and sports clubs established (by 1937 there were over fifty African soccer clubs).¹⁸⁰

This paternalistic approach, it was believed, was the most effective way to keep a watchful eye over the activity of Durban's black population and keep them away from engaging in politics. According to the Native Welfare Officer in 1931,

This interest on the part of Europeans would certainly limit the spread of vicious and evil influences, and the native community of Durban could be moulded into a law abiding and contented section of the community of the Borough.¹⁸¹

Similarly, cultural activities such as music and dance came under heavy scrutiny by the state.¹⁸² There was a suspicion that cultural activities were becoming politicised (and indeed they were), which the state became aware of. These cultural modes however were not stamped out, but rather were sought to be diffused politically as the

Durban local state increasingly came to use recreation as an instrument of social control... an attempt was made in the 1930s to transform *ngoma* dancing [notoriously considered to be the "most" political and "violent" of Durban's African dances] into a harmless form of energy release, confined to and supervised in certain spaces at certain times. But the attempt was not entirely successful, as *ngoma* performances continued to express an oppositional cultural form.¹⁸³

Ngoma dancing, today understood as a "traditional Zulu" dance, was, in the 1920s, essentially an umbrella term for a range of hybrid male groups dances amongst Durban's

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 12

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 12

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 12

¹⁸¹ Native Welfare Officer, 1931, quoted in Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 12-13

¹⁸² See Erlmann, "But Hope"

¹⁸³ Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 13

largely Zulu migrant worker population. They ‘represented less the continuity of pre-colonial, traditional performance than the complex interaction of traditional dance forms, labour migration and mission influence’.¹⁸⁴ The dance indeed was explicitly oppositional to the racialised hierarchy of early 20th century South Africa. Its performance was used as a means to negotiate new ways of living, new identities and to discover new aesthetic models and expressions of self-conscious urban status. Indeed, *ngoma* had been the soundtrack to the 1929 beerhall boycotts.

Erlmann claims that ‘above all, the songs articulated the most deep-seated desires of the expelled, dehumanised and dispossessed black masses: the cry for land, the longing to regain the land their forefathers had lost to the white settlers.’¹⁸⁵ To exemplify this point Erlmann quotes a popular *ngoma* song, circa 1920s:

Who has taken our country from us?

Who has taken it?

Come out! Let us fight!

The land was ours

*Now it is taken*¹⁸⁶

By supervising *ngoma* performances, Durban’s local government sought to stamp out opportunities for the articulation of such oppositional cultural forms.

The racial division in worker mobilisation is deeply linked to the industrial policy of racial and ethnic profiling for specific jobs. Job profiling frequently shifted depending on economic conditions, labour availability or labour unrest, and while it was frequently opposed, it was also at times beneficial if your racial profile facilitated your ready employment.¹⁸⁷ Racial profiling for jobs was also a sure way to cause bitter divides between racial groups, thereby fragmenting labour forces. The interests of capital ‘lay in negating the possibility of a strong, unified working class, in limiting the influence of Communists, and also in taking economic advantage of the market to replace one kind of worker with another, cheaper and / or more cooperative.’¹⁸⁸ Oftentimes, the NIC and other Indian labour organisations would manipulate

¹⁸⁴Erlmann, “But Hope”, 84

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 87

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 87

¹⁸⁷Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 52

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 59

this policy to secure jobs for the Indian population, thereby embittering African workers, and vice-versa.¹⁸⁹ Job competition generated significant racial tensions.

However, in the 1930s, as jobs were cleared for white workers, there was a moment of mutual interest between African and Indian workers who would mobilise and strike alongside one another. Contrasting this, there was the Indian political elite, who saw the influx of African labourers from rural areas as a threat to Indian jobs, and successfully sought to shift the contemporary racialised job profiles to promote the employment of Indians in skilled labour.¹⁹⁰

Irreparably Damaged: 1930-1960

Manufacturing and secondary industry boomed in Durban during the 1930s-40s, especially during the Second World War.¹⁹¹ This economic growth facilitated immense industrial expansion. Subsequently, larger labour surpluses needed to be secured. This resulted in the expansion of Durban city's borough boundaries in 1932 to include peri-urban areas such as Sydenham, South Coast Junction, Mayville, Unhlatuzana and Greenwood Park; areas which had previously fallen under the limited administrative purview of local administration and health boards.

These peripheral spaces on the outskirts of Durban held the last few autonomous, multi-racial public spaces such as shebeens; racially mixed residential areas; and opportunities for economic autonomy outside of wage labour.¹⁹² The expansion of Durban municipality's realm of control held dire implications for its new inhabitants. Municipal legislation was enforced, closing down shebeens and other autonomous spaces. This largely eradicated possibilities for livelihood reproduction outside of wage labour, thereby securing a vast source of cheap, unskilled labour for the growing industrial sector. Everyday life was

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16

¹⁹² Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 34-35

increasingly impinged upon as the city's industrial, infrastructural and administrative nexus expanded outwards.¹⁹³ This was swiftly followed by systematic processes of segregation.

Already in 1916, Durban had seen a number of Native Location By-Laws being enforced against black South Africans who were deemed to 'live in unauthorized places and against the proprietors who allow them to live there'.¹⁹⁴ The 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act barred Africans from buying landed properties in urban areas outside demarcated reserves.¹⁹⁵ This act ultimately brought about total residential segregation for Durban's African population who were now residentially limited to the confines of isolated townships. By the time the 1950 Group Areas Act was passed, Durban's African population was largely already subject to the residential segregation the act made provision for.

Durban's industrial growth resulted in an influx of migrant African workers from rural areas. African workers were initially meant to be housed by the municipality, but in 1936, only 8 900 of 63 547 African workers lived in municipal accommodation.¹⁹⁶ In 1948, after the construction of Chesterville (and significant population growth), 23 800 African workers resided in municipal housing, 40 000 lived in private compounds or domestic worker's quarters, and 45 000 lived in vast, multi-racial shack settlements, such as Cato Manor.¹⁹⁷ Although such shack areas were characterised by poor material conditions with 'almost non-existent sanitation, health and water facilities', the lack of services allowed for a range of autonomous economic activities.¹⁹⁸ A host of independent service and goods providers emerged, while the sale of illicit liquor once again dominated this informal economy.

Tight knit communities formed amongst people living in such close quarters with one another. There was an emergence of cooperative movements, such as buying clubs, small-scale loan clubs and wholesale operations, with members making profits as middlemen.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, unions formed and political organisation began to take place. Between 1937 and 1950, 75 strikes took place, mainly over wage demands under the pressure of wartime inflation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 14

¹⁹⁴Kuper, Watts & Davies, *Durban*, pp. 30-31; & Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 9

¹⁹⁵Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 9

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 18

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 18

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 20

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 21



Figure 3: A man plays guitar outside a Cato Manor shebeen. From Ulwazi, "Cato Manor History", at http://www.ulwazi.org/index.php5?title=Cato_Manor_History

Post World War II African activism was led by smaller, localised grassroots organisations, rather than larger bodies like the ICU. Grassroots organisations such as Sydney Myeza's Natal African Tenants and Peasants Association were used as a means to unite shackdweller communities.²⁰¹ These small-scale initiatives also provided an alternative to better known, national organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and Communist Party, which were relatively weak and inactive in Durban (in 1949 the ANC only had 140 members in Durban, although it has been claimed that membership was as low 46 individuals).²⁰² Organisations were fractured along class and racial lines as 'the proletariat developed increasingly critical and resentful attitudes towards the African elite'.²⁰³ Grassroots initiatives also tended to be driven by a new African socio-political consciousness which rallied against pathologically racist ideas of Africans as inherently dirty, diseased and immoral. These emerging radical liberation ideologies opened up a space where new urban identities could be negotiated through music and fashion.

Indian activism was going through a seemingly tumultuous phase during this time. During the 1930s and 1940s the Indian workforce was split into a number of factions. The NIC had historically been a relatively conservative organisation using politics only to further the interests of Natal's Indian population. Africans and whites were excluded from their campaigns, unless beneficial to their own interests.²⁰⁴ However, between 1939 and 1945

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 21

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21

²⁰⁴ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 50

radicals challenged this leadership. Indian radicalism was characterised by a more inclusive, militant approach with links to the Communist Party, drawing influence from nationalist movements in India.

The newly radicalised NIC and ANC initiated a permanent dialogue with one another with the 1947 Joint Declaration of Cooperation.²⁰⁵ There were NIC / ANC joint press releases and claims of solidarity to one another.²⁰⁶ These NIC radicals sought to oust the elite merchant class leadership that had historically dominated South African Indian politics. Regardless of this radicalisation of the NIC, there remained significant conservatism amongst many Indian workers who wanted to remain racially exclusive when engaging in political struggles. This conservatism came to dominate Indian politics during the 1950s.²⁰⁷

In the 1940s, Durban's white community agitated against the "Asiatic danger" of "Indian penetration" in "white" communities. In response, Durban city council's Post-War Development Committee recommended a racial zoning of the city, the planning of which prefigured the group areas map of Durban.²⁰⁸ Legislation such as the Pegging Act, passed in 1942-43, was part of a sustained attempt by Durban's white population to segregate the city along racially exclusive lines. Purportedly a temporary measure to operate for three years, the Pegging Act laid down that no Indian could buy or occupy a house outside designated "Indian areas" which had been owned or occupied by a European without obtaining a permit from the Minister of the Interior.²⁰⁹

Prior to the 1940s, Natal had relatively few formal restrictive measures imposed on the Indian population compared to Africans. The 1896 Parliamentary Disenfranchisement Act abolished the parliamentary vote of Indians, but no legislation was passed denying Indians the right to purchase land except in demarcated areas until the Pegging Act. The stipulations of the Pegging Act became permanent legislation in 1946 when the Asiatic Land Tenure Act was passed. The 1946 Act prevented any "Asiatic" from acquiring ownership or residential occupation of land from any "Non-Asiatic", but did not deprive Indians from the right to

²⁰⁵ Southworth, "Strangling", pp. 5-6

²⁰⁶ Southworth, "Strangling", pp. 5-6

²⁰⁷ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 50-51; & Southworth, "Strangling", pp. 7

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22

²⁰⁹ Kuper, Watts & Davies, *Durban*, pp. 58

retain fixed property they had already acquired.²¹⁰ Four years later the Group Areas Act revoked this right from Durban's Indian population.

The Indian community is frequently understood as being an intermediary stratum between African and white residents in Durban. The assertion is deeply problematic. A comparison of wages reveals that in 1934/35 the average wage for an Indian worker was £63, for an African worker £43, and for a white worker £201.²¹¹ Inasmuch as there was indeed a difference in wages between Indian and African workers, this difference is almost extraneous when compared to the average wage of a white Durban employee.

