Songs in the Dust:

Riel Music in the Northern and Western Cape Provinces, South Africa

by

Engela Britz (BRTENG001)

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Supervisor: Associate Professor Sylvia Bruinders

COMPULSORY DECALRATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate Date: 8 February 2019

To all the musicians, dancers, leaders and audiences who dedicate themselves to the celebration of the *riel*.

Abstract

The centuries-old southern African dance form called *rieldans* (reel dance), or simply *riel* (reel), is believed to have emerged from Khoe-San dances. It is characterised by its distinctive footwork, animal mimicry, and courtship displays. In the post-apartheid, post-colonial South African context, the *riel* has emerged as symbol of indigeneity through large-scale public performance of Khoe-San heritage. Despite colonial influences, it represents an historical link to the Khoe-San people for its performers who are, for the most part, persons of mixed descent who were classified as 'coloured' under colonialism and apartheid.

Due to a recent *riel* revival, which emerged from the alignment of Khoe-San and Afrikaans identity negotiations following democracy, the *riel* has attracted a fair amount of informal attention both locally and internationally over the last decade. However, it remains largely unexplored in performance scholarship. This study investigates *riel* music of the Northern and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa. The research is qualitative in nature with data collection through participant-observation, semi-structured interviews (including feedback interviews), archival and literature-based research, and organology. A brief history of the *riel* is presented through a synthesis of documentary evidence and oral history gleaned from fieldwork. This includes an investigation into the history of the *ramkie* – an instrument that is strongly associated with the *riel*. By drawing on emic interpretations of *riel* music in conjunction with Muller's and Impey's ideas about 'music as archive', this study explores how *riel* music is an oral/aural archive of indigenous knowledge, memory and experience.

Findings indicate that contemporary practice links the *riel* to pre-colonial Khoe-San practices from which it may have derived. An examination of the *ramkie's* history reveals that it emerged from material and cultural exchanges in the Indian Ocean that link southern Africa to a vast trade network in pre-colonial and colonial times. Moreover, the instrument provides a glimpse into gender issues that influence *riel* music making. Like the dance that it accompanies, *riel* music exhibits characteristics that are indicative of its Khoe-San influence. An analysis of the *liedjies* (songs) shows that they deal mostly with themes of romance, place, and death and suffering, and that the music is a powerful platform for the expression of interpersonal concerns that provide a glimpse into the lived experiences of working-class coloured communities in the rural Cape.

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A selection of multimedia examples associated with this dissertation can be accessed on the University of Cape Town's open data repository, *ZivaHub*. Each example is linked to a specific passage and has a digital object identifier, or DOI. Within the text of the dissertation, a DOI number in parentheses appears after the text to which it refers, for example, (DOI 4.1). Arranged by chapter, the list below includes the DOI number, a short description of the media, and the full DOI. It only includes multimedia recorded by me; links to external multimedia appear in the reference list.

A Note on Translation

The translation of songs and interviews and has been a difficult task due to the poetic and idiomatic nature of these passages. Unless stated otherwise, all the translations from Afrikaans included here are my own. All interviews were conducted in Afrikaans. I have included the original transcriptions of interviews in the Appendix for reference – songs and Afrikaans sources appear in the main text.

Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

> *It is a warm spring day in October 2018. Just under thirty rieldans groups and their supporters have travelled from all over the Western and Northern Cape Provinces to attend the semi-final of the annual ATKV Rieldans Competition in Clanwilliam. Groups are welcomed with a simple breakfast snack since most left home before sunrise. Friendly greetings and challenges are exchanged among teams and friends who have not seen each other in a long time. However, there is a palpable feeling of rivalry in the air; the teams that succeed today will move on to the prestigious final round of the competition, which takes place in December. Those that do not, will try again next year. The day kicks off with the* optog *(procession); groups rush to the minibuses chanting phrases like* "Hier kom 'n ding, hier kom 'n ding!" (*something is coming). The procession is led by a* bakkie *(pickup truck) with speakers strapped to its roof; the favourite* riel *tune, 'Klipbok' (Klipspringer), mingles with chanting and hooting as the procession weaves its way through the business district and into the historically 'coloured' area where most participants live. Residents stream from shops and their homes to see the procession and cheer them on. The emcee announces that "Tickets are only R20 for adults and R10 for kids! Come and attend the competition at the Augsburg sports grounds!" After a brief performance on a dusty square the groups return to the sports grounds and change into their outfits that resemble mid-twentieth century farm labourers' clothes.* "Riel is in ons siel, askoek!" *(riel is in our soul, askoek[1]). The day has begun.*

The *rieldans* (reel dance), or simply *riel* (reel), is a southern African dance form characterised by its distinctive footwork, animal mimicry and courtship displays. It is practiced by Afrikaans-speaking, working-class so-called coloured[2] communities in rural parts of the Northern and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa. According to oral history, it is descendent from Khoe and San dances performed after the hunt or harvest, thereby making it one of the oldest dance forms in the region. It is also said to have been performed among 'mixed-race' nomadic pastoralists called *trekboere* (migrant farmers) and by itinerant sheepshearers known as the *Karretjie* people (cart people). Until recently, the *riel* was predominantly performed by coloured people who worked as tenant labourers on farms in the rural Cape. After roughly the 1980s, it rapidly declined in popularity but attempts to revive it through an annual competition have proven immensely successful. Thus, at present, the main

[1] The term '*askoek*' (ash cake) refers to both a dish consumed at social gatherings in the past and a dance step that is regarded to be unique to the *riel* (see Chapter 2).

[2] In South Africa, the term 'coloured' is an imposed designation for people of mixed descent (Bruinders 2012, 1) which is discussed and problematised below.

performance context is an annual competition, which was established twelve years ago by the ATKV (*Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging/* Afrikaans Language and Culture Association). However, the *riel* has been documented since at least the mid-nineteenth century, albeit to a limited extent.

In dealing with the *riel*, nomenclature is a challenge. First, the term '*riel'* or '*rieldans'* is a corrective to the colonial term '*hotnotsriel*' (Hottentot's[3] reel) and reflects the way that most participants in this study refer to the dance. The term '*hotnotsriel'* appears to have emerged among early white settlers and was subsequently taken up as a self-referential term used by those who practiced the dance.[4] Second, there is an implicit understanding that the *riel* may have been known by another name in the Khoe-San languages before it became known as the '*hotnotsriel'* in Afrikaans. The ATKV website states that it is known as the |*khapara* in Nama (ATKV, n.d.) – a claim that has been widely reproduced in the media. However, some participants have expressed doubts about this, stating that the |*khapara* is a different dance altogether (or at least a regional variant). Most people agree that it is simply not known what the dance was called before it became known as the '*hotnotsriel'*. Naturally, this assumes that the dance existed before the term came into usage (late nineteenth century), which it did, as I will show in Chapter 2. It is interesting, perhaps significant, that the earliest written use of the term was in the first Afrikaans magazine, *Ons Klyntji* (Our Little One), which appeared between 1896 and 1906, at the time when Afrikaans began to be formalised as a language.[5] At present, '*rieldans'* and '*riel'* are common, but the latter is used more frequently. '*Riel'* is used in much the same way as the English term 'reel' in the sense that it refers to both a type of dance, and the accompanying tune. Throughout this dissertation, I use '*riel'* to refer to the practice in general, as well as to refer to specific tunes; I use '*rieldans*' only when I refer specifically to the dance.

[3] The term 'Hottentot' is now considered to be derogatory. It emerged during colonialism as a term used by white settlers to refer to the indigenous Khoekhoe (previously Khoikhoi) people. Whereas 'Hottentot' was used in an ethnic sense, 'hotnot' carries more derogatory undertones.

[4] There are still many people (white and coloured) who refer to the dance as *'hotnotsriel'*. Some have even voiced their reservation about referring to it as '*riel*' and '*rieldans*' because those terms are generic, thereby reducing the specificity of '*hotnotsriel*'. Others also regard it as an unattainable aspiration to whiteness implied in dismissive comments like *"Moenie vir jou wit hou nie, dis 'hotnotsriel'"* [Don't pretend you're white, it's '*hotnotsriel*'].

[5] From its inception, the magazine carried anti-imperialist sentiments and sought to standardise and formalise the creole Dutch that had hitherto been looked down on as 'Kitchen Dutch'. It aimed to shape Afrikaner identity and to foster a literary culture. Later, it resurfaced as an anti-apartheid protest zine which coincided with the Voëlvry movement under the editorship of the Afrikaans musician, Koos Kombuis (Klyntjie, n.d.).

An Early History of the Cape

The history of the Cape does not leap from an ancient past as represented by its rich archaeological heritage into the mid-seventeenth century when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope. However, the area has often been represented that way. By the time that the first Portuguese explorers anchored at the Cape in the late fifteenth century to establish a sea route between Europe and Asia, southern Africa had been involved in the thriving Indian Ocean trade network for more than three centuries (Chirikure 2014; Duarte 2012). Exchanges occurred at coastal and inland hubs in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, so it is not surprising that the San whom Vasco da Gama encountered near St Helena Bay, on the West Coast of South Africa, in 1497 are reported to have "already 'valued copper very highly' for personal adornment" since they had previously obtained some from their north-eastern neighbours (Northrup 1998, 192).

Following Dutch colonisation in 1652, tens of thousands of slaves from the East and Africa (mostly Mozambique, Madagascar, India and Indonesia) were brought to the Cape since the Dutch forbade the enslavement of the indigenous Khoekhoe people (Bruinders 2017, 3-4). Bruinders (2017, 4-5) points out that race relations were fluid from the mid-seventeenth to the mid- to late-nineteenth century and that "sexual liaisons between the Khoekhoe, the Europeans and the slaves produced a mixed, integrated society in which the tricultural groupings (African, Asian, and European) became inextricably interwoven." In the nineteenth century, it became common to refer to this Creole population as coloured.

Within the first fifty years of the Dutch colony at the Cape, a class of "livestock-farming, wandering free burghers" known as the *trekboers* emerged (Penn 2005, 10); there were both white and so-called Baster *trekboers* (Kramer 2012, 19-20). From the beginning of the eighteenth century, *trekboers* systematically migrated into the interior seeking land to graze their livestock and greater independence from the Dutch East India Company (Penn 2005, 42; Hall and De Prada-Samper 2016, 10-12), thereby irrevocably altering the environment and sociocultural landscape. This came at a time shortly after the 1713 smallpox epidemic and other diseases decimated the last remaining "cohesive Khoisan societies in the area" (Penn 2005, 42). They moved into the Karoo forming a mobile frontier that "lurched forward and retreated" continually from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century by

which time "the area was fully settled with no place for indigenous peoples, except as labourers" (Kramer 2012, 3). Hall and de Prada-Samper (2016, 12) point out:

> It was a place of free association, economic opportunity and cultural change. It was also a place of dispossession and displacement, of violence and murder inflicted on the |xam [...] The frontier was not only populated by Trekboers, but also by Basters – people with new identities of mixed colonial and Khoe descent. There were also others, such as the Korana and Griqua, who were armed and mounted traders and raiders. They too, like the Basters, tried to escape the oppression suffered within the established colonial boundaries […] In addition, the frontier attracted ruffians, adventurers, missionaries and Xhosa fugitives fleeing the frontier wars of the Eastern Cape.

From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, the British systematically seized control of the Cape (Martin 2013, xvi). Roughly a year after the Slavery Abolition Bill of 1833 was passed by the British Parliament, slavery was abolished at the Cape in 1834, but the act apprenticed slaves to their masters for a further four years. Between 1835 and the early 1840s, an estimated 12 000 - 14 000 dissatisfied Afrikaners known as the 'Voortrekkers' left the Cape Colony along with some of their indentured slaves in an attempt to gain independence from the British and formed the Boer Republics (Great Trek, n.d.). Bredekamp (cited in Froneman 2012, 55) highlights that it remains unclear whether the former slaves followed their masters willingly or under duress.

Musical Life in the Colony

Some of the earliest evidence of music and dance in the Cape can be seen in the "high frequency of dancing compositions" (Parkington et al. 2015, 87) identified by archaeologists in rock art. Although not much is known about music in southern Africa before European colonisation, one of the most frequently cited precolonial performances occurred near Mossel Bay, when Da Gama's party is said to have been entertained by a Khoekhoe reed-flute ensemble in 1497 (Kirby 2013, 193; Coplan 1985, 82; Ansell 2004, 6; Martin 2013, 53; Steltzner 2016, 55).[6] Musical practices at the Cape become somewhat clearer after colonisation since several people wrote about them, bearing in mind that those writers were mostly white outsiders who directed their work at European audiences.[7] However, colonial descriptions create the impression of a unique creolised musical culture that Bruinders (2017,

[6] In Chapter 2, I show that Khoekhoe reed-flute dances may have bearing on our understanding of the *riel*'s history.

[7] Colonial sources and the use of colonial sources is problematised later in this chapter.

5) calls “translocal – illustrating the diversity of cultures from various locales on the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia.”

Hartman (cited in Froneman 2012, 50) remarks that slaves and coloured people were recognised to have an ‘innate’ ability for music by early white settlers, which meant that they often provided the music at white dance parties. Slave orchestras existed from as early as 1676 when a “black steward and another young slave” entertained a guest at the Governor’s residence, and continued well into the early-nineteenth century when Pieter van Breda, the owner of Oranjezicht, and the widow Colyn of Klein Constantia kept large orchestras that played on various Western instruments (Martin 2013, 70-71). Furthermore, as a port city, we can surmise that Cape Town had a lively pub scene that attracted patrons from all over the world. Bouws (cited in Martin 2013, 74) observes that “ordinary sailors could find entertainment in more than one sailor bar […] where they danced to the wind and string music of one or more slave musicians.” In taverns, Khoekhoe and slave musicians often “encountered their patrons’ respective types of music, in particular Dutch songs” (Bruinders 2017, 5). In many cases, slaves were valued as labourers as well as musicians by their masters (Martin 2013, 74). Bruinders (2017, 26) points out that some coloured anti-apartheid activists have critiqued the white recognition of coloured musicality as patronising. In Chapter 2, I expand on this and show that the prevalence of coloured bands at white parties is particularly relevant to our understanding of the *riel* in historical and contemporary contexts.

Although most recorded descriptions of musical practices would have been in contexts where whites were present, there are also some descriptions that give us a glimpse into the musical life of the coloured population outside the confines of white households and parties. Bird (1823, 166) refers to a “grand display [on] the outskirts of the town, to which the black population rush[ed]” on Sundays. This dancing is said to have been accompanied by “native music of every description.” De Kock (quoted in Martin 2013, 72) mentions that the slaves and “Hottentots” often danced together on Sundays and sometimes pooled their money to hire a wagon, which took them to the seaside or to dancing houses in the country. Moreover, Martin (2013, 72) contends that the *ramkie* (a finger-plucked lute) provides some of the earliest evidence of creolisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and mentions that it was one of the instruments played by the slaves when they were “making music by themselves, and not for their masters.” Musicians would have also accompanied two styles of coloured social dancing: “the relatively high status dress ball or ‘social’ [and] a more popular Anglo-Afrikaans style of ‘square dancing’” that Coplan (1985, 11) attributes to the British

influence on the Cape in the first half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, after the abolition of slavery, parading practices that would later become the *klopse* and Christmas bands emerged (Martin 2013, xvi; Bruinders 2017, 30). This was followed by the first Malay choirs (Gaulier and Martin 2017, 6). In her monograph about the Christmas Bands Movement, Bruinders (2017, 2) collectively refers to these three coloured musical practices as the "*ghoema* musical complex, as all three are characterised by a particular syncopated rhythm, which has become emblematic of Cape Town and is referred to as the *ghoema* rhythm."

Coloured and Khoe-San Identity

In southern Africa, the term 'coloured' is used to refer to persons of mixed descent. As mentioned earlier, the term emerged in the nineteenth century as a designation for the population that emerged from the sexual unions between Africans, Europeans and Asians at the southern tip of the African continent. The need to categorise arose because "Preserving order under white rule required a neat demarcation of population groups" (Besten 2013, 137). However, since its emergence, the term 'coloured' has been marked by ambiguity; Goldin (cited Bruinders 2017, 9) points out that the criteria used to define coloured people developed over time. Nonetheless, under colonialism and apartheid, coloured people were classified as neither white nor black/native[8] (Jorritsma 2011, 1; Bruinders 2017, 12), which was underscored by a sentiment of "less than white…but better than black" (Erasmus cited in Bruinders 2012, 20). As a result of this precarious position, coloured people have "remained marginal to the sociocultural and political landscape" (Bruinders 2017, xiv).

Although the term 'coloured' and the concomitant discourse surrounding coloured identity has been questioned by people since shortly after its emergence, the post-apartheid era provided a more conducive environment for identity negotiations. As such, some reject coloured identity while others embrace it. Among those who have rejected the designation are groups and individuals who identify as Khoe-San. The term 'Khoe-San'[9] is an "artificial combination" (Low 2009, 233) of 'Khoekhoe' (formerly Khoikhoi) and 'San', which is used

[8] The conflation of these terms is explored below.

[9] At present, 'Khoe-San' is preferred to 'Khoi-San' (or 'Khoisan') because 'Khoekhoe' is regarded as more accurate than 'Khoikhoi' and hyphenating the two terms "takes account of the objection that the San should not be subordinated to, or subsumed within, Khoekhoe groupings" (Besten 2013, 135). Therefore, I have elected to use 'Khoe-San' as recommended by the San Council (Schlebusch et al. 2012, 374). However, 'Khoi-San' (and Khoisan) remains common in lay and academic parlance.

to refer to the indigenous people of southern Africa who inhabited the area before the migration of Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists into the region approximately 2000 years ago (Besten 2013, 135). The former equates to the disparaging colonial appellation 'Hottentot'; the latter to 'Bushman'. Under colonialism and apartheid, the descendants of the Khoe-San were classified as coloured. As such, in the post-apartheid period, those who had long-since classified as Khoe-San (although usually in more specific terms like 'Griqua', 'Korana', 'Bushman', 'Khoekhoe' among others) are now reclaiming that identity. There are also those who have taken a more neutral stance and identify as coloured but claim Khoe-San ancestry.

Like coloured identity, which is fraught with notions of neither black nor white, Khoe-San identity is fraught with notions of neither coloured nor black. In South Africa, the term 'native' carries undertones, which are different from the way in which it is used in other places in the world. Whereas 'native' is often equated to 'indigenous', 'autochthonous' or 'aboriginal' globally, in South Africa, the term is associated with colonialism and apartheid since black Africans were classified as 'native'. However, the implications of this for the descendants of the indigenous Khoe-San people are complex. Just as the criteria to define coloured people developed as it unfolded, racial classifications were used inconsistently in legislation and Khoe-San people were sometimes classified as 'coloured' and sometimes classified as 'native' under colonialism and apartheid (Besten 2013, 136). Whereas being classified as 'black' or 'native' under apartheid was perhaps more problematic than being classified as coloured, affirmative action in the post-apartheid era has attempted to redress the inequalities of the past by prioritising the socio-economic and cultural development of the black majority. Therefore, Khoe-San groups were severely disadvantaged under colonialism and apartheid but are once again marginalised in the post-apartheid era. Yet, both black and Khoe-San groups lay claim to land based on indigeneity – i.e. their ancestors owned and inhabited the land prior to European colonialism, which therefore implies that land which was taken from them during colonialism and apartheid should be returned. However, Khoe-San groups regard themselves as the original inhabitants of the land because their ancestors lived in southern Africa prior to Bantu migrations into southern Africa. Thus, some Khoe-San groups posit a more authentic claim to the land than anyone else, and do not regard even black groups to be 'native' or indigenous (Besten 2013, 141). Hence, many Khoe-San groups have aligned themselves with First Peoples throughout the world to bring attention to their First Nation rights, which have been largely neglected. It is important to acknowledge that local struggles for the rights of the Khoe-San arose during the coincidence of the transition to

democracy (1994), and international recognition of indigenous peoples such 1993 being declared the 'Year of Indigenous People', and 1995-2004 being recognized as the 'Decade for the World's Indigenous People' (Besten 2013, 139).

It is this socio-political climate that gave rise to the establishment of the ATKV *Rieldans* competition in 2006, which aimed to 'protect' a so-called threatened dance (Nieuwoudt 2015, 36) that "*kan met reg as die oudste danssoort in Suider Afrika gereken word omdat die hedendaagse vorm direk na die Khoi-San, die eerste bewoners van die streek herlei word*" [could rightfully be regarded as the oldest dance form in South Africa because its contemporary form can be traced back to the Khoi-San, the first inhabitants of the region] (ATKV, n.d.). Most participants in this study identify as *bruin* (brown), another term for people of mixed descent, but many have asserted ancestral links to the Khoe-San; and whilst acknowledging that large sectors of the coloured population have Southeast Asian ancestry, most participants in this study do not identify with a slave past. However, the sponsorship of the annual *rieldans* competition by the ATKV, a historically white organisation aimed at "promoting Afrikaans language and culture as an indispensable part of the new South Africa" (Van Heerden 2009, 294), leads us to consider the *riel* as an expression of post-apartheid Afrikaans identity as well. The *rieldans* competition can be viewed in relation to other post-apartheid Afrikaans festivals that emerged "during a time of perceived crisis for […] Afrikaans communities [to] advance the arts in Afrikaans, to redeem Afrikaans, given its tainted reputation as the language of apartheid, and to help bring about national reconciliation" (Van Heerden 2009, ii).

Why Riel?

In comparison to other coloured musical practices, such as the Minstrel Carnival (Stone 1971; Jeppie 1990; Baxter 1996; Martin 1999), Malay music (Du Plessis 1935 and 1972; Kirby 1939; Davids 1985; Desai 1985 and 1993), Christmas bands (Bruinders 2012; 2017), *langarm* (Coetzer 2005; Dunseith 2017) and Cape jazz (Layne 1995; Johannes 2010), the *riel* has received very little scholarly attention despite its documentation since at least the mid-nineteenth century. There has been no full-length scholarly study of the *riel* from a dance or music perspective. Burden's Master's thesis (1985) and doctoral thesis (1991) on Afrikaans folk dancing and Afrikaans 'folk music' among coloured people have been useful contributions because she is the only scholar who has treated the *riel* from historical and

musical perspectives. However, the *riel* is not the focus of her study. Her work formed part of the research conducted by Stellenbosch University's *Departement Afrikaanse Kutuurgeskiedenis* (Department of Afrikaans Cultural History) from the 1970s to 1990s. She and Grobbelaar (1997) recorded many *riel* songs but their studies largely represent *riel* music as decontextualised folk songs and poetry. More recently, Key (2011) briefly analyses the *riel* in her Master's thesis, which deals with her work alongside South African guitarist and songwriter David Kramer in the film *Karoo Kitaar Blues* (Key 2003). Likewise, Bouws (quoted in Venter 2009), Froneman (2012) and Dunseith (2017) make references to the *riel* in their studies of Afrikaans folk music, *boeremusiek* and *langarm* respectively. The only full-length study is Arnolds's (2016) Master's dissertation, which was conducted within the discipline of geography. Van Wyk (2012 and 2013) has also published from an educational perspective. The broad focus on the *riel* in this dissertation therefore highlights a practice that has been largely neglected in performance scholarship, and which only gained local and international media attention within the last fifteen years.

I decided to focus on the music for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, the music has not been the subject of any thorough scholarly study, whereas the dance has received some attention. I found that the accompanying music often featured songs that were symbolic and that many of these were derived from interpersonal concerns. The songs are valued for their role as an oral archive of experience and I was immensely interested in the meaning that they hold for their performers and audiences. Second, people spoke extensively about the *riel* in ways that hinge on notions of tradition, innovation and change. I felt unqualified to discuss the dance in those terms since I do not have a dance background. Therefore, I elected to limit myself to the music. However, my distinction between music and dance does not mean that they can be arbitrarily separated. It is precisely due to their interconnectedness that I learned much about the dance even through a study of the music.

Bruinders (2017, 21) offers the suggestion that coloured cultural practices in general (with a few exceptions) have been largely overlooked because they lacked the "anthropological descriptor of exotic people and culture." I want to relate this idea to the *riel* music on two levels. First, I suggest that the music, with its three-chord Afrikaans songs played on so-called 'European' instruments, evaded ethnomusicological attention because it was perceived as Afrikaans folk music. Second, I argue that the music has been overshadowed by the dance, which is readily viewed as exotic due to its distinctive footwork and animal mimicry. This partly explains why colonial accounts, as well as recent studies, have paid more attention to

the dance than the music. Hence, the title of this dissertation alludes to the dust kicked up during the dance, which literally shrouds the musicians from view, as well as the epistemological cloud behind which the *riel* music exists.

