

**BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN MUSIC STYLES:
THE IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND BELIEFS
SURROUNDING THEIR DEVELOPMENT
1930 – 1960**

by

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To my parents, George and Georgina, with love and gratitude.

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SUMMARY

The main focus of this work explores the ideological concepts surrounding the early development of South African urban music.

First, a brief description of the development of some of the major urban music styles of the continent of Africa is provided. This is followed by an overview of the early development of South African urban styles, and includes definitions of the styles as they occurred chronologically up to the development of African jazz in the 1940s. *Kwela* is discussed as the major commercial offshoot of African jazz in the 1950s.

The concepts and beliefs, or ‘thought worlds’, which were transmitted from white South African liberals to elite black intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s, in so far as they were presented in the press of these decades, are examined. Specifically, the effects of these liberal ideological concepts on the preference for western civilisation in general and western music in particular is discussed. The role of Black America as the flagship of black progress, achievement, and above all, success in the realms of music, is assessed in relation to its impetus for the black elite ‘liberal’ strategy which essentially appealed to white moral conscience.

The concepts of Africanism and ‘New Africanism’ are investigated so as to determine their influence on the creation of unique, syncretic African forms, and in particular, on the birth of African jazz or *mbaqanga* of the 1940s. The viability of describing elite support for the Africanisation of jazz in this decade as expressing or emanating from political militancy as a manifestation of the ‘philosophy’ of ‘New Africanism’ is debated.

The 1950s are presented as a decade which can be described in generalised terms as one of ‘urban protest’, in which a mélange of hedonism and political assertion provides the context for the creation of highly commercialised African urban styles. The use of the colloquial epithet ‘*msakazo*’ as an umbrella term for these styles is discussed, focussing on the ideological perspectives of the proponents and opponents of the genre. Reasons for the vehement opposition to African styles by some in the

media who simultaneously sponsored American progressive jazz styles such as bebop, are analysed.

Emphasis throughout the work is given to the interplay between Government policies and the development of the different styles. In particular, the role of the Nationalist Party policy of Apartheid, and its direct and indirect effects on the demise of African jazz, is examined.

CHAPTER 1

STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There is convincing evidence that commonalities and consistencies which existed in the ‘thought world’ of literate black South Africans substantially influenced the specific jazz-related music materials which they chose as media of entertainment and expression. The focus of analysis in this work is for the most part this ‘thought world’: the concepts and beliefs dominant in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and which appear to have influenced both the choices and perceptions of styles.

There is sufficient evidence to endorse the claims by Ballantine (1993:11), Bozzoli (1983:40), Sole (1983:75), Lodge (1983:339) and Marks & Rathbone (1982:2) that there is no definitive relationship between the existence of class strata and cultural choices. (“While there may be economic classes in the making in South Africa, there have been few ‘class cultures’” (Bozzoli 1983:40/41)). In the *jazz* milieu, specifically, the same entertainment-style could be supported by educated, sophisticated teachers, nurses, clerks and social workers and at the same time by illiterate manual labourers, mine-workers or domestic helpers. Nevertheless, there is at least some evidence to support the hypothesis that there are in cultural activities and music styles other than American jazz (although some were closely related to jazz), limited periods in which there are distinguishable glimpses of class-based tendencies to support certain activities. These will be referred to for contextual purposes where appropriate.

Consciously or unconsciously, the black South African entertainment stage - with jazz and vaudeville as the increasingly major components amongst other styles like choral singing and ‘serious’ art music - reflected the divergent and often conflicting ideologies of the varying degrees of education, westernisation and urbanisation of black society. For some, jazz represented an “international musical vernacular of the oppressed”; black music proclaiming solidarity with black Americans (Ballantine 1993:8). For others, it was a vehicle appropriated for the expression of a unique, burgeoning African pride (and unlike Ballantine, this author argues that these two groups

were at certain times quite disparate); for some black liberal pedants, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, the fact that jazz was acceptable to South African whites was of even more importance than its relationship with American jazz.

The focal point of this thesis is an attempt to analyse the ideological *input*, the characteristic manner of thinking, of at least one sector of society into the ‘coalescing culture’ of jazz, as well as (and sometimes distinct from) that of jazz-related styles. The difficulty of such analysis has faced Coplan, Ballantine and Hamm: the ‘untangling’ and interpretation of what were for the most part *subliminal* motivations for, and traits exhibited in, the choice of jazz-related music entertainment styles. Furthermore, the sole available ‘hard evidence’ of such a ‘thought world’ or motivating ideology, is what was *written* in that period, mainly in the press, and therefore, by definition, by representatives of the black intelligentsia. This work will thus for the most part of necessity emphasise the ‘input’ or ideological motivations for cultural choices of the *educated*, or elite, members of black South African society. An attempt will be made to deduce the ideological aspirations or motivations for cultural choices of the masses of semi-urbanised, illiterate black South Africans. However, this will be done from the perspective that such deductions are, for the reasons expressed above, speculative: while made on the basis of such evidence as can be *inferred* from the advantage of historical hindsight, they are nevertheless presented as subjective opinion rather than objective academic truth. In every instance an attempt will be made to provide as much substantiation as available in arriving at such opinion.

The constraints of both the newspaper research referred to above, and the limited number of remaining musicians available for interviews who are both representative of the proletarian masses and who can make a meaningful contribution to this work in terms of articulating thoughts from which significant deductions can be made, are the same constraints which have faced other researchers in this field. Where claims of purported motivating ideologies or ‘views’ which influenced the cultural choices of the lumpenproletariat are made by other writers, while they may in fact be accurate, they are essentially speculative.

In the case of interviews with musicians representative of the various styles under discussion, the opinions expressed are as varied and subjective as there were interviewees, or more specifically, as there were socio-political interests represented. All these opinions are valid and authentic and of

infinite value in providing different perspectives - substantiating, contradicting or demonstrating utter oblivion of the thoughts expressed in the press. However, their greatest value lies in the illustration of the point which approaches, but is not identical to, that made by Bozzoli: that different classes could support the same entertainment structures; however, their *input* into these forms was motivated - consciously or unconsciously - from different socio-political, or even a-socio-political, perceptual stances (*Bozzoli 1983:42*).

The choice of music, and specifically jazz-related styles, for entertainment was not always a consciously political, or at least socio-political one; it would appear that for many, music was consciously *perceived* to be purely hedonistic. Therefore, issue will be taken with Ballantine's inference that the "liberal view" was a philosophical outlook and motivation for music practice which was subscribed to by the working class as well as the elite (*Ballantine 1993:40*). What was being presented in the press to be the dominant ideology, was generally-speaking that of the elite, rather than the masses.