Similarly, during the 1930s it was discovered that almost 75% of the Indian population lived below the Poverty Datum Line, while there are well documented instances of frequent and significant nutrition deficiency amongst Durban's Indian population.²¹² Salaries of £2 a month were commonplace in the 1930s, and there were horrendous industrial conditions for Indian workers with tuberculosis, dysentery and malnutrition being significant problems even in the 1940s.²¹³ Toilets and shelter were still not provided for Indian municipal workers as late as 1945.²¹⁴ There was also significant overcrowding in both the Magazine Barracks and the Railway Workers Barracks, both of which were notoriously unsanitary, while in the 1940s, the over 1 000 residents of the railway barracks shared only two bathrooms.²¹⁵

During the late 1930s and early 1940s a number of strikes were effectively undermined by African scab labour, often resulting in Indian workers being fired and replaced by African workers.²¹⁶ By the late 1940s, attempts at non-racial mobilisation were failing dismally, and there was growing animosity between workers of different races. Competition for work was pushing racial tension towards breaking point. Even the passive resistance struggle of 1946-48 against segregation, theoretically a non-racial movement, was hardly committed to by Indian workers.²¹⁷ At the same time, as already mentioned, African interaction with Indians was often one in which Indians were seen to be exploiting the African population, as rentiers and shop owners, exacerbating existing tensions.

Such tensions culminated in the January 1949 race riot:

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 29

²¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 42

²¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 40-43

²¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 42

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 42

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43

²¹⁶ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 54-55

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 61

Beginning with a trivial assault on a young African employee by an Indian shopkeeper in the centre of town, continuing over a phase of almost good-natured [sic] looting exclusively aimed at Indian property, the violence escalated over a horrible weekend into an anti-Indian pogrom on the part of Africans in residential areas. As a result, 87 Africans, 50 Indians, one white and four ‘unidentified’ people died. One factory, 58 stores and 247 dwellings were destroyed; two factories, 652 stores and 1 285 dwellings were damaged. Indian workers were assaulted on the job and Indian-owned factories were attacked. State authorities were very slow to act, and when they did act they caused many of the deaths of Africans recorded.²¹⁸

The 1949 riot remains a tender and taboo topic in contemporary Durban’s public sphere. It has become largely mythologised over time, although its implications were as immense as it was real. The ‘anti-Indian pogrom’ Freund speaks of essentially acted as a witch hunt for Indians in Cato Manor where Indian residents were driven out and rendered homeless. Any prospects of non-racial, unified resistance against apartheid in Durban were shattered, while Indian residential and business presence in predominantly African areas was eradicated. Gone were Durban’s multiracial residential areas. The riot was used by government to promote the “benefits” of separate development and advanced arguments for segregation.



Figure 4: At the height of the race riot on Pine Street. © Bettmann/CORBIS at <http://www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/U892504ACME/race-riot-in-durban>

In the 1950s most Indian workers joined the moderate South African Trade Union Council (SATUC) rather than the more radical and militant ANC affiliated South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).²¹⁹ This created a distinct racial divide in Durban’s workforce

²¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 57

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 58

unionisation and resulted in the Durban Health Department replacing all African workers with ‘more efficient’ Indians.²²⁰

Even the 1950s Group Areas Act did not unify Durban’s African and Indian populations politically. Some 80% of Durban’s Indian population were to be relocated, and yet there was surprisingly little Indian mobilisation against this. The only Indian mobilisation in opposition to the act that appears to have taken place was a protest at Curries Fountain in 1958, attended by the not insignificant number of 10 000 Indians.²²¹

Freund claims that perhaps for the poorer stratum of the Indian community the Group Areas Act was in some ways beneficial. For example, there were those Indian communities which existed beyond the city-limits and had no easy access to the city prior to the act. Similarly, for impoverished or destitute communities, the 1950 Act meant that they would at least be provided with shelter and basic services.²²² Arguably, the Group Areas Act was simply formalising what was already a reality for many members of Durban’s Indian community. Durban’s Indian population had been, since their arrival, subject to white discrimination and racial violence. In the 1940s there were numerous incidences of violence against Indians (including police brutality), while a 1947 vote for white Durban residents to approve Indian representation on the city council resulted in a 90% vote against the motion.²²³ On top of this, the 1949 race riots became a convincing argument used to promote segregation as the key to peaceful race-relations.

Wealthier Indians and the NIC were deeply opposed to the Group Areas Act. The Indian upper-class usually lived in areas with better services and conditions, and many of their households were longstanding homesteads which had been built up over decades.²²⁴ As such, Indian opinion over the Group Areas Act was hugely divided.

There is very little evidence of explicitly coloured mobilisation against the 1950 Act. This may be due to a number of factors, such as the general lack of literature relating to Durban’s coloured community. Close ties held between some members of the coloured and Indian communities, as well as coloured and African people in Durban could mean that coloureds have been omitted from histories which are now understood as being “owned” by a particular

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 58

²²¹ Maylam, “Introduction”, pp. 23

²²² Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 66

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70

²²⁴ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 72; & Southworth, “Strangling”, pp. 10-11

race. What matters here is that the Group Areas Act stripped the coloured community of their previously uninhibited right to own and occupy property where they pleased, except in areas specifically reserved for the occupation of whites alone.²²⁵ Previously, Durban's coloured community had taken up residence wherever they pleased.

Indian and coloured group areas were demarcated as buffer zones between African and white areas. Chatsworth, between the African Umlazi and a number of white areas is a good example of this pattern.²²⁶ Due to the fact that many "Indian" group areas were built to service industrial areas, they were located close to the expanding industrial zones which meant that unemployment actually dropped in Indian communities after being moved to the new locations. However, it cannot be overstated that material conditions in these areas were appalling, and that for the initial years, basic amenities in all new areas were lacking.²²⁷



Figure 5: Police violently suppress a crowd protesting the Group Areas Act in Cato Manor, 1960.
Accessed at Cato Manor Tourism: <http://www.mantramedia.us/sites/cmt/history.htm>

Nationally, the 1950s saw political action in the form of the Defiance Campaign. Amongst Durban's African community, there was significant resistance to forced removals, especially in Cato Manor. In June 1959 African women in Cato Manor attacked and destroyed municipal beerhalls in protest of forced removals.²²⁸ Other protests and widespread rioting also took place, culminating in a mass beerhall boycott which led to conflict in January 1960

²²⁵ Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 31

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 74

²²⁸ Maylam, "Introduction", pp. 23-24

and resulted in a number of deaths.²²⁹ 1960 also saw a march from Cato Manor to central Durban's gaol, and although the majority of participants were blocked by police, over a thousand individuals reached the final destination where they demanded the release of ANC detainees, after which there was a general strike in the city.²³⁰ The strike was effectively stamped out by police, and marked the beginning of a thirteen year break in political activity until the 1973 Durban strikes.²³¹ Nationally, 1960 was a dark year for South Africa. It brought with it the Sharpeville Massacre, the banning of the ANC, PAC and South African Communist Party (SACP), and an end to political action until the 1970s.

From the 1950s, most of Durban's Indian population began to find work in manufacturing, and increasingly, especially from the 1960s, found jobs as skilled labourers. The Indian population had relatively high literacy rates due to access to education.²³² The number of coloured and Indian workers in the clothing industry rose from 67% of the workforce in 1936, to 83% in 1955.²³³ In the 1960s the public imagining of the typical Indian worker shifted from an "uncivilised" threat to white capital, to descriptions such as: 'suited to work demanding initiative and quick thinking'; 'facility for skilled manipulative work and clerical employment'; and 'lacks physical strength of the Bantu [sic]'.²³⁴

During this time there emerged a form of moderate trade-unionism amongst Indian workers, such as the Durban Indian Municipal Employees' Union (DIMES). These unions would engage in struggles for workplace improvements, 'but did not shake the overall economic order on which municipal services rested' (for example, they advocated the replacement of African workers with self-proclaimed 'more efficient' Indians).²³⁵

The 1960s saw a positive change in South Africa for the Indian community. Prior to the 1960s, the NP had never viewed Indians as "real" South African citizens, and had sought to exclude and repatriate them.²³⁶ In the 1960s there was a drastic shift where Indians came to be considered permanent South Africans, resulting in a significant increase in government funding for Indian education, housing and services.²³⁷ Indian labour was rechannelled into

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24

²³² Freund, *Insiders*, pp. 46-47

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 79

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 79

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84

economic activities. 1964 saw the formation of the South African Indian Council, giving Indian communities a limited form of power over affairs relating to their communities.²³⁸

Such opportunities, it must be stressed, were not provided for either coloureds or Africans in Durban. The previously crime-riddled streets of Chatsworth which came to be characterised by tight-knit communities with good living conditions was not typical at all of African or coloured areas during the late-1960s and 1970s.²³⁹

The 1950 Group Areas Act eventually resulted in the forced removal of around 80 000 Indians from long-standing and established communities between 1958 and 1963, and 120 000 Africans from Cato Manor under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act.²⁴⁰ Thousands more were systematically removed from other shack settlements, central hostels and former townships, making way for new white residential areas and industrial expansion.²⁴¹ The destruction of such spaces had immense implications on Durban's cultural forms. Nationally, the Group Areas Act and its subsequent removals destroyed national meccas of vibrant, urban cosmopolitan culture; spaces such as Sophiatown, District Six and, in Durban, Cato Manor. In these spaces, local music, fashion and political cultures were melded with, and used to manipulate international and imported cultural forms such as jazz. The loss of Sophiatown is famously mourned in the songs *Bye Bye Sophiatown* by the Sun Valley Sisters, *Sophiatown Is Gone* by Miriam Makeba, and Strike Vilakazi's *Meadowlands* which was popularised by Nancy Jacobs. Additionally, the 1960s saw what Schumann terms 'the jazz exile', which hushed the musical community as Abdullah Ibrahim, Jonas Gwangwa, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, and many more left South Africa.²⁴² The forced removals of the 1950s and 1960s destroyed families, homes and various irreplaceable cultural artefacts. Such were the implications of the act which, according to Maylam, merely 'formalised much of the segregationist thinking and practice that had deep roots in Durban's history.'²⁴³

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85

²³⁹ See Rankin, "A Pilot Study"; & Maylam & Edwards, *The People's City*

²⁴⁰ Maylam, "Introduction, pp. 22-23

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23

²⁴² Schumann, "The Beat", pp. 25

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22



Figure 6: A child playing guitar in Cato Manor, 1959. Taken from South African History Online at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/police-open-fire-disperse-rioting-crowd-cato-manor-durban>

4. Durban's Coloured Community

Neither Here nor There: The Construction of Colouredness

While the coloured population may not have been subject to formal segregationist measures residentially or in the workplace, this paper has already illustrated that the coloured community of Durban was subject to day-to-day racism and victimisation. Rankin claims that the privileges supposedly enjoyed by coloureds 'were technical rather than actual', while by 1960 the NP 'merely codified what was already a social reality.'²⁴⁴

A key issue is that there is only a handful of literature that so much as refers to Durban's coloured community. When writing his thesis in 1982, Rankin claimed that there existed only two historical texts relating to Natal's coloured population.²⁴⁵ Additionally, these texts sought 'to legitimate this group of people as a new 'race'' to fit in with Apartheid's "Race Ideology", founded on the principle that racial groups are defined by distinctive physical features.²⁴⁶ With such limited literature relating to Durban's coloured community, as well as the fact that historically they were not categorised as a specific racial group, it is incredibly difficult to establish a clear and coherent history of the community.