Fieldwork and Methodology

Getting Involved

This dissertation is based on my participant-observation of the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition (2017 and 2018),[10] short-term immersion, and extensive interviews, focus group interviews and discussions with musicians, dancers, group leaders, adjudicators, audiences, elders and representatives of the ATKV. The research emerged out of an earlier pilot study that I conducted in 2016, during the final year of my undergraduate degree in musicology. That unpublished study deserves mention because the present one would have been inconceivable without the connections that I formed during that time. Although the findings presented here are mostly from fieldwork that I conducted in 2017 and 2018, I have been formally engaged in research on the *riel* since late 2015, and my previous experience was integral to this study. Most notably, in late 2016, I was roped into the recording of a *riel* music album entitled *Ruk en Riel* (tug and *riel*, like rock and roll), which was produced by the ATKV. Israel (2014, 30) points out that fieldwork beginnings are often determined by chance. I self-consciously admit that my initial involvement with most participants in this study occurred through chance and a degree of luck, when I was approached to take part in the recording of the above-mentioned album. The director, Elias Nel (founding member and former co-ordinator of the competition), was not a musician, so he required some musical input. My interest in the *riel* music therefore made me a perfect candidate. As an inexperienced final year undergraduate student, this was not part of my fieldwork plan, and I felt ill-qualified to be given such a prominent position as 'assistant director' especially since my aim was to learn about the *riel* music. However, it turned out that I did have some skills and qualities that were perceived as helpful to the project and "I let myself be sucked in" (Israel 2014, 30). Most of all, I lent moral support in studio since, as a musician, performance anxiety was well-known to me. I also acted as the timekeeper and conductor, since all tracks

[10] The competition occurs in several rounds that take place between May and December (see Chapter 2).

had to be six minutes long so that they could be used in future by groups without a band.[11] I did not have any input in the arrangements since those were determined by musicians; new lyrics were written by the musicians and Nel. In retrospect, I recognise that I may have been approached to lend some academic legitimacy to the project, which may have exaggerated the already asymmetrical relationship between researcher and participant in this study. However, had it not been for that album, my research relationships in the study would have been entirely different since most participants in this study are musicians that I met during that time; the album was something that we had done together, and we often looked back on it with pride. In fact, some participants suggested that we could use the field recordings that I made for this dissertation as a guideline for a follow-up album. Therefore, when I refer to recordings on that album, I do so with a good understanding of the music. I did not perform musically with my research community in the way that some musicologists have (Burnim 1985, Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005, Bruinders 2012; 2017), but I combined standard ethnographic methods like those already mentioned with creative strategies to collect data and to present my findings. I used feedback interviews to establish the relevance of primary sources and hosted an instrument-making workshop that I filmed. I also published biographical photo essays of musicians on an online storytelling platform called Maptia (see Appendix 1).

Getting Around

> *The 500km journey from Cape Town to Brandvlei on the R27 runs through Clanwilliam and takes roughly twelve hours by minibus taxi. Such taxis form part of a travel network that serves a route between the Western and Northern Capes, which is not covered by coach or railway services. They are accessible almost exclusively through word-of-mouth referrals, which is how I gained knowledge of them through my research community. One usually leaves Cape Town at about 7pm, after a tedious three- to four-hour period during which passengers are picked up from their homes. Most often, passengers are on their way to family gatherings such as birthdays, weddings or funerals. The surroundings change suddenly from urban to rural as one leaves the Mother City, and the mood shifts from restless anticipation to slumber as the driver switches from the radio to the trip playlist on his phone. The eclectic mix of 2000s R&B, contemporary Christian worship and local house is often interrupted by a phone call from a waiting passenger or relative inquiring about the passengers' whereabouts. In daytime, one would see the wide-open farmlands between Malmesbury and Piketberg, the ocherous Cederberg Mountains near Clanwilliam and the seemingly*

[11] Routines are roughly five and a half minutes long. Some groups dance to backtracks. However, if a track is not long enough (as is often the case), it stops during the routine and must be restarted. Hence, the motivation behind making tracks six minutes long was to alleviate this difficulty.

> *endless horizon as one snakes up Vanrhyns Pass, entering it in the Western Cape and exiting in the Northern Cape. However, one must imagine the landscape because the trip is undertaken at night and is punctuated by phone calls that drag waiting relatives from their beds to their front yards. I undertook this (and similar) journeys several times while I conducted research on* riel *music. At other times, I got a* rygeleentheid *(lift) with someone travelling the route. Lifts also require one to tap into networks of familiarity and trust, because they are dependent on good relationships with one's local community. They can be seen as a kind of social debt, because they are often favours, which may require reciprocation in the future.*

The notion of mobility unfolds throughout this dissertation. The *riel* goes together with verbs like *loop* (walk – used by musicians in the same sense as play/accompany), *draf* (trot – around the dance floor) and *trap* (stamp – the term used to describe the action of the feet). I will show that many of the *riel* songs are preoccupied with journeying, and that songs and instruments travelled with people and were exchanged and transformed along the way. Furthermore, within the context of the competition, the *riel* is valued for its role in providing the possibility to travel locally and abroad to perform, thereby creating the opportunity to move beyond what is typically available to youths in rural, working-class coloured communities.[12] There is also a relative scarcity of *riel* musicians, which means that they are permitted to accompany rival groups under certain circumstances. This affords musicians a mobility that is not available to dancers, who are bound by loyalty to their groups. In a serendipitous way, my interest in the *music* afforded me a similar mobility, which justified my research in several places, among several musicians, and at various organisational levels within the competition. This would have been significantly more difficult (perhaps impossible) had I studied the dance among different (rival) groups. At a deeper level, the music reflects a strong connection to place, and an analysis of the lyrics and lived experience of their performers reveals a certain nostalgia, which temporarily transports people to a bygone time. Lastly, there has been a gradual expansion of performance contexts of the *riel* – from farms, to towns, to cities.

My fieldwork represents an attempt to analyse the *riel* in various settings that are reflective of its past and present. I believe that limiting myself to a single geographic area or to the competition context would have been detrimental to my research for two reasons. First, in 2016, I was made aware that there are regional variants of the *riel* and I wanted to explore those on a stylistic level. Second, unlike other practices such as the "*ghoema* musical

[12] In a particularly apt way, my first international trip was undertaken to present a paper on the *riel* at an academic conference. My research community was highly supportive of me in this endeavour and interpreted the opportunity that my work on the *riel* afforded me to travel as a sure sign that "*Sien jy, die riel vat jou plekke*!" [See, the *riel* takes you places!].

complex" (Bruinders 2017, 2), the *riel* does not have a long history of large-scale public competition and performance. Rather, it was performed at social gatherings for most of its history. In interviews, I learned that people attached immense significance to the "*samesyn*" (spirit of togetherness) experienced at social gatherings prior to the establishment of the competition. In Chapter 2, I explore the notion of '*samesyn*', which can be likened to Turner's notion of *communitas*. Bruinders (2017, 19) points out, "Public performing arts are key activities for representing and shaping social identities." Therefore, the competition is fertile terrain for the analysis of identity in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa.

The two towns where I spent most of my time, Brandvlei and Clanwilliam, were carefully selected. Brandvlei is in a region that is known as the *Boesmanland* (Bushmanland), Northern Cape Province. My work on the album mentioned earlier alerted me to the fact that there were several *riel* musicians in Brandvlei. Elias Nel also made me aware that there was significant oral history about the *riel* in the area. Clanwilliam is in the Cederberg region of the Western Cape Province. As in Brandvlei, there are several *riel* musicians in Clanwilliam, and the region has a significant oral history about the *riel*. Furthermore, some of the most innovative and influential *riel* groups are based in Clanwilliam and neighbouring Wupperthal. However, I must emphasise that there are significant contributions to this dissertation from musicians who live in towns where I did not spend much time, such as Laingsburg and Saron. There are also equally significant contributions from musicians who now live in Cape Town, but hail from places with a strong *riel* presence. There are many elderly people with knowledge about the *riel* who live on farms. Unfortunately, this dissertation does not take their knowledge and experience into account for purely logistical reasons. Most of the musicians in this study lived on farms as children. Some remained on those farms into teenage and adulthood, when they started working themselves. Others moved to nearby towns as teenagers for school or work. A few also lived in towns but worked on farms and continue to do so. This dissertation offers a glimpse into their lives.

Participant-Observation as an Insider-Outsider Researcher

I considered myself as an insider-outsider researcher (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009), which meant that I experienced some of the advantages and challenges of both statuses. Aspects of my identity that position me as an insider include my nationality as a South African (resident in the Western Cape Province) whose home language is Afrikaans, which is

the language spoken by my research community and the broader working-class coloured community. Many times, during my fieldwork, I became aware of the crucial importance of my home language with regards to assimilation into my research community. The most obvious benefit was the relative ease of communication that I enjoyed. I discovered that foreign, English-speaking researchers had worked with members of my research community before because they contrasted the simplicity of our interactions with the difficulties that they had experienced in other interviews, which were conducted with the aid of a translator. Another distinct advantage of having an intuitive command of my fieldwork language was my ability to understand humour, which I will show is important. My status as a home-language speaker of Afrikaans also meant that I could claim membership to the ATKV, which is the organisation that sponsors and organises the competition.

However, I was also an Afrikaner in the typical sense of the word; a white speaker of Afrikaans, which positioned me as an outsider to my research community. Furthermore, from the mid-twentieth century, the term 'Afrikaner' denoted an "exclusive group that wielded political and economic power under apartheid" (Van Heerden 2009, 3). Van Heerden (2009, 3) points out that there have been "largely unsuccessful" attempts to make the term more racially inclusive since the 1980s, but there remains a "limited tendency" to view coloured speakers of Afrikaans as 'Afrikaners' or 'Afrikaanses'.[13] In light of my earlier discussion about coloured and Khoe-San identity, it is debatable whether coloured/Khoe-San speakers would *want* to claim an Afrikaner identity. However, the topic is pertinent to this discussion since the ATKV only opened its membership to "include all ethnic race groups who spoke Afrikaans and belonged to the Christian faith" in the post-apartheid period (Arnolds 2016, 43). In contrast to my research community, my identity as an Afrikaner, and membership to ATKV,[14] is unambiguous. Thus, despite belonging to the so-called 'born-free' generation that was born and grew up in the post-apartheid era, there were "power associations embedded in my whiteness" (Jorritsma 2011, 15) and my fieldwork experience was influenced by local power dynamics that went beyond the usual power imbalance between researchers and researched. Moreover, my skin colour continued to "mark [me] as insider or outsider with

[13] The term 'Afrikaanses' is a neologism that arose in the post-apartheid era to refer to "a social category that encompasses anyone that speaks Afrikaans or identifies with and appreciates the language" (Van Heerden 2009, 114). It arose due to the contentious issue of whether Afrikaans-speaking coloured people could identify as 'Afrikaner' since the term is used in an ethnic sense to refer to white Afrikaans-speaking people who are descended from Europeans who settled in South Africa in the mid-seventeenth century.

[14] This is a hypothetical membership since I did not hold a paid membership to the ATKV. However, I could have had a membership regardless of the political dispensation.

respect to the camp of the powerful and the oppressor" (Muller quoted in Jorritsma 2011, 16). I was made privy to incidents of racial antipathy because I was perceived as forming part of both a 'non-white' and a white "us" due to associations evoked by my race and ethnicity. For instance, both coloured people and white people in the towns where I conducted my fieldwork used disparaging remarks (with their concomitant racial slurs) about black people and immigrants in my presence. Likewise, I was included in the "backstage talk […] usually reserved for fellow whites or Afrikaners only" (Verwey and Quayle 2012, 552) so offensive remarks about my research community were sometimes made in my presence. Interactions like these were predicated on the "disenchantment with the new order and thus [continued] racial antagonism towards Africans" (Adhikari 2004, 173). Sometimes, I also received 'advice' like "just tell them [my research community] that they'll be on TV" or "just give them some wine". These suggestions stemmed from a legacy of exploitative research and the '*dop* system', which was a "despicable payment system used on farms in which part of the weekly wages was paid in alcohol" (Bruinders 2017, xvi), which had profound and lasting consequences on working-class coloured communities.

I believe my age and gender greatly facilitated the relatively relaxed and frank dynamic that I experienced. I found that many of my participants were flattered and pleased that someone had taken a deep interest in *riel* (and the music at that) and I identified with both the "guest and daughter" experience relayed by Abu-Lughod (1987) and the "teacher-student" relationship described by Jorritsma (2011, 16). My research community took my safety upon themselves due to my 'perceived'[15] vulnerability as a young white woman navigating the areas where they lived on foot. Initially, my movements were restricted: I had to walk around with a local and I would have been reproved for breaking the 'rule' not to walk around after sunset. Yet, as I developed some savvy and spatial awareness, I was afforded some freedoms.[16] Furthermore, although I received the best in terms of the hospitality (because I

[15] I use the term 'perceived' with some reservation because the rural locations where I worked were safer than some of the urban spaces in Cape Town that I navigate daily. However, it would be ignorant to deny that they have high rates of crime and violence (especially gendered violence). The fact that I was a highly conspicious outsider, with costly audio-visual equipment on my person, meant that I was perceived to be more vulnerable than locals.

[16] In comparing her own fieldwork circumstances as a young white female in the Karoo to that of an older male, Jorritsma (2011, 137) suggests that differences in their age and gender likely yielded "a completely different set of circumstances and research relationships." Likewise, I can contrast my own experiences to hers: she was local but lived on her family's farm outside Kroonvale where she conducted her research and drove in each day; since I did not have my own car (nor licence for that matter) I travelled by long-distance taxi and walked in the locations where I conducted my interviews, thereby sharing similar travel arrangements (and limitations) with my research community.

was a guest; not necessarily because I was white), I developed a true sense of belonging when I began to be roped into household duties like cooking, cleaning and serving other guests.

Whilst I acknowledge that I was an outsider on account of my race (and sometimes my class and education), I became a partial insider through my prolonged involvement and commitment to the *riel*. Over time, my research began to be regarded as important to the competition to the extent that some participants felt it could even affect change to the competition criteria, which were perceived as problematic. Moreover, I occupied a privileged position as a result of my research. By the end of my official fieldwork period, the 2018 competition was still ongoing. I could not, at that point, stop attending because I had a social obligation to support the musicians and teams I had worked with. However, my travel and accommodation budget had been depleted by this time, so I negotiated myself into the role of *baanbestuurder* (timekeeper)[17] for the quarter-final, in exchange for a lift to the Northern Cape with the ATKV. On this occasion, I recognised that I was afforded liberties that were not available to participants.[18] Later, at the semi-final, I was absorbed into that role once more in an emergency even though I arrived as a spectator. On these occasions, I benefitted from close contact with the adjudicators and management even though I had no effect or insight into the marks. However, my public involvement, as a young white woman, at a relatively high organisational level in the competition was open to scrutiny since my *riel* credentials are likely to have been questioned had it not been for my very public research activities that meant people knew (or knew about) me. I say this with relative certainty since even the credentials of adjudicators, many of whom have been adjudicating for years and are prominent and highly educated members of their communities,[19] were sometimes questioned by members of my research community. Incidents like these illustrate how I became a partial insider due to my prolonged research, whilst remaining an outsider on account of my race.

[17] Technically, '*baanbestuurder*' translates as 'track manager' because the timekeeper is also charged with ensuring that misbehaving spectators do not walk or dance onto the stage during a performance. She/he also ensures that the chalk lines that demarcate the dance floor are kept intact.

[18] There are musicians in this study who live far away from the teams for whom they play. Although the transport and subsistence of groups are covered by the ATKV, the cost of transporting musicians from far away is not. In those cases, musicians (or the groups they play for) must cover their transport, which is costly (between R500-1000 a return ticket), so some musicians simply cannot afford to attend.

[19] Since most of the adjudicators are not dancers or musicians themselves, there is a general belief that they do not hold knowledge of the *riel*. Although this stance is understandable, I should add that in my experience, many of the adjudicators learned about/witnessed the *riel* from their grandparents and parents. Moreover, they receive quite intensive training each year. Nonetheless, I have also heard of some basic errors in the adjudication process that justifies the lack of confidence in the adjudicators and the criteria.

However, no study represents the whole truth. In the introduction to *Writing Culture,* Clifford (1986) relays an incident in which a Cree hunter testified in a Montreal court about the situation of his hunting grounds. When asked to recite the oath that he would tell the truth, it is said that the hunter replied by saying, "I'm not sure I can tell the truth…I can only tell what I know" (Clifford 1986, 8). Clifford refers to this in his discussion about the nature of ethnographies, which he suggests are essentially an assemblage of partial truths; a montage of 'facts' presented by and to the researcher. I mention this to draw attention to the realisation that what I present here is merely a glimpse into the experiences of the individuals and community that are represented here. I can "only tell what I know" – the things people presented to me as their truths. I am certain that some information was willingly withheld from me. Most notably, the (alleged) profuse consumption of alcohol at dance parties in the past was downplayed around me. I became aware of this through informal discussions with people who were not participants in this study. Furthermore, Elias Nel, who can be considered an indigenous ethnographer of the *riel*, informed me that many of the songs are salacious. Although I heard one somewhat suggestive song, I cannot say that I encountered the songs that Nel referred to. However, Burden (1991) and Grobbelaar (1997) did. It may be that participants in this study simply were not familiar with those songs, or it could be that they were not performed in front of me, especially since other songs were censored in my presence. This could be related to notions of respectability, especially since the ATKV has a Christian ethos, but it may have been affected by my identity as a young, unmarried woman. Similarly, Florence Filton (27/09/2018) declined to answer some of my questions and jokingly admitted that she did not want to disclose more than she had already told me since she wanted to publish it first. Although this exchange was in jest, it was guided by seriousness and "complicated the traditional binary opposition between ethnographer and informant" (Jorritsma 2011, 16).

A Note on Sources

Throughout this dissertation, I make use of primary sources (texts, illustrations and footage) that span the period from the late fifteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Most of these sources are challenging because their accuracy, validity and relevance can be questioned for several reasons. From a purely technical stance, many were written by non-specialist authors, so it should not be assumed that their observations were correct from a dance or music

perspective. However, even accounts by 'specialist' authors are prone to human and methodological error. Therefore, care must be taken with regards to nomenclature, choreography and organology. From an epistemological stance, most of these accounts appear in travel writings that were largely aimed at describing 'exotic' cultures and practices in Africa to white audiences in Europe. Some of these travels were undertaken for pleasure; others were sanctioned and supported by European countries engaged in trade, religious expansion and colonialism of Africa. Hence, many of these sources emerge from the so-called colonial archive, which is fraught with issues of representation because they construct the African Other as underdeveloped and subhuman. However, the agendas that constructed the Other in those ways also constructed the Other as lacking history and a capacity for self-representation. While I acknowledge that the use of the colonial archive is contentious, I have attempted to make sense of the *riel* in contemporary and historical contexts, since the past does impact the present. Moreover, I make use of illustrations that may be regarded as derogatory in Chapter 2. However, they are the only extant sources that give us any visual clues about matters in a period that is not represented in oral history or elsewhere. Therefore, it is my hope that the voices, dances and songs of the individuals and community represented in this study will be taken very seriously, and that they will be viewed alongside and in dialogue with the more problematic sources to which I refer.

Outline

In Chapter 2, I build on what I have outlined thus far and present a brief history of the *riel* based on my participant-observations of the competition, interviews and an investigation of documentary evidence. I also explore the notion of indigeneity and belonging as manifested through references to a precolonial Khoe-San past because it has significance for my research community. In Chapter 3, I provide a history of the *ramkie* (a plucked southern African lute), which is strongly associated with the *riel*, and has a precolonial Indian Ocean past. Moreover, I briefly comment on gender in the music. This chapter is accompanied by a creative component entitled *Ramkie: An Experiment in Organology*, which is short film documenting an instrument-making workshop that I hosted in Brandvlei. Chapter 4 is an analysis of *riel* music, which I approach as an archive of indigenous knowledge, memory and experience based on my understanding of music as archive outlined by Muller (2002) and Impey (2008). I briefly discuss stylistic characteristics and provide a thematic analysis of the '*liedjies*'

(songs). Chapter 5 presents a summary, my concluding thoughts and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

Riel Past and Present

Introduction

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the history of the *riel* based on findings gleaned through participant observation, archival and literature-based research and interviews (including feedback interviews).[20] As mentioned in Chapter 1, the focus of this dissertation is *riel* music. Hence, this chapter is neither a stylistic analysis of *rieldans* nor is it a comprehensive overview of its history; rather, it places the *riel* in social, cultural and historical context as a starting point from which to attempt a musical and cultural analysis. Documentary evidence is scant and largely consists of anecdotal observations, which provide little more than fragmentary data about context, instrumentation and lay descriptions of the music and dance steps. However, pieced together, this data provides us with a rough idea of the *riel* over the last two centuries. My aim throughout this study has been to merge, to the best of my ability, the visual (written/filmed/graphics), oral/aural (spoken/sung) and tactile (danced/played/tasted).

Precursors of the *Riel*

Oral history attests that the *riel* emerged from Khoe and San dances; however, precisely which dances is uncertain. There is a consensus that those all-night dances were performed around a fire after a successful hunt or harvest; footwork, circular formations and animal mimicry in the *riel* are regarded as survivals of those dances. Froneman (2012, 72-73) has alluded to a relationship between the *riel* and shamanic San trance dance, and De Jongh

[20] According to Stone-MacDonald and Stone (2013, 3), the feedback interview is an evolving research technique which has been used by scholars in the social sciences over the last thirty years and has proven to be successful in providing "rich, multivocal responses from participants." During feedback interviews, researchers present participants with audio and visual recordings, musical instruments, objects, photographs and other media with the intention of eliciting a response (Pauwels 2010 cited in Stone-MacDonald and Stone 2013, 4). Not only are feedback interviews useful conversation starters and invaluable in the early stages of nondirected investigations, but also provide researches with a good opportunity to test the validity of their analyses. I elected to use feedback interviews because I uncovered sources that appeared to be relevant but were ambiguous or ethically problematic. I grappled with the task of representing the *riel* as a young, outsider researcher so I consulted with elders in my research community to assist me in ascertaining the validity and relevance of certain primary sources.

(2016, 89-93) implies that there is a link between the *riel* and Khoe rainmaking rituals of the past. Two participants in this study, Katrina van Zyl (20/01/2018) and George Slawerse (30/09/2018), have also suggested it might have emerged from rainmaking rituals. Interestingly, the reed-flute dances described in the colonial record share striking similarities with the *riel*, namely courtship motifs (Wikar cited in Kirby 2013, 201) and re-enactments (Von Francois and Schultze cited in Kirby 2013, 195 and 197).[21] There is an implicit understanding that the *riel* went through a transitional phase from Khoe and San dances to the *riel* proper. As expressed by one of Van Wyk's (2012, 52) participants, "no-one really knows what the *riel* looked like in its purest form, or when and where the transition took place." Participants in this study do not assign a great deal of importance to the specificities of this chronology. Hence, I have found it more productive to examine what the *riel* represents for people – a link to the First People of southern Africa.

Given its frequent representation as an indigenous dance derived from Khoe and San sources, an interesting conundrum is the notion that the Scottish/Irish reel may have influenced the *riel* (Van Wyk 2012, 52; Arnolds 2016, 45). A distinction must be drawn between linguistic and stylistic influence. Burden (1985, 43) suggests that the term '*hotnotsriel*' emerged among white settlers who witnessed the *riel* and named it after the reel on account of its footwork. She does not suggest a stylistic influence; rather, she implies that the term is a misnomer.[22] In contrast, Dunseith (2017, 69), suggests that the *riel* "appears to be an indigenized version of traditional Irish step dancing, the name appearing to be linguistically connected as well." This he attributes to the strong Irish presence in an area known as 'Irish Town' (that would later become District Six) in the early nineteenth century, where many "low Irish and coloured people resid[ed]" (Blackhouse quoted in Dunseith 2017, 69). To what extent the European reel may have exerted influence on the *riel* is beyond the scope of this study. What can be said with certainty is that indigenous footwork-centred dances probably existed at the Cape before colonisation (Tachard 1688, 76-77)[23] and before the nineteenth century (Burden 1985, 33). This is significant because the history of the reel in South Africa appears to coincide

[21] Furthermore, Johnson Jones (2013), a dance scholar who conducted extensive research including movement analysis, suggests that the Nama *stap* (a seemingly related yet distinct indigenous dance form) may be descended from Nama reed-flute dances. It therefore appears that both Nama *stap* and *riel* may have emerged from reed-flute dances.

