

Race and ethnicity in South African urban history: A call to investigate “mingling” as well as “separation” in the city¹

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Abstract

This article argues that more methodical attention should be given by historians to both the extent and nature of racial and ethnic mingling of people, ideas and cultures across the range of such potential divides in South African cities, and indeed cities beyond South Africa. Understandably, the focus of much of South African urban history has been on the origins, implementation, and effects of forms of ethnic and racial separation, especially residential segregation. Such history has commonly also focused on only one ethnically or racially categorised group in any detail. As it is, there has been relatively little research into mingling of a convivial, co-operative and creative kind, and how this was still possible and with what ideological and practical consequences after the implementation of forms of segregation from the late nineteenth century onwards. This article suggests that it is important while conducting such work to revisit our understanding of the terms race and ethnicity themselves, to explain why urban inhabitants may have perceived themselves in group terms along these lines. Mingling means the crossing of potentially rigid boundaries of group pride and prejudice that can accompany such self-identification and/or imposed categorisation, even if many doing the crossing could still retain a racial or ethnic identity among their other self-identities. It then explores concepts encompassed by the term mingling – such as transnationalism, integration, creolisation and cosmopolitanism – to explain some of mingling’s potential historical consequences. The final section uses a case study drawn from research on late colonial-era Cape Town as brief demonstration in this respect.

Keywords: Race; Ethnicity; Urban History; Segregation; Transnationalism; Integration; Creolisation; Cosmopolitanism; Cape Town, South Africa.

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- 1 The last paragraph of my introduction and first paragraph of the following section explain what is meant by the terms “mingling” and “separation”. My gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers of this article for their very useful comments and suggestions that have influenced this final version, as well as to Jennifer Davis in this respect and for much discussion of “race”. Any remaining inadequacies are clearly my fault alone.
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Introduction

Most urban historiography, for South Africa as well as globally, has focused either on racial and ethnic separation or on the mingling of members of different groups along these potential divides. Seldom, it seems, is equal attention given to both in the same study. Even though establishing the extent of urban separation within a city would seem to be impossible without equivalent consideration of the amount, nature and consequences of any mingling that might co-exist with separation, and vice versa. For instance, one consequence of forms of mingling might be, over time, to reduce or even undermine separation of people, cultures, and ideas: not least by challenging and offering an alternative to in-group beliefs, national ideology or social practices that had explained and promoted more rigid separation in the first place. Likewise, extreme forms of separation that encompass not only the residential but almost every conceivable variety of the social – as in apartheid legislation that attempted to impose cradle to grave separation in everyday urban South Africa – were intended to make physical mingling other than at the workplace (where it would be in racially hierarchical fashion) all but impossible; thereby to limit its potential to subvert separation ideology, making (over time) the practise of separation and “reality” of ethnic or racial difference seem natural.

This leads to questions of how and where in a highly separated city mingling could still happen (openly or in secret), who was involved, why, what transpired and with what results. These are questions that are informing my current research on co-operative and creative encounters across racial barriers in the apartheid city. The aim of this article though, is to introduce a more general case for studying mingling alongside separation, with attendant definitions of these terms as well as some they encompass. Having done so, it will conclude by revisiting earlier research on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Cape Town by way of brief demonstration.

This earlier research had not made the relationship between mingling and separation its central concern. Its main aim instead was to explain the growth of separation and the creation and/or maintenance of accompanying racial and ethnic identities through the hierarchical and spatial barriers that helped promote them. Far less attention was directed to mingling and its consequences, though its continued if more limited existence was noted and examples provided. So, the purpose here is to suggest briefly what the extent, nature and significance of mingling consisted of for this place and period. Thereby, to begin to demonstrate the potential of more thoroughly studying this phenomenon for South African cities in whatever period; or indeed for cities in any other part of the world with histories of ethnic or racial separation.

Within separation historiography globally, scholars have written about the likes of colonial Dual Cities and segregation in colonial Africa including pre-apartheid

South Africa.³ In the twenty-first century, there has also been a growing literature on Divided Cities – places of recurring ethnic conflict – like Beirut, Mostar, Belfast and Jerusalem.⁴ Also on separation, by way of socio-economic exclusion, whether in supposedly cosmopolitan metropolises like Paris or post-apartheid Johannesburg, to cite but two examples.⁵

Historiography such as this has considerably outweighed that on mingling, it would seem.⁶ This is evident, unsurprisingly, for South African urban historiography, if more so before 1994 than after.⁷ Much of the pre-1994 work explored in impressively thorough fashion the origins and history of urban (if mainly residential) racial segregation, “Native” administration, township culture, consciousness and resistance.⁸ With notable exceptions – such as work on pre-industrial Cape Town, early socialist

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- 3 CH Nightingale, *Segregation: A global history of divided cities* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2012), provides a magisterial synthesis of existing scholarship amid his own original insights into urban separation on a global scale.
 - 4 Nightingale’s focus is more on racial segregation than on what might be described as ethnically separated and conflicted cities. For these, see for instance: AC Hepburn, *Contested cities in the modern west* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); J Calame and E Charlesworth, *Divided cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2009).
 - 5 For a very readable article on the history and twenty-first century-problems of Parisian banlieues, see M Angelil and C Siress, “The Paris banlieue: Peripheries of inequality”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 65(2), 2012, pp. 57-67. MJ Murray, *Taming the disorderly city: The spatial landscape after apartheid* (New York, Cornell University Press, 2008) takes an almost entirely pessimistic view of continued and extensive social and economic exclusion. For two collections that are somewhat less pessimistic but give due weight to social exclusion see R Tomlinson, RA Beaugregard, L Bremner and X Mangcu (eds.), *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the post-apartheid city* (New York and London, Routledge, 2003); and J Beall, O Crankshaw and S Parnell, *Uniting a divided city: Governance and social exclusion in Johannesburg* (New York and London, Routledge, 2002).
 - 6 It seems that historical research is far overshadowed in this respect by (relatively) contemporary studies by non-historians. Much of the historiography that exists focuses on either “mixed” marriage or miscegenation patterns or examination or observation of degrees of residential integration. Neither of these phenomena of course preclude concomitant existence of enduring racial prejudice, as recent work on Latin America has confirmed. A useful multi-book review essay here, albeit not confined to the urban, is P Wade, “Racism and race mixture in Latin America”, *Latin American Research Review*, 52(3), 2017, pp. 277-485. For South Africa, much work is on the pre-industrial Cape colonial era before increased segregation in the late nineteenth century. Two detailed studies for Cape Town in this respect are VC Malherbe, “Illegitimacy and family formation in colonial Cape Town, to c.1850”, *Journal of Social History*, 39(4), 2006, pp. 1153-1176; and G Groenewald, “A mother makes no bastard’: Family law, sexual relations and illegitimacy in Dutch colonial Cape Town, c.1652-1795”, *African Historical Review*, 39(2), 2007, pp. 58-90. For an overview social history of pre-colonial Cape Town, see N Worden, E van Heyningen and V Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: The making of a city* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1998). A rare exploration of the relationship between mingling and residential segregation, albeit for the United States in the last decade of the twentieth century, is SR Holloway, R Wright and M Ellis, “The racially fragmented city? Neighbourhood racial segregation and diversity jointly considered”, *The Professional Geographer*, 64(1), 2012, pp. 63-82.
 - 7 V Bickford-Smith, “Urban history in the new South Africa: Continuity and innovation since the end of apartheid”, *Urban History*, 35(2), 2008, pp. 288-315.
 - 8 P Maylam, “Explaining the apartheid city: 20 years of urban historiography”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(1), 1995, pp. 19-38, provides an excellent overview of much of this work with its own original insights, not least into whether material or ideological factors were more important in explaining segregation. Maylam leans towards favouring material factors, though it would seem safe to conclude that material and ideological factors are usually entangled. See also MW Swanson, “The sanitation syndrome: Bubonic Plague and urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909”, *Journal of African History*, 18(3), 1977, pp. 387-410, which provides a pioneering argument for taking ideology seriously in explaining segregation.