Apartheid's racial system of categorisation remains to this day the normative lexicon employed by South Africans to understand and describe racial identities. These racial categories were concretised and given legislative meaning in the 1950 Population Registration Act which required the racial classification of every South African citizen according to four "distinct" categories: African, white, Asiatic or coloured. The categories defined in this act have become "common sense" and ahistorical, undisputed acknowledgements of ancestral difference.²⁴⁷ Since 1950, South Africans have understood themselves as racial subjects.

²⁴⁴ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 1-8

²⁴⁵ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 3 – The texts to which Rankin is referring to are D. Kent Brown, 1980. *The Coloured People of Natal*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, Pietermaritzburg; and E. Lamour & Engelbrecht, 1973. "A Historical Sketch of Coloureds in Natal", *Alpha*, 11, 2, pp. 3, pp. 25-31

²⁴⁶ Rankin, "A Pilot Study", pp. 3

²⁴⁷ See D. Goldberg, 1993. *Racist Culture*, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Inc.; & D. Posel, 2001. "What's in a name? Racial Categorisations Under Apartheid and their Afterlife." *Transformation*, 47, pp. 59-82

Racial categorisation is the reduction of large groups of different people into essentialised caricatures based on a few salient characteristics. Thus, disparate subjects are identified and understood as a single category premised upon these allegedly essential characteristics. It is asserted, and eventually believed that these characteristics are shared by those individuals placed within the confines of a specific racial category. This essentialism of racial categorisation facilitates the emergence of racially stereotyped identities.

The implications of the 1950 Population Registration Act were immense. Whatever racial category was forced onto you determined every aspect of your life, be it social, political or economic. For example, your home; what public facilities (such as schools, hospitals and toilets) you could access; where you could spend your leisure time; your opportunities in the workplace; and even who you could have sexual relations with were all dictated by the racial category you came to fall under. No aspect of life was untouched by the implications of racial categorisation.

Posel has written extensively on racial categorisation in South Africa.²⁴⁸ Her explanation of how race was constructed and classified under apartheid through loose notions of “common sense” is worth quoting at length:

The version of race and racial reasoning attached to apartheid as a mode of rule has not been the subject of much analytic scrutiny. In most instances it is simply assumed that the variant of racism produced by apartheid was spawned by biologically determinist notions of race, rooted in theories of scientific racism. Most popular understandings of apartheid depict it as the quintessential science of race. This misconception has been challenged by others who have argued that in the climate of strong international censure of biological racism produced in the aftermath of Nazism, apartheid ideologues cultivated a strategic ambiguity with respect to race. Strong inclinations towards scientific racism were masked with a veneer of culturalist thinking, to give respectability to otherwise more pernicious ways of representing racial difference. But this position does not fully capture the articulation of biology and culture that marked the formulation and enactment of race under apartheid. Leading architects of the apartheid system of racial classification eschewed a science of race, explicitly recognising race as a construct with cultural, social and economic dimensions. Race, in their view, was a judgement about ‘social standing’, made on the strength of prevailing social conventions about difference.²⁴⁹

Here we can see how the apartheid government’s application of existing social understandings of racial difference was central to its success in codifying and thereby immortalising racial categories. The 1950 Population Registration Act instilled an

²⁴⁸ See for example: Posel, “What’s in a name?”, pp. 59-82; & D. Posel, 2001. “Race as common sense: racial classification in twentieth-century South Africa.” *African Studies Review*, 44, 2, pp. 87-114.

²⁴⁹ Posel, “What’s In”, pp. 58-59

understanding in the South African public imagination that racial categorisation was specific and immovable.

Indeed, conceptions of racial difference had existed since colonialism. However, prior to the 1950 act, there was some room for mobility within racial categorisation. Posel claims that ‘The 1936 Natives Representation Act allowed that well-educated ‘natives’ who had achieved an appropriate station in life could petition for racial ‘promotion’ to ‘Coloured’.’²⁵⁰ After 1950, your race became fixed.

Posel has also claimed that the language of the Population Registration Act contributed to an understanding in South Africa of racial categorisation as “common sense”. In particular, the vague wording of official legislation and criteria for racial classification contributed to this “common sense” understanding. The Act itself reads as follows:

A white person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a Coloured person.
A native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa.²⁵¹

The looseness of the terminology and emphasis on how classification is hinged upon social perceptions of that person (eg: “is generally accepted as...”), gives ‘full juridical authority to the weight of social prejudice – or ‘common sense’.’²⁵² Through these means, the apartheid state could claim that they were merely enforcing a “natural” order which already existed in South Africa’s public sphere.

In reality, the individual classifiers deployed by the government were at liberty to use their own personal criteria to determine race (the “pencil test”, whereby a pencil would be placed in a participant’s hair to determine what race they were, is probably the most notoriously remembered of these methods). However, there was scope for individuals to be racially classified according to the community of which they were a part, rather than their ancestry, due to the “general acceptance” criterion stipulated in the act.²⁵³

Legislative racial classification made an individual’s race permanent, fixed and immovable. Maré argues that this instillation of race thinking creates “us” and “them” boundaries, as

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 60

²⁵¹Republic of South Africa, 1950. *Population Registration Act (no. 30)*, quoted in Posel, “What’s In”, pp. 62

²⁵²Posel, “What’s In”, pp. 63

²⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 66

social identities becoming increasingly based on race.²⁵⁴ Social identity, according to Maré, refers to the way in which individuals and groups distinguish themselves and in relation to other groups and individuals with significance attached to “established” similarities and differences.²⁵⁵ Racial categorisation and its inherent instillation of race thinking “establishes” an imagined, though concretised, point of similarity and difference, creating race based group boundaries. Maré claims that once legislatively solidified racial categories come to be adopted as the public mode of understanding social identities, it is impossible for the society in which race thinking predominates to ‘perceive of a world that does not start with the existence of races.’²⁵⁶ Race thinking blinds us to other ways of understanding or structuring social relations, excluding and suppressing alternatives. South Africa, since the 1950 Population Registration Act, to this day, remains a society dominated by race thinking.

In these ways, the illogicity of the 1950 act and its vague, “common sense” definitions came to not only determine how the state categorised its inhabitants, but how South African people understood themselves. Through apartheid’s legal structures, these imagined identities came to be reproduced as “fact”. However, the starkly heterogeneous nature of the appearance, religion, culture and origin of those people classified as coloured would surely have exposed the illogical essentialism of racial categorisation. Instead, colouredness came to be constructed as another accepted racial identity. On the problematic nature of understanding colouredness as a homogenous identity or social group, Farred claims:

...no other South African community has had to remake itself so frequently, under so many different conditions; no “natural” constituency has had to deal with a difference that is at once recognizable, and difficult to articulate, a difference that is simultaneously salient and ignored, silent yet valuable.²⁵⁷

Indeed, colouredness is the very definition of everything that is wrong with racial categorisation: they are neither fixed nor permanent. The coloured community problematises notions of racial binaries based on ‘The fiction of racial purity, the “undilutedness” of blackness and whiteness’.²⁵⁸ Colouredness negates this fictional purity, forever occupying a placeless liminality between black and white. Lewis has claimed that historically in South Africa, ‘the coloured as debased in-between or... perceived product of transgression of a

²⁵⁴G. Maré, 2001 “Race Counts In Contemporary South Africa: ‘an Illusion of Ordinarity’”, *Transformation*, 47, pp. 77

²⁵⁵Maré, “Race Counts”, pp. 77

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 79

²⁵⁷G. Farred, 2000. *The Midfielder’s Moment: Coloured Literature and Culture in Contemporary South Africa*, Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 24

²⁵⁸Farred, *The Midfielder’s Moment*, pp. 2

sacrosanct boundary, has connotated lack, deficiency, moral and cultural degeneration'.²⁵⁹ Farred's book is entitled *The Midfielder's Moment*, emphasising this occupancy of a racial middle-ground, usually between black and white, 'tenuously linked to both but with a firm grip on neither'.²⁶⁰

Farred argues that in a society founded on race thinking, 'Hybridity is a sign of difference, of racial, cultural and ideological impurity; a marker of alienation'.²⁶¹ Indeed, being coloured meant to exist as the very thing the 1927 Immorality Act, the amended 1957 Immorality Act, and the 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act sought to prevent. You were the product of miscegenation: one of the apartheid government's deepest fears, and one of the most enduring social stigmas in South African society.

The historical origin of coloured people in South Africa is all too often forgotten. The beginning of "racial hybridity" in South Africa is understood to be the product of a violent sexual encounter between the coloniser and the colonised; the oppressor and the oppressed. This is the derivation of what Farred calls 'a severed and truncated past', in which 'Violence becomes... that aspect of hybrid life that is all too frequently "forgotten" – banished from public memory – because it evokes a disturbing recognition.'²⁶² This recognition is of a "distorted" white self, or a "refigured" black self. Unable to ever retain an imagined racial "purity", and forever alienated by those whose race you have "tainted". On this subject, coloured poet, Arthur Nortje's poem about his own racial hybridity, entitled *Dogsboddy Half-Breed*, asserts that it is not that coloureds "belong" in a racial middle, but it is that they do not belong anywhere else.

In attempting to construct a history of colouredness in South Africa, the inconsistencies are glaring. During apartheid there existed no set of defining common signifiers to unite coloured people, other than the fact that they were not African, white or Indian. As such, there is no single "coloured politics" or culture. Again, within these spheres, coloured South Africans are Farred's midfielders.

Politically, coloureds played a somewhat problematic role in South Africa. In 1924 Hertzog promised that the NP would unite coloureds and whites as "civilised" people against the

²⁵⁹D. Lewis, 2001. "Writing Hybrid Selves", in Z. Erasmus (ed.) *Coloured By History, Shaped By Place*, Cape Town: Kwela Books, pp. 133

²⁶⁰Farred, *The Midfielder's Moment*, pp. 6

²⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 7

²⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 4

“native”.²⁶³ As such, there were many coloured NP supporters. On the other hand, there were also many coloured participants in the 1950 Defiance Campaign, the school boycotts of the 1970s-80s, and in the insurrections of the 1980s.²⁶⁴

Culturally, unlike the existence of an ‘autochthonous black culture’ or an imported white European culture, ‘coloureds had to forge a set of cultural practices out of disparate racial experiences’.²⁶⁵ This was largely due to the disparate nature of South Africa’s coloured community, as well as its diversity. Coloured South Africans are descendents of East Asian slaves, indigenous African communities, European colonisers, Mauritian and Malay migrants, with ancestry of varying combinations. It is virtually impossible to draw on locational, linguistic or racially exclusive cultural practices for someone who is racially hybrid in a society dominated by race thinking.

