

## CHAPTER 5

# THE RISE OF AFRICAN JAZZ AND RELATED STYLES VIS-À-VIS AMERICAN JAZZ

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

... Africa was a long way past original music works. She was drunk with American and English music works and quite inevitably, too. The missionaries had taught that the music of Africa was barbarian. Barbaric. Barbarous. Africa had to abandon African music as such. Africa had to learn Western music. Tonic Sol-fa. The Hallelujah Chorus. "In this hour of softened splendour" (*Drum July 1957:43*).

As with other landmarks in the development of South African urban styles, the gradual 'Africanising' of urban music was beset by currents and cross-currents of intellectual opinion. This chapter will attempt to unravel some of the strands of ideological, political and philosophical thought, expressed in the press, which appear to be related to the various stages of the process by which African elements were incorporated into black urban music, and in particular, those which surrounded the birth and demise of African jazz. Invariably, the concepts and beliefs implicated were related to the different ideological strategies for gaining freedom which were adopted to a greater or lesser degree of consciousness or unconsciousness by different groups of black South Africans. Similar to the issues which had dominated acceptance of western and black American styles, ideological trends which governed opinions regarding the incorporation of previously deprecated indigenous materials into urban performance, and specifically of *marabi* elements into jazz, are clearly articulated by the intellectual writers and readers of the newspapers and magazines. It must be stressed again that only the generalisations made and conclusions drawn about the viewpoints of this particular group can be substantiated by a variety of press articles.

It is essential to contextualise the discussion which follows in this chapter by emphasising the slow and gradual nature of this 'Africanising' process, the seeds of which were sown in the 1930s and which germinated slowly and sporadically in the 1940s. In the 1950s, the decade which featured both protest and celebration in black South Africa, 'Africanised' jazz-related styles which had emerged in the 1940s reached maturity in a heady *mélange* of what can be termed 'assertive urban festivity' that still included

much American material. A change of trend in popular styles in the late 1950s and the virtual demise of American jazz as a mass-supported popular style heralded the veritable explosion of a commercialised black South African ‘pop’ trend in the 1960s. Significantly and controversially, these developments were all concurrent with the introduction of the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s now infamous ‘Radio Bantu’.

This thesis will argue that rather than the embrace of a wholehearted political ‘radicalism’ (which, as manifestation of a “groundswell” of “militant protest” involved in particular the playing and composing of African material (*Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:146*)) an ever-increasingly strident voice of ‘urban protest’ which manifested as *pride in black urban identity* was adopted: black South Africans of all walks of life musically expressed their right to urban dwelling, and the media of expression incorporated both African and American styles. Tentative at first, the adoption of this ethos or ‘approach’ was gradual and always contrasted by those for whom the ideological and socio-political context of a ‘liberal approach’ (as described in Chapter 4) remained the primary motivation for performance and composition. The choice of stance was not straightforward and was beset with complex issues; expressions of contradiction and ambivalence were rife.

## 5.2 THE APPROACH OF ‘URBAN PROTEST’

Rather than a benign pleading for co-operation and moderation, a voice of assertive protest began tentatively in the late 1930s. In directly inverse proportion to the extent and number of draconian oppressive laws introduced by the South African government, it developed gradually in the 1940s, and became positively strident in the 1950s.

In politics, it would appear that the transformation from a moderate to a radical approach can be briefly described as the embrace - in the late 1940s, and generally more vociferously expressed in the press articles of the 1950s - of a more assertive form of African Nationalism than that which had been mooted in previous decades by the ANC. Strategies of political opposition, begun in the 1940s but which became a dominant feature of the 1950s, included measures of defiance and protest symptomatic of the adoption of a more radical approach to liberation than that which had previously been advocated

by the 'old guard' ANC politicians. The manifestation of a virile and oppositional African Nationalism had begun in the political milieu of the 1940s. It was the logical outcome of the realisation, which had begun to dawn nearly a decade earlier, that black South Africans had effectively been "locked out of a fully South African nationalism" (*Couzens 1985:256*). Inherent in this more ardent notion of African Nationalism was the generally and immediately pertinent concept of the assertion of the black South African's *urban* persona. Above the vociferous discussions about 'moderate' and 'extreme' currents in African Nationalism which punctuated an era of articulated overt black oppositional debate hitherto unprecedented in South Africa, a clear and united voice could be heard protesting the inviolable right to an urban life and urban identity. It became an ostinato to the chorus of debate which centred around the methodologies, strategies and forms of African Nationalism which became positively cacophonous in the 1950s.

Intellectual posturing on African Nationalism often included the perceived need to engender pride in African culture. However, it is a vital contention of this work that in practice the transformation to an assertive form of urban protest, which occurred under the general mantle of African Nationalism, did not imply a simultaneous and unconditional acceptance of African heritage for everyone concerned. The missionisation process as well as issues of tribalism and ethnicity in relation to Government policies resulted in a complex interplay of strategies and perceptions which deterred some from accepting, and urged others to embrace, African cultural elements as part of their urban African identity. Some, particularly amongst the educated whose views were expressed in the press, exhibited ambivalence and contradiction in regard to this issue which for them was inextricably linked with ruralism or lack of Christianity and education.

The essential difference between moderate (i.e. those who advocated a 'liberal approach') and 'radical' political leaders - as epitomised but not necessarily solely or wholly represented by the 'old guard' ANC on the one hand, and Youth League on the other - was captured by *Fighting Talk*, a non-racial leftwing publication. Refuting the fact that the Defiance Campaign of 1952 had officially adopted the "ideology of passive resistance ... as evolved by Mahatma Gandhi", the writer, Alan Doyle, asserts that the "satyagrahis" in India were appealing to the "moral conscience of the rulers":

It certainly was not and is not the outlook of the leaders of the national liberation movement in South Africa who live cheek by jowl with their oppressors and are only too well aware of the futility of appealing to their non-existent moral conscience or better feelings ...

Congress does not believe in melting the stony hearts of the oppressors, but in effective mass action to assert the people's rights to freedom and equality (*Fighting Talk* 1957:13).

The political feeling of the masses can only be gauged from references or deductions made by elite journalists and politicians. One such glimpse is the following poignant sketch by Joe Matthews in *Fighting Talk*:

In one newspaper photograph of a demonstration in the St Faith's area there appeared a solitary African woman wielding a stick in defiance at a Saracen. The tragedy of that photograph was the disproportion revealed in the woman with the stick and an armoured vehicle of war to deal with her ... When will they stop regarding themselves as an Army of occupation looking upon every act of the people as a potential military threat to be put down with heavy armour? (*Fighting Talk* September 1959:4).

In the music arena, the transformation for some to a hardened attitude of protest, rather than a benign demonstration of worthiness characteristic of the approach of 'moral persuasion', is most clearly expressed by Es'kia Mphahlele. In response to the Separate Amenities Act which made performances to racially mixed audiences illegal, he expresses the hurt frustration of 'liberals' and advocates a retaliatory total boycott of South Africa by overseas artists. Writing in 1962, he notes that the Syndicate of African Artistes, of which he was a founding member, had earlier requested the British Musician's Union and Equity to boycott South Africa unless they were allowed to perform to multi-racial audiences. This request had not been supported by the more powerful Union of Southern African Artistes. The reasons for their attitude were essentially rooted in the 'liberal' nature of those managing this body as well as those controlling the black press. Significantly, Mphahlele deems the tactics of moral persuasion of the past decades to have been in vain, given the hostile response of South African whites. Notably, the strategy of 'moral persuasion' of black Americans is declared to be inappropriate to the South African situation and useless to emulate. Of particular interest to this discourse is the expression of racial pride which manifests in the reference to the superiority of African musical ability:

... the people who controlled the African Press were ... influenced very strongly by liberals who always have views such as those of the Union of Southern African Artistes management had at the time. So we could not publicise our campaign.

The Union thought up another argument to rationalise its activities. The management said by entertaining whites [even on segregation terms] our artistes (sic) would be bridging the cultural gap between the various races. A healthy motive, certainly. This, they concluded, would go a long way in resolving race conflicts in South Africa. The case of the Negro artiste (sic) in America was cited as an instance in which race barriers were broken down by persistent efforts on the part of the Negro to reach out for (sic) a white public.

Granted that we also wanted and still want to help bridge the gap between our streams of culture ... (but why should we be the only ones to be doing this? ... Night after night, the whites who came and enjoyed themselves at “Township Jazz” shows went back to their comfortable, clean, plush existence in their bright and well-lit suburbs and forgot all about us, and did not lift a finger to press for our admission to their theatres, cinemas and (sic) restaurants and concert halls. Why, why, should we make all our efforts to crawl up to them with our art and go back to our dark shanty towns, to our dirty streets, to our draughty houses, to an existence that is littered with pieces of shattered ambition, aspiration and unrealised hope?

The case of the American Negro is a totally different one from ours. Negroes did not withhold their music because that would not have advanced their cause of freedom, they being a minority swamped by at least 97 000 whites who could create their own music, anyhow. Our boycott can be felt because we are a majority group; and everything vibrant and dynamic that exists in South African culture is to be found among the non-whites. Secondly, American whites generally have a conscience which can better be, and has been, exploited in other ways to win freedom. South African whites, on the contrary, are stubborn, and their conscience has short legs (*Fighting Talk July 1962:13*).

Mphahlele maintains that jazz, as the “international musical vernacular of the oppressed” (*Ballantine 1993:8*) was an expression of urban identity, and also of perceived commonalities of existence between the urban identity of black South Africans and black Americans:

It was very much, you know, (like) if you think of the blues in the United States: Blues was an expression of loss, an expression of sadness, an expression of desolation. And simply saying, “This is what things are like with me”. And Blues do that. And there was that about the music ... Listening to jazz and listening to Rhythm and Blues, it had a lot to do with their feeling that here were parallels; here, between two black populations, between two black worlds. The descendants of the slaves (*in America*) and here also, in a sense, (there were) descendants of some kind of slavery. And the slum conditions, and lack of political rights, etc. It had a lot of appeal for people (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

### 5.3 BALLANTINE’S EXPOSITION OF THE ‘RADICAL VIEW’

In his book, “Marabi Nights” (*Ballantine 1993*), Ballantine enunciates the transformation of musicians’ ‘approaches’ from a ‘liberal view’ to a ‘radical view’ and the reflections of these diametrically opposite ideological stances in western and African jazz-related music styles, respectively.

According to Ballantine, the decade of the 1940s was the period in which an unprecedented radicalism, articulated as ‘New Africanism’, was embraced ideologically and this embrace was directly reflected in the jazz played by Black South Africans. The radical view was based on the fundamental premise that music’s role should be politicised, assisting efforts to exhort real social change. In its ultimate and (strongly inferred) most laudable form, it manifested as an Africanisation of American jazz, to produce what became known as African jazz or *mbaqanga*.

Again two broad assumptions are identified, the first being that music should be formally linked to protest organisations (*Ballantine 1993:50; 1991B:141*). The organisation which most regularly used musicians from the ranks of the jazz and vaudeville subculture to play for their various events was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). The Communist Party, various black trade unions and the ANC also consciously associated themselves with the bands and troupes. Ballantine stresses, however, that on the whole, the musicians themselves remained professionally aloof from the sentiments expressed by these associations (*Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:145*).

It is from within the second assumption or impulse that a shift in this stance is witnessed. A new tendency emerged as part of a general current of militancy and disillusionment with previous strategies to gain credibility and acceptance: "a new militant period" in the 1940s stood "in striking contrast to the lethargy of the preceding decade" (*Ballantine 1993:56; 1991B:146*). This 'militancy' was to lead to revolutionary changes in the mindset of the jazz subculture and in the very constitution of the music: "political stance *should affect* musical style, in such a way that the music itself comes to symbolise political character" (*Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:145*).

Fundamental to the changes reflected in the music was the changed political atmosphere throughout the country; the most significant evidence of which was the dramatic swelling of the ANC into a dynamic mass movement. Beginning with and linked to political events of the mid-1930s - specifically the response to the infamous Hertzog Bills - younger, increasingly militant leaders became visible in the ranks of the protest organisations. The ANC, hitherto displaying characteristically *petit-bourgeois* attitudes, now effused a unifying spirit of proud nationalism. Class and social barriers gave way under the weight of the recognition of common oppression and mutual suffering. The changing political climate was mirrored in a changing cultural climate. Factors coinciding with the wave of black nationalism sweeping the country contributed to the emergence of a re-Africanisation of music, resulting in the expression of an "Africanist impulse" by the vaudeville troupes and jazz bands: "As with politics, so with music" (*Ballantine 1993:57; 1991B:147*).

Ballantine declares the ANC Youth League, founded in 1944 by Anton Lembede, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and Jordan Ngubane, to be "the political manifestation of New Africanism", the "philosophy" which had "already" (i.e. prior to 1944) demonstrated a "powerful impact" on jazz and on "how it understood its social role" (*Ballantine 1993:62; 1991B:151*).



According to Ballantine, the most significant and far-reaching impact of New Africanism on jazz musicians in the early 1940s was manifested in innovations which were woven into a cohesive, new syncretic style called African jazz or *mbaqanga* (Ballantine 1993:60/61; 1991B:150). If in the previous decade South African jazz had briefly and intermittently alluded to its true identity, that identity was now expressed confidently and assertively.

Whereas *marabi* elements had previously been introduced in certain numbers during performances on an ad hoc basis, Ballantine stresses that the soul and *raison d'être* of the emergent African urban jazz was now a uniquely expressed and fiercely proud African heritage (Ballantine: writer's interview 1/11/93). It was as if by the act of regenerating elements of *marabi*, of which the so-called "repressed elite" society (Ballantine 1993:25; 1991A:134) had previously felt inclined to be ashamed, blacks were self-consciously proclaiming the realisation of their self-worth as *blacks*, rather than trying to prove their worthiness as pseudo-whites (Ballantine - writer's interview: 1/11/93).

The following can be said to express the crux of the second assumption in Ballantine's 'radical view':

This shift - its outlines at first only dimly and intermittently perceived - ultimately had a profound and revolutionary impact on the future direction of black South African jazz culture. The shift involved the assertion that there was intrinsically a value in adopting or incorporating musical materials that were African. The precise nature of this value was never adequately spelt out by its advocates or practitioners, but there is no doubt that the belief was part of a broad groundswell that reached its first culmination in the early 1940s. Then, it inaugurated a period of militant protest; but it also - very significantly - found expression in the social and political philosophy of the New Africanism (Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:145/146).

For Ballantine, the years until 1944 were "a time of transition", in which militancy amongst the working class grew steadily, culminating in the highly significant political events of 1944. These were the forging of deeper ties between the Communist Party and the ANC as well as the formation of the ANC Youth League. The coincidence of the death of Zuluboy Cele, leader of the Jazz Maniacs and the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944, are strongly inferred to mark the effective end of the 'liberal view' and the beginning of the 'radical view': "The coincidence of these events signals, for black South African music, both the end of one era and the beginning of the next" (Ballantine 1993:62; 1991B:151/152).

For the vaudeville companies, the absorption of an ‘Africanist impulse’ meant the incorporation of thematic material with an African flavour, either in the form of indigenous themes or by presenting entire programmes which included “sentimental songs, jazz, madrigals and ditties” in the vernacular rather than in English (*Ballantine 1993:58; 1991B:148*). According to Ballantine, the jazz bands expressed “the Africanist impulse” by following one of two options: to play numbers composed by Africans, as did Wilfred Sentso of the eminent Synco Fans vaudeville company, or “More positively, they could ignore conservative prejudice and instead celebrate and encourage local proletarian music and dance styles” (*Ballantine 1993:59; 1991B:149*).

Ballantine infers that middle-class audiences, in response to an ‘Africanist impulse’ were now receptive to the inclusion of slumyard elements which would have been disdainfully received a decade or so earlier (*Ballantine 1993:60/61; 1991B:149/150*). In the early 1940s, this resulted in the birth of the *tsaba-tsaba* as a popular dance, even in the “most polished and distinguished halls” (*Ballantine quotes Walter Nhlapo – Ballantine 1993:60; 1991b:149*). (See 5.3.3.1) Thereafter, elements of *marabi* were forged with American swing, giving birth to African jazz of the 1940s as the essential expression of the “Africanist impulse” (inferred to be synonymous with or a component of ‘New Africanism’) (*see Ballantine 1993:60,62; 1991B:150,151*). As the musical embodiment of the ‘radical view’, African jazz (and *jazz per se*) was ultimately stifled by commercialism, which was driven and dictated by the state-owned radio airways in what is implied to be deliberate manipulation. It is strongly inferred that the SABC, sponsoring the ‘rural’ and tribal identity promoted by ‘Separate Development’, was directly responsible for the demise of African jazz (*Ballantine 1993:7*).

The following distinguishing features of Ballantine’s ‘radical view’ are in contention in this thesis and will be discussed in the sections which follow.

- The early 1940s as the period in which the transformation from a ‘liberal’ to a ‘radical’ approach in the black urban music sphere was apparent, particularly amongst the educated elite. Related to this is the analogy between a ‘militancy’ occurring as the culmination of a ‘broad groundswell’ of opposition in the 1940s, and its expression in African jazz, in general, and in the *tsaba-tsaba* in the early 1940s, in particular. (See 5.3.1 to 5.3.3.2)



- The “philosophy” of “New Africanism”, which manifested politically as the ANC Youth League, as a direct and conscious impetus for the composition of African jazz of the 1940s. The viability of using the terms the “Africanist impulse” and “New Africanism” interchangeably and unqualifyingly as describing the impetus for composition throughout the decades. (See 5.3.4 to 5.3.4.4)
- While the 1950s are referred to as an era of “astonishing innovation”, and the commercial styles promoted by the SABC in the following decade are roundly condemned (*Ballantine 1993:7/8*), the commercial African styles of the 1950s are left unspecified. (See 5.4 to 5.4.3)
- The inference that jazz is deliberately targeted and silenced by the state because of its perceived oppositional stance. (See 5.5 to 5.5.1.2)

### **5.3.1 The Early 1940s: a Period of Transformation from a ‘Liberal Approach’ to one of Radical ‘Militancy’?**

It is perhaps unfortunate that with regard to the ‘radical view’ as in discussions on the ‘liberal view’, Ballantine makes no distinction between the ideologies and strategies adopted by the elite, which can most easily be gained from the press, and those of the working class. However, he does infer very strongly that the ‘transformation’ from liberalism to radicalism purported to have occurred in the early 1940s, occurred within the realms of the intellectual elite. By deduction, it was this stratum which was most clearly able to articulate the “social and political philosophy of the New Africanism”. “New Africanism” both “inaugurated” and expressed “a period of militant protest”. Thus the creation of African jazz is the musical expression of “New Africanism” (which is in turn synonymous with the “Africanist impulse”) and “militancy” (*Ballantine 1993:55,56,57,60; 1991B:145/146,147,150*).

However, this research indicates that for the majority of the black elite, the entire decade of the 1940s would appear to have been an era of contradiction and ambivalence with regard to the ‘militancy’ exhibited by some of the younger generation of politicians in general and the Youth League in particular. Indeed, it was one in which many older educated Africans clung tenaciously to liberal

tendencies, with all their attendant features of personal ambition and progress, and significantly, to western styles as symbolic of such qualities.

In theory, the renunciation of a 'liberal approach' by the educated elite included a simultaneous rejection of cherishing individual privilege and a dedication to the unification of the race; a commitment to awaken, uplift and declare solidarity with the masses so as to present a strong and unified African nation in opposition to Government policy. An article in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1943, entitled "The Political Mentality of the Bantu; An Appeal" articulates this sentiment:

Now, Sir, plain common sense should teach me and if not, a hundred years of European rule should convince me that in a Democracy the Government is neither good nor bad. It always yields to political pressure and greater numbers. This should make it plain that unless our political bodies, such as Congress can, by intensive propaganda and contacts, awaken the political sense of the masses, there is no future for the Bantu.

...

... here we are 8,000,000 strong, sitting back, with our leaders and all, waiting patiently to receive our liberation from ... Mrs Ballinger's hands. What a hope! (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 13, 1943:7*).

However, while the need to mobilise and unite with the masses appears to have been intellectually perceived, there is strong evidence to suggest that, throughout the 1940s, it was not wholly and pragmatically accepted by the elite. An editorial in 1945 in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, almost certainly written by H.I.E. Dhlomo, whose significance to the debate on 'New Africanism' renders it of particular importance, refers to the decided lack of nationalist tendencies in elite echelons, where elements of a 'liberal approach' were still rife:

The popular idea in what one may call the Rising Middle Class African Sections [i.e. intellectuals, business and professional men] is, to put it crudely, each for himself and the Devil take the hindmost. Hence the wild [and welcome?] scramble to attain personal eminence and security in business, educational attainment, and the professions. Each person who succeeds in this "individual battle" feels he is liberated, powerful, honoured. He does not think of the Masses, and is not even prepared to co-operate with his successful upper ten comrades ... To put it better, the contention is that Africans must produce great men in education, in professions, and in business, first, to prove to the European that the black man can do this and that (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 17, 1945:12*).

In 1941, Henry Motseki, a writer to the "Reader's Forum" page of *Bantu World*, wrote the following letter:

## CHRISTIANITY

Sir,

I feel that it is a burdensome task to discuss the above topic without injuring the feelings of some of my fellow-Africans as I am almost certain that the majority of them will disagree with me, particularly those who have tenaciously gripped or are wholly absorbed in Christianity.

...

It is high time that we Africans should take cognisance of the fact that we have not in any way benefited by aping the Europeans, that our lot has degenerated into the "Native Problem".

In conclusion may I say that it is not and never was too late to mend; it stands to reason therefore that we as a people should with national pride lift up the banner and once more materialise those customs and religion endowed upon us by nature and characteristic to our type in a modern way.

Henry Motseki

Wolhuter Hostel (*Bantu World June 7, 1941: 5*) (own underlining).

Motseki is clearly aware that the opinion expressed is a decidedly minority one. In reality, the willingness to embrace a more assertive approach politically as well as the desire to express an African heritage in music - and it is the contention of this work that the two issues were not always synonymous - occurred as the reality of indifferent or hardened white attitudes in response to the strategy of 'moral persuasion' dawned. In practice, despite the oppressive laws which dramatically affected the lives of the masses, most of the black elite who had embraced the 'liberal approach', that bastion of individual progress and achievement, only made a genuine transition to an assertive oppositional stance to the status quo when their special passes and exemptions (see 4.4.3) were withdrawn in the mid-1950s. By contrast, the first half-decade of the 1940s, i.e. the war years, in which American swing reigned supreme in the jazz milieu, produced the height of the 'liberal approach of moral persuasion' (as described in chapter 4).

References to performances and dances in which American artists are imitated and American styles are lauded, occur frequently in the same editions in which similar attitudes to the following are expressed in political editorials, almost always as a reflection of hope in response to perceived liberal tendencies on the part of white South Africans: "It is no exaggeration to say the sympathetic attitude adopted by white men and women has sent a thrill of hope to our people. It has shown that there is a growing spirit of liberalism in this city which can easily be mobilised on the side of justice and liberty" (*Bantu World August 11, 1943:4*).

Ballantine asserts that in the early 1940s:

the ANC and other organisations ... formerly petty-bourgeois in their outlook and cautious in their style - now began to perceive that all Africans were ultimately subject to a common fate.

The results of these changes are most clearly borne out by the ANC itself, which now entered a period of revitalisation and began slowly to change into a mass movement ...

Symptoms of the new, militant mood were everywhere to be seen (*Ballantine 1993:56*).

It is the contention of this work that in black society in the 1940s in South Africa, the political climate amongst and as influenced by the educated elite, could not generally be described as characterised by a “new, militant mood” which was “everywhere to be seen”. An overview of press articles does indeed reveal the birth of an assertive, if not aggressive, form of political opposition centred around the formation of the ANC Youth League, which was attempting to spread its creed of a new version of African Nationalism. Thereby, it was attempting to *engender* an assertive and proud spirit of black nationalism, which was feasibly perceived by some individuals and groups to be ‘militant’.

The quotation by Ballantine used above requires the perspective given by Lodge: “Slovo, Magubane and O’Meara refer to Congress as a working class movement with a revolutionary strategy. The Anti-Removals Campaign demonstrates this was not the case. Both the organisation and its context were socially complex” (*Lodge 1983:338*).

The above statement is expanded in a further discussion:

It seems fairer to argue that the ANC was caught in a web of social contradictions that reflected the situation of its petty bourgeois national and local leaderships. Elements in this group still had a material position to defend. Such people, because of their upbringing, their socialisation and their beliefs, were hardly going to relish the possibility of bloody confrontation with the state ... Organisationally the ANC was too weak and under too much external pressure to risk internal disunity by bringing latent tensions out into the open. The Congress movement was changing, there can be no question of that, but its transition from an elitist to a popular movement was a complicated, gradual and often painful process (*Lodge 1983:360*) (own underlining).

The vast majority of press articles of the 1940s reflect relatively little ‘militancy’. The reason for this may well be, as Mphahlele states in the Fighting Talk article quoted previously, because “the people who controlled the African Press were ... influenced very strongly by liberals” (*Fighting Talk July 1962:13*). What is voiced throughout the decade is an intellectual, pragmatic, if at times ambivalent,

acceptance of the need for unity and a simultaneous rejection of elitism and above all, tribalism. An extract from the following editorial in *Bantu World* in 1941 is both insightful and representative:

We have more highly educated men to-day (sic) than when the African National Congress was established in 1912 and what is the position of our race with regard to unity? Have we achieved anything better than the founders of this national organisation, the majority of whom were practically illiterate? If we have not, what is the reason? The reason is that our highly educated men are more concerned with the promotion of their own interests than with that of national unity. They have not yet, it seems, realised the fact that without national unity there can be no scope for their intellectual activities. They do not seem to realise that unity will not only make our voice of protest against injustices and disabilities heard in the councils of State but will also enable us to improve our economic and social status.

It seems to us that the more Africans become educated the more they become divided. The reason for this is not far to seek ... They are vieing with one another for positions of honour and in this struggle for leadership tribalism reigns supreme and unity becomes impossible (*Bantu World February 8, 1941:4*).

The lone public voices of the Youth Leaguers whose views could feasibly be said to express 'militancy' included Anton Lembede and Robert Sobukwe. Sobukwe delivered a speech at Fort Hare in 1949 which probably expressed the most radical sentiments heard to date in public, and which is of pertinence to the immediate discussion. Sobukwe was a proponent of the Africanist movement which strove for an African Nationalism free from 'foreign' (i.e. Indian, Coloured and white) interference and was to lead the breakaway Pan Africanist Congress or PAC in 1959. As President of the Students' Representative Council, Sobukwe's speech was made at the "Completers' Social" on 21 October 1949, which was later spoken of at Fort Hare as "a night not to be forgotten" (*Pogrund 1997:33*). The speech is significant to the debate regarding the general political climate in the 1940s, not merely because Sobukwe was a prominent leader of 'radical' Africanist thinking, but also because Fort Hare was set to become "an African College or University", which, Sobukwe urged, would become the "centre of African Studies to which students in African Studies should come from all over Africa" (*Pogrund 1997:34*). Notably, rather than demonstrating an affiliation with African jazz as symbolic of the Africanist cause, the "music that was usual for the social was dispensed with" (*Pogrund 1997:33*).

References to tendencies manifest in the 'liberal' approach were denounced by Sobukwe in strong tones which epitomise a radical oppositional approach:

We must fight for freedom - for the right to call our souls our own. And we must pay the price.

You have seen by now what education means to us: the identification of ourselves with the masses. Education to us means service to Africa ... We must be the embodiment of our people's aspirations. And all we are required to do is to show the light and the masses will find the way. Watch our movements keenly and if you see any signs of 'broadmindedness' or 'reasonableness' in us, or if you hear us talk of practical experience as a modifier of man's views, denounce us as traitors to Africa (*Pogrand 1997:35/36*).

However, of significance to the discussion is the fact that he indirectly subscribes to the view that in general, the 1940s were not characterised by radical militarism in black society at large. Expressing shades of Fanon's antipathy for white liberals who entice the black "colonized intellectuals" to engage in dialogue (*Fanon 1963:44*), as well as his cynicism of the role of the missionaries (*Fanon 1963:42*), the approach of 'moral persuasion' is inferred to be both alive and well and the greatest obstacle to liberation:

The opponents of African Nationalism ... are hampering the progress and developments not only of Africa, but of the whole world ... Every time our people have shown signs of uniting against oppression, their 'friends' have come along and broken that unity. In the very earliest days it was the Missionary [we owe the bitter feelings between Fingoes and Xhosas to the Christian ideals of the Reverend Shaw]. Between 1900 and 1946 it has been the professional Liberal. Today it is again the Missionary who fulfills this role (*Pogrand 1997:38*) (own underlining).

A second reference to the inferred liberal tendencies of his colleagues and the revolutionary nature of his views is expressed thus:

The battle is on ... It is a struggle between Africa and Europe, between a twentieth-century desire for self-realisation and a feudal conception of authority. I know, of course, that because I express these sentiments I will be accused of indecency and will be branded an agitator. That was the reaction to my speech last year. People do not like to see the even tenor of their lives disturbed. They do not like to be made to feel guilty. They do not like to be told that what they have always believed was right is wrong. And above all they resent encroachment on what they regard as their special province (*Pogrand 1997:35*).

Significantly, though, he declares war on the efforts of white liberals to woo those awakened by a new radical consciousness: "I am afraid these gentlemen are dealing with a new generation which cannot be bamboozled" (*Pogrand 1997:38*).

For Sobukwe, the 'new generation' was symbolised by the ANC Youth League. It was this organisation which was perceived to attempt to engender a spirit of 'militancy' in so far as it was perceived by some to be an integral component of African Nationalism, or 'Africanism', as it was first referred to:



The Congress Youth League preached African Nationalism (the late Lembede called it Africanism) through press and platform. As a result, many people, especially the Youth, are beginning to grasp the significance of this Nationalistic and militant liberatory ideology, upon which depends the freedom of Africa from white domination (*The World January 21, 1956:2*).

Godfrey Pitje, who became a lecturer in the Department of African Studies at Fort Hare and to whom the task of taking the “practical step” of starting the Youth League branch at this institution fell, succinctly summarised the transformation in the minds of those politically-conscious youth of whom the Youth League was representative. Here the essence of a new radicalism is captured, including a condemnation of the essence of the ‘moral persuasion’ approach (“people playing up to whites”). This mindset would appear to epitomise Ballantine’s ‘new, militant mood’ which forms the core of his ‘radical view’ as motivation to African expression in jazz. It should be noted, though, that the need to foster African culture was not included in Pitje’s definition of the transformation:

Looking back, Pitje sees the significant changes taking place at that time in the minds of blacks he knew – ‘from the tribal way of thinking to join the mainstream of Western civilisation; from a feeling of acceptance of the status quo to a complete rejection of what the status quo stood for; from an uncomplaining “*ja baas*” (“yes, boss”) to the feeling that every white man is a bastard.’ It meant a change in attitude towards the older men who were the leaders of the ANC: until then, they had been looked at with admiration; now those like Pitje looked at them ‘as people who were playing up to whites’ (*Pogrand 1997: 28*).