movements or the South African Communist Party – there was little on the nature and consequences of (especially social) mingling. Albeit this may have been noted for (themselves exceptional) places like District Six (Cape Town) or Sophiatown (Johannesburg), destroyed under apartheid, not least by ex-residents themselves.

My use of the term mingling here, as with separation, is because of its utility as another catch-all expression for different words used by scholars to describe processes and attitudes for what can be connected, overlapping or distinct phenomena. In the case of mingling, these are phenomena that have led to the mixing of people, cultures, ideas, and material objects within cities, and what has resulted from this. Words to describe such phenomena, ones deployed below, include transnationalism, integration, creolisation, and cosmopolitanism perceived as either neutral or positive in social effect. This is in contrast to how mingling, or intermingling, have sometimes been used in everyday language in South Africa or elsewhere in disapproving fashion by racial nationalist proponents of separation, and thereby of racial or ethnic “purity”.

Revisiting definitions of ethnicity and race

Like mingling, separation is a term seldom used by urban historians, but usefully encompasses the range of ways in which cities have been divided along lines of ethnicity or race even when such divides are not part of legislated segregation. Human history has after all suggested that *homo sapiens* is a clannish species, initially (and perhaps still) for defensive purposes.⁹ Also, that humans have tended to seek to explain the world by way of categorisations and perceived patterns in the world around them expressed as generalisations, often simple binary categorisations such as “us” and “them”. These are duly labelled with “our name” or the name we give to “them”, that may or may not be the name they have given themselves. These labels – whether suggestive of race or ethnicity, or indeed clan, nation, class or gender – are then associated with behavioural stereotypes: how in-group members are expected to behave among themselves, or towards others, or others expected to behave towards them. Labels and accompanying stereotypes “entrain norms about how people who have the labels [names] should behave and how they should be treated”.¹⁰ Once labelled, members can also develop a belief that there is some inner “essence” that explains why they have so much in common beneath some observable surface difference like outward physical appearance including skin colour or dress or their voice, language or accent: “an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly”.¹¹ Governments have commonly taken part in this process by ascribing labels to people in the likes of census categories, thereby giving them additional validity and rigidity among those who use or identify with them: the

9 The argument in this paragraph is drawn from Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity* (London, Profile Books, 2018), pp. 1-100.

10 KA Appiah, *The lies that bind...*, p. 20.

11 KA Appiah, *The lies that bind...*, pp. 25-26.

more so if this is then followed by official policies that favour or discriminate against people based on such categorisation.

The two kinds of (frequently overlapping, at least in part) identity groups this article is concerned with are those that have been described by modern scholars as racial and ethnic. In both cases, there will usually be material as well as imagined components to such identities that can provide adherents with a sense of belonging, perhaps pride in belonging, to a group (rightly or wrongly) perceived to have shared ancestry, history and/or culture. This might in turn be psychologically helpful in overcoming feelings of individual insignificance in a big city by offering friendship and kinship networks that render material and emotional support. Shared language (or dialect), institutions, occupations, material culture (including dress), social facilities and neighbourhoods give senses of perceived ethnic or racial belonging practical dimensions.¹² In other words, they might provide a feeling of belonging to a community that is more than purely imagined, as reading Benedict Anderson on nationalism as an imagined community might have us believe.¹³ This sense of community might then give adherents a visceral pride in the achievements of other members of the group at large, even if they are people they have never met, as well as potential prejudice against those of other groups. Such pride and prejudice are frequently encouraged by the likes of politicians or journalists, as well as by spatial segregation or divisions of labour that coincide with race or ethnicity.

Ethnicity and race are often used interchangeably with one another, and indeed with nation, that object of Anderson’s attention. Yet a way in which they have been distinguished is that race is commonly used to refer to some observable physical difference between groups of people – that might or might not have cultural (ethnic) components as well – whereas ethnicity (derived from *ethnos*, the Greek word for people or nation) has implied a necessary cultural dimension, usually including a shared language and/or religious beliefs, but may or may not involve any overt physical distinction. By these definitions, a racial group could consist of people of (possibly many) more than one ethnicity, an ethnic group in turn may have members of more than a single racial one.¹⁴

Race as a term attached to groups of people along lines of physically visible or imagined biological difference associated with supposedly heritable characteristics – or their inner essences – was a product of pseudo-scientific invention in nineteenth century-Europe, growing in usage from mid-century onwards. Such belief in the existence of races was found by the mid-twentieth

12 A Oberschall, *Conflict and peace building in divided societies: Responses to ethnic violence* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2007), pp. 4-7; KA Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers* (London, Penguin, 2008).