With this in mind, above all else, colouredness is an ‘uneven experience’, deeply complex, inconsistent and contested in terms of lived experience. This is the core problematic of colouredness as a social identity – it is constantly being redefined and contested by external scrutiny and intracommunal tensions. There is no set of obvious signifiers to culturally unite coloured South Africans as a single identity. Colouredness and its various accompanying identities are always constructed (although it can be argued that this is the case for all races). As Farred claims, it is ‘an artifact produced from, and in the face of racist hostility, indifference and ignorance’.²⁶⁶

The Forgotten People: Durban’s Coloured Community

As previously stated, the lack of literature relating to Durban’s coloured community is a significant hurdle this paper will have to clear. Rankin’s 1982 thesis, although written a after the years this paper will be focusing on, can provide a number of insights into what everyday life for Durban’s coloured community has been like historically.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 5

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 5

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 6

²⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 6

Indeed, the findings of the 1976 Theron Commission – an inquiry on the high rates of crime, violence, alcohol and drug addiction and psychological disorders which characterised Durban’s coloured group areas – are immensely revealing. Residents of coloured group areas ‘lived in a state of constant poverty and were characterised by a high degree of deviant behaviour, lack of power, lack of planning for the future, lack of participation in community organisation and poor, unstable family life’.²⁶⁷ This was compounded by a general ‘lack of finance, of power and of a feeling of social usefulness, [which] heightened the depression, and the limited milieu caused tension, frustration, estrangement and even fatalism.’²⁶⁸ Additionally, the material conditions of Durban’s coloured group areas were considered inadequate. In 1971 it was identified that there were only six service organisations for the over 15 000 residents of Austerville in the Wentworth district, while the Social Work Department deemed 66% of all coloured houses overcrowded in 1972.²⁶⁹

This inescapably bleak image of life in the coloured group areas certainly dispels any misgivings that Durban’s coloured community were recipients of racial privilege. Rankin claims that due to the legislative limitations placed upon coloured South Africans, such as lack of education and prospects for skilled labour, it became impossible for the community to attain goals of social and economic respect that South African society idealised.²⁷⁰ This resulted in immense frustration due to the inherent inability to aspire towards long-term goals. Frustration is then articulated through random and sporadic acts of violence, excessive alcohol and drug abuse and a prevalence of gangs –a mode of existence characterised by living ‘from moment to moment, in apparently random fashion,’ participating in whatever may give ‘the most intense sensation of being alive.’²⁷¹

While such conditions were arguably commonplace in African and Indian group areas, Durban’s coloured community were also subject to a form of cultural deprivation. Here Ranking advances the argument that Durban’s coloured community found itself in a cultural state of in-between.²⁷² Stuck in a quagmire of negative racial classification as “*non-white*”, and *neither* African, *nor* Indian, Rankin claims that some members of the community aspired to white South African or European culture, while others strove to form stronger relations

²⁶⁷ Rankin, “A Pilot Study”, pp. 8-9

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9, 17 & 18

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 16

with the African or Indian communities.²⁷³ While the coloured community of the Cape managed to construct a relatively grounded identity, Durban Coloureds had no fixed identity. This lack of a tangible, established, singular race based culture, compounded with an imposed state of cultural and racial subordination, regardless of an individual's mental or economic capabilities, either tended to manifest, according to Rankin, as a feeling of hopelessness and inferiority, or anger and frustration.²⁷⁴ It would appear that life in Durban as a member of the coloured community was largely characterised by economic, political, cultural and social insecurity and deprivation, and a distinct feeling of hopelessness, purposelessness and frustration.

However, there are indeed exceptions to this austere image painted by Rankin. A number of areas in Durban managed to remain relatively racially diverse. Indeed, the renowned Warwick Avenue Triangle (WAT) managed to evade clearance under the 1934 Slums Act, and remained an island of racial diversity in Durban's city centre for the duration of apartheid.²⁷⁵ The Slums Act was used extensively between 1937 and the early 1940s to expropriate Indian and coloured owned property in Durban under the pretence of areas posing a threat to public health. In 1961 the Durban City Council declared the WAT an unzoned area without any rigid racial classification. As such, the WAT remained predominantly Indian and coloured until the 1970s, when Indian and coloured residents began to receive notices of eviction.²⁷⁶ However, post-1976 political reforms into the 1980s brought the emergence of the tricameral parliament and opportunities for residents to mobilise and resist relocation. In 1987, the *Daily News* described life in the WAT in an article entitled "Casbah: Mixed and Happy":

While some streets are dominated by Indian families, some by whites and others by coloureds, a lot of them mix freely socially. There are also some streets which are integrated, home to families of various racial groups. In one block of flats whites, coloured, Indian and black families live next door to each other. There has been no friction among them and their children mix freely.²⁷⁷

As such, the WAT was declared a "grey area", and the state's response to these "grey areas" (as a number had also become apparent in other cities) was to introduce the Free Settlement Areas Act of 1989. The act stipulated that certain areas (presumably selected relatively

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18

²⁷⁵ B. Maharaj, 1999. "The Integrated Community Apartheid Could Not Destroy: The Warwick Avenue Triangle in Durban", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25, 2, pp. 249-266

²⁷⁶ Maharaj, "The Integrated", pp. 252-256

²⁷⁷ "Casbah: Mixed and Happy", *Daily News*, 13 May 1987, quoted in Maharaj, "The Integrated", pp. 259

arbitrarily) would be open to all areas, while Group Areas ‘would be more rigidly implemented in others.’²⁷⁸ It is truly incredible that in 1987, after more than thirty years of Group Areas implementation in Durban, there were some 160 Indian, 100 coloured, 80 white and ten African families all living together in the WAT.²⁷⁹ The Warwick Avenue Triangle presents us with an example of how the seemingly all powerful arm of apartheid could not, in fact, segregate every corner of its constituency.

Similarly, spaces such as Greyville and Sydenham remained managed to remain relatively racially diverse. Along Sparks Road in particular, where Sydenham, the Berea and Sherwood met, people tended to socialise freely across all races. However, it must be asserted that areas like Sydenham and Greyville were not subject to the poverty and destitution which characterised other coloured group areas. Areas such as Wentworth and Newlands East were deeply poverty stricken and consisted almost solely of state-subsidised homes. A significant portion of housing in Wentworth was categorised as sub-sub-economic housing; two-roomed, flat-roofed houses ‘notoriously known as the “Rainbow Chicken Houses”, which house[d] the so-called ‘unhousables’.’²⁸⁰

Sydenham on the other hand largely consisted of privately owned and built homes, and middle class, stable families. When the Durban City Council announced its plans to build municipal housing in Sydenham, residents actively sought to prevent such developments.²⁸¹ Municipal housing had come to be associated with crime, gangs, violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, and housing became the basis of classist splits within Durban’s coloured communities. Thus, one could safely make the argument that class held greater weight in determining social identities (and hierarchies inherent in this) than race in areas such as the WAT and Sydenham.

Sydenham is vital to this research as it was where the core members of *The Flames*, the Fataar brothers, came from. Originally from Greyville, the Fataar’s moved to Sydenham, where the future members of *The Flames* would spend their teenage years. As such, the members grew up in a relatively racially diverse social environment. Perhaps this limited the extent to which the members were affected by the notions of fixed racial identities and their

²⁷⁸Maharaj, “The Integrated”, pp. 260

²⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 260

²⁸⁰Rankin, “A Pilot Study”, pp. 45

²⁸¹D.A. Fowler, 1982. *The Residential Environment of Sparks Estate as Cognized by Members of the Community*, Thesis: University of Natal, pp. 4

inherent hierarchies the 1950 Population Registration Act sought to instil in the public imagination.

5. A History of *The Flames*

Introduction

The available information on the band, *The Flames*, is extremely limited, and exists almost exclusively in fragments on various websites of a musical orientation.²⁸² What information there is on these websites is largely unfounded fawning (*Fresh Music* describes *The Flames* as ‘The most famous South African group of all time’),²⁸³ while there is a void of information relating to the band members’ social backgrounds, and seemingly nothing written by the members themselves. Additionally to this, most available online biographies of the band are inconsistent with one another and frequently downright inaccurate, with Craig Harris of *All Music* referring to *The Flames* as ‘one of South Africa’s best white bands of the 1960s.’²⁸⁴

Due to the limited, inconsistent and inaccurate nature of the available information on *The Flames*, currently only fragments of the band’s history can be gleaned. The aim of this chapter is thus to firstly provide the first historically accurate and coherent written account of the band, *The Flames*. The history of *The Flames* provided in this paper will focus only on their time in South Africa until 1968, when they left the country and moved to Britain and then the USA where they were signed to Carl Wilson’s (of The Beach Boys) record label, Brother Records. Secondly, this chapter will seek to use the history of *The Flames*, as well as their context in place and time (Durban during the 1960s), as the means through which to examine and assess existing theories around the relationship between music politics and society discussed in section one of this thesis.

Source material for this chapter is primarily drawn from the author’s interviews with Steve Fataar and Rafs Mayet, newspaper articles and adverts, as well as the websites where there does feature some information on the band. Both the newspaper articles and websites will be

²⁸² The only websites which appear to provide any information on *The Flames* are: Fresh Music, <http://freshmusic.co.za/retrofresh.htm>; South Africa’s Rock Legends, <http://www.rock.co.za/files/flames.html>; All Music, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/steve-fataar-mn0001209963>; Soul Safari, entry dated 26/08/2010 <http://soulsafari.wordpress.com/2010/08/26/the-flames-soulfire-south-africas-soul-super-group-the-beach-boys-psych-soulbeat/>; The Rising Storm, <http://therisingstorm.net/the-flames-the-flame/>; and *The Flames*’ Facebook page’s “about” section, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/THE-FLAMES/176559827462?id=176559827462&sk=info>.

²⁸³ Fresh Music, <http://freshmusic.co.za/retrofresh.htm>

²⁸⁴ C. Harris, “Steve Fataar: Artist Biography”, at All Music, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/steve-fataar-mn0001209963>

drawn upon in a highly critical manner, while all the information has been cross-checked by Steve Fataar, correcting or confirming claims made by the various publications.

However, in reading the account, one should not forget that memories are constantly being reconstructed and revised. Steve himself acknowledges that he does not remember everything from this period of his life, some five decades ago, and that there may be minor discrepancies in his version of events. However, as stated in chapter one of this thesis, this does not devalue the validity of oral sources, which should always be subject to the same rigorous academic scrutiny as any other source.