This is not to infer that the masses' choice of musical expression was, while unarticulated in the press, devoid of all conscious or unconscious relationship to their repressed socio-political circumstances. The oppressive political climate in South Africa was so pervasive, insidious and vicious, that any attempt to exclude this dominating, suffocating spectre from the conscious or unconscious choices of expression of a people from whom virtually all freedom to choose in other areas of their lives was wrested, would be grossly flawed. If music was used only as an escape from their ugly reality, a form of hedonistic celebration of urbanness, this in itself was an unconscious demonstration of protest at, or victory over, the towering apparition of Apartheid which attempted daily to deny this urbanness and concerned itself with black South Africans' recreation and use of leisure time or lack thereof only in so far as it affected the life of white South Africans.

Couzens appropriately states that

... in this context of 'defusing Native Passions', culture and entertainment can be used as an auxiliary force in social control. A proper understanding of the literature, the drama, the music, the art and other related cultural forms must take this process into account (*Couzens 1985:92*).

To this should be added the fact that both the influences and the role of music, particularly from the mid-1940s onwards, were inherently more complex, more subtle, more the result of a complex interplay of inclinations of different dimensions, and generally more multifarious in their effect, than that of merely ‘defusing native passions’.

Thus this thesis focuses on an ephemeral subject: one which centres on perceptions, or more specifically, an analysis of perceptions as presented in the press, and tempered by opinions of these perceptions and those of other participants in the relevant decades. The researcher often works with what amounts to no more than *clues* - found in the press, secondary reading, and from personal interviews - of the perceptions of mainly journalists and intellectual leaders.

Ballantine’s area of excellent research focuses on aspects of the development of jazz and vaudeville in the years before and up to the (mainly) early 1940s. In many respects, this thesis can be regarded as an extension of much of his work, tracing the evolution of ideological trends which he had identified as emanating from the 1930s, through the following two decades and beyond. Developments in earlier or later years (i.e. the 1920s and 1960s) are used for contextual reference, to clarify or make deductions which lead to conclusions drawn about events in the decades under discussion, or where necessary for substantiation when this research has led to different viewpoints and conclusions from those of Ballantine. Those areas of his research on the developments in jazz and vaudeville with which this author concurs have not been reproduced to the same extent. His work on the manifestation of the details of American influence on early musicians and audiences in the jazz-milieu in South Africa, as supplied in press quotations, is one such example, and the reader is referred to his thorough research on that specific issue in both “‘Africans in America’. ‘Harlem in Johannesburg: The ideology of Afro-America in the formation of black jazz and vaudeville in South Africa before the mid-1940s’” (*Ballantine 1988:5-10*) and his book “Marabi Nights” (*Ballantine 1993:13-23*).

It is to be noted that in Chapter 2 fleeting references to some of the major urban styles of the continent of Africa are provided as a contextual framework for the presentation of the South African music; inaccessibility of musicians and experts with whom to conduct first-hand research may inevitably have resulted in certain inaccuracies made in the secondary literature being reproduced.

Chapter 3 contains a clarification of definitions and an overview of urban South African styles not readily available elsewhere. This is in order to provide some accurate contextual background for the issues dealt with in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students of black South African urban music development have access to a small body of literature which contains voids, generalisations, flaws and inaccuracies, particularly with regard to the socio-political and ideological motivations surrounding the birth or use of certain styles.

In some instances the problems are being perpetuated by consecutive authors. The following areas are specifically problematic:

- 1.2.1 Disparate ideological stances or ‘conceptions of the world’ which developed in relation to white South African government policies and which led to the popularity of different American and African music entertainment styles are specifically not accurately reflected in the literature. Unsubstantiated conclusions or views that are representative of a minority are presented as those of the majority of black South Africans.
- 1.2.2 The role of the Africanisation of urban music vis-a-vis the Apartheid government is not comprehensively presented. The ‘philosophy’ of ‘New Africanism’ and its role in the development of oppositional or ‘radical’ music styles is incompletely portrayed.
- 1.2.3 Names and lengths of periods of development which provided ideological and philosophical motivations for different styles are ambiguously presented. There is strong evidence to suggest that these were fluid, complex and most importantly, contained disparate groups from within which different socio-political perspectives, and the role of music styles as expressions of these, emanated.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this work is to add to the debate in the available literature discussing the social and political forces at play in the formation, influence and articulation of black urban music in South Africa. Specifically, it attempts to provide what substantiation is available as evidence of the beliefs, attitudes and mores of the most deeply urbanised black South Africans and how these appeared to affect their choice or rejection of mainly jazz-related entertainment styles.

Influenced and affected by the politics of white South Africa, consciously or unconsciously and to a greater or lesser degree aimed at achieving freedom from its oppression, differing ideologies and socio-political concepts spawned adherents to different musical styles. Those reflected in the press were for the most part the views of the intellectual elite, and are to be presented as such. Those of the majority of black South African workers who were mostly illiterate, can merely be deduced from reports written by and interviews with intellectuals, as well as from the small and insubstantial group of musicians who often express biased subjective world views. These will be presented as such.

The motivations for the Africanisation of different styles in different decades, with an emphasis on the development of this phenomenon in relation to racist Government policies, will be examined. Specifically, an examination of the concepts of 'New Africanism' and 'Africanism' and their role in the development of the music, particularly in relation to the Africanisation of music as an overt manifestation of political opposition, will be undertaken.

Ideological frameworks within which the concepts of Westernism and Africanism, as well as tribalism and ethnicity, as reflected in the perceptions of different styles, will be examined.

Different strategies to achieving freedom from oppression were reflected in groundswells of popularity for different urban music styles in the various decades. These broad impulses will be presented while attempting to provide insight into and substantiation for the complex and sometimes conflicting concepts of disparate groups which provided the motivation for the support of the same or different styles.

A secondary aim of this work, as context for the above, is the clarification of definitions and an overview of the major developments in black South African urban music not available to date as a comprehensive whole in the published literature.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

Six hypotheses are formulated for this study:

- 1.4.1 Those who hoped to achieve liberation through the ‘moral persuasion’ of South African whites were both led and epitomised by mission-educated, Christian blacks. Represented by leaders of political and ideological thought, they formed an elite stratum which included those who wrote for the black press. This is the only sector of black South African society whose views on the subject can be substantiated. For the vast majority of the elite, the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ which relied on the use of western cultural elements deemed admirable to and by whites, dominated cultural choices throughout the 1940s. In the 1950s, this mindset occurred alongside, or interspersed with, other ideological stances.
- 1.4.2 The birth of a feeling of pride in being African, or a sense of ‘Africanness’, can be regarded as a source of motivation (albeit mostly subliminal) for the Africanisation of jazz in South Africa. However, for the majority of black South Africans, the birth and use of African urban music styles in general and African jazz in particular, were neither the result of self-conscious, overt and articulated opposition to Apartheid, nor that of the conscious expression of ‘New Africanism’.
- 1.4.3 Commercialised black ‘pop’ (*msakazo*), denigrated by some intellectual music critics both then and now, was for many a celebration of a unique urban African identity, and forms a valuable part of South African heritage. *Msakazo* flourished in the 1950s, and some of South Africa’s most famous African jazz exponents contributed to its repertoire. The music appropriated by Radio Bantu in the 1960s was a continuation of the same commercial phenomenon which had propagated the African styles of the previous decade.