13 B Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, Verso, 1983).

14 V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride and racial prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group identity and social practice, 1875-1902* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 2-4.

century to have no basis in science, a verdict reinforced in the twenty-first century through DNA analysis. So, race was not real in any scientific sense.¹⁵

The argument made by many academics today, though, is that despite the fact that race is a historical and social construction, in other words a human invention and thus not real, it should nevertheless be deemed to be real. This is because most people still believe it to be, notwithstanding scientific evidence to the contrary. So, race may be a social construction of reality by human beings, as the title of Berger and Luckman's influential book puts it, yet it makes race real for practical purposes in their everyday lives.¹⁶ Self-identity along racial lines, and labelling others in this way with potentially discriminatory effect, becomes part of everyday reality. Karen and Barbara Fields, who describe themselves as Afro-American, argue as much in a book called *Racecraft: the soul of inequality in American life* (2012). For them race is a socially constructed ideology, with ideology:¹⁷

...best understood as the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence through which people make rough sense of the social reality they live and create from day to day ... as such, ideologies are not [ephemeral] delusions but real ... [but] an ideology must be constantly created and verified in social life; if not, it dies, even if it seems to be safely embodied in a form that can be handed down.

A major rationale for their book is the view expressed by the Fields that instead of belief in race dying out, as it may have seemed destined to once its lack of foundation in science became apparent and declarations to this effect were adopted by the United Nations, the USA was in an age of renewed reification and thereby verification of race belief, what they dubbed "racecraft". In doing so, they were likening belief in race to belief in witchcraft, one that was previously widespread across the world but has now greatly diminished. Clearly, believing in witches once had efficacy in everyday life and for some, not least in Africa, still does. Yet while the rise of science may have been responsible for the retreat of witchcraft, it has not yet much diminished racecraft in the USA. Indeed such belief would seem to have been revived in recent times. The same might be said for other parts of the world, including South Africa three decades after apartheid's formal demise.

15 AH Goodman, YT Moore and JL Jones, *Race: Are we so different?* (Hoboken NJ, Wiley Blackwell, 2020) is an accessible read that sets out the scientific evidence here. See also A Rutherford, *How to argue with a racist: History, science, race and reality* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2020).

16 P Bergman and T Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (London, Penguin, [1966] 1991).

17 KE Fields and BJ Fields, *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in American life* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), p. 134.

In the Fields’ view we – especially those of us in the academy – should not just accept this. For the Fields, the popular belief in the existence of race, fuelled by the unchallenged everyday use of the term or labels associated with it, underpins the continuation of racism, even if this racism is not necessarily tied to old notions of racial essence, or not openly acknowledged as such. Historiography itself, and this is certainly true of most South African historiography, adds to this potential problem by accepting racial labels – like coloured, white, Indian and black – as real without any explanation or qualification.

The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his 1992 book *In my father’s house*, at least partially agrees with the Fields’ views on race, albeit adding the distinction between extrinsic racism – the belief that there are different racial essences that warrant different treatment (a view used to justify colonialism and slavery) – and intrinsic racism: the belief that you should favour your own race ahead of others, whether or not you believe in racial essence. Appiah also acknowledges that there may be instances where race consciousness could have positive outcomes. To this end, he distinguishes between racialism and racism: where the former refers to the view that different races could in theory be distinct but equal, while racism denies this possibility; save perhaps in some distant (perhaps unobtainable) future. He takes the view that racial beliefs, and consequent race consciousness, might at times be beneficial in underpinning racial solidarities that could prove to be an appropriately constructive and effective response to racism. After all, race and thus racism can be something imposed on you whether you accept the existence of race or not. Racial consciousness could then be helpful in promoting policies that might provide some remedy for centuries of discrimination.

Yet Appiah nonetheless concludes that he is sceptical that either national or racial solidarity “can do the good that they can do without the attendant evils of racism – and other particularisms, without the warring of nations” or, by implication, of races. “African unity, African identity, need securer foundations than race”. So Appiah believes, and this a belief shared by others including historian of the “Black Atlantic” Paul Gilroy, that it is the duty of those in academia to play at least a small part in disrupting the idea that racial difference is real.¹⁸ They can do this by challenging the “myth of race” rather than simply or seemingly endorsing what on occasion might be an “ennobling lie”.¹⁹ Appiah believes that otherwise there is “no answer to the question of what identification our antiracism [if employing race consciousness] may lead us into”. The implication is that the reification of race embraced by this

18 P Gilroy, *Between camps: Nations, cultures and the allure of race* (Oxford, Routledge, 2004). This is also a point made for contemporary South Africa by sociologist Zimitri Erasmus in Z Erasmus, *Race otherwise: Forging a new humanism for South Africa*, (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 2018).

19 KA Appiah, *In my father’s house: Africa in the philosophy of culture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 175-176.

form of doubtless often well-intentioned antiracism could be counter-productive.²⁰

The title of Appiah's 2018 book, *The lies that bind*, succinctly suggests as much: namely that racial consciousness – and indeed ethnic consciousness – may not only bind people together in potentially positive fashion but can then blind them to commonalities with others perceived to be of a different race or ethnicity. The effect can be to build impenetrable fences around ethnic and racial group identities by only, or overly, stressing difference instead of experiential commonalities. Including those that have resulted from forms of mingling. It is the forms of racial or ethnic consciousness that build confining and stifling walls between in-group members and outsiders that Appiah rightly deplores.²¹

Transnationalism, integration, creolisation and cosmopolitanism

Transnationalism is the term Ulf Hannerz used in the 1990s, in preference to the more commonly deployed “globalisation”, to describe a process that led to racial and ethnic admixture. It was the increase in worldwide interconnectedness, circulation and thus mingling – of people, cultures and commodities – itself spurred by the growing global reach of capital and commerce.²² This process has an ancient history but has increased at ever accelerating pace over recent centuries with technological innovation and ever speedier forms of global communication. Hannerz preferred the term transnationalism to globalisation as the former could be used for forms of interconnectedness that might not be global, not stretch across the entire world. Also, because the term could refer to studies of interconnectedness not global in scale, scholarly work on a particular territorial region or oceanic world, say. Hence the likes of scholarship on transnationalism across the Atlantic Ocean, for which Paul Gilroy's ground-breaking *The Black Atlantic* is a prominent example.²³

For South African urban historiography, a special edition of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* on South African port cities and the Indian Ocean world, offers a very useful starting point. Isabel Hofmeyr's introduction and the contributions that follow provide a guide to the nature and extent of existing work in the transnational field, and scholars responsible for it up to 2016. A field that had grown apace since the early 1990s.²⁴

Integration – what might (to a lesser or greater extent) happen to people, cultures and commodities at their transnational destination – was one of the earliest terms used by scholars to describe urban residential and social mingling in cities, or parts

20 KA Appiah, *In my father's house...*, p. 42.

21 KA Appiah, *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity* (London, Profile Books, 2018).

22 U Hannerz, *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places* (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 6.