[22] There are several Afrikaans terms in which the prefix '*hotnots*' simply implies an association with the Khoekhoe people. For instance, '*hotnotsvy*' (Hottentot's fig; Carpobrotus edulis), '*hotnotsgodt*' (praying mantis), '*hotnotstee*' (Hottentot's tee; *Helichrysum orbiculare*) among others.

[23] Though little is known about the nature of reed-flute dances witnessed by Portuguese crews prior to Dutch colonisation, Kirby (2013, 193-194) contends that those performances must have been very similar to descriptions like Tachard's.

with British rule at the Cape (Burden 1985, 50). Regardless of European influence, the *riel* is widely regarded as indigenous because it is predominantly performed by Khoe-San people.[24] Moreover, in Chapter 3, I explore how an originally exogenous tradition can become 'indigenous'.

Mid-Nineteenth Century to Mid-Twentieth Century

The earliest documentation of what is clearly recognisable as the *riel* is of "a regular Hottentot dance (Old Colony style)" in which dancers mimicked baboons and clapped "their veltscooned [leather shoe] feet in the air" (Russel 1899, 184). This occurred at a New Year's celebration hosted by an Englishman in Durban, 1853. Although the author does not call the dance *riel*, we can deduce that it was from the dance steps. The gesture described by Russel, called '*askoek-slaan*' (hitting ash cakes) or simply '*askoek*' (ash cake), is characteristic of the *riel*. A late-nineteenth century Cape-Dutch idioticon defined '*askoek-slaan'* as a type of "Hottentotten" dance in which the heels are struck together to produce a sound that mimics removing excess ash from ash cakes by hitting them against each other (Mansvelt 1884, 10); figures 2.1 and 2.2 show how this *passie* (dance step) is performed:

Figure 2.1: Samonique van Rooy, member of the Betjies Rooirots, executes the *askoek* as typically performed by females at a regional trial in Bitterfontein, 28 July 2018. Photograph by author.

[24] In the same way, the Nama *stap* also represents a link to pre-colonial Nama history for its performers even though its origin "cannot be verified via a western mode of validation (such as a linear chronology of its development)" (Johnson Jones 2011, 8).

Figure 2.2: Members of the Betjies van Betjiesfontein execute the *askoek* as typically performed by males. Accessed October 10, 2018. http://www.paarlonline.com/event/atkv-rieldans-competition/.

In the early 1870s, the *askoek* was performed at an occasion in Bloemfontein that Froneman (2012, 58) describes as a "(white) birthday party" suggesting that the *riel* may have been performed at this event even though, once again, the dance is not identified as such:

> The musicians were four yellow boys, with the musical instruments always used at dances in those days. Two Griquas played the violin and concertina, accompanied by a fluitjie (mouth organ) and a guitar by two Hottentots. As the dancing and music became fast and furious, the musicians swayed backwards and forwards, and from side to side. The dancers made no sound with their feet on the mud floor, the only sound heard above the music being a shout now and then of "askoek" or "hiertjou" from an excited dancer. Occasionally a *mournful wail* was produced from the guitar by the small Hottentot player who, when the leader of the orchestra called "vee! vee!" (sweep, sweep) swept the backs of his nails along the strings of his instrument.
>
> The music stopped with a sudden jerk. Players and dancers were equally exhausted, and the whole party flocked out to the veld to partake of birthday cake and coffee. Refreshed, the dancers went back into the voorhuis, which, in the meantime, had been sprinkled with water to settle the dust. Amid much laughter and fun, Ouma Gouws and Tan' Hannie announced that they would be the musicians for the next dance (my emphasis) (Leviseur 1944, 25).

In her discussion of the creole history of *boeremusiek* (traditional Afrikaans dance music), Froneman (2012) argues that the passage above is evidence of a "shared musical idiom" (59) and "intimacy between master and servant within the constraints of structural racism" (58). She explains that descriptions of *boeremusiek* as "mournful or melancholic, even though the music evidently accompanies dancing and having fun, [has] become a stock theme of *boeremusiek* discourse" and refers to this as the "tears of joy" trope (59). Moreover, she suggests that "the 'mournful wail' of the guitarist in Leviseur's description, could be translated from an experiential context of slavery to one of a *boere* birthday party" (61). In fact, performances of the *riel* at Afrikaner parties appear to have been common in the second half of the nineteenth century as evidenced by descriptions in the first Afrikaans magazine,

Ons Klyntji (Our Little One) – Du Plessis (1899, 116) and Neser (1899, 167) mention the '*hotnotriil*' (early version of '*hotnotsriel*') among dances performed at (white) weddings. For reasons that will become apparent throughout this dissertation, I argue that this passage is as relevant to our understanding of *riel* as it is of *boeremusiek*.

The most thorough description the '*hotnotriel*' appears in Von Wielligh's *Jakob Platjie* ([1921] 2010, 27-30), which was published as a serial in *Ons Klyntjie* before it was released as a novel (Lombard 2014, 273). The writer observed the *riel* outside a canteen in Paarl and describes the music and dance, including *askoek*, in detail.

Oral history suggests that the *riel* went through a golden era in the first half of the twentieth century although this is not reflected in written accounts, which are relatively scant (Kotzé (1928, 13; Jacobs 1942, 16). However, a silent film shot by a farmer near Laingsburg in the 1940s shows two men dancing the *riel* (Kramer 2011). Another silent short film, *Kleurfilm van die Korana: Die Korana se Stapdans*, was shot near Upington in 1951 (Grobbelaar 1951). Its liner notes include "reel dance" in the title. However, through feedback interviews, I established that the dance performed in the film is Nama *stap* (a seemingly related yet distinct indigenous dance form); not *riel*.[25]

Mid-Twentieth Century to Present

The recollections of most participants in this study fall into the latter half of the twentieth century when the *riel* was primarily performed at social dance parties held on farms. People have mentioned that households took turns to host dances and fondly recall how neighbours travelled by donkey-cart or bicycle to attend dances. These visitations took place on weekends throughout the year, but the *riel* was particularly prominent at New Year's celebrations, when dancing continued for days on end, halting only temporarily in the morning. Florence Filton (27/9/2018) notes that it was also performed at life cycle events such as the combined *ramspartye* (stag parties) and *hennepartye* (hen's parties) preceding weddings. The *riel* was not the only dance style performed at social dances in the latter half of the twentieth century; other popular styles included *langarm* (social ballroom), twist and jive. However, the *riel* played a significant role in those dances. In interviews, I learned that those parties were characterised by an intense feeling of sociality that some participants have

[25] Furthermore, this source it is highly problematic because it appears that the dancers were asked to disrobe for the film; it also includes front and side profile shots in the typical style of race-based anatomy.

referred to as '*samesyn'* (meeting/gathering/belonging), in which music, dance, foods, like *askoek* (ash cakes), *afval* (offal), *braaivleis* (barbecued meat) and drinks, like *heuningbier* (homemade mead) and coffee played a crucial role. Moreover, those gatherings were valued for the opportunity to reconnect with family members who lived far away, and several musicians have described themselves as hailing from *riel* families.

Some participants have described those social dances as being "almost like competitions" in the sense that farms often challenged each other (SA 16/01/2018; MB 30/09/2018). Moreover, individuals challenged one other. Men engaged in *handspeel* (playing with the hands), a competitive mock-fight game that forms part of the *riel*, and since courtship is central to the *riel*, men vied for the attention of women through dance and music. Certain occasions and individual performers stand out, and their stories have been committed to memory by telling and retelling, thereby gaining something of a legendary status. In Brandvlei, Gert van Zyl (20/01/2018) and Gert Swarts (10/01/2018) recall a formidable old man by the name of Kaai Syster who danced a crack into a cement floor one evening on the farm 'Verdwaalvlei'. In Clanwilliam, Mashia van Rooy (24/06/2018), a singer from Clanwilliam, and her family recall the time her uncle defeated a group of dancers from Calvinia after a fierce battle that ended when he leaped into the air and landed in front of them, dragging his undercoat on the floor. Expanding on the competitive dances that she attended on farms near Kenhardt, Sophia April (neé Adams) (16/01/2018) explains:

> Our brothers, […] they dance[d] against each other. I want to see, I want to dance you out (I want to beat you). I want to dance better than you, you're not going to beat me. Then there's a brother, or a cousin, or an uncle, or a friend that dances better than you. And then you can see, but that one […] he won. That's how they danced it, against each other.

Some participants have also alluded to a practice in which women dressed like men to dance men's roles. Recalling New Year's celebrations from her childhood, Vollie Swarts (10/01/2018) says:

> My mum had this tendency to pack my dad's work shoes, his hat that he wore to work […] a shirt, and trousers, and a jacket. Early in the evening, she would dress up very neatly like a woman, wearing a dress, her New Year's dress […] For as long as they played *langarm* […] she wore her dress. But as soon as the *riel* began, then she'd change into his shoes […] trousers, […] shirt, […] jacket, [and put] the hat on her head. Then she'd dance with my dad, and my dad wasn't aware that it was his wife [laughs] who was dancing with them. And then she'd dance with the men the whole night long. She loved it, she really loved it […] She did it often, that was her thing […] She didn't dance *riel* like a woman – that's why she dressed like a man, because she wanted to dance like a man.

George Slawerse (30/09/2018), the leader of the Korbeel Rieldansers from Carnarvon, expanded on this and informed me that this happened often. He observed that slim women sometimes wore oversized men's clothing, which they stuffed with pillows/clothes around the buttocks and belly to create the humorous impression of a fat man performing "*vernuftige voetwerk*" (impressive footwork).

Although the *riel* was mostly performed by coloured people, I met elderly white people who had danced the *riel* in their youth. Currently, there are also white youths in the Northern Cape Province who participate in the *riel* at school, if not in the competition (see figure 2.3):

Figure 2.3: Instagram post featuring young *riel* dancers in Calvinia published on 5 May 2016. Photograph by Jaco S. Venter.

Burden's (1985, 126) findings also report that a small percentage of whites danced the *riel*, as well as a regional variant of the mazurka called *gaisa*, which was influenced by the *askoek* (118-119). Furthermore, several participants in this study reported that white farmers watched the *riel* on occasion, particularly over the festive season. Sophia April (16/01/2018) recalls:

> My parents [danced] in the light of motorcars for whites, *boere* (whites/farmers), I mention it, excuse that word. We lived on a farm called 'Blok se Kalk' [near Kenhardt]. Now, there were family members of the Montagues on that farm. Over the years, New Year's [Eve] they were there. They came to dance on New Year's Eve, they would park there, then we'd dance in the light! In the light, until dawn, until the day turned white, then the dust turned for the last time, and they drove away. Then my brothers and father quickly took the bicycles and the horse-carts to care for the cattle and the goats and that, fed them. At four o'clock, we'd be back on 'Blok se Kalk' dancing again until tomorrow morning six-o' clock. Then they'd go, and we'll be back again tonight. We danced there […] on that farm, we danced.

Read alongside evidence that the *riel* was performed at white parties in the nineteenth century and considering that the music at those parties was often provided by coloured musicians, I suggest that incidents like these are significant given the sponsorship of the competition by the ATKV, a historically white organisation.

According to participants in this study, the *riel* was performed regularly until roughly the 1980s; it rapidly declined after that. The reason for this is not entirely clear. However, Mashia van Rooy (24/06/2018), suggests that when people moved from farms to towns, the traditional performance context of the *riel* was essentially reduced. Nothing prevented people from performing the *riel* in towns, which they did to an extent, but it carried associations of impropriety (especially drunkenness) and backwardness and was regarded with condescension by the middle-class and elites. Furthermore, Moira Bladergroen (30/09/2018), an adjudicator, suggests that it declined in popularity in the presence of more popular dance styles like *langarm* and jive. Hence, it appears that the *riel*'s decline was strongly influenced by aspirations to respectability, which Bruinders (2017, 17-18) notes was "highly prized in certain coloured communities in the Western Cape [and which] emerged to counter unfavourable stereotypes of the uneducated, disreputable, inebriated coloured menial labourer." This is perfectly summed up in a reflection by Visagie (2018):

> As I grew up I didn't see my grandmother or other family members do the *Rieldans*. Perhaps it was because many dancers often drank alcohol, and since my family were stern Christians, they stopped taking part in this cultural activity. It's a sad loss, because, while classified as coloured, I always felt that a native or indigenous part of me was lost. I only knew how to be a Westerner and to behave like a Westerner.

The Annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition (2006 – Present)

Emerging from Khoe-San revivalism in the post-apartheid era, the establishment of the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition was undoubtedly one of the most influential factors in the resurgence of the *riel* at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The competition takes place between May and December. Participants compete in one of three age categories: under-14, under-20 and senior. Groups compete against each other in *uitdunne* (regional trials) for a place in the quarter- and semi-finals; the prestigious final competition takes place in December at the Afrikaans *Taalmonument* (language monument) in Paarl. A group consists of eight dancers and the band; four girls/women and four boys/men is a common format, although there are several groups with more women than men and vice versa. There are also women who dress as men and dance in men's roles, which usually occurs when there are not enough interested/able males in a group.[26] A band typically consists of between one and five musicians. However, as I have mentioned, there is a relative scarcity of musicians, so musicians sometimes accompany their own team as well as rival teams.

Routines are between five and six minutes long, which means that dancers need to maintain a high level of fitness, and work as follows: groups need to tell a story through their routine - this is called the *tema* (theme) and need to represent courtship, animals and their '*leefwêreld*' (lifeworld). The latter is related to the theme in the sense that groups typically re-enact agricultural and domestic activities in their town, which tend to be highly gendered. Some groups also portray local oral history or Khoe-San folklore and so-called '*tradiesies*' [traditions] and customs in their themes. For example, in 2017, the Betjies van Betjiesfontein incorporated genuine characters in their theme about the legendary ghost of Oupoort, which they uncovered through oral history from elders in Clanwilliam. The Griekwa Knersvlake Rieldansers's theme portrayed a celebration on the night before a young couple's wedding, in which the bride- and groom-to-be consume a cooked animal heart. In 2018, this same group had a theme called '*Die Maagdmeise*' (The Virgin Girl) that revolved around a Khoe ceremony in which a woman's virginity is tested before her wedding. Moreover, a few groups had themes about the life of Krotoa, a Khoe woman who worked in Jan van Riebeeck's household and acted as a translator for the VOC shortly during the founding years of the Cape Colony. In a relatively subversive theme, one of these groups briefly portrayed the alleged rape scene in which the young Krotoa is sexually assaulted by Van Riebeeck. The scene was received with some reservation by most audience members and stands in strong

[26] In a sense, this practice can be likened to a trouser role (also known as a breeches part), in which an "operatic or theatrical male role [is] played by a woman" (Jander and Harris 2001). However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a history of women dressing as men to perform men's parts. Similar 'role-playing' occurs in other Western Cape expressive practices like the Minstrel carnival (Gaulier and Martin 2017) and Christmas bands. Bruinders (2017, 143) notes that "in a few cases, [women] even marched along with or in place of the men" before the 1990s, when it became more common for women to perform musically in the bands.

contrast to most themes, which represent the lifeworld through portrayals of small-town rural life. In addition, groups get marks for synchronisation, circular formations and originality.

Pre-Coloniality and Indigeneity

> *Die Khoisan het mos die rieldans gedoen in hulle tyd. So, tussen die Khoi en die riel is daar nie eintlik 'n verskil nie want dit is hulle dans.*
>
> The Khoisan did the *rieldans* in their time. So, there isn't really a difference between the Khoi and the *riel* because it is their dance.

The quote above (by an unidentified young dancer from Wupperthal) is from the trailer of a film by Richard Wicksteed (2016), *SanDance!* It encapsulates a sentiment expressed by several members of my research community. Since the establishment of the competition, the *riel* has become a source of cultural pride for its contemporary practitioners. Throughout my research, I noticed that people often spoke of the *riel* in ways that alluded to notions of indigeneity and pre-coloniality. I have found these concepts useful in my understanding of the practice's meaning and significance for the *rieldans* community. In fact, post-coloniality, pre-coloniality and indigeneity are closely linked. Jayasuriya (2008, 8) points out that the recognition of ancient roots is important to the decolonial project because "Colonial cultures are altered or suppressed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (70). In this section, I briefly explore how representations of the *riel* often link it to a pre-colonial Khoe-San past as an expression of indigeneity; I discuss manifestations of indigeneity in the music in Chapters 3 and 4.

Figure 2.4: Promotional image for the production called '*Die Riel van Hip Hop*' (The *Riel* of Hip Hop). Accessed February 6, 2019. https://www.dancedeets.com/events/716035385235488/die-riel-van-hip-hop-amptelik-suidoosterfees-2017.

The first example I shall explore is an emic representation of the *riel*. In a promotional image for the 2017 production '*Die Riel van Hip Hop*' (The *Riel* of Hip Hop) (Dancedeets, n.d.), photos of the Betjies van Betjiesfontein (a group from Clanwilliam) are superimposed onto a background reminiscent of San rock paintings in the Cederberg, from where the team hails (see figure 2.4). The production also opens with a scene in which a graffiti artist sprays San rock art motifs onto a board. This can be read alongside another quote in the trailer of *SanDance!* (Wicksteed 2016), "*As jy nou in die veld instap, dan sal jy Boesmantekening sien. En daar sien jy, maar daar't iets gebeur – mense het gedans*" [If you walk into the *veld* (bush) you'll see Bushman drawings. And there you see, but something happened – people danced." Hence, some performers draw a connection between the *riel* and pre-colonial San rock art in the regions where they live.

Figure 2.5: A spread from the September 2014 issue of Comair's inflight magazine, High Life, shows *riel* dancers performing at the final of the ATKV *Rieldans* Competition. Photograph by Mike Rose. Accessed September 21, 2018. https://cargocollective.com/craigbaxter/British-Airways-SA.

The second example I shall explore is an etic representation of the *riel*. A spread from Comair's inflight magazine, *High Life*, alludes to a prehistoric past in the language used in its caption, "Ask most South Africans about *rieldans* and you'll be met with a blank stare. But deep in the country's hinterland, in dusty remote villages and towns, this *ancient*, richly layered dance form is more than alive...it's kicking" (my emphasis) (Bain 2014) (see figure 2.5).

It is noteworthy to mention how these two representations differ. In his discussion about authenticity in world music discourse, Taylor (1997, 21) observes that "constructions of 'natives' by music fans at the metropoles constantly demand that these 'natives' be premodern, untainted, and thus musically the same as they ever were." This sort of representation is evident in the second example, which constructs *riel* as somewhat static and marginal, and stands in contrast to the way that the performers represent themselves in the first example – as dynamic and occupying "different subject positions" (Taylor 1997, 21) through the merging of *riel* with hip hop. However, it is telling that while the *'Die Riel van Hip Hop'* was immensely successful, some elder members of my research community

expressed concern and even disapproval of combining *riel* with hip hop. While such sentiments may well stem from a genuine concern about the preservation of so-called tradition, they may also be influenced by "western discourse of authenticity to make music that seems to resemble the indigenous music of their place [lest they be] cast as a sellout if they make more popular-sounding music, and/or try to make money" (Taylor 1997, 23).

The construction of the *riel* as a symbol of indigeneity is significant with regards to belonging in the democratic South Africa. In fact, South Africa's democratic coat of arms and motto, which were met with some controversy, also evoke a pre-colonial Khoe-San past. The former features figures based on the Linton Stone (San rock art specimen); the latter is in |Xam, an "extinct […] language once spoken in the Northern Cape" (Barnard 2004, 5). Barnard (2004, 5) notes that "The choice of the figure and of the language of the motto were deliberate, and explicitly evoke the idea of Bushman as ancestral man and original South African." As noted by the president at the time, Thabo Mbeki, they "evoke our distant past, our living present and our future as it unfolds before us […] Those depicted […] were the very first inhabitants of our land, the Khoisan people." Therefore, representation of the *riel* as authentic indigenous Khoe-San heritage has profound meaning for its contemporary practitioners, some of whom assert ancestral ties to the First People of South Africa.

Communitas

Commenting on Schechner's suggestion that competitions take the place of ritual in modern societies, Bruinders (2012, 175) instead suggests, "competition contexts are special spaces for extraordinary experience such as intense bonding among [performers] and their audiences approaching what Turner (1969) referred to as *communitas*." In anthropology, the concept of *communitas* is the experience of "heightened sociality which occurs in certain ritual contexts" (Barnard and Spencer 2012, 759) when people experience liminality together. I suggest that social dances in the past and the ATKV *Rieldans* Competition are liminal events because they exhibit "extensive planning and preparation, different senses of time, the alteration of everyday routines, re-discovery and re-appropriation of private and public spaces, the activation of festival spaces and the reworking of rules" (Van Heerden 2009, 35-36). Hence, I argue that the ATKV *Rieldans* Competition mimics social dances where the *riel* was performed in the past, and that the '*samesyn*' experienced by people can be interpreted as *communitas*. However, whereas social dances were performed in relative isolation, the

competition is performed in public. I contend that large-scale public performance of the *riel* as an expression of indigenous Khoe-San heritage is significant, and that the competition is a platform for the negotiation of Khoe-San identity in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa.

In Conclusion

The origin and development of the *riel* is somewhat speculative given the relative dearth of documentary evidence about this practice. However, it has a long history that stretches from the early modern period to the present day. It has been documented since the mid-nineteenth century but was almost certainly present before that. Several elements of the dance appear to be survivals of much older indigenous dances, and for many contemporary practitioners, its Khoe-San roots and implied pre-colonial history are integral to its construction as an expression of indigeneity. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the dance was mostly performed at dance parties in the rural Cape. It had declined in popularity by the late-twentieth century but gained in popularity once more since the mid-2000s through the establishment of an annual competition. Although the dance form had been associated with notions of impropriety in the past, at present, it is a symbol of cultural pride for many of its practitioners.

Chapter Three

Exploring Pre-Coloniality, Indigeneity and Gender Through the *Ramkie*

Introduction

This chapter is a contribution to a project called 'Re-Centring AfroAsia: Human and Musical Migrations in the Pre-Colonial Period 700-1500 AD'. As the name of the project suggests, one of its aims is to study the cultural and material exchanges between Africa and Asia in a period which takes as its starting point the rise and spread of Islam and ends before the direct participation of Europeans in the Indian Ocean trade network; both these events had profound effects on the world system. The subject of this chapter is an instrument called the '*ramkie*', which is a stringed instrument that is classified as a "long-necked unfretted finger-plucked lute with three or four strings" (Rycroft and Impey 2001). The *ramkie* is interesting because it appears to have a pre-colonial Indian Ocean history, as well as being strongly associated with the *riel*.

The term '*ramkie*' (or *ramkietjie*) has been incorporated into Afrikaans and generally refers to a 'primitive' stringed instrument played by the Khoe people ("Ramkie", n.d.); other dictionaries define it as a "Hottentot guitar" (Bosman et al. 1982, 614). One can surmise that this is because Khoekhoe people mostly performed it from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. However, in musicological literature, the moniker and instrument itself are believed to be of Portuguese origin, a hypothesis first put forward by Kirby (1934) in his seminal work, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa*:

> The name itself is full of interest, being derived, according to the best authorities, from the Portuguese *rabequinha* (cf. *cavaquinho*, a little guitar, or *machete*), which is equivalent to *rabeca pequena*, a little violin. The instrument itself shows traces of Portuguese influence, but throughout the years the name has gone through many changes, and a number of variants occur in the works of some of the early travellers (Kirby 1934, 249).

Kirby's study was the first in-depth study on the instrument and despite suggestions that it had "been the subject of considerable discussion" (Herzog 1941, 106), there has been no further detailed study about the *ramkie*, although Rycroft (1977), Kubik (1989), Nurse (1994; 1999), Kaye (2008) and Martin (2013) have discussed it to a limited extent in their work.