The band, for the duration of its existence, consisted of the core members (and brothers), Steve Fataar on guitar and vocals, Ricky Fataar on drums and vocals, and Edries “Brother” Fataar on bass and vocals. They were sixteen, eight and fourteen years of age respectively when they started. In 1960 when the band was formed, it consisted of the three brothers and soon afterwards Eugene Champion was added on guitar and lead vocals. From 1964 to 1967, Edries Fredericks replaced Eugene Champion as the band’s lead vocalist and additional guitarist, and appeared on the band’s first album, *Ummm! Ummm! Oh Yeah!!!* (1965). In 1966-1967, Edries Fredericks was briefly replaced by Baby Duval, who featured on their second album, *That’s Enough* (1967), who was then replaced by Blondie Chaplin until the group’s split in 1972. Terrence William “Blondie” Chaplin sang lead vocals and played guitar on their three subsequent full-length releases, *Burning Soul!* (1967), *Soulfire!!* (1968) and *See The Light* (1970) (frequently referred to simply as “The Flame”). It is worth noting that even this basic information on the band’s line up and record releases is inconsistent across websites relating to the band, many of which are riddled with inaccuracies. The one written in this paper was provided by Steve Fataar himself.²⁸⁵

A Place of Disadvantage: Upbringing and Early Years

The day after I met Steve Fataar for the first time, we went for a drive around Durban running all his errands while we chatted together in my car. As he got into my car he showed me a video on his mobile phone of a black mamba (a highly venomous and deadly South African

²⁸⁵S. Fataar, (Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, 17 April 2015)

snake) which had been removed from the ceiling of his house. While we were watching the video he exclaimed: ‘Look at it! It’s massive! Look at how fuckin’ pissed off it is! I don’t blame it. [Chuckles] The poor bastard’s being forcibly removed.’²⁸⁶ ‘Was your family subject to forced removals in the 1960s’, I ask. ‘We were’, he answers.²⁸⁷ And so began Steve’s account of the history of his band, *The Flames*.

The Fataar’s originally came from Greyville, close to Durban’s city centre. There they lived in a block of flats, while the family lived in a small two-bedroom apartment. Most of their neighbours were Coloured, but Steve insists that there were also Indian residents, and that the atmosphere of the community was very close-knit. ‘Everybody lived so close to each other that it was impossible for you not to be involved with your neighbours and the rest of the people living around you.’²⁸⁸

In their youth, the Fataar brothers would ride their bicycles with all the other the other children in their area, and as children became fascinated with music when they first saw what Steve Fataar refers to as

“niggerbands”... You know, like at the “Coon Carnival” in Cape Town [sic]. Guys who’d blacken their faces with boot polish and play the banjo and sing sort of funny upbeat songs that were great for kids. They’d dance around and play and sing for hours. I know that sort of shit is considered racist these days, but back then it was the norm, and, you know, we thought nothing of it. We just liked the music and thought it was funny. It made us want to play music!

While the above passage illuminates just how normalised racism and public acts of deeply racialised humour were in apartheid South Africa, it also illustrates that music was central to the upbringing of children growing up in the neglected quarters of apartheid’s Coloured and Indian areas. It also makes the deeply racialised nature of music in South Africa painfully obvious. Even street music was raced in apartheid South Africa. While radio stations were catering for specific racial and ethnic groups, and record companies were producing the National Party’s desired representations of race and ethnicity in South Africa,²⁸⁹ even public musical performances were deeply racialised and reproduced apartheid’s desired racial stereotypes (in this instance, the childlike African performing the role of a simpleton to be publically humiliated and laughed at). It is compelling how such a profoundly racist public

²⁸⁶S. Fataar, (Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, 18 April 2015)

²⁸⁷Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ See the discussion around the work presented in Olwage’s “Apartheid’s Musical Signs” in section one of this thesis.

display could go by virtually unnoticed and be considered normal in the eyes of the audience. Here we see just how powerful music was as a means through which to normalise apartheid's social order of racial hierarchies.

While still living in Greyville, the Fataar boys got their first instruments from neighbours and members of their community. Steve Fataar was the first of the boys to start figure out how to play an instrument, and began playing with a guitar at the age of fifteen in 1959. He quickly got his brothers to join him and soon Brother was playing bass and Ricky was banging on whatever percussion instruments he could find at the tender age of seven. 'People would gather around at the windows of our flat and crowds of them would stare in at us as we practiced in those early days. It felt great.'²⁹⁰

However, in 1960 the Fataar's were forced to move out of their home in Greyville and were taken to the rapidly growing Coloured area of Sydenham. Steve Fataar however claims that the boys were too young to understand what was going on. 'We thought we were just moving house. We were moving from a tiny flat in the city to a new house, which seemed really big to us, with a garden. So as kids we thought that was great. Our parents never told us what was actually going on.'²⁹¹ Similarly, when asked if the loss of the Greyville community affected the Fataar's, Steve claims that many members of their previous community also moved to Sydenham, where there emerged a new, expanded community of which they were a part.

It was here in Sydenham that *The Flames* really started to learn their instruments and become a much tighter band. At high school there were adults who taught the children how to play musical instruments, while generally there was a strong culture of making music in Sydenham community. Steve claims that

There was always music being played somewhere in the area. The community hall had live music every weekend and sometimes during the week. Also, people used to play music at the clinic and the library. The sports clubs also always had music events. I remember lying in my bed at night and hearing music drifting through the air. Guys who could play guitar sat on street corners and practiced. How we learnt to sing harmonies so well was by singing with those street musicians.²⁹²

Indeed, their singing and harmonies are what most people loved about *The Flames* and frequently what they are remembered for when brought up in conversation. But we can also identify here just how valuable and important music was to the community of Sydenham. It

²⁹⁰Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

²⁹¹*Ibid.*

²⁹²*Ibid.*

was performed in virtually every public space, and functioned as something for the community to rally around and bring everyone closer together.

Rafs Mayet has similar sentiments about music when reminiscing about his upbringing. Rafs came from the Warwick Avenue Triangle (WAT) in the city centre of Durban and lived ‘right at the markets.’²⁹³ As already mentioned in the paper, WAT was a multiracial space classified as a “grey area”. Rafs claims to have had multiracial friends, but also emphasises that there existed notable racial tensions between the white members of the community and everyone else. ‘The white women would swear at us out the windows of their flats and we would swear back at them. We’d get into fights with white kids, but nothing ever escalated to anything really serious.’²⁹⁴

When asked about the atmosphere of the WAT community, Rafs emphasised the importance of community halls and clubs, but most importantly, the church. He claims that the church was the most central social site, and that even Muslim and Hindu children (Rafs himself was raised in a Muslim family) would go to the Christian church to socialise. At the church there was a range of activities and clubs for local youths to engage in. ‘There was scouts, music clubs, sports clubs, youth clubs, religious clubs and lots of bands. There were always variety shows being put on and there were always lots of bands playing. You know, it was cool to play guitar or drums or pennywhistle, those sorts of things.’²⁹⁵

Similarly to Steve, Rafs claims there was also lots of street music; ‘mainly guitar-driven lang-arm [a South African style of music to dance to, meaning “long arm”] bands. But also, the back stairs of flats was also a social spot which produced lots of great musicians... including the likes of Blondie Chaplin and some other great Durban musos [slang term for musicians].’²⁹⁶ As a side note, Rafs adds, ‘Lots of people lost their virginity on those stairs.’²⁹⁷ A seemingly irrelevant addition to the tale, but it is this point that allows us to identify that South Africa was undergoing a similar youth revolution during the 1960s to what was happening in the USA and Britain.²⁹⁸ This calls attention to the fact that popular groups in South Africa, such as *The Flames* need to be understood within a global context, as well as a local context to be made sense of.

²⁹³R. Mayet, (Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, 15 April 2015)

²⁹⁴Mayet (Durban, 15 April 2015)

²⁹⁵*Ibid.*

²⁹⁶*Ibid.*

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*

²⁹⁸See chapter two of this thesis.

What is striking about both Rafs and Steve's accounts of music in their communities is just how central music was to keeping the community together. As mentioned in the previous section of this thesis it has always been known that musical performance was closely linked to political organisation in South Africa, especially in grassroots community organisation. Looking at the accounts that both Steve Fataar and Rafs Mayet provide, it would appear that music acted almost as the binding agent to hold communities together and provided a platform for people to meet with each other, for ideas to be shared and to simply have a good time together and strengthen social ties. If anything, these accounts indicate that there exists significant scope for a detailed study dedicated to the role that music played in Durban's (and probably South Africa more broadly) communities, and its role in the political organisation and mobilisation of these communities.

While both Rafs and Steve stress the importance of music in their communities as a means to create a space to bring the community together, one cannot help but feel resonance with Frith's assertion that the values of social groups are not expressed through cultural activities, but rather, values are determined and negotiated through *engaging in* cultural processes or activities and that 'music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.'²⁹⁹ Rafs claims that music also has a 'transportation factor', in that 'music can take you away.'³⁰⁰ In a world with no television Rafs claims that it was hard to escape the realities of being part of a Coloured community surrounded by a seemingly much larger white community which made it clear they did not want you there. Here he says that one had to create one's own entertainment to distract oneself as a child. Ultimately, Rafs claims that all the community had to stay united was sports and music. Both Rafs and Steve agree that music was the binding agent that kept the communities of their childhoods together, lending themselves as a powerful confirmation to Frith's claim that 'musical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement.'³⁰¹

Coming from a coloured community, *The Flames* were not raised on a musical repertoire of any form of "traditional" songs which spoke of their own heritage or culture.³⁰² Rather, the music they listened to and played was a variety of what they heard on the white radio stations, and what was played in the community (on the streets, in clinics, community halls,

²⁹⁹Frith, "Music and Identity", pp. 111

³⁰⁰Mayet (Durban, 15 April 2015)

³⁰¹Frith, "Music and Identity", pp. 114

³⁰² See the earlier discussion on Coloured identity in South Africa earlier in this paper for more information.

at sports events, etc). This proved to be a mix of European and North American popular music that was played on the Springbok Radio (the “white” South African radio station), various forms of Indian music, and music that was unique to South Africa, such as vastrap, kwela and boeremusiek. Both Rafs and Steve emphasise the importance of record stores while growing up. ‘They were places you could hang out at with your friends and listen to new and sometimes even illegal music from around the world.’³⁰³ One such popular record store was Mahomedy’s, which was a “secret” record bar run out of the back of an Indian family’s shop.

Durban proved to be a prime location for discovering music, as much of the music that had not yet become popular in South Africa, or was banned and was largely unavailable to the public, could be acquired through dockworkers.

A lot of guys worked on the ships and brought music from all around the world. There were lots of records from Europe and Britain, and also a lot from Japan. Friends who worked on ships would also bring American fashion to Durban. From the sixties, you heard a lot of soul and other African-American music in Durban. People would hear it in record bars or from friends who worked at the docks. People identified with it.³⁰⁴

This passage is particularly relevant to the work of Carol Muller, who investigates the importance of American or European songs being listened to by South African audiences and covered by South African performers, highlighting the importance of music’s global nature through theories of what she terms ‘musical surrogacy’.³⁰⁵ Essentially, Muller emphasises how universal commonalities can be identified and shared through music, resulting in instances such as the one described by Mayet, where Coloured, Indian and Black South Africans identify with African-American music. Both parties were under similar forms of racial subjugation, while there were certain affinities between the civil rights movement in the USA, and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Examples such as this illustrate that historical and cultural studies need to move beyond the geopolitical borders which the production and consumption of culture defies, and embrace a globalised lens for understanding and examining social and cultural histories.