However, rather than the Youth League reflecting the mood or thinking of the average black South African, Mphahlele states that

*They* (the Youth League) had to motivate the people, *they* had to motivate the people. Because the Youth League actually began - it had academic roots, that is, roots in academic life - in Fort Hare. And, as it spreads, it captures the imagination of the students. And that is the beginning, and then as it becomes more and more part of the ANC as a pressure group, it captures other young people who are not necessarily intellectuals, you see? (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

It is Mphahlele’s conviction that the ANC Youth League was not catalysed into being as a result of a ‘groundswell’ of ‘militancy’: rather it was the function of the Youth League to *initiate* such a phenomenon:

I think it was the Youth League that initiated the groundswell. The groundswell did not begin at all in the 40s in that way, because the ANC was still very much traditional. The ANC was headed by Ministers of religion very often, and it was headed by a group of elite who were teachers and yes, there were Trade Unionists, but highly educated Trade Unionists - when I say highly educated, I mean they were highly literate ... So that was the elite that led the ANC. Now, that was throughout the 40s. And in the 50s, the Youth League now has emerged, as a kind of intellectual thing. And *then* only when it spreads, the groundswell begins. In the 50s, really (*Mphahlele – writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

Certainly the need for militant leadership was perceived. Even the conservative Bantu World declared in 1946 that what was required was “a leadership that will give us a policy and a programme which will place us on the road to a militant and unrelenting fight for our national rights (*Bantu World* October 26 1946:4).

An editorial in 1948 in *Ilanga Lase Natal* is especially significant in determining the influence of the Youth League’s policies of Africanism on the general populace in the 1940s. This newspaper was edited and written by the two Dhlomo brothers, R.R.R. Dhlomo and H.I.E. Dhlomo. The latter can be stated to be the father of ‘New Africanism’, the “philosophy” which Ballantine credits to be the motivating force behind the Africanisation of culture and politics. H.I.E. Dhlomo is credited by Couzens as being active in the formation and ideas of the Youth League. In this editorial entitled “The Home Front”, the organisation is stated to possess a “small but clever group of publicists and theoretical critics”. However, the editor, H.I.E. Dhlomo (see *Couzens* 1985:256) bemoans the severely limited influence of the Youth League on the masses. Notably, this article was written as late as 1948, well after Ballantine would infer the transformation to radicalism to have occurred within the general populace and to be reflected in the Africanisation of jazz:

This group (the Congress Youth League) is powerless as far as practical politics are concerned. This is proved by the fact that although it is loud and persistent and clever in its arguments, it has no influence on the masses. The leaders whom this group criticises daily, continue to have the confidence and the following of the masses. The group is powerless to alter this situation despite the publicity it gets. One reason for this is that the key men of the group have no contact with the masses. They are unknown to the rural people who follow the Chiefs, the older Congress leaders and the members of the N.R.C., nor (sic) to the urban workers whose fate is in the hands of trade unionists. Every Congress and N.R.C. election shows that this group has no influence at all on the people. Another reason is that the “brain” men of the group carry on their polemics and write their best expositions in English which the great mass of the people do not read. Thus they may impress the Europeans and the few educated Africans, but they do not influence the masses ... At best, they are laboratories of African political ideas. In that they are doing useful work. But like the work of pure scientists, their work is known and admired in their limited circle (which includes Europeans) only. And it will take time before these ideas can percolate to the masses (*Ilanga Lase Natal* August 7, 1948:15) (own underlining).

Rather than a decade in which a major transformation to ‘militancy’ occurred within the ANC and was duly reflected culturally, *Ilanga Lase Natal* analysed the black political and cultural mood in 1949 as follows:

The Africans who once again have become the pivot of South African politics have rather been hesitant and cautious ... Thus at the beginning of 1949 we find our position almost where it was since May (*i.e. the month of the Nationalist Party victory and thus the official beginning of Apartheid*) ...

On the African home front, there seems very little to report. There have been no sensational political developments. Indeed there appears to have set in a kind of paralysis. True there has been much barking, but no biting; much heat, but no fire.

...

On the cultural and creative side nothing of outstanding importance has been done. No African poser, research scholar, educationist, writer or painter [excluding, perhaps, Sekota, whose work overseas received wide and favourable comment] has produced work to evoke Union-wide, let alone international, praise.

Thus, by and large, the closing year is not one we can boast of. It is to be hoped that the New Year will see better things, if not in the wider field of world and Union achievement, at least on the African home front (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 1, 1949:11*).

At the end of the decade, an editorial in *Ilanga Lase Natal* described the ANC in tones which are reflective of a decided lack of militancy in both the organisation, and, to the degree to which they were represented by the ANC leadership, in black elite echelons:

Congress today is moribund. The leaders resent criticism, new ideas and new blood. They are concerned with petty, personal and parochial matters and with local clique politics. The nation stands in need and in danger while they pipe their hackeneyed (sic) ditties of personal glory. The Congress rules are violated, the meetings are medleys of puerility or babel towers of acrimony and personal vindictiveness (*Ilanga Lase Natal March 19, 1949:15*).

Walter Nhlapo, the music critic and self-avowed Africanist whose relevance to the debate is significant and will be discussed below, wrote in 1944: "The Congress has shown stupidity in declining membership, and this shows that they do not exercise a healthy, progressive and uniformed policy. For this reason they make no positive contribution to our welfare. Such a movement is useless, for it merely has a negative effect" (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 10, 1944:11*).

The notoriously cautious and conservative *Bantu World*, amongst the expression of other sentiments typical of the 'liberal approach' throughout the decade, declared in 1947 that "Any student of politics in this country fully-well knows that the political set-up in this country does not permit sweeping changes and reforms such as many people want at present" (*Bantu World October 4, 1947:16*).

### **5.3.2 Elite Attitudes to African Culture as a Reaction to the Failure of the 'Liberal Approach'**

The desire and exhortations to include African elements in adopted western culture had been expressed at the height of the 'liberal approach' throughout the 1930s. It would appear that the difference

between these expressions and those exhibiting African characteristics as part of a more 'oppositional' impulse lies in the concepts and beliefs, the ideological framework, from whence such articulations emanated.

In an article in *Bantu World* in 1933 entitled "Africans Should Develop Their Own Languages", by an arch-liberal white, Prof. Edgar H. Brookes, and in which references to literature are analogous and relevant to the sphere of music, the educated African is encouraged to embrace both cultures within an essentially 'liberal' framework:

The educated African must be a *liaison* officer between his people and the white community. He must put out of his mind the idea that he has to choose between the one language or culture and the other. There is no opposition between them. Both are accessory.

Such a man was the late Sol. T. Plaatje. Few Africans have made more significant or more useful contributions to the literature of their own tongue. We all know of Mr. Plaatje's collection of Bechuana proverbs. Not so many know of his translation of Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" ("Diphosho-phosho") nor of the other Shakespearean work and materials for a dictionary left by him in manuscript. With Dr. D. Jones he published a "Sechuana Reader" which contains many fables from the folk-lore of his people. Yet, as we all know, Mr. Plaatje published a novel in English, and wrote and spoke extensively in English, helping to change the attitude of many a European to one of sympathy and respect for the Bantu (*Bantu World* January 21, 1933:2).

In just this way, the urban African (for which 'New African' is probably an apt synonym, but not frequently used as such at the time) is encouraged by the press twenty years later to adapt to the modern challenges of the 20th Century while retaining pride in his heritage. However, the contrast with similar articles of the 1930s is striking: the 'goodwill' of South African whites, which was the *raison d'être* of the 'liberal approach', is no longer being appealed to. The urban African of the 1950s asserts his own identity in the knowledge that he has an inalienable right to urban existence and rights for which he has pleaded benignly in the past. To the extent that these ideological concepts of embracing both African *and* western culture as symbols of a unique South African identity are revealed to be generally held by the elite of the press, jazz culture can be said to reflect them. However, this cannot be stated without the cautionary proviso that there were pockets of social groupings which differed sharply from this generalised status.

An early articulation of the need to express an African identity in music was in response to an apparently perceived danger of being overwhelmed by American culture. An editorial in *Ilanga Lase Natal* expressed alarm at the fact that:

Nowadays the dance craze has taken hold of the Native masses and they play or vamp whatever they hear from gramophones without any intelligent rendering of the songs.

... what would be best would be to have more and more Native songs by Natives themselves rather than aping European singers which is so frequently out of place in Native audiences (*Ilanga Lase Natal* February 8, 1929:7).

There are many other occasions on which mild concessions to traditional elements or encouragement to preserve a cultural heritage were presented from within a generally 'liberal' context. For example, in 1936, after a "very grand variety concert" in Langa, Cape, which featured the Mtetwa Lucky Stars Troupe, a Mr C. Tshabalala

emphasised the fact (that) although the members of the choir were a civilized and enlightened set of the modern age, they felt it beneficial to Bantudom to stage shows based on their customs and traditions. Such shows, serve to remind us favourably of the days of our forefathers.

... It is an appreciable fact to note that the Bantu race is so fast advancing in the demands of civilization as to be able to feel the necessity of exploring the different avenues in art that make up well for a race on the trend of civilisation (*Bantu World* July 4, 1936:5).

In more uncommon but strongly-phrased articles, this promotion was enunciated as part of a clear strategy to foster the emergence of a proud black nationalistic spirit. In the 1940s, one of the most eminent proponents of this mindset was Mark S. Radebe, who, driven by a "fierce embryonic nationalism", promoted the creation of "distinctive Bantu music" (*Umteteli wa Bantu* July 9, 1932:4). H.I.E. Dhlomo was the chief spokesman for an 'African nationalist spirit' in culture (see 5.3.4.3). In one editorial, he promotes the art or literary critic, stating that "Criticism will set us free from the authority of our self appointed masters in matters of art, and help us find original culture elements in our Past" (*Ilanga Lase Natal* June 16, 1945:15).

The role played by R.T. Caluza in engendering pride in African indigenous music in educated circles is significant. At a prestigious musical evening held at the Durban International Club in 1948, "a big part of the programme" consisted of "music by African composers" and Bantu Glee Singers sang "Bantu traditional songs interspersed with a few European items" (*Ilanga Lase Natal* February 28, 1948:18).

It would appear, however, that this need to Africanise culture was intellectually perceived and promoted by only a minority of the intelligentsia. Prof Khabi Mngoma remembers the trend adopted by certain of the “elite Missionary-types”, who, “with the onset of Africanisation, ... reverted, (in order) to be perceived to be truly traditionally African for purposes of National identity” to an embrace of certain indigenous African musical elements (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*). However, missionary-influence and the inculcated synonymy of concepts of civilisation and education with western culture meant that in practice there was much resistance to a perceived retrogression to ruralism and primitivism inherent in the concept of ‘African culture’. Mngoma recalls his efforts to introduce African elements into the milieu of western-style choral singing: “In my case as a practitioner, I was attacked every time for pushing that sort of thing (*i.e. African elements*), (which I did) realising that the people had to gain self-assurance; they had to be sure of their own music (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*). He maintains that older intellectuals, in particular, were averse to embracing the culture which they had been educated to resolutely eschew (*Mngoma – writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

As late as 1953, Walter Nhlapo indicated that the general populace was still averse to elements of African culture:

However unsavoury tribal dances may seem to the African educated elite, or to ordinary urban Africans, they have at least one genuine virtue ... From the tribal dance, scorned by foolish sophistication, will come much of the vitality for African dance creations of the future (*Umteteli wa Bantu February 14, 1953:6*).

Mngoma provides the interesting perspective that for many musicians, the incorporation of African elements was born out of the frustration of hopes held aloft in the ‘liberal approach’. Rejected by white audiences and society in general, they turn to their own people for recognition:

They had not been accepted as successful, or expert, practitioners in Western music. People like Sal Klaaste, who did a Wits D. Mus. [... could never perform with an orchestra, and was not accepted as a top rate musician ... Culturally and socially, he was not accepted in white society. As an expert pianist who could play the A Minor Schumann concerto. So they, too, (*i.e. black western music practitioners*) had to revert to - and try to find out something about - African music. And many, like Matshikiza, when they compose, they try to bring in African characteristics, because they are striving for an audience that would recognise their worth (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).



### 5.3.3 African Jazz in the Early 1940s

Mngoma feels strongly that the absorption of previously shunned African elements into new syncretic forms, whilst not consciously perceived as such, was the result of “vague urgings” to Africanise an essentially western urban identity. Emanating in inarticulate and indistinct form from the people, the desire to express a new, proud African identity began to be unintelligibly and unconsciously sensed in urban society, along with the need to express this identity in African, rather than American, urban forms (*Mngoma - writer’s interview: 23/4/95*). Nevertheless, Coplan maintains that “Only a few African jazz musicians of the 1940s brought anything identifiably South African to their playing of American swing. The reason was simply the identification of traditional music with the rural present and tribal past” (*Coplan 1985:148*).

No single factor contributes more to the conclusion that African jazz was not a dominant feature of the entertainment stage in the 1940s as the dearth of press articles in which the style is mentioned in that decade. Generally speaking, the merits and features of African jazz (or in the early 1940s, *tsaba-tsaba*) are neither debated, lauded, nor derogatorily referred to, to any impressionable degree. By far the majority of articles chronicling the social events of the 1940s were dominated by accounts of evenings which reflect that, throughout the 1940s, African jazz played a relatively small role in black music entertainment in comparison to its American counterpart.

Mngoma maintains that throughout the decade, American orchestrations were the order of the day. African jazz was a novelty feature, reserved for the end of the evening:

It was usually towards the end. It was the end; where they wanted to hot up things and it would be a signal to the audience that the whole dance is coming to an end, when they used one of the local *mbaqanga*-types of music. (For the rest), you usually played American orchestrations (*Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*).

The following 1947 article with its references to African songs and “items depicting African culture”, taken from *Bantu World*’s regular column, “The Week’s Social Whirl” is chosen as a representative example of the ratio and nature of African items performed in relation to western material. It is also representative of the emphasis given to these, respectively; as well as of sentiments typical of the ‘liberal approach’ which were characteristic of reports in the press throughout the decade. It is therefore quoted in full:

LIVELY CONCERT: De Pitch Black Follies, under Griffiths Motsieloa supported by Peter Rezant and his Merry Black Birds Orchestra, made an appearance before a large and enthusiastic audience at the Bantu Men's Social Centre recently. The programme consisted of twenty-five items of a varied nature: there were songs, sketches, dances and items depicting African culture. The African songs rendered were: "Tata Wam" by Henry Jorha in Xhosa, "Shidzeze" by Daniel Marivate in Shangaan.

Prince Sesinyi delighted the audience with "Chewing a Bit of Straw." He is the winner of many prizes at the Odin Theatre, and the finalist in the Odin Talent competition held recently.

Snowy Mahlangu (nee Radebe) carried the house with her rendering of "It Might as Well be Spring". The highlight of the night was the beautiful waltz "Princess Elizabeth" by Ralph Trewhela sung by Snowy Mahlangu and Leonard Nongauza with a chorus consisting of Nimrod Mahlangu, Godfred Mabaso, Prince Sesinyi and Ben Dreyer. The applause was terrific and the composer, who was present, was introduced to the audience amidst cheers. He stepped forward and shook hands with Griffiths Motsieloa. Peter Rezant then read a letter from His Majesty King George VI who replied to a letter from Griffiths Motsieloa thanking him for his letter.

The Merry Black Birds opened their programme with a trio - Sal Klaaste at the piano, Jerry Dunjwa, string-bass and George Koza at the drums. This item was also highly appreciated. The guest artist, Elias Disimelo, sang with feeling "A Garden of Happiness" and "Arise O Sun" accompanied by Emily Motsieloa. He received great applause.

The Merry Black Birds played some numbers by Count Bassie (sic) the great American pianist and band leader, and Duke Ellington's "Take the 'A' Train" which received sustained applause from the audience.

Marjorie Lekgetho sang in her usual captivating style. Other band members who took part were: Stephen Monkoe (trumpet), Mack Modikoe (tenor sax), Wilfred Ditsie (alto sax) and Norman Shongwe (alto sax). Some of the members who took part in the Follies troupe were: Edna Davies and Peggy Makhunga.

European visitors from America and England who were present at the concert said they had spent an enjoyable and delightful evening at the Bantu Men's Social Centre (*Bantu World* May 17, 1947:14).

Mphahlele stresses that he soundly refutes the theory that music in the 1940s, or 1950s for that matter, reflected a mood of 'militancy' as felt by the general urban population:

No! It was not that. As I was saying, it was not a confrontational thing. That is what militancy is, isn't it? It has got a target. It did not have a direct target at all (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

### 5.3.3.1 *The 'Tsaba-Tsaba' as an Expression of an 'Africanist Impulse' in the Early 1940s*

A 1940 advertisement for "Singer Bantu Records", dominated by *isicathamiya* numbers by "Solomon Linda's Original Evening (sic) Birds", contains a sub-heading for "Singer Rumba Orchestra". This is followed by the names of two rumba numbers: "Zulu Hymns - Zulu Sacred Singers" and "Beatrice Mbanjawa and her Big Boys". The last section, "Sechaba" by "Motsieloa's Pitch Black Folloes (sic)",

includes a list of eight song titles. These are all western in character, with the exception of “Tsaba Tsabake No. 1”, which is featured fifth (*Bantu World* May 4, 1940:3).

Ballantine maintains that under the impetus of the ‘Africanist impulse’, jazz bands in the 1940s could “ignore conservative prejudice and instead celebrate and encourage local proletarian music-and dance styles” (*Ballantine* 1993:59; 1991B:149). Prestigious composers such as Wilfred Sentso showed this encouragement in the early 1940s for the *tsaba-tsaba*, a “popular” dance that was “a successor” to the *marabi* dance, that symbol of slumyard culture which had previously been regarded as a decidedly unacceptable feature of prestigious occasions. As evidence of this strongly inferred elite transformation, Ballantine declares that the “major critic Walter Nhlapo lent it (i.e. the *tsaba-tsaba*) his full weight” in 1941. Evidence of this support is provided by a quotation from Nhlapo:

“OH, THIS TSABA-TSABA!”

The origins of the indigenous Tsaba-Tsaba dance, which a year ago was the craze of Bantudom, is shrouded in considerable obscurity ... It may have been copied from the Lambeth Walk as some would have us believe, but we don’t know. One thing certain is, (sic) it first came to life at Sophiatown.

...

I have seen, at the B.M.S.C. and Ritz Hall, dancers poorly trying to dance the Big Apple (and they don’t know what they are dancing), and spectators have gloried the sight (sic). Bands play foxtrots, waltzes, tangos, rumbas etc. etc. and everybody enjoys the music and dancing. In bioscopes we’ve seen Harlem dance the Big Apple, The shag and Africa’s creation, La Conga and we’ve admired these creations, and these dances have not been recipients of abuse as Tsaba-Tsaba ... If Tsaba-Tsaba is condemnable so is every dance ... Tsaba-Tsaba is dusky South Africa’s own creation art. Whether it is a fiend or not, it is an indispensable part of our musical and dance culture ... it had the Spirit of Africa in it; the Life that’s Africa, thus it inspired composers like Wilfred Sentso to give us the sensational ‘Tsaba-Tsaba Baby’.

... Tsaba-Tsaba was a vogue even in the city’s most polished and distinguished halls, but as is the lot of many popular dances, on introduction it was chastised as indecent, scurrilous and lewd. Right and left, old and young, educated and uneducated, it felt the brunt of considerable criticism and infective (sic). Regardless of torrents of scathing abuse, it swept the country. What we anxiously waited for was a satirical “An Apostrophic Hymn” (sic) but none came (*Bantu World* July 12, 1941:11).

The singular use of a shortened version of the above quotation implies that the *tsaba-tsaba*, as a “craze of Bantudom”, was not only universally accepted in black society, but an all-embracing feature of dances in the early 1940s and therefore a common and widely-accepted symbol of an “Africanist impulse” (*Ballantine* 1993:60; 1991B:150).

Questioned about whether he perceived the *tsaba-tsaba* to have been a manifestation of ‘Africanism’ in the early 1940s, Prof. Ezekiel Mphahlele responded: “No. No, I really don’t think so. I think, what happens often in history, with people, is that once in a while, certain collective memory comes and bounces off the people. And then they find some sort of novelty in it. But it goes and it goes, (in) very short steps, and then it fizzles out. And that is what happened.” Despite this assertion, though, he attests to a continuity between the advent of this dance and the future lineage of African urban music: “Today, you see the variations of *tsaba-tsaba*. The *kwela* is really the same family” (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

The importance of the *tsaba-tsaba* as a symbolic milestone of African cultural heritage lies in the fact that it appears to be one of the first examples of slumyard culture being incorporated into instrumental American jazz. This fact is alluded to in an article in *Golden City Post* in 1958, where inference is made to the fact that it was the beginning of a continuum of jazz-related African music, and in which *tsaba-tsaba*’s perceived synonymy with *marabi* (here referred to as *maraka*) is evident:

The “Klanker” thumps his thick cigarette-stained fingers on what is left of the keyboard. The drummer bangs his sticks on the drums and cymbals.

The result: A lilting three-chord sequence.

Hlala! shout the boys and girls as they put away their “skaals” and burst on to the floor. They break into a rhythmic leg-kicking, arm flinging and body rocking.

...

Well, that was Maraka, folks. Today we have “Kwela”, - the same music and rhythm, but a different name. Instead of shouting “Tsaba”, they now say “Kwela.”

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE OLD PIANO IS LONG DEAD AND BURIED - MAY ITS MEMORY LIVE FOR EVER (*Golden City Post August 24, 1958:8*) (upper case as in original article).

Radebe Petersen recalls the *tsaba-tsaba* as a fast-tempo dance which included *marabi*-like elements and which appealed to middle and working class audiences alike. It was a phenomenon which occurred in the entertainment arena of the more elite venues such as the “Inchcape Hall” (or “The Ritz”, as it was also known) as well as location halls. However, both Radebe Petersen and Piliso assert that whilst it is true that ‘jive’ dances (or, as Radebe Petersen points out, American swing styles played to faster ‘jive’ tempo) continued to be all the rage with the younger generation for the remainder of the 1940s, these were for the most part *American* jive dances within a jazz idiom, rather than African-flavoured music (*Radebe Petersen: writer's interview - 8/11/94; Piliso: writer's interview - 1/11/94*).

Peter Rezant maintains that the Merry Blackbirds' brief flirtation with *marabi* (presumably in the form of *tsaba-tsaba*, although he does not have a clear recollection of this fact), was "only in the early 40s, (and) the late 30s. Later on it never came in (to the repertoire)." By the mid-1940s

... that side (*i.e. marabi*) died out with us because, the better class African, the educated one, did not want that type of music, because they connected it with the shebeens, the lower class, the uneducated African. So we did not follow it. We followed the western way, the high class ... We did not follow the African music.

... We were divorced from that. We were divorced from that kind of music altogether (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

The limited life of *tsaba-tsaba* is indirectly referred to in an article in *Bantu World* in 1953, in which the history of jazz is described by "Zorro", a pseudonym used by their regular columnist. Referring to the Jazz Maniacs, for whom "Hot jazz numbers were the speciality", he provides his perspective of the place and duration occupied by the dance in relation to other American dance styles of the 1940s: "This group formed the first Jazz Maniacs band of the "Ts'aba-Ts'aba" days, that is, days before the advent of jive and charleston" (*Bantu World July 25, 1953:9*).

While it would appear to be an undisputed fact that the *tsaba-tsaba* enjoyed significant popularity in the early 1940s, this fact must be contextualised by strong evidence of two sobering facts. Firstly, the dance craze was short-lived. More importantly, the *tsaba-tsaba* was characterised as a decided *novelty* feature, included as a moment of light-heartedness at the end of a function dominated by American and English ballroom music (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98; Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

### 5.3.3.2 *Walter Nhlapo as Proponent of the 'Africanist Impulse'*

An overview of Walter Nhlapo's articles, both as music critic for *Bantu World* and as a writer in other publications, reveals that Nhlapo's music palate was a uniquely eclectic one. It included western 'serious' music and American jazz, African 'folk' music and other indigenous styles as well as African jazz. Uncharacteristic and unrepresentative of his elite peers, Walter Nhlapo was one of a relatively small number of vociferous Africanists in the 1940s. His agenda included the propagation of African pride together with the development of a strong urban identity. For those of the elite who shared his

views to a greater or lesser extent, the latter goal does not appear to have been mutually exclusive from many of the tenets of the ‘liberal approach’, particularly in this decade.

There is definite evidence to support the theory that Nhlapo promoted African Nationalism. One of the clearest enunciations of Nhlapo as champion of black pride and more specifically, of Africanism, is found in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in an article in which Nhlapo drops the mantle of music critic. Commenting on a political meeting held by Indians, Nhlapo pronounces in a paragraph headed “Africans for Africans” that:

We are proudly capable of protecting our interests and fighting our own battles alone and that we must do. Our power lies in our glorious past and national traditions that have withstood segregation, suppression and spate (sic) of racialism. We are consequently loyal and devoted to our colour and we neither regret nor apologise (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 19, 1944:10*).

However, comments in support of African music, in general, in the 1940s seem more likely to have been intended to urge others of his echelon to accept the indigenous heritage which their education had inculcated an inclination to deprecate. The following comment with regard to the developing African jazz is one such example:

Many musicians look upon Africa for inspiration. We gave the world the movements of the tango, plain blues and we have much in store. This shows that if Bantu Bands would play folklores in swing tempo, playing with innate feeling and ability, (they) would achieve fame. This is my belief ... Our folklores are jazzy in tempo, and only require one thing: arranging the brutish rhythm (*Bantu World November 22, 1941:9*).

Nevertheless, Nhlapo’s own obvious elitism is revealed on many occasions: “Most African pedestrians are from the rural areas and are sleepish” (*Bantu World October 12, 1946:9*). Elements which are “rude and suggestive” are enjoyed by “our poor and foolish audiences” (*Bantu World March 22, 1941:0*). His obvious bias against proletarian institutions is glimpsed in comments like, “One or two of our bands are on this fine rating, the rest should be liquidated to Stockfells” (*Bantu World October 25, 1941:9*). Nhlapo often clearly distinguished his elevated taste from that of the common audiences: shows which were “well patronised” were declared to be “far from good” (*Bantu World August 29, 1942:5*). While enjoyed by the audience, Nhlapo declared an evening’s performance to be “a total and sand (presumably “sad”) failure” (*Bantu World October 13, 1940:9*). Often it was the “Bantu” numbers of the vaudeville companies which were “disappointing to the core and marrow”, providing



“dull performance for alert gatherings” (*Bantu World* October 18, 1941:9). On one occasion Nhlapo found it “shocking to see Africans enjoying such nonsense” (*Bantu World* March 22, 1941:9).

The elite’s evident ambivalence regarding *tsaba-tsaba* and its perceived links with *marabi* are inferred on various occasions: “I have been invariably given to understand that the Jazz Maniacs 9 (sic) are ‘swing’ and the Merry Blackbirds ‘dull’; Maniacs a ‘tsaba Marabi band’ and the Black-birds, (sic) the real band for educated and civil gatherings” (*Bantu World* July 8, 1939:5). In 1941, Nhlapo protests the fact that “Dancing clubs deplore engaging Bantu dance bands instead of Coloureds on the false ground that Bantu bands play nothing but *tsaba-tsaba*” (*Bantu World* March 1, 1941:9). A year later, Nhlapo states that the “Jazz Maniacs for years have been called a ‘Marabi band,’ but whether so, their music has intensity, brilliancy (sic) and sensational drive which is essential in jazz or swing” (*Bantu World* July 4, 1942:5).

It must be stated that throughout the 1940s Nhlapo’s promotion of African culture and his desire as an elite intellectual to woo white society were not mutually exclusive domains, and articles were often punctuated by comments more suitable to the ‘liberal approach’. For example, an article extolling the virtues of *isicathamiya* groups like the “Dumas Morning Stars”, “Linda’s Original Evening Birds”, “M.C.C. Rolling Stars” and “Thulasizwe” was juxtaposed with the following two paragraphs:

VAUDEVILLE STAGE: - The Vaudeville stage is rich with troupes like the De Pitch Black Follies, Synco Fans and Diamond Horse Shoe. These troupes can lavishly entertain any audience even the most sophisticated among the Europeans.

FOR DANCERS ONLY: - Johannesburg is abound with straight ballroom dancers and jitterbugs. These cliques wear off their shoes to the irresistible strains of the Merry Blackbirds, Jazz Maniacs, Rhythm Clouds and Synco Down Beats. Some of these bands have given a good account of themselves as “live” or “swing” exponents in European clubs (*Ilanga Lase Natal* May 15, 1943:8).

Similarly, Nhlapo’s role as ambassador of the inclusion of African heritage in music never implied a simultaneous rejection of western styles. Perhaps the clearest and most pertinent example of this is seen in an article extolling the virtues of the eminent Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival in 1949. For Nhlapo, the virtue of the Festival “as a music appreciation society” is the fact that “unceasing efforts have brought western music via recitals right into the African, thus fostering love and not mere toleration for music in the advanced idiom from Bach to Walton”.

“Intelligent interpretation” of works which included

a discreet blend of old masters and contemporary music like “Evening and morning” (Oakley), “Teach me O’Lord” (Attword), “After many a dusty mile” (Elgar), “O can ye sew cushions” (Bantock), “I love my Jean” (Button), “He that hath a pleasant face” (Huston), “Second Minuet” (Besly), “Bless this house” (Brobe), “Deep River” (Burleigh), “As the road to Mandalay” (Speaks) and so forth

would be heard. ‘Bantu’ numbers, notably western style choral singing, are presented in a context of unequivocal ‘moral persuasion’:

Some fine compositions by Bantu will have a notable niche. There will be ... Masiza, M.N. Ramokgapa, J. P. Mohapeloa, ... to represent the blackman’s (sic) creative ability. These works, I hope, will convince the European that there is much in Bantu Music. This is one occasion when Europeans tell whether our music has an impulse behind it or is purely cerebral (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 24, 1949:15*).

It must also be noted that Wilfred Sentso, whose promotion of *tsaba-tsaba* is referred to above, primarily composed in the medium of American jazz. One such composition, “Trying to Tell the World”, was praised by Nhlapo in a review in which items such as “This Year’s Crop of Kisses” and “Top-Hat” (“similar to the one of “Top-Hat” by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers”) were received by an audience which “went hoarse with joy” (*Bantu World October 19, 1940:9*). Despite his evidently brief foray into the *tsaba-tsaba* realm, Sentso’s ‘Africanist impulse’ was confined to his resolve to compose his own works, but with a distinctly Eurocentric flavour. Writing a brief history of jazz in *Drum* magazine in 1957, the pianist and composer Todd Matshikiza recalls Sentso’s compositions for these characteristics rather than those of the *tsaba-tsaba*. Instead, he refers to the distinctly western bias of “local bands” in the early 1940s, the years which Ballantine credits as heralding a major transformation to African styles:

Wilfred Sentso began composing. Swing fever had touched him but he wouldn’t touch imported music. He wrote his own numbers which went over well with his Downbeat Band and Synco Fans concert party. Us kids sang his “Synkopation” like this: “synkopation, modulation, obligation, jubilation,” and any other words that rhymed with “synkopation.” Sentso’s music was published in England. But the local bands preferred “the real berries from America” (*Drum 1957:43*).