23 P Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London, Verso, 1993).

24 I Hofmeyr, “Durban and Cape Town as port cities: Reconsidering southern African studies from the Indian Ocean”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(3), 2016, pp. 375-387.

of them, along lines of race and ethnicity. Integration in this sense does not have to mean the production of cultural conformity. What the study of integration has provided for academics and policy makers is a potentially helpful indication of the urban social geography of ethnic or racial intermingling. A qualitative investigation might follow that could result in a range of findings along a temporal and emotional spectrum. At least according to the results of one research project on migrants in Glasgow and London. The feelings they found among migrants ranged from senses of active discrimination towards you along racial/ethnic lines by older residents in the neighbourhood; through a sense of more trouble-free mutual co-existence; to socialising with at least some neighbours across potential ethnic/racial divides; to forming enduring friendships across these lines; to a sense of urban belonging.²⁵

Work on urban integration for the United States goes back at least as far as the 1950s.²⁶ There was similar work for Cape Town conducted by an urban geographer in the same decade. Scott’s 1955 survey demonstrated among other things, in detailed case-study fashion, that sections of Salt River still contained areas where people he believed belonged to different races – in his definitions “coloured” and “white” – were residentially mingled.²⁷

Scott’s work was drawn on by another geographer, John Western, in his pioneering study of the effects of the Group Areas Act on residential patterns in the city, *Outcast Cape Town*, in 1981.²⁸ This argued that in the case of The Valley, Mowbray (Western’s case study) by the mid-1960s – on the eve of the removal of its inhabitants to the Cape Flats – there was a clearer racial delineation between what he deemed to be a coloured residential “pocket” and surrounding white housing than Scott had found for Salt River a decade earlier. Yet this development may have involved some people who were “passing” for white, which itself draws sharp attention to the socially constructed nature of racial (and ethnic) identities.²⁹

As it is, there are now numerous accounts by residents who lived in parts of South African cities that remained open to all before eventual Group Areas Act removals, if only most famously District Six, Sophiatown and the Grey Street area of central Durban. These accounts generally emphasise the existence of integration – albeit there may have been a numerically (very) preponderant group – characterised by

25 A Ager and A Strang, *The experience of integration: A qualitative study of refugee integration in the local communities of Pollokshaws and Islington* (London, Home Office Report 55, 2004).

26 R Sin and M Krysan, “What is residential integration? A research synthesis, 1950-2013”, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(4), 2015, pp. 467-474.

27 P Scott, “Cape Town, a multi-racial city”, *Geographical Journal*, 121, 1955, pp. 149-157.

28 J Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1981).

29 The notion of ‘passing’ as someone of a supposedly different race to your own – thus a ‘coloured’ person passing for a ‘white person’ – only makes sense within a delusionary societal acceptance of the ‘reality’ of different races in the first place. In apartheid South Africa, this was given legal form: all South Africans had to be identified and registered within a racial category from birth according to the Population Registration Act of 1950.

mutual tolerance, neighbourliness, and friendships across lines of race and ethnicity.³⁰ There have also since the 1990s been academic studies of urban “desegregation”, as the enforcement of the Group Areas Act slackened in the 1980s before abolition in the early 1990s. This though has largely been a matter of a racialised movement of inhabitants from a poorer area, one that remains (largely) racially homogeneous, to a “better” neighbourhood. In some cases, this new neighbourhood may become integrated along the range of quantitative possibilities we identified. Yet frequently this has been followed by the racialised flight elsewhere of its “host” inhabitants.³¹

The term creolisation – one borrowed by other disciplines from linguistics – has been used to describe the cultural mingling, sometimes called hybridity, that can result from transnationalism and social and residential integration. In addition, creolisation might usefully describe supposedly biological as well as cultural hybridity, even if scientifically there is no such thing as race. Hannerz has stressed that the cultures that people bring with them to cities are also not as “pure”, as racial or ethnic mobilisers might still have us believe. Partly by way of countering this idea – that homogeneous and confined cultures or races exist and are superior to mingled ones – Hannerz sees creolisation as culturally creative, often richly so. For Hannerz, it is a cultural global gain even if he also rightly emphasises, as have others, that creolisation has customarily taken place in socially unequal (core-periphery, coloniser-colonised) contexts.³² James Campbell made this apparent in a piece on “The Americanization of South Africa”, published in 2000. This might suggest for some, speaking to a fear very far from realised, that transnationalism, rather than creating a multitude of exciting new and differing cultural forms around the world, might be producing

30 V Bickford-Smith, *The emergence of the South African metropolis: Cities and identities in the twentieth century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 262-271 gives a brief overview of such accounts for Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

31 B Maharaj, “Segregation, desegregation and de-racialisation: Racial politics and the city of Durban”, B Freund and V Padayachee (eds.), *(D)urban Vortex: South African City in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2002), pp. 171-194; B Maharaj, “The politics of local government restructuring and apartheid transformation in South Africa: The case of Durban”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 15, 1997, pp. 261-285. Two early collections that contained a number of essays on the history of the apartheid city but looked forward to the problems and possibilities of transition are DM Smith (ed.), *The apartheid city and beyond* (London and New York, Routledge, 1992), and M Swilling, R Humphries and K Shubane (eds.), *Apartheid city in transition* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1991). See also GR Saff, “The changing face of the South African city”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 18, 1994, pp. 371-391; and O Crankshaw and C White, “Racial desegregation and inner-city decay in Johannesburg”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 19, 1995, pp. 622-638; KSO Beavon, “Johannesburg: A city and metropolitan area in transformation”, C Rakodi (ed.), *The urban challenge in Africa: Growth and management of its large cities* (London, Routledge, 1997), pp. 150-191; A Morris, *Bleakness and light: Inner city transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1999); S Oldfield, “State restructuring and urban transformation in South Africa: Negotiation of race, place and poverty”, University of Minnesota PhD. thesis, 2000; J Beall, O Crankshaw and S Parnell, *Uniting a divided city...; L Bremner, Johannesburg: One city, colliding worlds* (Pretoria, STE Publishers, 2004); AJ Christopher, “The slow pace of desegregation in South African cities, 1996–2001”, *Urban Studies*, 42, 2005, pp. 305-320; GR Saff, *Changing Cape Town: Urban dynamics, policy and planning during the political transition in South Africa* (Lanham, University Press of America, 2005).