- 1.4.4 The 1950s were characterised by an ethos of urban protest. This appears to have been the impetus for the hedonistic and celebratory assertion of urbanness which permeated the entertainment scene and which manifested in the use of both African and American styles. Both were significant tools with which to brandish an assertion of urban identity and pride. For many, this presented no contradiction or confusion; for others, the choice of either a black *South African* or black *American* cultural identity emanated from specific ideological stances, which developed in reaction to Apartheid.
- 1.4.5 The level of identification of black South Africans with black Americans was comprehensive, inclusive and far-reaching. As such, the use of black American music was considered by many to be an expression of black pride. For some, this genre, rather than its African counterparts, was perceived as an important vehicle by which to demonstrate urban sophistication as a conscious or unconscious means of protest against Apartheid policies.

In America, ‘modern, progressive’ jazz or bebop of the late 1940s and 1950s was indeed self-consciously ideologically motivated as an expression of black consciousness. It is possible that this motivation was shared by the small group of young intellectual black South Africans who espoused the style. For this articulate minority, the adoption of a distinctly *un-African* persona and the wholehearted embrace of Americentric culture represented a strong oppositional stance to Government policies.

- 1.4.6 Despite its legendary indifference to blacks’ wellbeing, in the years in which black South African urban music styles developed, the SABC, as representative of the white South African Apartheid government, was not opposed to specific styles of black urban music, nor did they view the Africanisation of any style as a form of black radical opposition to Apartheid.

The South African Apartheid government policies had no direct and conscious role in the death of either big-band American swing or its Africanised version, namely *mbaqanga* or African jazz, of the late 1940s. Apartheid policies were aimed at the interracial milieu in which bebop was nurtured in the 1950s, rather than the style itself. Bebop, and to less of an extent, ‘cool’ or West Coast jazz, was embraced by only a minority of black South Africans,

and was not regarded as an accessible entertainment genre by the majority of the population. For this reason, its failure to thrive as a popular black South African music style cannot be attributed to Apartheid alone.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This work is the result of the following methods of research:

1.5.1 A comprehensive literature study in two main areas:

- 1.5.1.1 The body of literature related to a description of the history and development of African and South African urban music styles. While the literature available in these areas was meagre at the outset of this project, significant and substantial contributions had been made by the end.
 - 1.5.1.2 The most important area of research for the purposes of this thesis was the ideological and socio-political contexts for the developments of the styles. The body of literature on South African policies and related subjects is, as is to be expected, substantial. While little published literature is available on the ideological concepts of South African blacks and how these affected their choice of music, that which is available is significant in that it has been produced by eminent academics. It was controversial issues and insubstantiations found in this literature which necessitated the extensive newspaper research described under 1.5.2.
- 1.5.2 Thorough and extensive newspaper research which required over two years of exclusive study and which provided invaluable insight into and substantiation for the views presented in this thesis.

Almost every major black publication, broadly between 1930 and 1960, available in Unisa, the State Library in Pretoria and the South African Library in Cape Town, was thoroughly

perused. Relevant copies were made, categorised, collated and filed; many were re-copied and re-filed for cross-referencing.

- 1.5.3 Interviews: locating interviewees sometimes necessitated travelling to remote parts of the country and also to London, UK. On the whole interviewees fell into two main categories:

1.5.3.1 Musicians who had actively participated in the decades under discussion.

Initial informal conversations with black South African musicians were followed by subsequent taped, lengthy interviews on specific subjects. Included amongst those consulted are eminent music practitioners of the 1930s to 1960s, of whom, Peter Rezant, Ntemi Piliso and Louis Radebe Petersen, are extensively quoted and acknowledged in Ballantine's work (*Ballantine 1993:xi, 15, 16, 19, 21, 29, 35, 36, 42, 43, 47, 53, 66, 71, 72, 73, 80*).

- 1.5.3.2 Intellectuals: these were selected as keen observers and analysts of the South African condition, who, as most intellectuals of the time, had also participated actively in at least the jazz sub-culture, if not in other related music styles.

Interviewees from this category provided the perspective which this thesis adopts: namely, that what was presented in the press at times as the generally dominant ideology, and accepted by other writers as such, is rather that of the elite and cannot be construed as the ideology of the masses.

Personal interviews with two profound thinkers in particular influenced this perspective. While this may be a very small and unrepresentative number, they are the most insightful and influential people - both then and now - with whom this author has been fortunate enough to have developed truly meaningful and ongoing debate over several years. Without their thoughtful and considered insight, many views expressed would have presented only the currently accepted academic bias. The two gentlemen are:

- Professor Ezekiel Mphahlele (better known as Es'kia, or Zeke to his friends), political activist in the 1950s, eminent international academic and author of *Africa, My Africa, Down Second Avenue*, etc.
- The late Professor Khabi Mngoma, academic, musician, musicologist and political activist-peer of Ezekiel Mphahlele's, although his views sometimes differed significantly from Mphahlele's.

Another influential contributor to the views expressed in this work is the younger Aggrey Klaaste, erstwhile 1950s journalist for Drum and Golden City Post (two rich sources for this research), brother of Sal Klaaste (jazz pianist of note in the period under discussion) and nephew of Peter Rezant of Merry Blackbirds' fame. Most importantly, he was for a long time the highly respected editor, and is currently editor-in-chief of South Africa's largest newspaper with a predominantly black readership.

These people brought to this work their insightful ability to analyse the socio-political situation, which they had continued to do as political spokespeople, analysts and catalysts of thought, both then and - with the wisdom of hindsight - now. Their interest, enthusiasm and concerted efforts to clarify and define their thoughts and points of both agreement and disagreement have lent this work a dimension which has contributed immeasurably to its efforts to uncover the truth. This truth applies both to the ideological influences behind their own perceptions of entertainment styles, and what they perceived to be those of other, educated and uneducated, more and less urbanised, sectors of black society.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is necessary to define certain terms in the specific way in which they are used in this thesis.