³⁰³ Mayet (Durban, 15 April 2015)

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ C.A. Muller, 2008, “Musical Echoes: Composing a Past in/for South African Jazz”, in G. Olwage (ed.) *Composing Apartheid: Music For and Against Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 137-153

Becoming a Band, Building an Audience and Evading Apartheid

When asked how *The Flames* became so popular in South Africa, Steve Fataar immediately responds:

We really worked at it. We'd get out of bed and play. We were a full time band. That's why the three of us went through so many frontmen. They just couldn't keep up or they lacked the commitment.³⁰⁶

Additionally, Steve claims that the support of their entire community was behind them, and that they were seen as cultural ambassadors of Sydenham. All of the local newspapers and magazines such as *Drum* supported the band and wrote about them regularly, and as a result they constantly had shows to play. No opportunities to perform were ever turned down. Through constantly gigging, and with the zealous support of their community, *The Flames* quickly began to amass a following amongst Durban's Indian and Coloured communities where they played on the streets, at parties, in community halls, at churches, sports events and even in clinics. Steve adds that the youthfulness of the band was also probably an attraction, or at least some kind of novelty, for certain audience members. When they started playing gigs around Durban Steve was the oldest member, at the age of sixteen, while Ricky was the youngest, at the tender age of eight.

Very quickly they began to tour the rest of South Africa outside of Durban. Touring proved to be an unexpected obstacle for the band. As Rafs says, 'playing to white audiences was hard. It was actively discouraged.'³⁰⁷ It was common for promoters to cancel shows for multiracial bands, while frequently such bands would not be paid, or would be left out on the street after performing. Similarly, often when it was discovered that they weren't white, they would lose bookings and be left stranded in the parts of the country where they had no support and nowhere to sleep. As a result, the early tours of *The Flames* largely consisted of them playing in African, Indian and Coloured townships' community halls, churches and clinics, as well as mining compounds.

During this time in the early 1960s, the "British Invasion", led by The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, took place internationally as British bands rocketed to global fame and success. Very quickly, the repertoire of *The Flames* came to include covers of these

³⁰⁶Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

³⁰⁷Mayet (Durban, 15 April 2015)

contemporary pop songs, and as a result began to appeal to South Africa's white audiences who were familiar with such music. *The Flames* became South Africa's answer to these British bands. In a time when such bands never came to South Africa to tour, *The Flames* really were the only South African band that was clearly influenced by, and part of the developing global youth culture that South African teenagers could go and see perform live.

However, playing to white audiences remained incredibly difficult for *The Flames*. Both Steve Fataar and Rafs Mayet agree that the primary concern of venue owners and officials was that of miscegenation; the fear of racial mixing and of white youths becoming sexually corrupted by the Coloured, Indian or African "other". As Steve says, 'Those white men didn't want us having sex with their daughters. Actually they didn't even want us holding hands with them.'³⁰⁸

To refer back to Farred's work discussed in the previous chapter regarding Coloured identity, in a society founded on race thinking, 'Hybridity is a sign of difference, of racial, cultural and ideological impurity; a marker of alienation'.³⁰⁹ No doubt the fact that the members of *The Flames* were of racially mixed descent meant that they represented exactly what it was white promoters feared: miscegenation and an imagined racial "impurity". Indeed, it was this fear of a fabricated racial impurity which had led to a legislative structure to prohibit "racial mixing": the 1927 Immorality Act, the amended 1957 Immorality Act, and the 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

In a globalised context, such concerns, as this paper has illustrated, are nothing new. As previously mentioned in this paper, Brent Ostendorf deftly articulates the nature of these historically common concerns:

...apocalyptic metaphors of decline are by now familiar stuff in the history of jazz and popular music: Orientalism, intoxication, pollution and blatant sensuality at the gates of Western culture whose door keepers react by strengthening its cultural defences with a strong dose of racism. They articulate a latent fear of instability and libidinal freedom that White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant cultural custodians associated with the threatening Other...³¹⁰

In South Africa, the response was virtually identical when Kwela music started to attract white fans. The outcry of the white, conservative South African public over teenagers of different racial groups 'jiving disgustingly' together was a common concern in Johannesburg

³⁰⁸Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

³⁰⁹Farred, *The Midfielder's Moment*, pp. 6

³¹⁰Ostendorf, "Subversive Reeducation?" pp. 56

in the 1950s.³¹¹ Similarly, both the case of 1950s kwela music, and of *The Flames*, represented the emergence of a youth culture which entailed a reimagining of personal and political liberation and freedom through music on a global scale.³¹² However, the sexual, political and social freedom that this movement stood for was deeply incompatible with the very essence of what apartheid was, and most of what the movement stood for went directly against South African legislation. Free love, drug use, and political liberation for all people regardless of ethnicity were all very much so illegal during apartheid, while white South Africa, with its conservative values, shuddered at the possibility of something as seemingly inconsequential as white youths disobeying their parents and teachers. These global tides of cultural production and consumption and what popular culture was coming to symbolise globally became a threat to the apartheid government their political and social “stability”. As such, *The Flames*, as representatives of this global culture came to symbolise a perceived threat to the overarching socio-political status quo of racial hierarchies, Christendom and conservatism.

While *The Flames* were undeniably part of a global youth movement which articulated itself primarily through the performance of music, it is worth noting that the band members never considered themselves to be political.

We didn’t consider ourselves disadvantaged. We were playing to thousands of people eight days a week and we were the best fucking band around at the time. We didn’t even know what was going on with politics, honestly...Until we were followed by the cops. Also sometimes when we couldn’t play or our shows were cancelled.³¹³

Although Steve denies any overt politicisation of the band, it is obvious from the above quote that music was a means for them to escape an alternative existence in which they *did* feel like they were disadvantaged, and ultimately, this meant finding a way out of an unjust socio-political system. However, here again it is useful to understand the politics surrounding *The Flames* as part of what Allen refers to as ‘the politics of pleasure’, who illustrates how a seemingly apolitical act can become deeply politicised given its context.³¹⁴ As already discussed in this paper, pleasure becomes political when it defies the status quo; white South Africans being able to appreciate and identify with the music of *The Flames*, a multiracial band, was directly contradictory to the apartheid logic of separation and racial

³¹¹ Allen, “Kwela’s White Audiences”, pp. 79

³¹² See Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*

³¹³ S. Fataar, Personal communication over the telephone, 21 February 2015

³¹⁴ Allen, “Kwela’s White Audiences”, pp. 80

incompatibility, and therefore undermined such logic, making it seem ‘not only unjust, but also unrealistic’.³¹⁵ Similarly, the band was associated with the broader, global youth revolution of the 1960s which advocated free love, equality and individual freedom / liberation. As such, anyone who was a fan of the band came to be associated with these ideological orientations which were deemed contradictory to the National Party’s envisioned social order for the South African public.

Simply due to the context in which *The Flames* emerged – apartheid South Africa during the 1960s – they were a deeply politicised band. The fact that they were not white, but were attracting a white audience, and were playing a style of music which was symbolic of a global youth rebellion against authority, meant that they were inescapably politicised.

Rafs Mayet argues that artists during apartheid couldn’t escape becoming political simply due to the context.

You were surrounded by injustice, and bands like *The Flames* were directly subject to those injustices. You couldn’t deny what was happening around you or happening to you. You know... When you and your friends are constantly being harassed and bullied by the police and club owners how can you pretend that isn’t going on?

Steve Fataar provides an interesting alternative perspective on this topic. He argues that for *The Flames* all the political associations and the “ground-level” problems they experienced due to their race simply spurred them on to become better musicians.

It became a way out, you know. We never thought of it that way at the time, but when I think back to it now I reckon that subconsciously we knew that it was the only way we would be able to make a better life for ourselves. We loved it. We loved the music so much and playing live to those audiences was the best feeling in the universe. I think that we all wanted to keep doing it forever, and in a way I suppose we all have... Even though we were just kids I think we knew that it was our ticket out of here.

Steve however denied that this was the reason they ever got into music in the first place. But understandably, the opportunity to escape a world in which you are placed at a distinct and irrational disadvantage simply due to your race is one not to be missed. Their success in music was what facilitated their escape from a potentially terrible and certainly unfair and oppressive existence. As Steve says, with a knowing glint in his eye, ‘it could have been a lot worse.’³¹⁶

³¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 83

³¹⁶Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

Finding a Sound and Making Music: a History of *The Flames*' Albums

In 1963 the first single by *The Flames* was released. The song revealed the band's earliest influences, as side A was a cover of the traditional "blackface" Minstrel song, "Dixie". Historically, the song was adopted as something of an anthem by the Southern Confederacy during the American Civil War, and has since been associated with the deep south of the USA. The B-side of the single, on the other hand, was a cover of The Bel-Airs' song "Mr. Moto", which was at the time a contemporary song, prototypical of what would become Californian surf-rock. However, the repertoire of *The Flames* shifted dramatically in the space of a few short years, coming to include much more of an African-American influence as genres like soul and rhythm and blues blossomed into popularity in Durban's music scene.



Figure 7: *The Flames*, circa 1965 with Edries Fredericks as frontman. L-R Ricky Fataar, Steve Fataar, Edries Fredericks, Brother Fataar. Note how young Ricky Fataar is. Picture taken from Steve Fataar's collection.

In 1965 the first album by *The Flames* was released, entitled *Ummm! Ummm! Oh Yeah!!!* and primarily featured cover songs. The covers were mainly British and American pop songs such as The Beatles' song "Eight Days a Week", but also included covers of songs by African American artists, such as Chuck Berry's "Talkin' 'bout You". At this early stage of their career it is clear that the songs the band chose to cover were selected with the intention to garner a youthful, urban audience which appealed to white consumers. Steve Fataar claims this was not their explicit intention, and rather asserts that they simply were playing the music

that they were personally fans of. In this we can see evidence of Farred and Rankin's claims that Durban's coloured community lacked any uniquely "Coloured" culture, meaning that members of the community sought to adopt the cultural practices and products normally associated with other racial groups.³¹⁷ This could explain the members of *The Flames*' appreciation of European and African-American musical forms, rather than trying to establish uniquely "Coloured" sound in their music. Additionally, one could also pose the possibility that *The Flames* had selected these songs specifically to attract white fans and thereby secure a more reliable source of wealthy consumers than could be found in any of South Africa's other racially-based communities. In this way the band could have been manipulating the tides of popular music and consumer preferences to serve their own interests.