Amongst the few critiques in which *tsaba-tsaba* was mentioned by Nhlapo, and which give perspective in terms of the ratio and importance of the “Africanist impulse” in relation to western items, were the following:

- A 1941 concert and dance at the Ritz Hall which featured the vaudeville troupe, the African Minstrels, and the Merry Blackbirds, was reviewed as follows:

The popular Edward Manyosi was given a hearty reception for singing Until and Ole Man River. A piano selection by Jacob Moeketsi was very well received. A Game You Can Play and All Are Forgot (sic) received happy results. Minstrel Style with a bit of Tsaba-Tsaba in it was encored. Merry Blackbirds ended the attraction with sweet strains (*Bantu World June 14, 1941:11*).

- At a concert and dance given by The Broadway Stars of Pretoria and African Rhythmers Band of Benoni, *tsaba-tsaba*, while obviously popular with the audience, is given similar emphasis:

There were several items which received applause and (were) encored: Banyana Ba Mona, with *tsaba-tsaba* acting, rocked the house. Captain Rhythm, an item in which the boys were dressed like sailors was really outstanding(ly) well acted and sung. Were you there? a solo rendered by Philip Matante was well rendered with a fine, clear and powerful baritone. Back to Back Susy were (sic) also a success. From Boy to Boy, a humorous, witty dialogue, had clever impersonations and fine acting which brought down the house (*Bantu World May 17, 1941:9*).

The motivation for Nhlapo's undisputed and documented support for the Africanisation of urban music was not without at least some contradiction and ambivalence. In 1940 he decisively states: "I believe much in the development of Bantu original art than to ape the European" (*Bantu World November 2, 1940:11*). In 1942, however, precise "apeing" of American artistes is praised. He proclaims that the Diamond Horse Shoe Troupe's "imitation of the Nicolas Brothers stunts from Down Argentine Way is the most perfect apeing yet presented" (*Bantu World December 12, 1942:5*).

Lest the context of the above remark be questioned, Nhlapo continues in the same article to laud the "bombshell" Emily Kwenane, who "if she would only turn a blues singer, we in Johannesburg would have found a Bessie Smith or falling lower she would be a Teddy Grace" (*Bantu World December 12, 1942:5*).

Nhlapo's sponsorship of an "Africanist impulse" (*Ballantine 1993:59; 1991B:149*) must be viewed from within his unequivocal support for American jazz which continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s. As late as 1957, American swing receives vehement defence and praise (*The World August 3, 1957:8*).

### 5.3.4 The Concepts of ‘New Africanism’ and ‘Africanism’

The explicit and conscious acceptance of aspects of a social and political philosophy – in this case New Africanism – into the very constitution of music, was a turning-point in the history of black South African jazz (*Ballantine 1993:62; 1991B:151*).

The “philosophy” of “New Africanism” is implied throughout the section “Politics in Music - Towards an African style” to be synonymous with the “Africanist impulse” (*Ballantine 1993:55 – 62; 1991B:145-152*). This is arguably a theoretical, if not commonly perceived, truism of the 1940s, when the concepts of ‘Africanism’, and far less audibly, ‘New Africanism’ first found public expression. However, examination of the political debates of the various decades reveals the use of these terms within the framework of this stance to lead to an over-simplistic, if not perceptually misleading, understanding. Particularly in the 1950s, definite and important distinctions in common perception, if not academic theory, of the two terms, are evident among the newspaper writers and readership. It would appear that in both decades ‘Africanist’ and ‘Africanism’ were more commonly used and understood terms than ‘New Africanism’.

Together with Ballantine’s definition of the ‘shift’ to a ‘radical view’, the ‘conscious acceptance’ of ‘New Africanism’ is inferred to be, if not synonymous with the ‘Africanist impulse’, then the latter a direct result of the former. Closer examination of concepts of ‘New Africanism’ and ‘Africanism’ provide a slightly altered perspective to Ballantine’s sweeping approbation of the term “New Africanism” as embodying a “social and political philosophy” which, in a process of “explicit and conscious acceptance”, was inferred to have directly resulted in the Africanisation of jazz (*Ballantine 1993:62; 1991B:151*).

#### 5.3.4.1 *New Africanism*

The architect of the concept of ‘New Africanism’, in the South African context, was the playwright, H.I.E. Dhlomo. Acutely affected by the infamous Hertzog Acts and the daily disappointments, frustrations and humiliations suffered by an educated and erudite black person unrecognised and unrewarded in racist South Africa (see *Couzens 1985:134,135,126*), Dhlomo was the person who

“was to articulate most specifically the concept of ‘The New African’ - the detribalised, ‘progressive’, adapted adaptor of the modern South Africa” (*Couzens 1985:110*).

In support of Ballantine’s assertions of a ‘shift’ in the 1940s, a 1949 essay by Herbert Dhlomo outlines the transformation from the ‘liberal view’ to the ‘radical view’ and the birth of a new black South African psyche:

Paradoxically, yet truly enough, the more discriminative our laws and the more rigidly they are applied, the more rapid the growth of African revolt and nationalism, and the more complete the emergence of a strong, militant African middle class ...

During the period the African did not only admire, but envied and aspired to European ways of life. He thought education and proven ability would solve the question. He strove. He aspired. He was not content with his own (lot in life) as his fathers had been. He was even partly ashamed of his background, and tried to appease and win over the white man by appearing in the best light possible - according to so-called western standards. Rejected and frustrated, despite all his efforts, his admiration of the European turned to helpless envy and even to hostility. It was a phase in the long process of evolution (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 9, 1949:15*).

However, thorough study of Couzens’ research reveals certain subtle contradictions existing within the mind of the patron of the concept. These correlate with the ambiguities expressed in the press by other members of the elite, in terms of both political and cultural transformation.

Couzens declares “the career and writings of Dhlomo” to be a “perfect step-by-step chronicle” of the “transition” or “ideological break of Dhlomo and others”. It is important for this discourse to note that Couzens concludes this ‘ideological break’ to have been “less known, less noticed” than the “new movement”, the break with the available idiom, *which followed in the 1950s* (*Couzens 1985:354,353*). What Couzens does not mention, however, is the fact that in practice many of the Drum writers which he chooses to epitomise the ‘new movement’ of the 1950s, *eschewed African culture*, or at least the urban African music styles.

Dhlomo, it would appear, had, if not plagiarised the concept of “The New African”, then “adapted the phrase [and perhaps fitted some of the ideas to his own concept]” from a black American, Alain Locke, who had written a book called “the New Negro” in 1925: “For page after page the style and thought of Locke [in its exhortatory tone of hope] is so much the style and thought of Dhlomo” (*Couzens 1985:110/ 111*).

Dhlomo's concept of the 'New African' is succinctly expressed in the second of a series of two articles published in 1945. There were "three categories' of Africans: the 'Tribal African' the 'Neither-Nor African'; and the 'New African'". The 'Tribal African' was "patriotic, buoyant and proud", his "responses were 'nationalistic' and militaristic" and "this kind of African could understand the White man's dictatorship over the Blacks". The 'Neither-Nor' African, who is reminiscent of the individuals who evoked Sobukwe's and Fanon's contempt (see 5.3.1) and "came in for Dhlomo's obvious scorn" (Couzens 1985:32), manifested the characteristics of proponents of the 'liberal approach', and included, "strangely enough, some of our most educated men". The 'Neither-nor African' was the person who

... uses European measuring-rods for success, culture, goodness, greatness, etc., and thinks his power and progress, his success and salvation lie in his becoming blindly and completely Europeanised. He accepts the authority and standards of Europeans in almost everything [hence the lack of originality and the spirit of dependence of many of the educated African people]. He believes in and is friendly to the liberal, the missionary, the philanthropist, the good master, the benevolent administrator, the paternal ruler (Couzens quotes Dhlomo – Couzens 1985:33).

"The 'New African' was, of course, the hero" (Couzens 1985:33), who discerned that the Government-sponsored institutions set up to 'represent' the African population were farcical and impotent structures supported by the spineless 'Neither-nors'. The 'New African', on the other hand,

knows where he belongs and what belongs to him; where he is going and how; what he wants and the methods to obtain it ...

What is this New African's attitude? Put briefly and bluntly, he wants a social order where every South African will be free to express himself and his personality fully, live and breathe freely, and have ... a social order in which race, colour and creed will be a badge neither of privilege nor of discrimination ... He knows that Councils chosen undemocratically by Government puppets cannot represent African thought, attitudes, progress; he knows how they prevent progressive Africans from leading their own people (Couzens quotes Dhlomo - Couzens 1985:34).

The initial description of the 'New African' would imply that this assertively oppositional urbanite was to be found in abundance amongst the ranks of the working class. Pragmatically, (and as an essential part of Youth League policy and strategy), the unification and support of the 'masses' was vital for effective protest and demonstration, by means of which freedom was to be effected. Thus at the beginning of the description the average working class South African black of the 1940s is described as a determined and highly politicised member of the 'class' of New Africans who effectively represented the new 'militant' psyche: "This class consists mostly of organised urban workers who are awakening



to the issues at stake and to the power of organised intelligently-led mass action and of progressive thinking African intellectuals and leaders” (*Couzens 1985:33*).

However, the remainder of the article provides the context which would support Mphahlele’s views that the ANC Youth League was the *generator*, rather than the reflection, of the feeling of political urgency and determination among the masses of black South Africans. Despite Dhlomo’s description of and desire for the ideal ‘New African’, in reality, unification was not yet feasible, precisely because this prototype was *not yet* representative of anything near the majority of the population:

There is no single African point of view. The reasons for this are not far to seek. There are urban and rural Africans; tribal and detribalised Africans. We have the problem of religion which, from the national point of view, is a dividing force. There is also the question of literacy and illiteracy.

These factors create wide differences among Africans in outlook, political and national consciousness, attitude, temper and tempo (*Couzens 1985:35*).

The imminence of the emergence of the ‘New African’ from the ranks of the working class suffering from the harshness of life in Apartheid South Africa is described, along with Dhlomo’s scorn for the tribal way of life and culture - despite his apparent admiration for this prototype expressed above:

There are differences, too, between an African in the Orange Free State who is kicked and bullied and told frankly and frequently that he is a kaffir, and a Natal African who is assured that his chiefs, customs and laws are wonderful and is encouraged to stay tribal; who when he comes to town is allowed, nay, encouraged to address and in turn is addressed by his boss in Zulu; permitted to board public vehicles [albeit segregated and confined to the upper deck], and encouraged to dance his old tribal dances amid cheering and jeering crowds of the ‘superior race’. It would be superfluous to state which of these two Africans lives under a more complete system of enslavement; who is a ready, if unconscious collaborator with his masters; and who of them will soon discover himself and fight desperately for his freedom (*Couzens 1985:35*).

Dhlomo’s political goals were expressed in his regular column in *Ilange Lase Natal*. Writing under the pseudonym, “Busy Bee”, the column, “Weekly Review and Commentary” was used as a political platform for his views, which presumably were also those of the ‘New African’. On this occasion, his understanding of the original aims of the ANC are stated:

The first thing was to build a progressive, united African nation. The tribes were to be merged into one whole; rural folk and city people had to co-operate; and the highly educated and the most backward had to be brothers. There was to be a programme for country people and those in the cities; to fight our own internal weaknesses such as ignorance, illiteracy and conservatism; for economic, social and cultural progress; in short, for positive and dynamic self-help instead of negative and dissipating self-pity and lamentation (*Ilange Lase Natal June 30, 1951:15*).

Couzens asserts that Dhlomo's poetry "foreshadows the rise of the Congress Youth League" (*Couzens 1985:350*) and that his "role in the formation of the Youth League and Luthuli's victory was significant" (*Couzens 1985:352*). However, Couzens provides very necessary perspective by stressing that "he (*Dhlomo*) took up a stance rather more radical than most of his contemporaries in the same (*elite*) class" (*Couzens 1985:35*). In fact, Dhlomo displays a caution not characteristic of a militant, nor of the utterances of the 'father' of Africanism, Anton Lembede: "In politics there come times when strong protest and even action are called for. This is no easy task although some political demagogues think this should be the chief work of Congress. Sanity and statemanship (*sic*) are necessary here" (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 30, 1951;15*).

Much more important, though, is the suggestion by Couzens that had the circumstances of Dhlomo's personal persecution and unacknowledged 'superior' status been different, his 'radical' sentiments might have been less vehement, were they to have emerged at all. Dhlomo's apparent conversion to radicalism from the 'liberal' position of the 'Neither-Nor African' should be viewed from within a realistic context that was not without ambiguities:

We must not be completely fooled by this, however. It is clear that his definition of 'the New African' derived heavily from a sense of individual persecution, of not being accepted and recognised ...

Much of the same language which Skota (*i.e. an archetypal proponent of the 'liberal approach'*) used was still there ... Mainly the tone had changed - to one of bitterness and frustration. While the rhetoric *had* changed it is not altogether clear that the real substance had. The 'New African' was not all that different for Skota and for Dhlomo. The ambiguities of Dhlomo's articles perhaps lie in the fact that they were representative of Skota's old definition *and* transitional (*Couzens 1985:36*).

It is particularly necessary to keep in mind the perspective provided by Couzens' inference of his (Dhlomo's) personal ambivalence vis-à-vis the retention of class aspirations, which, politically, and according to Ballantine, musically, 'New Africanism' purports to surrender.

The 'transition' from a 'liberal' to 'radical view', to use Ballantine's terms, was as a result of a situation in which the desires and strategy for liberation of *the educated intellectual* are thwarted: "The aspirations of this educated class were frustrated and, as Luthuli wrote of himself and his generation, 'roughly between the late thirties and the middle forties, an awakening was taking place'" (*Couzens 1985:353*).

A 1950 editorial in *Ilanga Lase Natal* (almost certainly by H.I.E. Dhlomo) is representative of many others which reveal cracks in the facade of the 'radical' stance of the 'New African'. In a statement typical of the elite from within the framework of the 'liberal approach', loss of European contact is bemoaned along with the loss of presenting cultural propaganda to Europeans (in what must be presumed to be a Eurocentric medium for purposes of communicating such propaganda). Most importantly, the editor expresses his bitterness about the fact that "educated" Africans are to suffer the same fate as the "tribal peasants". (Again a different bias is given than that of the 'Tribal African' in Dhlomo's definitions provided above):

The fact has now been established that the Government is imposing cultural, intellectual and spiritual separation ...

An intellectual and spiritual iron curtain is being drawn between citizens of one country who mix together in industry, commerce, public places, domestic services, etc. They must not know each other's thoughts, feelings, cultural aspirations and achievements, but meet as mere automats.

... Because you cannot understand, love or co-operate with a human being unless you know his mind and soul, Africans and Europeans will go in mortal fear or contempt, ignorance or misconception of one another.

... It is now admitted that art [in the wider sense] besides being a thing of beauty, entertainment, and self-sufficient in itself, has a social, protest and even propaganda value ... There are plays, poems, stories, etc., that would lose most of their value if presented to African audiences only ... These are primarily intended to educate other than African audiences.

... The first thing to be noted is that these plans include all Africans, the most advanced, progressive and cultured, and the least; the sophisticated, westernised urban dwellers and the tribal peasant; the highly trained leaders and the conservative and uninformed parblind and parochial-minded chiefs (*Ilanga Lase Natal* November 25, 1950:15,4).

An examination of Dhlomo's articles produces a fairly comprehensive description of the qualities and values of the 'New African'. In these articles, Dhlomo's sentiments are expressed in varying tones of conciliation or assertion: often stressing the necessity for education and progress (which is also typical of the 'liberal approach'); sometimes nationalistic, proud and bordering on hostile. The allusions to the 'ideal' African are made without necessarily referring to this individual as the 'New African' (a term which is rarely used in the 1940s, occurs infrequently in the 1950s, and becomes a relatively familiar term in the 1960s in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, specifically). A summary of these findings follows:

- The ‘New African’, the antithesis of tribalism or ruralism, is epitomised by the progressive, politically-conscious city dweller. Despite Dhlomo’s praise for the ‘Tribal African’ in 1945 (see 5.3.4.1), his scorn for his rural countrymen is repeatedly articulated in other articles (e.g. *Ilanga Lase Natal April 8, 1950:14*).
- A good deal of Dhlomo’s energy seems to be aimed at exhorting the ordinary black person to *attain* this ideal stature, rather than reflecting the mentality of the average city dweller. In describing the archetypal ‘New African’, clear contradictions exist between Dhlomo’s ideal prototype and reality. For example, in 1951, on a single page, one paragraph describes the “non-European young man” who is “more interested, not in amassing wealth, but in serving humanity”. In the next paragraph, sophisticates in an individualistically ambitious milieu are only “concerned with our immediate, petty, material ends” (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 26, 1951:18*).
- Again and again, it is the young, *educated*, middle-class African who, like a colossus, has risen from the ranks of the older liberal-minded, obsequious elite whose strategy of ‘moral persuasion’ has failed in the struggle for liberation. By definition, this type of proud, educated young man poses more of a threat to white South Africa than the uneducated type, and part of this threat lies in the fact that while he seeks to nurture his own heritage (albeit selectively), he embraces and is fully conversant with, western culture (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 23, 1951:15; July 9, 1949:15*). (See 5.3.4.3 for summary of the cultural ideals of the ‘New African’.)

Myriad examples support Couzens’ observation that Dhlomo’s ‘transformation’ from espousing the ideology of ‘moral persuasion’ to a more ‘radical’ exhorting others to adopt a proud urban identity was born of his own persecution at the hands of racist whites. On many occasions, sentiments similar to the one quoted below are expressed:

... it has become a practice among the police to raid bus ranks ... , entertainment places, roads and bridges leading to and from locations ... And the police choose hours when workers go to and come from work, or when they leave entertainment and other places of assembly ... It is the innocent person who suffers, for he is humiliated even if not arrested. And the police seem displeased with and more rough to the person who can prove his innocence and high and respected place in society. He is the cheeky, spoiled person (*Ilanga Lase Natal March 22, 1952:14*).

Generally speaking, the press (and this included publications other than *Ilanga Lase Natal* and writers other than Dhlomo) used the term, the ‘New Africa’, to create a vision of a proud African continent of the future. As such, the ‘New Africa’ was interchangeable with references to “the African spirit”, the

“awakening soul of Africa”, “Africa’s hour of destiny” (*Bantu World* May 2, 1953:6), “African awakening” (*Fighting Talk* May 1956:5) and “emergent Africa” (*Post* July 21, 1963:5), etc. This use of the term is certainly the most commonplace in the 1940s and 1950s. While it can rightly be understood to form part of the general ethos of growing African pride and urban identity, it is arguably this interpretation which was more generally understood by the average reader than its definition as a social or political ‘philosophy’ (e.g. *Drum* January 1954:29).

In the 1960s, the term (very often spelt “new Africa” rather than “New Africa”) is adopted as a unifying emblem of pan-Africanism, and as a symbol of an emerging, potentially free African continent. As a symbol of hope, the articles infer an inevitability that South Africa would ultimately take her rightful place in such a free continent (e.g. *The World* June 14, 1963:4). The following example effectively encapsulates various elements of the concept: viz., pride in the victory of previously enslaved black societies, the concurrent hope stimulated by such victory, and the strong association of the term, and the victory, with progressive and educated people:

#### THE NEW AFRICA

Dominating the world scene in 1963 is the new Africa and its new leaders.

Some of the new men were in jail only a few years ago: Nkrumah, Kenyatta among others. Today they walk with heads held high in international society in Washington, London, Bonn, Rome and other capitals.

...

At the United Nations, they form the biggest, most united group of nations and their influence is for peace and development.

Africa’s swift and dynamic rise has transformed the international scene. In any major country today, the Africans form the majority in the diplomatic corps.

...

Taking an important part in the development of the new Africa are highly qualified men and women from this country.

They are playing their part as doctors, nurses, professors, lecturers, and their contribution is highly valued by the lands to the North (*The World* June 14, 1963:4).

References to the ‘New African’ were invariably exhortations to the ordinary black man in the street to improve and uplift his status, and thereby the status of Africa, by education and manifestations of ‘progress’. The ‘new African’ of *Bantu World*, the *World*, *Drum*, *Golden City Post*, etc. was synonymous with the progressive, striving, literate, *urban* dweller.

Not until the 1960s are the distinguishing perceptions between Africanism and 'New Africanism' most clearly visible. (However, it is contended that this era, too, engendered a concept of hope of a 'New Africa' - synonymous with the concept of pan-Africanism as a symbol of hope in the dark of Apartheid oppression, and of which the term 'the New Africa' is the emblem - rather than espousing a 'philosophy' of 'New Africanism'.) Drum magazine, which had, with a few cautious exceptions, steadfastly eschewed or criticised Africanism as propagated by the Africanists of the 1950s, would from time to time make proud references to the 'New Africa'. A good example of its perception of this term is found in an article in 1963, in which bold headlines for a prominent two-page article declared: "'NKOSI SIKEL' - SONG OF THE NEW AFRICA" (*Drum June 1963:49*).

As such, both the 'ideal' Africa and African, as synonymous with the envisaged free country and individual described by ANC and Communist party members who supported the inclusive Nationalist rather than exclusive Africanist movement, were a "far cry" from the utopian dreams of Marcus Garvey. (The latter was an obvious inspiration to Sobukwe (*Pogrand 1997:36*).

It would appear that the concept of 'New Africanism' coincides (at least to an extent) with and can be described as an intellectual articulation of the psychological mood within certain groups and epitomised by the ANC Youth League (although the term 'Africanism', rather than 'New Africanism', was, due to Lembede's influence, an important founding credo of the Youth League at its inception.) However, the subtleties, ambiguities and contradictions of ideology which appeared to exist within the adherents of 'New Africanism' provide the reader with necessarily adjusted context and perspective as to its potency. It is this writer's contention that the term 'New Africanism', as used by Ballantine to denote a philosophy which articulated a period of 'militancy' in the 1940s in particular, more accurately describes a nascent and emerging set of ideological convictions which was neither widely-known nor fully evolved in that decade.

Couzens states that:

It is beyond question that he shared a common language, a common code, with a group or class of people (thousands strong, though a small elite in comparison with the vast numbers of people without their background or level of education). His failings were therefore also the failings of this group, his strengths their strengths. The obsession with genius, the imitation of European forms, did stifle creativity but Dhlomo not unnaturally or unreasonably expressed himself in the available idiom of his time. He seldom managed to strike through it (*Couzens 1985:353*).



As an intellectual and musician actively pursuing the cultivation of black pride and identity through the incorporation of African musical material, Khabi Mngoma declares that in all the decades under discussion here, the “philosophy of New Africanism ... was not common to me at all. In fact, I only got to know of it from the writings of Tim Couzens. In the different forums that we had, it did not emerge as a philosophy that they were pushing for” (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

Mphahlele interprets Dhlomo's 'New African' as “the modern African”; the African who was ready to take his place in 'modern' urban society (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*). However, it is interesting to note that neither Mphahlele and Mngoma, two prominent intellectuals and anti-Apartheid activists, had heard of the 'New African' in either the 1940s or 1950s, when, according to Ballantine, it was most influential (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97, 27/5/98; Mngoma – writer's interview: 14/2/95, 22/4/95*).

#### **5.3.4.2 'Africanism' or the 'Africanist Impulse'**

Ballantine uses the phrase, the “Africanist impulse”, to refer to the urge to Africanise music from the 1940s onwards (*Ballantine 1993:60; 1991B:150*). This impulse is inferred to have emanated from the broader impetus of - or from the umbrella 'philosophy' of – “New Africanism” (*Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:145/146*); thereby a modicum of interchangeability or synonymy of terms is implied. The suitability of the term the 'Africanist impulse' to refer to the inspirational source for the Africanisation of jazz and other styles in the various decades is examined here.

'Africanism' is inherently, at least in academic terms, a component of Dhlomo's 'New Africanism'. However, the perceptions created by common parlance in the press in the 1950s contain subtle but important distinctions between the two terms. Without the consideration of these the process of unravelling the ideological concepts and beliefs surrounding the Africanisation of jazz is inherently flawed and can lead to an over-simplified conclusion.

The last paragraph in Couzens' book is appropriate here:

It is important to note, in conclusion, that Dhlomo did not change his class position. His aspirations never really changed - they were roughly the same as those defined by Skota. For the Dhlomos and the Luthulis, while their *aspirations* remained, what did change was their *perception* [as to the likelihood of the fulfillment of those aspirations] and their *tactics* [from partial acquiescence to passive resistance]. Dhlomo was not a simple figure. In his angrier moments he favoured a black nationalism [sometimes even there were hints of Zulu nationalism]. In his more benign moods he advocated a non-racial South African nationalism, a unity, founded in nature, which would ... replace the 'shattered Eden' (*Couzens 1985:356*) (own underlining).

The wavering between the extremes of 'black nationalism' and a more benign 'non-racial South African nationalism' epitomises the debate which existed from the time of the formation of the Youth League, but which was conducted vociferously in the press in the 1950s: those favouring exclusive African Nationalism, or the 'Africanists', on the one hand, and those who proposed inclusive or non-racial African Nationalism, or the 'Nationalists', on the other. (These terms are contentious and debatable, and for a time in the mid-1950s the 'Africanists' were referred to as the "Nationalists" and the proponents of inclusive African Nationalism, were known as the "Internationalists" (*e.g. The World, January 14, 1956:2*). However, for the large part of the decade, the terms 'Africanists' and 'Nationalists' were used. They have also been chosen by, amongst others, Pogrud and Holland (*Pogrud 1997: 61; Holland 1990:62/63*) and for lack of others more universally acceptable, will be used here).

At the one end of the spectrum, the more moderate and arguably more widely accepted definition of the 'New African' can be understood from Mphahlele's perspective to mean "the modern African" (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*). This image coincides with Couzens' definition of the "detrified, 'progressive', adapted adaptor of the modern South Africa" (*Couzens 1985:110*), and could feasibly represent Dhlomo's 'more benign moods' in which he advocated a 'non-racial South African nationalism'. At the opposite end, the 'black Nationalism' which was the product of his 'angrier moments', is suggestive of the exclusive 'Africanist' policy which was the subject of fierce debate and which was vehemently opposed by those who favoured an inclusive, non-racial 'nationalism' which would embrace other South African nationalities.

'Africanism' was the term used by Anton Lembede, as a founding member of the ANC Youth League, to denote his philosophy or creed. Lembede is described by Edgar and ka Mzuma as a "political philosopher" who "crafted an ideology of liberation centred around the cornerstones of African unity and spiritual pan-Africanism" (*Edgar & ka Mzuma 1996:35*). It was to be the rallying cry which would

unite the African nation in order that they, the Africans, as the most oppressed race in South Africa, should challenge white rule. The medium of this challenge was to be mass protest rather than the 'moral persuasion' adopted by the older generation. The propagation of this philosophy, synonymous with the concept of African nationalism at its inception in the mid-1940s, was envisaged to repair and raise black self-esteem and would result in "a sense of black nationhood". Without this sense of a unified nationhood of black South Africans, mass action was not possible (*Holland 1990:56,57,60; Ilanga Lase Natal September 29, 1945:15*).

The concept of African Nationalism was not new, of course. It had been the credo of the ANC since its inception in 1912, and had always included the basic tenets of the destruction of tribalism and unification of the African nation (*Bantu World July 10, 1937:8*). However, the essential difference in ethos inherent in those who would support this proclamation in the 1930s and that of the Africanists of the 1940s as epitomised by the early Youth Leaguers and Lembede in particular, was two-pronged: while the alleged aim of both was the unification of the masses to be achieved by the abolition of tribalism, the strategies of the older leaders and Youth Leaguers were diametrically opposed.

The 'old guard' was convinced of the success of the strategy of 'moral persuasion'. An important tool in the armoury of this approach was culture: they used either essentially western material or indigenous African material in a 'refined', essentially western context, both of which were deemed pleasing and acceptable to whites. Inextricably linked to this quest for western 'civilisation' is the perception of individualism and elitism, again linked to elements of western culture. Up to the 1940s, and to less of an extent, into the 1950s, an image of elitism was integral to the ANC which was led by educated intellectuals who enjoyed many privileges from which the uneducated masses were excluded.

By contrast, the founding of the ANC Youth League and the advent of Lembede's Africanism saw the proud declaration of an African heritage as the basis for the African's self-worth and self-identity. The essential distinguishing characteristic of Lembede's Africanism, or exclusive African nationalism, was the conviction of the necessity to divorce itself from other nations in the struggle for liberation, and to build an exclusive African nation. A vital element in Africanist propaganda is the obliteration of elitism: worker and intellectual link arms and the sole purpose of education, in practice rather than mere theory, is to educate and uplift the masses. The society of the 'European', to which the 'moral

persuasion approach' of the elders had sought entry, is to be eschewed. The ultimate goal of these prerequisites to unity is the overthrow of white rule by means of mass action. As articulated in 1945 by Ilanga Lase Natal (and very probably by H.I.E. Dhlomo himself writing as "Ramajan"), the publication which in the mid-1940s eulogised Lembede's achievements and his contribution to the African nation (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 29, 1945:15*),

Lembede ... had in mind ... the serious business of assaulting the formidable fortress of white domination and ultimately over throwing (sic) oppression, rather than the timid nibbling at its outer defences which we have been doing in Congress, in the All African Convention, in the Communist Party and in the Democratic Party, these many years (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 22, 1945:15*).

Supported by the Dhlomo brothers at Ilanga Lase Natal, Lembede's Africanism promoted pan-Africanism and the brotherhood of all Africans of the continent (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 10, 1945:12*). As such, Africanism was essentially an ideology which promoted racial exclusivity, and this factor was to prove to be the rock on which it was ultimately to flounder within the ANC: despite vigorous assertions to the contrary, it developed the perception of possessing an inherent anti-whiteism. This image was symbolised by the frequently quoted slogan alleged to emanate from militant Africanists: "Hurl the White man to the sea" (*Holland 1990:68*). (In 1997, the similarity between this and the chant - 40 or so years later - of the radical militants within the PAC, "One settler, one bullet" is highlighted (*Mail & Guardian July 4 to 10, 1997:21*)). Lembede was strenuously opposed to the alliance between the ANC, as representative of the majority (and inferred, superior) race, and the various oppositional organisations which represented other races in South Africa (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 18, 1946:15*).

After his untimely death in 1947, Lembede's Africanism, initially staunchly supported by, amongst others, Mandela and Sisulu, was officially rejected by the Youth League (*Holland 1990:68*) but tensions between Africanists and those favouring a broader nationalism continued to provoke "unceasing ferment" in the organisation (*Poggrund 1997:65*).