32 U Hannerz, *Transnational connections...*, pp. 10; 66-67.

greater cultural homogeneity.³³

Although creolisation has not been a term used often by most South African urban historians, much urban social history from the 1980s onwards has included examples of this culturally creative process whether in passing or as a central focus. Not least when addressing aspects of, for example, religious and political beliefs, material culture, leisure activities, language, gang culture and music.³⁴ Like Hannerz, Denise-Constant Martin, in a monograph on music at the Cape, made the concept of creolisation central to what he deemed was this music’s creative originality. He went further though, and suggested that a focus on creolisation of cultural forms, including music, might begin to demonstrate what South Africans could claim to share across racial or ethnic categorisation. Albeit racial or ethnic mobilisers might ever prefer an emphasis on what divides them.³⁵ The point being that once you start looking for examples of creolisation in South Africa, they can be found ubiquitously in both the urban and rural past and present. Creolisation may have affected South Africans differentially, though not entirely predictably, across the social spectrum, but it is far from an entirely one-way process that eradicates all traces of one’s “own” local culture and affinity.

Cosmopolitanism can and has been a term associated with all three of the previous ones. It has been used, for instance, almost as a synonym for residential integration, to refer to residential intermingling that has been characterised by relative mutual tolerance in a way that suggests at least a degree of acceptance of the ethnic or racial “difference” of neighbours. It has also been used to refer to global travellers who have learnt about, lived in, and felt at ease in places with different cultures to their own. The corollary is that the term “cosmopolitan” has also been used to refer to someone who does not identify sufficiently with the (genuine, racially pure) nation/state, a charge infamously levelled at Jews by Nazis and Stalinists alike. For Hannerz though, proper cosmopolitanism is virtuous and means displaying an “orientation, a willingness to engage with the other”.³⁶ This can include virtual engagement – and empathy – with said other through the media, whether literary or electronic.

In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers*, Appiah also suggests that cosmopolitanism should mean more than mere trouble-free mingling. For him, like for Hannerz, it involves an active “obligation to others, that stretches beyond those

33 JT Campbell, “The Americanization of South Africa”, R Wagnleiter and ET May (eds.), *Here, there and everywhere: The foreign politics of American popular culture* (Hanover and London, University Press of New England, 2000), pp. 34-63.

34 There is a particularly rich literature that has explored how new musical forms were generated in South African cities that are describing a process of creolisation. See V Bickford-Smith, “Urban History in the new South Africa ...”, *Urban History*, 35(2), 2008, footnote 121, for references to pioneering work in this field before 2008.

35 D-C Martin, *Sounding the Cape: Music, identity and politics in South Africa* (Somerset West, African Minds, 2013).

36 U Hannerz, *Transnational connections*, p. 102.

we are related to by kin, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship". This does not mean, though, giving up all "local affiliations and partialities" in favour of an abstract common humanity, because cosmopolitans should also take seriously "particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practises and beliefs that lend them significance".³⁷ So cosmopolitanism does not necessitate revoking your "own" ethnic or racial identity, if you have one, but it does require not being confined by it. Perceptions and realities of difference that blind the perceiver to seeing commonalities contain potential seeds of conflict.³⁸

What cosmopolitanism requires instead is "interacting on terms of respect with those who see the world differently" to you. People whose culture and behaviour may be different in various – and not always readily acceptable – ways to you.³⁹ Ideally, experiencing different cultures should not just be exotically exciting for cosmopolitans, it should also be informative by inducing self-reflection and questioning of their own cultures and prejudicial pre-conceptions.⁴⁰

Mingling and separation in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Cape Town

George Fredrickson, in his comparative study of South Africa and the American South in *White supremacy* (1981), claimed that Cape Town in this period was an exceptional place in southern Africa – and compared to cities in the American South – because of "its traditional toleration of white-colored intermingling in public places." For Fredrickson, Cape Town had a "special tradition of multi-racialism", because "fraternization between racial groups...remained relatively free and unimpaired by laws or even strong and consistent patterns of customary exclusion until well into the twentieth century". Fredrickson advanced several reasons for this special tradition. One was that it was the result of the Cape liberal tradition: the legal and political equivalence between Cape Colony inhabitants conferred by Britain through the abolition of slavery in 1834, followed by the non-racial (but male only) franchises that accompanied representative (1853) and responsible (1872) government. In several constituencies, including Cape Town, black (used here as a synonym for all those not officially categorised as white) voters could play a decisive role in election outcomes, potentially deterring candidates or the city's MPs from advocating discrimination. A further reason was "the notorious permeability of the colour line" that made drawing a clear demarcation along lines of race between inhabitants after two hundred years of "miscegenation" difficult. This had resulted in a large proportion of supposedly "mixed race" inhabitants with skin colour that

37 KA Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism...*, p. xiii.

38 Oberschall, *Conflict and peace...*

39 KA Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 145-146.

40 L Sandercock, "Cosmopolitan urbanism: A love song to our mongrel cities", J Binnie, J Holloway, S Millington and C Young (eds.), *Cosmopolitan urbanism* (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 49.

varied on a continuum between white and black. So racial distinction was harder than in towns in the Boer Republics or Natal where distinguishing between white and black was generally (visually) easier. Fredrickson also believed that the absence of discernible black institutional parallelism was a factor.⁴¹

My early career research involved investigating Fredrickson’s claims, as well as his explanations of them. It found that in addition to the reasons Fredrickson gave for Cape Town’s special tradition was the fact that its main economic activity was commerce not mining, with Cape Town employers generally favouring a mobile and seasonal labour pool of urbanised residents while the mine owners of Kimberley and Johannesburg favoured migrant labour brought to segregated, easily controlled mine compounds on fixed contracts. Also, “older towns [like Cape Town] possessed pre-existing racial patterns that altered more slowly [towards more complete segregation]”⁴².

Yet the focus of what became *Ethnic pride and racial prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group identity and social practice, 1875-1902* was, as its name suggests, to demonstrate that Fredrickson had seriously discounted the degree to which racial separation, and racist rhetoric, had grown in the city by the early twentieth century.⁴³ It argued that compared to the 1870s, by the early 1900s there was far greater segregation along racial lines in many organisations, recreational facilities, government institutions and residential areas. This served to separate more working-class Capetonians along such lines, including now through legislation the removal of whites from inner-city mission schools into better, publicly funded government ones in 1905. There had also been the introduction of *de jure* residential segregation through title deeds in some new whites-only housing developments (in the suburbs of Milnerton and Camp’s Bay, for instance).

Notably, the coming of bubonic plague to the city in 1901 had led the Cape colonial government to pay for the forced removal of most inhabitants deemed to be “Natives” (i.e. Bantu-language speaking people, who will henceforth be referred to as Africans) – only those who qualified for the Cape franchise were not subject to removal (later confirmed by legislation) – from those multi-racial inner-city residential areas like District Six into two locations. One was at the docks, for migrant workers brought to Cape Town to work there from the Eastern Cape; the other at Ndabeni on the outskirts of the city accommodated both migrants and families. Legislation in 1902 retrospectively sanctioned this supposedly health emergency measure. Legislation was also introduced by the Cape government that prohibited Africans from drinking

41 GM Fredrickson, *White supremacy* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 257-268. The quotations in this paragraph are respectively from pp. 258; 260; 267.

