

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND BELIEFS ON PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN MUSIC STYLES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on how the general tone of political editorials and other articles expressing ideological beliefs and concepts in black newspapers in the 1930s to 1950s corresponded with the emphasis on *western* music styles, and American jazz in particular, in the reviews and articles in which entertainment was discussed. It will examine why the rhetoric surrounding these styles, as presented in the articles on and entertainment reviews of variety concerts, dances and the combined ‘concert and dance’ functions, as well as the musical shows which became a distinctive feature of the 1950s and early 1960s, can be interpreted as representing distinguishable threads of ideological trends dominant in the press in the different decades.

In South Africa’s mushrooming shantytowns, municipal ‘locations’ or freehold urban areas where makeshift shacks were often crammed next to brick houses on the same property, mission-educated teachers, clerks and nurses lived cheek by jowl with domestic workers, manual labourers, the ‘disreputable’ unemployed and morally degenerate hooligans (*Koch 1983:168*). Support for American jazz and its related entertainment structures emanated from well-springs of concepts and beliefs, which reflected the varied and often contradictory tenets and strategies which collectively formed the diverse ‘conceptions of the world’ (*Gramsci 1971:9*) of the different strata of black society’s emerging and complex class structure. For the most part, these were linked to conscious or unconscious responses to South Africa’s policies. Music, for listening and dancing, was a constant, and often sole, source of pleasure for people living in poverty-stricken conditions, hounded by repressive laws. While there appears to be some evidence that at least certain styles were appropriated to a greater general degree by one class than the other in different decades, different classes could support the same music-related entertainment structures and receive pleasure from the same styles. But it would appear that the

specific ‘conceptions of the world’ which existed to varying degrees of consciousness or unconsciousness and which were subtly reflected in the choice of music styles, may well have differed widely.

Broadly speaking, in the decades under consideration here, an evolution from a relatively benign “liberal view” (*Ballantine 1993:40*) to a strident voice of urban protest - both of which subscribed to the use of western cultural material for the expression of these world views - can be identified. Very broadly speaking, it would appear that the difference between the use of a western cultural medium in the 1930s and 1940s and the western inclinations of the 1950s and 1960s lay in the *ideological concepts and beliefs* which motivate such choices.

Tracing this shift from the concepts and beliefs of the 1930s to those of the late 1950s and 1960s will reveal that there was no clear-cut, watershed moment when the earlier reasons for the choice of western music - and in the jazz milieu, predominantly American music - were replaced with other motivations. The ‘liberal approach’ is to a large extent a reflection of the degree of hope of freedom which black intellectual and political leaders felt - liberal sentiments, as a general, majority perception of the elite, recede gradually after the late 1940s, and most noticeably after the withdrawal of special exemptions from petty apartheid for the educated few in the mid-1950s.

Probably because the choice of cultural expression had by then become an inbred, intuitive inclination or habit on the part of some, and because American jazz, in particular, was embraced for reasons different from those of the ‘liberal approach’ by others in the 1950s and 1960s, there is no immediate, simultaneous rejection of this music. In these later decades, the most dominant or striking change of the face of black entertainment appears to be the incorporation, or *accommodation*, of an African, or more precisely, distinctive South African, sound aesthetic. This impulse is discussed in Chapter 5, but it is important to state at this point that this apparent transformation is in fact an accommodation, a co-opting, of ideological motivation and expression of style, rather than a *substitution* of stance, accepted to varying degrees and by different sectors of society. These various threads of ideological ‘input’ are woven into one cord. This chapter attempts to untangle and reveal the apparently major ideologies, or

‘conceptions of the world’, governing those which represent the motivations for the use of western entertainment styles and structures.

“Contradictory preoccupations” of the jazz and vaudeville subculture were a constant feature: on the one hand the infatuation with American jazz and vaudeville, on the other, the inclination to include original music of their own heritage. This phenomenon is attributed by Ballantine to two differing approaches: the “liberal” and “radical” views (*Ballantine 1991B:130-152; 1993:40-62*).

Generally speaking, the comments and discussion in the black South African newspapers of the 1930s and 1940s can be said predominantly to reflect concepts and beliefs which Ballantine has labelled the ‘liberal view’. Liberal-minded utterances do occur in the 1950s, as do musical forms and functions which can be said to reflect these, but they become less frequent and somewhat less self-assured in tone as the decade proceeds. An analysis of this set of beliefs (which the present research indicates to last appreciably longer than the period inferred, although not clearly stated, in Ballantine’s work) will be followed by a consideration of the general impact of American culture on black South African society, and specifically, its apparent influence on those whose espousal of the ‘liberal’ stance can be traced. Thereafter, insight into the ideological stance adopted by a small but influential sector in the 1950s and early 1960s will be furnished. This led to their espousal of American jazz rather than the African forms then popular in South Africa. Here a definite and insistent voice of ‘urban protest’ emerges; one whose language is unashamedly that of American culture, and most specifically, ‘modern, progressive’ American jazz. The persona of this voice is epitomised by young intellectuals like Aggrey Klaaste and his fellow journalists who worked for Drum magazine and its affiliated newspaper, Golden City Post, in the 1950s and early 1960s.

In the world of black entertainment, the Liberal view is quintessentially represented by American jazz. When viewed from within the framework of liberalism, this embrace is symbolic of seeking change “within a given order” (*Ballantine 1993:40*). This implies that the “given order” is symbolised musically as the western, i.e. white, musical sphere.

In order to contextualise the arguments presented in this and the following chapters, a summary of the exposition of Ballantine's theories is necessary here.

4.2 BALLANTINE'S EXPOSITION OF THE 'LIBERAL VIEW'

According to Ballantine, a period of "passivity" existed for *workers and slum-dwellers* between the 1920s and the early 1940s. This was partly the result of the ethos typical of the petits bourgeoisies in those decades together with the relative inactivity of the African National Congress of the time. Aligned to Gramsci's "corporate" proletarian consciousness, which aspires to "define and seek to improve a position within a given order", the spirit which governed the "oppositional activities of this class" (i.e. the working class) was one of achieving its aspirations from within the given order. The name which Ballantine assigns to this set of convictions or beliefs is the "liberal view" (*Ballantine 1993:40; 1991B:130*).

Ballantine has deduced that two broad assumptions were fundamental to this view: the first, and for the purposes of this discourse, the more important of the two, being that racism and oppression were essentially the result of whites' ignorance. Music, then, should demonstrate the worthiness and competence of the black man, persuading the white man of the black's merit of higher status, regard and treatment. Therefore, for those musicians who consciously or unconsciously promoted what Ballantine refers to as the "liberal view", the social role of jazz and vaudeville was confined to the attempts to achieve the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of the black man from within the existing order.

Blacks in the United States provided the supreme example of the success of this strategy. Black American examples of achieving freedom from oppression as a result of musical ability are used by various press columnists and music critics of the time, thereby exhorting black South Africans to follow the example of black Americans (*Ballantine 1993:41; 1991B:131*). One critic whose theories Ballantine uses as an example of the promotion of the 'liberal approach' is that of *Umteteli wa Bantu*

called “Musica”, whom, it can safely be assumed, was Mark Radebe, an eminent musician, educator and critic, who later assumed the pseudonym, “Musicus”. Ballantine quotes “Musica’s” argument that “developing our music and singing to the white man will do much better than some of the methods adopted in solving the intricate Bantu problem in South Africa” (*Umteteli wa Bantu January 25, 1930:4*).

However, it must be stressed at this stage that it is this writer’s contention that both this and subsequent comments made by Radebe with reference to the socio-political role of music were strictly confined to the use of ‘serious’ art music, rather than jazz. (See 4.3)

The second assumption, Ballantine states, was more pragmatic: since music could be used to make one rich and famous, blacks could “play the system” and from within its parameters, acquire wealth and acclaim (*Ballantine 1993:44; 1991B:135*). Giving impetus to this conviction was the well-known Xhosa composer of western-style choral singing, Benjamin Tyamzashe.

In practice this approach contained a “treacherous contradiction”: black musicians were often exploited by mercenary and ruthless (white) controllers of the recording industry. The recording industry was also largely responsible for the emergence of the phenomenon of women performers, particularly within vaudeville troupes (*Ballantine 1993:44-50; 1991B:135-141*). In support of this approach, Ballantine quotes Tyamzashe’s statement made at the conference of the South African Bantu Board of Music in 1929, where he proclaimed that “the race possessed men and women in South Africa who could become millionaires” (*Ballantine 1993:44 footnote 18; 1991B:135 footnote 19*).

Examination of the original article reveals a subtly different, slightly sardonic twist in Tyamzashe’s thought: “Lastly, the race possessed men and women in S. (sic) Africa who could become millionaires if they were patronised or if they were Europeans” (*Imvo Zabantsundu February 4, 1930:5*) (own underlining). More importantly, it must be noted that Tyamzashe, as a composer of western-style choral music, was again promoting ‘serious’ art music rather than jazz. In the preceding two sentences of the article in question he is quoted by the journalist as having said that:

Music was a social as well as a spiritual necessity as in heaven they have nothing else but music. But there was a difficulty at present for Ragtime or Jazz music had taken the upper hand, and professional pianists like Mr Davis in Johannesburg could not have their way, as they were expected to play from ear and sometimes were required to play “Thula Ndivile” and if they failed in doing so they were regarded as no players at all (*Imvo Zabantsundu February 4, 1930:5*).

4.3 THE ‘LIBERAL VIEW’ AND THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE

The native intellectual has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world. He has used his aggressiveness to serve his own individual interests.

Thus there is very easily brought into being a kind of affranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free. What the intellectual demands is the right to multiply the emancipated, and the opportunity to organize (sic) a genuine class of emancipated citizens (*Fanon 1963:47*).

Magubane asserts that black South Africans who rose above the ranks of unskilled labour were nevertheless denied the development of a “separate ‘class consciousness’” as a result of their physical proximity to proletarians in the cramped and restricted conditions of black urban areas as well as the mutual identification of their common disabilities (*Magubane 1972:441*). Given the fact that there was no “geography of class” such as existed in the white suburbs, Lodge maintains, “it is artificial to define interests with rigid precision” (*Lodge 1983:339*). Bozzoli clearly enunciates the elusive and ambivalent qualities, the ‘tensions’, inherent in relationships between ‘class’ and ‘culture’ in black urban settlements (particularly those where “‘wives and children’ are the most obviously present”) in the then Transvaal. Here various classes of workers and the unemployed “coalesced to give cultural and political expression to their experiences” (*Bozzoli 1983:41*). By definition, this coalescence defies meticulous analysis.

The use of western music styles, including American jazz and vaudeville entertainment styles, therefore, represented to varying degrees in the decades under discussion here, the *vehicle* or model chosen to give cultural expression to the socio-political aspirations of the “multitude of classes and sub-classes” of South Africa’s black urban society (*Bozzoli 1983:39*).

This thesis argues that whereas the common and overriding political desire of all classes was freedom from oppression which may or may not have contributed to the commonality of audience for various forms of cultural expression, differing modes of ideological stances were expressed by different groups from within the ambit of this general goal. These modes, affected by aspirations which differed largely as a result of education or the lack of it, seem to have influenced the intuitive framework from which such choices were made, and certain ideological stances appear to be at least generally aligned to specific groups in specific decades.

In the 1930s and 1940s specifically, despite their “social compassion and depth of anger that went well beyond their immediate class interests”, there is evidence of a strongly articulated set of beliefs or “petty bourgeois aspirations” (*Lodge 1983:339*) largely peculiar to erstwhile graduates of mission schools. In these decades of major illiteracy amongst Africans, these people represented South Africa’s intellectual elite, and by far the largest body of newspaper subscribers (*Bantu World January 27, 1940:12*). A distinctive feature of this group was that it fervently aspired to upward social and political mobility, and, probably more importantly, encouraged by prominent white liberals of the day, *it felt intellectually and morally equipped to attain such achievements*. These were the educated black South Africans who embarked on an active crusade to persuade white South Africans of the merits of making such mobility possible, and, as part of this strategy, sought the most ‘civilised’ and sophisticated cultural expressions of the western norms which they had embraced. Their views were clearly articulated in the black press; mainly, but not exclusively, in the first two decades under discussion. Thus a historical legacy of the ‘conceptions of the world’ of these newspapermen and those whom they represented is left in the wake of this period. Their press utterances of the 1930s and 1940s can for the most part be characterised by petits bourgeois convictions, with an emphasis on the ‘progress’ (a well-worn term) and education of the race as both critical to and synonymous with its potential evolution as a *westernised*, urbanised, and ultimately, equivalent to white, nation. For this minority group, the choice of a western music idiom, initially and significantly made in preference to an African one, was a conscious decision. Inherent in this choice was the use of a bi-faceted cultural yardstick - the approval of white South Africa and the emulation of (mostly black) America - which was used for the selection of repertoire and performance, and which favoured or emphasised these different sides to varying degrees in different decades.

In the context of his discussion of the ‘liberal view’, Ballantine’s somewhat ambiguous references to the “relative passivity” of the “oppositional activities” of the “workers and slum-dwellers” and their relationship to the ANC hierarchy lead to puzzling inferences as to their motivation for and substantiation of the adoption of these ideological concepts and beliefs. Mindful of Sole’s conclusion that “Although ideology can be loosely connected to class interests, there can be no such thing as pure ideologies belonging to any particular class” (*Sole 1983:58*), research indicates that common aspects of the ideological concepts which formed a ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ were consciously and consistently expressed by a significant sector of educated black South Africans, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. This lent impetus to, or influenced their frame of reference for, their choice of western cultural expression, including American jazz and its related variety concert entertainment styles. One of the “several generations” of mission school graduates, these people were products of the “ideological goals” (*Sole 1983:70*) of:

Institutions ... set up ... to influence and form the way people think. Education has, for example, always been a way of controlling how people in South Africa think: early black education was almost totally controlled by the missions ... Here several generations of a new black elite were trained in the supposed superiority of Christian and European values, the English language and the virtues of Godliness, Cleanliness, Industry and Discipline (*Sole 1983:69*).

While the ‘liberal view’ or ‘liberal approach’, as it will be referred to in this work, is not a “fixed ... class-ascribed” ideology “operating *through history*” (*Sole 1983:68*) (own italics), there is convincing evidence to suggest that it represents the common world view or ideology *most prominent* in, and therefore at least ‘loosely connected to’ an influential group of the educated black middle class of the 1930s and 1940s. Articulated by the intelligentsia in the black newspapers of the day, it represents a collective, distinctive body of concepts and beliefs representing educated black South Africa’s ideological tool for not only surviving more comfortably under, but as a potential means of escaping from, the harshly repressive, poverty-stricken conditions which were the inescapable destiny of those born black in this country.

None of the evidence available to this research suggested with any degree of certainty that this view was representative of the dominant ‘conceptions of the world’ of the majority of illiterate black

urbanites in the newly industrialised towns. Rather, it appears to have been the characteristic ideology of the distinct minority of educated, literate thinkers, expressed to various degrees by various newspapers for two (and in others, nearly two-and-a-half) of the decades under discussion. Similarly, the music critics who promoted the performance of western (some British, but mostly American) music as examples of elevated and sophisticated musical behaviour, and encouraged the use of international repertoire as the yardstick of good standards and quality fare, belonged to the educated and elite circle of black journalists. Exhorting the other members of their race to emulate black Americans in all spheres of endeavour became a common practice of the black petits bourgeoisies, but it was in the music arena where results were most spectacular and easily attainable.

Workers and slum-dwellers were not alienated from the jazz culture of the dance-halls. On the contrary, there is evidence that particularly after the demise of *marabi* in the mid- to late 1930s, and particularly in relation to their predilection for certain styles or tempi, they were eager participants in such culture (*Koch 1983:170; Sole 1983:83, 85; Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95; Mphahlele - writer's interview: 21/11/97; 27/5/98; Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*). From within the framework of the distinction between 'culture' and 'ideology' as defined in this work, it is submitted that the 'interests' (as pertaining to 'culture') of different classes were indeed 'ambivalent', and not bound by "rigid precision" to any particular class (*Lodge 1983:338*). However, the *ideology* which is expressed by the 'Liberal view' as "part of the struggle to maintain the world in a desired state of being, or to change it" (*Sole 1983:66*) signifies the specific way in which missionised, educated black South Africans, in reponse to the ebb and flow of politics in the 1930s and 1940s, found suitable cultural expression and "live(d) out their values, ideas and images of reality" (*Sole 1983:67*).

Thus the 'liberal approach' (see 4.4), as the product of the ideological indoctrination of missionisation, becomes mid-wife to the 'interests' of educated black South Africans, which finds cultural expression in western music forms. It is suggested that for the majority of the lumpenproletariat, the *ideological impetus* or the motivation for such participation could well have been notably different from that which was framed in the liberal strategy of moral persuasion consciously embraced by the intelligentsia. For slum-dwellers in various states of urbanisation, literacy and education, *who had not been subjected to the ideological domination or indoctrination of missionary education*, the choice of American jazz

entertainment structures could well have emanated from a psychological mindset and strategy for survival that differed significantly from those which distinguished the intellectual elite. This distinction is perhaps most succinctly defined by Bozzoli: “This is not to say that each of these groups ... has the same *input* into the coalescing culture. To argue this would be to fall uncritically into a nationalist analysis” (*Bozzoli 1983:42*) (own italics).

It must be categorically stressed, however, that in the absence of written or significantly representative oral evidence to the contrary, this conclusion can at best be declared an assumption, made from the available inferences and clues found in the historical trail left by intellectual black journalists, readers and politicians in the press. It is not the intention in this chapter to focus on such assumptions. Nevertheless, where such evidence occurs in the course of the discourse, it will be presented so as to lend credence to the theory that alternative conscious as well as unconscious strategies to that of a ‘liberal approach’ may have been at play in the decision to use American jazz as the medium of cultural and political expression for classes other than the *petits bourgeoisies*.

In efforts to substantiate elite support for the ‘liberal view’, Ballantine quotes “conservative poet and critic” B.W. Vilakazi who, writing in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1933, exhorts readers to believe “that music will induce men of wider aspect to open for us gateways to economic and political liberty”. This quotation and those of “Musica” (*Ballantine 1993:40,41; 1991B:130,131*) are presented from within the context of the “elaborately framed” question emanating from the first conference of the South African Bantu Board of Music (“How could this heavenly gift ... best be used for the glory of God and the amelioration of our social and cultural conditions?” – *Ballantine 1993:39; 1991B:129*). Positioned outside of the perspective only provided nearly twenty pages later (*Ballantine 1993:80.81*), these references would appear to misleadingly imply a general and premature sponsorship of jazz by the black *petits bourgeoisies* as an acceptable tool with which to effect the desired “amelioration”.

The same Vilakazi quoted by Ballantine above, in the same year, 1933, displays his ambivalence towards jazz in this comment about Caluza’s music: “There is no name in music libraries for purely Caluza’s music but for lack of an apt word we call it jazz. Jazz music is somewhat inferior to the sort

of music found in Caluza's compositions" (*Couzens 1985:54*). (See also "elite critic" R.R.R. Dhlomo's criticism of jazz - *Coplan 1985:122*).

Ballantine quotes the writing of the columnist "Musica" from *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1930 as substantiation of support (in this instance, elite support) for the use of jazz in the promotion of the 'liberal view': the "fate" of singers such as Layton and Johnstone, Paul Robeson, Florence Mills and "other 'descendants of a race that has been under worse oppression', 'Musica' argued, proves that 'developing our music and singing to the white man will do much better than some of the methods adopted in solving the intricate Bantu problem in South Africa'" (*Ballantine 1993:41; 1991B:131*).

'Musica', Ballantine states, is probably the early version of the pen-name 'Musicus', which by 1932 elite critic Mark Radebe was using regularly (*Ballantine 1993:14, footnote 8; 1991A:144 note 2*). However, Musicus' views on jazz, significantly expressed three years *later* than that of the above quotation used by Ballantine, i.e. in 1933, belie a somewhat different perspective. The columnist had, in fact, expressed his hope that jazz was to be banished from the entertainment arena:

The old jazz of the screeching jazz maniac will not torture its victims much longer ... King Jazz is dying. His syncopating, brothel-born, war fattened, noise drunk is now in a stage of hectic decline ... It is, however, true that jazz is a perversion of some of the remarkable syncopating rhythms to be found in the Native music of many races. The Negroes, we are told, contributed some, but it is a libel upon our brethren to lay the crime of jazz upon them (*Coplan 1985:141, endnote 44*).

Coplan reinforces Rezant's assertion that jazz, particularly in the 1920s and early 1930s (*Rezant - writer's interview: 9/8/95*) was not initially supported by the intelligentsia. Coplan states that the "growing popularity of jazz in Johannesburg's rowdy African dance halls troubled ... African music educators". As a result, they

... hoped that the Eisteddfodau would replace the old ragtime and coon song competitions and promote the classical and Afro-American religious music performed by Roland Haynes and Paul Robeson, in preference to jazz. The association of jazz with urban working-class culture in America and its growing popularity in Johannesburg's rowdy African dance halls, troubled elite critics such as 'Musicus' (*Coplan 1985:121*).

In 1940, when most overt criticism of jazz seems to have subsided, intellectual critic “Aureole” from Ilanga Lase Natal – while displaying something of an earlier prejudice against jazz - explains the apparently diffident accession of jazz into the realms of the intellectual elite on the basis of it being an ‘art’ (by inference, sophisticated) form:

The now popular modern musical form – Jazz (sic) has its origin in Africa [with all that is said about Jazz it is an art form. As art has been said to reflect life it also reflects modern life and one cannot blame the form for what it reflects as one who looks at his reflection on (sic) the mirror cannot blame the mirror for the ugliness of the face that appears there] (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 23, 1940:6*).

4.4 THE ‘LIBERAL APPROACH OF MORAL PERSUASION’ REDEFINED

Black mission-educated South Africans’ adoption of a ‘liberal-minded’ ideology, and its expression in the use of and rhetoric about western music predominant in mainly the 1930s and 1940s, can properly be understood within the framework provided by Berger and co-authors as a ‘liberation’ by ‘modernity’. This prototype can also be used to describe the adoption (by some) and rejection (by others) of the different ‘Africanised’, mutated jazz-based styles of the 1950s:

... modernity is understood by some as *liberating*, and by others as that *from which* liberation is sought ... If one is to understand correctly the relation of various ideas and movements to the contemporary crisis of modern society, it is most important that one knows which liberating aspiration is at work ...