According to Holland, the debates between Youth Leaguers which preceded the formal formulation of Youth League policy were punctuated by the relative virtues of exclusive Africanism versus the inclusive nationalism favoured by, amongst others, Oliver Tambo. Tambo interpreted Africanism as "a reverse form of racial discrimination". Shrewdly grasping the anomalies inculcated by missionary

education and perpetuated by those espousing a ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ and evident within the likes of Dhlomo himself, Tambo predicted that inclusive nationalism would be more readily accepted “partly because it left the way open to whites who might eventually be persuaded to accept blacks as allies and partly because he feared many mission-educated blacks would reject a vindictive policy towards whites on the grounds that it offended their Christianity” (*Holland 1990:63*).

Ultimately, Tambo’s ‘Nationalism’ won the day. ‘Africanism’, commonly perceived as “hostility to the European presence in South Africa”, was officially rejected as Congress policy (*Walshe 1987:335*) which was finally formulated in 1948. While it declared that “the Africans will be wasting their time and deflecting their forces if they look up to the Europeans either for inspiration or for help”, it clearly articulated its dismissal of the exclusive Africanism mooted by the then-deceased Lembede four years earlier. Karis & Carter declare that “exclusive and nonexclusive approaches to the problem of change in South Africa were reconciled or at least blurred” (*Karis & Carter 1973:106*) as a result of the following declaration in the Congress Youth League Manifesto:

Now it must be noted there are two streams of African Nationalism. One centres round (the) slogan “Africa for the Africans”. It is based on the “Quit Africa” slogan and on the cry “Hurl the White man to the sea”. This type of African Nationalism is extreme and ultra-revolutionary.

There is another stream ... which is moderate, and which the Congress Youth League professes. We of the Youth League take account of the concrete situation in South Africa and realize that the different racial groups have come to stay. But we insist that a condition for interracial peace and progress is the abandonment of white domination, and such a change in the basic structure of South African society that those relations which breed exploitation and human misery disappear. Therefore our goal is the winning of National freedom for African people, and the inauguration of a people’s free society where racial oppression and persecution will be outlawed (*Karis & Carter 1973:328*).

Robert Sobukwe, ANC Youth League leader from Fort Hare, who was ultimately to lead the Africanists in a breakaway movement in 1959 to form a rival political organisation, the Pan-Africanist Congress, strongly protested on more than one occasion that the Africanists were “pro-black” rather than “anti-white” (*Pogrand 1997:37,36*). Sobukwe, a man of deep integrity, epitomised both this ideal and that of the intellectual who not only empathised but identified with the masses (*Pogrand 1997:31*).

However, Bantu World firmly stated in 1958 that the Africanists’ main objection to the Freedom Charter, drawn up after nation-wide consultation across all races, lay in its opening statement: “that

South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White” (*Fighting Talk, September 1958:13*). Sobukwe’s friend and biographer, Benjamin Pogrund, stresses that while the “anti-white reputation” was somewhat unfairly stressed by the white press, “Despite their dedication to non-racialism, in practice the stress on blackness carried a message of anti-whiteism” (*Pogrund 1997:101*). He describes the attendance at Africanist meetings at the home of Patrick Leballo, a vociferous Africanist, in Dube, where “An anti-white racism often seemed to be lurking just under the surface, on occasion breaking into actual words” (*Pogrund 1997:67*).

Thus the perceived meaning of ‘Africanism’ or ‘Africanist’ continued to be commonly understood to imply a hostility to or rejection of South African whites, linked to the rallying cry of “Africa for the Africans” and its associated synonymity with “Hurl the White man to the sea” (*Holland 1990:68*). In the press the term was firmly related to those who pursued an ‘exclusive Africanist’ political agenda; rejecting white interference, white *assistance*, or even the validity of white *presence* in the struggle for liberation. Forty-odd years later, the *Mail & Guardian* notes that (the then-Deputy) President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, was “lambasted by some media in recent times for being an Africanist”. It quotes Joe Thlohloe, former SABC television news head and “leading Africanist at SABC”, as ruefully stating that “The concept of Africanism has developed horns around it because it is seen as anti-white and that perception has not faded away” (*Mail & Guardian July 4 to 10, 1997:20*).

#### 5.3.4.3 *The Concepts of Africanism, ‘New Africanism’ and their Influences on Ideological Stances Surrounding the Role of Culture*

Inaugurator of a “philosophy of racial exclusivity”, Lembede shunned a multi-racial version of nationalism because of the inherent danger that blacks would remain “beguiled by white culture” (*Holland 1990:62/63*). Lembede’s vision of racial exclusivity thus would appear to incorporate the desire for an exclusive culture: exhortations to avoid the imitation of whites and warnings to avoid being captivated by white culture could feasibly be interpreted as an inclination to shun western cultural material.

Further sentiments which could possibly indicate that Lembede was not a slavish follower of western culture in general are articulated by Holland. Lembede, she declares, was



... hostile towards whites, despising the eagerness with which blacks tried to emulate them. He was not himself prey to the temptations of smart clothing and material status symbols, which he identified as the root cause of the black people's sense of inadequacy. His earnest Catholicism and the life-long poverty he had endured while feeding on the fruits of his mind left him free to warn that 'Moral degeneration is assuming alarming dimensions ... (and) manifests itself in such abnormal and pathological phenomena as loss of self-confidence, inferiority complex, a feeling of frustration, the worship and idolization of white men, foreign leaders and ideologies' (*Holland 1990:55/56*).

In 1954, a double-page "Masterpiece in Bronze" in *Drum* magazine was dedicated to Anton Lembede, who was described as abhorring "bluff and humbug as much as he disliked the foibles, fads and fashions of sophisticated urban society" (*Drum January 1954: 29*).

The ANC Youth League epitomises the point of confluence between the concepts of Africanism and 'New Africanism'. African heritage was integral to Lembede's Africanism, which could be described as the ideological axis around which the founding of the Youth League revolved in 1944. According to Couzens, the Youth League "paralleled, or was" the "awakening spirit" which Dhlomo describes in an essay on the "*inkomo*" cattle in 1947. The third in a series of three articles motivated at least in part by the desire to form an African Academy, the climax of Dhlomo's essay symbolises a 'pessimism' ("now that 'the age of the inkomo has perished'") from which he "begins to build [on the 'seed of Shaka, Hintsa, Khama and Moshoeshoe'] a new optimism". The 'new optimism' presumably, is epitomised by the concept of 'New Africanism', which, while the symbol of modernity and progress, is founded on a positive image of African heritage and identity (*Couzens: 1985:298*).

The Youth League was initially wholly absorbed with Lembede's Africanism and its implications of racial exclusivity. In a speech made by Lembede on the occasion of its formal establishment in 1944, he alluded to a cultural policy which could possibly be interpreted as the desire to strive for unique African cultural expression while eschewing white culture. The result of the "opposing aspirations" of wanting "acceptance by whites" while simultaneously wanting to "strip whites of their privileges" was a 'weakening' "of the black man's resolve". "Africanism", on the other hand, "was the surest way to awaken black self-respect; to revive the pride in the past and confidence in the future that had been damaged by the demeaning urban experience of living on the fringes of a white world." If they were offered a multi-racial form of nationalism, blacks' fascination with western culture would not diminish (*Holland 1990:63*). Instead, "Blacks should take what was worthwhile from their global inheritance and add it to their own cultural traditions, instead of feeling inferior and trying to emulate the white person's lifestyle" (*Holland 1990:62*).

However, by the time of the official formulation of its policy in 1948, exclusive Africanism had been rejected, if not unanimously, then at least officially, and replaced by a non-racial African Nationalism. The ANC Programme of Action of 1949, approved by the Youth League who also assisted in its drafting, articulated a cultural policy which appeared to echo Dhlomo's ideal. It was a theme which was expressed and debated in numerous articles in *Ilanga Lase Natal*. The necessity "to unite the cultural with the educational and national struggle" was articulated. The cultural struggle was to be based on a two-pronged paradigm, the first of which echoed that of Lembede's statement on culture in 1944, that "the best elements in European and other civilisation and cultures" should be assimilated "on the firm basis of what is good and durable in the African's own culture and civilisation". Secondly, suggestive of Dhlomo's contribution in both style and content, it was decreed that "African works of Art can and should reflect not only the present phase of the National liberatory struggle but also the world of beauty that lies beyond the conflict and turmoil of struggle" (*Couzens 1985:299*).

Couzens declares that Dhlomo's poetry from the mid-1940s until his death in 1956 reflected his desire to be "both part of the 'national liberatory struggle' and to reach 'beyond the conflict and turmoil of struggle'" (*Couzens 1985:300*). Furthermore, "From the very inception of the Youth League ... Dhlomo ... produced an ideology of art which was identical with the League's own ideology and which presumably partly determined the League's approach" (*Couzens 1985:263*). Therefore, a summary of his utterances vis-à-vis the cultural ideals to which the 'New African' should aspire, as expressed in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, are presented here:

- The New African, representative of the "rising middle class", armed with its education, financial independence, self-confidence and, above all, its knowledge and recognition of the value of African heritage, is able to "reinterpret and recreate African culture and make new forms from it and graft it into the New Culture" (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 9, 1949:15*) (own underlining).
- Educated African musicians seemingly personified the 'New African' to whom the creation of a 'New Culture' was to be entrusted. Moreover, it was the lack of recognition afforded these educated creators which raised the ire of Dhlomo. On their and his own behalf, veiled threats of the power of their culture as an oppositional tool were made (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 11, 1944:13*).

- For Dhlomo, like for many other elite of the time, the tribalism with which much of African culture is tainted presents a veritable minefield from which the composer must select his indigenous elements. It is repeatedly stated that this choice, and its use within the fold of ‘high’ art, can only be entrusted to the educated musician, who, well-versed in European music, and presumably epitomising the ‘New African’, now develops an appreciation for indigenous music (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 17, 1948:18*).
- Dhlomo’s ambivalence between the perceived need to Africanise culture and his deeply inculcated love of western cultural forms is glimpsed in many of his articles. On several occasions he expresses his class aspirations and strong inclination for western cultural forms, in some instances so strongly as to apparently contradict, or at least confuse the reader as to his desire for unique, syncretic African cultural expression (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 26, 1951:18*).
- In 1951, the stance vis-à-vis the creation of a ‘New Culture’ appears to be somewhat more ambivalent, possibly affected by the Africanist-versus-Nationalist debate in political circles. Referring to the “obstacles and difficulties” in the “fields of cultural endeavour”, one of which is “the social set-up” and the “question of language”, the writer asks: “Can we mould a national culture under these circumstances? Another delicate question is whether Africans must aim at a purely and distinct Bantu culture or bring whatever contributions and talents they have into the maelstrom of universal culture” (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 23, 1951:14*).
- In other articles, Africans’ successes in what are almost certainly pure western forms are praised as viable tools of cultural protest. The establishment of an African Academy of Arts is contextualised as falling squarely within the ambit of western cultural achievement and education; the societies which are referred to, appear to have been solely concerned with the promotion and teaching of western ‘serious’ music (*Ilanga Lase Natal December 31, 1949:15*).
- While Ballantine implies a symbiosis of ‘New Africanism’ with the Africanisation of music, Dhlomo asserts that “It is not the non-European who wants to break ties with British connections and culture”. By 1951, the model African fully embraces an ‘international’ rather than ‘national’ concept of both culture *and* politics (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 26, 1951:18*) (own underlining).

- Western forms, for the ‘New African’, emanate from a new, assertive mindset, rather than the inferred inferior position of ‘moral persuasion’. The essence of this stance is captured in an editorial entitled “Cultural Progress” in 1951 (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 24, 1951:15*).

The inherent features of Dhlomo’s view of culture as an oppositional tool springs from the inviolable premise that African heritage is first and foremost the exclusive domain of Africans themselves. As such, Africans must take control of their own cultural matters, which include the occasions at which African indigenous culture is displayed and the direction in which African heritage is to be developed. Secondly, culture must always represent progress and advancement of the race. While it is essential that African heritage be used, it is equally essential that it is not merely to be preserved unchanged in what is inferred to be a stagnant, or retrogressive, state. And herein lies the crux of the intellectual’s fine distinctions in the selection of African culture: using African cultural elements in new and unique, original creations represents progress and opposition to racism, while using them in indigenous form plays into the hands of enemy racial segregationists:

... Africans are proud of their past. They know that there is great wealth in our folk music, folk tales, history, and tribal lore. Some are using this rich background for their work. This will stamp their works with originality. But our artists must not be deceived by the theories of some of their European well-wishers and patrons. Their work is not to concentrate on the past only but to tell and paint for us the present. Our artists must play a leading role in the struggle for liberation. In doing this they must refuse the *pera clous* South African doctrine of the African developing along his own lines. Art is universal and above these petty theories. Like Mahatma Gandhi they must say “I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible” (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 24, 1951:15*).

It would appear that the influence of missionary education and the impact of western civilisation together with concurrent concepts of serious art as symbolic of supreme ‘civilisation’ to which the intellectual aspired, resulted in this medium, for the majority, being the vehicle of choice for their musical expression.

The implication exists that educated men, having demonstrated their competency in manipulating the elements of western culture, should now marry this ability with the judicious use of African elements, to demonstrate an urban pride and unique, superior identity, and to create a cultural ‘tool’ of opposition. However, from within the approach of ‘moral persuasion’ this weapon is doomed to failure, and Dhlomo’s frustration at the gifted artists’ failure to impress white South Africans, is palpable:

Many of these Europeans treat the very Africans whose art and genius they profess to admire, in a condescending political-like, paternal spirit ... It is as if one admired the symphonies of Beethoven, the plays of Shakespeare, the art of Van Goch, and at one and the same time thought the creators of these works were children! No sane, sincere person would say African culture and art are as good as any other culture and art and yet refuse to admit that Africans themselves are his equals (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 11, 1944:13*).

It must be stressed that despite Dhlomo's assertive and at times, even angry, protestations about the inviolability of African culture as well as his passion to create a syncretic 'New Culture' by the grafting of new and original forms (and his warning to whites not to encroach on this domain), his awe of western culture remains constant and his determination to demonstrate Africans' ability in the realm of 'high' art makes serious forays from time to time into the ethos of pure, 'liberal, moral persuasion'. Again and again, Dhlomo's ambivalence between his desire to Africanise western culture ('grafting' a 'New Culture'), and his awe and love of western culture *per se* is demonstrated. A comment in an editorial in 1952 was a far cry from the stance of Robert Sobukwe and the Africanist leanings he had supported in the 1940s; it was more typical of the conservative Bantu World's attitude to the use of music:

The ordinary men and women of the other sections of the community are not interested in political harangues and philosophies, not even in the controversial politics of their own group. But they are interested in and you can talk, appeal and win them over through song, art, literature or concrete and flourishing business adventure. These things transcend race, politics and colour differences. They are universal, fundamental and cementing. They appeal to the best, co-operative and responsive in human nature. They are the meeting ground for people who differ in colour, race, religion, country and political leanings (*Ilanga Lase March 29, 1952:15*).

Prior to the formulation of official Youth League policy, Lembede and other Africanist 'converts' were apparently reminded by Oliver Tambo "that the urge among blacks to win acceptance by whites was in many cases as strong as the competing urge to strip whites of their privileges" (*Holland 1990:63*). For a significant proportion of South African blacks in these two decades, this dichotomy remained: both sentiments and cultural choices appeared at times to reflect a vacillation, and at other times a balance, between the two options.

#### 5.3.4.4 *Exponents of Africanism and 'New Africanism': their Association with or Attitudes to African Jazz*

In order to gauge conscious or unconscious attitudes to African jazz, press articles will be examined. These articles feature leading figures associated with influencing African thought, particularly with regard to culture and its socio-political role in black South African society. In this way an attempt will also be made to deduce possible concepts and beliefs which could have encouraged the creation of, or been transmitted and consciously received as encouragement to create, a unique South African jazz style as a flagship for either Africanism or as a symbol of the 'New Africa'. The debate regarding the relative merits of African jazz must form part of the discourse, as the people promoting these styles often expressed opinions which could be interpreted as philosophical or ideological bases for the creation of Africanised jazz-related styles.

Ballantine states that the Africanisation of jazz styles, in response to the 'Africanist impulse' was the result of an "*explicit and conscious acceptance*" of "New Africanism" into the "very constitution" of the music (Ballantine 1993:62; 1991B:151). Thus 'New Africanism' was expressed by the use of African elements. Therefore the deduction is made from within his stated context of "As with politics, so with music" (Ballantine 1993:57; 1991B:147) that those who continued to play American styles were motivated by neither the 'Africanist impulse' nor affected by 'New Africanism'. Earlier, Ballantine declared jazz to be the means whereby South African blacks "were proving to themselves and to the world that they were the equals of whites", and "proudly and self-consciously identifying themselves as actors on the international stage of world history" (Ballantine 1993:8). This dictum could feasibly have emanated from either the arena of the 'liberal view' or that of the 'radical view'. In a later work, he states that in the "fifteen years after 1945", a "new political resonance ... (was) given ... to the local identification with black American culture" (Ballantine 1999:3). However, its motivation from within the specific fold of the 'radical view' - as defined by Ballantine in relation to the Africanisation of jazz - is not adequately explained.

It would seem that a key element in this discussion is to be found in the concepts and beliefs which motivated the South African jazz musicians' appropriation of American music. Were this appropriation an attempt to identify with the norms and values of white society, or with the achievements and



successes attained by American blacks in an attempt to gain entry into white society (i.e. the ‘liberal approach’), then they could be said to be guilty of the sins of the ‘Neither-Nor African’. If, on the other hand, black South Africans were manifesting their identification with black American oppression, i.e. if they viewed jazz as “the international musical vernacular of the oppressed” (*Ballantine 1993:8*), then the preference for American jazz styles could be more easily understood to emanate from the impetus of a protest of ‘modern’ urban African identity as this conforms with the ‘philosophy’ of ‘New Africanism’. (See 5.3.4.1)

The changed attitudes to jazz, and specifically to the incorporation of *marabi*, on the part of the educated elite from within the framework of, or with relevance to ‘New Africanism’, is of relevance to this discourse. Ballantine uses Walter Nhlapo’s comments vis-à-vis the playing of “proletarian” music (*Ballantine 1993:60; 1991B:149*) as apparent evidence of the changed mindset. It is the contention of this thesis that Nhlapo’s comments are not representative of a major or general sweeping change in mindset from educated middle-class quarters in the 1940s. In addition, the perspective gained in this research would indicate that the playing of instrumental African jazz in the 1940s remained a decidedly novel feature in an evening’s entertainment (*Piliso - writer’s interview: 1/11/94, 18/8/95; Mogotsi – writer’s interview: 24/6/98; Mphahlele – writer’s interview: 27/5/98; Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*). It would appear that whereas *some* of the elite showed a modicum of *accommodation* for the incorporation of *marabi*, this was not indicative of a major *transformation* to ‘radicalism’ or (Ballantine’s definition of) ‘New Africanism’ - in culture *or* politics - by the majority of this sector in the 1940s.

Numerous references are made in the press by politically conscious individuals in support of the importance of culture as a tool of the African in the struggle for liberation. Like Dhlomo and Nhlapo, these utterances in the press often indicated a vacillation between an ‘Africanist’ and a ‘Nationalist’ (or ‘Internationalist’) stance, expressed in praise and encouragement for either the creation of unique African styles or the exemplary performance or composition of essentially western styles. However, with the exception of the Nhlapo quotation to which Ballantine refers, direct correlations cannot be found in the press of the 1940s to substantiate the fact that African jazz was consciously perceived by leaders of African thought to be a conscious expression of either Africanism, Dhlomo’s personal concept of ‘New Africanism’, or even as a reflection of the more widely-understood concept of the ‘New Africa’. In the 1950s, African jazz is for the most part denigrated in the newspaper articles.

Zacks Nkosi is one of the only musicians to articulate his attempts to express African pride or ‘consciousness’ in his music. However, his work was produced from within an essentially commercial idiom, the 1960s version of which is *denigrated* by Ballantine. (Although Ballantine’s research did not focus on this era, he specifically mentions certain other jazz practitioners – of the ‘progressive’ jazz idioms – as being significant contributors to this period (*Ballantine 1993:7*.)

The cultural policy of the Africanists of the 1940s as expressed by Lembede (i.e. representing Africanism in its most ‘radical’ form), could feasibly be interpreted as the desire for the pursuit of a unique cultural voice. Furthermore, it is within the bounds of possibility that Lembede, as an avowed non-elitist, who associated with the “humblest and simplest folk” and attempted to unite intellectuals and the uneducated masses, would have supported ‘proletarian’ music forms such as *marabi*, as well as its appropriation in African jazz. Therefore, given the influence and significant publicity granted to Lembede, the Youth Leaguers and their talk of a new and vital African nationalism, Ballantine’s references to the African jazz of the 1940s as emanating from an ‘Africanist impulse’ is not at all implausible. It is a significant fact that African jazz was born in this era. Nevertheless, apart from a single article by Walter Nhlapo, quoted by Ballantine, almost no significant substantiation, either concrete or illusory, of his theory that this style was the ‘explicit and conscious’ interpretation of ‘New Africanism’ can be found in the press. Significantly, neither of the two ‘architects’ of the ideologies of Africanism and ‘New Africanism’, respectively Anton Lembede and H.I.E. Dhlomo, make statements which can be interpreted as support for the specific manifestation of their ideologies in African jazz.

There are occasions in which references are made to styles of music employed at functions in which it is feasible that the individuals concerned, or those closely associated with them, were influential in the choice of styles, or that the choice of music was made with deference to them:

- Two days before his death, Lembede attended “a reception organised by the Congress Youth League” on behalf of the graduation of his close friend and fellow-Africanist, A.P. Mda. The music rendered on this occasion was by the Philharmonic Choir (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 27, 1947:20*). The choir was conducted by a certain “Mr Mtimkulu”, and included a solo sung by a “Mr Manyosi” and accompanied by “Mr Mphahlele” (*Bantu World August 2, 1947:2*).

- Possibly the occasion of Lembede's own graduation celebration of his newly-acquired title of M.A. L.L.B. was more significant. Were African jazz perceived to be the voice of Africanist thinking or the creation of an 'Africanist impulse', then it seems that its inclusion would have been mandatory and significant. Since this event takes place in the period *after* which Ballantine infers a transformation of thought to have occurred, the choice of 'western-oriented' artists (in particular the Merry Blackbirds as bastions of 'liberal' thought and 'moral persuasion'), reflects as somewhat incongruous, and lends ambivalence to, the sentiments expressed by Lembede on the night:

... African Nationalism is definitely and irrevocably against foreign domination of any description and from whatever quarter it comes. It visualises the rise and emergence of Black Africa as a world power. It believes in the leadership of Africa by Africans and rejects White leadership. Mr Lembede was given a great ovation.

Apologies were received from Mrs Made Háll Xuma ... and from Dr P. ka I Seme. Music was rendered by the "Manhattan Stars" and the "Philharmonic Choral Society," whilst the Merry Blackbirds Orchestra played for the dance (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 7, 1946:14*).

Ballantine quotes Mark S. Radebe as a proponent of the preservation of indigenous music and the creation of a 'national' music (*Ballantine 1993:24; 1991A:134*). Radebe was instrumental in, and made the remarks with reference to, the creation of the Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival. However, programmes and references to items performed in these Festivals in the 1940s, which were regularly published, reveal that western styles, with the exception of the occasion named "Africa Day" (referred to immediately below), dominated. Generally speaking, African jazz was conspicuous by its absence.

The "Africa Day" ceremony was promoted by the Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival in order to promote "as far as practicable", items of "Bantu Art, Music and recreation". Significantly, no African jazz was showcased on this occasion, but western style choral music is presented along with selected indigenous African items as suitable musical manifestations of the African nation. Included in the list of published items for this event were: *Lithoko* (Sotho National Praises); *Izibongo* (Zulu National Praises); "Party Dances"; "Cycle Racing"; "Beauty Queens' Parade" and "National Dances". There were also two choral items sung by the Orlando High School choir conducted by "Mr. Z. Mothopeng, B.A." (*Bantu World March 12, 1949:11*). Zeph Mothopeng, an Africanist who was later to become leader of the Pan-Africanist Congress, was an activist who, together with Khabi Mngoma, Zeke Mphahlele and others, published "The Voice" in the 1950s.

Prescribed works for the Bantu Music Festival Competitions held in 1949 were published in *Bantu World*. A performance, by white artists, of these works was held prior to the Festival at the Odin Theatre, Sophiatown. The western serious song forms, some apparently sung by whites, were effusively praised by the political activist, Africanist-influenced music critic, Walter M.B. Nhlapo, excerpts of which are included here:

The chef d'oeuvre comprising of (sic) masterpieces such as: "And the Glory of the Lord," "Lift up your heads," "Teach me, O Lord," "Evening and Morning," ... was such as to raise the audience to the lofty heights of music.

Frederick Dahlberg's rendition of Mozart's "O Isis" and "Osiris" accomplished all that one could have expected ...

Adelaide Newman, the noted pianist, gave a performance of Valsette by Carse, and Mendelsohn's Scherzo, in which she shone with lustre.

Sylvia Sullivan's "I'll Walk Beside You": and Burgoyse Gibbons' "Macushla" were sung with admirable effect. "Deep River" by Marjorie White commanded the bizarre flights of the soul (*Bantu World* September 17, 1949:9).

Comments which can be taken as references, however vague, to African jazz, by the author of the concept of 'New Africanism', H.I.E. Dhlomo, include a sub-section, "Commerce and Culture", in an article entitled "Cultural Activities". Here references to "semi-professional theatrical and music groups" could feasibly have included the possibility that such groups incorporated African jazz in their repertoire. However, it should be noted from the context of the entire article (excerpts of which will be quoted extensively so as to provide such context) that the style is given no significant prominence, and in fact is not specifically mentioned. In other words, while it may be a viable tool in the armoury of the "invisible social and cultural revolution" which is manifest by mushrooming African cultural enterprise, it is not accorded anything like the status given to serious cultural forms in Dhlomo's expositions on "New Culture" or culture as a tool in the struggle. (See 5.3.4.3) Other than manifesting the previously stated feature of the New African's desire for financial independence as an empowering strategy, African jazz does not appear to receive major emphasis as a significant symbol for or musical manifestation of 'New Africanism'. (It should be noted that the "commercial recordings" appear to refer to those in which African folk music is featured in a similar vein to "what has been done in the fields of African folklore and folk poetry", and there is no evidence to suggest that this is alluding specifically to African jazz.)

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

An invisible social and cultural revolution is taking place among Africans ... Some Africans think that it is best that it should remain so as it gives their people a chance to dig themselves in and grow powerful and great before and without obstacles being put in their way.

### **Fame and Fortune Without Politics**

Other African observers thank the growing political bad weather for this development ... Today politics is a dangerous and difficult way to gain fame and fortune. Those who want to help themselves, find security, amass wealth and live happy and undisturbed lives, shun politics.

... It is alleged that today most Africans are accepting the materialistic and matter-of-fact view that the greatest, happiest and most free persons are those who possess great wealth. Cultural and social activities and direct trading are said to be the best and safest ways to gain wealth without trouble.

### **Cultural Bodies**

... there is no doubt that interesting developments are taking place in the cultural field. The movement, of course, is nascent, but it has great possibilities. In Johannesburg we have bodies such as the Polly Street Art Centre, the Bantu Musical Festival, The Bantu Music Society and a host of smaller cultural movements ...

### **Commerce and Culture**

Commercial recording companies, which are doing a roaring trade among Africans are indirectly helping to preserve and develop African folk music-forms. Today we have a wealth of this folk music. It compares well with what has been done in the fields of African folklore and folk poetry. In all these spheres, research work is going on apace. We know of even two high medical authorities who are carrying on research in the field of African herbs. One might add to the list the growing volume of theses written by African graduates many of whom turn to African culture in this respect.

As was to be expected, this rich harvest is successfully being exploited in practical and commercial ways. A growing number of Africans is making its living in the practical application of this knowledge and discoveries. Embryo African Film Companies have been formed. There are several semi-professional theatrical and music groups. Besides staid, highly technical pioneer journals like "Bantu Studies", "Africa", etc., there are springing up popular magazines that are the practical manifestation of this spirit.

The last paragraph is perhaps the most significant:

Whatever we think about it, the change is here. And it is significant that even erstwhile political demagogues and "hotheads" are saying the best weapons to use today are cultural and economical (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 23, 1951:14*).

#### 5.4 A CELEBRATION OF ‘URBAN PROTEST’ IN THE 1950s: ITS MANIFESTATION IN PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN AND AFRICAN JAZZ (AND RELATED STYLES)

Music was everywhere – on street corners, or in front of the City Hall, where groups of teenagers played the penny whistle. Music was heard at bus terminals and on buses and trains ... the penny whistle, the harmonica, the guitar or some homemade string instrument, often a tin container attached to a long piece of wood with a few strings. These were the popular and cheap ways of making music. The more sophisticated musicians played the trumpet, saxophone, trombone and clarinet at parties and in dance halls. They blew their horns at birthday parties and funerals. At wakes (where families and friends sit watching over the deceased by candle light) they sounded through the night. Then there was the piano in the high dive shebeens ... it was jazz from morning till night (*Sampson 1994:18*).

The 1950s was an era in which black South Africans asserted their right to urban life. For a large majority, the unique African urban identity portrayed in African music forms was a viable medium of expression. Others, in counter-reaction to Government attempts to foist an essentially rural identity onto the black population, rejected African expression and vehemently embraced American jazz with various degrees of conscious or unconscious interpretation of its assertive black American ‘oppositional’ roots. For the majority who chose the African route there does not appear to be any direct or even indirect link to the ‘Africanist’ politics of the breakaway Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which was founded and led by Robert Sobukwe in 1959.

Ballantine aptly refers to the 1950s in South Africa as “a time of astonishing innovation” (*Ballantine 1993:7*), for it was in these years that creative juices in journalism and the arts found a source which was to sustain them through the following two decades - arguably the most oppressive that black South Africans were to suffer in the history of the country. Schadeberg maintains that journalism of the 1950s was characterised by a “wryly humorous and easy style”, born together with “Creative energy and self-expression which provided the surest sign that black people would ... demand their rights and their self-respect in the cities which they had made their own” (*Sampson 1990:13*).

Entertainment in the 1950s was characterised by an air of festive hedonism and “inventive trying” which, according to Mphahlele, were part and parcel of the unconscious expression of “urban protest” (*Mphahlele – writer’s interview: 21/11/97*). This ambience is pervasive in the black press and is glimpsed in myriad articles such as this one:



Goodbye, Nineteen Fifty Seven. You were a **STINKER**.

Come on, Nineteen Fifty Eight. **HIYA, BABE**.

Barring a major upset, the present Government will sweep back to power in the elections. There may be new Prime Minister, but he will wear the same colours.