42 JW Cell, *The highest stage of white supremacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 134.

43 Unless otherwise specified in footnotes that follow, arguments and information in this section are drawn from V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride...*

“European” liquor.

The use of African migrant labour, residential segregation and the liquor laws acted as further catalysts to redefining the term “coloured”. Though this may often already have been a term used as a label or self-identification for, or by, many “mixed race” Afrikaans-speakers, it had not infrequently been used in the course of the nineteenth century to refer to all those deemed not to be white in the Cape. By the end of the century, coloured had almost exclusively come to refer to those within this category not deemed to be Native, as well as a label of self-identification.

These are developments that *Ethnic pride* attempted to explain at length, and that cannot be repeated in any detail here. Suffice it to say that a key role was played by social Darwinian notions of the world hierarchically divided into different races. Also by the Cape colonial racialisation of British middle-class perceptions of the poor. The poor were thereby divided into those “deserving” (of sympathy and assistance) and the “undeserving” who were not. In Cape Town, this translated into “white” and “black” (in the sense of all those not deemed to be white).⁴⁴ Most of Cape Town’s predominantly anglophone middle-class sympathised with poor whites while blaming black poverty and urban problems of disease or crime on black racial inferiority and miscegenation.⁴⁵ Separation, by means of residential or social segregation, came to be seen in racist fashion as a means of rescuing poor whites from a dangerous black residuum. Equally social separation that involved exclusion from, or segregation within, many private and state facilities served as a gatekeeper for what had become a more virulently assertive and racist white identity. Cooper and Stoler have confirmed that such metropolitan notions of class affected race relations in many colonial cities and societies beyond the Cape.⁴⁶ The end result of this rhetorical reification of race and the increased separation that resulted was in turn to create or maintain more rigid ethnic and racial identities. Doing so made them appear a natural and normal part of everyday life, with associated prides, prejudices, and then policies that reinforced this process.

If the main arguments and theoretical approaches within them of *Ethnic pride* gave considerably more attention to separation than mingling, the latter was not ignored. The book’s findings partly concur with Fredrickson’s idea of Cape Town exceptionalism in as much as they reveal many further instances of mixing, of lack of *de facto* or *de jure* social or residential separation. If especially for the 1870s and 1880s, and among the less well off. For these two decades, as indeed for much of the period from the abolition of slavery in the 1830s up to the late 1880s, class appeared

44 G Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) for the explanation of British middle-class attitudes to poverty in London.

45 V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride...*, p. 211.

46 F Cooper and A Stoler, *Tensions of empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

to be as or more important than race in terms of how Cape Town society was ordered overall. There was certainly a close correlation of lightness of pigmentation with upper and middle-class status, but considerable residential and social mingling across lines of race existed among the less well off. This was a kind of cosmopolitanism of the poor akin to that which existed in inter-war Alexandria, Egypt.⁴⁷

Yet what such mingling might mean in terms of generating its own practices and ideologies received too little direct attention. So, the remaining part of this article will deploy those concepts associated with mingling, as defined above, to demonstrate some of its practical consequences in the Cape Town of this period. Also, by extension, this might suggest how mingling might affect other cities in this or other periods, whether in South Africa or beyond, in at least some similar ways.

The transnational component in much ethnic and racial mingling that encompassed people, cultures and ideas was clearly of significance to the nature and consequences of mingling in Cape Town. It was transnational immigration as well as rural-urban in-migration that not only greatly increased the size but also the demographic diversity of its population. Between 1875 and 1904, the number of inhabitants grew from some 45 000 to around 170 000. This was mainly the result of greater economic activity and employment opportunities resulting from the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior and consequent accelerated industrialisation and commercial activity in South Africa's port cities. Many immigrants from overseas, as well as rural-urban migrants from within Africa, made their way to Cape Town. In addition, to meet labour and skills shortages, the Cape government also assisted the passages of 22 000 people from Europe and St. Helena to the city between 1873 and 1884, as well as bringing 4 000 Eastern Cape Africans to the city during 1878-1879. A further 70 000 migrants and immigrants arrived between 1890 and 1904, including 34 000 from Europe. These included 9 000 Jews from the western parts of the old Russian Empire and 2 000 immigrants from India. But, albeit often in very small numbers, there were representatives of almost all geographical regions of the globe, from Afghanistan to Zanzibar, among Cape Town's population by 1904. Among rural-urban migrants from within Africa in this period, and using official census classifications of 1904, about 21 000 newcomers were Coloured, 9 000 were Bantu (Africans, and who included many migrant labourers) and 2 000 were White (mainly Afrikaans-speaking).⁴⁸

Having arrived, many of the less well-off migrants – with their diverse ideological and material cultures – squeezed into inner-city areas like District Six, east of the Dutch East India Company's Castle, Woodstock (with its own local government until 1913) to the East of District Six, and District 1 near the harbour. These became

47 J Moore, "Between cosmopolitanism and nationalism: The strange death of liberal Alexandria", *Journal of Urban History*, 38(5), 2012, pp. 879-900.

48 V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride*, p. 131 for these statistics and references to sources used to compile them.

the Cape Town areas most characterised by a high degree of residential integration of the relatively trouble-free kind. In the 1870s and 1880 at least, there was still considerable institutional and social integration in the city, if especially in these areas. In terms of government institutions, hospitals and prisons had yet to be segregated, and the same was true of at least some government schools. Beyond government institutions, there was wide ethnic/racial diversity among the pupils at inner-city British church mission schools like St Paul's or St Mark's in central Cape Town, as well among the patrons of many "canteens" (pubs/hotel bars) in similar parts of the town. This was often also true of stage entertainments and early cinema or bioscope shows, including those in some venues not confined to the poor. In addition, some trade unions as well as sports teams were also ostensibly open to all, including the Docks and Woodstock cricket teams.