Modernity has indeed been liberating. It has liberated human beings from the narrow controls of family, clan, tribe or small community. It has opened up for the individual previously unheard-of options and avenues of mobility ... However, these liberations have had a high price ... The de-modernizing impulse, whether it looks backwards into the past or forwards into the future, seeks a reversal of the modern trends that have left the individual ‘alienated’ and beset with the threats of meaninglessness.

The liberation of modernity has been, above all, that of the individual (*Berger et al 1981:174, 175*).

The ‘liberal approach’ in this work should be understood to refer to the psychological mindset or the ‘ideological space’ from whence emanated a strategy for liberation actively adopted by those black South Africans who perceived this strategy to be feasible and their liberation to be attainable. On the one hand, ‘modernity’, as represented by their westernised, ‘civilised’ condition, was the source of their

liberation from the ‘evils’ of their primitive condition. On the other hand, unequivocal proof of the attainment of this status would ultimately persuade white lawmakers to effect their rise in social and political status. Resting on the basic tenets of ‘civilisation through education’, the ideology of liberalism by definition thus largely became a domain to be articulated by educated Africans. Although highly individualistic in nature and manifested by individual examples of cultural advancement, it was the *aspirations* which found expression in western forms, which, while volatile, and often insecure, represented for a significant group of middle class black South Africans, an ideological coalescent.

To some, music offered virtually the only avenue in which white South Africans could be suitably impressed. In 1944, the music critic Walter M. B. Nhlapo pronounced that despite “much prejudice” against “the Bantu”, “it is only in musical shows, where his ability has amused and amazed the European” (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 29, 1944:10*). In 1951, typical liberal and servile sentiments were expressed at a reception in which the winners of the Bantu Music Festival in several vocal categories, the Benoni African Choristers, were awarded their trophies. The event was attended by a large white audience. In his opening address, Mr S. S. Mokgokong subtly admonished his audience for the poor living conditions of blacks: “Good living conditions go to make a good people who in turn do good things” (*Bantu World December 1, 1951:3*).

Successful concerts attended by ‘Europeans’ as part of a mixed-race audience, or by whites only, were always reported, and in the majority of cases the degree to which these whites had been impressed by their appreciation of black musical ability, was emphasised (*Bantu World February 12, 1938:18; Ilanga Lase Natal June 25, 1938:14; Ilanga Lase Natal July 29, 1944:10*). On at least one occasion, the white guest of honour, the mayor, is reported to have remarked that South African whites “preferred Bantu music to anything else when they attended Bantu social gatherings” (*Bantu World December 1, 1951:3*). Nevertheless, in each instance, the reader is led to believe that what is being admired is the accomplishment of the standard in which “Western Music is to be sung, interpreted and appreciated as it should be” (*Ilanga Lase Natal March 11, 1939:6*). Even the presence of only one white official was considered and expressed to be an honour (*Bantu World September 12, 1936:4*). When a black band or vocal group had been especially invited by whites into an exclusive white venue,

it was cause for extraordinary congratulations (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 30, 1935:9; Umteteli wa Bantu April 15, 1950:4*).

The Bantu Social Centre in Durban (or Social Centre, most commonly referred to as the B.S.C.), and the Bantu Men's Social Centre (B.M.S.C.) in Johannesburg, were frequently venues for concerts where important white liberals formed part of interracial audiences. Vocal groups such as A.A. Khumalo's Male Voice Concert Party, or Mseleku's Entertainers, whose repertoires appeared to have been affected by the influence of Reuben Caluza, included western-style choral singing, negro spirituals and ragtime songs, and formed part of the musical armoury of early liberalism. Added to these from the 1930s was the jazz stable, where vaudeville troupes performed, particularly those associated with the accomplished Griffiths Motsieloa, such as De Pitch Black Follies and troupes with generic names for those emerging from his famous Synco Schools such as the Synco Fans. In the jazz-band arena, the flagship of liberalism was held aloft by Peter Rezant's Merry Blackbirds.

However, it is important to understand that inherent in the ideology of the 'liberal approach' - whose objective was white acceptance and freedom from oppression - were several nuances of thought which were expressed at different times and to varying degrees by different sub-groups of educated blacks. A distinguishing feature of the ideological trend in its purest form is an expressed belief in the intrinsic goodwill of the majority of whites. White South Africans, once convinced of the degree and merit of black progress, were sure to allow, if not assist in, the social and political advancement of the black race. Varying shades of this characteristic are displayed at different times. Therefore it can be used as a yardstick for tracing an evolution of 'liberal thought' and its subtle reflection and counter-reflection in the dominance of music styles as well as the rhetoric surrounding the choice of such styles.

In the early decades under discussion, liberal thought found a ready audience amongst black intellectuals since it was compatible with the inferred promise of missionisation: religion and education were the criteria of civilisation; civilisation was the requirement for acceptance by, and gaining equal status to, white society.

Doc Bikitsha, veteran black journalist, comments that:

The 1920s to the 'roaring' 1940s in South Africa saw an emergent black society of mimics who followed their 'master's voice' in all sphere of culture and the arts. They dutifully did the Charleston, and copied other whitemen's traits. Even in dress, the slave mentality was evident – they mimicked the Oxford suit styles, Batersby hats and white mannerisms (*Schadeberg 1994:8*).

The first 'masters' were the English missionaries, and men of intellectual greatness who had received mission education were distinguished by a simultaneous conversion to both Christianity and westernisation as represented by the (educated) English. A typical example of this mindset is provided in the writings of Solomon Plaatje. A review by Mackie proclaims Plaatje's novel, *Mhudi*, to be an African story, but written with a white 'voice' in "Edwardian style of writing, with shades of Kipling and Shakespeare" which betrays his mission education and his membership of an "intellectual elite" (*Business Day April 14, 1997:11*).

Generally speaking, adherence to a 'liberal approach of moral persuasion' implied acquiescence to the given order of westernisation, symbolised by western music. More specifically, deductions drawn from the context of the majority of press comment in the 1930s and 1940s, and in *Bantu World* particularly, would indicate that it specifically implied an awe of and attraction to western culture as symbolised by white South Africans and the white (Smuts) government.

The concepts and beliefs inherent in the 'liberal approach' were catalysed by developments in white South African politics and attitudes displayed by white politicians. In other words, events, statements, policies and laws in the white political milieu affected the varying degrees of optimism and hope, and consequently the tone, of black liberal utterances. These in turn found subtle resonance in the *raison d'être* for the roles of certain western styles as expressed in the press by certain music critics, columnists, readers, and very occasionally, musicians. However, it must be stressed that a direct correlation between ideology and political attitude as stated by journalists and readers of the black newspapers was not necessarily, or even likely to be, representative of those of the mass of black South Africans, precisely because in the 1930s to 1950s the vast majority of blacks, while avid music-lovers, were illiterate. This situation was grossly exacerbated in the 1930s and 1940s.

At the beginning of the 1930s expressions of liberalism were accompanied by an almost obsequious attitude to ‘civilised’, Christian whites and in particular, white liberals, for whom some proponents expressed a deep gratitude and whose status they coveted. It would appear that here the greatest influence was missionisation, based on an apparently sincere and often-expressed belief that the demonstration and application of Christian principles would vanquish all white resistance to black advancement. More importantly, in terms of this missionised version of ‘civilisation’, black ruralism and the primitiveness of the kraal, as well as all cultural expression related to this state, represented evil. Variations of this theme, expressed by Dr. P. ka I. Seme, speaking at an ANC convention in 1933, were constantly repeated by politicians and intellectual leaders throughout the 1930s and 1940s: “The sins of your forefathers are weighing heavily upon the present generation, and we need the earnest prayers and the propitiation of the whole African Church” (*Bantu World January 14, 1933:1*).

A basic tenet of black elite liberalism in the 1930s, as expressed by the Rev. Ray Phillips in his book “The Bantu are coming” (*Phillips 1930*) is the acknowledgement of white intellectual superiority, and black determination to ‘progress’ to the level of western ‘civilisation’ attained by the whites. This determination, though, is marked by patience; to “learn as long as possible and not to rush in as fools where angels fear to tread and thus bring about worse condition (sic) than that in which they were in (sic) before rushing unprepared to achievements which are manifestly beyond their strength” (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 8, 1932:9*). “Reasoned convictions” and “analysis” were advised; “exorbitant demands from Europeans” were scorned (*Bantu World November 1, 1947:3*).

Despite vacillations to the contrary, the proponents of this earnest form of early liberalism for the most part expressed positive sentiments towards the South African Government led by Smuts throughout the 1930s, but more particularly in the war years, believing in its benevolence and good intentions. Nevertheless a tendency - the importance and relevance of which will be discussed later - is evident in this group: heroes who are offered as examples to be emulated and as the focus of admiration are on the whole neither white nor black South Africans, but rather black Americans. Closely linked, but subtly different from the newspapermen, ministers of religion and other professionals who subscribed to the newspapers, were political leaders in the ANC and other intellectuals who would voice

protestations to and disapproval of the white South African government, albeit generally couched in courteous terms.

As early as the 1930s, the enemy of the strategy of ‘moral persuasion’ was unambiguously declared to be the promotion of tribalism or ethnicity. (e.g. see *Ilanga Lase Natal March 27, 1931:9*). This fact is significant since it is integral to the discussion on the Africanisation of jazz. Also note-worthy to the discourse is the fact that vociferous opposition to the promotion of ethnicity was expressed in 1939 by the usually liberal-minded Bantu World in relation to the issue of education: the Native Affairs Commission had recommended that “Native education” be placed under the auspices of the Department of Native Affairs, and this recommendation was strongly opposed by Bantu World. This was in direct opposition to, and perceived as designed to destroy, black liberal concepts of advancement to white status and achievements. It was to be guarded against at all costs, for – and here the characteristic optimistic tone again clamours to be heard – “It is quite obvious that unless there is an intellectual segregation, the break-down of the Government’s Native policy is inevitable” (*Bantu World February 11, 1939:4*).

Black liberal thought in its most unadulterated form, which was prolifically articulated and prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s, was strongly associated with a rejection of Africanism. For a sector of the population, this factor was exacerbated by the barrage of Apartheid legislation of the 1950s:

It is understandable (that) ... they actually, the black people, wanted to be white; and those that were too dark, would bleach themselves; so anything that identified them with (being) black delayed their progress; sort of confined them to the ghetto, as it were. They virtually disowned being black, they all went for Western Christian names, even to the extent of changing their second names in order to be as near to (being) white people (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

By comparison, the second new “war-time troupe”, the African Minstrels (Pty) Limited, which joined the newly-formed United Bantu Artists, were blessed by Walter Nhlapo, eminent music critic for Bantu World, with the hope that “their programme will go with a swing from start to end and display the best and be ideal combination (sic) for war-time entertainments, gingering up life”. He contends that their emergence heralds “the destiny of African music and stage crafts”, and lists as one of their conscious aims to be the staging of “all African shows by Africans”. It is specified that the company will

specialise in “African numbers composed by Africans”. Nevertheless, these comments should be considered from within the general context of the article, and in particular from within the context of the listed “Aims” and “Matter”. From this perspective, it would appear that in this instance Nhlapo’s enthusiasm for things African fits most comfortably into the parameters of the ‘liberal approach’ as it pertains to African progress and development:

AIMS

1. To discover, to develop and encourage latent talent amongst Africans.
2. To elevate the standard of music and stage performance.
3. To stage all African shows by Africans.
4. To produce African actors and actresses.

MATTER

The Company will specialize in:

1. African numbers composed by Africans.
2. Exclusive novelty numbers.
3. Old classical jazz songs.
4. All round (sic) minstrel choruses.
5. Operatic minstrel choruses.
6. Vaudeville revues.
7. Specialities.

(Bantu World January 11, 1941:9).

Even faced with the reality of the Nationalist Party victory in the 1948 elections, Umteteli wa Bantu used the occasion to reprimand those who had pushed the previous Smuts regime “beyond a point to which it could rely on public (i.e. white) support”. This (by inference, extremist) blacks had done by their criticism of the former government’s tardiness to implement what Umteteli regarded as a “progressive policy”. “Notwithstanding the goodwill towards Africans among the Europeans”, the editor remarked, “the pace must not be overhurred”. By convoluted argument, he philosophically attempted to placate his readership that a drastic change of policy on the part of the new Nationalist Party government was unlikely: Any new party in power, “due to the brakes of responsibility” restraining “its wheels”, “must always go more gently than the opposition”. There was still cause for the hope which characterised black liberal thought, for “The policy may not be so severe as it sounded from pre-election platforms” (*Umteteli wa Bantu June 5, 1948:3*).

The anguish of black liberals in the face of Nationalist rhetoric is expressed in *Bantu World* in the editorial, “Whither South Africa?” in 1949. The new Nationalist Minister of Native Affairs had, in parliament, blamed interracial tension in South Africa on the “thoughts and actions” of white liberals towards their black compatriots. Asserting that repression, rather than liberalism, was the cause of racial antagonism, the editor praised white liberals to be the “protectors of white civilisation on the African continent”. Of the outcome, the editor is still convinced: “Theirs (i.e. that of white liberals) is a righteous cause which must eventually prevail against the forces of repression” (*Bantu World April 9, 1949:2*).

In the light of later political developments in South Africa, it is noteworthy that attitudes of goodwill were not only extended to white English liberals. Occasional gestures of goodwill towards the Afrikaner (or Dutch, as they were sometimes referred to) nation included Afrikaans editorials and articles promoting understanding between the races which were featured in *Bantu World* in the 1930s (for example, *Bantu World August 27, 1932:1*). John Tengu Jabavu, an early “pioneer of Bantu journalism and inter-racial co-operation” is accredited as advocating a mutually beneficial friendship between blacks and Afrikaners. This friendship, the *Bantu World* editor in 1932 is compelled to declare in a typical statement, would be the natural consequence of the realisation that the “atrocities and barbarities” committed by both blacks and whites in the Voortrekker clashes “were due to ignorance ... and not to any race hatred” (*Bantu World October 1, 1943:6*).

It was in the cultural arena that the question of individual achievement as a significant element of the ‘liberal approach’ is clearly evident. ‘Cultural achievement’ on the part of any black individual was regarded as a subtle, but highly effective tool of liberation. An editorial in 1948 in *Ilanga Lase Natal* necessitates extensive quotation. Headed “Personal and Cultural Achievement”, and placed beside an Anniversary Tribute to Anton Lembede (the father of the genre of South African African Nationalism widely referred to as Africanism), it is significant to both the discourse on the ‘liberal’ and ‘radical approaches’ and to their reflections and counter-reflections in music. In a veiled oppositional, or at least divergent, stance to the mobilisation of the masses and its concurrent theme of unity with the masses advocated by the predominantly Africanist thinking of first Lembede and then Mda of the ANC Youth League, the editor concedes that:

It is natural for an oppressed group like the Africans to think in terms of the mass struggle only and to ignore the achievements of the individuals. However ... An individual Newton, Shakespeare or Beethoven can lift up a whole humble nation on his shoulders and make it into a great and proud one ...

Africans are fond of the American Negroes and often look upon the rapid progress and achievements of this group as an indication, an example, of what the black man here can and must do. One of the chief points in Negro technique in their battle for liberation and progress, is to support and boost as loudly and widely as possible their individual men and women of talent and achievement. Their patriotism and enthusiasm in this direction are remarkable ... it is high time we paid more attention to the question of individual and cultural achievement. There are reasons for doing so.

In our struggle for liberation and progress, cultural and individual achievement can play an important part. Things being what they are, the majority of the public are not interested in our mass effort as such. The ordinary man and woman is more impressed by the striking and outstanding achievements of individuals. If an African could be awarded the Nobel Prize in some field of endeavour the results would be great not only for himself but for the whole Race. It would be pungent and effective argument for the greatness of his people and for their claim for self-determination. Such an achievement would touch the hearts of even the most apathetic of prejudiced persons. It would have to be recognized (sic) by each and all. It would be more effective because no one (sic) would think of it in terms of political and social rights and problems. Yet in the final analysis it would affect the question of these rights and problems immensely. Thus in encouraging individual and cultural achievement we would be using a subtle and effective weapon in our struggle for progress. It might prove a short cut to liberation (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 14, 1948:15*).

The 'liberal approach' demonstrated certain striking characteristics in the different decades. These are discussed in sections 1 - 7 in the Annexure.

4.4.1 Activities Promoting Black Progress

Activities in which black South African 'progress' - keyword of moral persuasion - could be showcased, were eagerly reported in all publications. Certain of these formed a constant ostinato in the theme of demonstrating the worth of the black race.

4.4.1.1 'High' or 'serious' art

Amongst the adherents of liberalism there was a significant element who supported 'high' art. Generally speaking, African ability to appreciate 'serious' western music was interpreted by liberal journalists as the ultimate example of civilised behaviour and intellectual justification for elevated social status.

In December 1933, in a front-page leader article reviewing the events of the past year, which included achievements in "business" and discussion of the financial state of the Union, the bold-lettered sub-heading was: "Bantu Singing Creates Friends Among Whites". The Transvaal African Eisteddfod had revealed hitherto latent African talent, and while the writer speculates on the development of "a spirit of nationalism in music", it is clear from Eisteddfod programmes that the music referred to is western and emanates from the domain of 'serious' culture. "The most remarkable thing about the progress of Bantu music" (or black South Africans' mastery of western styles), and obviously the motivation for the exuberant sub-headline, was the fact that "European dealers in music" had been brought into "direct contact with Bantu singers and composers." Continuing in the same vein, the Bantu Dramatic Society had "opened the eyes of many Europeans" (*Bantu World December 30, 1933:1*). Encouraging encounters with 'Europeans' such as these, regularly and inevitably resulted in blacks experiencing a "thrill of hope" (*Bantu World August 11, 1943:4*).

A direct effect of missionisation was the adherence to the fundamentals of melody, harmony and rhythm of western 'classical' or 'serious' music. The most popular vocal style was western choral music taught by western missions and churches, and this became a permanent style in black sacred as well as secular repertoire for generations to come. Ilanga Lase Natal, in an editorial in 1930, praised the Department of Native Education for their attempts to "bring the proper study of music to its proper place among Natives". Pointing to the fact that the rudiments of (western) music were not taught in African schools, the editor lamented that, unlike white schoolchildren, black pupils invariably left primary school without knowledge of the "principles of music". Recognising the inherent musicality of the black man – "he always sings even in his raw state" – the editor states that "proper music", considered important in 'European' schools, should be taught to "the Native". The proposed lectures

on “proper music” by the Department of Native Affairs to black schoolteachers would hopefully provoke a thirst for “proper music” throughout the country, and teachers “will not be satisfied till they have acquired the necessary knowledge and appreciation of proper music” (*Ilanga Lase Natal April 18, 1930:9*).

When “Lady Windermere’s fan” was presented by the Bantu Dramatic Society at the Bantu Men’s Social Centre in 1936, it “was gratifying” to note that the audience was seventy-five percent white. The writer concludes the extravagantly complimentary review with the observation that

... it cannot be otherwise than of benefit to the darker people of this town for so large an audience of whites to be moved time after time to loud applause at the excellence of work. It must raise the Bantu in the estimation of the European to see men and women with Bantu Blood (sic) exhibit such remarkable ability (*Bantu World May 23, 1936:17*).

The significance of the quality of musical talent lay not only in the presentation to the white population of black *ability*, but, far more importantly, it was perceived to be a demonstration of the hitherto undiscovered *intrinsic worth* of the black race. An explicit enunciation of the valuable role of music from within the ideological fold of the ‘liberal approach’ is found in an editorial in 1932. Entirely devoted to expounding the importance of the quality of participation in the ‘Bantu Eisteddfod’, the editor maintains that this institution affords the black South African an opportunity to answer questions being asked by the entire (white) “thinking world” in relation to “the Bantu”. The most important of these appears to be: “Can they prove their capabilities if given every facility of advancement?” Participation in the Eisteddfod was regarded as an activity in which “they will be judged by concrete proof of their ability” and in which “Even those who were inclined to sneer at Bantu aptitude will gradually admit that the Bantu have some contributions to make to the ‘gathering achievements of the human race’” (*Bantu World December 17, 1932:6*).

A year later, the respected B. W. Vilakazi wrote in *Ilanga Lase Natal*: “Politics fall behind music as one of the purely African endowments which will win for us respect and put aside at least for the time being - the offensive. (sic: punctuation) Music will induce men of wider aspect to open for us gateways to economic and political liberty” (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 10, 1933:9*).

This sentiment apropos the potential power of music to sway white opinion to admiration, approval and finally acceptance of black people to useful citizenship of the South African nation, was commonly expressed throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Music concerts attended by members of elite society and deemed to fit the perception of sophistication and personify western civilisation, were always singled out. For example, the good attendance at a choral concert conducted by a Mr. M. B. Mfeka at the Bantu Social Centre in Durban was praised: actions such as this which would “result in the recognition of the Bantu as a respectable race” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* October 23, 1937:9).

Occasions in which liberal strategies appeared to be successful in terms of eliciting white admiration or better still, cooperation, were uniquely confined to the realm of the educated, ‘respectable’ black South African. Generally speaking, articles in which such functions were described, served to create an atmosphere of ‘interracial elitism’, as it were. (As examples, choral singing: *Ilanga Lase Natal* August 30, 1935:9; *Bantu World* May 23, 1936:17; *Ilanga Lase Natal* June 25, 1938:14; July 29, 1944:12; *Umteteli wa Bantu* April 15, 1950:4; May 6, 1950:5; *Bantu World* December 1, 1951:3).

A typical article which was portrayed to be contributing to the growing awareness amongst white and black of the Africans’ contribution to ‘high’ culture appeared in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1944:

Social Centre

Interesting programmes are now being given. In the Sunday Guest concerts well-known European artists like the Mayoress (Mrs. C.R. Brown), Miss Lancashire and others have sung. Bantu Talent (sic) is to be presented in a series of monthly concerts - the first of which takes place on the 19th when Miss M. Bhengu and the Adams septette will be featured.