1.6.1 The term '**culture**' is used in this work in the sense of the condensed definition supplied by Lodge:

... the concept ‘culture’ must be broadened to include not only the products of specialised intellectual work (books, philosophy, painting, etc.), but also the general social activity whereby all men and women give creative expression to the material conditions that surround them. In this sense culture is the way in which social groups ‘handle’ their experience of living in a set of objective conditions and thereby create a corresponding set of attitudes, symbols, values and mores. These patterns of meaning are created in all forms of practical activity and are the means whereby a ‘social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored’ (*Lodge 1983:154*).

- 1.6.2 The use and meaning of the term ‘**ideology**’ does not refer here to “a deliberate and systematic manipulation and misrepresentation of objectivity” (as in “Communist ideology”, etc.) (*Sole 1983:65*). The Oxford Dictionary’s two definitions have been merged, so that the concept of ‘ideology’ is meant as “the system of ideas (or set of beliefs) at the basis of ... the manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual”. Hall’s definition is perhaps the most comprehensive in terms of the use of the concept in this work:

Nowadays, the term ideology includes the whole range of concepts, ideas and images which provide the frameworks of interpretation and meaning of social and political thought in society, whether they exist at the high, systematic, philosophical level or at the level of casual, everyday, contradictory, common-sense explanation (*Hall 1986:36*).

- 1.6.3 The context for the use of the phrase ‘**conception of the world**’ is that supplied by Gramsci:

There is no *human activity* from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded ... Each man finally outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a ‘philosopher’, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and therefore contributes to sustain a *conception of the world* or to modify it, that is to bring into being new modes of thought (*Gramsci 1971:9*).

- 1.6.4 The term ‘**liberal**’, while used by Vigne to refer to “South Africans – both black and white – who sought freedom, justice and equality” (*Vigne 1997:3*), is normally used in the South African socio-historical political context to refer to whites, amongst whom Jan H. Hofmeyr, Leslie Rubin, Margaret Ballinger and Leo Marquard are outstanding early examples (*Vigne 1997:4*). In this work, the proper noun, ‘**liberalism**’, which Hall states “is a diverse, not a unified, discourse” in which “radical, conservative and ‘social democratic’ strands” are identifiable (*Hall 1986:37*), does not refer to the political creed associated with the erstwhile Liberal political party. Rather ‘**liberalism**’ is used within the framework of the “common sense” understanding of the term as it appears to have formed part of the “unwritten presuppositions of the social thought of ... (the) epoch” (*Hall 1986:37*), in the form of a set of concepts and beliefs adopted by some black South Africans, including members of the

African National Congress, as a strategy for liberation. ‘Liberal’ is used to describe black South Africans who, influenced by their white counterparts and the teachings of white missionaries, sought by gestures of co-operation, goodwill, individual progress and achievement, to demonstrate a “moral and intellectual ascendency” (*Hall 1986:5*).

- 1.6.5 The term ‘*tsotsi*’ was the slang term, commonly used in South Africa in approximately the 1950s to 1970s, which was used to refer to young African male ‘layabouts’ who were suspected of unconventional, if not criminal, behaviour.

1.7 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA RELEVANT TO THIS THESIS

The following synopsis is intended to provide brief chronology for readers less familiar with the details of South African history:

1.7.1 Milestones in the history of black oppositional politics:

- 1912 The South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was founded with Dr John Dube as its first president. It was later to be renamed the African National Congress (ANC).
- 1930 Dr Pixley ka I. Seme became president of the ANC. During the 1930s, the ANC was inactive and generally perceived to be ineffective and elitist.
- 1935 The All-Africa Convention (AAC), a new movement to unite black opposition, was jointly formed by Dr Pixley ka I. Seme and Prof D.D.T. Jabavu. In oppositional alliance, it existed side-by-side with the ANC and many people were members of both organisations.
- 1940 Dr Albert Xuma became president of the ANC.

- 1943 Following brief bus boycotts in 1940 and 1942, the Alexandra Bus Boycott was instigated in August 1943 by the residents of Alexandra, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, in protest against the increased bus fare. Thousands of Africans refused to ride on the buses, and walked almost eighteen miles to Johannesburg for nine days. In November 1944, the protest resumed and this time resolutely lasted for a grim seven weeks.
- 1944 The ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was founded. Frustrated by the lack of progress achieved by the old guard's moderate and passive actions, the young activists (amongst whom were Anton Lembede, A.P. Mda, Walter Sisulu, Jordan Ngubane and Nelson Mandela) sought to overthrow the white government by mass action.
- 1948 The ANCYL finally formulated its policy.
- 1949 Dr James Moroka was elected President to replace Dr Albert Xuma. The ANC adopted a 'Programme of Action' which was to be frequently quoted by the 'Africanists' of the 1950s as foundation for their political stance.
- 1952 On 26 June, the Defiance Campaign, in which black South Africans mounted nationwide civil disobedience as a means of protest, began. Apartheid laws were openly flaunted: blacks used whites-only facilities and transport, stayed in the cities without permission, etc. Meetings all over the country to organise and publicise the campaign were punctuated by shouted phrases, many of which were to become common to the liberation struggle. In August twenty leaders, including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, were arrested. By October, support for the campaign had begun to dwindle. In the aftermath, cooperation between the ANC and the Indian Congress continued to grow. Significantly, by the peak of the campaign, the ANC membership had swelled from 7 000 to over 100 000.

In December of this eventful year, Albert Luthuli was elected president of the ANC. Nelson Mandela became deputy-president.

1954 The Congress of the People, formed to formulate a Freedom Charter, significantly unified the ANC, the Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation and the Congress of Democrats . The exclusive 'Africanists' resisted this move as they believed that the African problem should be solved exclusively by Africans, without the interference of 'foreigners'. The 'anti-white' perception with which they became tainted in the press stemmed from attitudes such as these.

1955 At a meeting in Kliptown attended by 3 000 people of all races, the different sections of the Freedom Charter, collated from individual contributions of ordinary people, were read out and voted on. The Charter demanded a non-racial, democratic government in South Africa. The opening sentence which affirmed that South Africa belonged to both black and white, became a bone of contention with the 'Africanists' who would in 1959 form the breakaway PAC.

October of this year saw an historic march of black and white women of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) led by famous white South African activist, Helen Joseph (a member of the Congress of Democrats) and Bertha Mashabe from the ANC. In protest against the extension of the hated Pass Laws to women, 2000 women marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria, individually mounting the steps to deliver their petitions.

1956 FEDSAW launched a far bigger version of the protest. Twenty thousand women of all races and from different parts of the country again went to the Union Buildings. Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophie Williams, as representatives of the different organisations, were the leaders. After delivering petitions to the Prime Minister's office, the crowd stood in silence for thirty minutes. Then, led by Lillian Ngoyi, the women sang *Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika* and a song especially rehearsed for the occasion, *Wathini abafazi, wa uthini' imbolodo*

uzo kufa (“Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock”).