...  
In spite of pressures, frustrations, etc., we shall have some **FUN** and plenty of **ENTERTAINMENT** in 1958 (*Golden City Post December 29, 1957:4*) (bold type as in original article).

An avalanche of unprecedented oppressive laws failed to extinguish the exuberant, positively celebratory spirit of urban assertion which characterised and was expressed in the music of the era. For those who embraced America more fervently than ever, Sophiatown, in particular, provided a haven of Americentricism where blacks self-consciously imitated American dress and style. Shebeens, or “speakeasies” called the “Thirty-nine steps”, “Back O’The Moon”, “Aunt Babe’s” were frequented by journalists from the Drum stable and their colleagues, “where black teachers, jazz players or city workers could drink illegally together, and where whites were still welcome despite the incursions of apartheid and the police” (*Sampson 1990:13*).

In a prominent article in Post in 1957, the editor effectively captured the ethos of the decade in which an underlying optimism that liberation was inevitable could not be dampened:

A Call to S.A. And A Challenge To The Politicians

**DEMOCRACY – OR BUST**

South African pet prophet, Professor Arthur Keppel-Jones, has recently come up with a vision of life in 1967.

It’s a dark and depressing picture: White nationalism more grimly in the saddle than ever; Black South Africa menacing and hostile; labour sullen and slow.

Surely that’s not the last word.

**Our own view is that there is cause for concern but not for despair. Not by a long way.**

Let’s do a bit of fact-facing for a new approach.

There is no truly South African tradition today. There is the humanity and great good humour of the Coloured, the family tradition, culture, commercial drive and shrewdness of the Indian, the vitality, patience and – in recent years – the growing political awareness of the African.

There is an Afrikaner tradition – dour determination, courage of convictions and a sense of mission and there is the British way of life (admirable if you exclude the snobberies that sometimes go with it.)

***If all these fine attributes were used properly, what a rich South African culture we’d be able to offer the world!***

Instead, they are all set against one another, bringing out the worst instead of the best in each – in a crazy, mixed up country.

The answer is that [as someone rightly says in the letters column] there is no alternative to a fully democratic state.

**IT'S DEMOCRACY OR BUST.**

Democracy means human rights for everyone. It's as simple as that.

...

Both from the principle of the thing and from a selfish, practical point of view, this country must make Democracy work.

**If the talents of all nations were used properly inside and outside industry – we'd have in 1967 not Keppel-Jones' nail-bitten country of fear, but a great, rich, happy NATION.**

...

**THE EDITOR**

*(Golden City Post July 7, 1957:4)* (bold type and italics as in original article).

Throughout the decade, it is clearly evident that 'urban protest' was not necessarily concurrent with the concept of *Africanisation*. Furthermore, the unprecedented support for African Nationalism did not imply a simultaneous conversion to the embrace of an African identity; nor were the connotations of embracing an 'African identity' identical for all. Again, Apartheid policies appeared to provide the insidious but often unexpressed convoluted rationalisation for behaviour:

For the first time, black women were judged according to the 'beauty queen' concept. But apart from her vital statistics the 'beauty queen' was most often judged by the tone and hue of her skin – the lighter, the better. This use of colour as a measure of valuation was the cornerstone of the Population Registration Act. Often, if they were light-skinned, Africans were able to pass as coloured. This meant they avoided carrying the much detested dompass, and as coloureds were entitled to earn higher wages. In their turn, many fair-skinned coloureds passed as whites and enjoyed the advantages of the privileged (*Schadeberg 1994:17*).

In response to the Apartheid laws, unprecedented support for African Nationalism, mostly for the ANC, resulted in the embarkation of mass action. The 1950s were characterised by remarkable mass demonstration, of which the Defiance Campaign was no doubt the most notable. These were also the years in which 'Africanism' became the rallying cry of those who were ultimately to form the breakaway PAC at the end of the decade. Nevertheless, Mphahlele maintains that the demonstrations and political fervour were invariably interpreted at grassroots level as forms of "urban protest" rather than overt 'militancy' (*Mphahlele – writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

According to Jurgen Schadeberg and Doc Bikitsha (photographer and journalist, respectively, for Drum magazine in the 1950s), blacks believed firstly, that their protests were ultimately going to succeed in enforcing change; and secondly, “They simply did not believe that Apartheid was going to last. They didn’t believe that it *could* last. They simply did not believe it” (*Schadeberg - personal communication: 17/4/97; Bikitsha – personal communication: 23/4/97*). Lara Allen maintains that the “deep nostalgia for the fifties” which surfaced during the political mobilisation of the 1980s resulted from the fact that the 1950s were “glorified as the last time when hope for (a) new order still existed” (*Allen 1999:58*).

This feeling is conveyed in many press articles of the time. One, chosen from a plethora, is symbolically juxtaposed to a photograph of “Mr N. R. Mandela, National President Congress Youth League and General Officer, national volunteer corps”. The caption states that Mandela “was arrested on Thursday night outside the hall in Anderson Street, Johannesburg”, as part of the campaign of civil disobedience. As one component of the latter, thousands of blacks converged on police stations and in public places without carrying their dreaded ‘passes’, thereby courting arrest. Excerpts of the adjacent article, entitled “THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN”, effectively convey the ambience which pervaded:

Touching scenes marked the start of the campaign of defiance against “unjust laws” when the first batch of volunteers set off in a convoy of cars on Thursday, June 26, 1952 ...

...  
... Crowds had gathered and amid singing and shouts of “Afrika,” there was hand-shaking between Mr. Sisulu and people in the crowd.

... There was loud and prolonged cheering, singing and cries of “Afrika” while the Congress salute was also given.

...  
No incidents occurred and the volunteers were cheerful and smiling when arrested (*Bantu World June 27, 1952:1*).

Many articles at the beginning of the decade referred to the “awakening” or “the change” which was occurring in black South African society. (For example, see *Ilanga Lase Natal June 23, 1951:14*.) This “change” can be regarded as falling within the ambit of the same phenomenon as Mphahlele refers to when he speaks of the dawning of an era of ‘urban protest’, in which the “inventive trying”, in African *as well as* western music forms, and as epitomised by African *and* American jazz, was an expression of the people’s assertion of their right to a ‘modern’ urban existence (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

In an era which saw the prolific mushrooming of bands, vocal groups and fast-tempo dances of which ‘jive’, *kwela* and *phata-phata* were the most significant, the existence of a subliminal motive articulated by Francois may be pertinent to the general hedonistic, celebratory entertainment climate of the decade. In common with western pop’s disco era, it seems possible that black South African dancers and revellers of the 1950s, like “disco freaks” of the 1970s, found meaning and solace in

... a secret refuge in “mindless repetition and lyrical idiocy” [George 1988]: it’s both a passport to the skies, and a way of staking out the same ground over and over again ... And implicit in (the) ... bleaker side is the unstated idea that the only permanent basis for community is the inescapability of this world and of the need to survive in it ... If everyone is shakin’, “whether you’re a mother or a brother”, it’s not that we are all finally family to each other, but that in this crisis which is everyday survival, it doesn’t make any difference who is what to whom (*Francois: 1995: 450/451*).

In strikingly apolitical reasoning when compared with later sections of his book, Ballantine provides four possible reasons for the incorporation of African elements into black South African entertainment. The essence of the fourth reason and, it would appear, the most pertinent, was that the music was, generally speaking, under the control of the “repressed elite”. The audience, however, represented various strata of society and varying degrees of both ruralism and sophistication. Vaudeville troupes, using scenes and sounds which functioned as common denominators amongst different sectors, transcended “incipient contradictions of social class” (*Ballantine 1993:25; 1991A:134*).

For Mphahlele, journalist, author and academic, the 1930s (to an extent), but in particular the 1940s, were characterised by a “rural-urban (ergo, sophisticated) divide”. While this did not result in watertight, mutually-exclusive entertainment structures, there were nevertheless those in which greater elements of either class-aligned association or rural-versus-urban commonality could be found (*Mphahlele – writer’s interview: 21/11/97*).

*Marabi*, as recognised slumyard culture, was in the 1930s associated with moral degradation and alcohol abuse, and its adherents tainted by association with a raw lack of sophistication. By contrast, jazz, particularly in the 1940s when most earlier elite prejudices against the style appear to have largely evaporated, epitomised urban sophistication. While never regarded as the exclusive domain of the upper echelons, subtle perceptions of jazz, and its sophisticated and progressive black American identity so acceptable to whites, nevertheless made it the flagship of urban culture and refinement.

Broadly speaking, jive played a pivotal role in the generalised amalgamation of slumyard and dance-hall cultures. Once the idea of ‘fast-tempo’ dancing, initially, in the 1940s, in the form of the jitterbug and charleston (along with the concept of dancing independently, i.e. away from one’s partner, rather than holding the partner, as in ballroom dancing) had gained popularity, a veritable fuse was ignited which burnt through this decade and exploded into the ‘dance craze’ era of the 1950s. The ‘jive’ phenomenon was the most influential and far-reaching milestone in the process, and it was enthusiastically absorbed by all sectors of black society. The arrival of the ‘dance craze’ which followed ultimately heralded the ‘pop’ era of ‘township music’ (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

This unarticulated homogenising of the rural-urban divide of dance culture was neither instantaneous nor unanimously supported, however. It is comparable to the debate in ‘serious’ music circles between the use of original, indigenous African culture as opposed to the incorporation of African elements into ‘serious’ western music styles. The latter, being the domain of the educated, was perceived as the ‘superior’ genre. Of the leading intellectual proponents of culture whose writing appeared in the press, the critic Walter Nhlapo appeared to be a lone voice in his support for the creation and development of the style of African jazz, using *marabi* elements, as a serious contribution to jazz repertoire. Other members of the elite, musically represented in the jazz milieu by either the Merry Blackbirds or ‘modern’ jazz exponents, while they enthusiastically supported American jazz and would countenance the use of indigenous African cultural material in the items of the vaudeville troupes, regarded African jazz as unequivocally inferior. This would appear to be the result of one of two reasons: either they were unable to let go of the perceived symbiotic association between *marabi* and derogatory or inferior elements of society and behaviour, or they regarded support of all African styles tainted by commercialism as tacit capitulation to Apartheid strategy.

#### **5.4.1 The Effects of the Commercialisation of African Jazz on Concepts and Beliefs which Affected Perceptions of the Various Styles**

Commercialism in African jazz and Africanised jazz-related styles became a decisive factor in the cross-currents of ideological stances which inevitably came into play in debates in the press. Almost by definition, the commercialisation of African styles involved inextricable association with concepts of manipulation and exploitation by racist whites. Similar to the controversy spearheaded by Dhlomo

regarding the use of African heritage, whites who were associated with commercial companies were viewed as exploiters of the black music industry. Those bands which willingly formed part of this industry, became the subject of ongoing and contentious debate. For much of the decade, pressmen and music critics showed prejudice for either black American or black South African recorded music; reflecting pride by association with their sophisticated black American brethren, or unique South African urban identity, respectively. As the majority of the population became swept up in the commercial boom of recorded African styles, a minority of intellectual elite who reviewed recorded music and live entertainment for the black newspapers either openly declared or subtly inferred African jazz and its offspring to be inferior to the new, progressive jazz styles emanating from America.

It must be noted that whereas Ballantine spurns the commercial recorded music played by the SABC in the 1960s, the commercialisation of African jazz in the 1950s receives scant comment. Yet this decade is lauded as a commendably innovative era of jazz (*Ballantine 1993:7*). One of the main issues which needs clarification in this area relates to Ballantine's insistence on the African jazz of the 1940s as being the authentic voice of radicalism, ergo, opposition and the somewhat ambiguous situation which this presents. The reader is left with no frame of reference for the analysis of the concepts and beliefs surrounding the music which was prolific in the 1950s – in particular the recorded African jazz and related styles such as *kwela* and *phata-phata*, most of which were the subject of fierce debate. While the 1940s was the focus of Ballantine's research, certain generalisations are made in the introductory chapters which leave the reader with controversial and unsubstantiated perceptions. The music promoted by the SABC after 1960 is branded as having no more than a Government-sponsored, 'puppet' status, but a similar slur is not cast on the styles which featured strongly in the commercial boom of the 1950s. Despite the inference that the African jazz of the era continued to be worthy and authentic oppositional music, the majority of "smaller groups" of the decade who "looked again towards the fertile indigenous soil of *marabi*" (*Ballantine 1993:7*) were in fact prominent commercial role-players. They made significant contributions to the genre which was effectively perpetuated by the SABC's Radio Bantu in the 1960s.

It is the contention of this thesis that commercialism was the lifeblood of African urban music in the 1950s and that perceptions about the two issues both affected, and were inextricably linked to, each other.



Radio Bantu, exclusively intended for South African blacks, was introduced by the SABC at the same time as then Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd launched the infamous ‘Bantustan’ plan and changed the name of ‘Apartheid’ to the more palatable ‘Separate Development’. Thus tainted by association, post-1960s Africanised commercial music was played on the first full-time racially and linguistically segregated airways. It has been tacitly accepted by most thinking South Africans that the chief purpose of Radio Bantu was to promulgate the myth that ‘Separate Development’ would mutually benefit blacks and whites alike. However, this perspective is incomplete without the observation that black music and other programmes for Africans, albeit in limited time-slots of the day, had been featured on the SABC for many years (*SABC Annual Reports: 1942:7; 1944:18; 1945:10; 1947:22,33; 1948:37; 1949:31*). From a 1949 reference to the need to “combat unfounded rumours amongst the Bantu” it can be deduced that the medium was viewed at the outset as a means of spreading political propaganda (*SABC Annual Report 1949:31*). Furthermore, ‘rediffusion’, again viewed by many as a Government ploy of indoctrination, had been a feature in many black homes in the then Transvaal since the early 1950s (*SABC Annual Reports 1952:4; 1958:18; Mphahlele – writer’s interview:27/5/98; Klaaste – writer’s interview: 15/2/98*). Rediffusion was the name given to the ‘radio service’ which was started in Orlando in 1952 and by 1958 was supplied to most black townships around Johannesburg (*SABC Annual Report 1958*). A ‘box’ radio was supplied and installed free of charge to each home and wired to a central diffusion service. A special programme for this service, consisting “mainly of music” was devised (*SABC Annual Report 1952:36*). Interspersed with Apartheid propaganda, music programmes were transmitted from dawn till dusk every day. These programmes were derived from “recorded music, particularly the SABC’s own recordings made in the Native reserves” or from recordings made “by first-rate groups at the various broadcasting centres ...” Thus the SABC had played an influential role in the commercial recording industry for at least seven years prior to 1960, yet this music escapes Ballantine’s criticism.

Commercialism, per se, had been around since the late 1930s. In the insightfully analytical Ilanga Lase Natal in which the Africanisation of ‘serious’ culture was regularly discussed, a long feature entitled “Evolution of Bantu Entertainments” credits the record industry for the birth of the Africanisation of popular or light music. Referring to the time of “Europe and America in Africa - Africa in Hollywood and the Argentina!”, (which, in the context of the article could possibly refer to the 1930s or 1940s) the writer outlines the introduction of “Bantu” elements into some vaudeville programmes, alongside other

western offerings, and the subsequent appropriation by the recording companies of a vibrant African market:

While this was happening, other developments were taking place. Some African groups had introduced Bantu composed choral music and short original sketches of Bantu life, both tribal and urban. Some more ambitious companies were staging European plays and light opera.

Recording establishments that found a huge, profitable market in Bantu music, brought about the birth of a national [but undirected and almost unconscious] revival in Bantu forms of art, drama and music. A curious by-product of this movement was what is known as “jazibantshi” (*i.e. isicathamiya*) [Corruption of the Afrikaans “jasbaadjie”] performers and concerts (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 20, 1953:27*) (own underlining).

Ballantine’s perspective on the 1940s appears conciliatory in terms of the motives of the recording companies. Gallo, who made recordings of the Manhattan Brothers singing vernacular lyrics to familiar American tunes, is described as having “correctly understood a national mood, and thus found a way of translating political sentiment into capital gain” (*Ballantine 1999:8*).

There is no doubt that the industry burst onto the entertainment scene in the 1950s in an unprecedented manner and one which had enormous impact on future trends of black South African music in general. Above all, the commercialisation of African jazz ‘hits’, and in particular those that emanated from the umbrella genre of ‘African jive’ which spawned a dance craze hitherto unparalleled in black South Africa, resulted in the large-scale commercialisation of what was tantamount to an African ‘pop’ music industry. This fact prompts the argument about whether commercial music manipulates public taste or capitalises on taste trends that already manifest in the populace. The debate is age-old, and exists in the western pop field as the subject of academic examination as well as vociferous posturing between rock and pop enthusiasts and proponents. While in-depth examination of this question is beyond the scope of this work, shades of this debate do encroach to an extent on the ‘commercial’-versus-‘authentic’ argument presented here.

Whether the record companies were dictating or responding to demands from the populace would determine whether the music can be viewed as the spontaneous expression of urban, if not oppositional, identity, as well as the degree of culpability to be assigned to the SABC for manipulating taste to meet political ends. Either way, the fact that this commercial phenomenon of unrivalled proportion began in the 1950s, prior to ‘Radio Bantu’, does not exonerate – and possibly exacerbates – motives of ill intent on the part of the SABC. It does provide a slightly altered perspective to

Ballantine's declaration of 1960 as a "decisive year" which marked the end of the era of 'astonishing innovation' of South African music, and by inference, jazz. More importantly, it suggests that the commercial styles of the 1950s, existing as they did in the era which Ballantine praises, are unclassified in terms of his ideological paradigm. Of significance to this discourse is the perception of commercialism vis-à-vis the propagation of African jazz and subsequent Africanised jazz-related styles.

Joe Mogotsi, member of the most famous of all South African vocal jazz groups, the Manhattan Brothers, recalls how the commercialisation of vernacular recordings of well-known American songs of the 1940s was the lifeblood of the group. While the group were subjected to the exploitation of record companies, who only paid a "flat rate" and no royalties whatsoever, the records "sold madly".

Oh, the people were just crazy when the records came out ... so that is precisely why we managed to survive. Because after recording, we used to plan our tours, with the money that we got (*Mogotsi - writer's interview: 24/6/98*).

A common perception, expressed or inferred in numerous press articles, is that commercialism catalysed and proliferated, and to an extent, directed, the Africanisation of jazz *from its inception*; not only the African jazz recorded in the commercial studios, but the African jazz played nightly in the dance-halls. In other words, commercialisation was responsible for the manipulation of taste. In the 1950s in particular, opinions on the worthiness of African jazz of many pressmen and writers to newspapers appear to have been influenced substantially by this perception. There is no dramatic and overt substantiation for nor substantiated answer to oppose this charge. However, it is of significance to the discourse that the proposers and defenders of the motion appear to be motivated by differing concepts and beliefs. These are fundamentally grounded in their varying perceptions of the viability and merit of African culture – and specifically, of *marabi*-influenced, fast-tempo dance music and 'jive' – as a tool of modern urban expression. These sentiments appeared to have played a role in the bias displayed by many against, or at least in their ambivalence for, 'inferior' African products perceived to be appropriated and exploited by whites for their own gain.

For Peter Rezant, leader of the prestigious Merry Blackbirds, the birth, development and very existence of African jazz was symbiotic with the efforts of the commercial market:

The African jazz, you know, as it is called now, is a thing that came in because of recording; to sell records ... It is something that we never fell for. Never fell for! (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

It is as if to him, those who “fell for” the ploys of the commercial industry were being hoodwinked into playing inferior music; ergo, African jazz, being the child of commercialism and synonymous with *marabi* in association if not status, was inferior music.

Radebe Petersen, “meticulous observer of the local jazz and vaudeville scene” (*Ballantine 1993:42; 1991B:133*), maintains that the commercial music of the 1950s was motivated by the greed of the record establishments, who catered to, and manipulated the tastes of, the lower echelons of black society. He is in apparent agreement with and perhaps responsible for Ballantine’s derogatory assessment of - and his perception of dance-hall African jazz as superior to - the commercial music of the 1960s. However, for Radebe Petersen, the recorded styles of the 1950s are tainted with the same suggestion of manipulation, and hence, lack of authenticity and valid political expression. In order to exploit the tastes of the proletariat, an inferred inferior, lowest common-denominator music was prolifically produced:

*They (i.e. the record companies) were looking at the interest of the money. Because why? Must I tell you why? The buying majority were the lower class African. Must I put you in the picture? ... I will start from Parktown: the people who worked there was (sic) mostly domestic servants, domestic servants like garden workers, working as builders, and so on. They are the buying majority. They were buying all this music in order to send for their children at home, and those people ... if you play solid jazz, I don't (they didn't) understand it; not even African jazz, mbaqanga (i.e. the big band style as opposed to the commercialised studio version of the 1950s). No, he didn't. You must play real marabi; really the primitive township jive. Ja, the jive, like the penny whistle, (i.e. kwela) ... was sending a message home (Radebe Petersen - writer's interview:8/11/94).*

It is Ntemi Piliso’s adamant opinion that the surge of popularity for the newly-released record, “Tamatiesous”, was the single biggest factor which established a predilection amongst dance-hall audiences for similar numbers. “Tamatiesous”, variously called “Tamatie Sauce” and “Tamatie Sous” (or spelt “Tomatie Sous”) in the different advertisements, was a *marabi*-inspired and -flavoured number by the New Symphonators, a Bloemfontein-based jazz band, which exploded onto the market in the early 1950s and became instantly and massively popular. Thereafter, composers like Piliso prolifically produced what subsequently came to be known as *mbaqanga*, although not referred to as such at the time, or African jazz (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*).

For Piliso, changes in style are motivated by changes in trend. As in the western ‘pop’ market, the situation is dictated by the introduction of a new style which is eagerly grasped or rejected by the masses and the previously-popular style is replaced by a new, fresh sound. Similarly, the trend in the

black entertainment industry, which by the 1950s was a thriving industry, changed: first, from predominantly American to predominantly African jazz, then from big-band African jazz (also called *mbaqanga*) to *kwela* and ‘African jive’ (as opposed to the more sedate ‘jive’ of the 1940s – *kwela* and ‘jive’ occurred concurrently and the terms were used interchangeably in the press); and then, in the 1960s, to the commercial *mbaqanga* of Mahlatini and the Mahotella Queens (which in turn, is distinct from Piliso’s *mbaqanga* referred to above).

Coplan appears to share Piliso’s fairly pragmatic assessment of the birth of African jazz: “Performers (*and recording studios*) who wished to appeal to the large African working-class audience had to draw upon indigenous performance culture”. He succinctly captures the contention of this discourse as it relates to the ultimate role of the commercialised styles of the 1950s: “Nevertheless, the internationalism of African jazz became part of a struggle against cultural isolation and segregation and expressed the aspirations of the majority of urban Africans” (*Coplan 1985:139*).

Mphahlele gives the insightful opinion of one who played an active role in the jazz culture of the 1940s and 1950s. His views are especially valuable since they are those of a political activist and an arch-enemy of the South African government of those decades. Questioned as to whether he viewed ‘commercial’ African jazz and the subsequent mushrooming of the commercial styles of the 1950s as spontaneous expressions, or whether they were the result of deliberate and cynical manipulation by the commercial industry, he replied that he viewed the two events as concurrent phenomena: “*Both* things happened. *Both* things were happening (at the same time)”. However, the bias tilts slightly when he explains that the SABC and record companies effectively harnessed and exploited the spontaneous, authentic expression of the people, created in response to the urge to articulate their urban African identity:

It started as a people’s music, people’s beat; the beat of the street. And of course SABC is ready to catch always what is popular; and they got hold of it and commercialised it. You know, we used to have, in the 1950s, ... rediffusion. They used it as a lure (*i.e. The SABC used music to capture an audience in order to spread Apartheid propaganda*) (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

Khabi Mngoma, a personal friend of the critic and staunch African Nationalist Walter Nhlapo, maintains that Nhlapo actively supported the commercial music of the 1950s as well as that of the 1960s, both of which he viewed as the authentic and worthy expression of the people. Mngoma’s own

strong perception is that the recording establishments of both decades captured on vinyl, and thereby made accessible, a genuine people's culture (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is feasible to assume that after decades of foreign influences and sounds, the record industry recognised and capitalised on the masses' readiness and willingness to listen to accessible and familiar African material. While there is a dearth of evidence in the form of articulated sentiments, this tendency feasibly could have been part of an emerging desire to express an essential 'Africanness'; or less directly and in a slightly altered context, to revel in a new-found pride in an urban, hedonistic, but distinctly African, identity in moments of recreation.

#### **5.4.2 Issues of 'Popularity' versus 'Authenticity': African Jazz versus American Jazz**

In order to contextualise the validity of Ballantine's views about the inferiority of the commercial music of the 1960s and his lack of reference to that of the 1950s, this section will address the following questions: Was African jazz which flourished in the 1950s, and the various dance crazes that it spawned, viewed as more or less authentic than the American jazz styles which were in vogue in that decade? What were the reasons for these perceptions? And lastly, what were the reasons for the demise of jazz (African, as well as American) as a mass-based popular style?

At the end of 1956, *The World* published a prominent article on its entertainments page entitled, "COMMERCIALISM IS KILLING OUR MUSIC", in which the sentiment was expressed that the "growing commercialism" was stifling the music "as played from the heart". The "thousands of records" being "turned out" each year offered "very little musicality" (*The World December 15, 1956:5*).

Referring to inherent characteristics and widely-held public perceptions of different newspaper publications, Hall makes the observation which is applicable to the music of the 1950s. Similar to the perceptions surrounding the newspapers which he describes, the majority of press critics divided records which they reviewed into two "mutually exclusive, polarized binary opposites", the "unequal parts" of



the 'quality' and the 'popular', each carrying a different cultural value or index. 'Quality' is serious; 'popular' is entertaining but trivial ... What is 'popular' cannot be 'serious'. What is 'quality' must be powerful. What is entertaining cannot be 'quality' and so on. The readers (*or listeners*) are also constructed as two distinct kind of public: highbrow and lowbrow (*Hall 1986B:37*).

The unstated and possibly unconscious rule which governed press critiques until the late 1950s was that 'quality' invariably meant American jazz, and almost always, specifically 'modern' jazz; 'popular' was reserved for all music which had an African urban flavour. The term *msakazo* was invariably used to denote 'popular' commercialised African styles.

The African jazz commercialised in the 1950s, and the subsequent styles of the dance craze to which it gave birth, were catalysed into being by - and can be viewed as a perpetuation of - the tendency to incorporate elements of *marabi* into the dance-hall African jazz of the 1940s. Mngoma perceives *marabi* culture as the expression of an inherent "Africanist" voice (*Mngoma – writer's interview: 23/4/95*). Ballantine describes *marabi* culture as "vital" and "hedonistic" (*Ballantine 1993:28; 1991A:136*).

However, press critics of the 1950s often refer to the Africanised styles of this decade in statements which invariably infer that the characteristics of vitality and hedonism detract from serious aspects of 'quality'. Examples of this mindset abound, but perhaps nowhere more eloquently and sardonically expressed than in a scathing review of the show, "Sangoma", which was articulated in a letter to the World (quoted in full below) and published in Aggrey Klaaste's regular "Show World" column. It is especially significant that this show featured and was the brainchild of Isaac 'Zakes' Nkosi, one of the most prolific, and certainly the most outspoken, practitioner and proponent of the commercially spawned African styles of the 1950s. Nkosi can safely be stated to epitomise studio-sponsored African jazz or *mbaqanga*, which he viewed as an expression of African Nationalism. As evidence of Klaaste's own support for the highly critical sentiments expressed, photographs of the show adjacent to the letter bear the caption: "This crazy caper was taken at one of the corniest shows seen in Johannesburg since the old days. It was billed rather fantastically 'Sangoma' and had a host of top artists who should have known better" (*The World September 19, 1962:6*).

Important factors in the 'African-jazz-versus-American-jazz' debate are highlighted in this letter. The writer and, more importantly (since he was an influential journalist) Klaaste's caustic references to the

“old days” of African jazz confirm the fact that detractors of African jazz in the 1950s had not supported the style since its inception as a dance-hall phenomenon of the 1940s. In other words, they viewed the commercialised version as essentially the same product as the dance and concert-hall variety which Ballantine lauds as authentic political expression of the ‘militancy’ of the 1940s. Secondly, while the sardonic reference to “our New Orleans” hints at the superiority of American jazz, the sarcastic comment, “hats off to the great London ‘Kippie’ Moeketsi”, which is intended to chide the saxophonist for his involvement in an “African-sponsored” show, infers the superiority of the ‘modern, progressive’ American jazz which was his usual domain. Probably most importantly of all, the article emphasises the fact that for Klaaste and his ilk, the resistance to Africanisation is based on the perception that this phenomenon is playing straight into the hands of racist whites, who actively seek such displays of blacks’ essential ‘Africanness’ as evidence of their inherent ruralism and lack of sophistication:

#### LETTER

#### HE LIKED “SANGOMA”

We wish to congratulate Mr Zuma and Zakes Nkosi for their courage and success in staging such a well attended, happy show at the Selborne Hall.

They brought the Location or Township into Town!! When Zakes played “Sadhuva” he reminded us of the late Zulu Boy (*i.e. Zulu Boy Cele, leader of the Jazz Maniacs, famous exponents of African jazz in the 1940s*) and reminded us of shows at the Communal Halls 20 years ago when there was no sequence, no glamorous sets, no arrangements, no bookings, no critics!

The compere carried on with his “ungrammar” and witticisms! The girls wriggled and artists acted “hot” as the spirit moved them and the audience queued up, filled the halls and shouted themselves hoarse in appreciation just as they did at the Selborne Hall on Thursday the 6th. That was our New Orleans.

Those days the fans just supported “Buta Khampepe’s Shows.” Never mind what he gave them. They just supported the promoter not the show and Boys, you have brought them days to Johannesburg City Hall this time.

Why worry what you give them, Boys, as long as they like it, come and fill up your houses and enable you to pay for your troubles as well as plan future series!

We have seen some expensively produced modern shows hardly draw audiences and stamped as failures by critics and never to see the light of day again!

Bravo Boys! Go ahead and revive the old bones and departed spirits of Africa! Even the White lady cashier and box office were happy with the tickle of silver and the queue at the door! That’s what shows are for - Cash and Happiness! Pity (sic) you cancelled the “All White” show! The Whites would have lapped it up! They like us - unsophisticated, raw and uninhibited!

Hats off to the great London “Kippie” Moeketsi for performing to an African sponsored show! - Ronnie Mkwanazi (*The World September 19, 1962:6*).

South Africa in the 1950s was already tightly locked in the vice of Apartheid, which sought to promote a tribal identity. In reality, this meant a 'rural' homeland and the denial of permanent urban residency. For many intelligent and educated blacks, although never overtly expressed at the time, adopting an African persona was inextricably linked to the perception of succumbing to Apartheid policy. It would appear that this factor, the insidious *raison d'être* for opposition to African styles, was the overriding yardstick whereby judgements of 'quality' and 'authenticity' were made. From the perspective of many intellectuals, Africanisation had been hijacked by the South African government. Erlmann succinctly summarises the situation in which identification with black America rather than black South Africa, was deemed truly 'oppositional': "Far more important a reason for the failure of Africanism as a significant cultural theory was the rise to power of Afrikanerdom and apartheid ideology in 1948" (Erlmann 1983:146).