International Club

In the lecture and musical programme of the Club, Africans are making an outstanding contribution. Last week the McCords Zulu Hospital Choir, conducted by Mr. S.T. Manzana gave an excellent programme of Negro Spirituals.

Mseleku Entertainers

The Mseleku Group has a wide programme to cover. They have arranged a series of concerts for Durban and District centres, and for rural areas. Some of these programmes are in conjunction with the work of Co-Operative Societies of which Mr. W. Mseleku is Director. The Group will perform at B.S.C. on May 24 (*Ilanga Lase Natal* May 20, 1944:10).

In 1948 (when, according to Ballantine, a ‘groundswell’ of ‘militancy’ was manifesting as an expression of ‘New Africanism’) Bantu World’s regular columnist, ‘Sjambok’, wrote:

Some Europeans do not believe that Bach, Beethoven, Tshaichovsky (sic) or Chopin can make any impressions (sic) on us ... Increasingly, Africans are appreciating the culture of the European ... They will probably be surprised to find Africans who would be quite prepared to pay a guinea to see a Shakespearian play on the stage (*Bantu World February 7, 1948:3*).

Gentle liberal persuasion adopts a more strident tone of protest in the 1950s. As late as 1954, Walter Nhlapo, maintaining that “the standard of civilization attained by any race, is justly estimated by its care and adoration of art”, tabled the achievements of black South Africans in the performance and appreciation of “western musical classics”. Organisations which fostered an appreciation of serious or ‘classical’ music included the Bantu Philharmonic Society (“which in the late thirties presented the whole Messiah”), the Germiston Music and Study Circle and the Syndicate of African Artists (*Bantu World August 21, 1954:3*). Nhlapo berates as “wholly unfounded” the thought prevalent amongst ‘Europeans’ that:

... music in the higher idiom: from Bach to Walton is beyond the understanding (of black South Africans). They assume they know us best and can rate us as of less consequence or of lower intellectual stature.

The African has developed a profound and penetrating musical mind ...

Give Africans classical music. They are civilized alright. Let them have a taste of the noble things of life and not always the merriment of a Russian holiday carousal (*Bantu World August 21, 1954:3*).

In 1947 Bantu World described the audience response to the (white) Johannesburg City Orchestra’s performance at the Odin Theatre, Sophiatown: While “absolute silence” was maintained during the playing of items, general attentive and appreciative behaviour showed “that a large section of Johannesburg’s African population is ready to welcome the best music” (*Bantu World January 4, 1947:10*).

Attraction of ‘European’ ‘high’ culture remained a feature in every decade: a “huge” and “cheering” crowd of blacks attended a Shakespearian play, acted by whites, at the University Great Hall, and the event received a superlative-laden rave review in the World in 1956 (*The World, May 16, 1956:1*). In

1958 a prominent article in *The World* was headed: “The Kenya Police Band ... (sic) From the Tinkling of Goat Bells to the Delicate Overtures of Rossini”. Two white English band masters, Dennis Walsh and Frank Hornton, had turned “tone-deaf tribesmen into polished performers who make audiences stand up and cheer”. The fact that some band members were illiterate in language, was “more than balanced by ... (their) proficiency in the works of Rossini, Auger, Sousa and other celebrities of the concert world”. The most junior band member was able to astound onlookers with his knowledge of western music theory (*The World* May 24, 1958:5).

The achievements of black individuals in the sphere of serious or ‘classical’ music are frequently found in the black newspapers. In 1954 Doreen Mzobe’s gala appearance at the Durban City Hall was glowingly reviewed, and included the favourable comments which her performance had received in the white press. Dubbed an “African ballad singer”, Mzobe’s performance repertoire included “Because”, “Birds’ Song At Eventide” and “The Rosary” (*Mayibuye, supplement to Bantu World* March 20, 1954:15).

Cultural integration was articulated as both a liberal strategy and reward of paramount importance. Cultural segregation, such as Africans’ exclusion from libraries and theatres (in the early forties, this often occurred even though no official laws enforcing such exclusion yet existed), was bemoaned (*Ilanga Lase Natal* September 19, 1942:7). Clubs and associations fostering black advancement, and perhaps more importantly in terms of the aims of liberalism, ‘showcasing’ this advancement to white South Africa, flourished. Included were the Gamma Sigma Club and the International Club, established by erstwhile members of the Joint Councils, and a meeting-place where blacks and whites were served meals and tea; blacks were barred from entering white restaurants in the mid-1940s. Here multiracial members were entertained by “music and lectures”, which included expositions on Yoga philosophy, Indian art, ‘negro’ poetry, ‘Bantu music’, ‘Bantu Literature’, and a lecture on ‘Bantu poetry’ by H.I.E. Dhlomo, followed by a poem written by a white, A. De Charmoy, dedicated to Dhlomo. “A cultural society” frequented by intellectuals such as R.R. Dhlomo and H.I.E. Dhlomo was known as the Baumannville Cultural Society (*Couzens* 1985:290).

‘Tea-rooms’ were important meeting places of liberal-minded black intellectuals. The habit of drinking tea as opposed to alcohol had been established in the early years of missionisation as a ‘civilised’ pre-occupation, or sign of aspiration to such civilisation. Couzens refers to those “tea-rooms” popular with “prominent Africans”, many of whose names would be listed in Ilanga Lase Natal after having been seen at these prestigious venues, such as Cili’s, Ngwenya’s, Luthuli’s and the Ngoma Club (which was the venue featured in the first all-African cast film, “Jim Comes to Jo’burg”. Adding credence to Prof. Mngoma’s assertion that more self-respecting individuals frequented shebeens than one is led to believe by some (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*), Couzens refers to the fact that there appears to have been a shebeen behind Cili’s, where H.I.E. Dhlomo purportedly drank on many occasions, “presumably when he had had too much tea” (*Couzens 1985:292*).

How many supporters of western ‘serious’ music also accepted jazz as a suitable medium of expression of their ideological thinking cannot be categorically quantified. Certainly Walter Nhlapo, a personal friend of Khabi Mngoma’s, exhibited an appreciation for both art forms. Moreover, Mngoma testifies to the fact that Nhlapo, unlike most of his peers in the press, also supported the commercial black South African music of the late 1950s and 1960s (*Mngoma's writer's interview: 23/4/95*). It would appear that this viewpoint was representative of the exception, rather than the rule. Because jazz is often excluded in instances when ‘serious’ music and art are credited as an effective means of arousing admiration from whites and as a means of gaining admiration and ultimately, freedom, one has to presume that for some members of the intellectual elite, there was little merit in jazz, be it American or African.

However, Mngoma’s perspective of discrimination against individuals showing talent in the serious music sphere is an interesting one: Sal Klaaste, he maintains, was never given the full credit due to him as a serious musician, but was only appreciated as a jazz practitioner (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/94*). From this perspective at least, it would appear that the jazz practitioner’s role was preferable in terms of popularity with both blacks and whites. (See 5.3.2)

4.4.1.2 *Jazz and Vaudeville*

A concert epitomising the ‘liberal approach’ and its reflection in the jazz arena is described in the Social columns of *Bantu World* of 1947. The typifying elements of high standards reflecting black ability and ‘progress’, obsequious attitudes on the part of black elite to whites (together with admiration for the British crown), black American music, vernacular rendering of essentially western-style choral compositions, and the importance of European and American approval, are all present. (See quotation 5.3.3, pp 5-22.)

It is important to note that negro spirituals, which will be discussed below, straddled the realms of ‘high’ or ‘classical’ music and the jazz milieu, and may have played a role initially in bringing intellectuals into the fold of appreciation for American jazz. In 1948, a concert for “African music-lovers” invited them to attend a “film and gramophone-record recital” which was being sponsored by the Bantu Music Festival Committee, and was to be held at the Jubilee Social Centre in Eloff Street. Here a short talk was to be given before the various records were heard, including “Negro spirituals, classical music, Italian operatic (sic), arias and folk songs” (*Umteteli wa Bantu March 27, 1948:1*). Instances in which whites attended concerts featuring vaudeville troupes or companies were reported more and more frequently in the late 1930s and 1940s. Interestingly, these were more often in the variety concert format, in which jazz bands would feature as an item or items on the programme, than in the ‘concert *and dance*’ structure in which the dance would follow the variety entertainment and would typically last until 4 am. (*Bantu World September 4, 1937:5; October 7, 1939:17; Ilanga Lase Natal July 29, 1944:10; Bantu World February 26, 1949:11; October 14, 1950:7; Ilanga Lase Natal October 18, 1952:13; July 2, 1955:12*).

“Durban’s Promising Troupe”, The Zulu Male Voice Party, conducted by the eminent composer, A.A. Khumalo, is worthy of mention, not least because of its excellence in performing standards achieved in western-style choral music and negro spirituals, reportedly lauded by ‘European’ audiences. However, the review in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1939 provides a classic and ironic example of racist reaction to the ‘liberal approach’, which ultimately resulted in legislative ‘backfiring’ on its proponents. Describing

the feats of Khumalo's group, the writer observed that their memorable performances had not endeared them to racist law-makers:

Within the fifteen years of its existence it has broadcast about ten times and has performed before a number of important audiences, among them being the Methodist Jubilee Celebrations in the City Hall, Maritzburg; was once invited to sing before Sir Charles G. Smith, and perhaps their most history-making performance was at the Pavilion last year when, as readers will remember, a storm was raised in the City Council and subsequently resulted in the laying down of the rule prohibiting the appearance of mixed European and non-European performers before European audiences (*Ilanga Lase Natal March 11, 1939:6*).

Bantu World in 1944 referred to the rare occasion on which white bands, specifically "Charles Berman and his Orchestra" and "Ray Martin and his Orchestra", played the music of a black composer, Henry ('Japie') Mokone. It is of relevance to this thesis to note that for some blacks, the perception existed, at least to a degree, that the significance and status of jazz (referred to here as "European Jazz Music") derived from the fact that the music had been appropriated by whites (*Bantu World August 5, 1944:10*).

More than any other musician or band, Peter Rezant and his Merry Blackbirds can be regarded as the epitomisation of the essence of the 'liberal approach of moral persuasion' in its purest form in the jazz milieu. Although they were only one of many bands, particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s, it must be remembered that this jazz band was quite the most famous, the most reported and certainly the most lauded in the black press. As the musical analogy of black liberal thought, the Merry Blackbirds had significant western, Christianised influences in the backgrounds of both Emily Motsieloa and Peter Rezant.

The Merry Blackbirds, Rezant is adamant, became the yardstick of sophisticated urbanity, not only in their playing, but in standards of dress, speech and general demeanour: In all these areas, the Merry Blackbirds strove to demonstrate their achievement of westernisation, ergo sophistication and 'civilisation'. Rezant maintains that he was first impressed by the dress of the British conductor and band-leader, Teddy Joyce, when he had come to South Africa in 1936 to play for the Empire Exhibition: "I had seen what a leader of a band should look like ... There was Teddy Joyce, standing in front of the band dressed in tails, conducting the band. It was a sight! I did not know

that in a few years, I would appear like that in front of a band!” (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

The Merry Blackbirds “set the standard” to which other bands were constantly striving to conform, “if they wanted to be recognised” (i.e. by sophisticated black and white society). Not all bands could live up to the standards of discipline set by Rezant. For example, no member of the Merry Blackbirds was ever allowed to partake of alcohol; anyone caught doing so faced expulsion (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

The Pitch Black Follies, the premier vaudeville company of the late 1930s and 1940s, enjoyed an almost symbiotic association with the Merry Blackbirds. In almost every entertainment review in which this company was mentioned, the Merry Blackbirds are named as the band with whom they always appeared, and whose personnel and accompaniment would invariably complement the Follies’ performances. While occasional concessions to African identity included either primitive or amusing situations from urban life, African songs that were sung included a liberal dose of western-style choral music such as hymns by Bokwe and Soga and occasional indigenous songs and dances. Americentric repertoire was ever-present: for example, one show in 1938 included: “Sing ye Sinners”, “Baisin Street Blues”, “Ole Man River”, “I’ll Never Say Never Again” and “Shoe Shine Boy” (*Bantu World February 12, 1938: 18*).

Griffiths Motsieloa, as talent scout, trainer and impresario, single-handedly impressed black elite and white society alike with his many talents and abilities. Typical of his ilk, Motsieloa went to England in order to study elocution. (Khabi Mngoma recalls how one specific pre-occupation of the informal discussion group of black intellectuals to which he belonged was to correct one another’s pronunciation of English (*Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*). Not even the respected professor and black liberal, D.D.T. Jabavu, could at first understand the need for such seemingly extreme measures. However, on hearing Motsieloa reciting at a concert in English, Prof. Jabavu was moved to publicly apologise for his initial scepticism, and to compare Motsieloa’s pronunciation with none other than the Bishop of the Anglican Church:

And now he said: "It's God's wish that I should ask for an apology". [He was speaking from the stage now.] He said, "Griffiths, I ask you for an apology, because I was one of those doubting (by thinking): "What is an African going to do with elocution?" [Because he (Motsieloa) would recite in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Sotho.] And he said to the Bishop of the Anglican Church: "You can't recite better in your own language than this black fellow did!" *That is the level of where we were! (Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98).*

The ability of band members to read music was a source of pride to Peter Rezant's Merry Blackbirds. In a somewhat convoluted rationalisation for their total eschewal of improvisation, he proudly stressed that every note played was read from scores. While other bands, such as their rivals, and one of the first jazz bands to Africanise American jazz, the Jazz Maniacs, often learnt music by rote from gramophone records, the Merry Blackbirds would only listen to the music after having mastered it from published scores:

... when a musical (*film or record*) was sent out, a Glenn Miller, a Tommy Dorsay or Duke Ellington, we had already received that music through the agents, 20th Century Fox. They had given us that music, and when we now played it 'live', (it was) ... unbelievable! Talking about the whites now, they can't believe it! (We played) ... the same as it was printed, and the same as they (had) heard the band playing (on the record or film) as they had seen in the picture. Because we had the band, we had the instrumentation! (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

In 1947 Emily Motsieloa retired from the Merry Blackbirds after fifteen years as their pianist. A report of the reception held in her honour includes some of the accomplishments of the band. Described in superlative-laden enthusiasm distinctive of the 'liberal approach' (and notably, members of the white band are described as the "stars of the evening"), these successes were considered the means by which black progress in music was endeavouring to capture admission to the status, if not outright membership, of white society:

Mrs. Emily G. Mosieloa's farewell reception at the Johannesburg Bantu Men's Social Centre on her retirement after fifteen years service with the Merry Black Birds (sic) Orchestra will go down the records (sic) as one of the most successful functions to be staged in African musical circles on the Rand. Comprising a large number of Africans and Europeans, the audience, which packed the hall to capacity, was the most distinguished seen in a long time.

...

Making their debut in the jazz world at an impressive performance "Show Boat" - at the Empire Exhibition, Johannesburg, in 1936, the Merry Black Birds followed this first success with a city hall performance at Pietermaritzburg on the occasion of Mr. R.T. Caluza's reception in 1937.

So terrific was the success of this show that even Mrs Marie Dube, noted Negress and soprano, was attracted to sandwich some of her own items in their programmes.

... Since then the Merry Black Birds Orchestra have taken part in important African and European functions, including night clubs, and were at their best when they participated in cavalcade engagements at Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg during the war.

...

The Orchestra rose to great heights when they played Ralph Trehwela's Princess Elizabeth waltz after Mr. Rezant had read a letter from Princess Elizabeth's Lady-In-Waiting at Buckingham Palace, thanking Mrs. Motsieloa and the Merry Black Birds for their good wishes on her engagement.

Dan Hill's (*European*) Orchestra with Miss Artiss as vocalist provided an unusual fare. They were the stars of the evening (*Bantu World* November 29, 1947:18).

4.4.1.3 Ballroom dancing

Along with elite pre-occupation with 'high' or serious western culture, ballroom dancing functions became increasingly associated with black aspirations of urban sophistication, and were invariably dominated by English and American ballroom dancing music. These elegant occasions in Johannesburg were synonymous with the appearance of Peter Rezant's Merry Blackbirds. Significantly, Rezant's identification with the western world was not only symbolised by black America, and he stresses that orchestrated English dance music played a major role in the Merry Blackbirds' repertoire in the 1930s and 1940s. He firmly maintains that the niche market (which included an important white audience) for his type of "*proper jazz ... Western music*", never dwindled and the Blackbirds enjoyed a substantial following right into the 1970s when they finally disbanded. Certainly Rezant's stated aims were to prove the progress of the race, and this progress was decisively and explicitly linked with those members of black and white society who were perceived, by virtue of their education or social status, to have transcended to a state of sophistication and 'cultured refinement', or at least were consciously aspiring to attain such standards (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

In Johannesburg in the 1930s, most ballroom dancing functions were associated with or organised by Griffiths Motsieloa, one of South Africa's earliest and most famous black impresarios and talent scouts who was frequently applauded by the black press for his efforts to impress white South African audiences (*e.g. Bantu World February 26, 1949:11*). Together with his wife, Emily, founding member of the Merry Blackbirds jazz band, pianist, piano teacher, choir mistress and vaudeville troupe

trainer of note, Motsieloa was host, compere, producer and promoter of concerts and ballroom dancing receptions at which a real or perceived appreciation and preference for English and American dance-band music was manifested. Typically, 'grand' ballroom occasions were described in effusively enthusiastic prose. In Johannesburg in the 1930s, the Inchcape Hall was often the venue for such dances, sometimes attended by up to 500 people. Sonny Groenewald's Jazz Revellers was invariably the band of choice in the years prior to 1936 when Peter Rezzant's Merry Blackbirds rocketed to prominence. In one such report, where Groenewald's band is referred to as the "City Revellers Jazz band", the ambience of grandeur and elegance is suitably captured:

Mr G. Motsieloa ,The Famous Bantu Artist Gives A Grand Show

Brilliant as the Inchcape Hall usually is every night, yet on Friday June 24, it presented an even lovelier sight than usual. The decorations showed off at a great advantage, as the many coloured lights blazed forth in full splendour ...

From the time the doors were opened to the commencement of the dance, each part of the city and suburbs poured out hundreds of Bantu towards this haven of pleasure and enjoyment ...

The City Revellers Jazz band did not keep the audience waiting. They gave such exquisite music, as made the dancers uneasy on their seats. Then began a real grand night. Beautifully dressed pairs - immaculate suits of sundry hues on one hand, flowing dust sweeping robes of all makes on the other, added to the gaiety of the evening.

What a spectacle the hall gave, as after every tune, the gaily attired Bantu of all sexes, swayed round and round in response to the tunes played. No change of tune made any pause, but each was accompanied by a change of step. Never was a night so full of merriment. Sharp attentive waitresses served the refreshments to all inclined to have them ...

Among the distinguished visitors were ... Mr. D.N. Denalane carried out the duties of a master of ceremonies, while Mr. Griffiths Motsieloa showed himself a keen, wide-awake and lively host.

At dawn, when the grand show came to an end, all had entire satisfaction and Mr. G.Motsieloa's show came to an end having made everybody happy and carefree (*Bantu World* July 2, 1932:9).

By 1939, the "modern Western Ball-Room Dancing" craze had spread to black youth. In Natal it seemed "to have got full grip of the Durban public", where, as in Johannesburg and the Cape, ballroom dancing competitions became regular occurrences. However, a "visiting critic", "moved ... to boiling vexation" at the bad adjudication at one such occasion, declared that the principles of the art were "standardized ... fundamental" and as "permanent as the law of gravity" and advised readers to study a

specialist series of books on ballroom dancing by Victor Silvester in order to avoid violations in the future (*Bantu World August 12, 1939:16*)

4.4.2 'Fame and Fortune' in the 'Liberal Approach'

A group of black South Africans, part of a choir which went to sing in America in 1892, and who subsequently remained there to study, served as first-hand examples of African achievement and of what heights could be scaled as a result of using their "brethren 'neath the Western sky" as role-models. Having studied at Wilberforce University, Ohio, its namesake, the black South African Wilberforce Institute was established thereafter at Evaton by an ex-choir member, Rev. Henry Msikinya, B.D.. Other 'success stories' from the choir were the Rev. E.T. Magay, B.A., B.D.; Charles Dube, younger brother of Dr. J.L. Dube, articulate exponent of black liberalism and President of the ANC from its inception in 1912 to 1930, whose son, Frederick, received an M.A. degree at Columbia; Charlotte Manye Maxeke, "undoubtedly the greatest leader so far produced among African women in this country", who introduced the A.M.E. Church to Africa, and the Rev. Dr. James Yapi Tantsi, B.D., D.D. (*Bantu World November 23, 1944:4*).

The impulse to achieve success in all fields of endeavour, symbiotic in existence with the need for education, was rooted in both missionary teaching and black American ideological thought.

Clearly implying pragmatic, rather than political goals, Ballantine states that this 'second assumption' "was as liberal as the first but more unashamedly individualistic. Its appeal was not to morality but to economics, its logic not that whites would change the system, but that blacks could play the system. It promised not a better deal for all, but a road out of the ghetto for some" (*Ballantine 1993:44; 1991B:135*). However, research would indicate that financial success, while seen as a coveted affirmation of achievement, was part and parcel of the political strategy of the 'liberal approach', as

clearly articulated in the following article. Here, too, the basis of ideological thought behind these motives can be found in black America:

Sir Harry Johnson, in his book, "The Negro in the New World", says: "If the Negro wants to be respected, to be recognised as a citizen of the United States, he will do what the Jews have done and are doing - make plenty money (sic). With money he can make those who despise him, respect him, those who hate him, love him, and those who shun him, seek his friendship. With money he can build his own schools and colleges and thus acquire that knowledge without which no race can hope to become great and strong."

...

It is not merely because we are black that we are segregated and subjected to discriminating laws. It is because, as a race, we have made no distinctive contribution to the progress of humanity, and have nothing, except our labour, which the world needs to-day (sic). The poor in European society are despised and shunned and so is a race of poor men and women.

... the brains of all intelligent Africans must be mobilised so as to accelerate the process of unity ... It is unity which will enable us to stand on our feet and forge our way through poverty to triumph (*Bantu World April 23, 1938:8*).