Ramkie and Riel

Documentary evidence of the *ramkie* predates descriptions of the *riel*, but this does not preclude the possibility that the *riel* was performed before it was written about. In fact, a few accounts from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century indicate that dance music was played on *ramkie* even if it is unclear what type of dancing the music accompanied (Mentzel [1787] 1944; Percival 1804; Bell 1830s). The connection between the *ramkie* and *rieldans* has not been remarked on in earlier studies. However, from the early nineteenth century, there are hints that the *riel* may have been accompanied by *ramkie* music. Recalling his experiences in a Khoekhoe encampment at the Cape, the anonymous writer of *Gleanings in Africa* (1805, 232) explains that:

> [O]thers were busily employed in the dancing to the music of the ramky, (as they call it,) and seemed highly delighted with their exertions […] They are at no loss in amusing themselves with our fashionable reels and strathspeys.

It is unclear whether the dance performed on this occasion was the *riel* or European reel, although the latter seems likely. Nonetheless, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the *ramkie* was a favourite instrument of the *riel*. In his description of *rieldans* in Paarl, Von Wielligh ([1921] 2010, 27-28) makes an important observation about the band:

> *Die bend gaan teen die muur in die kantien sit. Apols Keiser is vioolspeler en dit lyk of hy die viool wil dood wurg as hy die strykstok so fyn oor die snare stryk. Moos Lampies sit weer die konsertina ewe lewendig in die ribbetjies te kielie; terwyl Klaas Windvoël hulle moses op 'n ramkie of hotnot gitaar is. Hy gooi sy kop so effe skeef en vooroor en demp die klank van die snare met sy beroemde spits ramkie ken.*
>
> The band sits against the wall in the canteen. Apols Keiser is the violin player and it looks like he wants to strangle the violin when he bows the strings so finely. Moos Lampies tickles the concertina in a lively manner; whilst Klaas Windvoël is their leader on the *ramkie* or '*hotnot gitaar*' [Hottentot guitar]. He slants his head sideways and forwards and mutes the sound of the strings with his famous pointed *ramkie* chin.

The technique employed by the *ramkie* player is significant and will be discussed later in this chapter. Brink (cited in Burden 1985, 69) also mentions that the musicians at an Afrikaner wedding were two coloured people who accompanied the "Hottentots *riel*" and other dances on *ramkie* and violin.

For many participants in this study, recollections about the *riel* and *ramkie* are intertwined. Given the relative expense of guitars, banjos and violins, most musicians started out playing on homemade *ramkies* (pl.), which they made from inexpensive materials as children. On these homemade instruments, musicians learned basic techniques until they were able to buy

their own instruments. Furthermore, commenting on the importance of learning about the *ramkie*'s history, Klaas van Zyl (18/08/2018) explains that:

> The *rammiekie*[27] is almost like the *riel* now. The *riel* is very important, and I believe […] that is why the *rammiekie* is also important now because if we didn't go back on the *riel*, then we would never have laid claim to the *rammiekie*.

It is telling that the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language) cites music played on *ramkie* as the usual accompaniment in the entry for '*hotnotsriel*' ("Hotnotsriel", n.d.). Although it has been replaced by acoustic guitar since the twentieth century, the *ramkie* is still strongly associated with the *riel*, as evidenced in a statement which was published on the ATKV website shortly before the first *uitdun* in 2018: "*Dis weer daardie tyd van die jaar wanneer die rieldansers hul vellies afstof en die ramkies getokkel word*" [It's that time of the year again when the *riel* dancers dust off their *vellies*[28] and the *ramkies* are plucked] (ATKV, n.d.).

The Indian Ocean History of the *Ramkie*

The history of the *ramkie* is mostly speculative. Kubik (1989, 6-7) points out that it is an example of an originally imported, foreign instrument that became 'indigenous' to southern Africa. Although it has only been documented in South Africa since the early-eighteenth century, the *ramkie* (or its prototype) appears to have a longer history elsewhere in the Indian Ocean world. According to Kaye (2008, 89):

> The spread of this and other lutelike instruments along the East African coast and in Madagascar may well reflect Arab or Islamic influence and the Indian Ocean trade, as do certain other East African plucked lutes, such as the Swahili *udi* ('*ud*) and the Malagasy *kabosy* (in the Comoro Islands, *gabusi*). However, we know little about the process of diffusion of stringed instruments in Africa before 1800, whether via European or Islamic trade routes.

Although it is often described as 'guitar like', there is evidence to suggest that the *ramkie* was not a copy of the guitar (Rycroft 1977, 241), bearing in mind that the so-called European *rabeca pequena* is itself derived from the Arab *rebāb* (Martin 2013, 73). Commenting on Kirby's hypothesis that the *ramkie* was borrowed from the Portuguese, Rycroft (1977, 241) points out that "some characteristics that look more Oriental than Portuguese seem to be evident in a drawing of it by Charles Bell" (see figure 3.4). Therefore, despite the still

[27] Another term for *ramkie*, which is used by most participants in this study.
[28] '*Vellie*' (pl. '*vellies*') is another term for *veldskoen*.

dominant claim that the *ramkie* is descended from Portuguese sources, it appears that it may be more alike to Arab/Asian lutes that were exchanged and transformed through material and cultural exchanges in the Indian Ocean.

The first writer who alluded to the *ramkie*'s Indian Ocean history was Mentzel ([1787] 1944), who was at the Cape between 1733 and 1741, and whose eyewitness account is the earliest written documentation of the instrument in South Africa:

> Among the slaves and Hottentots there are generally womenfolk who can pluck the strings of a *Raveking* which will be described below, and to whose *highly unmelodious* sound another slave or Hottentot adds a few discords on the *Gom-Gom*, to the dancing of the slaves (15) […] The *Raveking* or *Xguthe* did not originate with the Hottentots but is an imitation of an instrument which slaves brought from Malabar. The Hottentots copied it from them and for this reason it is not widely found among them. It consists of the lower half of a calabash or wild pumpkin through the centre of which a stick, two fingers wide and one ell long, with one end pointed and whittled is thrust through and fastened to it. A small piece of sheepskin, from which all wool has been removed and which has previously been soaked in water, is stretched over the halved calabash and bound fast to it, so that when it dries, it is very taughtly stretched and is resonant. To the thin end of the stick which passes through the calabash and protrudes on the other side, three gut strings of different strength are bound which, as on a violin, are drawn forward over a little bridge, and fixed and tightened by means of three small pegs, passing through three holes which have been bored through the broad end of the stick […] This instrument is not played with a fiddle-stick, but is fingered like a lute (my emphasis) (306).

The instrument described by Mentzel is more-or-less typical of *ramkies* from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries; from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, they were usually made with tin-can resonators (see figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: *Ramkie* held in the Kirby Collection of Musical Instruments, South African College of Music, University of Cape Town, K182_2287_chordo. Photograph by Sean Wilson.

According to Martin (2013, 75), the 'Gom-Gom' referred to by Mentzel was a *ghoema* drum, which also lent its name to the *ghoema* rhythm. In Chapter 4, I will expand on this rhythm and explain why it is relevant to our understanding of the *riel*. Furthermore, he argues that the biased Eurocentric assessment of the music as "unmelodious" and discordant suggests that the music played did not conform to European canons and was therefore original.

Roughly a century after Mentzel's visit to the Cape, Bird (1823, 166) wrote about Cape Town's street culture in the early-nineteenth century:

> [T]he grand display is on the outskirts of the town, to which the black population rush, on a Sunday, […] and go through their various awkward movements in quick or slow time, according to the taste of the dancers. The Sunday dance is accompanied by native music of every description. The slave boys from Madagascar and Mosambique [sic] bring the stringed instruments of their respective tribes and nation, from which they force sounds, *which they regard as melodious* (my emphasis).

This description, which once again alludes to 'unmelodious' music, can be read alongside a painting from roughly the same period, "Tom Tom Dance: Mozambiques & Mixed Race" by Charles Bell, which features an instrument that looks like a *ramkie* (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Early-nineteenth century watercolour painting entitled "Tom Tom Dance: Mozambiques & Mixed Race" by Charles Bell held by UCT Libraries Special Collections and Archives, University of Cape Town, BC_686_C14.

Commenting on Mentzel's account, Kirby (1934, 250) was initially somewhat dismissive of the notion that the *ramkie* was brought to South Africa from Malabar, stating that

"Instruments of a somewhat similar form are undoubtedly to be found in India, and yet I am inclined to the view that the *ramkie* is either definitely of Portuguese origin, or else a hybrid instrument." Moreover, he pointed to the long Portuguese influence on the Malabar Coast since the late fifteenth century. However, five years later, he revised this hypothesis upon seeing two instruments known as *ra'king*, which were made for him by two Malay musicians in Cape Town during the late 1930s (Kirby 1939). One of these, which is held in the Kirby Collection of Musical Instruments at the University of Cape Town, is shown in figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3: *Ra'king* made by Ideroos Isaacs held in the Kirby Collection of Musical Instruments, South African College of Music, University of Cape Town, K190_1969_chordo and K190_1971_chordo. Photograph by Sean Wilson.

After seeing the *ra'king*, Kirby (1939, 485-486) concluded that the *ramkie* could in fact be related to other similar Indian Ocean lutes like the *gamboes* in Java and Celebes, *kinnari vina* or *kacchapi vina* in India, and *kinanda* in Mombassa, Zanzibar and Madagascar. Moreover, he noted that the Malay Peninsula had been connected with the abovementioned countries at various times, and that the *gamboes* had been brought to the Malay Peninsula from Arabia through the spread of Islam. Indeed, Hilarian (2006, 50) discusses the peculiar position of the plucked folk lute *gambus* as the "national instrument" of Malaysia and shows how the

gambus Hadramaut (also called *gambus Arab*) and *gambus Malayu* are viewed as "icons of Islam".[29]

Recently, Martin (2013, xv) has suggested that the *ramkie* is derived from lutes brought to South Africa by slaves who came from Indonesia and Madagascar. Considering the mention of Mozambican performers by Bird (1823) and in the Charles Bell painting above, I suggest that Mozambique is also an important node in the history of the *ramkie*. It is important to note that large percentages of the 63 000 slaves brought to the Cape between 1660 and 1808 were from Mozambique, India, Madagascar and Indonesia (Shell cited in Bruinders 2017, 4).

Though most of what we know about the *ramkie* falls into the period when European presence in the Indian Ocean was well-established, pre-colonial trade had connected southern Africa with the east African coast and the wider Indian Ocean rim region for centuries before the first Portuguese sailors made their way to India. Commenting on the period AD 700-1700, Chirikure (2014, 717) notes that:

> The annual southeast/northwest monsoons were the pedestal on which interaction around the Indian Ocean rim was anchored […] In India, ships were loaded with merchandise and sailed westward past Persia, the Gulf region and southern Arabia and southwards to eastern Africa and the southern Mozambique coast […] The return trip followed the same route. Another route which also followed the monsoon cycles started in Java, Sumatra *via* Madagascan waters and terminated in east Africa.

Therefore, to return to Kirby's (1934, 250) suggestion that the *ramkie* is a "hybrid instrument", Martin (2013, 73) explains that:

> [I]t is likely that slaves imported from Batavia [modern day Jakarta, capital of Indonesia] brought with them elements of the local creole culture, along with expertise they had acquired prior to their transfer to the Cape. This included the knowledge of instruments originating from Indonesia, Europe and the Arabian Peninsula, and of repertoires played on these instruments, which could already, in the 17th century, be the result of early creolisation processes. It is therefore possible that a type of creole lute was transported from Indonesia to southern Africa; but this does not preclude the even stronger probability that it met there with other types of lutes, indigenous or exogenous, and eventually, through several phases of *bricolage*, gave birth to the family of instrument named *ramkie*.

Hence, while it seems "highly probable that the technology of the *ramkie* […] developed in the 18th and 19th centuries" (Rycroft 1977, 241) through European trade, colonial expansion and slavery in the Indian Ocean, precursors of the *ramkie* were transported and transformed

[29] The *gambus Hadramaut* looks like the classical Arabian *'ud* and is also known as *'ud* in Malaysia; the *gambus Malayu* is like the Yemeni *qanbus* (Hilarian 2006, 51).

around the Indian Ocean region for centuries through Arab trade routes, Islamic expansion and slavery between the eight and sixteenth centuries.

Ramkie 'Blues'

In Chapter 2, I introduced the notion of a 'weeping guitar' mentioned by Leviseur (1944) at a *riel* performance in the late-nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that the *ramkie* too, has been described in similar terms. Moodie (1835, 224) recalled listening to the "*melancholy"* notes of the *ramkie* and "*gorah*" (a blown single-stringed instrument). Duff-Gordon (1875, 259) referred to "queer little mournful ditties."

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Froneman (2012) suggests that the mournful quality of the music can be linked to the experiences of slavery. In her biography of Saartjie Baartman (the Khoekhoe woman nicknamed "Hottentot Venus"), who appears to have been coerced into travelling to England where she was exploited and vulgarly exhibited, Holmes (2007, 66-67) notes:

> Of all the sounds that defined Saartjie, her *ramkie* was the most distinguishing. In the evolution of this African guitar is compressed the diversity of 600 years of South African history […] Descended from the original Khoi gourd and nut instruments, the *ramkie* merged, through trade routes, colonisation and slavery, with influences from Portugal and the East, mainly India and Malaysia, and later developed into the tin-can guitar. By the early nineteenth century, its arpeggios denoted African, Asian, Arab and Western harmonies; this music was a direct antecedent to the blues.

Khoe Influences

When the creole lute, which would become known as the *ramkie*, arrived at the Cape, local performers exerted their influence on it and became associated with the Khoekhoe people, who were the most frequent performers of the instrument. In particular, one playing technique appears to have derived from Khoekhoe musical practices – a peculiar harmonics technique.

Moodie (1835, 226) was the first writer to remark on this technique when he noted, "The instrument has great compass, and the performer can produce the octaves by touching the middle of the strings lightly with the chin." In 1834, Charles Bell captured this technique in a picture of a woman performer (see figure 3.4):

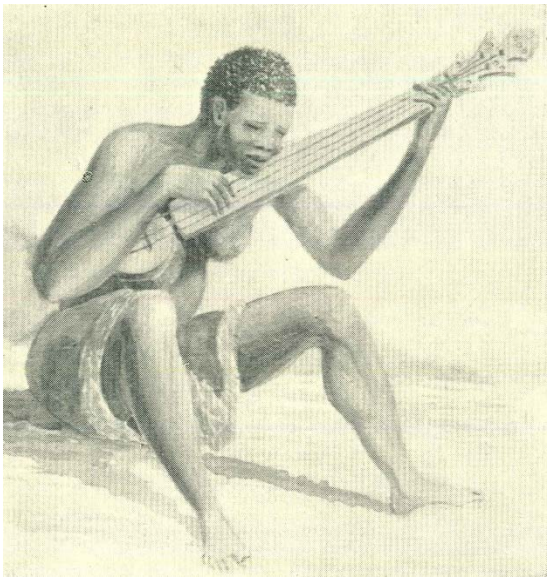

Figure 3.4: Early-nineteenth century drawing of a *ramkie* player by Charles Bell (Kirby 1934, Plate 73).

Von Wielligh ([1921] 2010, 28) also mentioned it in the late nineteenth-century description of the *riel* mentioned earlier, when he says that the performer muted the strings with his chin. In a performance for Kirby, Ideroos Isaacs swept his chin across the strings and explained that *ramkie* players used to move their beards up and down the strings "to improve the effect" (Kirby 1939, 484). This was captured in a photograph that appears in Kirby's article (see figure 3.5):

Figure 3.5: Ideroos Isaacs performing on the *ra'king* that he made for Kirby (1939, 480). Photograph by A. Loxton.

According to Kirby (1934, 252), the chin technique is a Khoe practice that is also used by women performing on the *kh:as*, which is a struck musical bow (see figure 3.6). He therefore implies that the practice may have been transferred from the *kh:as* to the *ramkie*.

Figure 3.6: Unidentified Korana woman performing on the *kh:as* (Kirby 1934, Plate 58).

Although no participants in this study referred to the chin technique, one wonders whether this practice might have any influence on the technique employed by Karoo guitarist Hannes Coetzee, who became an overnight sensation when a video of 'his teaspoon slide technique' was uploaded onto YouTube (see figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7: Hannes Coetzee demonstrating his 'teaspoon slide-guitar' technique on 28 June 2007. Photograph by Fabianily; some rights reserved. This work is licensed under an Attribution-NoDerivatives 2.0 Generic Licence. Accessed February 6, 2019. https://www.flickr.com/photos/61258967@N00/2149473367.

It is interesting to note that Kirby (1934, 144) observed that some songs played on the *kh:as* were transcriptions of Korana reed-flute dance songs. He notes that only men played the reed-flutes – women thus transcribed and transformed the music for an instrument that was their own. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is evidence that the *riel* may be related to Khoe reed-flute dances, so I suggest that this practice could be noteworthy.

Creative Component

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that this chapter is accompanied by a creative component, *Ramkie: An Experiment in Organology* (DOI 3.1), which is a short documentary film detailing an experimental instrument-making workshop that I hosted and filmed in Brandvlei. Since no eighteenth-century specimens have survived (Rycroft and Impey 2001), the motivation behind the project was to create a playable replica of a calabash resonator *ramkie* akin to eighteenth and nineteenth century *ramkies*. To achieve this, I approached three musicians who had expressed an interest in building a *ramkie* during our interviews about the *riel* music. They were Gert Swarts, Klaas van Zyl and Kola Zandberg. I commissioned these musicians to build such an instrument based on the following archival material: a) Mentzel's early-eighteenth century written description of the *riel* mentioned earlier, which I translated into Afrikaans; b) the earliest visual representations of the instrument that comprised a painting by Charles Bell (see figure 3.2) and his two line drawings of the *ramkie* (see figures 3.4 and 3.8); and c) photos of the 1930s *ra'king* built by Ideroos Isaac (see figure 3.3).

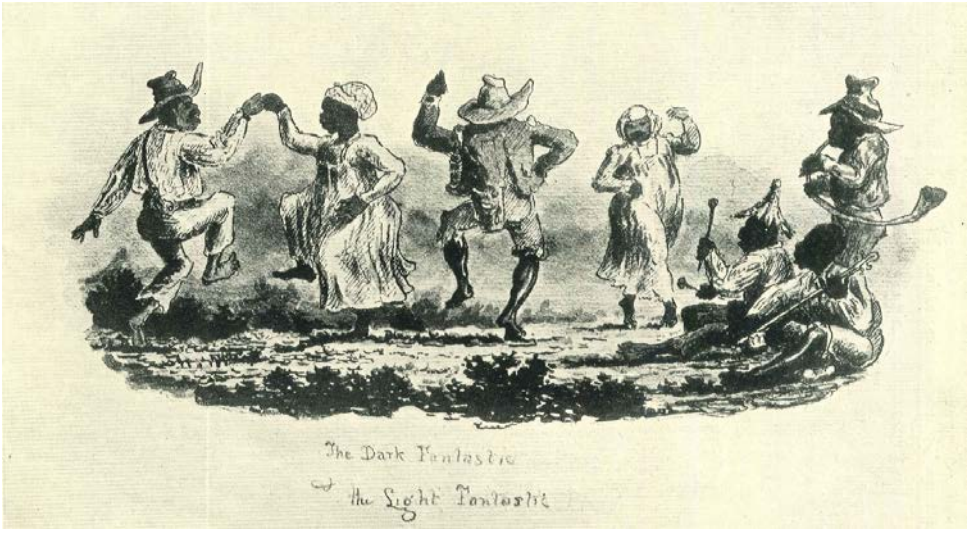

Figure 3.8: Nineteenth century drawing entitled "The Dark Fantastic & The Light Fantastic" by Charles Bell (Kirby 1934, Plate 71).

Although the use of archival material was central to the project, its success was dependent on the skills of the musicians involved, who had constructed *ramkies* as children. Moreover, although I provided musicians with the archival inspiration and some of the materials required for the instrument, I left the conception and construction of the replica entirely up to them, and the final product can be seen in the film. Regrettably, the instrument does not produce a very clear sound; however, improvements to its action (distance between the string and fingerboard) and resonator could improve this.

Gender

In interviews, I learned that making of a *ramkie* was an important step in musical learning for most participants in this study. This process initiated musical learning, and usually occurred during preadolescent or teenage years. Even musicians who play instruments like accordion and harmonica often started out on homemade stringed instruments. Therefore, I suggest that "the homemade instrument [was] a symbol for musicianship itself" (Kubik 1989, 5).

When, as a woman, I became involved in the making of an experimental *ramkie* for the creative component mentioned above, I became aware that the process was strongly influenced by gender since various activities fall broadly into the male domain: for instance, procuring materials like discarded oil cans and intestines/skin (which is usually done during butchering), access and proficiency on tools like saws and sandpaper etc. I propose that Kubik's (1989) observations about the social role and function of homemade banjos in Zambia and Malawi can be applied fruitfully to this study. He states that the homemade instrument tradition exhibits the following characteristics:

> [I]t […] promotes age-set identity, somehow compensating for that identity that was provided by other "traditional" institutions in the past […] Although the process of making and learning to play a homemade banjo is not part of any initiation ceremony […] a strong peer-group element is discernible in the sociology of the boys involved, comparable in some respects to a "rite de passage" (using van Gennep's term [van Gennep 1909]). By this I mean that the making and playing of a homemade [instrument] has become a positive stage in a male's life […] It is exclusively male […] The [homemade instrument] itself, therefore, has become a symbol not only of a transitional stage in a young male's life, but specifically of the virility, and its expression, associated with the time-framework of puberty (Kubik 1989, 6).

From the list of participants in this study, there are relatively few female instrumentalists. Those who do play guitar, were often given instruments by their male family members, or learned to play from romantic partners in adulthood. Of course, this study has a small sample and is not fully representative; however, female musicians agree that there are relatively few

riel instrumentalists. I argue that the importance of the homemade instrument, coupled with the fact that its construction lies broadly within male spheres of life, is a determining factor in the relative scarcity of woman *riel* musicians. Another factor is that males often had more time on their hands to play on these instruments when they were tending to livestock, whereas females were often fully engaged in household tasks like minding younger siblings, washing and cooking. Relaying an incident in which she played on a fellow *riel* musician's guitar, Gertruida Lombard (21/07/2018) alludes to the connection between *riel* guitar playing and masculinity:

> When I played *riel* on his guitar, his jaw dropped because, "Playing *riel*," he said, "was a man's thing." It was mostly men who played it […] That makes it a challenge […] I feel it's a unique thing if you can play *riel* as a woman […] Perhaps there are many [women who can play], but they don't want to come forward […] As a woman, it's quite a challenge for me to see that I can do the same thing as a man, such as playing *riel*.

By contrast, several eighteenth and early-nineteenth century colonial accounts list Khoekhoe women as performers of *ramkie*. However, as mentioned earlier, women (who were not allowed to play on the reed-flutes) appropriated male songs and transcribed them for their own enjoyment. I argue that this is comparable to the practice mentioned in Chapter 2, whereby women dressed as men to perform male dance steps. Hence, although beyond the scope of this study, I suggest that *riel* performance spaces were/are often used by women to challenge gender norms.

In Conclusion

Though typically associated with the indigenous Khoekhoe people of South Africa, the instrument known as the *ramkie* was introduced to southern Africa from elsewhere through maritime activities in the Indian Ocean. Thought to be descendent of the Portuguese *rebequinha* (equivalent to the *rabeca pequena*), itself descendent from the Arab *rebāb*, the *ramkie* appears to be a creole lute that emerged from material and cultural exchanges at various nodes in the Indian Ocean namely India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique and then the Cape. These exchanges and transformations occurred over centuries that stretch from soon after the emergence of Islam (seventh century AD) to the present day. However, the technology and repertoire that is typically associated with the Khoekhoe *ramkie* emerged in the early eighteenth century, when it was constructed with a calabash resonator. From the late nineteenth-century onwards, empty tin cans began to be used as resonators. For most musicians in the twentieth century, the *ramkie* played a crucial role in musical learning

because the construction of a homemade instrument initiated learning. This process was influenced by notions of masculinity, and perhaps accounts for the relatively low number of female *riel* instrumentalists. Like the *riel*, which may or may not have been derived/influenced by European reels, the *ramkie* is often perceived as indigenous, and represents a link to the Khoe-San people for its performers. Moreover, acknowledgement of pre-colonial roots, and routes (see De Jongh 2012) that gave rise to the *ramkie* challenges earlier disparaging Eurocentric interpretations of the instrument as a 'primitive' or 'degraded' form of more highly developed instrument.