Ballantine's perception of expressions of political militancy aside, 'authenticity', as perceived by press critics in reference to African and American jazz of the 1950s, can be defined as pertaining to a medium perceived to be a valid expression of a 'worthy' (and generally sophisticated) urban identity, and of an artistic 'quality' which engenders pride in the product. The latter clearly distinguished the various writers of the press. Some, while theoretically encouraging the creation of African jazz as a necessary articulation of a hitherto unexpressed unique African identity, often criticised quality of performance, and perceived melodic or rhythmic content as inferior when compared to American jazz styles. The general perception is conveyed that while the necessity for African expression had been perceived by a few, the medium of commercial African jazz and its related styles had not yet reached the internationally accepted standards of American jazz. Others, while occasional comments suggested that they may regard African jazz as a valid expression of their less sophisticated brethren, displayed *indifferent*, rather than disapproving, attitudes to the style and its relatives.

For the pressmen, one man's meat was another man's poison in the choice of urban music styles. For Gideon Jay, harshly critical at times but generally more inclined to promote African styles than his colleagues, "Lovely Lies" as recorded by the Manhattan Brothers, made "no pretence at being African music. It's an African attempt at an American pop tune, a pretty one" (*Zonk November 1955:47*). For the young writers of Drum magazine who epitomised the strongly-Americanised "*un-African*" (see 4.7.3), "Lovely Lies", composed by Mackay Davashe, leader of the prestigious modern

jazz group, the Jazz Dazzlers, was lauded as “the song that was to put Miriam Makeba on top of the world” (*Drum September 1960:28*).

Initially Zonk’s Gideon Jay, while critical of poor standards, was a lone voice which promoted African jazz and other commercial African styles. In general, he advocated and articulated the need for an essentially *African* identity to be expressed through music, and the use of both indigenous and commercial African urban styles as the medium for this expression. These sentiments, obvious from most reviews, are juxtaposed in one article in the mid-1950s which highlights their relationship, and his view of the commercial arena as the area in which this identity can be encouraged and promoted:

*African Jazz* is now firmly established, and while our boys have made vast strides in their field, and have gained a certain amount of musical conviction, I want to sound a word of caution. There is still a lot of room for improvement individually, and in order to maintain the rate of progress, the standard of musicianship and technique must improve ...

One or two new labels have been launched, and this ... goes to make for progress, but I do not want to think of *African Music* on the Jazz side only. We have another side to the picture. A vast one, a pure one and one that must be nursed and kept alive ... and this is the Traditional Music of the country.

The new generation must learn the folk songs of the fathers and learn to acquire the spirit and character that is the backbone of a fine race. This can be done through Traditional Music (*Zonk February 1955:45*).

Later, though, particularly after the popularisation of *kwela* and the birth of what was a commercial pop market in all but name, Jay appears to either tire of the African offerings, or, like many of his peers (such as his successor at Zonk who called himself “Mazurkie”, Bloke Modisane who wrote the column ‘NiteLife’ in Golden City Post, and Aggrey Klaaste of ‘Show World’ in The World), become so enamoured with progressive American jazz styles (and simultaneously disillusioned by Government policy), that his reviews tend to subtly but definitely manifest preference for American styles to the detriment of the African genre.

With few and notable exceptions, the reviews of most of the critics in the first half of the 1950s tended to review African styles with inane and fairly bland, if not patronising comment, and wax lyrical in the same column about the latest offering from America. The reader is left with the distinct impression that the African product is inferior, and that people of the critics’ stature would not stoop to the support or enjoyment of African-flavoured commercial music. The following are provided as singular examples, randomly chosen from among a plethora:

- In December 1956, *kwela* is reviewed condescendingly by Gideon Jay: “The flutes sound the same as they always have, and always will, because the boys have blown every note on the instrument – there’s nothing more they can do with the primitive simple pipe”. A guitar ‘jive’ number is “just that much out of the ordinary in rhythmic simplicity to make it new; and a vocal jive group, the P.E. Sisters, who “make a fair showing”, are “perhaps above average, but the girls must get some new material.”. On the other hand, the American long-playing disc reviewed, “McGuffie Magic”, contains “many fine examples of McGuffie’s outstanding style, ranging from the tender lyrical playing in the first chorus of ‘Memory’ to the electrifying jazz version of ‘Just One of Those Things’” (*Zonk December 1956:41*).
- In their record review column, “Gramo Go Round”, in the same year, Drum superlatively declared Frank “The Voice” Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald to be favourite male and female vocalists of the year. The last paragraph in the article is assigned to African recordings, the beginning of which is an apt summary of the magazine’s generally indifferent attitude to commercial African jazz, *kwela* or ‘jive’ styles:

Back home, here where we are, there is very little progress. We’re still playing the same flutes, penny whistles and two-penny tunes. We’ve also gone Vernacular in our advertising. But here and there there’s been a dash of enterprise (*Drum December 1956:79*).

- On a full page in which American jazz is praised in every other article, a large and prominent headline reads: “African Jazz Is Now Deadbeat”. The article is juxtaposed to a photograph of the Modern Jazz Quartet (the black South African quartet who played bebop or ‘progressive’ jazz) and another article describing Harry Belafonte as “the kingpin of calypsos”. The columnist, Bloke Modisane begins by asking, “What’s wrong with African Jazz as a form of music?” He goes on to trace the development of American jazz from New Orleans jazz, through Dixieland and Swing, which was “hampered by the strict arrangements”. As a result, “a freer form had to come about”, and thus the Bebop of Charlie ‘Yardbird’ Parker was born, “with its variations, East Coast or West Coast”. Notably, the only jazz musicians in South Africa worthy of praise are the handful of “progressive musicians” such as Kippie Moeketsi and the Modern Jazz Quartet of Durban. Evidently frustrated by ‘African’ offerings, he asks,

... where are these changes, growth, in African jazz? There are no variations. African Jazz hasn’t progressed by one millimetre in ten years.

The basic throbbing African rhythms haven't progressed - the repetitive bars are still there with all their monotone.

With this kind of stiltedness, our musicians will never reach world standard. Besides, African Jazz is not progressive and original.

...

Durban's Modern Jazz Quartet, Jerry "Kippy" Moeketsi and perhaps a few others are the only progressive musicians we have.

What's wrong with African Jazz? I offer a record of modern jazz for the best reader's comment on the subject (*Post May 19, 1957:6*).

At a lecture at the BMSC, Dave Lee, the jazz pianist, reportedly stressed the fact that jazz was the natural articulation of the 'Negro': "So far as the white musician was concerned, he could only copy". Denigrating African jazz for being influenced by the "Suikerbossie" element of "Afrikaner [Boere] music", "the most furthest from jazz", he advised that "for the next decade only records featuring Negro artists should be purchased so that the influence of other forms of music would fade" (*Bantu World June 11, 1955:11*).

This article succinctly encapsulates at least one of the most important features of the American jazz versus African jazz controversy of the 1950s: for some, American jazz, as an expression of black assertion, remained an articulation of liberation or aspirations of liberation. For others, African jazz became an expression of an essential *Africanness* - as opposed to the already recognised *blackness* of American jazz - which symbolised their pride and right to liberation in the specific South African context. For many, these two styles, and the conscious or unconscious acceptance of these perceptions, lived happily side by side. For others, such as the journalists from Drum magazine, the one was espoused at the expense of the denigration of the other.

It would appear that for Drum, the death-knell of Africanisation was the advent of commercialisation of the music entertainment industry and its attendant implications of manipulation by white and Government racist intervention and strategy. In one article (where, contrary to the more representative article quoted above by Aggrey Klaaste, fairly nostalgic references are made to origins of African jazz), commercialism in the form of "big promotions" which were "parading old tired donkeys in front of the footlights" and the SABC were blamed for the death of 'quality' styles (*Drum September 1960:28*).



However, these comments require the perspective of the insightful interviewees who assisted this research. The apparent schism in dance hall and record culture that could be deduced from the above, is countered by both Mphahlele and Mngoma. There were, they maintain, a significant number of people, obviously not represented by press articles, who supported both American modern jazz and the African jazz and jive of the dance halls as well as those of the recording studios (*Mphahlele – writer’s interview: 27/5/98; Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*).

For press critics, no single event did more to marry the concepts of ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ than the recording and co-performance, in 1958, of *kwela* music by the renowned American progressive jazz clarinettist, Tony Scott. Whereas his “sound” demonstrated an influence “typical” of the revered Charlie Parker, and his credentials were further established by playing “Be-Bop tunes” at the concert session attended by South African blacks, Scott saw fit to record “Manga-manga” and “Dhlahdla” with a penny-whistle group, the Alexandra Dead-End Kids, on his album, “Tony Scott in South Africa” (*Zonk March 1958:45*). Previously, journalists, even those expressing their cautious or patronising praise for the ‘popular’ offerings of pennywhistle bands, would not have deigned to mention the epitome of American sophistication, bebop, in the same breath as *kwela*. Scathing criticism of “Dhlahdla” was typical of press reports prior to this landmark event, whereas in the same column as the Scott article Zacks Nkosi is declared to be “King of Mbhaqanga” (sic). Thus it was that the international recognition of commercial styles like *kwela* which fell under the umbrella term of *msakazo* to the extent that the terms were often confused in press articles, prompted the advent of grudging, yet firm praise for the home products.

Overseas success of a South African number guaranteed instant acceptance in South Africa. Zonk’s Gideon Jay (admittedly a promoter of African identity and expression - although with some ambivalence and reservation at different times), glowed with pride on the occasion of the recording of a ‘cover’ version of Msarurgwa’s “Skokiaan” by an American band:

We can all remember the not-so-distant past, when our African groups, vocal and instrumental, were aping and imitating the American artists ... [and usually falling far short], but 1954 found the “greats” of the States listening with all ears to the *Sweetwater Rhythm Band’s* version of *Skokiaan* and doing their best to get into our African Jazz idiom. And let me say that some of them fell far short here, too. But this is not surprising, because there is something intrinsic, sincere and characteristic in our music that is not easy for “foreigners” to capture, and while the overseas discs were technically far superior to Msarurgwa’s, that “certain something” was not there (*Zonk February 1955:45*).

Self-conscious emulators of the prestigious Merry Blackbirds of Johannesburg and nation-wide fame, the absorption of elements of *kwela* into the repertoire of the Merry Macs of Cape Town marked the advent of Africanisation for the band. Mtshimilikwane maintains that *kwela* was one of the most important milestones in the Africanisation of music. The style flourished because South African blacks instantly recognised the style as a natural and spontaneous expression of their urban African identity. As an erstwhile member of what appears to have been the most prestigious band in Cape Town, the Merry Macs, who, like the Merry Blackbirds, were firmly rooted in American swing and remained loyal to this style throughout the 1950s, he expresses his reaction to *kwela*: “(For) anybody listening to the rhythm, it was like (you recognised) your natural rhythm that you have in you; and you would say, ‘Hey, this is ME happening!’” (*Mtshimilikwane - writer's interview: 4/7/97*).

#### 5.4.3 ‘Msakazo’

After Sharpeville and the introduction of Radio Bantu in 1960, seminal events inferred to mark the end of an era of remarkable progress in African jazz, Ballantine maintains that “anodyne, formula-bound” styles characterised the commercial airways. Styles which were “derogatorily” labelled ‘*msakazo*’ (literally translated as “broadcast”) were personified by Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, who, it is implied, are puppets or stooges of the Apartheid government (*Ballantine 1993:7.8*). By inference, the term ‘*msakazo*’ is associated with radio and thus has an inherent quality of Apartheid-sponsorship and inferiority. While this was certainly the perception shared by some, examination of press articles of the 1950s reveal this inferred definition to be incomplete.

Rather than the style of Mahlathini and other commercial products of the 1960s, newspaper research would indicate that *msakazo* was initially used and commonly understood to apply specifically to recorded African jazz and related urban styles of the 1950s. It was firmly related to the Africanisation process. Commercialisation, generally perceived as either a blessing or a curse, was the lifeblood and catalyst for the existence of African jazz and the ‘dance craze’ which spawned, amongst others, *kwela* and *phata-phata*. The *mbaqanga* or African jazz of certain of the most significant jazz bands of the era was also associated (from certain viewpoints, symbiotically so), with recording studios (see *Coplan 1979:152/153,161,162*). According to Ntemi Piliso, the dance hall and studio versions were both referred to as *mbaqanga*. In other

words, *mbaqanga* and what the press labelled *msakazo* were, from Piliso's standpoint, synonymous (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*). An examination of the use of the term gives insight into the perceptions surrounding African jazz, as opposed to American jazz (predominantly 'modern', 'progressive' jazz of the Charlie Parker era and beyond).

It would appear that the term *msakazo* was used predominantly in, if not coined by, various readers and writers of *The World* in the second half of the 1950s. (*Bantu World* became known as *The World* from 1956 onwards.) Certainly the most letters expressing opinions of the genre occur in this publication, amongst them those that succinctly highlight the varying opinions of the studio-sponsored music. It should be noted that in many of the articles, debate centering around *msakazo* is confined to recorded African jazz or *mbaqanga*, and is therefore related to the preceding section dealing with issues of 'popularity' versus 'authenticity'.

In the article "COMMERCIALISM IS KILLING OUR MUSIC" referred to above, *msakazo* is deprecatingly described as follows (it should be noted that the radio station referred to, i.e. 'Springbok radio', was a 'white' station as opposed to the notorious 'Radio Bantu'):

Take the commercial jazz music known as "Msakazo". It is a cacophonous type of music with very little originality and jazz patterns. Normally the chord construction is so repetitive that the piece loses its musical quality.

Recently I wondered why some of Johannesburg's leading stage artistes (sic) failed to impress when they appeared in a recent show. I spoke to them. "How can we sing our best when we are forced to sing commercials. Producers give little thought to us as full-blooded musicians. They expect us to sing commercials so often that we lose individuality and eventually resemble Springbok Radio."

The medium of radio is another offender to musicians ...

One important fact sticks out like a sore thumb. Unless music lovers club together and offer employment to musicians in the form of concerts and record clubs, commercialism will kill music as we know it (*The World* December 15, 1956:5).

The 'progressive-jazz-versus-commercial-jazz' debate seemed to have an inferred intellectual 'superiority-versus-inferiority' component lurking beneath the surface. *Drum* magazine would fuel the controversy from time to time by adding comments in articles on other subjects. In one such example, the opinion of Kippie Moeketsie, famous alto-saxophone exponent of modern jazz in South Africa is quoted: "Commercialists, he thinks, are ruining jazz. He agrees that original Bantu music could be developed, but whines that nothing of it has been written down as yet. Only Sam Maile tried to

write it down. In the period 1947 to 1948 Sam wrote a lot of good Darky music modernised” (*Drum January 1958:47*).

It is interesting to note that in nearly all articles in which *msakazo* is used as a derogatory term, it is used to refer to *all* African jazz per se; in other words, another version of African jazz is not regarded as a superior alternative to the commercialised version. Therefore the deduction becomes quite clear: for most intellectuals of the press, with the possible exception of Walter Nhlapo, opposition to *msakazo* is a blanket opposition to African jazz. The detractors’ main objection to the style appears to be that African jazz is not *jazz* at all, and much effort is expended in attacking the composers’ right to refer to the style as ‘jazz’. When ‘jazz’ is mentioned in these articles, it invariably refers to American jazz, and generally, but not always, to the ‘modern’, ‘progressive’ styles epitomised by Charlie Parker.

A 1956 quotation by Walter Nhlapo in *Bantu World* is used by Coplan in support of his theory that “African musical journalism of the time was full of complaints that *mbaqanga* was killing serious local jazz”. *Mbaqanga*, used here to apply to recorded commercial styles, was synonymously and interchangeably referred to by journalists of the time as *msakazo*: “There are still musicians who play the pure, polished jazz of days gone by, musicians whose music does not appeal to, and stir, the masses to promiscuous gyrations, musicians whose music does not sell, but all the same, the kind of jazz that savours of the pure and the best” (*The World August 3, 1957:8; Coplan 1979:153*).

References to nostalgia for “jazz of days gone by” and “musicians whose music does not sell”, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, could feasibly be interpreted as a hankering for ‘big-band’ jazz which included sophisticated *American as well African* styles. This argument is supported by further comment made by Nhlapo in the article referred to above: the “hot swing” of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong as played by the “swing bands” such as the Jazz Maniacs, Merry Blackbirds, Rhythm Clouds and Harlem Swingsters, is praised (*The World August 3, 1957:8*). Mngoma asserts that Nhlapo was a firm supporter of recorded *mbaqanga*, and that he worked for a recording studio as a talent scout, promoting the style (*Mngoma – writer’s interview:23/4/95*). Therefore it is quite plausible that derogatory inferences about commercial music which “stirs the masses to promiscuous gyrations” could well be an objection to one particular dance style among a plethora in the decade. (The *phata-phata*, for example, could arguably fit this definition.) The danger of taking one press article out of context and using it as a generalisation is thus highlighted.

As on many other occasions, Zacks (often spelt 'Zakes') Nkosi is identified in an article in *The World* in 1957 as the chief proponent of studio-sponsored African jazz or "*umsakazo*". The piece refers to an earlier letter in which Nkosi's "type of jazz" had been derogatorily referred to, and Nkosi is given the chance to defend the criticism. In the letter it had been charged that "Zacks and his men played very little jazz and a pot full of 'Umsakazo'". "*Umsakazo*" is then defined as "African rock 'n roll". While Nkosi credits American jazz as "a marriage of original African rhythms to European music patterns", he asserts that the essentially *African* element in African jazz (or '*umsakazo*') presents a uniquely African voice: "We are playing genuine African rhythms and already have discovered a new jazz sound which is typically African. This music will be nurtured here on the Gold Reef - it is a sound which we will proudly display to the rest of the world as genuine South African jazz" (*The World* June 8, 1957:7).

The article referred to above prompted a veritable storm of controversy, and a letter in reply to Nkosi's assertion took the form of a prominent article with a large, bold headline, "UMSAKAZO HAS NEVER BEEN AND NEVER WILL BE JAZZ". "However hard Mr Zacks Nkosi tries to defend it", the writer, Gordon N. M. Siwani, declared, "umsakazo" was a "hybrid sound divorced from jazz and cannot even be compared to jazz". The letter is of particular relevance, not least because the synonymy of *msakazo* and African jazz idiosyncratic to the 1950s is clearly demonstrated, but also because it highlights two issues. Reminiscent of those for whom African culture was associated with ruralism and backwardness, the major critics of *msakazo/umsakazo* appeared to perceive the inclusion of *marabi* elements to have produced a retrogressive, inferior product. As a result, it was one which would encourage the cultural isolation of those who eagerly wished to participate on the 'world stage' of the 'civilised' west; the antithesis of the image of modernity, progressiveness and urbanity which was transmitted by 'modern' jazz. Secondly, it would appear that from the perspective of these critics that *msakazo* symbolised the antithesis of the perception which Dhlomo's 'New African' sought to project:

It is not jazz because it has divorced itself from the mainstream. It is stranded and people like Mr Nkosi are trying to explain it to us.

It is vulgar and pretentious ... Oh please, Mr. Nkosi, which typically African sound have you discovered in African jazz? Is it perhaps that monstrous "Fanagalo" you and Emily Kwenane recorded, your equally monstrous blues pattern effort "Zavolo Blues," maybe those endless tin whistles on "Meadowlands Boogie" or that monotonous "Dladla"?

...

Modern jazzmen are followers of a school of thought, they are building instead of destroying painstaking craftsmanship. They have the edge on African jazz players (*The World* July 6, 1957:8).



Like Zulu Boy Cele of the 1940s, Nkosi was a seminal figure in that he epitomised African jazz in the 1950s. Furthermore, he straddled the lines of distinction between African ‘jazz’ and the commercial ‘pop’ era which *kwela* heralded and which was to begin a lineage ultimately known until the turn of the century by the umbrella term, ‘Township Music’. Unabashed manipulator of commercial trend, Zacks Nkosi is credited with having popularised the renowned township dance, *phata-phata*, and in a 1960 article promised that “his new one will be more torrid than phata-phata”. When asked his opinion of the modern, ‘progressive’ jazz styles, he replied: “It’s good music like all other types of music. But for me, give me the township beat” (*The World* May 7, 1960:8).

In 1958, the terms of reference for *umsakazo*, while defined as “the township brand of African Jazz”, are broadened to include *kwela* (“township music as symbolised by penny whistles”) as well as “girl singers who sang in the ‘Township idiom’”. Used derogatorily by *The World* journalists on previous occasions, *umsakazo* takes on new respectability when described glowingly by the Charmain of E.M.I., Mr J.F. Lockwood (*The World* March 1, 1958:11). Unveiling plans for *umsakazo* to “invade world markets”, he highlighted the similarities, possibly in terms of the market and age-group targeted, between *kwela* and commercial pop music of the western market:

It was possible that within the next few years African musicians would be making “in-person” appearance (sic) overseas as part of the scheme to popularise “Umsakazo”. Mr Lockwood pointed out that many of the hit-parade tunes in the world today had African origin. “Your music is the basis of the best part of popular music today” (*The World* March 1, 1958:11).

Mazurkie, successor to Gideon Jay, was the regular columnist for *Zonk* who provided a critique of the latest American and African records. Mazurkie referred to Zacks Nkosi as “King of Mbhaqanga” (sic) or African jazz, for which he provides the respectable definition of “well-arranged marabi songs”. However, he rather insidiously enters the ‘quality’ versus ‘popular’ fray by adding the rider:

It strikes me that Zacks seems to be suffering from a musical inferiority complex because he is running away from his own smooth sound and seems to have adopted Kippy’s sound. For a moment I could have sworn it was the alto wizard himself playing! Is Zack’s (sic) perhaps getting a little jealous of Kippy whose style is so highly acclaimed? Still, “B.M.S.C.” and “Rock, Rock, Jazz” on H.M.V. J.P. 2091 are very good (*Zonk* March 1958:45).

In 1957 *Post* offered a prize for readers’ answers to the question, “What do you think is wrong with ‘African Jazz’ as a jazz form?” (The writer had previously declared African jazz to be “dead beat, without growth”.) However, immediately below this article, *kwela*, as a recognised component of



*msakazo* and deprecated in this and other publications until its recognition by the overseas record producer referred to above, is placed among prestigious South African styles as an example of “modern jazz this end of Africa”: “When you hear the notes of modern jazz this end of Africa: the music of the Manhattan Bros., of the pennywhistlers, of the Merry Blackbirds dance band, of the Blues singers, do you ever think of the big guns that gave the first jazz boom?” (*Post June 2, 1957:6*).

By unarticulated tacit acknowledgement, African jazz, whether referred to as such (as it invariably was by those who found a modicum of merit in the style), or *msakazo*, *majuba* or *siyagiya*, became recognised as a grassroots expression. An unnamed writer in *Post*, in December 1956, lent grudging acknowledgement to the validity of the style: “Boetie Sililo’s Savoy Havanas can be truly called the “Siya-Giya” dance band, or the poor man’s Count Basie. Leader Sililo, altoist and clarinettist, is content to front a strict dance band with no pretensions to legitimate jazz” (*Post December 30, 1956:6*). Highlighting the schism between press and mass opinion, Bloke Modisane had raged in his “Nite Life” column in the same publication a month earlier that “Siyagiya” was “a low type of rock ‘n roll rhythm” (*Post November 11, 1956:6*).

Khabi Mngoma adamantly maintains that both he and Walter Nhlapo staunchly supported the commercial African styles of the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, Mngoma asserts that the reason for Nhlapo’s active support of these styles emanated from his burning desire to see the African identity proudly and assertively expressed (*Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*). However, whereas Nhlapo does not openly criticise commercial African jazz or its derivatives, no direct substantiation of these claims could be found in his writing. In one rather ambiguous article entitled, “TRASH TALKED ABOUT MODERN AFRICAN JAZZ: Too Many Imitate The Really Great”, while credit is given to original American beboppers, Nhlapo swipes at the South African exponents of modern jazz so lauded in other publications. However, his defence of African jazz rests on a rather ambiguous defence of “swing” bands. The general context of the article leaves one with the impression that he is reminiscing about the past era of jazz, and the subject of commercial African jazz, or *msakazo*, is avoided altogether (*The World August 3, 1957:8*).

Zacks Nkosi’s defence of his brand of African jazz rests on the words of Wilf Lowe, “who had a weekly broadcast programme on the S.A.B.C.” and who “said that unless we dug up our own

original jazz pattern we were sunk. He said that African music was rich in the field of jazz and that with more confidence and research in our music we could easily lead the whole world in jazz” (*The World 1957: 7*).

## 5.5 THE DECLINE IN POPULARITY OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ

South African jazz - i.e. American jazz played by black South Africans, as well as and distinct from ‘live’ and recorded African jazz or *mbaqanga* of the 1940s and 1950s (as opposed to the other commercial forms which, like recorded *mbaqanga*, *kwela*, vocal jive and *phata-phata*, etc. could be classified under the umbrella term of *msakazo*) suffered a dramatic decline in popularity in the 1960s. Until the inaugural performance in 1983 of the African Jazz Pioneers (led by Ntemi Piliso who was leader of the Alexander All-Star Band in the 1950s and member of the Harlem Swingsters in the 1940s), the genre had experienced relatively little exposure in the intervening years. The reasons for this phenomenon form the subject of discussion and speculation by writers and jazz musicians alike. The following are mooted as possible reasons for its virtual demise between the 1960s and 1980s:

- Johannesburg’s Western Areas were destroyed, and thereby many of the jazz musicians’ performance venues. Inhabitants were uprooted and moved to “locations” where strict policing of apartheid laws was the order of the day and where the element of hooliganism later became a major factor to be contended with (*Coplan 1985:164; Andersson 1981:41; Stapleton & May 1987:188; Ballantine 1993:7*). Coplan observes that in the 1960s, the remaining major venues were only “big concerts” and most specifically, the outdoor jazz festivals held usually in Orlando Stadium, Soweto (*Tshomela: writer’s interview 17/10/94*). These were sponsored by South African Breweries and organised by United Artists (*Coplan 1985:191*).
- Legislation barred blacks from using concert halls in city centres, or from appearing at venues where liquor was served. (A notable exception is the “major” series of concerts held in the Johannesburg City Hall in 1962, for which United Artists “managed to get permission” (*Coplan 1985:19*)). Police harassment was a constant factor to be contended with:

We were not allowed to play for white people. By law. We were not at all. In fact, I don't know how many times I was arrested coming from a white party on those rare occasions that we would be hired, privately, by a white family and white people at the parties or something, or in the hotels. When we come back home, we're via the cells. Because it's curfew time. Our own shows, we used to play from 9 to 4 in the morning, there was no curfew at 4 o'clock. But if you play in town you must play till about 11 or 12, and go back home. On your way home, you meet up with the cops and they want a night pass. Now, I haven't got a night pass because I haven't got a boss (*i.e. a white employer*) who can write down my night pass. Now I ... tell them that I have a daily labourer's pass, which nobody can sign for me. I'm self-employed. Then, they say: "It's your own funeral. You must have a pass at night. 'Nagpas'". So, they arrest you for that (*Piliso: writer's interview 1/11/94*).

- Musicians' tours around the country were frustrated by pass regulations (*Coplan 1985:164; Ballantine 1993:72/73; Graham 1989:260; Stapleton & May 1987: 187-190; Andersson 1981:111; Gibson et al 1992:241*).
- There was an increase in violence among *tsotsi*-gangs who admired and avidly followed jazz musicians but from whose ranks there emerged gang warfare, attacks and assaults on musicians and audiences alike (*Coplan 1985:163; 1979:153; Andersson 1981:111; Ewens 1991:188, 190/191*). The safer alternatives provided by record companies, and to which, according to Coplan, groups such as the Manhattan Brothers and Jazz Maniacs subscribed, came in the form of

... hired black cinemas and some of the remaining location halls to present their stable of performers. With their superior authority and resources, the companies could provide security for their performers and reduce the potential for violence by keeping audiences seated throughout the show (*Coplan 1985:168*).

The change in trend to fast-tempo dance music which led to the 'African jive' phenomenon of the 1950s and of which *kwela* was arguably the most significant style, was related to the advent of the hit-parade-type syndrome. Favourites, in terms of style, if not individual number, began to be obsessively demanded at live performances. This sometimes led to hooliganism which became a contributing factor in the demise of the popularity of live jazz performances. This fact was highlighted by Bloke Modisane in Post:

**A BEEFY BOUNCER**  
That's What Sophiatown Jazz shows Need

The best jazz combine in the country, The Jazz Dazzlers, was told at a show at the Odin Cinema, Johannesburg that it was playing "rubbish".

That was because the band would not play "Siyagiya", a low type of rock 'n roll rhythm. The last show there, reported on this page last week, also had trouble. It was "Skokiaan" then.

When the Jazz Dazzlers refused to play “Siyagiya”, the show spoilers jumped on to the stage and started manhandling the musicians who packed up their instruments and left. The audience did the same (*Post November 11, 1956:6*).

Violence effectively ended the Cold Castle jazz series of the 1960s. At the 1963 festival “there was violence both inside and outside the stadium, and at the 1964 festival six men died outside the gates in a confrontation between township gangs” (*Coplan 1985:191*).

From Donald Tshomela’s perspective, sinister Apartheid motives are to be found in the fact that attempts at bolstering security or finding safe alternatives were not forthcoming: “This gave the Government the lever they wanted to use against us. So there should be no more jazz, no more entertainment for the blacks” (*Tshomela: writer’s interview 17/10/94*).

- Jazz musicians boycotted the studios so as to eschew the manipulations of artistic control (*Coplan 1985:177/178;194*;) and commercial exploitation (*Andersson 1981:39; Coplan 1979:151*). Conversely, producers disliked the jazz musicians’ “sense of artistic and professional independence and found their demands for better pay and working conditions troublesome”. As a result, these generally middle class players were replaced by migrant and working class performers (*Coplan 1985:178*).
- The new craze of the 1960s emerged as an electrified and commercialised genre also called *mbaqanga*. This style was to be vigorously promoted by record companies (*Coplan 1985:178/179,193; 1979:152/153,161/162*) and the SABC (*Ballantine 1993:8*). Viewed by many as an inferior, studio-sponsored, hastily contrived style, it was nevertheless effectively able to poach the following which had previously been enjoyed by the jazz bands. “Whether or not it was a record company “creation” to start with, the rough and raw *mbaqanga* sounds attracted thousands more people to festivals than the jazz bands did” (*Andersson 1981:111*).
- To at least a certain extent, the ‘fashionability’ of ‘African’ dance trends which swept township society had been initiated and promoted by jazz bands. The *tsaba-tsaba* appears to have been the first occurrence of this phenomenon which was later feverishly adopted by *kwela* followers and of which *patha-patha*, monkey-jive and ‘*smodern* are examples (*Roberts 1972:259*). The develop-

ment of the mindset characteristic of the western pop market - which continually replaces an 'old' style with a 'new' favourite - appears to have contributed considerably to the move away from jazz.