A mark of the achievement of 'fame and fortune' was undoubtedly being deemed fit for white entertainment, be it in the form of private parties or in public nightclubs. Here again, the Merry Blackbirds were pioneers and supreme examples of success, followed closely by the Manhattan Brothers (*Mogotsi - writer's interview: 24/6/98*). Private parties flourished in the summer in particular, "in private gardens on the lawns and (among the) flowers" (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

Opportunities were well used to publish the success of musicians. In 1951, it was stated that the Manhattan Brothers had negotiated a contract to entertain London audiences, for which they were to be remunerated at the rate of one hundred and twenty pounds per week, which was a large sum of money in those years, and quite probably more than their white counterparts were being paid in South Africa (*Umteteli wa Bantu March 31, 1951:1*). The Manhattan Brothers' financial success is repeatedly mentioned over the decades. As the "only professional singing group of their type in Africa", they were reported to be "paid large sums of money out of which they pay other entertainers appearing on the same programme" (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 11, 1960:5*).

It is from within this aspect of the 'liberal approach' that the seeds for the more strident assertion of urbanisation which developed largely in the 1950s, was nurtured. The need for economic empower-

ment in the struggle for liberation was defined by Ilanga Lase Natal. On an everyday basis, it could prove more useful than education alone in overcoming white prejudice in a society in which “one of the tragedies of African life today is the frustration and asphyxiation, the kicking about and bullying, the muzzling and humiliation of highly educated and talented, but financially weak Africans” (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 12, 1951:14*). Financial success, inextricably linked to the need for education, was articulated as part of the larger plan to achieve freedom from oppression:

Today, fortunately, the Africans know their economic power both as workers and consumers ... They know also that economic strength will help them in their political struggles for liberation.

...

... professional careers have come to stay, both as a means of self-assertion and economic security ... And it is from this class that will emerge African creative minds and leading spokesmen (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 1, 1951:15*).

Africans, therefore, had to “embrace” opportunities if and when they occurred (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 3, 1930:7*), and “prove” their ability in as many fields as possible. This fact was constantly reiterated (as examples see *Bantu World December 24, 1932:6; August 2, 1941:4*).

For some the ‘struggle to achieve’ individual success was closely allied to the need for “labour and sacrifice in the struggle for freedom”, which a representative of the ANCYL to the World Youth League Festival, Victor Mboobo, referred to in his homecoming speech (*Bantu World January 24, 1948:17*). Providing continual impetus and inspiration for this ‘struggle to achieve’ were ever-present examples of black American success stories.

4.4.3 Special Privileges for the Educated

So it was (that) this elite ... did not ... give that stamp of approval to anything that rocked the boat, because they got all the privileges. You had what was known as ‘exemptions’ for them: they did not suffer the rigours of the pass system because they were exempted from this. They, for instance, got exemptions to buy liquor, got rations of one bottle of gin, one bottle of brandy; (you got given) six litres a month (of alcohol), because you were elite, civilised (and therefore could be trusted), not to drink yourselves silly. Therefore, the fear to lose those privileges was great ... That is how the elite, including a good many of the musicians, would just follow the main stream of things (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

Members of the black elite were granted special dispensations on the grounds of education or economic viability, the latter very often being associated with the former. Special exemptions to own property (albeit in certain limited and specified areas), not to carry passes and to buy alcohol acted as a definite impetus to identify with western, ergo white, modes of behaviour and culture. Thus black liberalism in the South African situation encouraged elitism and association with westernism, and vice versa.

In 1932, the editor of *Ilanga Lase Natal* eagerly reported the fact that the then Minister of Native Affairs, Mr. E. Jansen, had deduced the difficulty of the “Native problem” to lie in the fact that “legislation had to deal with highly educated Natives on the one hand, while on the other they were dealing with those who were little more than barbarians”. This conclusion the editor deduced to “smack of some hope” that educated blacks would escape legislation imposed on the “barbarian class”. Furthermore, the possibility appeared to exist that at a future date, the authorities would assist the “educated Native ... to come into his own” (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 12, 1932:9*). Even more eagerly, the announcement of the imminent granting of exemptions to “Natives belonging to certain classes, such as Chiefs, Government clerks and teachers, will be automatically exempted, as well as respectable and deserving Natives being eligible for exemption by myself (*i.e. M.E. Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs*)” (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 19, 1934:9*).

However, later in the same year, the ever-insightful *Ilanga Lase Natal* published two articles by S.D.B. Ngcobo, B.A., which gave rare perspective. In the second of the two articles, he concludes that “South Africa prefers the raw and tribal Native” to the “Christian, ambitious and educated Native”. This deduction is reached because the result of their education had elicited neither admiration nor polite conduct from whites. Missionisation had produced a new elite class, “a superior, intelligent and cultured class of Natives”. As a reward, the educated black was given only a “semblance of recognition”. He was

... declared to be a fit and proper person to be exempted from the operation of Native Law. But it does not seem that Native Law means all laws affecting Natives. To return to these exemptions, what are they?

An exemption certificate is that which if you produce makes a white policeman treat you gruffly ... It is that which makes your position in the land anomalous. It prejudices your position because you are out of the tribal arena which can be dealt with en masse (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 20, 1934:9*).

However, this opinion was certainly not representative of most of the elite. Its cynical stance was contrasted by the front-page article in *Bantu World*, in response to these same dispensations. “THE MODIFICATION OF THE PASS LAWS: EXEMPTION RIGHTS EXTENDED (sic) TO ALL DESERVING MEN”, proclaimed the headline. This was followed by enthusiastic expressions of satisfaction that the “exemptions to Africans in certain occupations and also to those of good character” were justified, and the “courage and courtesy” of the Minister of Native Affairs were cause for congratulations (*Bantu World August 25, 1934:1,8*). However meagre, privileges thus gained were tenaciously clung to. Nevertheless, even in *Bantu World*, sombre recognition was given to those for whom the horrors of the “pick-up van” were a daily occurrence (*Bantu World October 27, 1934:1*).

Spurred on by white liberal opinion, the cherished hope of full political rights was fostered. In 1941 Senator Edgar H. Brookes, in an article in *Bantu World* entitled “The Bantu In South African Life”, stated that Parliamentary representation was the rightful inheritance of responsible and educated citizens and that “franchise is the badge of citizenship” (*Bantu World June 14, 1941:9*). It would appear that the educated elite with these perceptions, articulated by Mphahlele as “making the system work for them”, were the people for whom the description of “affranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free” given by Fanon and referred to earlier was most fitting (*Fanon 1963:60*). (See 4.3). The special passes and certificates of exemption from petty Apartheid laws went a long way to ameliorate the conditions of everyday life in South Africa, and were fiercely and possessively clung to. Es’kia Mphahlele stresses that one of the aims of Anton Lembede, better known as the father of Africanism and founding member of the ANC Youth League, was to convince educated Africans that their education did not make them superior to other members of black society. This was possibly due to the fact that this attitude flourished in the ANC old guard of the 1940s. Mphahlele makes the point that many political figures came from the ranks of Ministers of Religion, and in this realm, too, leaders were guilty of an ambiguity between the tenets of liberalism and practices needed for political action:

So the people really wanted to be up there, far up the ladder, and be privileged. Education meant for them just privileged ... It was a way of making the system work for them. People who became leaders were (often) Church Ministers; political leaders were Church Ministers. They wanted to have it both ways, right? That is, they wanted to create a mood of protest, political protest; but at the same time, (to) preach to their people to be humble, to be forgiving and that kind of stuff (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

As white Government-fermented attitudes became more hostile and Apartheid took hold, even those exemptions from petty discrimination which still existed proved of little effect in immunising their holders from the hostility and aggression of racist rebukes or even attacks. As one example, a report in *Bantu World* in the 1950s described the assault and verbal insults directed at a Minister of the Presbyterian Church, a Rev. Keith Nkabinde. Significantly this Minister was “having talks with high police officials” on the incidence of crime in the province. In other words, he was a black liberal, keen to liase with his white compatriots. Yet travelling on a ‘European’ bus, for which he had been issued with a letter of authority, he was subjected to a verbal and physical assault by an Afrikaans man who objected to the presence of a “black Kaffir” on a ‘whites-only’ bus (*Bantu World November 14, 1953:1*).

More than any other event or discriminatory law, the withdrawal of special exemptions to elite and educated black South Africans signified a milestone of futility and despair to those who had fervently espoused the ‘liberal approach’.

4.5 THE ‘LIBERAL APPROACH OF MORAL PERSUASION’ AFTER 1950

In the 1950s, liberal sentiments were still to be found, but less often overtly expressed with the naive hope of most of the 1930s and 1940s. Rare articles reminiscent of this tone, though, were occasional, such as the one in *Golden City Post* in 1956, entitled “Kunene’s Conducting Makes Cabinet Minister Think”. The cabinet minister concerned was Tom Naude, the Nationalist Minister of Health, and merely his remark, “I wonder why more Europeans don’t go in for African music”, prompted the use of the optimistic headline (*Golden City Post May 13, 1956:6*).

In 1952, cautious hope is expressed by Golden City Post that all is not lost in terms of African recognition. The fact that the Prime Minister “repeated twice” the assertion that “justice must be done to the Non-European” and that another Cabinet Minister stated the need for a formula for co-existence of races, is eagerly grasped: “Do these statements commit the South African Government to an official policy of friendship and co-operation towards Non-Europeans throughout Africa? If so, can we be encouraged to expect practical expression of this principle in the not too remote future?” (*Golden City Post* October 2, 1955:4).

As late as 1956, an article by Nimrod Makanya devoted to the “stalwarts of the African music world” is of great significance. Here are liberal sentiments of the 1930s and 1940s vis-à-vis the socio-political role of black South African musicians being clearly expressed. Important musicians and stage personalities were listed, including: Griffiths Motsieloa, Mark Radebe, pianist and teacher (of, among others, Khabi Mngoma) and founder of the African Musical Eisteddfod, Johannes Masoleng of the Darktown Strutters and then leader of De Pitch Black Follies, Emily Motsieloa and Peter Rezant, Wilfred Sentso and the Synco Fans, and the Manhattan Brothers. These people were among those to be congratulated on their past and continuous efforts in the typically liberal pursuit, namely to “shoulder the noble work of advancing African social circles”, a task for which Makanya wished them “many more years of fruitful labour” (*The World* January 11, 1956:0).

As another example, an editorial entitled “They opened Up Their Hearts”, which appeared in Golden City Post in the middle of the 1950s expresses the almost naive assertion that despite events to the contrary, South Africans’ “true voice” is not a hard, cynical and unfeeling one. Citing the experience of a farm labourer who had been sentenced to nine months’ imprisonment for theft committed because he and his family were hungry, the assistance which “poured in from all parts of South Africa” was another example of “goodwill between races”. In another instance, blacks had donated blankets to needy whites in the town of Krugersdorp. These incidents, the editor declared, were “shining lights of hope on a dark road” (*Golden City Post* August 14, 1955:4).

Articles expressing the sentiments of the one in Umteteli wa Bantu in 1954 announcing the jazz band contest at the Windmill Theatre under the auspices of Abe Herbert were common throughout the

1950s. Bands were being urged to enter this competition “to show white audiences how snappily they can play”. The writer comments that the fashion of having “African jazz bands at European dances”, seems to have dwindled in the last three or four years. The fact that there have not been many black bands invited to white functions in the recent past is not blamed on any political factor, and the hope is expressed that “when white folk hear how black bandsmen can make their feet itch to dance, there may be more dance-band engagements to come. The Windmill venture will at least give them a chance to find out just how good are the African bands” (*Umteteli wa Bantu May 1, 1954:7*).

In 1954, Zonk’s record review column, “Pick of the Discs: Off the Record”, by Gideon Jay, complimented the management of the Windmill Theatre for its “initiative” in employing African musicians to play to “European audiences”, many of whom “were really staggered at the standard of Show business that was offered them”. The subtle difference between this and other purist liberal reports concerning the presence of whites at black shows, was that the columnist felt that “Promotions of this nature are bound to raise the standard of African Music” (*Zonk June 1954:48*).

An apparent blow to liberal sentiment, the rejection of the African response to the Tomlinson Report was nevertheless couched in moderate tones: the *World* reported that those Africans attending the conference had “praised” the commissioners “when they really deserved it”, and roundly condemned the aspects of it which were the “crystallisation of apartheid”. While at the conference to discuss the report, the African leaders “warmly stretched out their co-operative hand to the Europeans of this country” and hoped that “they will not spurn this wonderful gesture of goodwill”. The unanimity of African leaders as a direct consequence of response to the Report is significant. “From now on the whole world will be able to know what Informed African opinion is”. Based on the meeting, the editor remained optimistic about the future of African political expression at conferences such as these, “not as a museum piece, but as a power house of thought and action” (*The World October 20, 1956:4*).

On the same page, a headline, “Whimpering Children We Are Not”, sets the tone for a bold and assertive attack by the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane at the national conference on the Tomlinson Report held in Bloemfontein. In an atomic age, he asked in an apparently veiled warning, was the voice of the Black man to be treated as that of a whimpering child? “How can people who have gone through

university education here or overseas not be expected to know what they want?" (*The World* October 20, 1956:4).

It is significant to the discourse on black world views of this time to note that while these political statements were measured and thoughtful, an indication of the feelings of the masses is gained from the report of a soccer match in the same edition. Stating that "(black) soccer fans in Johannesburg have a tendency to use the soccer field as a platform to vent their spleens against white South Africa, especially when there's a visiting team", the reporter, Usiyazi, expressed the fact that the Non-White soccer fans viewed the defeat of the Czechoslovakian team by the white South Africans as a "national disaster". Further evidence of the ideological melange and how this is reflected in music taste, may be the fact that this report is juxtaposed with a record review in which "New Orleans Disc by Satchmo" is the headline of an article discussing Louis Armstrong's latest recording, followed by reviews of *kwela* and *maskanda* (*The World* October 20, 1956:5).

In an editorial in *Ilanga Lase Natal* as late as 1953 - especially significant to the discourse, since it is the assistant editor of this newspaper who is the author of 'New Africanism' - sentiments reminiscent of tenets of the 'liberal approach' are again clearly displayed, but this time as a feature of 'the New African'. (This quotation and its sentiments as a facet of this 'philosophy' will be referred to again in chapter 5.) While a burgeoning racial pride is inferred by the use of a capital letter in "Race", as well as references to separatist churches being more successful than their orthodox counterparts, the emphasis, as articulated in the last paragraph in particular, remains unequivocally on optimism in the face of hardship, the importance of impressing Europeans, 'proving' black ability and thereby winning recognition:

It is encouraging to learn of the efforts being made by some of our people to prove their position in life. They have learned the important lesson that is (sic) serves no useful purpose to lament over disabilities, pinpricks and acts of discrimination. The best way to fight our battles is not always to advertise and complain ... It is to show the world the efforts, initiative, strength and achievements of the Race. Human nature being what it is, most people are better impressed and more easily won over by achievements and strength - and not lamentations and a show of weakness. Recently a European audience was surprised to hear about the efforts of groups of African women. ...

To show their thirst for education, not a few groups of Africans have built and are running schools for their own ... Today Africans are penetrating into all careers still open to them, and the more ambitious are

preparing themselves and their children for positions and opportunities not open to Africans yet. Some of these efforts are all the more remarkable because in most cases their (sic) are no incentives except the individual's own self-determination to be efficient ...

But the New African knows that the only way to establish his claims and win recognition is to prove that he can (do) as well as and perhaps better than the next person. For it is only in this way that the winter of his discontent can be made glorious summer (*Ilanga Lase Natal October 24, 1953:19*).

It is of significance to the discussion to follow in chapter 5 that in the 1950s more angry and hostile rhetoric in the black press was often to be found in the same edition as the typically liberal sentiments of awe of 'European' culture and the desire for white approval of black entertainment. As only one example, in an edition of *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1955, an editorial headed "Too Much Beatings" muses, "Perhaps they still labour under the misapprehension that the African of today is that of the olden days who grovelled and thanked in whispers their tormentors" (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 2, 1955:14*). However, the announcement of the fourth annual band contest is punctuated by the proud remark that the standard achieved the year before had "astonished European musicians of repute" (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 2, 1955:12*).

The recognition that white South Africans were indifferent to their demonstrations of achievement and ability in western cultural practices, was a gradual process. As black liberals slowly perceived that their audience or target group - from whom appreciation, and ultimately social justice, was being sought - had slowly changed from white South Africans to foreigners for help in their struggle for human rights and political recognition, so a concurrent, slowly evolving need to educate the 'outside world', and black Americans in particular, of the situation in South Africa, emerged. For former liberal puritans, or those still semi-submerged in liberal ideology, this was translated into a desire to inform black Americans of black South African achievement. No decisive year or event can be attributed to this conversion, but glimpses of this attitude were revealed from approximately the 1950s onwards, while still interspersed with many liberal sentiments, some of which are quoted in this chapter.

Articles in which black Americans were being informed of black South Africa appeared, and the liberal journalists emphasised the transmission of black South African achievement. An emissary of black South African progress, that keyword of liberalism, was Dr. Josephus Roosevelt Coan, M.A., D.D., a

black American and former Dean of the Wright School of Religion at Wilberforce Institute at Evaton in Natal. He had also been General Superintendent of the A.M.E. Church in Southern Africa, and returned to the United States as the College Minister of Morris Brown University College, Atlanta. As a ‘warm’ supporter and promoter of black South Africans and a subscriber to *Bantu World*, he had made considerable efforts to “build a bridge” between the two black worlds, which included teaching “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika” to Negro students (*Bantu World June 9, 1951:6*).

4.6 THE ‘LIBERAL APPROACH’ WANES

From press articles it can be deduced that it was mainly during the 1950s in which the realisation dawned that the ideological outlook generally adopted by the elite had not succeeded. In response to an article in the Afrikaans newspaper, “Die Vaderland”, in which distinctions were drawn between “kombuiskaffers” (“blanket-kaffirs”) and “verteenwoordigers van regerings” (“representatives of governments”), the World irately demands:

... are educated and civilised men like Prof. Matthews, Dr. Xuma, Dr. Molema, Mr. Rathebe, and a host of others, blanket-kaffirs because they are sons of this soil? Is this not untenable and ridiculous? Or is it because this apartheid policy of discrimination between races is so indiscriminating when it comes to discerning between the advanced and civilised Africans and the real so-called “blanket Africans”, who are still emerging from a mode of life not considered in confirmity (sic) with Christian civilisation? (*The World November 23, 1957:2*).

Evidence of this realism was rare in the previous two decades, but *was* articulated by Ilanga Lase Natal as early as 1938. The formation of the Zulu Cultural Society is shown in this editorial to be in direct response by a minority of intellectuals to the realisation that liberal goals were not about to be realised:

It may not be generally known that the Natal Bantu Teachers Union suggested two years ago a consideration of the revival of those of our customs which were not barbaric but were good for the morals of the nation. These (sic) good and bad customs among all nations and the urge which brings this about with the Zulus is that they now find themselves neither on earth or in heaven. Through the arrival of the Europeans with their new customs and laws many of the good institutions of the Bantu were swept with (sic) the bad ones. After the defeat of the Zulu kings and the teaching of the missionaries in conjunction with the law of the Government most of these salutary customs were swept overboard.

Most of those who discarded the old life were led to entertain the false hope that henceforth they would have no longer anything to do with their heathen people and institutions. This went on like that for some years so that the Africans themselves were divided into exempted, educated, and Kholwa Natives while the great majority of their race remained to pursue the old ways. Certain doings in after years, especially recent legislation, convinced the enlightened section of the people that the white man is determined not to have anything in common with the Native Africans, however enlightened and upright.

Thus they begun (sic) to look back whence they came. Some of the customs followed by the Europeans seemed worse than their old ones, for example, their form of dance was and is still considered heathenish and conducive to immorality and the only justification it has is that it came with the dominant races. There are a good number of such customs. It has been proved by experience that civilization alone does not always make people good.

...
... The Zulus are undoubtedly loyal to the Government and nowadays nothing can tempt them ever to be disloyal. When they want to restore some of the salutary customs of their race, there is no idea of backsliding from Christianity nor live (sic) like barbarians, but they want to make themselves respectable and yet retain their identity as Native Africans. The Government and politicians have on many occasions advocated the introduction of a state, whatever that may mean, where the Native Africans will not have any part in the life of the rest of the country but will live according to their own lines. This is a slight response to that cult ... (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 29, 1938:11*).

Exhibiting a subtle shift to a more strident tone, but still urging the use or creation of essentially western compositions, articles in the 1950s became more assertive. Rather than attempting to persuade whites of their worth by noble and patient efforts, African musicians were now “forcing their way through toward achieving recognition in the World (sic) of modern entertainment”: “local Europeans are just becoming aware of how musically modern our African musicians are. ‘African Jazz’ surprises them; ‘Township Jazz’ rocks the Reef; the Jabula Jazz is as new as the Golden City Jazz” (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 11, 1956:19*).

The same article urges Durban musicians to develop self-confidence, stating that “some” believe that Natal has enough talent to produce a show like “African Jazz and Variety”. The coercion of the development of black national pride is glimpsed in the questions: “Are they waiting for a European to give the idea? Are they scared of themselves?” (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 11, 1956:19*).

An article entitled, “African art is being misrepresented”, written at the end of the same year, 1956, by the Ilanga Lase Natal music critic who used the pseudonym, “Bass Cleff”, is deeply significant and warrants extensive quotation:

Ordinary European music-lovers know next to nothing about our musical activities, achievements and degree of artistry. “Nu Zonk,” the “Africa Sings and Dances” group of George Makhanya, and the “African Jazz (and Variety),” to crown it all, were the “mysteries” that happened within a single decade.

...

What some people know and take for the true African art is ngoma plus a couple of other things might have led them to think they know us. That is to say, if for the last 25 years you have been telling them that the jazbantjie (*i.e. isicathamiya*) singers were the Bantu traditionalists, that the gumboot-slappers were the preservers of our African rock 'n roll grace, then, those Europeans know just that and nothing more.