- 1959 Robert Sobukwe, a Fort Hare graduate, led the breakaway Pan-African Congress (PAC) of disgruntled ANC ‘Africanists’. (He was later to be arrested and kept incarcerated for years on Robben Island by the infamous ‘Sobukwe Clause’, by which his term of imprisonment was renewed ad infinitum by a simple decree of Parliament. He died without gaining his freedom.)
- 1960 The notorious carnage at Sharpeville, where 69 blacks were killed and 180 injured when the police opened fire on an unarmed crowd, occurred on 21 March. The protest action was part of the Anti-Pass campaign, led by the PAC, in which thousands of blacks marched to police stations without their passes, thereby courting arrest. A massive clampdown on black oppositional activity followed: the ANC and PAC were declared illegal organisations and by the end of March over 18 000 people were detained in terms of new emergency regulations.
- 1961 The declaration of South Africa as a Republic sealed the fate of blacks in South Africa. They faced a future in which they were totally deprived of political and social rights and effectively decreed to be foreigners in the country of their birth. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) ('The Spear of the Nation'), the armed wing of the ANC, was formed, thereby officially abandoning the ANC's erstwhile commitment to non-violent action. Led by Nelson Mandela, sabotage was directed at government buildings and installations.
- 1963 The ‘Rivonia Treason Trial’ commenced. The most famous treason trial in South Africa’s history, the accused included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and Rusty Bernstein. It lasted 11 months. All the accused, save Bernstein, were sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 1964 In June, the Rivonia trialists began their life sentences on Robben Island.

1.7.2 Developments in white South African politics:

- 1910 A new constitution, ratified by Britain, united South Africa under a single government. Those in favour of a union had successfully defeated the proponents of federalism and Louis Botha, leader of the South African Party, became Prime Minister..
- 1919 Botha died and Jan Smuts became Prime Minister of a South Africa in the grip of depression. General strikes occurred which were very damaging to Smuts. They served to cement the forces of the Labour and Nationalist Parties who contested the election on the same side.
- 1924 Smuts was defeated by J.B.M. Hertzog of the Nationalist Party. With Hertzog the 'colour issue' assumed an urgency in South African politics and he introduced laws to keep whites in supreme political control. Of particular significance was the policy of 'civilised' (white) labour and 'uncivilised' (black) labour which protected whites and marginalised blacks.
- 1925- 1929 Afrikaans became an official language and by celebrating the centenary of the Great Trek, Afrikaans history was formally established. The Bantu Repression Act was passed and blacks were removed from the common voters' role.
- 1930 Smuts and Hertzog formed a coalition government.
- 1934- 1939 During these years there was ever increasing urbanisation of blacks who moved to the cities in search of work. With a World War looming, a split developed in the coalition government as Smuts challenged Hertzog's policy of neutrality and won a narrow victory.
- 1948- 1966 Led by D.F. Malan, the National Party came to power. The two main objectives of

the new government were to implement the policy of Apartheid ('Separateness', i.e. the separation of the races that effectively condemned blacks to political, social and economic discrimination) and to establish a Republic.

The ever-widening wage gap between whites and blacks led to labour unrest. Blacks also protested against the 'Pass Laws', which required them to carry certificates that allowed them entry to different 'white' areas. The Mixed Marriages Act (prohibiting inter-racial marriage), the Immorality Act (prohibiting inter-racial sexual intercourse), the Population Registration Act (which classified people into groups according to colour), amongst others, were passed.

- 1954 D.F. Malan retired and J.G. Strijdom became Prime Minister.
- 1958 Strijdom died and H.F. Verwoerd came to power. In order to make his even more sinister version of Apartheid palatable to the international arena, he renamed the policy 'Separate Development'. His vigorous propaganda attempted to promulgate the myth that blacks and whites would both benefit from the system. Blacks were regarded as temporary migratory labourers in 'white' areas and the 'homelands' or 'bantustans' (small and inadequate tracts of land assigned to different black ethnic groups), became 'independent states'.
- 1960 The notorious carnage at the police station at Sharpeville, later to gain the historical epithet 'Sharpeville', occurred in March of this year. The ensuing draconian actions against the ANC and PAC, in which the organisations were outlawed and their leaders detained, silenced black political expression. These measures triggered international sanctions and South Africa became the pariah of the world.
- 1961 South Africa was expelled from the Commonwealth and became a republic.

1.8 NOTES TO THE READER

The following notes are offered by way of clarification, and are in no particular order of priority.

- 1.8.1 For the most part this work focuses on what could arguably be called the ‘main’ stream of development of black South African urban music which occurred in the Transvaal (as the province was called prior to the new political dispensation). More specifically, it refers to that which occurred in Johannesburg and the surrounding areas. It should be noted that this is the same area of research of, amongst others, Coplan and Ballantine. The author went to some lengths to interview Cape musicians and other informants with a view to including this branch of the genre’s history. However, the substantial difference involved in certain aspects was deemed beyond the scope of this work. (See Recommendations - 6.2)
- 1.8.2 An exceptionally large number of quotations are used in this thesis, and especially in the sections based on newspaper research. This is in order to substantiate the context. Without such extensive quoting, incorrect conclusions can be drawn and/or perceptions created.
- 1.8.3 Where direct quotations are followed by several references in brackets, the first author listed is the one from whom the direct quotation is taken. Where a list of authors is given as substantiation for a point of view, those authors are listed in order of priority.
- 1.8.4 Curved brackets () are used to denote comments by this writer, and square brackets [] to reproduce brackets as they occur in the quoted passage itself.
- 1.8.5 The use of single inverted commas (‘ ’) is intended to convey the meaning ‘so-called’; the use of double inverted commas (“ ”) signifies direct quotations.
- 1.8.6 Italics are used for the African names of styles and for emphasis. In quoted passages, italics in brackets are used to denote the writer’s explanation, as opposed to bracketed ordinary type which corrects grammar or supplies missing words.

- 1.8.7 While “Biography tends to demand the past tense, literature … favours a kind of literary-historical present tense” (*Couzens 1985:xv*). Therefore, as in Couzens’ book , this work vacillates between past and present tense: most commentary is in the past tense, but references to press articles or other literature have been made in the present tense.

Sadly, several informants to this research have died since the time of interview. They include Prof Khabi Mngoma, Peter Rezant, Michael Ranho and Henry Kolatsoeu. Many of the others are old and frail. Therefore, since the ‘live’ tapes have provided the source of their assertions and since newspaper personalities long-since dead are often referred to in the present tense (as mentioned above), the informants’ opinions and assertions are reported in the present tense.