- Related to the above two points is the fact that there is a strong case to be made for the decline of jazz – as in 'swing' or swing-related *mbaqanga* or African jazz – to have occurred in the 1950s as a result of a change of trend brought about by the phenomenon of *kwela*.

Highlighting the unconscious nature of possible ideological motives for many of the musicians, Piliso is adamant that both the decline in popularity for jazz styles and the concurrent rise of *kwela*, while intrinsically related, were essentially apolitical events on the inevitable cycle which characterises the music entertainment world:

It was not politically motivated ... How could it be politically motivated? These guys come and play the penny whistles, it does not say anything. You would not say "I am playing this music because I am suffering, I have no job, I have got no food, I have no roof over my head, so I am playing this penny whistle". It says nothing. Unless you are *saying* it, then it becomes politically motivated, but because a guy plays and changes a trend - because he is playing a penny whistle, would you say it is political? It is to change a trend (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*).

Mtshimbilikwane concurs with Piliso that the single biggest factor in the decline of swing's popularity was the change of trend which occurred with the introduction of *kwela*. The style "sort of overwhelmed" the entertainment industry in South Africa. The distinctive sound of the pennywhistle, refreshingly different from the big band sound of the swing era, and the immense and immediate appeal of the distinctive rhythm was immediately identifiable as uniquely urban and African. It brought about "this change (from) whatever was there (before), and the band moved to *kwela*. It had a great effect on what was happening to other types of music then ... And of course, it was diminishing the *swing* era, which was more American than anything else" (*Mtshimbilikwane - writer's interview: 4/7/97*).

Aptly using the example of changes in trend in the American jazz arena, Mazurkie rationalises the changing trends of the 1950s on which commercialism thrived: "It happens in all categories of music, whether it's Dixieland, Swing, Ragtime, Be-Bop, or East and West Coast jazz, the time comes when there's just got to be a new sound for music lovers to listen to" (*Zonk March 1958:45*).

- The popularity of large dance orchestras waned in America in the early 1950s, and South African audiences followed suit (*Coplan 1985:164*). Ballantine refers to the increase in popularity of jazz in America as affecting its popularity with the black elite in South Africa: “It was, therefore, inevitable that when black attitudes towards jazz shifted in the U.S. these changes would inevitably have an impact on the African subcontinent” (*Ballantine 1993:84*). However, Ballantine makes no mention of a similar analogy with regard to the decline in popularity of swing as a ‘mass’ culture and the subsequent failure of bebop and cool to reach that status.
- Jazz audiences in South Africa (i.e. audiences for ‘big-band’ American swing and African swing-related jazz) declined “in an age of American ‘bop’ and ‘cool’, in any case” (*Coplan 1985:167*). A strong implication that swing was replaced by ‘modern’ jazz, rather than being deliberately suppressed, is mooted by Walter Nhlapo. (Ironically, in terms of Nhlapo’s avowed Africanist stance and Ballantine’s use of this critic’s views in support of his theories, ‘modern’ jazz would appear to be rather more self-consciously political and oppositional in character than swing.)

African modern jazz artistes have been made to glitter like gold ... They have been hailed (hailed) almost in toto by African music reporters.

It is not the culmination of years of experience with all types of jazz bands that has made African reporters and music critics pass such far fetched judgement.

...

Remember the Jazz Maniacs, Merry Black Birds, Rhythm Clouds and Harlem Swingsters. These were swing bands and what music they rendered! Hot swing. Is this not jazz?

...

Most African modern jazz artistes (sic) cannot play with easy freshness which is invigorating for they are obsessed with following exactly in the footsteps of recognised greats in order to play safe.

This safe playing as a group or soloists is copied from gramophone records. Therefore they lack originality and sincerity, which should be body and soul of every musician (*The World August 3, 1957:8*).

The degree to which the advent of ‘modern’ jazz is implicated in the decrease in the popularity of swing will be discussed in greater depth when commenting on Ballantine’s theory for the decline of jazz.

Significantly, Coplan mentions that festivals held subsequent to the ill-fated Cold Castle series, but which remained “the only workable commercial setting for live jazz” (*Coplan 1985:191*), were not able to be sustained by solely offering jazz (note his definition of “jazz” as distinct from *mbaqanga*):



Those that try to attract a large audience by featuring jazz, soul, *mbaqanga*, and even choral groups on a single programme risk disruption by listeners who prefer one type of music over another. Those that present only jazz bands risk a poor turnout (*Coplan 1985:192*) (own underlining).

Reasons for the failure of 'modern' jazz or bebop and its successor, cool, to capture the imagination of the mass of black South Africans will be discussed later.

### 5.5.1 The Demise of Jazz: The Result of Sinister Ideological Manipulation?

Unlike other writers, Ballantine does not attribute the demise of swing and the African jazz to which it gave birth, to 'natural causes' (e.g. *Hamm 1983:543*). Instead it is strongly inferred that the decline of jazz in the 1960s was due to the deliberate ideological manipulation of the Nationalist Government (*Ballantine 1993:8*). Ballantine gives the following description of the decline of jazz (with minor contributions to detail by other sources).

The harsh implementation of apartheid laws resulted in the destruction of racially and ethnically mixed communities as well as the creative cultural institutions they spawned, including, and notably, jazz society. The Group Areas Act of 1950 initiated a wave of legalised destruction which by the late 1950s was to have effectively deprived the large dance orchestras of performing venues. Smaller groups survived doggedly, working

... once again in two different directions. One looked primarily to the virtuoso bebop style of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie; the other looked again towards the fertile indigenous soil of *marabi* (*Ballantine 1993:7*; see *Coplan 1985:171*).

Famous South African jazz musicians who were later to go into exile and earn international reputations were spawned in this era, e.g. Dollar Brand, later to be known as Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, the late Chris McGregor, Dudu Pukwana and Johnny Dyani (*Ballantine 1993:7*).

According to Ballantine, the political events which took place in South Africa in 1960 signalled the commencement of the simultaneous suppression of the black jazz era and of oppositional politics. By expressing a new "Africanist impulse" (*Ballantine 1993:59*; *1991B:149*), the former largely symbolised and articulated the spirit of the latter. The controversial Radio Bantu was introduced by the

state-controlled SABC. In the same year an inordinate number of arrests, the banning of the main proponents of the black liberation movements, as well as the notorious protest at Sharpeville, ending in carnage, took place (*Ballantine 1993:7/8*).

Radio Bantu highlighted - and in practice, encouraged - ethnicity among the various black language groups (*Hamm 1991:158-160; Ballantine 1993:7*). (This viewpoint is supported by Sole, who states that after 1960, Radio Bantu “served to negate as much as possible black social and cultural identification with the urban areas” (*Sole 1983:86*)). This represented a complete reversal of the melting-pot situation which had existed in the ethnically mixed shantytown societies, of which Sophiatown is a supreme example. In addition, according to Ballantine, the SABC stifled the creative process by exhibiting a bias towards neo-traditional and religious music which the record companies duly promoted (*Ballantine 1993:7/8*). Presumably this occurred because these styles were virtually guaranteed air-time.

Jazz was deliberately suppressed because of what it symbolised, both internationally and in black South African society. Ergo, the reader deduces, music now manifested a spirit of black consciousness and pride, which, viewed from within the “new, militant mood” of black politics (*Ballantine 1993:56; 1991B:146*), made it a target for destruction by the Apartheid regime:

It is important to understand that one of the reasons jazz was suppressed was that it aspired to (among other things) musical and social *equality*: it was precisely that musical idiom in which and through which urban blacks were proving to themselves and to the world that they were the equals of whites (without in the process abandoning valued aspects of their black culture, or of their history as blacks who were assuming aspects of western culture) ... By adopting jazz, urban black South Africans were proudly and self-consciously identifying themselves as actors on the international stage of world history.

But the identification went further. For jazz was not only international: at times it was also, and very significantly, a discourse aspiring to the status of an international musical vernacular of the oppressed. Moreover, it was a discourse with explicit and historical roots in the continent of Africa, and it had been cultivated by people of colour - by former Africans - in the United States, under conditions of explosive capitalist development. The parallels with South Africa were obvious (*Ballantine 1993:8*).

Only in 1983, concurrent with the re-emergence of overt resistance politics, did jazz (or, more specifically, *mbaqanga* (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*)) re-appear as “the release of energies and process stifled for two decades”. Its revival in South Africa heralded and re-commenced “the striving for an authentic South African culture ... which even an endemic State of Emergency was unable to still”. Choirs singing in *isicathamiya* style and bands, such as the African Jazz Pioneers, the Elite

Swingsters and Mbongo playing ‘big-band’ African jazz, now provided the musical settings for UDF and Cosatu rallies (*Ballantine 1993:9*).

Bands which played “syncretic fusions” such as Johnny Clegg and Savuka, Sakhile, Bayete and Sabenza now joined the ongoing process of developing an authentic South African culture. The musical innovations discovered and made possible by the fusions explored, displayed artistic merit which had been absent during the arid period of state suppression.

For Ballantine, “worthy” South African urban music represents, articulates or is associated with, “an alchemy, helping, in its way, to corrode the old social order and to liberate the new” (*Ballantine 1993:9*). Indeed, it is suggested that even international support is gained because “the struggle and hope it signifies resonates with their own struggles and hopes” (*Ballantine 1993:9*).

It is important to understand that one of the reasons jazz was suppressed was that it aspired to (among other things) musical and social *equality*: it was precisely that musical idiom in which and through which urban blacks were proving to themselves and to the world that they were the equals of whites ... At the very moment that the white and racist South African state was devising an ideology and a programme for fragmenting black South Africans, for turning them against each other by reinforcing and artificially cultivating ethnic and racial differences, black jazz musicians and audiences were insisting not only on their necessary unity as blacks and as South Africans, but also on their status as fully-fledged and equal members of the international society of human beings (*Ballantine 1993:8*).

In summary, the deduction gleaned from Ballantine is that a two-pronged strategy by the Apartheid Government played an enormous, if not decisive, role in the demise of the jazz culture in South Africa:

- The environment and venues necessary for its survival were destroyed.
- Jazz was stifled commercially. The implication is that the powerful and state-controlled SABC played a significant role in this issue, presumably as a manipulator of tastes and prime stimulus of commercial sales. It is strongly implied that jazz was not played at all on the “divisive, ethnically based radio service for blacks”, which instead ‘fostered’ the “rigid, anodyne, formula-bound styles” of post-1960 commercialised *mbaqanga* epitomised by Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens (*Ballantine 1993:7/8*).

The question which arises and begs satisfactory answers from reliable and authentic sources in order to establish the validity of this theory, relates to the *motives* of the suppressors and a precise definition of the *object* of their suppression. In other words, was jazz eradicated consciously and deliberately because it represented “a virile, popular oppositional culture”; or alternately, because it was “aspiring to the status of an international musical vernacular of the oppressed” (*Ballantine 1993:8,9*)? Furthermore, was the ‘jazz idiom’ - implying the music, and what this symbolised - the object of suppression, or rather, were the State targeting the society, the subculture, that was generated by jazz? Or was the demise of the actual music the calamitous but incidental by-product of the implementation of Apartheid - most especially, of the Group Areas Act?

Similarly, the motives of the institution established to promote Nationalist Government ideologies, the SABC, need to be questioned. Did this institution fail to promote jazz, or worse, consciously exclude the style from its programmes? And if so, was it because, as implied by Ballantine, jazz was viewed as promoting the antithesis of State ideology (*Ballantine 1993:7,8*)? In which case, was it the African or American genre which was perceived to be more ‘oppositional’ or hostile to the status quo?

The ‘insistence’ on equality and unity shown by jazz musicians and audiences needs to be viewed from within the context of the book in its entirety, and in particular, the perspective provided in the sections entitled “Organisational Links and the Radical View” and “Politics in Music - Towards an African Style” (*Ballantine 1993:50-64; 1991B:141-152*). In essence, Ballantine observes that the music of those jazzmen adopting the ‘radical view’ (*Ballantine 1993:50,55; 1991B:141,145*) was either associated with or enunciated the spirit of black militancy as articulated by the ANC Youth League (*Ballantine 1993:8,9,57,86; 1991B:147,151/152*). Once again Ballantine’s insistence on the African element as epitomising the most radical or authentic form of opposition raises problems from within the framework of his discourse.

From the perspective provided by the introductory “Memory, History and Context” chapter and disregarding the bias given to expressions of the ‘Africanist impulse’ later in the work, the reader deduces that one of the major reasons for the deliberate suppression of jazz was that the ‘aspirations’ and ‘insistence’ of jazz society were expressed by this association with and musical manifestation of black oppositional politics (*Ballantine 1993:8*). Since it is the big-band African jazz of Ntemi Piliso’s Alexandra Jazz Pioneers which is hailed as the epitome of resurrected, previously suppressed

oppositional expression (*Ballantine 1993:9*), the inference that this swing-aligned form was specifically targeted for assassination by the State is strongly evident.

However, the studio-sponsored African jazz or *mbaqanga* as promoted by Ntemi Piliso, Zacks Nkosi and Ellison Themba thrived in and was promoted by the politically tainted-by-association commercial environment of the 1950s. As such, were these musicians considered to have contributed to a “culture of resistance” (*Ballantine 1993:8*) which manifested in this decade (*Ballantine 1993:7*)? Or were they willing stooges in, or duped by, the sinister motives of the SABC and commercial companies alike who promoted an inferior but African image of black South Africans by promoting inferior, unsophisticated music with broad mass appeal ?

It can be persuasively argued that Piliso, Nkosi, Themba and their ilk were influential role players in the demise of swing-related, big band *mbaqanga* and promoters of the smaller studio-sponsored recorded version. Thereafter, they contributed to the demise of this product and promoted fast-tempo *jive*, *kwela*, *phata-phata*, etc. Yet Piliso is acknowledged and quoted in Ballantine’s book (*Ballantine 1993:xi,19,35*), and Nkosi is one of the only African jazz musicians to articulate the fact that his compositions were consciously ideologically motivated by African pride and African identity.

Hamm’s briefly expressed perceptions of the links between jazz and politics (strangely not mentioned in a later work, more aptly - in terms of the discourse - entitled "*Afro-American Music, South Africa, and Apartheid*" - Hamm 1988) read as follows:

Many black intellectuals and political leaders were known to be jazz fans; many jazz musicians were outspoken critics of the policies of the Nationalist Party, and some became leaders of the resistance - Matshikiza, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Dollar Brand eventually became outspoken political exiles; Alcock ‘Sikwenene’ Gwentshe joined the African National Congress. Jazz was thus linked with rising tides of black nationalism and consciousness (*Hamm 1985A:171*).

Significantly, though, while “jive” (deduced to be, or to include, recorded commercial African jazz or studio-sponsored *mbaqanga*) is described as “essentially apolitical” and considered to be “appropriate music” for Radio Bantu, no mention of suspicions of the deliberate suppression of the dance-hall or ‘live’ styles of jazz is made (*Hamm 1985A:173*).

Nowotny observes that the popularity of jazz declined because it was not as popular among the working class (*Nowotny 1993:3,4*). Rather less simplistically expressed, Coplan and Andersson postulate that jazz lost popularity when black culture lost its struggle for autonomy: ceasing to be created for and by the black community, it was co-opted by the white commercial industry (*Coplan 1985:144; Andersson 1981:41*).

Sole maintains that:

While it can be argued, fairly persuasively in my opinion, that the exclusivist nature of white political rule means that many blacks have not been over-anxious to believe the State's version of reality and attempts at ideological incorporation, commercial aspects shaping black culture have had rather more success (*Sole 1983:87*).

However, since "commercial aspects" were essentially white-controlled, it is feasible that this in itself implies "ideological manipulation of cultural images to accommodate white preconceptions" (*Sole 1983:88*).

The most substantial and substantiated criticism of the role and motives of the SABC is advanced by Hamm:

The media were intended to play a critical role in maintaining social control over the black population, and in persuading it of the benefits and inevitability of Separate Development. A Bantu Programme Control Board of the SABC, set up in 1960, was charged with the establishment of separate radio services in each of the major African languages of the region, "bringing home to the Bantu population that separate development is, in the first place, self-development through the medium of their own language and that, by this means, there will be progress in all spheres of life." (*Annual Report of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (Pretoria, 1967), p.10.*) The challenge for the government was to insure that blacks listened to these programs, collectively called Radio Bantu. Recognizing that "(radio) is something which you cannot force on anybody" (*Debates, The Senate of the Union of South Africa, Third Session, 12th Parliament, 1960, pp 2446-47*) and that "Music constitutes, and will always constitute, the most comprehensive component of any radio service," (*Annual Report of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (Pretoria, 1964, p.8)*) the SABC developed and refined a strategy of using music to draw and hold black listeners to Radio Bantu so that they would also hear news and political commentary, in their own languages, written in Pretoria.

Each "vernacular" service of Radio Bantu had a committee charged with selecting appropriate music; the selection process included screening song lyrics to insure that political and moral sentiments contrary to state policy were not heard on the air. The twist was accepted by strategists and censors as appropriate music for Radio Bantu ... since African twist music was instrumental, it was even better suited to Radio Bantu, which accordingly devoted a considerable amount of air time to it.

The government's strategy depended on having a large percentage of the black population listen to Radio Bantu ... Thus black radio ownership increased twenty-fold during the lifetime of the African twist ... And as elsewhere in the world, radio play stimulated record sales, and in turn recording companies produced



more music of the sort already being played on the air. Though the recording industry was in private hands in capitalist South Africa, state policies governing the selection of music for radio play had a considerable impact on record-manufacturing strategy: there was little to be gained from recording music that would not be played on Radio Bantu.

Ironically, in a time of intensified racial repression, the African twist became an effective media weapon in the hands of the racist state (*Hamm 1988:24/25*).

Yvonne Huskisson was in charge of music at Radio Bantu from 1961, and well into her retirement continued to consult to the SABC. She asserts that no particular *style* of music was ever censored by Radio Bantu, or considered to epitomise oppositional political ideology. While she freely admits that censorship committees rigorously enforced the censorship of lyrics, no style of music was considered to be identifying with, manifesting or promoting, oppositional politics. (*Isicathamiya* and *makwaya*, for example, were never censored as *styles*, although from time to time they were undoubtedly used by and associated with black resistance movements.)

As head of music at Radio Bantu, Huskisson maintains that she made special efforts to promote African jazz. The “progressive” jazz of artists such as Abdullah Ibrahim (or Dollar Brand, as he was known in those days), Kippie Moeketsi, etc., was purposefully given airtime by Radio Bantu in an effort to promote the music (see also *Huskisson 1969:X/XI*), despite the fact that it did not have a “big listenership” amongst the population in general. According to Huskisson, the lifespan of African jazz styles - in terms of public support in black South African society, that is - may well have been attenuated, rather than suppressed, as a result of the exposure they received on Radio Bantu (*Huskisson - writer's interview: 29/10/94*). This assertion is verified by Rob Allingham, archivist at Gallo (Africa), who hosts (and played for this writer) transcription tapes of ‘progressive’ jazz styles played by the SABC in the period under dispute (*Allingham – writer’s interview: 24/3/98*).

Huskisson asserts that commercial *mbaqanga*, while heavily in demand from the populace on the one hand, was undoubtedly vigorously promoted by record companies, and financial exploitation was the order of the day. Unscrupulous producers attempted at one time to bribe SABC announcers, and “checks” and formulae for airtime had to be devised to prevent this from happening (*Huskisson - writer's interview: 29/10/94*).

Henry Kolatsoeu, erstwhile librarian for black music at the SABC for many years, supports Huskisson's declaration that the corporation responded to listener demand in the compilation of programmes. Large volumes of correspondence, and the opinions of announcers who lived in the townships, were used to determine listener choices (*Kolatsoeu – writer's interview: 30/1/95; Huskisson – writer's interview: 29/10/94*).

#### ***5.5.1.1 The Styles of Swing, Bop and Cool and their Perceived Relationship to Black Consciousness***

In the light of the perception of jazz as the “musical vernacular of the oppressed”, as attested to by Ballantine and confirmed by Mphahlele (*Ballantine 1993:8; Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97*), it is pertinent to examine the American styles popular with and promoted by journalists for links with expressions of black consciousness which feasibly could have raised the ire of the Apartheid regime. In this way real or perceived links with black South Africans' political aspirations, and their adoption of the styles for conscious or unconscious purposes of political expression may be validated.

It is pertinent to the discourse to note that the jazz style which had flourished in the big band era of the townships was predominantly *swing* - and alongside it, the African jazz or *mbaqanga* it generated - as well as jazz-based vocal groups. The decline in popularity of the music of the big bands occurred at the same time as the implementation of Apartheid laws, and most specifically, the Group Areas Act.

The demise of the big band and concert-hall era led to the emergence of smaller bands which specialised in the 'progressive' styles (firstly, and more importantly, 'bebop', followed by 'cool') which had replaced swing in the United States. Bebop represents, in the context provided by Ballantine (*Ballantine 1993:7*) an important component of the rearguard or final splutterings of jazz in the black community. In addition, it is the music with which many of South Africa's most high profile jazz musicians, many of whom went into exile, were associated. It is also the style which was most vigorously promoted in the columns of the black press throughout the 1950s. The reasons for its demise in the light of inferences made by Ballantine (*Ballantine 1993:7/8*) are therefore of significance.

Furthermore, since Ballantine asserts that jazz was suppressed in South Africa because of its manifestation of aspirations of racial equality, and since parallels are drawn with its development in America, a brief but comparative overview of bebop and the styles which preceded and followed it, as they were perceived to relate to oppositional politics in America, is necessary. Swing in South Africa had reigned supreme in the townships for a decade or more, and provided the springboard for the creation of African jazz. While in style and content swing appears to pertain to the “liberal view”, in some respects it also manifests tendencies related to the “first assumption” of Ballantine’s “radical view” (*Ballantine 1993:50,55*), since certain swing musicians chose to associate with oppositional political functions. ‘Cool’, which came to be known as West Coast jazz, but which never featured as a mass-based popular style (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*), will be briefly examined.

#### 5.5.1.1.1 *Swing*

Hamm’s contention is that the “Afro-American” music emulated and accepted in South Africa was “mediated by and acceptable to white Americans” (*Hamm 1988:15*). The identical premise is reflected in the commentary of certain writers evaluating the perceptions of American blacks vis-à-vis the swing or big band era:

As in the Jazz Age, the “kings” of swing were not African-American players and arrangers like Fletcher Henderson ... but first-generation white Americans born of immigrant parents.

... A nostalgia for those to whom the moment belonged and to successive generations convinced via mass mediation of Swing’s socio-historic cohesion ... Like any durable tale, it’s easy to remember in its essentials, becoming cultural truth continually reproduced in so many reassuring modes, continually refined, simplified into a shadowless domain of Technicolor utopian nostalgia. Like any telling, it’s a version turned into an institution, a desk on a floor of the culture bureaucracy, manufacturing mementos of itself as belief-sustaining memos for the disciples (*Meltzer 1993:143,144*).

However, from the examination of press articles, it would appear that South African jazzmen perceived the American idiom to be one in which “The divisive function of racism as a practice was filtered out of the celluloid myth-stream dream of jazz” (*Meltzer 1993:145*).

Nevertheless, in reality the examples of swing emulated by jazzmen in South Africa for the most part neither portrayed nor were perceived to portray the voice of the oppressed masses in America, but the successful, sophisticated black American who had gained entrée to white American society. Rather

than representing the “international musical vernacular of the oppressed”, the swing embraced by black South Africa was evidently music that had been ‘laundered’ by whites; ‘refined’ for white or black middle-class consumption.

Primarily music for entertainment, and to at least a large degree a manifestation of black middle-class and white values rather than the suffering ghetto society, the swing music of the big band era was viewed as a functional dance music style (*Walton 1972:101*); predominantly perceived to be commercialised, entertainment music which became the recognised “popular music of America” (*Collier 1993:207,173/174*). “In the late 1920s and throughout the big-band period, jazz had allied itself with popular song and the several media controlling and profiting from the mass dissemination of music. Most jazz performers catered to popular taste and were cast in the role of entertainers” (*Hamm 1983:538/539*).

Perceptions about the manifestation of black nationalism, or lack thereof, during the swing era have to be gleaned from comments made by writers pertaining to bebop. In America, bebop music emerged as a reactionary movement in a society in which the “middle-class black man” had begun to develop “an emotional allegiance to the middle-class [middlebrow] culture of America” (*Kofsky 1970:103*). “... bebop was not only a rebellion against the white commercialization of jazz that had taken place during the swing era, but also a rejection of the stultifying “whitening” tendencies of the Negro middle class that had to be overcome if the music were to retain its vitality” (*Kofsky 1970:103*).

The acceptance of black jazz by white critics gave rise to the phenomenon in which black jazz no longer challenged, but appeared to manifest, white middle-class values. In particular, its endorsement by white middle-class musicians led to its somewhat diminished attraction within the black lower class (*Sidran 1971:124*).

One ultimately positive effect of White Americans’ approbation of jazz was the reactive spawning of new (“deviant”) black idioms (*Sidran 1971:125*). Not always as vehemently worded, other writers support Kofsky’s perception that those styles adopted by White America - in this instance, swing - had been expropriated from black culture and plagiarised by Whites (*Kofsky 1970:58; Hamm 1983:520; Dennison 1982:430,432,433; Walton 1972:64; Sidran 1971:69,78,106*).

Collier maintains that “Jazz, at the beginning, was a language that spoke more directly to blacks than to whites” (*Collier 1993:206*). However, his research leads him to the conclusion that it was specifically the Creoles who played an important, if not decisive, role in the development of jazz, and that the genre was not prompted into existence by some generalised ‘black culture’ or ‘black experience’ (*Collier 1993:185-205*).

Existing alongside the big bands in the swing era, black vocal groups such as the Ink Spots, the Mills Brothers and the Golden Gate Quartette (sic) appeared to occupy a similar space, if less contemptuously described in the available literature, vis-à-vis the manifestation of or association with black consciousness. Enjoying a large white audience and concomitant financial rewards, they developed in an era which promoted a “white is right principle” (*Haralambos 1974:153*). The lyrical content of their songs was neither controversial nor nationalistic, revealing “little relationship to race” (*Demison 1982:476*).

Referring to swing as “highly commercialized” and “people’s jazz” as opposed to “musician’s jazz”, Sidran maintains that the osmosis which occurred between “white” and “black” jazz in the big band era is demonstrated on a “terrifying record”. This refers to an anthology named *The Great Swing Bands* in which it becomes impossible to distinguish one (white) band from the other (black band).

The conformity of urban society, exacerbated by that pre-requisite of oral black culture which required “individuality above all else”, spurred the move from big band and the evolution of new styles. The move from big audiences was deliberate, too, since “those audiences were responsible for the watering down of musical content” (*Sidran 1971:87*).

#### 5.5.1.1.2 *Bebop/Bop*

Kofsky maintains that it was bebop, rather than - and, in fact, in reaction to - swing, within which the first stirrings of a potent black consciousness were detected in America. The bebop “rebellion” represented a reaction to the invasion of black music culture by white; a rejection of the effects, sociologically and musically, of that invasion. It sought to repudiate the petty bourgeoisie of black society - that stratum which, as American adherents of the ‘liberal approach’, so to speak, strove to

inculcate white middle class values. Attempting to compensate for the “rudimentary sterility” of Western culture (*Kofsky 1970:104*), bebop represented an articulation of the ‘blackness’ of its musicians. It functions as the mouthpiece of a black ghetto culture striving to free itself from the tentacles of its white counterpart (*Kofsky 1970:104*).

Unlike swing, bebop involved concentration and commitment on the part of the listener (*Collier 1993:207/208*). It was created for the expression of the musician rather than the entertainment of the listener. It was “difficult” and “impenetrable” for the casual audience (*Hamm 1983:539*) and more “solo-orientated” than swing (*Walton 1972:93*). For certain writers, it is in this impenetrability that the germs of black consciousness lie, for bebop was purposely designed to thwart easy accessibility to and duplication by white usurpers (*Kofsky 1970:32; Walton 1972:106*).

While Sidran argues that the roots of the movement go back much further (*Sidran 1971:78*), it is generally agreed that the bebop style crystallised in New York in the mid-1940s in the work of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Featuring an innovative improvisatory component (*Kofsky 1970:29*), “jazz had never before heard passages of such virtuosity, velocity and melodic invention” (*Hamm 1983:534*).

The popularity of bebop was slow to spread. Kofsky attributes this to various reasons, including a wartime shortage of shellac and an eighteen month strike by the American Federation of Musicians, which resulted in a dearth of jazz and rhythm and blues (i.e. ‘black’ recordings). Other writers maintain that bebop, by its very complex nature, was largely inaccessible to the lay audience in general and from the perceptions of some writers, the white audience in particular (*Walton 1972:105/106; Southern 1983:479; Sidran 1971:106*).

Collier concedes that bop was both devised and dominated by black *musicians* who resented and rebelled against the “grinning black entertainer of the Armstrong school” (*Collier 1993:210,209*). However, he maintains that the music nevertheless failed to become the “theme music” for the young black generation as it “ought” to have become (*Collier 1993:210*). Instead, the bop audience was mostly white (*Collier 1993:208*) while the black lay audience turned from jazz to a diversity of other American popular music styles (*Collier 1993:209*). His various reasons for the “partially unfathomable” dwindling of the popularity of jazz (*Collier 1993:207*) (with notable and definite pockets of exceptions), include:



- The more extremist among the militant blacks, rejecting the stereotype of the traditional black performer, “chose to throw the baby out with the bathwater” by rejecting the vehicle by which it was perceived that these performers had humiliated the race, i.e. the genre of jazz itself (*Collier 1993:210/211*).
- The ‘Europeanisation’ of bop in practice meant the adoption of harmonies and scales which were more related to Stravinsky “and the modernists” than to those of black folk music, and rhythms which were “incomprehensible not only to jazz fans of both races, but to the older musicians as well” (*Collier 1993:212/213*). The “overbred bookworm”, intellectualised appearance which their horn-rimmed glasses, berets, etc. conjured, compounded the perception of alienation (*Collier 1993:213*).
- The academic acceptance of jazz as a subject for (again, largely “European-oriented”) instruction, and its concurrent elevation to concert hall status, further alienated the black masses (*Collier 1993:213/214*). Collier attributes this factor as the cause for the lack of a “dominating black presence” or a “black messiah” in jazz since Coltrane. Young blacks, like their white counterparts, were learning about jazz in institutions, rather than drawing innovatively on black culture (*Collier 1993:216/217*).

Whatever the reasons may have been, bebop in the United States “never got beyond the status of a nascent movement ... it was reduced to the level of a cult, and many of its famous practitioners vanished into obscurity” (*Kofsky 1970:30*).