If, thereafter, Zondi or Butelezi came up to them with something unique by way of our African-composed Euro-African songs, then you would be silly to be astonished when your pupils [those Europeans] had their hair standing upright in surprise about it. You would need to laugh at your stupid self as you would have been guilty of misleading them about our true artistic originality and development in the sphere of entertainment.

I am merely drawing your attention to the fact that there are those among us who are daily misrepresenting us in this regard, individuals who, though they know nothing themselves about our much varied musical programme, dare teach others about us (*Ilanga Lase Natal December 15, 1956:20*).

This is an essentially liberal viewpoint, significantly expressed by the mouthpiece of ‘New Africanism’, Ilanga Lase Natal. “Nu Zonk”, “Africa Sings and Dances” and “African Jazz and Variety” were all variety shows in which American music was predominant, and lyrics in the vernacular were invariably either translations of American songs, or composed in American jazz styles, using western harmony and rhythm. These essentially western showpieces, along with the “Euro-African” songs of “Zondi” and “Butelezi”, are the “mysteries” whose loss to the ‘European’ is being bemoaned. The ‘liberal approach’ in music has failed, then, not because the approach is inherently at fault, but because there are “those among us” who insist on “misrepresenting” the progressive African to the white population by using such (inferred) examples of antiquity as isicathamiya, ngoma and gumboot dancing. (Isicathamiya and gumboot dancing were themselves products of urbanisation, but as a recognised proletarian, and specifically mine-oriented, occupation, are clearly not regarded as worthwhile representations of westernisation and its intrinsic meaning of self-worth and ‘civilised’ urbanity in the South African context.)

However, articles like these were interspersed with those expressing more strident cynicism. An example of the changed tone used by some sectors of the black population from the generally mid- to late-1950s is found in *The World* in 1956: headed “The M. A. Who Never Arrives”, the article is devoted to the story of a certain Nimrod Mkele, of Springs, who was the first black South African to

acquire a Master of Arts in psychology. However, in every position which he secured subsequent to his graduation, there “were simply no prospects of promotion”, the “salary was meagre”, and he had concluded: “It appears I am being bypassed”. “Not a man to be put off by obstacles”, Mkele was studying for the Chartered Institute of Secretaries diploma, again the first black South African to take this course. The article concludes with the words which also form its sub-heading: “Aspire though South Africa says you can’t” (*The World* October 31, 1956:5).

In 1957, ‘Bass Cleff’ noted that black South African artists accepted, and even “took pains to obtain”, criticism from white music critics, while being resentful and hostile to any censure or disapproval expressed by black critics. In essence he criticises the fact that, by virtue of their being white, an “Irishman from Dublin” could be picked to adjudicate ngoma dancing, or a white “hobo” considered qualified to judge isicathamiya (“jazzbantie” (sic)) competitions; by inference, a qualified black person would be considered inferior to unqualified whites (*Ilanga Lase Natal* February 16, 1957:16).

The draconian removal of the small concessions granted to select individuals on the basis of their having achieved a certain ‘civilised’ status demonstrated the ultimate futility of cherishing liberal hopes of effecting a ‘moral persuasion’ in the hearts and minds of racist white South African lawmakers. The Ilanga Lase Natal editorial in February 1955 clearly articulated the feelings of black liberals. Resigned to the daily hardships of white police hostility which accompanied Apartheid, the black elite had suffered the humiliations of Government oppression and accompanying white attitudes stoically. In typical ‘liberal’ mode, the editor notes that educated blacks could “excuse” laws which sought to protect whites from blacks, and the introduction of laws as “safeguards of European civilisation”. However, the withdrawal of “long-standing rights” which were the products of “bitter battles”, caused the very antithesis of liberal sentiments, namely, “hearts to swell with bitterness and utter frustration”.

... when these laws go right back and snatch away the rights and privileges we earned with our honour and integrity then well might one ask, “does it pay to be a decent and self-respecting human being?”

Does it pay to try your best to convince the Authorities of your good intentions and your desire to cooperate at all times with Authority?

There are hundreds and hundreds of Africans who have some rights which they cherish and seek to maintain. Some of these are freehold titles to their properties, exemptions from certain laws and Regulations, exemptions from liquor laws and pass laws.

These men applied for these because there were clauses in the laws concerned which offered them these valued rights. They applied to prove to the Ruling Powers that there were Africans who had reached maturity and could be entrusted with responsibilities.

...

Such people should be the pride and hope of any responsible ruling power. It should be proud to have produced dependable men who can be trusted and relied upon. Men who can be pointed out as examples to others.

Surely, it is possible, whatever laws are amended or made, to safeguard the interests of such people if the Rulers really want to prove that they are genuinely concerned in the welfare and progress of the voiceless people (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 26, 1955:18*).

If “important men and women” were deprived of the few privileges they had, they would feel that “nothing counts in this world but the colour of one’s skin”. Perhaps the symbolic end to the ‘liberal approach’ which began decades earlier, lay in the final realisation of the answer to the question posed in the last paragraph:

Can a people so ruled and controlled feel that their Rulers have their welfare at heart and would like to see them develop and progress just like other races among them? (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 26, 1955:18*).

Certificates of Exemption were withdrawn in 1956 in a gradual and what can best be described as misleading process. The World in 1956 reported that the Chief Journalist of the Native Affairs Department who claimed that at that point there was still “no law which compels Africans to exchange their Certificates of Exemption from pass laws for the Green-covered reference book”. They could not be “dispossessed of their ‘Exemptions’ against their will”. The editor noted that “‘Exempted’ Africans are strongly opposed to the confiscation of their exemption certificates” (*The World March 24, 1956:2*). In April the same newspaper reported the double discriminatory blow in which Sophiatown residents, being forced to move to Meadowlands, had to exchange exemption certificates for reference books, or ‘passes’, before “being allowed to go” (*The World April 18, 1956:3*).

Ilanga Lase Natal’s regular commentator, “Rolling Stone”, delivers a tirade of bitterness against the ill-treatment of educated, ‘exempted’ Africans:

... People like Yours Truly with all his recommendations for better treatment are made to feel that they are black and therefore, recommendations or no recommendations they must be treated like “all blanket Kaffirs”. How do Europeans of this type expect us to behave in order to win their sympathy and goodwill?

If we wear their clothes, we are cheap imitations of Whites. If we wear our skins, we are dirty and savage. If some among us ask for better treatment because of our education or social standing: we think we are like Europeans. We are running away from our ignorant fellowmen and do not seek attention: they say Education and Christianity are wasted on Natives. They are never changed. Law-abiding and self-respecting Africans seem to annoy these Europeans more than their violent type of African. Is it a wonder that more and more Africans are becoming hardened at heart daily?

A respectable African is the first to be jeered and sneered at ... He is the first to be asked 'Who the h-l (sic) do you think you are?' if he asks for service. Does it pay or does it not pay to be a good, Law-abiding (sic) and respectable member of the African Community?

Does it? Does it?

We wish to God it did; but daily occurrences, personally experienced, seem to prove that it does not!
(Ilanga Lase Natal January 6, 1951:14).

An editorial in 1959 most clearly articulated the official termination of support by the black intelligentsia for a 'liberal approach' as a result of the failure of the strategy to achieve the once-cherished, utopian conversion of white political sentiment and the concurrent attainment of black ideals. The combined blows of the Group Areas Act and the Immorality Act are chronicled. The tone of the article as a whole emphasises the injustice of the Government's failure to perceive and reward the 'civilised' behaviour of the educated elite. It would appear that the removal of special privileges and exemptions for black elite is therefore the symbolic 'final straw', as it were, which signified white Nationalist imperviousness to any form of educational competence, qualification, or other manifestation of couth (and Christian) behaviour which proved individual black eligibility for the attainment of social justice in South Africa. Indeed, it would appear that to this editor, the subtle perception exists that the refusal to accept the credentials of the black elite is of even more importance than the removal of political representation, or the proposed creation of 'Bantustans' or separate 'homelands' which formed a major cornerstone of Verwoerd's segregation policy. Entitled "Deprivation of rights", the veritable lament of the collapse of the liberal strategy included the following:

Nothing wounds the hearts of Africans more than the growing tendency in government circles to deprive them of the few but cherished rights and privileges they have today ... Many Africans who have suffered this humiliation have not done any wrong or broken any law to justify this retrogressive step being taken.

... The people whom any Government should be proud to encourage and depend on are thus turned needlessly into bitterly frustrated and humiliated human beings.

Hard-working people who saved money and bought properties have found themselves deprived of the right to own such properties because they were in White areas ...

When responsible men and women were deprived of their certificates of exemption, they were driven back into the irritating and discriminatory pass laws from which they had previously escaped because of their good characters and standard of education ... The mockery in this is that these Green Reference Books indicate that the owners once held the exemption certificates but do so no longer ...

Now to add more insult to injury, the Africans are being denied direct Parliamentary representation without consultation or discussion with their accredited leaders ...

... up to now the Government has studiously refused to consult responsible African opinion on these plans. In fact, as far as the Government is concerned, responsible African opinion does not exist: what poses as this opinion is called "agitative and irresponsible" ...

Is this democracy? (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 23, 1959:10*).

Of the utmost historical significance is the fact that the above editorial appeared on the same page as a prominently displayed article taken from the white daily newspaper, the Natal Mercury. The decision by Nationalists and Afrikaner intellectuals to enforce Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Bantu Education, in itself perceived by some black thinkers as a major blow to black progress, is reported. The insightful reference by the white journalist to a perceived Government desire to remove English as the second language of the 'Bantu', so as to "sever" him from "the main streams of world thought" is important to this discourse (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 23, 1959:10*). Nearly two decades later, this decision would prove to be the flame which finally ignited the fuse of anger of the black youth and resulted in the now famous 1976 Soweto uprising, from which event the ultimate collapse of Apartheid can be traced.

Immediately below, an article from the Diamond Fields Advertiser tells of the British television and recording contract offered to Miriam Makeba as a result of her star role in "King Kong". Meaningfully placed within the context of the other two articles quoted from this page, the journalist contemplates the fact that Makeba, having left South Africa, may never return to the South African stage. "We are continually losing our best non-European entertainers", he states, "for the simple reason that they are not given sufficient scope in this country" (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 23, 1959:10*). Ballantine's theory is that the demise of the immense popularity of jazz (he implies that both 'authentic' African and

American jazz were similarly affected) can be more or less pinpointed to the end of the 1950s. The reason for this occurrence is implied to be the wilful intent of the Apartheid state (*Ballantine 1993:7*).

The rejection of a 'liberal approach' by a significant sector of intellectuals is most eloquently articulated in Ilanga Lase Natal in the mid-1950s, a portion of which was quoted above:

Perhaps the life of an African has come to mean almost nothing of value to some persons who still glory in the fact that they are the trustees of the backward peoples.

... if an assault is made on an African scarcely a ripple disturbs the waters of public opinion in South Africa.

...

It is undeniable that to many Europeans in this country the life of a dog is more valuable than that of an African who has a sole (sic).

Does this behaviour enhance their civilisation and christian (sic) beliefs in the eyes of the people they insult and brutalise and corrode with hatred and antagonism?

Perhaps they still labour under the misapprehension that the African of to-day is that of the olden days who grovelled and thanked in whispers their tormentors.

The African of to-day is nothing of the kind: if he does not retaliate on the spot, he nurses a seething grievance which embraces even those who are striving to ameliorate his plight.

This sense of grievance is dangerous and does not help those who are fighting a losing battle to heal the breach between the Europeans and the non-Europeans in this country.

...

It does not pay to speak in glowing terms about the greatness of everything white in this country when such deeds can still be attributed to some of the representatives of this great white Race (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 2, 1955:14*).

4.7 THE IMPACT OF BLACK AMERICAN CULTURE

The following are representative examples of typical advertisements for the concerts and movies regularly staged at the Odin Theatre in Sophiatown in the 1940s:



O-D-I-N THEATRE
SOPHIATOWN

MON. TUES. JAN. 13th - 14th
Great Prize Giving Night For

Harlem Talent Finalists
Monday Night Only

Finalists of this Great Contest will
appear on the Stage

also

Fred Astaire - Ginger Rogers
in
THE SUPER MUSICAL HIT

TOP HAT

Captain America - Episode II
The Dead Man Returns
WED. THURS. JAN. 15th - 16th
BIG DOUBLE FEATURE
PROGRAMME

Jumping Jive! What a Show!

HOT RHYTHM

and

Allergic to Love

(Bantu World January 11, 1947:4).

MON. TUES. MAY 26-27

CRAZY HOUSE

28 Stars 5 Big Bands including

COUNT BASSIE (sic) and his Orchestra

with the Great Comedians
Olsen and Johnson

Last Episode - Black Arrow
"Black Arrow Triumphs"

Next week MON - TUES New Serial
JUNGLE QUEEN

WED. THURS. MAY 28-29

TWO BIG FEATURES

BABES ON SWING STREET

with Freddie Slack and his

Hot Swing Band

JIVE - JOY - JAM SESSIONS

GENE AUTRY in

UNDER FIESTA STARS

(Bantu World May 24, 1947:4)

Similarly, a glance at any movie and entertainment advertisement in the black press in the 1950s shows no discernible change in the frenzied pre-occupation with America. Very often, films or 'musicals' featuring musicians were included in the line-up for the week. As just one example, a caption to a photograph of Bing Crosby and fellow actor in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1952 reads:

Bing Crosby is at his old game of tap-dancing again in the film "Mr. Music," which is showing at the Harlem Theatre, Johannesburg. Here he is in the middle of a scene dressed in a boater and two-tone shoes.

It is a gay film full of attractive songs and dances and has a story which is entertaining and amusing (*Umteteli wa Bantu November 1, 1952:7*).

More than any other country on the continent of Africa, urban black South Africa passionately absorbed American culture. Expressed at times as an admiration bordering on veneration, this condition was not new or unique to the years under discussion here. Specifically, the American jazz craze in black South Africa which developed from approximately the 1920s onwards occurred against a background of a rich historical tapestry, woven by threads of analogous and inspirational ideologies, events and circumstances. These were meticulously recorded and articulated by the black press for decades. The sufferings, triumphs, and achievements-in-adversity of a nation of "Africans in America" (*Ballantine 1993:23*) were a continuous and intense source of comparison, motivation and encouragement for Africans in South Africa.

In 1954, the editor of *Bantu World*, J.M. Nhlapo, quoted from a letter of complaint to the newspaper in which it was accused by an unnamed reader of the “infamous perversion of recklessly Americanising the Africans, whatever this may really mean”. In reply, Nhlapo declared that “By ‘recklessly Americanising the Africans’ in this way our design is to inform them of the doings, thoughts, designs and triumphs of their kinsmen on the other side of the Atlantic” (*Bantu World* July 3, 1954:3).

Forty-four years later, after the abolition of the racist Apartheid regime, one century after the first historic contact with black American minstrelsy, and a decade after Charles Hamm wrote of Paul Simon’s ‘Graceland’ as an “historic closing of the circle” in black South African - black American cultural identification (*Hamm 1988:2*), a Johannesburg newspaper was to report on a function after a play by African Americans and acknowledge a heightened awareness of the “intense fusion of two cultures redolent in suffering and triumph” (*The Sunday Independent* July 12, 1998:4).

Founded on more profound issues than mere similarity of pigmentation, a perceived mutual cultural identity became the pillars on which a veritable bridge between the two black nations was built. The degree of significance accorded this bond was articulated by *Bantu World* in 1932. In the front-page leader article (the whole of the first and second paragraph appearing in capital letters), the headline boomed:

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD AND WIN

... “The *Bantu World*”, writes a correspondent, “has rendered a great service to South Africa, particularly to the Bantu community, in showing the progress made by the Negroes since their emancipation in 1866 - an achievement which disproved the theory entertained by some Europeans, namely, that the African is incapable of advancement.

The distinction achieved by such men of pure African blood as Lawrence Dunbar, Claude Mackay, Dr. R.R. Moton, Dr. Washington Carver, Paul Robeson, Roland Hayes and a host of others has demonstrated beyond doubt that the mind of the African is not different to that of the European. It is the mind of the human race, capable of development when released from the bondage of ignorance and superstition.

... The American Negro is, to quote another correspondent of your journal, “essentially an African.” Apart from being black like the Bantu, he has all the characteristics of the African peoples. His achievement, therefore, is the achievement of the Africans ...

... we are ... justified in being proud of the achievement of the American Negroes; for we feel that it is ours; that it is an African achievement (*The Bantu World*, September 24, 1932:1).

It would appear that from the initial contacts with minstrelsy until approximately the end of the 1940s, the impulse for the imitation of American music and other western styles can largely be understood as belonging to the set of concepts and beliefs which have been described as the 'liberal approach of moral persuasion' and which was largely, but not exclusively, dominant in the 1930s and 1940s. Significant evidence of liberal thought is still to be found in the 1950s. Largely, though, this decade represented a period in which the greatest ideological miscellany was reflected in disparate music styles: conscious and unconscious expressions of differing and even contradictory ideologies found expressions in different genres, some of which were appropriated by opposing political forces. Another group of young intellectuals in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s were distinct from the liberals referred to above. They, too, embraced American styles. In the face of Government policies of segregation which encouraged the concept of a narrow tribalism with ties to rural 'homelands', this practice was intended as an overt and defiant identification with a western credo of urbanisation.

Ballantine states that black entertainment repertoire was derived from "two huge, complex source areas, one American and the other local, which were absorbed into the repertoire in different ways and in different proportions" (*Ballantine 1993:13*). Coplan posits that the expression of an African urban identity based on black American models presented "a contradiction" (*Coplan 1985:139*), thereby implying that the two streams of influence caused some consternation, or confusion of identity, to black South African composers. Mphahlele, on the other hand, emphatically states that the absorption of black American culture has posed no dilemma at all to the black South African. He insists that the identification of black South Africans with black Americans was and is so strong that the two nations feel, and have always felt, united in one common brotherhood. From the black South African perspective, the voice of one is accepted as the voice of the other:

There is no schizophrenia at all. Oh, no! All I can say is that the two of them (*i.e. African and American influences*) got on together, sometimes one subduing the other; sometimes one carrying on the more prominent (role) than the other. But all the time there was a kind of undercurrent, linking both worlds (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

The prominence of the role played by American music in relation to African genres (or in Hamm's frame of reference, the emphasis on the imitation of American music as opposed to its assimilation into

new, syncretic African styles) appears to be related to the prominence, or *dominance*, of specific ideological concepts in disparate social groups. In other words, the degree to which the various American styles were either imitated precisely or transformed by the incorporation of African elements, displays apparent connections to ‘conceptions of the world’ held by these groups in reaction and counter-reaction to political and social developments. This section will examine certain of the ‘conceptions of the world’ or ideological frames of reference held by the intellectual elite which were at play in these decades and their apparent relationship, to whatever degree they were consciously or unconsciously perceived as such, to the adherence of American jazz styles. Argument will be presented to substantiate the suggestion that the ideological contribution of black America was especially significant to the development of the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ most predominant in the 1930s and 1940s. Adherence to black American jazz styles, after initial resistance by some of the elite, was regarded as at least one component of the passport to the hallowed corridors of white ‘civilisation’.

In the 1950s and 1960s, two identifiable generic streams of popular genres are distinguished, possibly linked to two evident ideological thought worlds: the first and more easily recognised, since it was overtly articulated, was that of a small but vociferous group of young intellectuals who emerged in these decades. They exhibited a mindset which was characterised by its fierce professions of *western* urbanity. This was translated into a conscious and fixated obsession with American culture, and expressed by the ‘modern’, progressive jazz styles of *bebop*, *cool* and related styles. The other stream was represented by proponents of new, commercialised genres of jazz-related styles in which African elements were consciously included. Expressed by small instrumental combos, vocal groups and studio bands, the ideological motivation for this preoccupation was not often expressed in the press.

Hamm maintains that the absorption of American styles by black South Africans, beginning with minstrelsy in the nineteenth century and continuing into the 1970s (with the advent of the ‘twist’ and ‘soul’ music as distinct landmarks (see *Erlmann 1983:150*)), was characterised by three distinct phases: importation, imitation and assimilation (*Hamm 1988:4/5,7,22,31*). While all American popular styles appear to have been imported into this country, the imitation of some by black South Africans was limited; others, while imitations existed, never reached the assimilation stage. The crux of his

thesis is that the assimilation stage, in which black American styles are welded into a new syncretic product with a recognisable African sound aesthetic, represents the ultimate stage of identification with, and thus, acceptance of, that style.

Of significance to this work is the fact that each - but in particular, the last - stage of appropriation appears to be motivated by the degree to which the respective 'conceptions of the world' of the two nations are perceived to be mutual at different stages in their history. (And by which stratum of black society these convictions are consciously or unconsciously perceived, and therefore the music is appropriated). By definition, the 'assimilation' stage falls into the category of the Africanisation of American styles, and will be discussed in chapter 5. The present chapter will be chiefly concerned with reasons for the depths of identification which led to the stages of importation and imitation. A subtle and gradual evolution of 'conceptions of the world' vis-à-vis black South Africa's perception of black America is reflected in the press rhetoric surrounding the 'imitation stage' of this process.

4.7.1 Black American-Black South African Identification

A leader article in 1932, under the heading "Slaves, Now Rich and Free: Amazing Feat of Negroes to Inspire Bantu" refers to the book by Sir Gordon Guggisberg, "The Future of the Negro". The editor comments:

The Negro is essentially an African. In the culture which he has created in American society is embodied all the human qualities which he has inherited from Africa. It is often pointed out that there is no comparison between the race problem of America and that of South Africa. This is a misleading idea. South Africa, in her endeavour to solve the so-called Native problem, will do well to study American methods and put some of the American spirit in (sic) dealing with this burning question (*Bantu World August 20, 1932:1*).

The black press ardently strove to inform readers of the irrefutability of deep and inextricable bonds with black America. An insidious ostinato theme of white (racist) South African denunciation of this relationship is often discernible, and is met with strident protestations or even defiance. While urbanisation can also be expressed by association with other western (predominantly English) forms,

assertions of urbanisation and kinship with black Americans are by definition overlapping and mutually dependent concepts (*Bantu World* February 21, 1948:3; *Umteteli wa Bantu* April 30, 1949:5).