The integration described above may well have been mainly of the limited kind where people of diverse ethnicities or racial affinities mingled in a (largely) mutually tolerant way rather than socialising, co-operating in work ventures, or becoming firm (perhaps lifelong) friends across such affinities. Yet evidence suggests that integration of these deeper kinds was not uncommon. The governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson suggested as much in a letter he wrote to Britain's colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, in 1901. Hely-Hutchinson referred to Cape Town's "mixed population closely intermingled in their domestic relations, comprising Europeans...Jews, Malays, coloured persons, Chinese, Indians and Aboriginal Natives".⁴⁹ In the same year, the lead article in a local newspaper commenting on British artisan immigrants stated that "we have been astonished ... to find how surprisingly large is the percentage of such settlers who marry coloured women".⁵⁰

This last comment suggests, unsurprisingly, a gender dimension to cosmopolitan mingling. One calculation for Cape Town given during evidence to a Labour Commission in the early 1890s was that roughly 15% of all marriages were "mixed". Such marriages were not entirely confined to the working-classes, with a local journal reporting in 1883 that a British immigrant, the Earl of Stamford, had married a "coloured" woman.⁵¹

Maurice Evans, author of *Black and White in South East Africa: A Study in Sociology*, who visited Cape Town from Durban in 1911, confirmed these impressions and added further telling detail:⁵²

He hears that it is quite a common thing for the European immigrant introduced for railway and mechanical work to marry, even to prefer to marry, women of colour ... he sees toleration of colour and social admixture to

49 Cape Archives, Government House files 35/40, Governor to Joseph Chamberlain, 23 April 1901.

50 *South African News*, 4 April 1901.

51 N Worden, E van Heyningen and V Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town...*, p. 227.

52 MS Evans, *Black and white in South East Africa* (London, Longman's Green, 1916), pp. 296-297.

which he is quite unaccustomed; it is evident on the streets, on the tramcars, in the railway stations, public offices, and in places of entertainment ... a sight impossible in an eastern town such as Durban, or Pietermaritzburg ... Young white men will be walking with well-dressed coloured girls, and an older European may often be seen with coloured wife and children of varying shades ... [in a bioscope/cinema audience one sees] representatives of every colour from the light-haired fair complexioned Scandinavian sailor or English workman to the sooty black of the Shangaan ... he will find no distinction made, all and any colour occupy the same seats, cheek by jowl, and sometimes on each other's knees.

Marriages and co-habitations also included white women and coloured men.⁵³ Indeed it seems as though it was quite common throughout the nineteenth century for women immigrants from Britain to prefer Muslim husbands (then also known as Cape Malays, and often of slave descent), in part because of their abstinence from alcohol.⁵⁴ There could still be prejudice against inter-racial unions from family members on either side. For instance, white relatives disassociated themselves from a Mrs Niemand after she married a coloured man.⁵⁵

This may well have reflected a growing alarm among many who self-identified as white about sexual liaisons of any kind across white-black racial divides. Such alarm was in keeping with growing social Darwinian fears in the late nineteenth century that “miscegenation” led to “race” degeneration. White supremacy was predicated on the existence of white racial “purity”. White women in particular, in patriarchal perspective, required protection from black men. By the early decades of the twentieth century, this was expressed both in periodic occasions of “Black Peril” urban panic – over the supposed threat that black men posed to white women – alarmist colonial literature to this effect, and official investigation. In time, it also gave rise to legislation prohibiting such sexual liaisons.⁵⁶

Yet the extent of friendly or intimate mingling described in accounts above helps to explain the existence of inter-racial cosmopolitanism frequently displayed in the city well into the twentieth century, and that never completely disappeared, though drastically reduced, even with the advent of apartheid. Perception of commonalities in ideas or life experience (despite likely simultaneous awareness of difference) was usually part of the explanation, with gender playing an important role here. One such display was provided by 500 dockworkers of very diverse origins who temporarily paralysed work at the docks when going on strike for better pay. Their

53 VC Malherbe, “Family law and the ‘great moral public interests’ in Victorian Cape Town, c.1850-1902”, *Kronos*, 30, 2010, pp. 7-27.

54 VC Malherbe, “Christian-Muslim marriage and co-habitation: An aspect of identity and family formation in nineteenth century Cape Town”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31(1), 2008, pp. 5-24.

55 VC Malherbe, “Family law...”, p. 26.

56 V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride*, pp. 115-119. See also V Bickford-Smith, *Emergence of the South African metropolis*, pp. 114-121 for discussion of Black Peril panics, investigations and literature.

leaders included Jamaican immigrant John Titus, an Englishman called Henry Yateman and French West African Phillip Susa. A bar near the docks at the Queen's Hotel became their headquarters, masculine conviviality and co-operation between them thereby duly lubricated. All three were eventually arrested for attempting to introduce picketing to the Cape and intimidating those who wished to work. Willingness to engage with others across racial lines was presumably facilitated by shared western education, Christianity and a desire to help the less fortunate in an instance of more middle-class cosmopolitan co-operation. This featured Estcourt born and Zulu home language speaking Alfred Mangena – who later qualified as a barrister in London, and became a founder-member of the ANC – and British immigrant Cowley Evangelist Father Bull, who lived among the poor in District Six. They worked together to help African migrant workers at the docks as well as Africans moved from the inner-city to Ndabeni.⁵⁷

There were many other individuals who because of personal background, life experiences, or deeply held ideological convictions, or a combination of all three, participated in what might be described as cosmopolitan initiatives. One such was John Tobin, himself the creolised son of an Irish immigrant and a slave descendant, who initiated outdoor gatherings in District Six known as the Stone meetings in the early 1900s. These were addressed by speakers of, physically and figuratively, all political complexions. Another was ex-Coldstream Guardsman Wilfred Harrison who became the founder member of the non-racial Social Democratic Foundation (SDF) in 1903. He gave speeches to all comers on the merits of socialism at Van Riebeeck's statue, at the foot of Adderley Street, on Sunday mornings. Three years later, in 1906, it was the SDF that called mass meeting and demonstrations of thousands of the unemployed without distinction of race or ethnicity on the city's Grand Parade. This was amid a severe economic depression, and the meetings eventually led to major riots that included working-class women as well as men.⁵⁸ By the mid-twentieth century, individual women become more prominent in the historical record of Cape Town cosmopolitanism. This was influenced by gradually changing gender patterns of employment as well as perceptions of acceptable gender roles in public life. Ray Alexander, Cissie Gool, Phyllis Ntantala and Pauline Podbrey, to give but four notable examples, were part of an inter-racial and politically aware (predictably left-leaning) social network of political and trade union activists in 1940s and 1950s Cape Town.⁵⁹

Given the extent of mingling described by Evans and others, considerable creolisation of cultures and ideas was inevitable. Indeed, our earlier mention of trade

57 V Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic pride*, pp. 108, 183.

58 V Bickford-Smith, "Ethnicity, place and protest: Perspectives on radical cultures and local identities in South African cities", K Cowman and I Packer (eds.), *Radical cultures and local identities in international context c.1780-c.1980* (Cambridge, Cambridge Scholar, 2010), pp. 195-212.