Chapter Four

Riel Music as Archive

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore *riel* music as an oral archive of indigenous knowledge, memory and experience. My understanding of 'music as archive' is based on Muller's (2002) and Impey's (2008) work. First, in expanding the traditional concept of an archive as a building that houses mostly written items, Muller (2002) suggests that:

> [S]ong composition provides a mechanism for archival deposit, care, and retrieval in contexts of immanent loss (409) [and] The archive/compositional space is itself multi-sited, even diasporic; it is personal and public; simultaneously real in its performance, and virtual in its potential for *imaginative travel* (my emphasis) (427).

Second, Impey (2008, 35) suggests, "Music may […] be perceived as an archive of experiences; a site of collective memory or a 'primary symbolic landscape' of a people." However, my interpretation of *riel* music as archive is not artificially imposed; it represents an emic understanding of songs as a platform for experience and memory. This excerpt from a focus group interview in Laingsburg, with Ruiter Jacobs, Klaas Nel and Katriena Swarts (18/06/18), illustrates this:

EB: What were the *rielliedjies* (*riel* songs) about?
KS: I would say the songs […] are about what you do or what you did.
RJ: Or maybe an event or -
KS: Yes, something that happened!
RJ: that the old people made a song about.
KN: The old people played it like this – "*Miekie Miekie bring jou viool, Jakob het my in die bloupin vermoor*" [Miekie Miekie bring your violin, Jakob murdered me in the blue pin[30]].
KS: […] I think the way our grandmas and grandpas sang, it is things that happened to them, and it is things […] they took note of, you see? […] Because they sing about knowledge, you see? They sing about knowledge […] I would say song comes out of experience, or how do you see it? Experience and that which happened. Yes, how would one say it, things that happened, or things that happened to someone else, you see?
RJ: […] The old people sang it […] very short […] then they'd repeat it. Then you must go and take that stuff, and stretch it, and add things to it.

[30] It is unclear what the term '*bloupin*' means but it possibly relates to its literal meaning of 'blue pin'. I enquired about its meaning during an informal exchange with Klaas Nel (02/12/2018), and he informed me that he was not entirely sure what it meant.

KN: Almost like a mix.

KS: If I can mention it, then I will mention it. It was actually their newspaper. What happened in the past, they carried with them […] Because there was no newspaper in the Kalahari, we made a song about it, to remember it […] There weren't newspapers and recordings and things like that […] It may have happened three or four years ago, but I make a song, so I remember […] And that's how they lived on. So, the songs they sang were […] their memories […] It's memories. It was sung repeatedly, over and over again. "*Tant Dina het 'n kind, wat uit die hemel water drink*" [Aunt Dina has a child, who drinks water out of heaven]. "*Vloek en skel is niks, maar jaloers is liederlik*" [Swearing and scolding is nothing, but jealousy is filthy].

I understand Katriena Swarts's observation, "Because there was no newspaper […] we made a song about it, to remember it […] It was sung repeatedly" as "deposit, care, and retrieval in contexts of immanent loss" (Muller 2002, 409). I understand Ruiter Jacobs's and Klaas Nel's explanation, "Then you go and take that stuff, and stretch it, and add things to it. Almost like a mix" as a "multi-sited" archive/compositional space that is "personal and public" (Muller 2002, 427). In this chapter, I will show that the *liedjies* are "a site of collective memory" (Impey 2008, 35) because musicians draw from a repertoire of orally transmitted music and transform it in often-personal ways.

In doing so, I rely on emic interpretations to challenge earlier etic representations of *riel* music. For example, Burden (1991, 24) commented on the strikingly "*onsinnigheid*" (nonsensical) and "*onlogiese*" (illogical) nature of songs that accompanied the *riel* by providing the following examples:

Mamma bring die viool van Bêrend	Mother bring Bêrend's violin
want hy wil my vermoor	because he wants to murder me
O maar tant Dina het 'n kind	Oh but aunt Dina has a child
wat uit sy linkerborsie drink	who drinks out of her left breast

The coincidence that Klaas Nel and Katriena Swarts referred to variations of these very same songs in their explanation is quite remarkable; the cryptic lyrics, which were 'nonsensical' and 'illogical' to Burden made complete sense to them as memory and experience. Hence, I suggest that the meaning of songs is rooted in lived experience and that music is a "'primary symbolic landscape' of a people" (Impey 2008, 35), which can only be accessed through qualitative methodologies. My interest in exploring how indigenous knowledge is archived in

the music builds on Van Wyk's (2012, 47) assessment that the *riel* can be regarded as an "entertainment form used as a social, cultural and educational tool."

This chapter is divided into three parts – each part builds on the part preceding it. In each part, and throughout the chapter, I show that indigenous knowledge, memory and experience is archived in the *riel* music in complex ways. Since *riel* music has not been the focus of earlier studies, I provide background by discussing its stylistic characteristics and performance/compositional procedures in part one. I show how certain characteristics are indicative of its Khoe-San origins and illustrate how the form and structure of *riel* music contribute to its memorability. The second part is a thematic analysis of the *liedjies* (songs) in which I analyse the lyrics under three themes: romance, place, and death and suffering. I provide several examples to support my contention that these are indeed recurring and significant themes. I also unpack the importance of humour in *riel* music. Part two features a series of personal reflections by musicians that serve to illuminate their compositional intentions and how they relate to songs. Challenging notions of 'anonymity' in 'folk' or 'traditional' music,[31] I show that *riel* musicians often relate to the music they compose/perform in highly personal ways. In part three, I discuss music within the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition and contrast it to twentieth century *riel* music because this was a theme that emerged strongly in my interviews.

Part 1: Stylistic Characteristics of *Riel* Music

Instrumentation and Techniques

Riel music was played on instruments like the guitar, violin, accordion, concertina, harmonica and *ramkie*[32] in the nineteenth century (Russel 1899, 184; Leviseur 1944, 25; Von Wielligh ([1921] 2010, 27). The instrumentation of *riel* bands in the twentieth century was the same,

[31] The contentious concept of 'folk' music has been characterised by varying degrees of anonymity since the late-eighteenth century. Herder, who coined the term '*volkslied*' (folksong), listed 'communal composition' as a defining characteristic of folk music; Sharp referred to 'anonymous composition'. The International Folk Music Council (which later changed its name to the International Council for Traditional Music), which initially ascribed to Sharp's ideas, later dispensed with the notion of anonymous composition favouring the idea that folk music may have originated with an individual composer even if it was subsequently absorbed into the "unwritten living tradition of a community" (Pegg 2001). However, the notion of 'anonymity' in folk/traditional music discourse remains strong and stands in contrast to the emphasis on individual genius of 'art' music, jazz and even popular music composers.

[32] As mentioned in Chapter 3, *ramkies* were common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but were largely replaced by guitars in the twentieth century. However, they continued to be used as introductory learning instruments.

with the addition of the banjo. Furthermore, people often played on improvised 'instruments' like tins, combs and spoons. Although there is no standard instrumentation format for a *riel* band, there is a predilection for guitar-based formats and any *riel* band must have at least one guitar since the role of timekeeping is assigned to the strummed guitar. Since the establishment of the competition, keyboards have become common and some bands even use drum kit and bass guitar. Several members of my research community, especially senior musicians, perceive the use of 'non-traditional' and electronic instruments as a threat to the 'authentic' *riel* sound, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Guitarists use one of two techniques: *'slaan'* (hit), which is to strum; or *'optel en knyp'* (pick up and pinch), which is a specific finger-picking technique. David Kramer (2011), who has performed extensively with guitarists from the Karoo, describes *'optel en knyp'* as a technique whereby the thumb works the bass strings (*optel*) while the first and second fingers play a melody on the first three strings (*knyp*). *'Slaan'* guitars play a rhythmic role whereas *'optel en knyp'* guitars have a largely melodic function. However, two guitarists in this study, Pieter van der Westhuizen and Alfred Basson, combine *'optel en knyp'* with strumming in their solo playing. Van der Westhuizen (23/07/2018) explains that his uncle taught him to play like that as a young musician. Basson (23/06/2018) refers to this way of playing as '*rol*' (roll) (DOI 4.1).

Singers often employ a vocal technique that members of my research community have described as typical of *riel* music. Florence Filton (25/06/2018), who has done work in the field of Khoe-San indigenous knowledge, likens it to Alpine yodelling and refers to it by the onomatopoeic term '*tjeedel*'. Indeed, the technique involves singing relatively high-pitched improvised vocables comparable to yodelling,[33] which is widespread throughout southern Africa and prevalent among the Khoe-San (Grauer 2006, 8; Tracey 2015; Low 2015). Mariette Kotze (25/06/2018), the leader of the Betjies van Betjiesfontein, recalls that her mother referred to it as '*kwêr*' (nag); George Slawerse (30/09/2018), the leader of the

[33] Yodelling is defined as "vocalization that uses the larynx muscles and glottal stops to accentuate the abrupt change of vocal register between the chest register and the falsetto or head register" (Vander Wel 2012). According to Vander Wel (2012), yodelling also has a noteworthy history in North American blues. Alpine yodelling was popularised in North America during the mid-nineteenth century by the Austrian Rainer Family. It was later adopted as a "vocal burlesque in portrayals of racialised and ethnic others" by blackface ensembles like the Christy Minstrels. However, by the early twentieth century, African American singers like Lottie Kimbrough introduced it to blues, and later, Jimmie Rodgers popularised yodelling in country music. Rodgers's recordings were immensely popular in Kenya to the extent that his music inspired the contentious recording of 'Chemirocha' recorded by Hugh Tracey ("Chemirocha (III)"). In Zimbabwe too, Rodgers's style was emulated by working-class acoustic guitarists (Turino 2003, 67).

Korbeel Rieldansers, calls it '*nxarra*' – a term, which he suggests is of Khoe-San origin even though its original meaning has been lost or transformed over time (DOI 4.2).

Chords and Progressions

Riel music is played in major keys and uses the primary chords (I, IV, V). However, the renowned South African musician, Alex van Heerden (2006), points out that homemade violins and guitars are often tuned in ways that are reminiscent of the natural overtones used in indigenous Khoe-San bow music. Musicians draw on a repertoire of *riele* (pl.) that are identified as *kortriel* (short *riel*) and *langriel* (long *riel*), among others. Through musical demonstrations and interviews, I learned that *kortriel* and *langriel* are best understood as chord progressions. *Kortriel*, also called *kortbegrip* (short idea) or *kortafriel* (abrupt *riel*), is precisely what the name evokes - a short, ostinato progression of I-IV-V-I played at a relatively fast tempo (DOI 4.3). *Langriel* is usually performed over an I-V-IV-I-V-I progression (DOI 4.4). An extract from an interview with guitarist Boeta Gammie (30/09/2018) (stage name of Jan Isaacs), illustrates this well:

EB: Why is the *langriel* named that way?
BG: It is about the […] the rhythm – that rhythm. It's a long rhythm. So, the bursts that you give, are longer. The *kortriel*'s bursts are just faster.

The rhythm referred to by Boeta Gammie is clearly the harmonic rhythm (or harmonic tempo), which is defined as the rate of change of chords – the term that he uses, '*sarsies*' (bursts), is a particularly apt description for the duration of a chord. Moreover, *kortriel* is more energetic than *langriel*; the former is often played to liven up a party whereas the latter is intended for longer periods of dancing. In a musical demonstration of *langriel* and *kortriel*, Gert Swarts (10/01/2018) spontaneously made some observations about *heuningbier* (honey beer)[34], which is mead brewed from honey/honeycomb and several other ingredients:

> [plays *langriel*] And if you want to heat things up, you'd always play [demonstrates *kortriel*] that is when you'd start with it. And you must remember that the *langriel* is the one that brings out the sun. When you've *braaied* (barbecued) and you've drunk *heuningbier* (honey beer), it brings out the sun. I must go to work, the [livestock] are in the *kraal* (pen). I should have been there already, but we're still dancing the *rieldans*! That's what they told you about last night, the *heuningbier* […] It's the healthiest. It has herbs from every flower that the bee has drawn sap from and carried to its nest [lengthy explanation about how bees make honey] [basic explanation about brewing *heuningbier*] [...] [resumes *langriel*] (DOI 4.5).

[34] In South Africa, honey beer is also known as *khadi* (Gordon 2009) and *iQhilika* (Cambray 2005).

According to Cambray (2005), mead-making techniques in South Africa originated among the Khoe-San (III), and they referred to mead as *karee*, *kari* and *karie* (Brandford and Brandford cited in Cambray, 12). Nortje (2011, 224) has shown that it is used medicinally for relaxation, stomach complaints and oral thrush. Swarts's observation serves as an example of how indigenous knowledge is archived in and retrieved through *riel* music.

Lastly, one of the most widely known and popular *riel*e, '*Klipbok*' [Klipspringer], is neither a *langriel* nor *kortriel* – instead, it is distinguished by its melody (DOI 4.6). '*Klipbok*' is regarded as one of the oldest *riele* and it is believed to have already been in existence in the early twentieth century.

Riel Rhythm

Musicians and dancers agree that the single most important element of *riel* music is its characteristic rhythm, which makes you want to *riel*. Moreover, tempo is equally important; if played too slow or too fast, the music can become undanceable. The ability to maintain a danceable pace, which does not exhaust the dancers is seen as the hallmark of a good *riel* musician. As mentioned earlier, the role of timekeeping is assigned to guitarists; *slaan* guitars carry the rhythmic impulse that sustain long periods of dancing. Fanie Hanse (22/07/2017) elaborates:

> My father was sensitive to the *riel* […] Now if a guitar was out, or if we did not play right, then he stopped us. Then he would say, "You must listen to what I tell you […] we dance on the string – the string that sounds right and the rhythm that goes with it. If you play incorrectly, then I will not dance right.

Several members of my research community have expressed this sentiment. Alfred Basson (23/06/2018) points out that a good *riel* guitarist must "*speel onder die dansers se voete in*" [play under the dancers' feet].

Although musicians do not call it as such, the underlying rhythm that can be heard in *riel* music is a uniquely South African rhythm called *vastrap*. The term '*vastrap*' is Afrikaans for "stamp down hard" (Dunseith 2017, 139); it denotes a style of dancing with contentious origins which is performed by both coloured *langarm* and white *boereorkes*/*boeremusiek* bands (Martin 2009; Dunseith 2017). Froneman (2012, 72) points out that it "has been the subject of a hot debate within boeremusiek circles […] The one pole of this debate emphatically insists that the *vastrap* bears no relation to the *riel* […] Instead the origin of the dance is said to refer to the stamping down of a newly constructed dung floor." Alex van Heerden (cited in Froneman 2012, 73) links the *vastrap* rhythm to the rhythmic stamping of

shamanic trance dances of the San people. In *riel*, the underlying *vastrap* rhythm is usually played as follows:

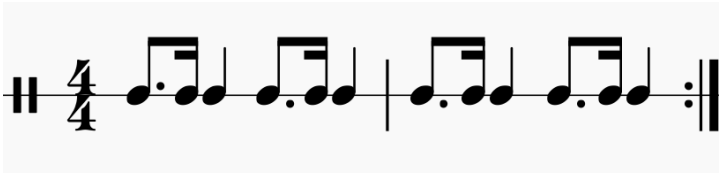

Figure 4.1: Underlying *vastrap* rhythm heard in *riel* music.

Van Heerden points out that the *vastrap* rhythm is "very much like the *ghoema*, [but] a slowed down *ghoema*" (Martin 2009, 81). The *ghoema* rhythm, so-called because it is usually played on the single-headed barrel drum of the same name, is found in several genres of the Western Cape Province (Bruinders 2017, 54).

Dunseith (2017) has also remarked on the relationship between the *ghoema* rhythm and the *vastrap* rhythm. This is interesting insofar as the *riel* shares stylistic and social similarities with the "*ghoema* musical complex" (Bruinders 2012, 1), including being most prominent at end-of-year celebrations, hosting competitions, and communal feasting. Yet, unlike the "*ghoema* musical complex", the *riel* was historically performed in the rural Cape and further afield in southern Africa and shares distinct similarities with *boeremusiek*. Moreover, whereas the *ghoema* rhythm has become emblematic of coloured musical practices in Cape Town, the *vastrap* rhythm straddles coloured and Afrikaner musical practices.

Performance/Compositional Procedures in *Liedjies*

The *riel* is frequently accompanied by instrumental music. However, when a vocal part is added, it is called a '*liedjie*' (song).[35] However, '*liedjie*' and '*riel'* are often used interchangeably. *Liedjies* (pl.) typically consist of one or several three- and/or four-line verses that are strung together in the fashion of a '*keurspel*' (medley) and sung repeatedly. In an informal discussion, Katriena Swarts (2/12/2018) compared the form of *liedjies* to '*laslappies*' (patchwork). Rhyme is a prominent feature of *liedjies*; although lost in translation, rhyme schemes are evident in the original Afrikaans texts of songs.

I found that *riel* singers approach *liedjies* in much the same way as performers approach the lyric poems called *ghinnawas* (Abu-Lughod 1987, 261), by drawing "from a cultural

[35] The Afrikaans term '*liedjie*' is the diminutive form of '*lied'* (song) so it technically means 'little song'. However, it is used generically to refer to songs that range from so-called folk songs to pop songs. For clarity, I use it only to refer to songs that accompany the *riel* throughout this dissertation.

repertoire or by [composing] extemporaneously, playing with familiar themes, phrases, and structures." This 'cultural repertoire' is not limited to musical repertoire; it encompasses other forms of verbal discourse, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Hence, verses in *liedjies* are often unrelated to each other since singers combine pre-existing material with newly composed material. *Liedjies* are thus assemblages of verses composed by different people. Most often, the melodies of verses in a *liedjie* are based on the same melodic contour. In a way, they can be likened to *contrafacta* (sing. *contrafactum*) whereby one text is substituted for another without significant change to the music (Falck and Picker 2001). As they are transmitted orally/aurally,

> Words change, lines and words are broken up, parts of songs interchange with parts of other songs and the music is transformed accordingly. Often when words are transformed, the vowels remain unchanged even if the meaning of the word and therefore the meaning of the sentence or line is changed completely or even becomes nonsensical (Burden 1996, 1).[36]

This process is evident in the following verses, which appear to be drawing on pre-existing lyrics centred on a *geelslang* (yellow snake); possibly the highly venomous Cape cobra (*Naja nivea*). Boeta Gammie (stage name of Jan Isaacs) performed this verse in Calvinia (30/09/2018):

Daardie geelslang om jou nek	That cobra around your neck
geelslang om jou nek	cobra around your neck
dis mos 'n jaloersmeid se werk	it's a jealous woman's doing

Katrina van Zyl in Brandvlei performed the verse below (03/07/2018):

Geelslang met die vlerk	Cobra with the wing
die ou geelslang met die vlerk	the old cobra with the wing
geelslang met die vlerk	cobra with the wing
dit is my hart se lêplek	it's my heart's resting place

Burden (1991, 405) and Grobbelaar (1997, 63) also recorded songs that mention a *geelslang*:

Die geelslang oor my nek	The cobra around my neck
die geelslang oor my nek	The cobra around my neck
die meide is so jaloers dat hulle kan vrek	the women are so jealous they can die

[36] Burden (1991; 1996) employs the German terms '*Zersingen*' (gradual disintegration of songs) and '*Umsingen*' (their gradual reshaping) to describe this process. These terms are dated because they stem from evolutionary perspectives and are rarely used in English literature. However, the process described by Burden is relevant to this study and many of the *liedjies* performed by participants in this study are variations of songs recorded by Burden (1991; 1996) and Grobbelaar (1997).

Die geelslang met die vlek	The cobra with the stain
die geelslang met die vlek	The cobra with the stain
bokkie jy moet weet	darling you must know
daar's 'n ander in jou plek	there is another in your place

Strategies of Remembering

Although some *riel* music has been recorded since roughly the 1970s, and smartphones and social media now play an important role in its preservation and transmission, *riel* music was and remains an orally/aurally transmitted tradition. Whereas the lyrics are sometimes (but rarely) written down, the music is not. The memorability of *liedjies* is thus crucial to their transmission and relevant to this chapter, which contends that the music can be viewed as an archive of indigenous knowledge, memory and experience. I suggest that several elements of *riel* music make them memorable. Firstly, *liedjies* were often performed repeatedly for a long time. As mentioned by Katriena Swarts (18/06/2018), "It was sung repeatedly, over and over again." Secondly, verses are short – they are rarely longer than four lines. Thirdly, they almost always contain rhyme. Turpin and Henderson (2015, 91) note that rhyme is an important form of sound patterning that "assist[s] in memorization and transmission of knowledge." Fourthly, they make use of pre-existing text and melodies. Commenting on *contrafacta*, Kaufman Shelemay (2001, 226) says, "The use of a well-known, pre-existing melody ensures, of course, that the new text will be remembered more easily." I argue that the same is true for the use and alteration of pre-existing text. Lastly, I will show that *liedjies* are often humorous, which makes them easy to recall. Hence, I argue that the stylistic characteristics of *riel* music are also strategies of remembering.

Part 2: Themes in *Liedjies*

I now move on to a thematic analysis of *liedjies*, which reveals that they deal mostly with topics of romance, small-town rural life, moral messages about jealousy, hardship and loss. The way in which they do so is significant since most *liedjies* are humorous in some way: some are comical, ironic and facetious whereas others are not funny at all. However, they are generally performed as accompaniment to a dance in which humour is crucial. As highlighted by Gertruida Lombard (21/07/2018):

> [T]he *riel* […] must be able to make people laugh […] The humour in it, the funniness in it, people enjoy it [...] When it comes to other types of music, I will sing sad things. But when it comes to *riel*, for me, it's always about laughing. It's about enjoying it […] about feeling *lekker* [cheerful]. Many days, I think that I make my own day if I can sing or say something funny to someone […] it takes a bit of the heartache away, or it takes a bit of the sadness away.

In their analysis of *moppies* (comic songs) sung by Malay choirs and the *klopse*, Gaulier and Martin (2017, 208) comment on the function of humour in musical practices of people "who are in large part descended from slaves, who have been oppressed and despised." They suggest that:

> With regard to the question of identity, comic, humour and laughter entertain close relationships with feelings of shame, and especially with self-shame or self-hate stirred up by the Other's gaze. In South Africa, as in many countries which have been submitted to colonial and racial domination, persons who were treated as inferior in part internalised the inferiority ascribed to them, while they never ceased to fight against it. They were traversed by a form of ambivalence that intertwined shame and self-esteem, struggle against scorn and efforts to recover dignity. Laughter, in the course of such struggles and efforts, appears […] as the antithesis of shame.

Moreover, humour acts as way to come to terms with difficulty. Jankélévitch (cited in Gaulier and Martin 2017, 136) notes that "Life is serious, especially for oppressed people, but can be transfigured by comic and humour, the figures and codes of which pervade social representations shared by members of a group who speak the same language and adhere to the same social codes." Indeed, Baudelaire suggests that "the power of laughter is in who laughs, and not at all in what is laughed at" (quoted in Gaulier and Martin 2017, 137). However, Schopenhauer reminds us that the comic is "unremittingly guided by a demand for seriousness" (quoted in Gaulier and Martin 2017, 136).

I should like to mention that references to journeys and mountains occur frequently. Since they are so ubiquitous, I have elected to analyse them as recurring motifs derived from common phrases rather than as themes.

Romance

Since courtship is central to the *riel*, it follows that *liedjies* often deal with romance. Those with romantic content usually take the form of playful courtship songs or songs that relay relationship woes like lost love and heartache; some also comment on jealousy, infidelity and domestic violence. Male musicians recall that as young men they often used to flirt with women through song and that their initial interest in music was often fuelled by the potential to impress women with their musical abilities (AB 23/06/2018; PVDW 23/07/2018).