Describing the decades following the emergence of what proved to be the vanguard of “new jazz”, viz. bebop, Hamm summarises the change in ethos which occurred in American jazz society:

Bebop and what came to be called “modern jazz” were played for the gratification of the performers themselves, with virtually no concern for mass appeal ... The jazz world increasingly revolved around a core of the most talented and creative performers, other musicians who admired their playing and aspired to become part of this core themselves, professional critics, and knowledgeable and dedicated fans - a structure mirroring the world of classical music (*Hamm 1983:539*).

Reflecting on the limited support for bebop in South Africa, Piliso reiterates the opinions expressed above. Bebop is essentially music performed primarily for the gratification of the musician as opposed

to “people’s music” (*Piliso: writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). Walton emphasizes that, primarily, bebop was not dance music (*Walton 1972:93,95*): “Unlike the so-called swing era, when Jazz had been an adjunct to dance and therefore required the continuous pulsation of the bass drum and guitar, bop was solo-oriented” (*Walton 1972:101*).

#### 5.5.1.1.3 Cool

‘Cool’ is a term generally applied to the style adopted by jazzmen on the West Coast of America (hence the simile ‘West Coast jazz’). It denotes for some a “more relaxed and dreamy kind of jazz” (*Ewen 1977:480*) and is attributed to the essential “abstraction and objectivity” which typifies the music (*Hamm 1983:541*).

Sidran confusingly refers to the “cool ethic” as characteristic of bebop musicians. He presents his arguments in a somewhat obscure context which gives the impression that the bebop and cool movements formed one single, amorphous period (*Sidran 1981:125,111*). His view is that the cool ethic was reflective of the “wait-and-see” attitude adopted by Black culture toward the American experience and was evident in black music until the mid-1950s, when “passivity took on a more deviant characteristic” (*Sidran 1981:120*).

Less than faithful to the (black) traditions of rhythm and blues, it seems that cool represented a reactionary movement to bebop (*Ewen 1977:480,678*). The style is referred to by Kofsky as a development “almost wholly ... due to whites” (*Kofsky 1970:31*); in particular, young, alienated whites in the early years of the Cold War (*Kofsky 1970:32*). Whereas bebop epitomised the ultimate engagement of the feelings of the players (notably not those of the audience), cool was “anything but that; it was the quintessence of individual *dis*-engagement” (*Kofsky 1970:31*).

Not explicitly or even consciously expressed or formulated, the aim of its white innovators (generally speaking, with the exception of Miles Davis) was to reclaim the control (ergo, accessibility) of jazz for white society. Hence “cool jazz ... represented a more or less conscious attempt to ‘whiten’ the music, to ‘bleach out’ its Afro-American roots” (*Kofsky 1970:32,31,33*).

### 5.5.1.2 *Various Perceptions of the Reasons for the Demise of Jazz*

Hamm's opinion on the decline in the popularity of swing is as follows:

Jazz was a dynamic and evolutionary art progressing through a series of stylistic changes until the 1950s. Older performers either adapted to the latest style or dropped out of sight; younger players were not interested in older repertoires and styles ... the big band era seemed to die a natural death, giving way to a new style of small-ensemble playing ... Bebop and then free jazz seemed to be logical evolutions and the best players went along with these newer trends (*Hamm 1983:543* (own underlining)).

While perceptions of musical expression and symbolism in South Africa cannot automatically be assumed to be identical to those in America, the analogies between the experiences of blacks in the two countries have already been proffered as hypotheses for the identification of black South Africans with black American music (*Ballantine 1993:8; Hamm 1988:16,19,29; Manuel 1988:106; Couzens 1985:107/108; Coplan 1985:146,148; Stapleton & May 1987:192*). It seems logical, therefore, to consider the various perceptions of the reasons for jazz's decline in popularity in the United States.

Collier, who states that "up until 1940, I should judge that jazz could be considered a black province more than a white one" (*Collier 1993:219*), proclaims that by the 1950s jazz appeared to many blacks no longer to be theirs. It now had, as the cultural historian Irving Louis Horowitz has put it, a 'largely white middle class constituency'" (*Collier 1993:215*). According to Collier, this dislocation of jazz from its predominantly black ethos was to persist until the present day. While the number of black musicians playing jazz is large,

it is ... clear ... that jazz is of serious interest only to a small percentage of blacks - probably not more than ten percent. It can hardly be said, therefore, that jazz today somehow reflects anything that can be called a "black ethos". And it is also clear that the bulk of the audience for jazz is white (*Collier 1993:215*).

Contradicting this opinion is the viewpoint that notwithstanding the blues era and its inherent expression of the black experience, jazz's identification with the black cause in the United States was not overtly established or vehemently announced *until* the 1950s and 1960s (*Hamm 1983:509*). This was done first by bebop, to a limited degree, and later to a greater and more self-conscious degree, by 'hard bop' or 'soul jazz' (*Kofsky 1970:100,104*).

In South Africa, the tendency for smaller bands to find a platform in clubs such as the Johannesburg Jazz Club, the Soweto Jazz Appreciation Society (*Andersson 1981:111*) and the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club (*Coplan 1985:171*) occurred in the wake of the big-band or swing era. Ballantine remarks that this period, dominated by smaller jazz combos, sought inspiration from the American models of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (*Ballantine 1993:7*). In the absence of specific comments to the contrary, the reader may assume that the adopted style, viz. bebop (or ‘bop’), was fairly widespread and manifested, or identified with, the political or ideological expression of the masses (*Ballantine 1993:7,8*).

However, it would appear that “The new music was not well understood by the urban African population as a whole” (*Coplan 1985:172*). Confined to relatively few inspired jazzmen, it never achieved broad popular acclaim in South Africa. It should be noted that, according to Ntemi Piliso, who participated in and was a founding member of the Modern Jazz Club, South African musicians able to play the style were confined to a select minority. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of the jazz played at the Odin was not an African variety of bebop, but rather the original American genre. The style simply never received wide acclaim because it was technically very difficult. As a result and generally speaking, it was not mastered by many black South African jazzmen. On the whole, bebop was not enthusiastically received by black audiences (*Piliso – writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). Piliso’s opinion appears to be substantiated by Hamm’s comment that it was the “best players” who followed the evolutionary path of bebop and then free jazz (*Hamm 1983:547*).

The fact that ‘progressive jazz’ was to all intents and purposes destroyed along with Sophiatown is substantiated by historical evidence. Once again, what is of significance to the present discussion is the *perception* of both the audience and the perpetrators of its destruction in terms of the elements of black nationalism evidently intended by its creators (*Kofsky 1970:103*). While it is stated that “serious students” of jazz recognise it as a vehicle of protest, bebop earns the description of “protest music at an avowedly artistic, intellectual level” (*Kofsky 1970:103*). Its perception as such by general lay audience or Apartheid government officials is questionable.

“Modern jazz” never resonated within the common psyche of the black South African audience. A music which had distanced itself from the impetus to dance, which was for the gratification of performer rather than listener (*Hamm 1983:539*), would not appear to be conducive to the

wholehearted and spontaneous response to music which could be said to be characteristic of the black South African population. Quite possibly for this reason, bebop never achieved more than a very limited and insignificant audience in South Africa. By the time the 'authentic' voice of black protest had crystallised in America in the form of 'hard bop', the thread of the jazz culture had been lost in South Africa. Jazz was, at least temporarily, virtually dead.

In his monograph *Afro-American Music, South Africa and Apartheid*, Hamm furnishes yet another perspective. (For an undisclosed reason, jazz is not given much significance, relatively speaking, in the treatise of the influence of American prototypes in the South African struggle for musical autonomy.) He states that black South Africans were never exposed to the "New Orleans, Chicago or New York jazz", which for Hamm, represent genuine black American jazz (*Hamm 1988:14*).

"Soul jazz", confusingly referred to synonymously with "soul" (as referring to the widely known landmark 'pop' style of the 1970s) receives specific mention as enjoying tumultuous emotional response from South African blacks (*Hamm 1988:28,29*). Significantly, Kofsky views "soul jazz" as a "breath of fresh air" developed in response and direct contradiction to ('white') "cool jazz" (*Kofsky: 1970:59/60*). Sidran states that 'soul' music was significant, "not just as a musical idiom, but also as a black-defined, black-accepted means of *actively* involving the mass base of Negroes" (*Sidran 1971:126*).

Steve Biko recognised American 'soul' as an important medium of "the new and modern black culture" in which "the real meaning – the defiant message of 'say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud!'" was responsible for "the restoration of our faith in ourselves and therefore offers hope in the direction we are taking from here" (*Biko 1978:60*). Ultimately, though, the authenticity of 'soul' in the South African context was perceived as contaminated by its association with or appropriation by the state-controlled SABC's Radio Bantu "to propagate Separate Development" (*Hamm 1988:32*). Hamm remarks on the irony of the situation in which "the 'soul jive', rejected by some black political leaders, had integrated elements of Afro-American and African styles so successfully that it was instinctively heard and accepted as an expression of black consciousness by its millions of African listeners" (*Hamm 1988:33*).

Bands such as the African Jazz Pioneers appear to symbolise for Ballantine the 1980s resurrection of the “radical view” of oppositional politics as expressed in jazz (*Ballantine 1993:9* see *1993:62*). Ironically, the leader and founder of this band, Ntemi Piliso (erstwhile member of the Harlem Swingsters in the 1940s as well as leader and founder of the Alexandra All Star band in the 1950s), only partially agrees with this assessment. He is adamant that the African jazz or *mbaqanga* of the 1940s and 1950s was not - and was never intended to be - politically motivated or articulating a political philosophy. He maintains that the popularity of swing waned for the simple reason that it had become outdated. At the same time, the unprecedented surge of popularity for *kwela*, the advent of which he sees as a major milestone because “it changed the trend” and initiated transformations (for example, changes of instrumentation which could not be accommodated by bands playing jazz).

Highly politicised though he was, Piliso contends that because of the advent of *kwela* the demise of the big bands would have occurred with or without the tumultuous political events of the time (*Piliso: writer's interview 1/11/94*). Significantly, though, he concedes that the inspiration for resurrecting the sound in the early 1980s was partly “because I was missing the big band sound” and partly “cultural ... I was worried that we were losing our African culture” (*Piliso: writer's interview - 1/11/94*). However, since Piliso was “encouraged” by the United Democratic Front ‘cultural desk’ in this effort, and since an inherent message of Black Consciousness appears to be conveyed by his statement, the inaugural performance might well be described as “a ritual of regeneration, the release of energies and processes stifled for two decades” (*Ballantine 1993:9*).

There is a strong inference that the African jazz or *mbaqanga* played by the African Jazz Pioneers set in motion and was inspirational to the “striving for an authentic South African culture” which followed its inauguration (*Ballantine 1993:9*). Piliso views the band’s *mbaqanga*, and its reception by the population at large, somewhat differently. Kippies, one of the “new performing venues ... through (which) passed musical groups of breathtaking originality ... absent from the South African stage for decades” (*Ballantine 1993:9*), was, according to Piliso, frequented by a more “sophisticated type” of audience, and was *not* the “appropriate place” to play *mbaqanga*: “Not straight *mbaqanga*. They get bored ... They play more contemporary fusion music” (*Piliso: writer's interview - 17/10/94*).



Very significantly, Piliso sees a distinction between jazz and African jazz or *mbaqanga*. The jazz lover is the more sophisticated person. The *mbaqanga* lover, on the other hand, is the worker, the person who likes jive: “They understand it. The chords are simple, it’s straightforward music that they understand ... If you go to a predominantly *mbaqanga* audience, you don’t play “In the mood”. In a predominantly jazz audience, don’t play “Sip and Fly”! (*Piliso: writer's interview – 1/11/94*).

There appears to be at least some evidence that, had Apartheid not occurred, the popularity of the swing era and its Africanised version, *mbaqanga* or African jazz, may well have waned of its own accord.

Nevertheless, the fact that black South African culture was not only subjected, but in the case of the SABC’s strategy - if not ideology - vanquished by white commercial exploitation, is undeniable. As such, the demise of jazz occurring at the expense of the birth of commercial *mbaqanga*, would appear from a certain perspective to symbolise the capitulation of black cultural autonomy to white control. Viewed from this standpoint, the perception of pre-Apartheid big-band *mbaqanga* as the epitome of freedom is both feasible and pertinent.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The six hypotheses formulated for this study (1.4.1 – 1.4.6) are proved:

- 6.1.1 Concepts and beliefs which influenced educated black South Africans' choice of music were largely the product of their perceptions of different social or behavioural strategies for liberation. Broadly speaking, in the jazz-related entertainment arena, these strategies or 'approaches' affected concepts of affiliation to and identification with African and black American cultural prototypes.

For many of the elite in the 1940s, in particular, the spirit and ethos of conservative Black American leaders of ideological thought such as Booker T. Washington and James E. Aggrey was pervasive. The press reflects the views of these literate and generally educated black South Africans, for the majority of whom the process of missionisation had left an indelible urge to westernise and a concurrent antithesis to African culture. In a largely illiterate population, the gradual (and for some only partial) change in attitude to these concepts as reflected in the newspapers are those of this stratum of society, and cannot be attributed to the proletariat. The views of the working class on the subject are for the most part not articulated in the black press, and can only be deduced by comments made by literate journalists and letter-writers. Evident from newspaper research, this fact was confirmed by interviewees who participated in the research for this thesis.

Despite reported incidents of warm reception to the intermittent introduction of African jazz, the vast majority of those whose views were articulated in the press demonstrated a strong preference for western forms of music such as those of the 'high' or 'serious' western music styles as well as American swing. Reviews of programmes show an unequivocal bias for western styles on concert platforms in this decade. Encouraged by white liberals, particularly those in the Smuts government, these styles were regarded as

the cultural common denominators with white South Africans. Appealing to ‘European’ taste, the ultimate aim of this ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ was white approval and the acceptance of blacks as worthy of South African citizenship.

- 6.1.2 Generally speaking, purists of this ‘liberal approach’ displayed characteristics of ‘westernism’ (as in pride in being ‘western’ and associated with western culture), as a direct antithesis to ‘Africanism’ (as in pride in being African, and associated with African culture). There were indeed those in the elite who attempted to engender a pride in African culture, but for the most part their view of the ‘admissible’ elements of African culture was highly selective. They tended to support certain, but not all, ‘indigenous’ or ‘folk’ elements, and to rigorously eschew others. Mostly, sanctioned African musical features were to be incorporated into ‘high’ or ‘serious’ music forms. Beginning slowly and sporadically on the part of *some* of the elite in the 1940s, this mindset was to change gradually in this decade and to a much greater extent in the 1950s. With the singular exception of the music critic and self-avowed ‘Africanist’ (at that stage) Walter Nhlapo, intellectual articulation of elite acceptance of *marabi*, or more specifically, African jazz, as an artistically worthy and permanent feature of black South African cultural expression was not evident in the press of the 1940s.

In the 1940s, the ANC Youth League generated, rather than reflected, the sentiments of the masses. Despite isolated and important incidents such as the miners’ strikes, this decade is not perceived to have been characterised by a ‘groundswell’ of ‘militant’ opposition to government policies, nor does the entertainment repertoire of the era reflect that such ‘militancy’ manifested culturally as a large-scale transformation to the expression or support of African jazz. Yet it is true that it was in the 1940s, the years of Lembede and Dhlomo’s initial articulations of the need for a proud and assertive African Nationalism or ‘Africanism’ as opposition to government policies, that the Africanisation of single items in the jazz arena was first glimpsed. It is also true that in the 1950s, after the introduction of Apartheid and the imposition of some of its most odious and draconian laws, along with the vigorous debate in black intellectual circles on the identity of African opposition, a positive explosion of African styles (heavily characterised by commercial promotion) occurred. Thus burgeoning African pride, occurring as it did alongside (but not always automatically synonymous with) the awakening of assertive

political opposition, must be credited as an important stimulus for the expression and acceptance of unique African urban styles. Nevertheless, there is very little documented substantiation for the assertion that African jazz of the 1940s, specifically, was a conscious or explicit manifestation of those for whom ANC Youth League policies were the order of the day. While the need for a 'New Culture' was articulated by Lembede and Dhlomo, amongst others, there is no evidence of their specific support for African jazz as the medium of choice for its manifestation.

The transformation from a benign 'liberal approach' to an assertive, oppositional stance which occurred in the thinking of the playwright, author, poet and journalist H.I.E. Dhlomo in the 1940s, cannot be used as a basis for generalising about what transpired in the whole of black South African society. Nor can his views on the creation of a unique African identity and culture, articulated as 'New Africanism', be attributed as the general views of the black nation. Rather the 'New African' represented the ideal prototype to which Dhlomo was exhorting his compatriots to aspire. 'New Africanism' was not a widely known or understood concept in black South Africa in the 1940s, and whereas it could feasibly have influenced the deliberate incorporation of African elements into the realm of 'high' art, it cannot be said to have played a *conscious* role in the creation of African jazz.

- 6.1.3 In the 1950s, articulated sentiments of African pride and its expression in African jazz were made, in particular, by saxophonist and bandleader Zacks Nkosi. However, the African jazz which he espoused was branded as inferior *msakazo* and unworthy of the epithet 'jazz' by those who viewed the commercialisation of the industry as harbouring sinister motives, the very least of which was the exploitation of blacks. Some of the interviewees who contributed to this thesis were of the opinion that the SABC promoted the commercialisation of this and other urban styles in order to promote an inferior African image rather than the sophisticated American one expressed by 'authentic' jazz. These sentiments were either articulated or inferred by several pressmen of the time. The international acclaim won by individual commercial products brought about the immediate reversal of this position, though, and *msakazo* would be lauded by its opponents in immediate and directly inverse proportion to the degree of praise expressed

by overseas musicians or even commercial representatives for a South African recording of the genre.

Whether commercialism hijacked the Africanisation of culture or created it in the first place (contributing to the concurrent decline in popularity of American jazz), remains debatable. It is the view of the eminent academics who contributed to this research that at least some of the commercial styles, denigrated elsewhere, were genuine and authentic expressions of the people. Either way, it is a fact that some of the products of commercialism in the 1950s and 1960s have become a valuable part of this country's heritage, and since South Africa's history proves that the sinister aims of the SABC to indoctrinate the black nation ultimately were a dismal failure, this factor shows that the styles, in a convoluted counter-reaction to attempts at manipulation, have emerged as perceptually uncontaminated in the long term.

- 6.1.4 Alongside sentiments of the 'liberal approach of moral persuasion' which continued well into the next decade, the 1950s manifested an assertive, but also celebratory and often apparently hedonistic, musical declaration of urban identity, or, to quote Mphahlele, "urban protest". For the majority, African styles were the most accessible and spontaneous means of expression. Nevertheless, many used the media of both African and American styles; African and black American identities essentially being regarded as two sides of the same coin. Black pride, rather than 'Africanism', was the impetus for creativity for some; for others there was a conscious or unconscious need to express an *African* identity. In many cases this was not necessarily linked to an essentially 'Africanist' political stance, but was rather an expression of a subtly different urban self-identity. When viewed from within the context of the policies of Apartheid, this assertion can be regarded as a valuable form of protest.

The urge to express a unique sense of Africanness, dimly felt and for the most part sporadically expressed in the previous decade, was manifested as first African jazz or *mbaqanga* and then a plethora of dance styles of which *kwela* was the first and probably the most important example. It would appear that for the majority of musicians and audiences alike, this urge was subliminal, unconscious, and remained unarticulated at the time. A minority, epitomised by Zacks Nkosi, claimed and articulated a desire to self-

consciously manifest an African pride and express a unique African identity in jazz-related urban styles as an authentic urban African phenomenon.

For the majority of black South Africans, the birth and use of African urban music styles in general and jazz in particular, were not the result of self-conscious political motivation or overt and articulated direct opposition to Apartheid. Nevertheless, they were significant tools with which to brandish an assertion of *urbanness*, as opposed to the rural identity which the Nationalists were attempting to foist on the black population.

- 6.1.5 A select group of intellectuals in the 1950s viewed commercialism as white-owned and tainted by the racist Apartheid agenda of the Nationalist Party government. For some individuals, this aversion to commercialism was expressed as a hankering for the 'couth' styles of the previous decade, both American swing and the swing-aligned dance-hall African jazz which it spawned.

For others, though, Apartheid was the death-knell of Africanisation: no longer seeking a black *South African* identity, they showed an even greater affinity for a black *American* one. For them, the music which thrived in the new 'hit parade' type market promoted by the black radio programmes of the SABC was dismissed as hastily created, inferior music which promoted a trivial and almost caricature image of South African blacks. Epitomised by the specific group of young intellectual Drum journalists emanating from or habitually frequenting Sophiatown, they strove passionately to display an allegiance to and identification with the style of bebop. In America this style was strongly perceived, at least by its creators and intellectual observers, as a self-conscious expression of black consciousness. This factor appears to have been grasped to varying extents of consciousness by journalists in general and may be symbolised by the degree to which they actively supported 'modern' jazz and either denigrated or laconically dismissed the commercial African styles. Rejecting the manipulation of the Nationalist government into accepting what they perceived as an inferior, racially-stereotyped and segregated 'tribal' mentality, they actively pursued what was labelled in Drum to be an '*un-African*' persona or identity. Imitating black Americans in dress, manner and speech, so-called 'progressive' or 'modern' styles of jazz and in particular, bebop, became their flagship. Uncontaminated by commercial, ergo, white, interference, it is also the medium in which



the selective use of African culture is allowed to forge a 'new culture'. The Drum *un-African* fits the mould of the 'New African' prototype as derived from Dhlomo's writing: he eschews Government-sponsored African commercial music, but embraces the use of African culture and a 'modern' African identity as portrayed in the selective and 'high' cultural medium of 'modern', progressive jazz styles by Chris McGregor and Dollar Brand (now Abdullah Ibrahim), and later in the 1960s, the Malombo Jazzmen. It is thus in this limited and small sub-culture that Dhlomo's ideal of the 'New African' is at least to a certain extent reflected.

- 6.1.6 Apartheid and its callous implementation destroyed the infrastructure of jazz – its venues, the society which nurtured it and the conditions necessary for its economic survival. The fact that the regime was by definition opposed to the inter-racialism of jazz society, may well have motivated the deliberate destruction of that society. However, while suspicions abound in the minds of erstwhile musicians who were the victims of so much of Apartheid's brutality, there appears to be no documented evidence of such motivation. What is being suggested in this work is that other extraneous factors existed which surely contributed to the decline in popularity of jazz in black South African society. In an objective assessment, these need to be considered.

Given that the United States was the main inspirational source of South African jazz, the reasons for the emergence and subsequent decline of those styles which followed the same chronological and evolutionary path in both countries cannot be summarily dismissed in a rational assessment of the reasons for their demise in South Africa. There appears to be at least some evidence that, had Apartheid not occurred, the popularity of the swing era and its Africanised version, *mbaqanga* or African jazz (particularly the 'live' or dance-hall variety of the 1940s, which also existed alongside other styles in the beginning of the 1950s), may well have waned of its own accord. Newspaper research confirms the opinion of erstwhile musicians interviewed that the fashion for big bands had already declined substantially by the time of the Group Areas Act which deprived this genre of the locations necessary for its survival.

The popularity which swing music held for black South African audiences is undisputed. However, while thinking intellectuals seemed to view the style as part of "the musical

vernacular of the oppressed”, it would appear that for the general black populace in South Africa, as in America, swing was first and foremost music for entertainment. It was also a model of ‘sophistication’ in the ‘liberal’ strategy of moral persuasion, particularly in the 1940s. Whether or not it had run its course as a music fashion (as Piliso suggests, and as fashions are inclined to do) or whether its lifespan was abruptly ended by Apartheid’s (literal, rather than figurative) bulldozers, the fact that *kwela* music and its subsequent dance crazes had gained enormous popularity must be taken into account and credited as at least one of the possible reasons for its demise. At the very least, the popularity of *kwela* and commercialised *mbaqanga* must be considered as contributing factors in jazz’s inability to resurrect itself in the newly built townships. *Kwela* provided a new, unique sound, ideal for the ‘jive’-type craze, a unique (initially, at least) dance to go with it, and in short, the perfect medium in which to express a hedonistic, optimistic and celebratory but nevertheless essentially *African* urban identity.

It could be argued that jazz, as a style, was stigmatised in the eyes of the regime (and its propaganda-promoting media - in this case, the SABC) because of bands who chose to associate overtly with resistance movements by playing at their rallies. However, were this the case, then one would have expected a similar repression of *isicathamiya* and western-style choral music (the style in which *Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika* is composed), for many years associated with resistance politics and surely the recognised ‘vernaculars of the oppressed’ in this country.

The destruction of Sophiatown (and possibly District Six in the Cape, although a detailed history and analysis of the development of South African music in this area, different in many aspects until the confluence with progressive jazzmen like Dollar Brand, was beyond the scope of this work) as a symbol of musical hedonism, interracial freedom and creative energy is nevertheless an important factor in the story of South African music. It is true that for many, the perception exists that, like Sophiatown, the commercial styles which swamped the country represented the capitulation of black cultural autonomy (not necessarily African *mbaqanga* only, but for many, the performance of and demand for American jazz in general and the progressive styles in particular) to white control. This factor renders it not surprising that big-band *mbaqanga*, reminiscent of an era in which

hope of liberation was high, was used to celebrate the re-emergence of overt liberation politics in South Africa.

Bebop never knew wide acclaim in the United States and was not well received or understood by black South African audiences. It seems feasible to speculate that the later ‘cool’, or West Coast Jazz, the ethos of which would appear to be anathema to black musical expression, would quite feasibly have known the same fate. Spokesmen for the erstwhile Radio Bantu claim not to have deliberately suffocated the creative genre of ‘progressive’ jazz. The cynicism born of witnessing the old regime disclaiming other sinister motives which subsequently proved to be true is tempered by the very real fact that hard evidence to contradict this assertion does not appear to exist. In addition and more convincingly, Rob Allingham possesses Gallo archive transcription recordings of jazz played by the SABC in the period under discussion. Nevertheless, the newspaper research indicates that whereas journalists actively promoted the ‘progressive’ new styles, the record industry promoted commercialised genres in the advertisements at the expense of the artistic products of South Africa’s ‘modern’ jazzmen. Whether as a result of perceptions *via-à-vis* listenership attitudes or potential for styles which were contradictory to the general ethos of dance mania which permeated the 1950s (i.e. it is possible that the commercial decision may have been taken to the effect that ‘modern’ styles, by nature, did not warrant promotion to the masses as ‘popular’ music), this factor must be credited as having played a role in the demise of ‘progressive’ jazz. It is the contention of this work that, had commercial manipulation not occurred (and there is no evidence that it occurred for ideological or political reasons rather than purely commercial considerations), the chances of survival for ‘bebop’ and ‘cool’ as mass-based popular styles would have been slim in any case.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Areas which still need research in order to fill existing voids in the body of knowledge of this era of the development of black South African urban music have emerged from this thesis. The author thus recommends:

6.2.1 A study of the development of urban styles in the Western Cape. Specific reference should be made to the ideologies at play in the preference for different styles in different decades. At times in the country's history, the political laws of the Cape were substantially different from those of the Transvaal and thus the political 'ambience' could be regarded as historically unique. Future research may reveal subtle but important differences in the ideological concepts and beliefs which influenced the development of or preference for different styles in the Cape in the different decades.

The so-called 'coloured' people's unique contribution, both ideologically and musically, to the urban styles which ultimately emanated from the area demands research. Their use of music acceptable to white South Africans, specifically in the form of 'langarm' ('long arm', a version of ballroom dancing), 'tiekie-draai' (a dance, adopted from the Afrikaans tradition, which involved swinging round on a partner's arm) and square dancing should be investigated.

6.2.2 The development of black urban music styles in the Eastern Cape should be researched with reference to the different concepts and beliefs related to their development, exemplified by those emanating from Fort Hare University on the one hand and missionary institutions such as Lovedale College on the other hand.

6.2.3 An investigation should be made of the urban styles which emerged in the KwaZulu Natal area, birthplace of renowned mission schools and spawning-ground of both proud Zulu nationalism and assertive oppositional proletarian activity at various times in its history. The specific ideological stances surrounding the various styles in this area require in-depth research.

6.2.4 Black commercial styles of the 1950s, referred to by various ambiguous umbrella terms in the press of these years, should be analysed in order to categorise in detail and define such styles.

6.2.5 Transcriptions and musicological analyses of big-band *mbaqanga* or African jazz of the 1940s as well as and distinct from studio-sponsored recorded *mbaqanga* of the 1950s should be undertaken so as to compare the structure, characteristics and instrumentation

of these styles. Such research would contribute substantially to the debate which raged in the 1950s, referred to in this work as the ‘authentic’ versus ‘popular’ argument. If these styles are found to fit Ballantine’s description (applied to black commercial styles of the 1960s and 1970s) of ‘formulaic and anodyne’, then a distinction between the ‘authentic’ 1940s version and commercial African jazz of the 1950s could be justified. If, however, the 1950s style proves to be essentially the same as that of the previous decade, this would indicate that criticism of the 1950s commercial product was influenced either by Apartheid, or by an artificially inculcated perception of the inferiority of African culture and identity.

- 6.2.6 The 1960’s *mbaqanga* of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens should be analysed and compared with the styles of the 1940s and 1950s which bear the same name.
- 6.2.7 Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga* of the 1960s and the music of the Malombo Jazzmen, as examples which epitomise the opposing poles of ‘authentic’ and ‘popular’ in this decade, should be examined so as to ascertain the nature of the ideological stances which surrounded their development and how, or if, these differed from those revealed in this thesis.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the findings of this research project be used in the following areas:

- 6.2.8 Curriculum planners should include the study of black South African urban music in music education programmes. At the same time, South African tertiary institutions which train music educators should imminently embark on a programme to include the study of the history of black urban music of this country. Such knowledge has to be imparted to learners at both general music and specialist music levels. In addition, music educators should be equipped to include these styles as music examples in the teaching of various musical elements within the course of general lessons in both primary and high school.

Within the ethos of the spirit of reconciliation and development which now pervades South Africa, the new political dispensation has led to proposals to restructure education

policies and specific curricula. Music educators have for some time now promoted the importance of multi-cultural music education – which includes the study and use of western pop music within the general music curriculum. Black South African urban styles can easily supplement occasions where western pop music is appropriate to the general music situation. Besides the more obvious educational benefits of studying and learning to appreciate this music, the inclusion of black South African urban styles should assist in the fostering of cultural understanding and harmony, and the development of pride in our heritage.

- 6.2.9 An abbreviated but comprehensive history of the development of black South African music should be an integral part of the primary and high school history curriculum, presented within a contextual framework which provides a sense of the chronology or context of the styles or performers.

It is suggested that the primary school curriculum be confined to an overview of the history and a familiarisation with the different styles. High school study could then include aspects of the socio-political contexts and ideological stances which influenced their development, as presented in this work.