A 1955 article by jazzman and music critic, Todd Matshikiza, in the regular entertainments column, “Nite Life”, was entitled: “Our Girls Dance Way To Success”. “Our Girls” referred to the ballerinas who had participated in the ballet dancing demonstrations held at the B.M.S.C., but more specifically, to a black American ballerina, Kathleen Stanford, to whom the majority of the space and a large photograph was devoted. Referring to her as “one of our own girls, although she is in far away America”, Matshikiza chronicles her international successes and then asks: “If Kathleen, who is five-foot four, can succeed so well in such well-known countries, is there any reason why we cannot produce talent to travel the same way of fame as Kathleen Stanford has done?” (*Golden City Post* March 27, 1955:7). (Note that Matshikiza, like Bloke Modisane and Aggrey Klaaste, can be defined as part of a throng of *un*-Africans, who used Americentric culture as proof of their state of westernised urbanisation, to which African culture or its derivatives were anathema. This subject is discussed below.)

While denouncing “white men who have endeavoured time and again to show that between the African and the American Negro problems there is a vast difference” and attempting to prove the fallacy of these assertions by a series of articles in *Bantu World*, a distinctly liberal tone is audible. For example, in one article, the enormous suffering endured by black American slaves was ‘compensated’ for by their “contacts with civilisation, with education and the Christian religion” (*Bantu World* March 11, 1939:4. See also *Bantu World* March 18, 1939:4; March 25, 1939:4; April 8, 1939:4; April 15, 1939:4; April 22 1939:4; April 29, 1939:4).

A number of factors affirmed the common heritage of the two nations: while the traditional orthodox Christian denominations remained firmly within the fold of liberalism, the black American inspiration provided another, more assertive branch to the notion of Christianity as a prerequisite of ‘civilisation’. The establishment of the A.M.E. Church (the African Methodist Episcopal Church) in South Africa in 1844 was a milestone development: this was an example of black America having recognised Africa as

its ancestral home; advances to black South Africa based on a common brotherhood had emanated from black America. One of the separatist all-African churches, the A.M.E., was in a front-page leader article declared to be a “Strong Link Between Negroes And Africa And A Channel Through Which They Are Helping In Redeeming Her Peoples”. Recounting the history of this church in America, an element of protest is described in the “resentment” felt by the “the intelligent Negroes” who were not allowed to sit in the front seats of white churches during the days of slavery. Prompted by “an ardent desire to worship God freely and without humiliation”, the A.M.E. church was established in 1816 (*Bantu World December 9, 1933:1*).

Why they thought of Africa when they knew very little of this continent and its people is a question that has yet to be answered. But the fact that they thought of Africa when they established the Church is significant, and to me it means a great deal. If the children of African slaves, of men and women who were captured from Africa by unscrupulous slave traders and sold at the market places to the highest bidder, could remember the home of their ancestors at the time when their faith was put to the test, it is no exaggeration to say that it was part of God’s scheme of things (*Bantu World December 9, 1933:1*).

In 1941, a letter to *Bantu World*’s ‘The Reader’s Forum’ discussed the term by which the black population in South Africa should be addressed. (In the 1940s the generally acceptable and most common term was ‘Bantu’; the use of the term ‘Kaffir’ was acceptable in earlier generations but now considered racist and derogatory). The writer concludes that by virtue of their common heritage, either ‘African’ or ‘Negro’ should be used for their pertinence and inter-changeability:

The word Negro is derived from the Latin word *Neger* which means black, and man spoke about Negroes as a race of blacks whose native land is Africa.

The Negro and the African are one, the African race is a race of blacks spread all over Africa (*Bantu World February 15, 1941:5*).

Similarly, the “folklore and music” of American ‘Negroes’ was “brought from their African Homes”. The “essential character” of the Negro, like the black South African liberal, is manifested in the spiritual, which, with its “weird beauty and soul-stirring power”, expresses no bitterness or revenge. Rather, the “Christian sentiments of faith, hope and love” are communicated in the face of ill-treatment - and as part of the liberal strategy for ultimate advancement (*Bantu World March 18, 1939:4*).

The 1950s saw an upsurge of dialogue in the press between the black communities of America and South Africa in the form of a flurry of articles on and from the United States. An almost feverish need for deepening the mutual acquaintance was continually expressed. In 1954, the editor of *Bantu World*, J.M. Nhlapo, informed readers that *Bantu World* was read in different parts of America, and that he, as editor of the newspaper, regularly received “American Negro newspapers” (*Bantu World* July 3, 1954:3). A series of articles from America by Nhlapo, generally called “Letter From U.S.A”, was prominently featured. The ‘Negro’, Nhlapo stated in the September issue, is “so much like his African brother in colour and many other respects.” However, the black South African could learn much from the Negro. For their part, Negroes were “extremely keen to learn about Africa, which one of them called ‘Our Palestine’” (*Bantu World* September 13, 1952:3; August 30, 1952:3; October 18, 1952:3; November 22, 1952:3; December 13, 1952:11, etc.)

Mphahlele recalls being swept up with the rest of black society into the American ethos which permeated township life, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s. Fascinated by American movies, from the ‘silent movies’ to the ‘talkies’, an Americentric culture appeared to offer an irresistible escape from the harsh realities of black South Africa, which “grew on us”. Integral to this fascination was American jazz, which was featured on both film and gramophone records. Mphahlele emphasises that the reasons for the fascination, the transitory elusion of freedom from oppression offered, were unconscious:

There was something about it which we would not have known at the time, which I can only say with hindsight, (and) that is: one of those ways in which people felt (able) to protect themselves against the hurts of everyday life, and the country, was ... to move out; to have something that will take you out of the country, even for an hour, or an hour-and-a-half, if you are watching a movie. It was a great release, and I did find it a great release, ... in thinking back on it now ... Always ... we were chasing after that kind of release. Also there was a false sense of *bigness* about the things we were seeing. Bigness in the sense of a flourishing life. We imagined black Americans were big people, really, and in our imagination we saw them as way ahead of us in progress. And of course, it was quite true (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

4.7.2 American Influence and the ‘Liberal Approach of Moral Persuasion’

Mutually dependent and largely symbiotic in existence, the ‘liberal approach’, predominant in the press in the 1930s and 1940s, drew much of its lifeblood from and largely gave impetus to the adoption of

black American culture by those who espoused its tenets in black South Africa. However, from within this ideological vantage point, there existed various shades of opinion and hence, possible motivations for association with America. To some, the white South African government was benevolent, and emulating the example of black Americans would unquestionably inspire this essential benevolence to a recognition of African achievement and a concurrent realisation of the worthy African's right to liberation. To others, particularly after the war, the white South African government was perceived as having rejected the perceived noble tenets of other foreign colonialists, and was following its own racist agenda. A small section of the black elite who were now more hostile to white South Africans and less convinced of their essential benevolence, were nevertheless bent on coercing their approval, without which freedom from oppression was perceived to be impossible. For these black South Africans, whom we shall for purposes of categorisation continue to refer to as proponents of the 'liberal approach', there was an element of protest and defiance in their imitation of black American and other western styles. To some blacks within the liberal fold, America merely provided examples of *individual* achievement, to be used in individual effort; to others, at various times in the different decades, but particularly in the 1920s and early 1930s, emulating American achievements represented a direct source of imminent emancipation.

During the entire period examined in this work, African-American intelligentsia provided a direct source of inspiration and example of a liberal outlook: black writers, musicians, religious and political leaders in America expressed sentiments that were to be reported and echoed by intellectual journalists, editors and politicians in South Africa; the repercussions of this intense and conscious co-option of a black American 'thought world' were to be felt, politically and culturally, for decades to come. One of its most striking effects was the self-esteem which black South Africans gained by the appropriation, by virtue of common birthright, of black American cultural pride. In the early stages of the manifestation of the 'liberal approach', this was of a humble, modest and vulnerable type; in the 1950s and early 1960s flashes of an assertive, fierce dignity are observed. The full-blown black consciousness of the 1970s had at least some roots embedded in this era; one in which Africa celebrated its black American links, and black America discovered its African roots (*Erlmann 1983:150; Hamm 1988:2,27,29,31,32,36*).

A culture - for in its heyday, that is what it became - of adulation and emulation of American entertainment styles, began with minstrelsy, as far back as the 19th century. Erlmann highlights the important legacy of the minstrel theatre in terms of laying the foundations for the spirit and ethos of black liberalism:

Minstrel humor closed the ranks of the black community and ultimately helped to restore racial confidence. Thus it is a perfect illustration of the effects of minstrel performances that as early as 1904 the Inanda Native singers persuaded doubtful concertgoers who “did not think there is anything worth seeing which could be done by blacks”, of the viability of black values (*Erlmann 1991:64*).

All black South African-American relations until the 1890s were limited to contact with *white* Americans, who were mainly missionaries. The first mission school, Adams College, was established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1853, followed shortly thereafter by the Inanda Seminary. Hamm stresses the point that, although the role played by missionaries in terms of the “pacification of dispossessed populations” was later to be judged by history as an important facet in the colonisation process, this idea was never conceived of at the time. Rather than colonisers and exploiters, American missionaries and educators were perceived as “doers of good deeds” (*Hamm 1988:9*).

The first black South African contact with black American entertainment styles was a mediated one: there is evidence that a white American minstrel group performed in this country in 1858, followed by the American Christy Minstrels in 1865. These performances were essentially for white audiences, but blacks were occasionally allowed to stand at the back of venues, or occupy allotted segregated areas. While black South Africans began to imitate these groups, it is important for this discourse to note that the genre of “blackface minstrelsy” became the “dominant form of popular *white* musical and theatrical entertainment in South Africa” for the next three decades (*Erlmann 1991:31*). In terms of this work, two important factors are of relevance here: black American music was enthusiastically embraced by white South Africans; the image of black America had undergone a ‘laundering’ process, and this ‘white mediated’ product was also accepted by *black* South Africans. Hamm speculates this music to be “at best one step removed from the music of black Americans [white Americans composing

and performing pieces supposedly reflective of black music and culture] and at worst four steps away [white South Africans imitating white Britons imitating the white American perception of blacks]” (*Hamm 1988:3*).

The first black American minstrel group to perform in South Africa was the Virginia Jubilee Singers, led by Orpheus M. McAdoo, who arrived in Cape Town in June 1890. Their visit was extensive and had great impact on black South Africans. They performed in different centres in South Africa between 1890 and 1892, and returned in 1895 for a further three years. By the end of the 1920s, a proliferation of black minstrel troupes were entertaining black township audiences in South Africa; significantly, many were from the intellectually elite rungs of mission school pupils (*Hamm 1988:3,4*). Minstrel styles had thus been accepted by South black society as appropriate music for entertainment; either because the styles were evoking images of - and strengthening identification with - black America; or more probably because, in addition to this, the music had been appropriated by and was highly fashionable in white South African society.

For the following three decades a deluge of American music in the form of gramophone records and sheet music, as well as films featuring American musicians, engulfed white and black South Africa. (Because of Government policies, the two societies of this country can be referred to as two distinct nations.) Black South Africans adopted ragtime, followed by dixie, with enthusiasm. Along with some British and European ballroom music, American jazz became a primary resource pool for entertainment repertoire in the 1920s and 1930s.

Vocal jazz groups in imitation of the American Manhattan Brothers, Inkspots, Mills Brothers and Andrews Sisters mushroomed in South Africa. The most famous of these included the (South African) Manhattan Brothers (the vocal group which flourished from the 1930s to the 1960s), the African Inkspots and Lo Six in the 1950s. The most popular were undoubtedly the Manhattan Brothers who, “in American styled clothes”, invariably managed “to appear immaculate, complete with red carnations in their buttonholes” (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 11, 1960:5*). Renowned bands from Johannesburg that played American jazz included the Merry Blackbirds, the Jazz Maniacs and the Harlem Swingsters;

from Pretoria, the most frequently mentioned bands were the Jazz Ramblers, the Swing Aces and the African Rhythmers; and in Cape Town, the most famous and popular black band appears to have been the Merry Macs.

Most significant for this discourse is the fact that the first record of the Manhattan Brothers was quoted as having “started a new trend in African music, a trend that broke away from the accepted style of singing, which was straight male voice choir” (which, in the context provided by numerous other reviews, can be understood as referring to *isicathamiya*) (*Ilanga Lase Natal June 11, 1960:5*). The “new trend in African music” was in fact intrinsically *western*: the Manhattan Brothers had appropriated American vocal jazz and specifically imitated the style of the American vocal ‘swing’ groups, in which typically four voices sang in close harmony. While certain numbers demonstrate ‘assimilation’ (e.g. *Umlilo* [Gallotone GE 939] “progresses in eight-beat phrases built over a single insistent harmonic underpinning”; “Unonkisa Kae” [Gallotone GB 1819] “unfolds over a four-bar harmonic ostinato” – *Hamm 1988:8*), the major portion of the Manhattan Brothers’ repertoire in the 1940s and 1950s, like those of subsequent black South African vocal groups, essentially consisted of the imitation of American close-harmony vocal swing. This practice was encouraged and lauded throughout the 1950s and included many translations of well-known American jazz songs into the vernacular. Vocal groups were praised for indulging in this often highly commercially successful exercise. (As only one example, the Manhattan Brothers translated “Chatanooga (sic) Shoe Shine Boy”, which then became “Umtwana Wezizwe” (Gallotone GB 1855) (*Zonk March 1954:45*).

Variety programmes, with or without dances to follow, were popular throughout the period under discussion, and were decidedly Americentric. There is mention, from the 1940s onwards of “Bantu sketches” in the work of the troupes. However, it is of great significance to the discourse that in reports of shows in which individual items are reviewed, emphasis or lavish praise is invariably given to the *American jazz* styles, rather than the African elements of the programme. As an example of this recurring tendency, a “Variety Show” at the Odin Theatre, Sophiatown, in 1950, consisted of an evening’s entertainment in which “singing and dancing”, an “exhibition of ballroom dancing” by “a man named Yankee Danny” and partner, boxing and a “picture show” were all included in the programme. The only two musical items singled out for special mention were “Cow Cow Boogie” and “Miss

Marjorie Timm”. The latter provided the supreme item of the night – “I’m in the mood for love”, and “was a beauty of ebony as she stood on the stage singing like a negress” (*Bantu World September 16, 1950:10*).

In the 1930s and 1940s a feeling of urgency to develop to the level of ‘progress’ which black Americans appeared to have attained, was generally expressed in effusive prose. However, in puritan liberal stance typical of this period, black South Africans’ pride at being part of a common brotherhood was always expressed with a modicum of self-deprecation. This is clearly demonstrated by the following front-page, lead article in *Bantu World* in 1933. Headed “DR. P. ka. I. SEME APPEALS FOR UNITY AMONG AFRICANS”, his presidential address to the ANC convention which had just been held in Bloemfontein was quoted:

... it is our desire to extend our feeble hands to our grown up brothers in other parts of Africa, and to the emancipated slaves in the United States of America asking for their help, and to offer thanksgiving to God for their emancipation.

We need their help and their constant prayers for us in this country, where the great leaders of the White race so publicly declare that it is their duty to disown any obligation, as elder brothers, to help the Africans to develop into manhood. A White South Africa is breaking down to-day (sic) the edicts of white emperors and kings, who took possession of this great Continent centuries ago, in the name of the almighty God to protect the Africans and to help them develop into manhood, like all the other civilised nations of the world ...

... the world, with its hoary centuries of civilisation, is looking upon you, perhaps wondering whether the child race will be able to steady its march forward into the manhood of other nations of the world ...

The mighty wheels of progress will grind into powder everything that dares to stand in their way. There is no other alternative (*Bantu World January 14, 1933:1*).

A clear expression of black American inspiration for black South Africa’s attempt to effect the ‘moral persuasion’ of whites is expressed in an article in 1939:

What more can the Negro do? He can gird himself with patience - not the patience to submit meekly to the perpetual (s)ubservient status of hewers of wood and drawers of water, but the patience to improve himself, educationally and otherwise, to that point where there can be no question of his fitness for full citizenship. He has made progress; he has won friends in the white race; he has dis-armed (sic) much prejudice; has gained much respect and much self-respect; but he has yet a long and weary, agonizing road before him. What he gains he cannot gain from violence, he cannot gain from force; he must gain it by creating confidence in his own ability and by stimulating a stronger sense of justice in those who have economic and political power (*Bantu World August 12, 1939:4*). (Own underlining.)

In an article in the Natal newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, in 1923, three streams of black American political philosophy are articulated, viz:

1 Garveyism. Marcus Garvey advocated an ideology which

... stands for the freedom of the Negro or Native from all European rule and that the European should at once give them all the rights of a sovereign people and evacuate to them a large portion, if not the whole, of Africa, their Ancestral country

2 Duboism. This leader

was an opponent of Dr Booker T. Washington and aimed at the recognition of the Negro by the European as an equal participant in the blessings of civilisation which has largely been the product of the European's brains ...

3 Washingtonism. Of the three, the article states,

... the principles and methods of the late Dr. Booker T. Washington, seems the best to follow inasmuch as it is the safest and most productive of permanency and lasting good. These are that the power and intellects of the white is (sic) fully recognised and faith is put upon Negro or Native ability to help himself and gradually to rise in the scale of civilisation along sane lines

(Ilanga Lase Natal June 29, 1923:5). (Own underlining.)

However, there is evidence that this opinion - for the most part the one promoted by black South African newspapers, and by *Bantu World* particularly - was very much the product of an elite, urban mentality. A "Special Correspondent" wrote in *Umteteli wa Bantu* of a night spent in a rural kraal. Here "We were asked if we were American Negroes who had come to deliver them from the bondage of farm life. Our reply in the negative saddened them considerably" (*Umteteli wa Bantu October 8, 1927:3*).

Twenty-five years later, commenting on the duration of black South African identification with black America, a journalist in the *Sunday Independent*, a national weekly newspaper, was to write:

... Walter Sisulu once told me in an interview of how, as a young boy, he and many of his fellow villagers in the Transkei believed that Marcus Garvey, the liberator of all African people, was going to fly in from the north to free them. The villagers had even cleared an airfield for him.

It was Sisulu who, many years later, in the 1950s, hoped that black American leaders, such as the singer Paul Robeson and the activist and writer W.E.B. du Bois, would help to organise a Pan African Congress. Three decades after that, it was the predominantly black American lobby in the US congress that helped to impose comprehensive sanctions against apartheid South Africa (*The Sunday Independent* July 12, 1998:4).

An article by R.V. Selope Thema in 1951 articulated the effect of Garveyism on workers who had joined the I.C.U. in the 1920s. Marcus Garvey had called upon “400 000 000 Negroes of the world to organise for the redemption of Africa from the clutches of aliens”. He inaugurated a “Back to Africa” movement in America, which according to Selope Thema, “made him the idol of a large section of the African people”. Confirming the beliefs of the young Sisulu expressed above, and probably alluding to the radical thought of the extremist wing in the Africanist debate raging at the time of the article, Selope Thema maintained that Garveyists had entertained the false hope that “American Negroes, under his leadership, would one day overrun South Africa and sweep away the whites into the sea” (*Bantu World* December 29, 1951:6).

Hill & Pirio declare “the Garvey phenomenon” of the inter-war years to have been downplayed by historians, who have tended to view it “as completely derivative or else as a kind of local aberration from the political norm” (*Hill & Pirio* 1987:209). According to these writers, Garvey’s message “found the most sustained organisational response” in Cape Town, which became a “principal radiating point” for the movement (*Hill & Pirio* 1987:214, 215). Important for the discourse on the “New African” to follow in chapter 5, is that for the Garveyists, the “American negro”-archetype had come to symbolise “a radical black consciousness” as opposed to the liberal black consciousness epitomised by Booker T. Washington and Aggrey (*Hill & Pirio* 1987:216).

However, the black press, as reflective of an influential sector of elite mentality, clearly accepted the more gentle means of moral persuasion as expounded by Washington and Aggrey, as well as in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” (*Stowe* 1938), over the confrontational approach of Garvey (*Couzens* 1985:99). Hamm clearly enunciates that black South Africa’s image of black America until the 1950s was an artificial one, based on limited contact between the elite of both countries. Whereas the music emulated by black South Africans was that of black American performers, it was still ‘mediated’ by a white music

industry, and in typical liberal strategy, was intended for the white market of both countries (*Hamm 1988:13,14,35*):

But just as African perception of the status and achievements of black Americans was shaped and distorted by the limitation of direct contact to a handful of relatively privileged individuals from each group, and by dependence on the media for information, so the African perception of black American music was limited by similar factors. It seems fair to generalize that most “Afro-American” music imported into South Africa before the middle of the twentieth century was mediated by and acceptable to white Americans. It was imprinted with white taste and white styles; and in the process of being transformed into a commodity for white consumers, it had lost much of the African identity so unmistakable in many forms of Afro-American music performed and enjoyed by blacks themselves at this time (*Hamm 1988:15*).

The ‘founding father’ of the set of philosophical beliefs which dominated educated urban black South African society was Booker T. Washington. From the 1930s to the 1950s, black journalists, educators and political leaders earnestly and insistently declared the teachings of this black American to hold the promise of salvation for South African blacks. *Bantu World*, in particular, shows itself to be champion of the conviction that in Washingtonism lay the salvation of South African blacks, or at least, the educated amongst them. Prominent articles in which the specific doctrines of Washington were promoted as example, inspiration and analogy, include: *Bantu World* July 22, 1933:1; July 7, 1932:8; March 24, 1934:8; October 30, 1937:8; August 17, 1940:4; November 30, 1940:9 February 14, 1948:3; April 17, 1948:3; May 8, 1948:3; September 18, 1948:2; April 28, 1951:5.

In the leader article in *Bantu World* in August 1932, Washington, as “the real pioneer of the Negro’s progress and the founder of his prosperity”, is declared to be “the greatest Negro America has yet produced”. Maintaining that “South Africa is in dire need of such a black man”, the editor articulates the essence of a black ‘liberal approach’ as prescribed by Booker T. Washington: “By preaching the gospel of hard work, self-help, self-reliance and the building-up of good character, he made the Negro win the sympathy of the white man and thus opened the way for the co-operation which enabled the Negro to help himself” (*Bantu World* August 20, 1932:1).