- 1.8.8 As is the practice of several authors, this essay will refer to the musics of sub-Saharan Africa as ‘African music’. It appears to be generally accepted that the musics of this area can be broadly categorised as distinct from those of North Africa, which generally tend to manifest a more middle-eastern Arab orientation (*Manuel 1988:84; Graham 1989:1; Graham 1992:2; Johnson 1990:31; Merriam 1982:61,156; Bergman 1985:34*).
- 1.8.9 References to the various papers presented at the symposiums of Ethnomusicology have been categorised by the year in which the symposium was held, rather than the year in which the document was published, in order to facilitate reference access. (Note that in his Bibliography, Coplan lists Clegg’s article from the Symposium held in 1980 as a 1981 reference (see *Coplan 1985:201*), a factor which made the said article extremely difficult to find.)
- 1.8.10 Blacking states that “Black Music” is a term more appropriate to Afro-American music which has not yet been generally used to refer to the musics of Africa (*Blacking 1982A:265*). Mthethwa maintains that the term ‘black’, used as reference to “people of African descent”, is regarded by many Africans as an insulting one (*Mthethwa n.d.:24*). However, it is believed that the term ‘black’ is currently regarded as the acceptable and self-identifying designation for the South African majority population group of African heritage.

It will therefore be used in this work to refer to black South Africans and to the music made in South Africa by black South Africans.

- 1.8.11 The term “kaffir” (or “kafir”), as used in the nineteenth century to refer to unbelievers, did not have the racist connotation which it has today. When historically appropriate, the term has been quoted.
- 1.8.12 Readers wishing to have access to tape recordings of interviews quoted in this work should refer to the author.

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CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF URBAN POPULAR MUSIC IN AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the Africanization of musical ideas and technology from abroad, Africans have taken an important first step toward confronting the onslaught of influence from industrial nations. Disruptions caused by colonialism, international business, and misguided development programs may continue to cause rampant confusion and disaster, but the arts and entertainments may become a beach-head in the battle to transform imported Western ideas to make them usable in African culture ...

In music, appreciation of the new transformations has been long in coming, veiled by mourning and ranting over the destruction of traditional music styles due to Anglo-American cultural domination. As for musicologists, critic Bruno Nettl says, "They have only lately recognized that some of the most interesting and significant events in the recent history of world music result from the rapid growth, modernization, and Westernization of cities in the developing or recently developed nations outside Europe and North America" (*Bergman 1985:10/11*).

In the 1980s a new pop music style which incorporated elements of indigenous African music exploded onto the international charts. While exemplified and catapulted to worldwide fame by Paul Simon's not uncontroversial *Graceland* album, many black urban popular musicians had in fact been associated with the process for years before this globally-marketed and highly successful venture (*Graham 1992:13; Stapleton & May 1987:4; Sweeney 1991:44*).

In *Graceland's* wake came the 'world music' phenomenon - ambivalently regarded by different authorities as to its contribution to the African urban music cause (see *Sweeney 1991: Introduction; Ewens 1991:211; Graham 1992:13; Gibson et al 1992:229*) - and a general Western awakening to the sounds of urban African music. Not least, a long overdue nascence of interest amongst white South Africans in the music of their black compatriots at last began to manifest. Groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambaso who had collaborated directly with Simon, as well as other prominent and well-marketed groups who had not, such as Johnny Clegg and Savuka, Mango Groove, etc., benefited enormously, both in South Africa and abroad, from the enthusiasm which the album generated.

The sounds to which the western world now pays attention are dynamic reflections of the changes which have taken place and are continuing to take place on the continent of Africa. Inextricably linked to the social and economic aspects that were the by-products of the urbanization of the various regions of the continent, African urban music “is still penetrating its own cultural environment and, to an extent, presaging a culture that has not yet emerged” (*Bender 1991:xvi*). The modernisation of Africa, described by Chernoff as “one of the most exciting historical dramas of our time” (*Chernoff 1985:155*) denotes the industrialisation of music and the resultant cultural con-sequences inherent in this process (*Wallis & Malm 1984:2, 12-16, 64*).

Certain extra-musical conditions are crucial to the development of an urban music industry: undeniably linked to commercialism, a viable economic market is one of them. Popular music requires the social conditions of urban society as sustenance; generating capital to buy instruments, to produce and distribute the music, and a clientele financially able and predisposed to purchase the music (*Ewens 1991:9*). National radio stations and their policies vis-a-vis the dissemination of foreign and local musics play a pivotal role (*wa Mukuna 1992:72,78*). And in Africa, a cultural policy which manifests considerably more than a general indifference to popular urban culture is distinctly advantageous (*Graham 1992:9/10; Wallis & Malm 1984:11*).

Predicted to be an aesthetic of sound which would dominate Western popular dance music of the future (*Graham 1989:14*), an enthusiasm optimistically used to refer to African urban popular music of the eighties in which “Black consciousness had liberated the music of the Third World” (*Gibson et al 1992:229*). However, this stance is tempered by the realistic account of the hardships and deteriorating economies of the continent and their effect on the music industry within Africa (*Graham 1992:14*).

Inadequate copyright laws and poor economies have combined to make tape piracy the prime, and in some instances, critical factor in the industry’s decline on the continent (*Bergman 1985:22; Seago 1985:177; Manuel 1988:89; Graham 1989:19; Graham 1992:10; Wallis & Malm 1984:77*). Interestingly, the market for Western pop has been substantially less affected. According to Seago, the MoR (i.e. ‘Middle-of-the-Road’ pop) and Disco fans generally tend to be more affluent. His warning that “unless something is done to reverse current trends, African pop will quickly suffocate under an

avalanche of disco” (*Seago 1985:177*), seen from the hindsight perspective of *Graceland* and its ripple effect, seems less dire. However, Graham’s observation several years later that First World multinational companies are still manifesting a priority to sell “western repertoire to Africa rather than sell African repertoire to the west” (*Graham 1992:9*) is sobering.

2.2 THE PHENOMENON OF “CROSSOVER”

This double transformation in the music, brought about by leaving and returning home has created a truly international music style in Africa, and yet one that is doubly African (*Collins 1985:734*).

The commercially-coined terms such as “crossover” and “ethnic rock music” (as examples amongst others, see *Johnson et al 1990:14; Gibson et al 1992:229*), as used to describe the well-marketed western/African fusions of the 1980s, in effect represent yet another stage in the “centuries-old trans-Atlantic musical feedback cycle” (*Collins 1989:221*; see also *Graham 1989:16*). The best-known product of an earlier phenomenon of grafting “Black” onto “White” music is rock ‘n roll and its myriad off-shoots. All of these can be termed Afro-American music and have in turn played a singularly important role in the forging of African urban music. However, other foreign styles (such as rumba, calypso, reggae) which have reverberated throughout many countries of sub-Saharan Africa and which have contributed significantly, if not definitively, to certain of the emerging syncretic styles, are effectively “displaced musical relatives” which also manifest an African legacy at their respective roots (*Ewens 1991:9,24,26,28,35; Collins 1989:221; Merriam 1982:157,159,160; Manuel 1988:24,25,26,28; Kubik 1981:93; Bergman 1985:8*).