Worthy of mention is the fact that 1965 was also the year in which Senator De Klerk announced that the government would introduce a bill banning racially mixed audiences completely. And that the government would 'enforce its policy by all the means at its disposal.'³¹⁸ As a result, the Musicians' Union of Britain placed a total ban on performing in South Africa. In later years this same Musicians' Union would arrange for *The Flames*' to acquire work permits during their time in England. Durban's popular music scene at this time was also a largely segregated affair, with racially exclusive music competitions such as The South African European Band Contest.³¹⁹

On *The Flames*' second full-length album however, their musical taste had very obviously moved towards an African-American soul music sound. The second album, entitled *That's Enough*, was released in 1967 and primarily featured covers of songs by African American soul artists, such as "Purple Raindrops" by Stevie Wonder, "My Girl" which was an old African-American traditional song, popularised by the African-American soul group, The Temptations, and most strikingly, a rendition of an old American folk standard, "Stagger Lee". "Stagger Lee" tells the true story of an African-American pimp from Missouri in the late nineteenth century. In the song the story unfolds about how Stagger Lee was gambling with his friend Billy, and after a dispute, shot Billy dead, even though he knew Billy had a wife and children to look after. The story and the song have both become standards in the canon of African-American folklore. In 1959 the song was popularised by a soulful rendition

³¹⁷Farred, *The Midfielder's Moment* & Rankin, "A Pilot Study"

³¹⁸ Senator De Klerk, 1965, *The Natal Mercury*, No 30, 751, January 27, pp. 1

³¹⁹*The Natal Mercury*, No 30, 751, January 27, pp. 11

sung by African-American, Lloyd Price, whose version was the one upon which *The Flames*' cover was based.

What is intriguing about *That's Enough* is how soulful it is, and just how deep its roots stretch into the canon of African-American folklore, history and musical style. Here again can one apply Muller's concept of 'musical surrogacy' as a useful framework to understand just how and why *The Flames* moved towards this new musical direction.³²⁰ Perhaps the band members sought to align themselves to a particular cultural sound. As already stated, due to the cultural vacuum that existed in Durban's Coloured communities during this time, the band may very well have sought to find cultural affinities with other musical forms such as British and African-American pop music. From their second album however, their sound shifts very distinctly to African-American soul music specifically. What is interesting here is that many African-American artists were at the same time subject to restrictions similar to those experienced by *The Flames*, due to their race. Additionally, it would appear that *The Flames* sought to become a popular band, but were hindered due to their ethnicity, much the same as the artists they tended to cover. Perhaps these commonalities were identified by the band, while covering the songs of African-American bands demonstrated a trans-Atlantic form of musical solidarity.

Of course, as interviews with Rafs Mayet revealed, soul and African-American musical styles had become popular in Durban amongst African, Coloured and Indian youths, due to dockworkers being able to attain such records. So perhaps *The Flames* were simply catering to the tastes of the public they performed for, while simultaneously introducing their white audience to new styles of music. However, perhaps the broader popularity of African-American soul music amongst Durban's Indian and Coloured youths can be understood as a form of trans-Atlantic solidarity, or simply the ability to relate to the racially determined plights that many soul songs focused on lyrically.

1967 also saw the release of *The Flames*' third album, *Burning Soul!* The album brought with it a continuation of the group's soul sound, with covers of "Knock On Wood" by Eddie Floyd (the song was also covered by both Otis Redding and Carla Thomas in the same year, while it has since been covered by some ten or more artists, including David Bowie and Eric Clapton), the Isaac Hayes penned classic "When Something Is wrong With My Baby", and what is now a rock 'n roll classic, "Purple Haze" by The Jimi Hendrix Experience. While the

³²⁰ See Muller, "Musical Echoes"

album adhered to the recording of, almost exclusively, African-American artists' songs, this was also the first release by *The Flames* that did not include any images of the band members, or any of their names.

This is an important observation, because it was with this release that *The Flames* started to really build up a significant white fan base. To return to the argument of Michael Drewett, the album covers were under increasingly intensifying scrutiny by state officials to ensure that they were 'not undesirable' in accordance with the ideology of apartheid.³²¹ Publically displayed images and names of musicians who were not white, but who were appealing to white consumers, were most certainly considered undesirable by the apartheid government. As previously stated, white audiences appreciating music made by people of different racial groups was seen as a threat by the National Party as listeners and performers are 'drawn into emotional alliance with one another',³²² thereby exposing concepts of racial hierarchies and segregation as not only unjust, but also unrealistic.

This being the case, we can understand the lack of any images or names of the band members on *The Flames*' records in two ways. Firstly, it can be argued that the band adhered to the National Party's regulations on record covers, and thereby normalised and perpetuated the apartheid logic of separate development and segregation. By removing their race from the covers of their records, they became a band void of racial identity. This would allow for white consumers to buy their records, ignorant of the fact that they were listening to music performed by people who were Coloured, and therefore the listener would be unaware of his or her emphatic relationship with musicians of different races to their own. As such, the logic of apartheid would never be brought into question by the listener, which may have been the case, were the listener aware of the race of the musicians.

Secondly, it could be argued that *The Flames* removed any trace of their ethnicity from their releases so as to appeal to more conservative sectors of the public. In this case, the act could be understood as a way for the band to manipulate the irrational logic of apartheid and of the conservative white public so as to sell more records (which, after all, was in their best interests). If this were the case, it could be understood that the band were in fact hoaxing the conservative white South African public into purchasing music performed by people of a different race, and were insistently understood to be fundamentally different and inferior due

³²¹ See Drewett, "Packaging Desires"

³²² Frith, "Music and Identity", pp. 121

to this fact. In this instance, *The Flames* could be applauded for their ability to manipulate the white conservative South African public so as to further their own interests; a significant accomplishment when considering the band's sociohistorical context.

The fourth and final South African release of *The Flames* was 1968's *Soulfire!!*. Again, *Soulfire!!* drew primarily on African-American soul influences, while their musicianship and harmonies improved substantially. Additionally, this album also did not feature their names or any images of the band. *Soulfire!!* launched the band to the fore of South African popular music. The album spawned the group's biggest ever single; a cover of The Impressions' (an African-American Soul / R&B group from Chicago) song, "For Your Precious Love". According to the website, *South Africa's Rock Legends* (and confirmed by Steve Fataar), the single reached the number one spot on Springbok Radio (the South African radio station aimed specifically at a white audience), where it remained for thirteen weeks, and became Springbok's eighteenth most popular song of 1968.³²³ Still to this day the song is played on South African radio. However, the song's popularity became a point of controversy once it was discovered that *The Flames* were in fact, not white:

The Flames were the first non-white [sic] group who entered and achieved success on the national charts. The single became a massive hit and soon moved into the coveted #1 position on the Springbok charts. The song's success resulted in *The Flames* being short listed as nominees for a SARI award, but the organisers soon realised that the venue for the gala event, the Wanderers Club, was a whites' only venue and decided not to proceed with an official nomination.³²⁴

Steve Fataar claims that the SARI awards came to be referred to as the "sorry" awards by the band members and their friends.³²⁵ It is worth noting that besides the above quote, the only other written reference to the racial composition of the band is on the group's Facebook page, where the band is simply referred to as being 'brown'.³²⁶ As already mentioned, there remain people today who believe that *The Flames'* band members were white. Despite the fact that the band did not receive the award which they had most certainly earned, they were now arguably the most popular South African band, and had a strict regimen of touring to attend to.

³²³ South Africa's Rock Legends, "Springbok Hits", http://www.rock.co.za/files/springbok_hits_1968.html & "SA Hits", http://www.rock.co.za/files/sahits_1968.html, & Soul Safari, entry dated 26/08/2010 <http://soulsafari.wordpress.com/2010/08/26/the-flames-soulfire-south-africas-soul-super-group-the-beach-boys-psych-soulbeat/>

³²⁴ South Africa's Rock Legends, "Springbok Hits", http://www.rock.co.za/files/springbok_hits_1968.html

³²⁵ Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

³²⁶ *THE FLAMES*, "about", <https://www.facebook.com/pages/THE-FLAMES/176559827462?id=176559827462&sk=info>

We had achieved almost everything we could have ever wanted to. In 1968 it was pretty common for us to be playing three gigs a day. We used to fill [Durban] City Hall three times a day on Friday and Saturday. It would be absolutely packed. Every time. We'd play a lunch time set for about two hours. Then an afternoon or evening cocktail set for another two hours. Then we'd play a full night time set for up to four hours sometimes! The crowd loved us, and at City Hall the crowd would always end up being mixed racially. It was impossible for them to police that.³²⁷

At this stage the band were most certainly at the height of their success in South Africa. However, here we must shift our attention from the band to the audience. The band members themselves were categorised as Coloured, and were playing to racially mixed audiences. As such, frequently at their concerts people of different racial categories would be socialising in the immediate vicinity of one another, if not even with one another, on a socially equal plane.

As already stated, Frith argues that fans of the same music who are engaging in a cultural process centred around that music, such as seeing a band perform live, are drawn into emotional alliance with one another due to the fact that 'musical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement.'³²⁸ Using this logic, one could argue that this point of commonality (being a fan of *The Flames* and watching them perform live) would facilitate, to paraphrase Lara Allen, the recognition of the self in "the other".³²⁹ This realisation of similarity regardless of race would in turn bring into question the premise upon which apartheid and "separate development" were founded: racial groups are fundamentally different from one another and are incompatible for coexistence. As such, one could argue that attending a performance by *The Flames*, with a multiracial audience would have certainly shifted some people's personal opinions and ideologies surrounding the issue of racial segregation, or at the very least would have brought the concept of apartheid and segregation into question.

Rafs Mayet agrees with this sentiment:

I think that some white people had just never even thought about it [the irrationality and unjust nature of apartheid]. I know some people who only started thinking about it when they found out their favourite bands or singers were black. So yes, I definitely think that music, at the very least, has the power to get people to start thinking about things differently. But you know, the apartheid government did an excellent job of hiding the injustices from white people. Also, lots of white people who knew about it pretended like it wasn't happening and didn't tell their kids or wives or whatever. I think bands like *The Flames* and other previously disadvantaged musicians really got

³²⁷ Fataar (Durban, 18 April 2015)

³²⁸ Frith, "Music and Identity", pp. 114

³²⁹ Allen, "Kwela's White Audiences", pp. 81

white kids thinking about race in South Africa. And when you started opening your eyes to what was going on with race back then it was like going down the rabbit hole! Once you knew about it, it became so obvious.³³⁰

Indeed, central to the National Party's project of apartheid was the necessity to keep the injustices hidden from the white voting population and the rest of the world. In such a deeply controlled society where the media only produced pro-apartheid nationalist propaganda, and racial groups were severed from any meaningful contact with one another, there was seemingly no way for people to understand, or even see the injustices that were going on around them. In this, *The Flames*, as well as other bands who managed to accrue a multiracial fan-base could have been hugely influential in simply making apparent the fact that racial segregation was both illogical and unjust.

Venues such City Hall, and most universities as well as a few "underground" clubs allowed for *The Flames* to play in front of mixed audiences. With the regularity of their shows, and the band's popularity born in mind, *The Flames* may have actually had a not insignificant impact on the ideology of South Africa's white youth. Steve claims that the band grew accustomed to playing in front of mixed audiences and became lax about adhering to apartheid laws. He says that his parents were terrified when, from around 1966, they started having white visitors and began bringing white girls home. He claims that his father tried to forbid it and says that

...their generation bought into that whole "races should be separate" bullshit. But we didn't care. As I said, we didn't feel disadvantaged. Our white fans loved us just as much as our Coloured fans, our Indian fans, our black fans or whoever. Race just stopped being important to us. Until there was a raid at the club or you wanted to jam with your white friend on stage and he would have to stand behind a curtain. Fuck it was stupid.