Accordingly, women mention that men propositioned them by reciting short, witty rhymes (FF 25/07/2018). Example 1, a verse from a *liedjie* performed by Frederick Boyes at the semi-final competition in Calvinia (29/09/2018), mentions courtship:

Bokkie dit is net ek en jy	Darling it is just you and I
bokkie ja dit is net ek en jy	darling yes it is just you and I
ek het gekom om na jou te kom vry	I came to woo/court you

Example 1

Example 2, '*Wie Se Kjênd Is Jy?'* [Whose Child Are You?][37], composed and performed by Pieter van der Westhuizen (2014), is popular among the *riel* community and the broader Afrikaans-speaking community since it has been covered by well-known Afrikaans pop musicians.[38] It exhibits the flirtatious humour typical of *liedjies* about romance:

Wie se kjênd is jy	Whose child are you
wat my so verlei?	seducing me like that?
Weet jou ma van jou	Does your mother know
wat so aan my klou?	that you are clinging to me?
Het jy jou pa gevra	Did you ask your father
of jy mag ringe dra?	if you may wear rings?
Jou neusie is nog nat	Your nose is still wet (you are young)
maar jy wil aan my kom vat	but you want to touch me

Example 2

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there appears to be a body of songs with 'lewd' lyrics, which is not represented in this study although Burden (1991) and Grobbelaar (1997) recorded *liedjies* that fit the description. Example 3, performed by Ruiter Jacobs and Klaas Nel, offers a glimpse into *liedjies* with suggestive lyrics: [39]

Jou groen komkommer jou steenbokvel	You green cucumber you(r) steenbok skin
meisiekind laat ek jou rok optel	let me lift your dress girl

[37] The term *'kjênd'* is a regional pronunciation of *'kind'* (child), which can be heard in certain parts of the Western and Northern Cape.

[38] First released in 1997, '*Wie Se Kjênd Is Jy*?' has been covered by several artists including Dr Victor and Theuns Jordaan (2009), Daniel Hoffmann (2014) and Klifwerf Orkes (2015). Van der Westhuizen owns the copyright to the song and it is registered with SAMRO under his name (08/11/2018), so he gains royalties from these covers which were released as '*Wie Se Kind Is Jy*?' by the artists mentioned above.

[39] This example in particular can be compared to a song recorded by Grobbelaar (cited in Burden 1991, 651); the first line might well be interpreted as a double entendre: "*Die groen komkommer en die ryp spanspek / ag en sy maak my so waterbek / Julle kan maar dans en skoene verniel / ou Pieta sleep vlerk by tant Anna van oom Giel*" [The green cucumber and the ripe sweet melon / oh she makes my mouth water / You can dance and ruin your shoes / old Pieta is wooing aunt Anna of uncle Giel].

rokkie so kort want die boudjies so vet	dress so short because the buttocks [are] so fat
daarom skiet oom Kallie so net	that is why uncle Kallie shoots his net

Example 3

According to Klaas Nel (18/06/2018), a '*groen komkommer*' (green cucumber) is a term of endearment for a young girl, and a '*steenbokvel*' (steenbok skin) refers to something that is slept on; a *steenbok* (*Raphicerus campestris*) is a common small antelope found throughout southern and eastern Africa. He also suggested that the 'net' that is shot here, refers to a bow and arrow; the idea is that a man would shoot an arrow at a woman that he wanted to court – much like Cupid.

Liedjies that relay betrayal, heartache and domestic violence can be likened to the blues and other African songs of mockery and denunciation in that they castigate unacceptable social behaviour in a symbolic manner (Kubik 1999, 27). The somewhat cryptic lyrics of Example 4, *'Die Bloupoort'* [The Bloupoort][40] performed by a band from Carnarvon (2016), appear to hint at infidelity:

Keer my mamma keer	Stop me mother stop me
keer my mamma keer	stop me mother stop me
keer my mamma keer	stop me mother stop me
dan gaan ons die Bloupoort deur	then we'll pass through the Bloupoort
Sakrivier is vol	Sakriver is full
Sakrivier is vol	Sakriver is full
Sakrivier is vol	Sakriver is full
dis my trane wat so rol	it's my tears that are rolling
Sy het my bedrieg	She betrayed me
sy het my bedrieg	she betrayed me
sy het my bedrieg	she betrayed me
want die kind lê in die wieg	because the child lies in the crib
Die wit hemp lê gevou	The white shirt lies folded
die wit hemp lê gevou	the white shirt lies folded
die wit hemp lê gevou	the white shirt lies folded
onder die jong getroude vrou	beneath the young married woman
Nou kom ek terug my ma	I'm coming back my mother
Nou kom ek terug my ma	I'm coming back my mother
Nou kom ek terug my ma	I'm coming back my mother

[40] Bloupoort (blue gateway) is a mountain pass near Sutherland, Northern Cape.

Met 'n blou oog wat my pla	with a black eye that pains me

Example 4

Jealousy is treated often. Example 5 appears in Pieter van der Westhuizen's '*Bokkie Sê My Reg*' [Darling Tell Me Straight Up] (Van der Westhuizen 2011) and was also recorded by Burden (1991, 402) in Springbok:

Vloek en skel is niks	Swearing and scolding is nothing
vloek en skel is niks	swearing and scolding is nothing
maar jaloers is liederlik	but jealousy is filthy

Example 5

Example 6 mentioned earlier was inspired by a rhyme that the performer, Boeta Gammie, heard in his hometown in the Northern Cape. He explains his approach and intent below the lyrics (30/09/2018):

Ja die geelslang om jou nek	Yes the cobra around your neck
geelslang om jou nek	cobra around your neck
dis mos 'n jaloersmeid se werk	it's a jealous woman's work

Example 6

> […] The people on the farms had a habit of reciting certain things, bringing up rhymes in their heads which no person knows where the rhymes come from. So that thing I sing, is something I heard from farm people who were talking about how jealous a woman was […] Then I had to […] figure something out. What can I link this jealousy to? […] Then I thought […] being jealous is poisonous. It's dangerous. So, I must link it to a snake [...] That one is a sentimental one.

Finally, I am indebted to Elias Nel who initially called my attention to the notion that women often spoke out against domestic violence through song. He relays the following *liedjie* from his youth in Example 7 (Nieuwoudt 2015, 36):

As jy vir my trap en skop	If you step on me and kick me,
wie sal dan vir jou lap en stop?	who will mend and darn your clothing?
As jy vir my klap en byt	If you strike and bite me,
wie sal dan vir jou lap en stryk?	who will darn and iron your clothing?
En as jy vir my aanhou slegsê	And if you continue to insult me,
wie sal dan saam met jou saam lepellê?	who will spoon with you at night?

Example 7

The title of Example 8, *'Kriebêrre toe!'* [To Kriebêrre] (Loeriesfontein 2016) by Gertruida Lombard refers to a mountain range in the Northern Cape, the Kareeberge, which is known as the Kriebêrre by locals:

Bokkie vat jou sloop	Darling take your sack
dat ons na mamma's huis toe loop	so that we walk to mother's house
Kriebêrre toe	to the Kriebêrre
Jy lig jou hand vir my	You lift your hand to me
jy lig jou hand vir my	you lift your hand to me
nou kan ek nie langer by jou bly	now I cannot stay with you any longer
Mansmens my ma was reg	Man my mother was right
mansmens my pa was reg	man my father was right
jy is maar net een ding en dis vrek sleg	you are only one thing and that is very bad
Ek gaan nou weg van jou	I am going away from you now
ek gaan nou weg van jou	I am going away from you now
want jy's te treurigom my hier te hou	because you are too pathetic to keep me here

Example 8

What follows is a somewhat lengthy excerpt from an interview in which she reveals what she wanted to convey, as well as highlighting the importance of place, which serves as an introduction to the next theme (GL 21/07/2018):

GL: If you really want to experience *riel*, you must move among its people […] Because look, like now, for me it sometimes actually feels strange to be here, in Atlantis, on Cape Town's soil. I even tell people, "I cannot even think about writing a song, because it is not my area." But when I get to the Northern Cape, then immediately, with […] the assistance of the group, things start to fall into place to write a song for their theme […] But as soon as I am here – I hit a blank.

EB: Why do you think that is?

GL: I am in a different environment.

EB: So, in other words, the surroundings are very important in terms of the music?

GL: For me, I don't know about other people, but for me specifically, because there are times…I just cannot think. For example, they [the group] can tell me what their theme is, but I will not come up with anything, to start writing a story. So, at the end of the day, if I want to start something, then I must go to the Northern Cape; then I need to be that side, to start thinking.

EB: Your song, '*Kriebêrre toe!*' is about the Kriebêrre (Kareeberge), right?

GL: Yes, it's about the Kriebêrre. Look, most of the time, as the story goes, you know how it is – most of us on the farms, [it's a] fighting home, it's a broken home. If mum and dad don't *kuier* (visit) and *riel*, then they fight. They fight, and they drink.

> But, it's also about the mountains in your area […] And about the girl who wants a man, and dad and mum see that the thing doesn't work or *won't* work. And in the long run, he did start hitting her, and she decided that she would have to walk over the Kriebêrre to her mother's home […] That's usually how it goes. [You] know, if one must really start writing, besides the humour, it is about that brokenness of homes, where you see the fighting, the things that don't work out. And it's mostly men who hit women […] These days, you see that it has turned around a bit [implying that women also hit men]. But in those times, it was mainly about the man who bullied the woman. But the mountains are usually because they are familiar [...] [the music is about] things that happen in your town, around you, you look at the mountains and *koppies* (hills) and your farms, and you write about those.

EB: I remember Elias [Nel] said he heard a song like that in his youth [relay Example 7] […] Why did women sing about that?

GL: Because it happens to them.

EB: Did they do it because they wanted things to change, or because it made them feel better?

GL: I think, probably to make them feel better, but also […] to make her situation known […] to the people around her, but through a song.

Place

By studying the *riel* from a geographical perspective, Arnolds and De Jager (2013) showed how place is reflected in the dance through the mimicry of certain animals, allusions to region-specific architectural styles and agricultural activities, and regional variants of the *rieldans*. Departing from their work, I was interested in the way in which place is constructed in the music. Lombard introduces the importance of place in the passage above. In musicological literature, several scholars have studied connections between music, place and emotion (Feld 1990; Stokes 1994; Roseman 1998; Impey 2006 and 2008; Jorritsma 2011). Dundon and Hemer (2016, 3) point out that the concepts of topophilia and emotional geographies link emotion to space and place. They explain that:

> These concepts have aimed to aid our understanding of the ways in which spaces and emotions are interlinked — how spaces come to hold particular emotional nuances, or evoke feelings […] Work in this field has addressed how people feel at home in certain spaces or how they feel when they are away from them or return: feelings of emplacement or displacement, and how we may feel in unfamiliar places.

Considering Lombard's observation that "the mountains are [sung about] because they are familiar" (21/07/2018), I therefore suggest that the frequently recurring mountain motif can be read as a symbol for home and interpreted as emplacement. Moreover, images of mountains are often linked to a mother figure, as in the first verses of Examples 4 and 8 above, and Example 9 below:

My ma se huis lê so ver	My mother's house lies so far
my ma se huis lê so ver	my mother's house lies so far
my ma se huis lê so ver	my mother's house lies so far
agter die skaduwee van die berg	behind the shadow of the mountain

Example 9

Interestingly, journeying and mountain motifs frequently occur side by side, perhaps signalling the journey from and to home.

Riel musicians evoke place in numerous ways. First, geographic names and landmarks are often cited in lyrics (see Examples 4 and 8 above, and Example 13 below). Second, lyrical content often derives from regional forms of verbal discourse. As mentioned earlier with reference to Example 6, orally transmitted rhymes were a notable feature of farm life in the rural Cape and inspired the lyrics of some *liedjies*. Furthermore, Pieter van der Westhuizen (23/07/2018) explains that some of his lyrics are derived from the '*omgangstaal*' (regional colloquial language) that he heard in different places throughout southern Africa. He comments on Example 10, '*Dikgelap Maar Skoon*' [Heavily Patched But Clean] (Van der Westhuizen 2014), and Example 11, '*Bokkie Sê My Reg*' [Darling Tell Me Straight Up] (Van der Westhuizen 2011) below the lyrics:

Ek is dikgelap maar skoon	I am heavily patched but clean
ja ek's dikgelap maar skoon	yes I am heavily patched but clean
op ons lappiesland is plek	there is space on our patchwork fields
vir 'n man wat hard wil werk	for a man who wants to work hard

Example 10

Bokkie sê my reg	Darling tell me straight up
is ek goed of is ek sleg?	am I good or am I bad?
Daai ding wil ek nou weet	I want to know that now
of het jy my al vergeet?	or have you already forgotten about me?
Bokkie vat daai sloop	Darling take that sack
la's ma se [huis] toe loop	let's walk to mother's house
vloek en skel is niks	Swearing and scolding is nothing
maar jaloers is liederlik	But jealousy is filthy

Example 11

> The words "heavily patched but clean" […] I got from my father and the men who passed each other on the way to work […] When they greeted each other they always asked, […] "Morning, Hans. How are you?" Then [my father] answered, "No, heavily patched but clean." That story always remained with me. The same with a song like

> ‘Bokkie Sê My Reg’ […] I got that one from one of my aunts. On Sundays, they travelled to visit neighbouring farms. They [my aunts] explained how a couple walks next to each other, and as soon as they disagree on the road, the woman will walk out ahead of the man. Then the man will ask from the back, “Darling, what’s going on now? Tell me straight up, tell me the right thing […] Am I good, do you like me? Or am I bad, what have I done this time round?

Although Examples 10 and 11 deliver moral messages about work and romance respectively, I am interested in the way that the composer evokes place in these examples. In Example 11, Van der Westhuizen deliberately makes use of a regional accent, which can be heard in the pronunciation of “*la’s ma se [huis] toe loop*” (let us walk to mother’s house).

Third, region-specific indigenous knowledge is embedded in *riel* music. The lyrics of Example 12, a verse from *‘My Boesmanland’* [My Bushmanland] composed by Katrina van Zyl and adapted by Elias Nel (Brandvlei 2016), can be read alongside local beliefs about the *riel* in the Bushmanland. The composer’s comments are below the lyrics (KVZ 20/01/2018):

Kyk hoe lig die weer	Look at how the weather lifts
onder die donker bome deur	beneath the dark trees
dis hoe dit hier by ons reën	that’s how it rains here
en so word Boesmanland geseën	and how Bushmanland is blessed

Example 12

> The *riel* is actually an eight-day *riel*, that’s how the old people did it, because when they played and danced for eight days […] after that eight-day dance, it rained. So, the *riel* is actually a rain *riel* because […] it was actually their expectation. That is actually what they believed – the rain will fall after the eight-day dance (DOI 4.7).[41]

Within the context of the competition, groups are required to depict their lifeworld. *Liedjies* must mirror themes (this will be discussed later), so newly composed songs often incorporate information about the places that groups hail from. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some groups

[41] Katrina van Zyl made this observation in a focus group discussion after Gert van Zyl (her husband) and Klaas van Zyl (her brother-in-law) relayed an incident in which a dance ring, which had been formed after hours of dancing, was filled with water when a strong rainstorm broke out. By the time of this interview, I had heard permutations of this legendary account among other members of my research community in Brandvlei. Inexperienced as I was, I had mistakenly assumed that the water in the dance ring referred to groundwater seeping through until this specific interview. I include this account because I believe it merits further investigation given the regional cultural history of Brandvlei, which falls in the area that was inhabited by the |xam San in the past. The father of Dia!kwain, one of Bleek and Lloyd’s informants, was a rainmaker who may have made engravings at Varskans, which lies near Brandvlei (Deacon 1988, 131). Three members of my research community – Magdelena Beukes (nee van Zyl), Katriena Swartz (nee van Zyl) and Klaas van Zyl - were also participants in De Prada-Samper’s (2016) recent work on the contemporary storytellers of the Karoo. Commenting on the impact of the frontier on the indigenous population, Hall and De Prada-Samper (2016, 12) note, “Despite the physical appropriation of |xam resources, some of the ideas that attached the |xam to their landscape appeared to be enduring, particularly those about rain.”

also incorporate regional legends and folklore in their performances, which are consequently reflected in the *liedjies*.

The examples above represent the most common and noticeable ways in which musicians evoke place in *liedjies*. However, they also do so in subtler ways like references to endemic animal species and individuals who live in the community.[42]

Death and Suffering

The final theme that I shall discuss is that of death and suffering, and how those are often intertwined with place. Death is universal. However, there is a difference between the inevitability of death and the normalisation of death; put simply, there is a difference between knowing you will die some day in the future and the unpredictability of premature death. My thinking about death is influenced by my understanding of Maldonado-Torres's (2008, xii) application of the "death ethic of war" which he regards as "the suspension of what usually goes by ethics not only in war, but in civilization. It is this suspension that allows the production of premature death to become normative, at least for well-selected sectors in society." Death comes in different forms for many impoverished and working-class persons – hunger, cold, abuse, violence and gangsterism, unattainable medical treatment and accidents.[43] Music is often a powerful platform for the expression of those experiences.

Liedjies about death and suffering are common, and musicians treat these serious topics in ways that range from facetiousness to mournful tragedy. Irony in these *liedjies* exists on several levels: they are often (but not always) energetic, major-key songs that accompany a playful dance performed in contexts of celebration and an abundance of food and drink; moreover, they often evoke laughter even though they deal with topics that are not comical.

[42] References to individuals who live in the community often occur in *liedjies*. Gertruida Lombard (21/07/2018) mentions that the characters in her music are usually inspired by individuals in her hometown. This does not preclude the possibility that some names are arbitrary and refer to fictional characters. However, names in pre-existing songs are often replaced with those of people present at a specific performance, thereby capturing information about certain contexts in the music. In some of my field recordings, *my* name replaced other names or generic terms like '*sussie'* (sister) or '*meisie*' (girl).

[43] In his memoir, *Tell Freedom*, South African novelist Peter Abrahams (1970, 26-27) talks about the daily coming to terms with cold and hunger as a child: "For us children, the cold, especially the morning cold, assumed an awful and malevolent personality. We talked of "it." "It" was a half-human monster bent on destroying us. "It" was happiest when we were most miserable. Andries had told me how "it" had, last winter, caught and killed a boy. Hunger was an enemy too, but one with whom we could come to terms, who had many virtues and values. Hunger gave our pap, moeroga, and crackling a feast-like quality. When it was not with us, we could think and talk kindly about it. Its memory could even give us moments of laughter. But the cold of winter was with us all the time."

Example 13, performed by Ruiter Jacobs and Klaas Nel, exhibits a dark humour due to its choice of words (partially influenced by its rhyme scheme) whilst alluding to violence and gangsterism:

Ek is 'n Richmonder	I am a Richmonder
ek is 'n Richmonder	I am a Richmonder
ek is 'n Richmonder	I am a Richmonder
ek is 'n dooie donner	I am a dead bugger
As julle van my hoor	If you hear about me
as julle van my hoor	if you hear about me
as julle van my hoor	if you hear about me
dan het die skollies my vermoor	then the gangsters murdered me

Example 13

Another frequent motif is that of the '*weeskind*' (orphan). Example 14 is one of many *liedjies* that relays the hardships of orphaned children:

Ek is 'n weeskind van my ma	I am an orphan of my mother
ek is 'n weeskind van my ma	I am an orphan of my mother
ek is 'n weeskind van my ma	I am an orphan of my mother
nou moet ek alle sonde dra	now I must carry all sins

Example 14

Example 15, although alluding to the death of a parent, is humorous as a result of its strong language and implied defiance:

My pa wou nie gehad het	My father did not want
dat ek die riel moes dans	me to dance the *riel*
nou is die moerskont dood	now the mother's cunt[44] is dead
en nou loop die rieldans oop	and now the *rieldans* continues

Example 15

The dish and *passie* called '*askoek*' were mentioned in Chapter 2; references to bread also occur in the music. In Example 16, performed by Boeta Gammie (30/09/2018), and Example 17 (Van der Westhuizen 2014) bread is mentioned in *liedjies* that hint at both physical and emotional hardship:

Die sewe snye brood	The seven slices of bread

[44] The term '*moerskont*' (literally mother's cunt) is generally regarded as a swear word in Afrikaans. However, its use and connotation are often not as rude among people in the Northern Cape. Nonetheless, it is used as an insult.

die sewe snye brood	the seven slices of bread
ek maak my tien kinders alleenig groot	I raise my ten children alone

Example 16

The composer/performer of Example 17, *'Asbrood en Hardevet'* [Ash Bread and Hard Fat], faced difficulties with his back throughout his life as the result of meningitis during his infancy (PVDW 23/07/2018). Hence, its lyrics can be read both figuratively, as a metaphor for perseverance amidst difficulty, and literally, as an expression of the physical hardship:

My ruggie abba alle swaarkry saam	My back carries all hardship
maar regop kop na bo	but head held high
[…]	[…]
Hier ga't ek nou	Here I go now
my knieë vou	knees buckling
hou maar aan net wat ek het	holding on to what I have
Al moet ek sterf	Even if I die
ek gaan tog erf	I will inherit
al is dit net asbrood en hardevet	even if it is just ash bread and hard fat

Example 17

The 'Boesmanland' Enigma

From an early stage in my fieldwork, I noticed that a widely known song called *'Boesmanland'* [Bushmanland] was immensely popular among *riel* musicians. The song is often associated with the Afrikaans pop singer Worsie Visser (Senekal and van der Berg 2010, 110), who released a version of the song in the late 1980s. However, he composed neither the melody nor lyrics. Two tracks on the *Ruk 'n Riel* album were based on '*Boesmanland*' – '*Boesmanland, Vat My Hand'* [Bushmanland, Take My Hand] (Carnarvon 2016) and *'My Boesmanland'* [My Bushmanland] (Brandvlei 2016), which was mentioned with reference to Example 12. The former, seen in Example 18, is a straightforward rendering of the original song performed by a band from Carnarvon:

Boesmanland vat my hand	Bushmanland take my hand
lei my oor die rant se kant	lead me over the ridge's edge
As jy vir my kan sê	If you can tell me
waar die Boesmanland lê	where the Bushmanland lies
Boesmanland vat my hand	Bushmanland take my hand
Die hond het my gebyt	The dog bit me
o die hond het my gebyt	oh the dog bit me
die hond het my gebyt	the dog bit me

in my linkerkantste sy	in my left side

Example 18

The latter, Example 19, is a variation of the example above that was performed by a band from Brandvlei:

Daar ander kant die rant	There beyond the ridge's edge
daar lê my Boesmanland	there lies my Bushmanland
Kom vat hier aan my hand	Come take my hand
en kom lei my oor daai rant	and lead me over that ridge

Example 19

However, aside from these instances, *'Boesmanland'* as performed in Example 18, is played regularly in part or in whole by musicians in the competition and elsewhere. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the area known as the Bushmanland is in the Northern Cape Province; it lies south of the Orange River, between Springbok and Kenhardt, and north of Calvinia. Brandvlei is located in this region, where it is believed that the melody of *'Boesmanland'* was composed in the first half of the twentieth century by a white violin player, Ella Swartjan, who lived on the farm 'Klipwerf' in the Hantam region (KZ 11/01/2018). Swartjan regularly performed in Brandvlei with a coloured guitarist, Isaac Mafane, and the two of them are remembered as a formidable duo. I managed to obtain a recording of Swartjan and Mafane playing the original *'Boesmanland'* from Kola Zandberg, a retired farmer who lives in Brandvlei (DOI 4.8).

Strictly speaking, *'Boesmanland'* is not considered to be a *riel* (GS 10/01/2018; PVZ 18/01/2018; BG 30/09/2018). However, musicians assert that they can alter its tempo and rhythm to make it danceable (GS 03/07/2018). Moreover, it has the same chord progression as *langriel*. Its popularity led me to wonder whether it held any meaning that might be significant to our understanding of *riel* music. Guitarist Floreen Naudé alerted me to the notion that the song may be imbued with meaning that cannot be derived from a literal reading of the lyrics. This extract from an interview, conducted by Mariette Kotze and me,[45] illustrates this well (FN and MK 23/06/2018):

EB: Can you tell me what you know about 'Boesmanland', you sang it earlier?
FN: 'Boesmanland' comes out of the Namakwaland, Hantam. Those people suffered. Then our *nooiens* [boss's wife/daughters] […] had to help my cousins. There wasn't

[45] During my fieldwork in Clanwilliam, Kotze, with whom I had been boarding, suggested that I interview Naudé and arranged this meeting. Since I did not know Naudé prior to this interview, Kotzé played a crucial role in guiding our discussion.

even water. Then they fetched [water] from the kitchen. They'd say, "*Nooi, baas* – give [us] some water, please." Then they would fill cans. To this day we do not know where they got that water! […] But okay, people survived.