59 V Bickford-Smith, E van Heyningen and N Worden, *Cape Town in the twentieth century* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1999), p. 121.

unions and sport teams suggest as much. So do references to theatre and cinema entertainment, or mission schools, or newspapers. All of these transmitted a range of ideas and cultural influences from abroad, if only most notably Britain and the United States. They included the likes of musical traditions, dress fashions, hairstyles, gangster and cowboy machismo and other mannerisms, picketing, trade unionism, socialism and ideas of freedom of speech and assembly. Much of this might have been creolisation of a seemingly unequal, core-periphery, or coloniser-colonised, anglicising of the colonial working-class kind. One that helped underpin a cross-racial, cross-ethnic British Empire loyalism, most notably in time of war or on royal occasions like Victoria’s Jubilee in 1887: “even the poorest Malays in the back streets illuminated their tenements” according to a local newspaper.⁶⁰ When the Queen died in 1901, apparently “everyone” wore signs of mourning.⁶¹

Yet one can argue that creolisation in Cape Town was not merely a unilinear process. This was something explored in some of my research after the completion of *Ethnic pride* that paid more attention to the phenomenon. From the perspective of locals, including slave descendants, taking on elements of British or other “foreign” culture could be a matter of considered choice as much as Imperial imposition. In the case of some ideas and political ideologies it meant learning the language of anti-Imperialism, in English, as well as offering socio-economic advantages. Non-immigrant Capetonians had considerable agency in deciding what cultural forms to accept and why, and in making adaptations. This could produce the likes of syncretic forms of Christianity, perhaps in independent churches; or a fusion of imported and existing musical and lyrical styles; or adaptations of local languages and adoptions of imported accents; or the use of trade unions and the political party system to argue for improvement in work conditions or of Cape society in general, albeit with growing frustration.⁶²

In addition, as Hannertz suggests, creolisation produced some particularly complex and innovative creative adaptations. One such example was an annual showpiece of assertive working-class coloured community consciousness, the self-named and purposefully self-mocking “Coon Carnival” at New Year. This emulated yet also appeared to parody British military parades. Participants adopted, but adapted (and continued to do so over time), the dressing-up, disguising one’s face, self-mockery and street parading itself that were features of many other festive or theatrical occasions in nineteenth century-Cape Town: whether a cross-racial carnival that celebrated a

60 *Excalibur*, 24 June 1987.

61 *Cowley Evangelist*, 1901, p. 126.

62 V Bickford-Smith, “Revisiting anglicisation in the nineteenth century Cape Colony”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31(2), 2003, pp. 82-95; V Bickford-Smith, “The betrayal of Creole elites, 1880-1920”, P Morgan and S Hawkins (eds.), *Black experience and the empire* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 194-227; V Bickford-Smith, “Meanings of freedom: Social position and identity among ex-slaves and their descendants in Cape Town, 1875-1910”, N Worden and C Crais (eds.), *Breaking the chains: Slavery and its legacy in the nineteenth century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1994), pp. 289-312.

British royal wedding in 1863, or a summer fete in the centre of town in 1866. On this second occasion, 5 000 patrons across the social and melanin spectrum wore fancy dress or false noses while watching performances by white Christie minstrels in black-face make-up who were themselves emulating visiting American minstrel groups. There was also the way that coloured street songs that might be part of New Year Carnival ranged from old “street” or “drum” ditties, *ghoemaliedjies* (themselves the result of slave cultural creolisation in the Dutch colonial period), through those that stemmed from American minstrelsy, to London music hall favourites like “Daisy”, “After the ball was over”, and “My grandfather’s clock”. Yet despite all this creolisation, marching as self-proclaimed Coons through the central streets of Cape Town was a defiant act of coloured working-class solidarity and self-assertion.⁶³

Conclusion

Thinking anew about the relationship between mingling and separation comes at a time in many parts of the world when there appears to be renewed emphasis in the academy and the media on the reality of racial difference and its transgenerational heritability. An emphasis that on occasion at least seems to be reifying rigid and immutable divides between (a racially determined) “my group culture” and “your culture/s”, or “my lived experiences” and those of others. There may well be political efficacy in doing so. Yet there might also be a danger that this can begin to resemble belief in monolithic, tightly bounded, racial/ethnic groups that justified apartheid, or segregation in the American South, or concomitant ideologies of black separatism as advocated by the Nation of Islam in the early 1960s. Albeit evocations of racial difference today are at least at times accompanied by some acknowledgment of the socially constructed nature of its “reality”.

Yet in contrast, there are many writers and academics who have pointed to the extent of cosmopolitanism and creolisation evident in so many cities today. This has resulted from transnationalism-induced mingling celebrated by the likes of Salman Rushdie as: “the transformation that comes with new and unexpected combinations of human beings. Cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs ... Rejoice in mongrelisation, fear the absolutism of the Pure”.⁶⁴ There are echoes here of words deployed by Breyten Breytenbach speaking at the University of Cape Town’s Summer School two decades earlier. The year was 1973, still within the heyday of apartheid, during a brief visit back to South Africa with his Vietnamese wife Yolande (Ngo Thi Hoang Lien) from exile in Paris. In typically provocative and celebratory fashion, Breytenbach spoke of

63 V Bickford-Smith, “Leisure and social identity in Cape Town, British Cape Colony, 1838-1910”, *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* (Pre-millennium issue, 1998/9), pp. 103-128. For later and far more extensive treatments of the Cape Town Carnival see D-C Martin, *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town, past and present* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1999); JE Mason, *One love, ghoema beat: Inside the Cape Town Carnival* (Charlottesville: VA, University of Virginia Press, 2010).

64 S Rushdie, *Imaginary homelands* (Cambridge, Granta Press, 1992), p. 394.

Afrikaners such as himself as belonging to a "bastard people with a bastard language. Our nature is one of bastardy. It is good and beautiful thus." The problem, he argued, was when "we began to adhere to the concept of purity. That is apartheid".⁶⁵

In this view, the architects of apartheid had built the kind of walls between racial groups that Appiah deplored, walls that stifled and confined people within fixed racial/ethnic group affiliations. Mingling – of people, ideas and cultures – threatened the ideology of racial and ethnic purity on which the establishment of apartheid was based. The nigh complete social and political separation between groups, and the divide and rule this enabled, that its plethora of legislation aimed at maintaining. Mingling threatened to undermine those walls.

65 B Breytenbach, *A season in paradise* (San Diego: Harvest, [1980] 1994), p.156. The whole of Breyten Breytenbach's talk at UCT entitled "A view from outside" is published in this account of his return to South Africa. The talk was part of a series presented by Sestigers, the avant-garde Afrikaner writers of the 1960s.