... Since the 1930s, the forms that have had the biggest impact in Africa have all come from there in the first place: calypso, reggae and, most significantly, rumba. Today’s funk and electro music, which are having a strong influence on some of the younger African artists, are the latest in a long line of musics that owe their basic thrust to Africa (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*).

To varying extents, all modern urban African music can be said to represent “crossover music”: traditional African elements have crossed over or been assimilated into modern syncretic styles which may contain Afro-American or Afro-Latin elements. Consequently, the genres manifest both a western and an African flavour to a greater or lesser degree. It is from this musical mélange of assimilated and

hereditary ingredients that various popular idioms have emerged which have demonstrated an ability to communicate and engender appeal beyond the borders of the country in which they first evolved:

The most enduring pan-African styles have thrived not only because they started in the right place at the right time, but also because they were examples of outgoing music, deliberately tailored to help the widest inter-ethnic or non-tribal audience find a place in the modern world (*Ewens 1991:9*).

West African *highlife*, Congo-Zairean rumba and South African *mbaqanga* are arguably amongst the most prominent examples of African urban styles which have crossed over cultural boundaries to find an audience in other parts of Africa, or even further afield in Europe and America. It can be argued that the above styles reflect the facet of Western influence more specifically than, say, *mbalax* (see 2.8.10) or *fiji* (see 2.8.4) (*Sweeney 1991:18,40*). However, suggestions that international appeal is proportionate to the conspicuous presence of familiar Western elements are contradicted by Graham's observation that recent changes in Western tastes for African music reflect an interest in Sahelian music (in which elements of the *griot* tradition are prominent) (see 2.8.9) as well as South African music (*Graham 1992:1,3,60*). Furthermore, there is now evidence to suggest that "a closer approximation to western tastes and standards has inevitably involved a drop in domestic popularity" (*Graham 1992:9*; *Sweeney 1991:18*). (Note that this observation applies to those artists recognised as exponents of authentic African urban music as opposed to Western Disco or MoR - 'Middle-of-the-Road' - pop.)

2.3 COMMON SALIENT FEATURES OF URBAN AFRICAN MUSIC

While there are a number of distinctive styles which fall under the generalised umbrella term of "urban African popular music", the genre as a whole manifests a number of common distinguishing characteristics:

- The most outstanding and idiosyncratic feature is the predominant and highly active rhythmic component of the music; the counterpart in Western pop playing a mainly time-keeping, *beat*-accentuating role.

- The heritage of rhythmic complexity of rural indigenous music is found in urban African music to a greater or lesser degree. However, the most common exemplar found in modern commercial styles generally comprises syncopated lines added above a simple quadratic pulse.
- Unlike western pop music, where melodic and percussive instruments have distinctive and decidedly separate functions, the full rhythmic potential of melodic instruments and the melodic potential of rhythmic instruments are exploited. Similarly, the separation between the solo and rhythm parts is less well-defined than in Western pop. Melody and rhythm intertwine, balance and complement each other, while losing some of their complexity in the process of their incorporation into modern, syncretic forms.
- For the most part, electrified, western instruments are used.
- An insidious, essentially hypnotic but indefinable African element most aptly described by Ewens is invariably evident:

In trying to describe music in non-technical terms commentators necessarily turn to metaphor and analogy such as the familiar image of an “inter-woven fabric of rhythms and melodies which ‘mesh’ together into a complete whole”. This is fine as far as it goes but the carpet analogy is two-dimensional and frays at the edges. A better image for African music would be a three-dimensional shape with room for the spaces between the notes, so essential to any music and fundamental to an appreciation of African idioms. It is more like a net or a web, an image which also illustrates the sense of helpless entrapment that can overcome those ‘wrapped up’ in the music (*Ewens 1991: 8*).

2.4 MAJOR MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND GENERAL TRENDS

The incorporation of western instruments and the absorption of elements of foreign styles, both sacred and secular, into indigenous forms provided the fundamental media from which new, syncretic forms evolved in the urbanizing areas of Africa (*Stapleton & May 1987:7*). Cautionary perspective is provided by Chernoff (and substantiated by others - see *Manuel 1988:22; wa Mukuna 1992:80/81*) who warns that while documentary “evidence of such-and-such an instrument and such-and-such a musical presence” provides convenient landmarks of the continent’s musical development,

... we do not know enough about what was already there, the full range of traditional repertoires and the prototypical forms of evolving popular styles. I believe that creative developments are rooted in local affinities which take the names of imported styles they only resemble (*Bender 1989:xv*).

However, the following influences are generally credited as being the major catalytic sources of inspiration in the development of urban styles:

- Various styles of European music (most specifically in the form of Christian hymns and brass band music) and the adoption of Western instrumentation.

In practice, the promotion of western religion in Africa involved the imposition of western culture and civilisation on blacks. In churches and numerous schools established by the missionaries, traditional music and dance were denigrated as heathen, and therefore suppressed (*Graham 1989:15; Bender 1991:75; Stapleton & May 1987:9,10*).

The most important and lasting influences of church music on developing urban popular music in Africa were in the realm of melody and harmony and were reflected to a greater or lesser degree in the music of colonial times such as *highlife* (*Bender 1991:77; Coplan 1978:98/99*) and *juju* (*Stapleton & May 1987:11; Alaja-Browne 1989:231/232*).

The influence of the missionaries, and particularly the education they provided, spawned a societal phenomenon in the form of a black Christian elite. Regarding themselves as superior to those of their own race who persisted with “heathen” traditions and practices, they enthusiastically conformed to their newly-imposed culture and its conventions (*Bender 1991:75*). This stratum of black urban society was mainly responsible for reflecting whites' tastes in their endorsement of ragtime, vaudeville and Western choral music. They also espoused ballroom music and were mainly responsible for its initial flourishing in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya (*Stapleton & May 1987:11, 12; Coplan 1978:100*).

Brass band music introduced mainly by European colonists (*Stapleton & May 1987:8; Manuel 1988:86*) played a significant role in the hybridisation of modern popular forms in Africa. Not least, its contribution is notable for providing the medium of brass instrumentation which was

idiosyncratic to later forms. By the time the influences of Afro-American jazz and Cuban music were felt on the continent, African musicians had mastered the techniques of playing brass instruments which were essential to the genres and which gave birth to styles such as East African *beni* (*Martin 1991:75; Manuel 1988: 86; Stapleton & May 1987:9*), West African *dance-band highlife, adaha* and *konkomba* (*Manuel 1988: 86; Collins 1985B:2; 1989:222; 1976B:62*).