MK: But why do people love to sing 'Boesmanland'?

FN: Because of the suffering, it's a deep matter! They came through the death's Jordan.[46]

EB: What do the words mean?

FN: It means we suffered […] We are becoming hardened, it's from suffering.

During a later interaction in Brandvlei, Kola Zandberg and guitarist Stuurman Swartz (03/07/2018) made a comment that can be read alongside Naudé's remark:

SS: When I grew up, I remember that *'Boesmanland'* was played so that you became sad […]

KZ: Especially the violin with it, and the weeping of the guitar. Then you'd miss people –

SS: that you've never seen!

In Chapter 2, I referred to Leviseur's (1944) late-nineteenth century description of a 'weeping guitar'. In Chapter 3, some authors mentioned the 'melancholy' and 'mournful' sound produced by the *ramkie*. Read alongside these observations about suffering, sadness and death in 'Boesmanland' and other examples in this section, I suggest that 'happy-sad' *liedjies* provide a glimpse into "[s]ubalter memories [...] of suffering and displacement, but also of happiness and hope in the midst of challenges to human existence by repressive and inhumane social orders" (Maldonado-Torres 2008, xiii).[47]

Part 3: Music in the ATKV *Rieldans* Competition

In the final part of this chapter, I briefly discuss the way music is performed in the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition and how it differs from late twentieth century *riel* music. From the outset of my fieldwork, senior members of my research community commented on the changing aesthetics of the *riel* music and dance; Arnolds (2016, 164-166) came to the same conclusion in his study. Those observations hinged on the notions of authenticity and tradition implied in negative comments like "*Daai is nie riel nie*" [That is not *riel*], which

[46] In Christianity, the River Jordan is often associated with death. Although not widely used, the concept of the '*doodsjordaan*' (death's Jordan) refers to conditions of extreme suffering, often preceding death.

[47] Maldonado-Torres (2008) expands on his use of the term 'subalter' (rather than 'subaltern') in his book, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Arboleda-Ríos (2014, 189) explains that "According to Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the coloniality of the self refers to 'the violation of the sense of human otherness, to the point where the alter-ego transforms itself into a sub-alter'".

was contrasted with positive assessments of "*ou riel*" (old *riel*), "*outydse riel*" (old-fashioned *riel*) and "*stadige riel*" (slow *riel*). In order to understand this change, I needed to hear what was regarded as 'traditional' first. Most of the music discussed thus far constitutes what senior members of my research community have described as typical of *riel* music in the twentieth century, prior to the establishment of the competition. I gradually became aware of how innovations in the dance, coupled with the assessment criteria, influenced the music in decisive ways. In interviews, I learned that the 'change' heard by senior musicians could be narrowed down to three elements: tempo, instrumentation formats and lyrical context of *liedjies*.

From 2013-2015 a group from Wupperthal in the Western Cape Province, Die Nuwe Graskoue Trappers, were awarded first place in the junior category. They also made local and international headlines when they won several prizes at the World Championships of Performing Arts in 2015 (Vollenhoven 2015), thereby setting them up for emulation. They withdrew from the competition in 2016, and although several members of my research community regard their style as inauthentic, they are still widely copied by some groups. Since they are known for the fast pace at which they dance, the ever-increasing tempo of *passies* has been linked to them. The preference for faster *passies* therefore caused the need for a fast tempo in the music, which has been problematized by several musicians in this study.

Unconventional instrumentation formats that include keyboards, drum kit and bass guitar have also been described as inauthentic; bands that use these instruments have often been compared to church bands and *langarm* bands. Since the role of timekeeping is traditionally assigned to guitars, drums are seen as superfluous. Boeta Gammie (30/09/2018) explains that, "The guitar is the pacemaker […] when it comes to *riel*. Nothing else must give the pace other than the guitar." Moreover, some keyboard players also use a backing beat. Many musicians recognise the potential of keyboards since they can emulate the sound of the accordion. However, most keyboardists are described as playing in a gospel or *koortjies* (contemporary worship chorus) style.

Lastly, in Chapter 2, I mentioned that groups need to represent a theme in their routine; one of the criteria requires that the accompanying song must mirror the theme. For instance, if a group's theme is about harvest time in Clanwilliam, the lyrics must reflect that. Several

musicians have voiced their dissatisfaction about this by pointing out that it was not the case in the twentieth century. Alfred Basson (23/06/2018) explains:

AB: […] To tell you the truth, what is happening now, does not work for me. You cannot sing after a theme [...] Look, with the *riel*, you sing anything [...] The thing you sing, the people out there laugh, but these days they do not laugh anymore. Because in those years people heard what we sang. Almost like, "*Plat wees soos 'n bees, maar hy wil baas gesê wees*" (flat like an ox but he wants to be called boss). See? I cannot sing that at a competition now.
EB: Why not?
AB: Because...my theme. See? I cannot sing that. Or, "*Skilderbees se kwas, toe gaan haal ek vir my 'n bok in Namakwaland se gras*" (Nguni's tail, then I fetched a girl/buck in Namakwaland's grass). I cannot sing that. See? Because it does not suit my theme.

Basson's observation once more reiterates the importance of humour in the *liedjies*. However, some *liedjies* that have been composed for the competition contain powerful commentary, such as Example 20, which was composed and performed by Karoneshia Nel from Uitsig in Cape Town; this *liedjie* won the prize for the best *rieldans liedjie* at the final competition in 2017:

Brood is 'n nood	Bread is a necessity
dit weerhou ons van die dood	it keeps us from death
Sewe dae 'n week	Seven days a week
sal ons brood moet eet	we'll have to eat bread
[…]	[…]
Manne kom verby	Men come past
manne kom verby	men come past
julle moet die koring sny	you must cut the wheat
[…]	[…]
Waneer die skote klap	When the shots are fired
dan askoek ons dit weg	we askoek them away

Example 20

The lyrics address three problems: first, the description of bread as a thing that prevents death can be read as a metaphor for hunger; second, the group's routine urged young men to take responsibility for their actions and to contribute actively to their families, hence the appeal to "cut the wheat"; and third, the poignant image of the *askoek* that is performed to drown out the sound of gunshots comments on the gang violence in the suburb where the singer comes from. This example uses themes and symbols that are prevalent in *liedjies* from the twentieth century.

Likewise, the lyrics of Example 21 below, composed by the group leader of the Griekwa Knersvlakte Rieldansers, Elsabe Cloete, is a powerful statement about Khoe-San identity and perfectly encapsulates the underlying motivation behind the competition by addressing the recognition of a Khoe-San past in a post-colonial present:

Jong man jong meisie dis nie sonde nie	Young man young woman it's not a sin
as Khoikhoi is dit ons tradisie	as Khoikhoi it's our tradition
jong man jong meisie dis nie sonde nie	young man young woman it's not a sin
al word dit nie vandag raakgesien nie	even if it is not recognised today
Dit was deel van die Khoi lewe	It was part of the Khoi life
al was dit in die verlede	even though it was in the past
vandag leef ons maar in die hede	today we live in the present

Example 21

Therefore, while many groups perform music that some members of my research community regard as 'non-traditional' or even 'inauthentic', they often still make use of themes and symbols of twentieth-century *riel* music.

In Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to discover how *riel* music is an archive of indigenous knowledge, memory and experience. Challenging earlier interpretations of *riel* music as 'nonsensical' and 'illogical' (Burden 1991, 24), I have shown that the *riel* music provides a look into the memories and experiences of its performers. By drawing on a cultural repertoire of pre-existing music and merging it with personal experience, musicians archive both the "personal and public" (Muller 2002, 427) in *riel* music. Hence, I contend that the *riel* music is "a site of collective memory" (Impey 2008, 35).

Discussions about *riel* music evoked conversations about indigenous knowledge like traditional mead brewing techniques and beliefs that link the *riel* to rainmaking in a region known as the *Boesmanland*. Furthermore, *liedjies* composed for the competition are often centred on Khoe-San folklore and traditions; some are powerful statements about the preservation and transmission of Khoe-San customs that promote the celebration of Khoe-

San identity in contemporary times. In this regard, they are an "entertainment form used as a social, cultural and educational tool" (Van Wyk 2012, 47).

A thematic analysis of *liedjies* showed that they deal largely with topics of romance, loss/death and suffering, and that these are often intertwined with notions of place. Place is evoked in the music in several ways – through the insertion of place names and geographic landmarks, use of regional colloquial language and/or accents, references to endemic animal species and incorporation of local beliefs in lyrics.

The *liedjies* are not the central focus of the *riel*; they are songs in the dust – perhaps it is this quality that makes them a safe space to express matters of the heart, whether through playful flirtation or through poignant songs about sadness, loss and hardship. The treatment of serious topics like death and suffering is somewhat ironic given the performance contexts and humorous nature of many *liedjies*. This irony can be likened to the "tears of joy" trope in *boeremusiek* (Froneman 2012, 59), which perhaps accounts for the compatibility between *riel* and *boeremusiek* as evidenced by the incorporation of *riel* dancers in recent 'boeremusiek' music videos like Klipwerf Orkes's *'Wie Se Kind Is Jy?'* (Klipwerf Orkes 2011) and Die Teelepetjies's *'Lapland'* (Die Teelepeltjies 2017).[48]

[48] There are some *boeremusiek* musicians and/or listeners who would not classify either of these bands as 'authentic' *boeremusiek* bands. However, broadly speaking, they are associated with the genre.

Chapter Five

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

History

Historically, the *riel* was integral to New Year's celebrations and social dance visitations held over weekends in the rural Cape. Music, dance and feasting were crucial to these social gatherings and they were characterised by a feeling of *samesyn* (togetherness), which I suggest can be likened to Turner's notion of *communitas*. These occasions of celebration stand in strong contrast to daily hardships endured by most working-class, coloured communities in the rural Cape.

According to oral history, the *riel* is descendent from indigenous Khoe and San dances performed after the hunt or harvest – reed-flute, trance, and rainmaking dances have been suggested; other possible influences include Scottish/Irish reels. However, despite overt colonial influences, the *riel* represents an historical link to the indigenous Khoe-San people of South Africa for its performers.

In its current form, the *riel* appears to have emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. This date is notable because it roughly coincides with the emergence of other expressive practices with which it shares stylistic and social similarities (*klopse*, Christmas bands and similar practices) following British occupation of the Cape, the abolition of slavery and the Great Trek. Little is known of its nineteenth century history except that it was performed regularly at Afrikaner parties in the second half of the century. However, it went through a golden era in the early- to mid-twentieth century, when its main performance context was all-night social dances hosted on farms in the rural Cape. These dances were competitive in nature, occasionally featured performances in which gender norms were upturned, and were frequently spectated by Afrikaners. After roughly 1980, due partly to aspirations of respectability, it declined in popularity and was displaced by other more popular dance styles.

Emerging from the alignment of Khoe-San and Afrikaans identity negotiations in the post-apartheid era, the *riel* gained in popularity once more through the establishment of the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition in 2006, thereby causing a *riel* revival. On the one hand, large-scale public performance of the *riel* is a powerful space for the performance of indigeneity and negotiation of Khoe-San identity, which aims to bring recognition to the still-marginal

position of coloured and Khoe-San communities in South Africa. On the other hand, the competition's sponsorship by a historically white Afrikaans organisation is aimed at national reconciliation and justification of Afrikaans language and culture as important and relevant given its tainted reputation as the language of apartheid.

Ramkie

The *ramkie* was common among Khoe-San musicians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it was usually played to accompany dance. Despite having been largely replaced by acoustic guitar since the twentieth century, it is still frequently associated with *riel* music since *ramkies* served as introductory instruments for most *riel* musicians.

Although the instrument is often regarded as indigenous, it is not originally from southern Africa – noteworthy geographic nodes in its history and development include India, Indonesia, Madagascar and Mozambique. It is difficult to tell precisely where the *ramkie* originated because it is likely a hybrid instrument that emerged from several phases of *bricolage* in different places along the Indian Ocean rim. Earlier Eurocentric interpretations have represented it as a degraded form of European and/or Asian instrument. However, the *ramkie's* history reveals much about southern Africa's pre-colonial and colonial interactions with the rest of Africa, the Middle East and Asia through the vast Indian Ocean trade network.

Since the construction of a *ramkie* is an important phase in the initiation of musical learning for most *riel* musicians, whereby the homemade instrument is a symbol of musicality and masculinity, the *ramkie* provides a unique glimpse into the gender dynamics that shape *riel* music-making.

Descriptions of music played on *ramkie* as sounding melancholic and mournful are best read in relation to *riel* music as also exhibiting those characteristics, despite being performed in settings of apparent gaiety. Moreover, I suggest that this music should be contextualised by taking into account the conditions of slavery, displacement and oppression experienced by the communities who uphold these expressive practices.

Music

The cyclic, three-chord, guitar-driven music, which accompanies the *riel* is characterised by a uniquely South African *vastrap* rhythm that makes it danceable. Although *riel* music has been played on 'Western' instruments since at least the mid-nineteenth century, some elements of this creole genre can be traced to indigenous Khoe and San music, namely its distinctive *vastrap* rhythm, non-standard tunings and chord shapes that are reminiscent of bow music, and yodel-like singing.

The repertoire of short, witty, rhyming *liedjies* that are sung to *riel* music is transmitted orally and is valued by performers as an archive of knowledge, memory and experience. By drawing on pre-existing material and altering it in personal ways, *riel* musicians perform both collective and individual experience since lyrical content is usually derived from interpersonal concerns that deal with romance, small-town rural life, hardship and loss. Many *liedjies* contain moral messages about topics like jealousy, domestic violence and infidelity that are perceived as lessons or commentary about social expectations and norms. Often, these themes are intricately intertwined with notions of place, and musicians evoke place in several interesting ways. Furthermore, indigenous knowledge about the environment and Khoe-San customs is embedded in and accessible through *riel* music.

Tragic *liedjies* about relationship woes, sadness, suffering, loss and death are ironic because they are performed in contexts of abundance and mirth. In this regard, *riel* music is comparable to *boeremusiek* with which it has a shared history. Therefore, it is more than just the alignment of socio-political circumstances that contributed to the emergence and popularity of the recently established competition – I suggest that the overlapping histories and shared aesthetic characteristics of *riel* music and *boeremusiek* are indicative of a shared musical experience both historically and presently, which accounts for the relative popularity of the *riel* among the broader Afrikaans-speaking community.

The establishment of the annual ATKV *Rieldans* Competition in 2006 stimulated the reworking and composition of new music, which, although regarded as non-traditional by some elders, uses many of the same devices and themes as *riel* music in the twentieth century. Some of these songs are powerful statements about contemporary Khoe-San identity.

Recommendations for Further Study

Throughout this study, I have focused mostly on the music, talking only in simple terms about the dance. However, my fieldwork experience made me aware that movement analysis by a dance scholar is crucial to our understanding of the *riel*'s history. Furthermore, an analysis of women's dance steps in the twentieth century compared to how they are performed at present could yield interesting results since several elderly women have voiced indignation about the way in which young women perform at present. Moreover, interviews with participants who danced *riel* in the mid-twentieth century, when it is believed to have gone through a golden era, would add greatly to our understanding of the *riel* in the first half of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

I delimited this study about *riel* music in the Northern and Western Cape Provinces, South Africa, by investigating only the following aspects of this practice: 1) the socio-political and socio-cultural climate that gave rise to the *riel* revival in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era; 2) the *riel*'s history; 3) the instrument known as the *ramkie*; and 4) *riel* music.

The title of the study, "Songs in the Dust," alludes to both the literal dust cloud that is kicked up in performances, thereby partially shrouding musicians from view, and a figurative epistemological cloud, which accounts for the scant scholarly interest in the *riel* music to date. I also suggest that the music is a safe platform to express sentiment and interpersonal concerns precisely because *liedjies* are songs in the dust – they are not the main focus of *riel* performances. Like items that are kept in libraries, the *riel* songs constitute an archive that gets covered in dust from time to time. Yet, whereas dust is detrimental to the preservation of written documents, it is the dust clouds of the vibrant *rieldans* that make songs in this oral archive retrievable.

This research is important for three reasons. First, though small in scope, it provides a basic but multifaceted analysis of a musical practice that has been largely neglected in performance scholarship. Second, it highlights the experiences of musicians for whom this practice is significant. Finally, this study dispels disparaging assessments of the *riel* music as simple, nonsensical and uninteresting, showing instead that the *riel* music is highly symbolic, witty and often deeply personal.

Given the importance of place, and the foregrounding of land repatriation in South Africa at the time of this study, one aspect that I did not ignore but felt unable to address within the scope of this minor dissertation, was the effect of various sanctioned forced removals that resulted in the land dispossession of coloured and Khoe-San communities in the rural Northern and Western Cape Provinces. Although a few members of my research community alluded to the trauma of having been forced out of their homes as children or mentioned that their grandparents had been chased off their land, it was difficult to ascertain whether these events were the direct result of legislation or coercion by farmers. Often, incidents like these were fuelled by personal disagreements between employers and employees, but it is possible that incidents like these were affected by legislation that included the Native Land Act and the Group Areas Act. The long-lasting effect of acts like these are still visible in the geographic and economic apartheid that continues to shape the layout of small towns in the rural Cape, which are still largely divided into 'historically coloured' and 'historically white' areas. However, farms, not towns or cities, are relevant to our understanding of the *riel* in the twentieth century. For reasons that I have outlined already, I did not conduct research on many farms. I therefore elected to include the stories and sentiments that attach participants to those places, if not in the main text, in the participant biographies included in the appendix.

The sporadic decline and then growth of the *riel* from the mid-twentieth century to the present makes it difficult to predict what the future holds for this practice, especially since its main performance context at present is a relatively young competition that is not financially self-sustaining and depends greatly on funding (Arnolds 2016, 161). What can be said is that this practice has grown exponentially over the last decade and continues to do so at present. This centuries-old practice, which used to be treated with condescension and regarded as the antithesis of respectability, has since its resurgence become a symbol of cultural pride for young people as well as a means of instilling fitness, discipline and providing opportunity in communities that have suffered oppression and marginalisation under different political dispensations for several generations.

Appendix 1: Musician Biographies

	**Sophia April, Brandvlei** **Harmonica player and dancer** Read her biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/sophia-april
	**Alfred Basson, Clanwilliam** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/alfred-basson
	**Fanie Hanse, Saron** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/the-hanse-family
	**Gershwin Hanse, Saron** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/the-hanse-family

	**Marvin Hanse, Saron** **Banjoist, guitarist, keyboard player** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/the-hanse-family
	**Boeta Gammie, Calvinia** **Guitarist and singer** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/boeta-gammie
	**Ruiter Jacobs, Laingsburg** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/ruiter-jacobs
	**Gertruida Lombard, Witsand** **Guitarist and singer** Read her biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/gertruida-lombard

	**Phillip Mankepan, Loeriesfontein** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/phillip-mankepan
	**Floreen Naudé, Graafwater** **Guitarist and singer** Read her biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/floreen-naude
	**Klaas Nel, Laingsburg** **Guitarist and singer** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/klaas-nel
	**Gert Swarts, Brandvlei** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/gert-swarts

	**Katriena Swarts, Laingsburg** **Guitarist** Read her biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/katriena-swarts
	**Pieter van der Westhuizen, Ravensmead** **Guitarist and singer** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/pieter-van-der-westhuizen
	**Mashia van Rooy, Clanwilliam** **Singer** Read her biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/mashia-van-rooy
	**Gert van Zyl and Katrina van Zyl, Brandvlei** **Guitarist and singer** Read their biographies here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/gert-van-zyl-and-katrina-van-zyl

	**Klaas van Zyl, Brandvlei** **Guitarist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/klaas-van-zyl
	**Piet van Zyl, Brandvlei** **Banjoist and accordion player** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/piet-van-zyl
	**Cecil Wiese, Clanwilliam** **Keyboard player** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/cecil-wiese
	**Kola Zandberg, Brandvlei** **Banjoist** Read his biography here: https://maptia.com/engelabritz/stories/kola-zandberg

Appendix 2: Glossary of Local Words and Phrases

askoek	refers to both a dish (ash cake/bread) and a dance step
baas	male white boss, typically a farmer
boeremusiek	traditional Afrikaans dance music
braaivleis	barbecued meat
dop system	a system of payment used on farms whereby a portion of a labourer's weekly wage was paid in alcohol
ghoema rhythm	a syncopated rhythm used in several Western Cape musical practices
handspeel	mock-fighting greeting game played by men
kuier	visit/drink
koortjies	contemporary worship choruses
langarm	social ballroom
nooi	a white woman, usually the wife or daughter of a baas
optel en knyp	guitar picking technique
optog	procession
passie	dance step
ramkie/rammiekie	stringed lute-like instrument

slaan	strum
trap	verb used to describe the stamping action in the riel
uitdun	regional trial
vastrap	dance style performed by both *langarm* and *boeremusiek* bands
veldskoen/vellie	rugged walking shoe made from vegetable tanned leather and rubber soles

Appendix 3: Afrikaans Interview Transcriptions

Chapter 2

Interview with Sophia April, 16/01/2018:

Ons broers […] *hulle dans teen mekaar. Ek wil kyk, ek wil vir jou uitdans. Ek wil harder dans as jy, jy gaan nie vir my wen nie. Dan is daar 'n broer, of 'n neef, of 'n oom, of 'n vriend wat harder dans as jy. En dan kan jy sien, maar daai een* […] *hy't gewen. So't hulle hom gedans, teen mekaar.*

Our brothers, […] they dance[d] against each other. I want to see, I want to dance you out (I want to beat you). I want to dance better than you, you're not going to beat me. Then there's a brother, or a cousin, or an uncle, or a friend that dances better than you. And then you can see, but that one […] he won. That's how they danced it, against each other.

Interview with Vollie Swarts, 10/01/2018:

Dan het my ma daai manier gehad van my pa se werkskoene insit, sy hoed wat hy werk toe op sit […] *'n hemp* […] *en 'n broek* […] *en 'n baadjie. Vroeë aand dan maak sy vir haar baie netjies reg soos 'n vrou, 'n rok aan, haar Nuwejaar's rok* […] *Solank hulle hierdie langarm goeters speel* […] *het sy haar rokkie aan. Maar sodra hulle die riel beginne, dan gaan trek sy daai skoene,* […] *broek,* […] *hemp,* […] *baadjie, die hoed op die kop. Dan dans sy saam met my pa, en dan is my pa nie bewus daarvan dat dit sy vrou is nie [lag] wat so dans hier saam met hulle nie. En dan dans sy daai heel nag saam met daai mansmense* […] *Sy was erg daaroor gewees, sy was baie erg daaroor* […] *Sy't dit gereeld gedoen, dit was nou haar ding gewees daai* […] *Sy't nie soos 'n vrou riel gedans nie – dis hoekom sy vir haar mansklere aangetrek het, want sy wou soos 'n mansmens gedans het.*

My mum had this tendency to pack my dad's work shoes, his hat that he wore to work […] a shirt, and trousers, and a jacket. Early in the evening, she would dress up very neatly like a woman, wearing a dress, her New Year's dress […] For as long as they played langarm […] she wore her dress. But as soon as the riel began, then she'd change into his shoes […] trousers, […] shirt, […] jacket, [and put] the hat on her head. Then she'd dance with my dad, and my dad wasn't aware that it was his wife [laughs] who was dancing with them. And then she'd dance with the men the whole night long. She loved it, she really loved it […] She did it often, that was her thing […] She didn't dance riel like a woman – that's why she dressed like a man, because she wanted to dance like a man.