Here we see just how liberating being musicians was for the band. It would appear that it was the ultimate means through which to escape (to a certain extent) the irrationality of apartheid. What is intriguing here is also how one can observe the tenets of the broader, global youth rebellion of the 1960s in the band members disobeying their parents and bringing home white friends and girlfriends, thereby breaking the law.

However, it must be stressed that it cannot be stated as "clinical fact" that *The Flames* altered the ideology of their fans. Indeed, there are many people to this day who still think they are white (most likely due to the lack of names and images on their third and fourth albums). As

³³⁰Mayet (Durban, 15 April 2015)

mentioned earlier in the paper, writers such as Teer-Tomaselli have made valid arguments around the way in which audiences consume popular culture.³³¹ Teer-Tomaselli argues that the meaning audiences procure from popular culture have less to do with the intentions of the producers, ‘and depend more on social and cultural factors.’³³² She argues that very often audiences attach their own meanings to the cultural artefacts they consume. This framework would account for those white conservative individuals who became fans of *The Flames* without altering their racist views.

Unfortunately for the researcher there is no concrete way of determining just how much of an impact *The Flames* made on every individual who ever saw them perform live or was a fan of their records. However, the accounts of Steve Fataar and Rafs Mayet imply that fans of *The Flames* tended to be of a more liberal, free-thinking disposition. The fact that Steve Fataar and other members of *The Flames* had white friends and girlfriends who would hang out, and even live with them in Sydenham, a Coloured group area, indicates that these were fans that did not adhere to apartheid ideologies. Similarly, white supporters simply going out to watch *The Flames* perform with a mixed audience points to the fact that these people were not supporters of segregation. Surely then, the majority of the fans of *The Flames* were people who had been turned against the tenets of apartheid and segregation by attending concerts with people of all races, and being fans of musicians that they were supposed to be fundamentally different to.



Figure 8: *The Flames* in 1968 just before leaving South Africa. Taken from Steve Fataar's collection.

³³¹Teer-Tomaselli, "Shifting Spaces"

³³²*Ibid.*, pp. iv

The End of *The Flames*

The end of *The Flames*' career is probably the period which has been most extensively written about and covered by online music magazines. This is no doubt due to the sensationalism of them leaving the country and becoming friends with the ranks of rock 'n roll royalty such as The Beach Boys, The Rolling Stones and The Doors. Their international exploits will not be covered in this paper, but a brief account of what came to pass for *The Flames* will be provided.

In 1968, amidst the scandal of their near SARI award nomination, and as they grew increasingly aware of police surveillance, the band moved to England. After six months of being unable to work, the British Musicians' Union managed to secure work permits for the band and they immediately started gigging as frequently as possible. Eventually, Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys saw them performing, and persuaded the band to return with him to the USA.



Figure 9: *The Flames* performing live in England, 1968. Taken from Steve Fataar's collection.

In 1969, *The Flames* moved to California where they secured a record contract with the Beach Boys' "Brother" record label. There the band changed their name to The Flame – a decision which many websites claim was due to avoid confusion with James Brown's band, The Famous Flames. Steve Fataar however claims that this is 'utter bullshit', and says that they decided to change the name simply to "The Flame" to create a greater feeling of oneness and unity. Under the name The Flame, the band released their final album, *See The Light* (incidentally the only non-Beach Boys album to be released on the label, and frequently

referred to simply as *The Flame*). The album, however, was a commercial failure. A follow-up to *See The Light* was recorded, but never released, and remains in the archives of Brother Records. The band broke-up in 1972 when Steve Fataar returned to South Africa, Brother Fataar moved to the Netherlands, and Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar became full-time members of the Beach Boys. Both Chaplin and Ricky Fataar have had successful musical careers internationally. Steve Fataar claims that he

...was sick of the industry. For me it was always about the music and I just wanted to play music. In California it didn't work like that. You had to put up with all the bullshit of record labels and contracts and venues and I just got sick of it.



Figure 10: *The Flames* in California, 1970, with Carl Wilson of The Beach Boys. Picture taken from Steve Fataar's collection.

Today Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar still reside in the USA. Blondie Chaplin still tours as a solo artist, and occasionally collaborates with other musicians such as Brian Wilson and The Rolling Stones. Ricky Fataar has been the drummer for American country musician Bonnie Raitt since 1990. Brother Fataar died in 1978 at the age of thirty-two while living in the Netherlands. Steve Fataar lives in Durban where he regularly plays live solo shows and provides a platform for young up-and-coming Durban musicians.

Conclusion

The work presented in this thesis aims to have made a contribution to the study of music and its role in history and historiography, as well as the history of Durban. Additionally, the thesis has provided the first coherent and historically accurate account of the South African band, *The Flames* and what small part they may have played in Durban and South Africa's history.

Although *The Flames* were not an explicitly political band, the author argues that simply due to their context they became inextricably entwined with politics. By being a group of Coloured musicians performing music for multiracial audiences, their concerts became spaces in which individuals of different racial categories socialised on an equal plane, thereby undermining apartheid's logic of "racial incompatibility" – the very foundation of separate development and apartheid. Additionally to this, the research finds that music became a means through which the members of the band could escape the harsh social and economic realities of existence in South Africa as categorised as Coloured. As musicians they managed to attain a better quality of life than they would have experienced had they attempted to find wage labour in their historical context (Durban, under apartheid in the 1960s). Ultimately, music allowed for the band members to leave South Africa and make new lives for themselves elsewhere around the world.

Additionally, for their final two South African album releases, their names or images were not printed anywhere on the album covers or on the record itself. This can be interpreted in two ways, both of which have political implications for the band. Firstly, it can be construed that *The Flames* succumbed wilfully to the National Party's regulations on record covers, and thereby normalised and perpetuated the apartheid logic of separate development and segregation. By removing their race from the covers of their records, they became a band void of racial identity. On the other hand, it can be argued that *The Flames* were in fact manipulating white conservative consumers into buying their albums by hiding their race, thereby securing more possible sales and "tricking" conservative listeners into listening to music performed by the feared "other". In this sense, the band could have simply been manipulating white consumers for their own interests.

More broadly, this study has demonstrated how music was used to normalise apartheid ideology. In this, the study found music's capabilities of naturalising the principles and

psychology of segregation and concepts of racial hierarchy to be greater than initially anticipated. From formalised recordings of “ethnic” music to solidify public understandings of African’s as compartmentalised in distinct categories, all the way down to everyday street-performances by musicians with blackened faces which perpetuated and solidified public imaginings of Africans as child-like, simple and funny, music in South Africa has been inescapably racialised historically.

To remain within the South African context, music has been historically, and possibly still is, vital to formation, perpetuation and renegotiation of South African urban communities. Through interviews with research participants, the study found that music has historically been central to the South African urban community’s social and cultural processes, ranging from simply providing entertainment for a party, to solemnising funerals, and to mobilising people for a political ends. In all of these instances in the South African urban community during the 1960s, the researcher found music played an essential role. Historically it has been noted how in South Africa political action has been accompanied by singing and music, but this research has found that the importance of music extends far deeper than simply rallying crowds politically, and is essential to the basic functioning of communal life. The researcher asserts that there is significant scope in this field for further research to be undertaken.

Beyond the geopolitical confines of South Africa, this research found that through studies of music one can observe cross-cultural, trans-national and global commonalities and trends which are vital to understanding the South African historical experience. We can only truly understand our local history if it is read and understood alongside an international history. Relevant to this is Carol Muller’s concept of musical surrogacy, which accounts for trans-national public appreciation of the same music or the same songs, due to the capacity music holds to carry universal experiences which emphasise geographically distant commonalities. The researcher found that rhythm and blues and soul songs in which the plights experienced by African-American communities during the Civil Rights movement, and the African-American experience of racial subjugation more broadly, were dealt with lyrically, tended to become popular amongst the similarly racially suppressed South African population. The researcher found that soul music in particular was immensely popular amongst Durban’s Coloured community, while *The Flames*’ themselves ultimately ended up being a band which covered African-American songs.

To build on this theme, the researcher also found that through a study of music one can observe globally common responses to particular kinds of music and what these sounds represent socially and politically. In this paper it was uncovered how across the globe, since the early 1900s with the emergence of jazz in the USA, well into the 1970s, one of the most frequent focal points of public concern around particular kinds of music has been the fear of the exoticised “other” and a perceived libidinal excess associated with people of different races and the music they play. Whether it be 1920s America, 1940s Europe, or 1960s South Africa, the spectre of miscegenation has fuelled the most vehement of musical criticisms. The possibility of people of different racial ancestry enjoying music together and engaging in any kind of relations with one another (although relations between races appear to have always been deemed sexually predatory on the part of the exoticised “other” by white conservatives) appears to have driven the majority of mobilisation against particular kinds of music. In South Africa this has particular connotations for those people of racially mixed ancestry, where the self is understood to be a product of this miscegenation which society fears and despises so intensely.

The research has also found that music can meaningfully change individual opinions, although this is not to say that it can change anyone’s opinion on any topic. In the case of *The Flames’* live experience, the band frequently, at the height of their success in South Africa, played to multiracial audiences. The work of Frith states that fans of the same music who are engaging in a cultural process centred around that music, such as seeing a band perform live, are drawn into emotional alliance with one another due to the fact that ‘musical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement.’³³³ Using this logic, one could argue that this point of commonality (being a fan of *The Flames* and watching them perform live) would facilitate, to paraphrase Lara Allen, the recognition of the self in “the other”.³³⁴ This realisation of similarity regardless of race would in turn bring into question the premise upon which apartheid and “separate development” were founded: racial groups are fundamentally different from one another and are incompatible for coexistence. As such, one could argue that attending a performance by *The Flames*, with a multiracial audience would have shifted some people’s personal opinions and ideologies surrounding the issue of racial segregation,

³³³Frith, “Music and Identity”, pp. 114

³³⁴ Allen, “Kwela’s White Audiences”, pp. 81

or at the very least would have brought the concept of apartheid and segregation into question.

In such a deeply controlled society as apartheid South Africa, where the media only produced pro-apartheid nationalist propaganda, and racial groups were severed from any meaningful contact with one another, there was seemingly no way for young white teenagers to understand, or even see the injustices that were going on around them. Simply by making white fans aware of the fact that they could share musical tastes with people of different racial categories could have started to get them thinking about how illogical and deeply immoral segregation was. However, this is not to say that every fan that ever saw *The Flames* perform live with a multiracial audience would have had this experience. Indeed, the research also found that in many instances audience members construct their own meanings that which they consume.

The researcher hopes that this work has made a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature around music and its role throughout history in both the South Africa, and the global context, while opening up further questions for investigation in this field. Ultimately, the researcher hopes that this work has illustrated the importance of treating music as a legitimate object of study in the field of history, as well as a valid historiographical lens or tool.

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