The life of Washington was in itself as inspirational to blacks in South Africa as in America: born as a slave boy in a log cabin, he “never knew the experience of a family meal” or enjoyed a game as a child. After emancipation, he followed his great desire to be educated, and set out on foot to Hampton

Institute, hundreds of miles from his home. The harrowing tale of his journey and subsequent educational achievements aside, his racial attitudes during the period of “Reconstruction” which followed emancipation were the source of inspiration to black South Africans who had been educated while enduring and despite the many hardships of oppression in South Africa.

A review of the book by Basil Mathews, “Booker T. Washington: Educator and Inter-Racial Interpreter”, which supplemented the earlier autobiography, “Up from Slavery”, describes it to be “the story of Booker Washington’s struggle for inter-racial co-operation”. Drawing inferred parallels to the “more militant attitude” prevalent amongst certain blacks favouring an “Africanist” oppositional stance (see 5.3.4.2), Washington’s principles, as articulated by Mathews, are expounded:

His policy of patient persistence in pressing forward to take the next feasible step reflected his belief in the inevitability of progress so long as the Negro continued to improve his education, increase his economic hold upon land and other forms of property, and advance his business and professional status. For him politics was in the fullest sense the science of the practicable: ‘let down your bucket where you are.’ He believed in change without a break of continuity; and that this can be achieved by persuasion and economic pressure. He was profoundly convinced of the fatuity of violence and head-on collision (*Bantu World May 19, 1951:6*).

Another black American who epitomised and inspired black liberalism, and in particular its espousal of hope and justice as embodied in the Christian doctrine, was James Emman Kwegyo Aggrey. In 1952, the columnist “Sjambok” was moved to write:

This is the time when we should ... say: “Aggrey thou shouldst be living at this hour; Africa hath need of thee.” We cannot call Aggrey back, but we can recall the things he said in the flesh, and use them as a balm for healing of the wounds of the racial disharmony of to-day ... Aggreyism is, among other things, a philosophy of faith in the ultimate triumph of what is right ... Let us keep our faith firmly fastened to the power of what is right: “and let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not: The present wrongs will ultimately be conquered by right, virtue will ultimately supersede vice, and in the place of the present discords - be they domestic, racial or international - harmony shall reign”, says Aggrey (*Bantu World February 9, 1952:6*).

The philosophies of liberal black Americans were enthusiastically adopted and encouraged by like-minded white South Africans, from whose ideological ranks future members of the South African Liberal Party were to emanate. In the Smuts government in the 1930s the member of parliament, Jan

H. Hofmeyr, became known in the black press for his conciliatory and encouraging utterances. In one such speech at Fort Hare in 1930, he quoted the simile used by Aggrey, who

... was wont to liken the race problem to the relation of the white notes and the black notes of the piano, each different and diverse, but whose joint contribution is necessary for the harmony ... There are white notes and black notes in South Africa and for the fullness of the harmony of the life of the nation we need the contribution of both (*Bantu World August 20, 1932:4*).

Interestingly, Peter Rezzant, whose Merry Blackbirds can be said to epitomise black South African liberal thought in action, clearly recognises Booker T. Washington as an influential source in his life (*Rezzant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*). Khabi Mngoma, on the other hand, a 'serious' western musician and singer of note, but a highly - and unfashionably, amongst most of his intellectual peers - politicised and insightful thinker who also actively promoted African culture, states that "some of them (i.e. black American leaders) were not very attractive at all because they were sort of Jim Crow-nice-attitude (types)". Rather, Mngoma was influenced by the "Martin Luther King and Malcolm X-type of attitude" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

It would seem fair to speculate that typical pro-white, petit bourgeois sentiments expressed by black South African politicians and intellectuals were emanating from the select elite of black America. As one of many examples, the editor of *Bantu World* articulates the pertinence of Washington's advice to black South Africans in the main editorial column in March 1934:

No one (sic) can deny that the Africans in this country are exactly in the same position as the Negroes when Washington came upon the scene. They are specialising in grievances. Indeed they have men who have made it their duty to go about the country preaching the gospel of complaint ...

The Bantu people cannot hope to achieve success in life if they follow men who are unable to see the brighter side of their unfortunate position, if they follow men who, in their determination to fight against oppressive laws, are unable to appreciate the good that certain Europeans are doing for their race. The wonderful progress made by Negroes in the sixty years of their emancipation could not have been achieved without the co-operation (sic) and guidance of the white man. While it is essential that the Bantu people should learn to stand on their legs it is nevertheless true that for some time they will need the assistance of Europeans in every sphere of human activity ... Our advice to them, therefore, is "take advantage of the helping hand extended to you by the European of goodwill" (*Bantu World March 24, 1934:8*).

The fundamentals of the ‘liberal approach’ are expressed above, viz: optimism in the face of hardships; the necessity of ‘progress’ or self-help; but alongside the latter, the necessity of acquiring the collaboration and assistance of ‘Europeans’ of goodwill. Not articulated here, but implied, is the fact that white cooperation cannot be achieved without such ‘Europeans’ having been suitably impressed by black achievement, thereby encouraging their conviction of both the feasibility and righteousness of promoting social justice. Crediting “American philanthropy” for its perception of advances made by black Americans and rewarding them accordingly, liberals amongst black South Africans were essentially appealing to the same goodwill and sense of fair play in white South Africans. This sentiment was consistently expressed in *Bantu World* in the early 1930s (e.g. *Bantu World August 20, 1932:1*).

4.7.2.1 The ‘Great Men of History’ Concept in the ‘Liberal Approach’

As the archetypal mouthpiece of the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’, *Bantu World* keenly embraced the theme of black heroes; significantly, many more American examples were used than South African. However, an eminent black South African academic and musician who was given at least some credit in the press was the Rev. John Langalibalele Dube, commonly known as J.L. Dube, and as “Jan”, by many older black South Africans. One of the most prominent black South Africans to be influenced by Booker T. Washington’s teachings, Dube was portrayed as a hero in the black press. On the occasion of his doctoral graduation from the University of South Africa in 1937, an “event of national importance”, *Bantu World* devoted an editorial to this “foremost leader the Bantu race has produced in modern times”. J.L. Dube was educated at one of South Africa’s leading black educational institutions, Adams College, which had been established by American missionaries in the nineteenth century. At the age of 17 Dube went to the United States, where he studied at Tuskegee, in Alabama, for more than six years. Here Washington’s principles were instilled, and Dube “looked forward to the day when he would do for the Africans of South Africa what Booker T. Washington was doing for the Negroes of North America” (*Bantu World September 29, 1951:6*).

On return to South Africa Dube became a 'pastor' in the Inanda congregation of the American Board Church, and later went back to America to study theology. Returning to South Africa in 1899, he founded "a South African Tuskegee", namely, Ohlange Institute. Soon thereafter he started the Natal newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*. He became the first President-General of the ANC when it was founded in January 1912, and when the Native Representative Council was established in 1936, became one of its first members. Among his literary works are the biography of Shembe, who was the founder of the separatist "Nazareth Church" (see 3.3.1.7), and his book "Isitha somuntu nguyi uqobo lwakhe" ("The Black Man Is His Own Enemy"), the title of which appears to be in keeping with the liberal ideology which he espoused (*Bantu World* September 29, 1951:6).

However, the observations of the *Bantu World* editor in 1937 with regard to Dube's recognition in South Africa is of particular interest. The somewhat selfish individualistic tendencies characterising the era of elite liberal persuasions, as well as the later tendency observed, in particular in the 1950s, in which original black South African music styles gained credibility at home only after they had achieved overseas approval, are evident in his statements:

Most of us look upon Dr. Dube's achievement as a personal thing and not a racial contribution. We regard Ohlange Institute and "Ilanga Lase Nata" as Dr. Dube's own properties and not as national institutions of which we should be proud ... Thus we do not know a great man of our race when we see him ...

Very often one hears men praising rightly American Negro leaders for what they have done for the improvement and advancement of their race. They speak in glowing terms of the great service rendered by Booker T. Washington to Negro progress through the establishment of the Tuskegee Institute. But the same men have no word of appreciation for the founder of Ohlange Institution (*Bantu World* May 29, 1937:8).

The death of George Washington Carver in 1943 inspired the editorial "From Slavery to Fame". This black American's emergence from slavery, "strong in body, mind and soul", together with his great scientific work would inspire the current and future generations to "higher things"; his death had removed "from the Negro World, or more precisely from the African World, an outstanding man of science, who was the pride of the African race" (*Bantu World* January 23, 1943:4).

The imminent visit of black American actor and singer, Paul Robeson, to South Africa in 1945, “thrilled the whole of Bantudom”. The sub-heading of the front-page editorial loudly proclaimed the importance of cultural expression in the arsenal of the ‘liberal approach’: “His Presence Will Give Fillip To Transvaal Eisteddfod And Bantu Dramatic Society, And Enthuse The Spirit Of Adventure: Bantu Artists Will Be Encouraged”. In a veiled reference to the Garveyists, the article stated that

It is not because they expect American Negroes to deliver them from the thralldom of European oligarchy, but because their achievement has exploded the theory that the black man is mentally not the equal of the white man ... To them Paul Robeson brings the message of hope from men and women who have emerged from the crucible of slavery to a position of importance in American life (*Bantu World February 2, 1935:1*).

American movies were an indispensable component of the inspiration of black American culture, and those featuring musicians played significant roles in the influence of some renowned black South African jazz exponents. Second to films, the advent of musical shows in South Africa, and their advertisements and general fanfare in the black press, particularly *Drum* and *Golden City Post*, contributed to the creation of a black South African ‘star’ syndrome.

American pictorial magazines such as *Everyday Life* were sold in bookshops in major South African cities, and this contributed to the appropriation of American culture. The success of the black South African magazine, *Drum*, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Prof. Mphahlele asserts, was due to the fact that it was fashioned after *Everyday Life*. Like *Everyday Life*, it featured “sensationalist” writing and an abundance of photographs, emulating the perceived ethos of black America which, Mphahlele states, “seized our imagination”. This magazine, and its sister ‘tabloid’-type publication, *Golden City Post*, played major roles in the creation of black South African ‘stars’ (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

The ‘star’ craze thrived throughout the 1950s as an integral part of Americentric culture. In articles and advertisements, words like “fashionable” and “sophisticated” were used synonymously with each other and were inferred to as synonymous with ‘urbanised’ and ‘civilised’. The following are isolated examples chosen from among a myriad:

- In 1955, “five of the leading stars of the new production ‘African Jazz’” were photographed walking down a Johannesburg street on their way to rehearsals (Golden City Post March 13, 1955:7).
- In 1949 a smiling Griffiths Motsieloa, holding a cigarette, appeared in the advertisement for “C to C” cigarettes. Quoted as saying, “C to C is the cigarette preferred by fashionable city life people”, the sub-heading describes Motsieloa as “one of the most important men in Johannesburg Society” and lists his accomplishments as including his production of De Pitch Black Follies and his executive membership of the Bantu Men’s Social Centre, the African Music Society and the Bantu Music Festival Committee (*Bantu World* May 28, 1949:1).
- In the 1950s, Nathan “Dambuza” Mdledle, leader of the most famous vocal group to be produced by South Africa, the Manhattan Brothers, describes how the efforts of Griffiths Motsieloa (the talent scout who recruited Peter Rezant for the Merry Blackbirds, was an impresario and compere of note, and trained, amongst others, De Pitch Black Follies) was the catalyst that boosted this quartette to the status of stardom. Engaged by a white South African for a function in the “swankiest (white) suburb” of Johannesburg, Houghton, the Manhattan Brothers were surprised to find that the transport which had been arranged for the occasion was “two beautiful roadsters ... waiting for us. They were the kind used by the film stars. I thought to myself ‘but these cars are only for places like Hollywood, not South Africa’” (*Mayibuye, supplement to Bantu World, April 3, 1954:8*).

4.7.2.2 American Influence and Jazz in the ‘Liberal Approach of Moral Persuasion’

It would appear that it was the shared ideological concepts of a ‘liberal approach’ to liberation (as manifested by the financial and educational gains, the progress, and above all, the prestige, which individual black Americans achieved in all fields of endeavour, and in music in particular) which resulted in black newspapers of the 1930s and 1940s continually using these successes as examples to be emulated by black South Africans.

Generally speaking, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, American jazz, along with English ballroom music and other already accepted western musical forms, symbolised African progress and sophistication. The enthusiasm engendered for all aspects of American entertainment culture by music scores, gramophone records, and most especially films, including and especially American jazz, was sanctioned, (at least by *some*, and after initial resistance), by journalists. The intellectual articulation of jazz as the medium of expression of the ideology of a 'liberal approach' became the domain of the black South African intelligentsia, specifically music critics who wrote regular columns in the black press. However, participation in what Ballantine calls the "jazzing society" was a preoccupation extended to and shared by - to varying degrees - all levels of society. In an article in 1935 extolling the praises of the Transvaal African Eisteddfod as an emerging "event of national importance", the Organising Secretary, the influential music teacher and music critic, Mark Radebe, demonstrates a reluctant but pragmatic change in his earlier hostile stance vis-à-vis American jazz:

It is through this national festival that African talent will find its expression and make itself felt in the national life of South Africa. The day is not far distant when this country will have its own Hollywood, and the African people with their natural love of song and rhythm will provide valuable material for film producers.

... And there can be no doubt that Europeans are becoming conscious of the fact that we are not only an asset as labourers and consumers but as entertainers and producers (*Bantu World December 7, 1935:1*).

By inference, if jazz was good enough for black Americans, it was good enough for black South African intellectuals.

As stated earlier, the practice of *importation* and *imitation* of American styles and specific artists can be regarded, as specified by Hamm's model, as a clear expression of the 'liberal approach'. Hamm refers to the fact that in certain compositions the Manhattan Brothers demonstrated a transition from *imitation* to *assimilation* (*Hamm 1988:8*). Yet it is feasible to declare that their general ideological stance and strategy remained for the most part liberal, particularly from the mid-1930s when the group began singing together, until at least the end of the 1940s. Their music remained firmly rooted in American vocal swing style, a flagship of black South African sophistication and urbanity.

The series of articles by the leader of the Manhattan Brothers which was referred to earlier illustrates the use of the American genre from the perspective of the 'liberal approach'. Central to the story is the anxiety expressed at the awesome task ahead: "It was one of the first shows in which we appeared before a European audience, and we were not sure what song to sing and how to sing it". However, white approval was won by the singing of "In the shade of the old apple tree", followed by "Outside Paradise". After the performance, white members of the audience came and asked for the Brothers' autographs, and the pride experienced from this accolade as well as from the subsequent 'European' engagements which ensued as a result of their accomplished performance, is palpable (*Mayibuye* supplement to *Bantu World* April 10, 1954:8).

This preoccupation with white approval continued into the 1950s, where typical 'liberal' sentiments were still to be found. Others, though, are less easy to define as to whether they were intended as part of a liberal strategy or as a component of the more assertive urban protest to be discussed later. (For example, the tenor of an article extolling the state of advancement and education of the 'Negro' (*Bantu World* January 21, 1953:9) would appear to fit more comfortably into the latter concept).

Marabi, perceived by the elite as a kind of slang musical medium of slumdweller was, in theory at least, generally regarded as the province of the uneducated and lower strata of urbanised black South Africans. So it was that the Merry Macs in Cape Town, which former member John Mtshimilikwane maintains was regarded by the audience as the Cape version of the prestigious Merry Blackbirds of Johannesburg, ("I think those were the only two African bands that could read music") were initially scathing in their criticism of *marabi*, played by slumdweller for slumdweller. As "an upliftment kind of thing", the Merry Macs were trying both to set an example and to 'educate' the masses by playing western music belonging to the realms of what they perceived to be a higher or more refined culture, namely, American jazz:

What people (*i.e. the band members*) were actually trying to do those days, they were trying to educate the public more than anything else. You would find *marabi* was played in the shebeens everywhere. So what they (*i.e. the band members*) were saying, (was): "Let's get our people out of wherever they are and bring them, make them ... understand where we would like them to be" (*Mtshimilikwane - writer's interview: 4/7/97*).

The Merry Blackbirds, too, as “masters of dignified dance rhythms” (*Bantu World August 31, 1940:9*) felt that they had a role to play in the education of the black public. Affirming that the band did not play *marabi* after the beginning of the 1940s, Peter Rezant states:

We were the only band that comes to the African identifying himself with *progress*. I want you to take note of that! We went to the institutions: Lovedale and Fort Hare, Healdtown, and all that, just to show *progress*. They (*i.e. the teachers at these institutions*) wanted the students who never had the opportunity to see our social status in the world, what we can do. Professor Jabavu was very proud of us (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

4.7.2.3 Comparisons with American Artists in the ‘Liberal Approach’

Generally speaking, the veritable explosion of black South African ‘American’ entertainers who were featured in the press from the 1930s to the 1950s, can be regarded to varying degrees as an appropriation of the black American musical manifestation of the liberal ideology. In terms of Hamm’s classification, the imitation of American jazz by black South Africans represents a proverbial celebration of the recognition of mutual identity with black Americans. For music critics, the co-option of American styles as part of the strategy of black South African liberalism meant, by definition, a continual exhortation to achieve black American standards. However, the encouragement or criticism aimed at artists attempting exact imitations of American performers gave the practice a different ideological bias in the different decades. Generally speaking, American material in the 1930s and 1940s demanded meticulous imitation; by inference, the closer the ‘cover’ version was to the original product, the better the performance. (While this trend continued into the 1950s – see examples below – it occurred alongside the development of other styles, which in turn were linked to ideological concepts that appeared to support them.)

Consummate performances were rewarded by comparisons with (usually) black (but occasionally white) American artists - the highest possible verbal bouquets bestowed by liberal black journalists. Invariably these were accompanied by verbal paroxysms of delight. Multiple articles are to be found in which black South African musicians are favourably compared with their American counterparts. Samples from the different decades include:

- Ellen Thabetha of the vaudeville company the Western Wizards was described as an eminent substitute for Ginger Rogers when she performed “Swing Time”, and another member of the same troupe referred to as Sethlogelo was compared to Fred Astaire (*Bantu World* September 4, 1937:5).
- In 1937 the “crooning” of Babsy Oliphant of De Pitch Black Follies “would easily make Ethel Waters and Josephine Baker feel they have a worthy rival in her” (*Bantu World* September 11, 1937:4).
- In 1939, “Little Mildred” Mdletshe was described as “Zulu Shirley Temple”, and ‘Europeans’ “spoke so well” of her, having “heard of her through the air” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* May 20, 1939:17).
- In 1940 the troupe the Mexican Broadway Babies’ brilliant performance prompted Walter Nhlapo to gush: “... as a quartet, they follow closely on the heels of the Peter Sisters, those fat Negro girls we hear in (sic) the records” (*Bantu World* April 20, 1940:12).
- The following quotation is used by Ballantine, but is included here since the exuberance and exhilaration makes it a unique and memorable review. The thrill experienced when Toko Khampepe, pianist of the troupe, the Bantu Revue Follies, performed at a variety concert in 1940, is conveyed by Nhlapo’s effusiveness:

Mr. Toko Khampepe of the Bantu Revue follies appeared in one item playing the piano. I can’t explain this except if I were taught psychiatry or practice it. It is wonderful how he pounds the piano. As times (sic) marches on, charmed by the strains of music for it is said ‘music hath its charms,’ he becomes hotter and hotter; bangs the instrument, leaves his stool, knees on the ground, plays with his back towards the piano, sits on the key-board and plays with his haunches. Such playing is seen in Harlem. Sorry that I’m no cartoonist otherwise you’d understand me better (*Bantu World* October 19, 1940:9).

- In 1942 the Diamond Horse Shoe Troupe’s imitation of the Nicolas Brothers was described as “the most perfect apeing yet presented”. Emily Kwenane, at that stage with the Synco Fans, was “proving herself a bombshell”. While her voice and diction were good, “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).

- De Pitch Black Follies’ “Jubilation and partner”, were “regarded as the South African Nicolas Brothers”, and the troupe's female ensemble “would be praised by the Peter Sisters, Duncan Sisters, Andrew Sisters and the King Sisters” (*Bantu World* November 13, 1943:8).
- “Artistes Negros!”, the *Drum* headline roared in 1953, repeating the lavish acclaim received by the Harlem Swingsters in Lourenco Marques (*Drum* April 1953:25/26).
- In typical liberal sentiment, Gretta Dhladla, a member of the Black and Whites troupe, was described as “ the only ‘Doris Day’ on the South African music platforms ... In Durban she has sung for Europeans at the Palmerston and Savoy Hotels, and entertained audiences of all races at the Bach Band Box several times” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* December 15, 1956:21).
- The leader of the Black and Whites, Gene Ball, was himself often the subject of superlative praise from music critics, none of which could be more admiring than the comment that his performance in “African Jazz and Variety” gave “faint echoes of Frankie Laine and Bing Crosby” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* May 14, 1955:13).
- The entire group of artists appearing in a show at the Y.M.C.A. in Durban in 1953 had earned the respect of the audience, but Petros Majola, of the “dance and singing twosome” which consisted of Majola and Percy Mkhize, was found worthy of the supreme tribute: “Majola’s dancing reminded one of a description once made of the Negro dancer, Avon Long, that ‘He danced like a feather in the wind. He is bent over at your right hand and then he is at your left and you haven’t see him go’” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* April 25, 1953:16).
- The Globe Trotters produced a record in 1957 entitled *E’ Sisi* which was a Zulu translation of the Harry Belafonte song, “Day-O”. ‘Elbee’, the record reviewer for *The World*, announced that *E’*

Sisi was “as near to the Harry Belafonte version - even to the echo in the opening chords - as possible. If you were to listen to the Trotters’ version you would think that it was Harry Belafonte and vice versa” (*The World August 10, 1957:7*).

- When, in 1952, Alpheus Nkosi's composition, *Lizzy*, was reportedly said by some critics to be “far better than some compositions of leading Negro jazz composers”, original South African music had entered a new dimension; one which forms part of the broader issues to be discussed in the following chapter.