Interview with Sophia April, 16/01/2018:

My ouers het so op die plaas [gedans] in die motorkarligte vir blankes, boere, ek noem dit nou, verskoon vir daai woord. Ons het daar [naby Kenhardt] op 'n plaas gebly, sy naam was 'Blok se Kalk' gewees. Nou daar was familie van Montagues gewees op daai plaas. Nou oor die jare, Nuwejaar/Oujaar, dan's hulle daarso. Dan kom dans hulle Oujaarsdaeaande, dan

kom hou hulle daar staan, dan dans ons in die lig! In die lig, tot die dagbreek, die dag wit raak, dan draai die stof so vir die laaste terug, dan trek daai motokarre so terug. Dan vat my broers en my pa hulle gou die fietse en die perdekarre, dan loop besorg hulle gou die beeste en die bokke en daai goeterse, loop voer gee. Vieruur is ons weer op 'Blok se Kalk', dan's ons al weer daar besig om te dans tot weer moreoggend sesuur toe. Dan gaan hulle weer, en dan kom ons weer vanaand. Daar het ons gedans [...] *daai plaas het ons gedans.*

My parents [danced] on the farm in motorcar lights for whites, boere (whites/farmers), I mention it, excuse that word. We lived on a farm called 'Blok se Kalk' [near Kenhardt]. Now, there were family members of the Montagues on that farm. Over the years, New Year's [Eve] they were there. They came to dance on New Year's Eve, they would park there, then we'd dance in the light! In the light, until dawn, until the day turned white, then the dust turned for the last time, and they drove away. Then my brothers and father quickly took the bicycles and the horse-carts to care for the cattle and the goats and that, fed them. At four o'clock, we'd be back on 'Block se Kalk' dancing again until tomorrow morning six-o' clock. Then they'd go, and we'll be back again tonight. We danced there […] on that farm, we danced.

Chapter 3

Interview with Klaas van Zyl, 18/08/2018:

Die rammiekie is amper soos wat die riel nou is. Die riel is baie belangrik, en [..] ek glo […] *dit is omdat die rammiekie ook nou so belangrik is, want as ons nie op die riel teruggegaan het nie, dan sal ons nooit aanspraak gemaak het op die rammiekie ook nie.*

The *rammiekie* is almost like the *riel* now. The *riel* is very important, and I believe […] that is why the *rammiekie* is also important now, because if we didn't go back on the *riel*, then we would never have laid claim to the *rammiekie*.

Interview with Gertruida Lombard, 21/07/2018:

Toe ek riel speel op sy kitaar, het hy feitlik oopmond gestaan want "Riel speel," het hy vir my gesê, "dit was 'n manne ding." Meestal mans het dit gespeel […] *Dit maak nogal dat dit 'n uitdaging is* […] *Ek voel dis 'n unike ding as jy as 'n vrou riel kan speel* […] *Daar* […] *kan miskien baie [vrouens wat speel] wees maar hulle wil nie na vore kom nie* […] *As 'n vrou, dis vir my nogal 'n uitdaging om te sien ek kan 'n bietjie ook die selfde ding doen as wat 'n man kan doen, soos om riel te speel.*

When I played *riel* on his guitar, his jaw dropped because, "Playing *riel*," he said, "was a men's thing." It was mostly men who played it […] That makes it a challenge […] I feel it's a unique thing if you can play riel as a woman […] Perhaps there are many [women who can play], but they don't want to come forward […] As a woman, it's quite a challenge for me to see that I can do the same thing as a man, such as playing *riel.*

Chapter 4

Focus group interview with Ruiter Jacobs and Klaas van Zyl and Katriena Swarts, 18/06/2018:

EB: *Waaroor het die rielliedjies gegaan?*

What were the *rielliedjies* (*riel* songs) about?

KS: *Die liedjies sal ek sê* […] *is oor die wat jy gedoen het of doen.*

I would say the songs […] are about what you do or what you did.

RJ: *Of miskien iets oor 'n gebeurtenis of –*

Or maybe an event or -

KS: *Ja, iets wat gebeur het!*

Yes, something that happened!

RJ: *het die ou mense sommer van 'n liedjie gemaak.*

that the old people made a song about.

KN: *Die ou mense het dit so gespeel – "Miekie Miekie bring jou viool, Jakob het my in die [bloupin] in vermoor."*

The old people played it like this – "*Miekie Miekie bring jou viool, Jakob het my in die bloupin vermoor*" [Miekie Miekie bring your violin, Jakob murdered me in the blue pin].

KS: […] *Ek dink soos ons oumas en oupas gesing het, dis goed wat met hulle gebeur het, en dis goed* […] *wat hulle van kennis geneem het, sien jy?* […] *Want hy sing mos oor kennis, sien u? Hy sing oor kennis* […] *Ek sal meer sê liedjie kom meer uit ondervinding uit, of hoe sien jy dit? Ondervinding en dit wat gebeur het. Ja, hoe sal 'n mens dit nou kan stel, goed wat gebeur het, of goed wat met iemand anders gebeur het, sien jy?*

[…] I think the way our grandmas and grandpas sang, it is things that happened to them, and it is things […] they took note of, you see? […] Because they sing about knowledge, you see? They sing about knowledge […] I would say song comes out of experience, or how do you see it? Experience and that which happened. Yes, how would one say it, things that happened, or things that happened to someone else, you see?

RJ: *Die ou mense het dit* […] *baie kort gesing* […] *dan herhaal hy hom nou so* […] *dan moet jy mos nou weer daai goed gaan vat, en vir hulle rek, en weer bysit.*

[…] The old people sang it […] very short […] then they'd repeat it. Then you must go

and take that stuff, and stretch it, and add things to it.

KN: *Amper soos 'n 'mix'.*

Almost like a mix.

KS: *As ek dit nou kan noem, dan sal ek dit nou noem. Dit was eintlik hulle koerant. Wat in die verlede gebeur het, het hulle saamgedra* […] *Omdat daar nou nie 'n koerant gewees het in die Kalahari nie, het ons daarvan 'n liedjie gemaak, om dit by ons te bly* […] *Daar was mos nie koerante en opnames en sulke goed nie* […] *Dit het miskien drie vier jaar terug gebeur, maar ek maak 'n liedjie, so dit hou my by* […] *En so't hulle voorgelewe. So, die liedjie wat hulle gesing het was* […] *hulle* 'memories' […] *Dis 'memories'. Dis herhaaldelik het hulle dit oor en oor gesing – "Tant Dina het 'n kind / wat uit die hemel water drink". "Vloek en skel is niks / maar jaloers is liederlik".*

If I can mention it, then I will mention it. It was actually their newspaper. What happened in the past, they carried with them […] Because there was no newspaper in the Kalahari, we made a song about it, to remember it […] There weren't newspapers and recordings and things like that […] It may have happened three or four years ago, but I make a song, so I remember […] And that's how they lived on. So, the songs they sang were […] their memories […] It's memories. It was sung repeatedly, over and over again. "*Tant Dina het 'n kind, wat uit die hemel water drink*" [Aunt Dina has a child, who drinks water out of heaven]. "*Vloek en skel is niks, maar jaloers is liederlik*" [Swearing and scolding is nothing, but jealousy is filthy].

Interview with Boeta Gammie, 30/09/2018:

EB: *Hoekom is die langriel so genoem?*

Why is the *langriel* named that way?

BG: *Dit gaan oor die* […] *die ritme – daai ritme. Dis 'n lang ritme. So, die sarsies wat jy gee, is langer. Die kortriel se sarsies is net vinniger.*

It is about the […] the rhythm – that rhythm. It's a long rhythm. So, the bursts that you give, are longer. The *kortriel*'s bursts are just faster.

Interview with Gert Swarts, 10/01/2018:

[speel langriel] En as hy sommer wil die ding opwarm dan sal hy vir jou altyd speel [speel kortriel] Dit is waneer julle met hom begin. En jy moet onthou jou langriel is die man wat die son laat uitkom. As julle klaar hier gebraai het en julle't bietjie heuningbier gedrink, dan laat hy die son uitkom. Ek moet nog loop werk, jou goed [vee] staan in die kraal. Ek moet al daar gewees het maar daar dans ons die rieldans! Dis daar waar hulle gisteraand vir jou gesê het van die heuningbier [...] *Hy is die gesondste. Hy is hy is kruie van elke blommetjie wat die heuningby die sappies van trek so dra hy hom na sy nes toe [lang verduideliking oor hoe bye heuning maak] [basiese verduideliking oor die proses van heuningbier brou]* […] *[speel weer langriel]*.

[plays *langriel*] And if you want to heat things up, you'd always play [demonstrates *kortriel*] that is when you'd start with it. And you must remember that the *langriel* is the one that brings out the sun. When you've *braaied* (barbecued) and you've drunk *heuningbier* (honey beer), it brings out the sun. I must go to work, the [livestock] are in the *kraal* (pen). I should have been there already, but we're still dancing the *rieldans*! That's what they told you about last night, the *heuningbier* […] It's the healthiest. It has herbs from every flower that the bee has drawn sap from and carried to its nest [lengthy explanation about how bees make honey] [basic explanation about brewing *heuningbier*] [...] [resumes *langriel*]

Interview with Fanie Hanse, 22/07/2017:

My pa was baie sensitief op die riel […] *Nou as daar 'n kitaar uit is, of ons speel nie reg nie, dan sal hy vir ons stop. Dan sê hy vir ons, "Julle moet luister wat ek vir julle sê* […] *ons dans op die snaar – die snaar wat reg klink en die ritme wat daarmee gaan. As jy verkeed speel, dan gaan ek nie reg dans nie."*

My father was sensitive to the *riel* […] Now if a guitar was out, or if we did not play right, then he stopped us. Then he would say, "You must listen to what I tell you […] we dance on the string – the string that sounds right and the rhythm that goes with it. If you play incorrectly, then I will not dance right.

Interview with Gertruida Lombard, 21/07/2018:

[D]ie riel […] *moet mense kan laat lag* […] *Die humor wat daar in is, die snaaksigheid daarin, dan hoe dat mense dit geniet* [...] *As dit kom by ander tipes musiek dan sal ek meer soos hartseer goeters [sing] Maar as dit by die riel kom, is dit altyd vir my by lag. By geniet dit* […] *voel 'n bietjie lekker. Ek dink ook baie dae dat dit my eie dag maak as ek kan net 'n snaaksigheidjie kan sing of vir iemand sê* […] *dit vat 'n bietjie die hartseer weg of dit vat 'n bietjie treurigheid weg.*

[T]he *riel* […] must be able to make people laugh […] The humour in it, the funniness in it, people enjoy it [...] When it comes to other types of music, I will sing sad things. But when it comes to *riel*, for me, it's always about laughing. It's about enjoying it […] about feeling *lekker* [cheerful]. Many days, I think that I make my own day if I can sing or say something funny to someone […] it takes a bit of the heartache away, or it takes a bit of the sadness away.

Interview with Boeta Gammie, 30/09/2018:

[P]laasmense [het] die gewoonte gehad om sekere dinge op te sê, rympies in hul kop op te bring wat geen mens weet waarvan af kom die rympies nie. So daai ding wat ek sing, is 'n ding wat ek gehoor het wat plaasmense sit en praat oor hoe jaloers die vrou is […] *Toe moet ek* […] *iets uit* 'figure'. *Waaraan kan ek die jaloers ding 'link'?* […] *Toe dink ek* […] *om jaloers te wees is giftig. Dis gevaarlik. So, ek moet hom gaan link aan 'n slang* […] *Daai een is 'n sentimentele eenetjie.*

[…] The people on the farms had a habit of reciting certain things, bringing up rhymes in their heads which no person knows where the rhymes come from. So that thing I sing, is something I heard from farm people who were talking about how jealous a woman was […]

Then I had to […] figure something out. What can I link this jealousy to? […] Then I thought […] being jealous is poisonous. It's dangerous. So, I must link it to a snake [...] That one is a sentimental one.

Interview with Gertruida Lombard, 21/07/2018:

GL: *As jy rerig riel wil ervaar, dan moet jy tussen sy mense beweeg* […] *Want kyk, soos nou, dit voel eintlik soms vir my snaaks om hier, in Atlantis, in die Kaapse grond, te wees. Ek sê 'even' vir mense, "Ek kan nie eers dink aan om 'n liedjie te skryf nie, want dis nie my area nie." Maar as ek in die Noordkaap kom, dan onmiddelik* […] *beginne val dinge, met behulp van* […] *die groep, makliker in plek om 'n liedjie dan te skryf of oor hulle tema* […] *Maar sodra as wat ek hier is – my my kop slaan 'blank'.*

If you really want to experience *riel*, you must move among its people […] Because look, like now, for me it sometimes actually feels strange to be here, in Atlantis, on Cape Town's soil. I even tell people, "I cannot even think about writing a song, because it is not my area." But when I get to the Northern Cape, then immediately, with […] the assistance of the group, things start to fall in place to write a song for their theme […] But as soon as I am here – I hit a blank.

EB: *Hoekom dink tannie dis so?*

Why do you think that is?

GL: *Ek's in 'n ander omgewing.*

I am in a different environment.

EB: *So, met ander woorde, die omgewing is baie belangrik in terme van die musiek?*

So, in other words, the surroundings are very important in terms of the music?

GL: *Vir my, ek weet nie vir ander mense nie, maar vir my spesifiek, want daar's net partykeer…ek kannie dink nie. Hulle kan [die groep], byvoorbeeld* […] *vir my sê dit is hulle se tema, maar ek sal aan niks kom nie, soos om dan 'n storie te beginne skryf nie. So, op die ou einde van die dag, as ek iets wil begin, dan moet dit Noordkaap toe; dan moet ek daai kant wees, sodat die prikkels kan begin loskom.*

For me, I don't know about other people, but for me specifically, because there are times…I just cannot think. For example, they [the group] can tell me what their theme is, but I will not come up with anything, to start writing a story. So, at the end of the day, if I want to start something, then I must go to the Northern Cape; then I need to be that side, to start thinking.

EB: *Tannie se liedjie, 'Kriebêrre toe!' gaan oor die Kriebêrre, né?*

Your song, '*Kriebêrre toe!*' is about the Kriebêrre (Kareeberge), right?

GL: *Ja, dit gaan oor die Kriebêrge. Kyk soos, soos die meeste van die tyd, soos die storie daarrondom gaan is, jy weet mos – meeste van ons op die plase, [dis] bakleihuisies, dis 'n gebroke huis. As ma en pa maar nie kuier en riel nie, dan baklei hulle. Hulle drink, en hulle baklei. Maar, dit gaan ook oor die berge in jou omgewing* […] *En oor die*

meisiekind wat 'n man wou hê, en pa en ma sien maar die ding werk nie, of gaan nie *werk nie. En op lang termyn, het hy tog aan haar beginne slaan, dat sy tog maar moet besluit, maar Kriebêrge moet ek maar weer beginne stap na my ma se huis toe* […] *Dis maar gewoonlik hoe dit gaan. Weet [jy], as 'n mens rerig moet begin skryf, buiten die humor, dan is dit maar net daai gebrokenheid van huise, wat jy maar sien die baklei, die dinge wat nie uitwerk nie. En dis meestal mans wat vrouens slaan* […] *Vandag sien jy mos bietjie darem, omgekeer [impliseer dat vrouens ook mans slaan]* […] *Maar meeste van daai tyd, het dit maar gegaan oor die man wat die vrou afknou. Maar die berge is gewoonlik oor dit bekend is* […] *[die musiek gaan oor] wat in jou dorp gebeur, rondom jou, [jy] kyk maar na jou berge en jou koppies en jou plase* […] *en dan skryf jy daaroor.*

Yes, it's about the Kriebêrre. Look, most of the time, as the story goes, you know how it is – most of us on the farms, [it's a] fighting home, it's a broken home. If mum and dad don't *kuier* (visit) and *riel*, then they fight. They fight, and they drink. But, it's also about the mountains in your area […] And about the girl who wants a man, and dad and mum see that the thing doesn't work or *won't* work. And in the long run, he did start hitting her, and she decided that she would have to walk over the Kriebêrre to her mother's home […] That's usually how it goes. [You] know, if one must really start writing, besides the humour, it is about that brokenness of homes, where you see the fighting, the things that don't work out. And it's mostly men who hit women […] These days, you see that it has turned around a bit [implying that women also hit men]. But in those times, it was mainly about the man who bullied the woman. But the mountains are usually because they are familiar [...] [the music is about] things that happen in your town, around you, you look at the mountains and *koppies* (hills) and your farms, and your write about those.

EB: *Ek onthou oom Elias [Nel] het gesê hy't so liedjie gehoor toe hy klein was [noem Voorbeeld 7]* […] *Hoekoem dink tannie sou vrouens dit in liedjies gesit het?*

I remember Elias [Nel] said he heard a song like that in his youth [relay Example 7] […] Why did women sing about that?

GL: *Omdat dit met hulle gebeur.*

Because it happens to them.

EB: *Het hulle dit gedoen sodat dinge moet verander, of as 'n manier om hulself beter te laat voel?*

Did they do it because they wanted things to change, or because it made them feel better?

GL: *Ek dink, seker om hulle beter te laat voel, maar ook om dan* […] *bekend te maak wat die situasie rondom haar [is] aan die mense bekend [te maak], maar deur 'n liedjie.*

I think, probably to make them feel better, but also […] to make her situation known […] to the people around her, but through a song.

Interview with Pieter van der Westhuizen, 23/07/2018:

Die woorde "dikgelap maar skoon" […] *het ek gekry by my pa en die ooms wat verby mekaar geloop het as hulle werk toe gaan* […] *Nou wanneer hulle mekaar groet, dan's daar altyd gesê,* […] *"More, Hans. Hoe ganit jong?" Dan antwoord [my pa], "Nee, dikgelap maar skoon." Die storietjie het altyd by my vasgesteek. Die selfde met 'n lied soos 'Bokkie sê my reg'* […] *Daai enetjie het ek weer gekry by een van my tannies af* […] *Waar hulle altyd [op] Sondae reisbesoeke aan die plaas langsaan gaan doen het. En hulle het vir mekaar vertel, ons loop langs mekaar, en die oomblik as ons stry het langs die pad, dan loop die vrou vooruit. En dan vra die man van agter, "Bokkie, wat gaan nou aan? Sê my reg, sê my nou die regte ding* […] *Is ek goed, hou jy van my? Of is ek sleg, wat het ek nou weer gemaak?*

The words "heavily patched but clean" […] I got from my father and the men who passed each other on the way to work […] When they greeted each other they always asked, […] "Morning, Hans. How are you?" Then [my father] answered, "No, heavily patched but clean." That story always remained with me. The same with a song like 'Bokkie Sê My Reg' (…) […] I got that one from one of my aunts. On Sundays, they travelled to visit neighbouring farms. They [my aunts] explained how a couple walks next to each other, and as soon as they disagree on the road, the woman will walk out ahead of the man. Then the man will ask from the back, "Darling, what's going on now? Tell me straight up, tell me the right thing […] Am I good, do you like me? Or am I bad, what have I done this time round?

Interview with Katrina van Zyl, 20/01/2018:

Die riel is eintlik 'n agt-dae riel, het die grootmense hom gevat, want as hulle nou daai agt dae gespeel het en hulle't gedans […] *na daai agt-dae dans, dan reen dit. So, die riel is eintlik 'n reën riel want* […] *dit was eintlik 'n verwagting van hulle af. Dit is eintlik hoe hulle geglo het – die reën sal val na die agt-dae dans.*

The *riel* is actually an eight-day *riel*, that's how the old people did it, because when they played and danced for eight days […] after that eight-day dance, it rained. So, the *riel* is actually a rain *riel* because […] it was actually their expectation. That is actually what they believed – the rain will fall after the eight-day dance.

Interview with Floreen Naudé, 23/06/2018:

EB: *Kan tannie vir my sê wat tannie weet van 'Boesmanland', tannie het dit nou nou gespeel?*

Can you tell me what you know about 'Boesmanland', you sang it earlier?

FN: […] *'Boesmanland' kom uit Namakwaland, Hantam. Daai mense het swaargekry. Toe moet onse nooiens* […] *my neefietjies help. Dan's daar nie eens meer water nie. Dan kom haal hulle [water] uit die kombuis uit. Hulle sê, "Nooi, baas – gee water, asseblief." Dan maak hulle kannetjies vol. Waar hulle daai water kry weet ons nou nog vandag nog nie!* […] *Maar, inelkgeval, hulle't dit gekry en die mense lewe.*

'Boesmanland' comes out of the Namakwaland, Hantam. Those people suffered. Then our nooiens [boss's wife/daughters] […] had to help my cousins. There wasn't even water. Then they fetched [water] from the kitchen. They'd say, "Nooi, baas – give [us]

some water, please." Then they would fill cans. To this day we do not know where they got that water! […] But okay, people survived.

MK: *Maar hoekom is die mense so lief om vir 'Boesmanland' te sing?*

But why do people love to sing 'Boesmanland'?

FN: *Is oor die swaarkry, dis 'n diep saak! Deur die doodsjordaan het hulle gekom.*

Because of the suffering, it's a deep matter! They came through the death's Jordan.

EB: *Wat beteken die woorde?*

What do the words mean?

FN: *Dit beteken ons het swaargekry* […] *Ons raak hardegat, dis van swaarkry.*

It means we suffered […] We are becoming hardened, it's from suffering.

Focus group interview with Stuurman Swartz and Kola Zandberg, 3/07/2018:

SS *Toe ek hier beginne die gras uitkruip toe't ek gehoor 'Boesmanland' was gespeel la't jy hartseer geword het* […]

When I grew up, I remember that '*Boesmanland*' was played so that you became sad […]

KZ *Veral die viool daarby, en daai huil van die kitaar. Dan verlang jy mense wat jy –*

Especially the violin with it, and the weeping of the guitar. Then you'd miss people –

SS *wat jy nog nooit gesien het nie!*

that you've never seen!

Interview with Alfred Basson, 23/06/2018:

AB: […] *Om die waarheid te se né, dit wat nou gebeur, werk nie vir my nie. Jy kannie sing agter 'n tema aan nie* […] *Kyk, by die riel, jy sing enige ding* […] *Daai ding wat jy sing, die mense lag daar buite, maar deesdae lag hulle nie meer nie. Want die mense het daai jare gehoor wat ons sing. Amper soos, "Plat wees soos 'n bees, maar hy wil baas gesê wees." Sien? Ek kan nie nou dit by 'n kompetisie sing nie.*

[…] To tell you the truth, what is happening now, does not work for me. You cannot sing after a theme [...] Look, with the *riel*, you sing anything [...] The thing you sing, the people out there laugh, but these days they do not laugh anymore. Because in those years people heard what we sang. Almost like, "*Plat wees soos 'n bees, maar hy wil baas gesê wees*" (flat like an ox but he wants to be called boss). See? I cannot sing that at a competition now.

EB: *Hoekom nie?*

Why not?

AB: *Want…my tema. Sien? Ek kannie dit sing nie. Of, "Skilderbees se kwas, toe gaan haal ek vir my 'n bok in Namakwaland se gras." Ek kannie dit sing nie. Sien? Want dit pas nie by my tema nie.*

Because...my theme. See? I cannot sing that. Or, "*Skilderbees se kwas, toe gaan haal ek vir my 'n bok in Namakwaland se gras*" (Nguni's tail, then I fetched a girl/buck in Namakwaland's grass). I cannot sing that. See? Because it does not suit my theme.

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Personal and Focus Group Interviews

1. Fanie Hanse 22 July 2017
2. Gert Swarts and Vollie Swarts 10 January 2018
3. Kola Zandberg 11 January 2018
4. Sophia April 16 January
5. Piet van Zyl 18 January 2018
6. Gert van Zyl and Katrina van Zyl and Klaas van Zyl 20 January 2018
7. Ruiter Jacobs and Klaas Nel and Katriena Swarts 18 June 2018
8. Alfred Basson 23 June 2018
9. Floreen Naudé 23 June 2018
10. Mashia van Rooy 24 June 2018
11. Florence Filton and Mariette Kotze 25 July 2018
12. Danie Hanse and Fanie Hanse and Gershwin Hanse and Marvin Hanse 14 July 2018
13. Gertruida Lombard 21 July 2018
14. Pieter van der Westhuizen 23 July 2018
15. Klaas van Zyl 18 August 2018
16. Jan Isaacs 30 September 2018

Feedback Focus Group Interview

1. Lena Beukes, Vollie Swarts, Gert Swarts, Klaas van Zyl, Sabina van Zyl, Stuurman Swartz, Katriena Swartz, Gert van Zyl, Katrina van Zyl, Kola Zandberg. Brandvlei, 3 July 2018.

Informal Discussions

1. Mashia van Rooy 24 June 2018
2. Florence Filton 27 September 2018
3. Moira Bladergroen 30 September 2018
4. George Slawerse 30 September 2018
5. Pieter van der Westhuizen 8 November 2018
6. Klaas Nel 2 December 2018
7. Katriena Swarts 2 December 2018