If being compared to black Americans was the ultimate accolade, winning black American approval surely represented the attainment of the pinnacle of standards. So it was that Peter Rezant, whose band played at the American pavilion, “Dead Horse Gulch” at the Liberty Cavalcade in Cape Town in 1944, found playing for ‘Negroes’ from the U.S.A. Merchant Navy a “thrilling” experience: “They appreciated the music, understood it and whirled madly, bringing out what Harlem, Chicago, East Side have created and given to the world in the form of rag-cutting” (*Bantu World May 27, 1944:10*).

Remembering other experiences surrounding the playing at the Cavalcade (the purpose of which, in typical liberal sentiment, was to raise money for the ‘Governor General’s war fund’) in 1943, Rezant recalls that at first the Merry Blackbirds were almost rejected, since “the organiser did not think that the whites would accept a black band”. The manager of Firestone, an American, came to Johannesburg to listen to the band, whereafter it was decided that the Merry Blackbirds were eminently suitable for the occasion:

We were at the General Hospital, playing for the nurses at a function. When he came in there, [he had his braces on], and he said, “If ... I had closed my eyes and said, ‘If I am in America now’ with the sound only, I would say, ‘yes, I’m at home!’” So we got the job (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

This was one of many occasions when the Merry Blackbirds were mistaken for black Americans; a compliment which confirmed their status as the premier jazz-band. Another story linked to the Cavalcade illustrates both this fact and how the playing of American jazz was seen to achieve

important successes within the 'liberal' mindset; time and again the Blackbirds gained entree to white society, otherwise barred to black South Africans:

... I went to Somerset Hospital to go and see a niece of mine that was training in the nursing home in the Maternity Hospital. And as I was standing at the Reception there, a fellow came past there - one of the white men. He looked at me, and came back again and said, "Are you the gentleman in the band at the Cavalcade?" I said, "Yes", so he said "(that since) I am fair (-skinned), so I can go in as a white."

So I went in to satisfy our fellows that you *were* a black band (*i.e. from South Africa, who had Oachieved this standard and status*). (They asked:) "But where are you from?" I said, "From Johannesburg". They argued amongst themselves, and said, "No man, there is no black band in South Africa that can play like that!" He (*presumably referring again to the white man at reception*) said, "Now just tell me (the truth)!" I said, "We are a black band (from South Africa), there is no one from overseas in the band". *That is the standard that we had achieved!*

... One thing I must emphasise: they (*i.e. black and white audiences in general*) never believed we were South Africans! Even at the (black) institutions; when we went to the institutions (like) Fort Hare, Loveday ... (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

4.7.2.4 American Swing: the Prototype of 'Sophistication' in the 'Liberal Approach'

More than any other style to date, swing music, which emerged in South Africa in the 1940s and finally enveloped the black entertainment world in this country by the end of the decade, catalysed a pervasive ambience of Americentrism: the 'swing era' or 'swing mania', as it was known in America, spawned a sub-culture which captivated urbanised black South Africa. Like the spiritual and ragtime, the initial identification with American instrumental and vocal styles typical of the 'swing' era, adopted simultaneously by white South Africa, can be regarded as a progeny of liberal ideology, as dominant in and expressed by educated black South Africans. The music columns in the early 1940s, particularly in Bantu World, were characterised by debate about the nature of swing as well as a desire for black South African bands to capture the style as transmitted by black American bands.

One concludes that Walter Nhlapo, who was music critic for Bantu World, found swing to be an elusive quality, both musically and literally. Many music reviews of the early 1940s leave the indelible impression that Nhlapo regarded the transmission of the true essence of this style as the hallmark of quality to which all bands should strive:

Some bands do not carry a powerful punch, and moreover their playing is not soulful and delicate, sincere and effective for le hot jazz from the heart. Bands trying swing mass (sic - presumably “mess”) it. Swing is an art and is more varied and more influential. There must be a feeling for melodic improvisation (*Bantu World August 30, 1941:9*).

Two years later, Nhlapo was still dissatisfied with the translation of the American idiom by some black South Africans:

The augmented Harlem Swingsters played in an afternoon show on August 2 in the Ballenden Hall, Pimville. This band, though better than what it has been, should know that melodies can not be swing but the swing content has to be infused into them and that cannot (sic) be done without imagination, character, style and also a sense of fitness into the nature of the tune (*Bantu World August 28, 1943:3*).

By comparison, the Blackbirds on numerous occasions were referred to as “the Merry Blackbirds Swing Orchestra” (*e.g., Bantu World May 27, 1944:10*). In inverse proportion to his references to other bands’ inability to truly ‘swing’, Nhlapo renders accolades to Rezant’s interpretation of the style. In the following article, as on many other occasions, the critic waxes lyrical in his praise:

The Merry Blackbirds Swing Band, one of the finest hot jazz exponents in this country, staged on Friday, October 15, their eleventh anniversary guest night show.

... Competent leader, Mr. Peter T. Rezant, presented the Merry Blackbirds Dance Band personal 15 in one hot item after another.

... The brass section was very outstanding. It was virile, hot, with rich harmonising tones. It was so solid and perfect that they could build up, warming to a theme, dig low and heavy, blend wonderfully as the tension increases, ending climaxes in a thoroughly relaxed way with Monkoe's horn weaving high - the playing which at times is a sudden pickup of the reed section (*Bantu World November 13, 1943:8*).

4.7.3 Criticism of Imitation

While both the ideology of the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ and the hoped-for social and political gains it was to achieve were clearly articulated in editorials and other articles, the shift away from the encouragement of precise imitation of American jazz was never consciously or directly expressed as a shift in stance vis-à-vis attitudes towards or concepts of black America, nor was such a view articulated in articles expressing political or ideological opinion. Whereas American culture was

still widely admired and even venerated, there were *at the same time* for *some* varying reasons for desiring to find an authentic black voice; one which would fit the category of *assimilation* as defined by Hamm (*Hamm 1988:5,22,23,31; Mngoma – writer’s interview: 23/4/95*). Some young journalists, however, continued to identify with black American culture as the authentic voice of black South Africa. (See 4.7.4.)

Discussions with musicians as well as intellectuals like Mphahlele and Mngoma emphasise the deeply subconscious nature of the shift away from the pursuit of the imitation of American models. The researcher, from a broad overview of these articles and interviews, can deduce that the wholehearted acceptance, for some, of the commercial African styles prevalent in the 1950s was accompanied by a concurrent subtle change in the rhetoric surrounding the *imitation* of American styles. During the course of the 1950s this change of stance, slight at first, is evident in the comments made in the black press (many of them emanating from readers and guest columnists or quotes from outside the press fold, implying that this was the view of a sector of society other than that of intellectual journalists). It must be stressed that this trait became evident as part of wide debate, in which there were many voices still in favour of the imitation that was previously unanimously praised for over two decades. The assimilation of American jazz into new, commercialised African styles, did not imply the simultaneous, wholehearted dismissal of the imitation of American jazz. The vast majority of articles by educated music critics reflect the opposite: journalists are simultaneously dismissive of both the African idioms *and* the imitation of American styles other than ‘modern’ jazz, as if both tendencies reflect an inferior idiom.

It is important to note that whereas advertisements and (often dismissive) comments about commercial African styles in critiques and reviews often strongly inferred that the majority of the proletariat supported these new styles, the voice of the press, being that of the elite, for the most part continued to laud American jazz to the (again, inferred) detriment of African styles. These writers tended to praise the modern jazz idioms then emanating from America; the inference being that South African compositions were inferior to these forms. Commencing the cycle of Hamm’s model of *importation* and *assimilation* yet again, these critics praise the imitation of ‘progressive’ American jazz artists. Significantly, these same critics encourage the incorporation of African ideas into ‘modern’ or

‘progressive’ American jazz forms, which appeared to be perceived as a ‘higher’ art than the commercially available styles which proliferated in the 1950s, - and which were ultimately expressed by Dollar Brand, Chris McGregor’s Blue Notes and in the 1960s, the Malombo jazzmen.

Beginning as lone utterances of certain individuals, opinions and counter-opinions are voiced about the imitation of American jazz, the criticism appearing to grow in quantity and volume from the mid-1950s onwards. The following are representative examples:

- P.G. Makaza, in a stinging attack on commercial African recordings in the publication, *Zonk*, nevertheless denounces the jazzman who

... copies his favourite American musician. Studying his records judiciously and trying to memorise his phrasing. He spends night and day trying to emulate something which is the product of some-one else's private life, some-one else's personal experience. Without knowing it, he loses his identity and individuality and natural interpretative ability. He copies the external form without possessing the spiritual content to back it up (*Zonk July 1954:53*).

- In 1956, the music critic for *Golden City Post* expresses a desire for originality by a criticism of singing troupes' penchant for imitation of both the South African Manhattan Brothers and American vocal groups: "People don't want to pay to listen to carbon copies when the originals are available" (*Golden City Post December 23, 1956:6*). The Manhattan Brothers were at that stage presenting a relatively eclectic programme of African and American songs. It would appear, though, that this criticism is largely levelled at the overall Americentricity of the ambience of performance, since the Manhattan Brothers were themselves modelled on the American originals of the same name.
- The music critic in the entertainment column in *The World*, self-proclaimed adherent of 'modern' jazz and believer in the superiority of the American product, delivers a series of devastating blows to "jazz in the African idiom" as popular in the 1950s (see 5.4.2). Obviously not averse to the incorporation of African elements into the modern genre ("a great deal of what is known as Modern Jazz is very similar to indigenous African melodies"), he first denounces the tendency to use American jazz melodies in African material. It would appear that his objections focus on the

adulteration of the *American* idiom rather than the African: the end result, using “unending riffs”, is monotonous. The critic’s strongest disparagement, however, is reserved for those unashamed mimics who are the very objects of praise for others.

Famous men like “King” Cole, Billy Eckstine, Bill Kenny are not subjects to be studied carefully by budding musicians. No, for them that is not enough. They MUST copy them, they must sing like them, and if he has seen one of them he must copy every gesture. The result is too deplorable to waste the reader’s time (*The World February 11, 1956:5*).

- In 1966, the defence of black South African artists by a reader of *Ilanga Lase Natal* lends clues to the criticism being levelled from within at least some quarters, of blatant imitation of America, while at the same time affirming the superior status of American musicians:

SIR -, Too much is being said in criticism of our jazz artists. They are accused of imitating overseas artists and lack of originality...

A budding star will always have and be inspired by an ideal singer ...

It is only when a singer has reached a very advanced stage that he develops independence - not originality -Jazzist. Durban (*Sun, supplement to Ilanga, February 26, 1966:6*).

- In a minority of articles, the criticism of precise imitation is *inferred*, but not stated, to be linked to a desire for an ‘African’ voice. One such article is in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, the voice of ‘New Africanism’. It belabours the point made by Stanley Kweyama who was a talent scout for an unnamed “national firm with film and television studios”, the commercial connotations of which are significant and will be discussed in chapter 5. (See 5.4 – 5.4.3)

... he said that some African ~~singers~~ and artists thought that by imitating some celebrated star they could easily go to the top. They failed to realise that there could be no two “Satchmos” or two Paul Robesons.

The great stars and singers, he said, are great because they chose early to leave the beaten path and are on a road all their own. He expressed gratitude for what he called a trend to originality among some artists and expressed great hopes for the future of the African stage and screen (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 19, 1959:9*).

It must be noted that the journalist who wrote the article had, along with the audience who had given the unnamed imitatress a “big ovation”, been impressed by her performance. The

implication that a significant sector of black South Africa still appreciated imitation, is thus there.

Significantly, though, the advent of 'modern jazz' saw a resurgence of the tendency to praise imitation of the American sound aesthetic. No higher accolade could be conferred on a few black South African 'modern jazz' musicians than that by American jazz critic, Scotty Olromo, in 1955: the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club 'Volume Three Concert' was, he was reported to have declared, "out of this world'. He says it was difficult for patrons to realize that they were in Good Street, Sophiatown, and not on 52nd Street, New York City and that the venue was the Odin Cinema instead of Birdland" (*Bantu World December 10, 1955:9*).

4.7.4 American Influence and the Un-Africans

Another group of young intellectuals, epitomised by the Drum journalists, part of a minority but vociferous sub-culture, *consciously* used American jazz in general, and modern, progressive styles from *bebop* and beyond in particular, as an alternative, strident voice of protest against the specific direction of tribalisation or Africanisation-in-Apartheid, as it were, in which the Nationalist Government was seeking to thrust the black population of this country. Perceived as the epitome of urbanisation which was being torn from their grasp, this sector tenaciously clung to progressive styles of jazz, which they regarded as superior to the African forms popular amongst the uneducated masses. This small but vociferous group of young intellectuals self-consciously adopted American culture as a form of 'un-Africanism' (the term used in an Ilanga Lase Natal article to describe the concept) (*Sun, supplement to Ilanga Lase Natal September 11, 1965:4/5*). This phenomenon occurred at precisely the time when certain other intellectuals, and notably the journalists of Ilanga Lase Natal, were promoting a proud new African identity, or what Ballantine describes as 'New Africanism'.

A strong feature of identification with American jazz was the assertion that it was a direct descendant of indigenous African music. Of interest to this discourse is the fact that this observation is expressed

in *Drum* magazine in 1952: this was not in order to find common links between American jazz and African jazz, but as a justification for the *Drum* journalists' preference for "modern *American jazz*". The "underlying theme" of the "All-African Musical Film", 'Song of Africa', the writer attests, "shows the influence of African tribal music on modern American jazz, and will therefore be especially interesting to those of us who study this type of music. It shows clearly that the beat of the drums of Africa was the forerunner of jazz as we know it today" (*Drum April 1952:15*).

Different journalists found different ways of expressing black South Africans' perceptions of the links between jazz and African music. For some, American jazz, related as it was to African music, represented a refined, more 'civilised', and therefore more acceptable version of the indigenous product. This boded well for the emergence of a sophisticated nation of Africans, but one in which the source of cultural pride was their mutual identity with black America.

An article in *Drum* magazine in 1951 describes black South Africans' initial reaction to American jazz as one of instinctive, instantaneous acceptance. By inference, the style "won its way into the hearts of the African people" because of its inherent traditional African rhythmic characteristics and its element of excitement (*Drum December 1951:26*).

In the same publication, another article in the same year reveals a different pride in performance than that generally expressed in the previous two decades. This is captured by nuances which are generally absent from liberal accounts in which the pride expressed is inversely proportionate to either the approbation from whites, or the successful emulation of black Americans, the intention of which is to impress whites. Here jazz is not conveyed as the language with which to converse with the white man, but first and foremost as the mother tongue of the black man. At the same time, jazz is inferred to be, as Ballantine eloquently refers to the style, "the international musical vernacular of the oppressed" (*Ballantine 1993:8*). The "drums of Africa" are proclaimed to be the "ancestors of this music", followed by the work-songs and spirituals of black American slavery. While "early jazz was jubilant music, the music of a people set free", the understanding that this freedom translated into the reality of "free only to work even harder and often to go hungry", changed the shades of expression. Hence the "dark thread of bitterness and disillusion", shades of emotion which lead the author to contemplate:

“No wonder that the blues is the better part of jazz”. The deceased jazz greats, all black, are listed along with the venues, “the dives and the dance halls”, in which the music evolved. The meaning throughout is clear: jazz is irrefutably black music, and music which has both mirrored, and been the means of, the development of pride in black America. This pride, as conveyed in this article, is neither inferior nor ingratiating, but deserved and empowering:

Many books have been written about jazz and its early days but someone has yet to write the book that will lay bare its real significance ... the whole story of jazz is the saga of a rising race. While creating this music the American Negro has in a sense himself been created by it. It has sustained him, borne him up through these 50 formative years. It has won him friends, and won respect for him too. His music has been stolen from him and dragged in the mud, but he has kept sturdily on ... And making it out of nothing but his own spiritual strength, that love of harmonious and rhythmic living without which there can be no peace and no righteousness (*African Drum June 1951:12*).

Drum journalist David Mhlanga adopts a more placatory and even-handed tone: jazz “as a whole”, he declares, is “the music of the American proletariat, white and black”. However, the “setters of style”, the creators of milestones in its development, are black. Furthermore, the black American, with the “physique passed down to him by his African forebears” is an inherently better wind-instrumentalist than the white. Notwithstanding the fact that “drums have been associated with Africans, and negroes, for hundreds of years”, whites, for some inexplicable reason, tend to be better drummers than blacks (*Drum November 1951: 28*).

It would appear that journalists like Bloke Modisane, Todd Matshikiza, Aggrey Klaaste and Can Themba regarded themselves as emissaries of American culture in general, and modern, ‘progressive’ American jazz in particular (*Klaaste - writer's interview: 26/11/97*). Their columns on American jazz records, which could include (generally favourable) comment on South African artists attempting modern idioms, invariably contained a degree of lecturing or expounding knowledge to the black South African population on progressive American jazz styles and artists. Inevitably, the inference that these styles were superior, authentic and belonged to a higher art form than the South African styles, was evident.

- For example, when, after a performance of *Township Jazz* at the University of the Witwatersrand Great Hall, patrons had been overheard to grumble that the alto saxophonist, Ben “Gwigwi”

Mrwebi, appeared not to have been sufficiently familiar with the works he played, Modisane launched into an explanation of improvisation as a feature of “the modern jazz tradition”. Similarly, a discussion of a Nat King Cole disc resulted in a general exposition of the advent of small combos as part of this tradition (*Golden City Post August 12, 1956:6*).

- Kippie Moeketsi, *enfant terrible* of this ‘modern’ jazz sub-culture and acclaimed prodigy alto-saxophonist, was proclaimed by numerous music critics to epitomise the pinnacle of black South African achievement in ‘modern’ jazz styles. In 1958, Mike Pahlane, music critic of *Zonk*, chose Kippie as premier also-sax-player in his article, “Top of the 1957 hit parade”. “Kippy”, he declared, “plays and sounds like the great Charlie Parker” (*Zonk January 1958:28*).
- The fact that Dollar Brand - as Abdullah Ibrahim was known then - while “undoubtedly the wizard of jazz here”, was unappreciated by “some jazz enthusiasts”, was complimentary. This experience placed him in the same hallowed category as Miles Davis and Thelonius Monk, American exponents of ‘cool’ or west coast jazz, who had also “suffered the same humiliation” before their genius was recognised (*Golden City Post 1972:10*).
- Chris McGregor’s Blue Notes was populated by “jazz giants”, according to the *Post* and *Drum* journalists of the 1960s. As an example of the esteem in which they were held, a 1964 article in *Post* described McGregor, at the piano, as “a Duke Ellington of South African jazzmen ... for alliteration lets (sic) call him Count Chris”. The epithet given the tenor saxman of the combo was “Nick ‘Charlie Parker’ Moyake”; and Dudu Pukwane, the other tenor saxophonist, produced a tone which was “full and throaty and sometimes very sweet - a real Ben Webster sound”. Letta Mbulo, female vocalist for the Blue Notes on this particular occasion, was “wasting her big voice on Cole Porter and similar syrup”. Instead she should listen to records by Bessie Smith (“all of them”), and Ella Fitzgerald (“some of them”), and realise that, rather than attaining the status of mere “entertainer” in America (where she was headed with the cast of ‘Sponono’), “with better material she could be more - she could be a great jazz singer” (*Post January 26, 1964:11*).

- The music critic for the publication *Zonk*, Gideon Jay, generally more inclined to favour African numbers than were his peers working for other newspapers, (particularly those of *Drum* and *Golden City Post*), makes interesting and significant comments with reference to a record released by Timothy “Umlaba” Mkize which had been categorised as “Zulu Jive Vocal”. While he praises the disc as being a “good, double-sided” one, he is apparently not in favour of the bastardisation or contamination of American styles. This appears to be indicative of his preference for or regard of American jazz as a ‘higher’ art form, as opposed to African jazz. This comment also reveals the extent to which the adoption of American culture, or at least the superficial trappings of this culture, was a self-conscious one:

... but is it *Jive*? We in this country have come to understand *Jive* in the American idiom, and if we are to follow through with adopting American music, American styles, and American idioms, we must adhere to their pattern and keep within certain limits (*Zonk March 1956:43*).

What appears to be an evolving trend culminated in a myriad articles in the press expressing black American identification with and a thirst for knowledge about black South Africa. The most startling feature of this desire was its musical manifestation in the 1950s: black South Africa’s *African* styles, once sanctioned by overseas, or more specifically, by American, approval, gained intellectual acceptance (at least by newspapermen) here. Critics who had previously denounced these styles as inferior, by inference if not words, now made concessions which varied in degree and expression as to their possible merits. Earlier references to *kwela* in *Golden City Post*, if not derogatory, had been somewhat dismissive. In 1958, immediately below a discussion of the Bud Shank Quartet’s rendition of the “Jazz West Coast” style in “When Lights Are Low” and “The Nearness Of You”, a large and prominent advertisement was published with the wording: “King Kwela, Spokes Mashiyane, Plays Kwela With The Famous American Artists, ‘The Claude Williamson Trio’ on TJ.222 ‘Kwela Claude’ and ‘Sheshisa!’ ...”. In the right hand corner of this advertisement, bold letters announced that this disc was “Applauded by the American Stars of Jazz West Coast” (*Golden City Post May 18, 1958:6*). (See 5.5.1.1.1; 5.5.1.2)

For some black South Africans, identification with black America represented, as a pure form of the ‘liberal approach’, a means of gaining ‘European’ approval. For others who did not Africanise their

music, American identification could well be viewed as African music, given the level of identification between the two black nations. Practitioners like the Merry Blackbirds, and those followers, including music critics, who doggedly pursued American music - and were deprecating to various degrees about African jazz and related styles - were not manifesting a lack of support for the struggle for liberation. Their preference for American music over *marabi*-influenced African jazz and related styles of the 1940s and 1950s, manifested the choice which since the 1930s has represented a higher level of sophistication, ergo urbanisation, than what they at best considered to be less intellectual (at least musically) and at worst tribal or unsophisticated music.

For a third group, it was a less ingratiating and more forceful, if not aggressive, assertion of urbanness, which was synonymous with and epitomised by black America and characterised by a turning away from the whites in South Africa as potential saviours. Instead, proponents of this mindset looked to the international community, and America in particular, as partners in the struggle against Apartheid. For some in this latter group, escaping overseas was seen as a triumph in terms of fleeing the steel grip of Apartheid, as well as the acquisition of an international platform from whence to campaign against the South African government.