- Music styles from the Caribbean, and Cuba in particular, in original or transmuted ‘Latin-American’ form. These styles are often credited as being the biggest single influence in the development of urban popular music on the continent in general (*Manuel 1988:87; Sweeney 1991:43; wa Mukuna 1992:72*). Their impact on developing popular forms in South Africa such as jazz and *mbaqanga* would appear to be more subtle. (Certainly the influence is evident in the music of the miners who migrated to Zaire and were exposed to the “dry” Katanga guitar style (*Bender 1991:43.*)).

The French and Belgian Congo, Senegal, Mali and Guinea were among those who, as part of a general trend, adopted and then adapted the sounds of Latin-American, particularly Cuban music (*wa Mukuna 1992:75; Sweeney 1991:10,17,26; Graham 1992:52; Stapleton & May 1987:21*).

Cuban styles, of which the *rumba* can feasibly be isolated as the most significant, were primarily responsible for the creation of the syncretic urban Congolese genre which “has been more influential within Africa than any other regional style” (*Manuel 1988:97*). Stapleton & May maintain that the attraction of Cuban music lay in the fact that the African flavour of this genre was manifested more strongly than that of “earlier imports such as waltzes and swing”. Because the rhythms of Cuban music “were still essentially African” they were more familiar to the African ear than those of the other ballroom styles (*Stapleton & May 1987:20*).

The Second World War was the turning point in terms of the dissemination and popularity of Cuban music and its assimilation into African repertoire (*Graham 1992:52*). Africans adopted a new, self-assertive image which manifested politically as emerging nationalism, calling for independence, and culturally, as pride in the African heritage. “The Latin boom, with its tropical self-confidence, was symbolical of a new era” (*Stapleton & May 1987:20*).

- Afro-American music, including minstrelsy, ragtime (generally “accompanied by Black Minstrelsy with its tap-dancing and plantation humour” (*Collins 1985A:74*)), vaudeville and jazz. Collins comments on the irony of the situation in which the dance music of North American blacks was introduced primarily by whites (*Collins 1985A:73*). Later influences included rock, and more particularly, soul and reggae (*Manuel 1988:87*).

Manuel unambiguously states the significance of Afro-American musical influence in the development of African urban pop (*Manuel 1988:8*). Early South African urban music, in particular, responded with vigour and enthusiasm to Afro-American music, most significantly, to American vocal styles and the big-band swing era which included vocal swing (*Hamm 1988:7*). Of the other African styles, dance-band *highlife* (as opposed to brass band or guitar band-*highlife*) stands out as the one in which the direct influence of American *swing* appears most pronounced in the period of germination (*Manuel 1988:92; Collins 1989:225*). A general appraisal of the overall early development of the various styles of urban African music reveals that there is ample evidence of the initial adoption of the ballroom styles favoured by the colonialists. Sweeney, for example, emphasises the use of American-style jazz band *instrumentation* rather than musical elements in the evolution of *highlife*: “... in its original dance band form it was a blend of European jazz-band instrumentation with local Akan and Ga rhythms, given added spice by an assortment of influences from Latin to calypso” (*Sweeney 1991:34*).

However, the pivotal and catalytic role of Afro-American jazz in the early development of South African *mbaqanga* is unparalleled in the development of the modern syncretic forms of the other countries of the continent.

It seems plausible that the policy of Africanisation adopted by Mali, Ghana, Guinea and Zaire, the motives for which included the “abandonment of colonial values” (*Sweeney 1991:26*) as well as the impact of Cuban/Caribbean influences, tempered the prominence of elements of Afro-American jazz.

In later years the presence of Afro-American pop was decidedly felt, particularly by the youth in countries such as Sierra Leone and Ghana. The first African pop band was the **Heartbeats** of

Sierra Leone, followed by student bands like the Echoes, the Golden Strings and Red Stars (*Collins 1985A:80*). However, others proved more resistant to this Western genre. For example, Sweeney observes that during the 1950s and 1960s, which was the heyday of rock 'n roll, Senegal displayed overwhelming susceptibility to Latin-American, particularly Cuban, musical influences (*Sweeney 1991:17*). In yet other countries the level of interest in Afro-American pop fluctuated. An illustration of this phenomenon can be found in Mali, which in the 1960s distanced itself culturally from the West in an attempt to consolidate African culture. As a result, the “Euro-American pop-rock influence waned” only to be replaced by Cuban influences (*Sweeney 1991:20*).

The reason for the evident preference sometimes given to Caribbean/Cuban or Latin-American musics above those of Afro-American genres, lies in the extent to which the musics of the Caribbean were perceived as being essentially more African than those of America. Dealing with South Africa’s enthusiastic reception of “mediated”, commercially available Afro-American music and admiration for Black American achievements, Hamm maintains that these were “based to some degree on highly selective and often distorted information and images” (*Hamm 1988:15*). (See 5.5.1.1)

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*).

For oppressed South African blacks, however, the bonds with African-Americans were deeply ideological and similarities in their respective social and political conditions outweighed the many differences (*Hamm 1988:16*). (See 4.7.1)

Rock 'n roll was nevertheless not afforded the expected enthusiastic reception in South Africa. Despite an initial response to and limited imitation of the music, its popularity amongst black South Africans faded dramatically within two years of its introduction. According to Hamm, and possibly because of the enthusiastic acceptance of the music by white South African youth, the reason for this rejection is primarily the black South Africans' perception of the music as “having to do only with white interests and white power” (*Hamm 1988:19,20,21*).

It is interesting to note that those African countries which embraced the rock ‘n roll and early pop music of predominantly white bands, abandoned the styles the moment that “Black Pop music” (such as the West Indian Ska music of ‘Millie’ - of “My Boy Lollipop” fame, and Chubby Checker’s twist craze) hit the African continent in the mid-1960s (*Collins 1985A:82*). In South Africa “the twist” (“the first genre of Afro-American music to reach black South Africans in essentially the same form in which it was heard by a mass black American audience” (*Hamm 1988:25*)) was an overnight success. Elements of the style were almost immediately assimilated into *mbaqanga* artists’ work (*Hamm 1988:22*).

The impact of soul music, which “hit Africa long before it hit Europe”, was greater than that of any pop idiom previously introduced on the continent (*Collins 1985A:82*). The first African soul band is named as the **Heartbeats** (also the first pop band, see pp 2-8), who inspired the creation of many counterparts in the 1960s. **Joni Haastrup** “became Nigeria’s James Brown” (*Collins 1985A:83*).

In South Africa the genre, first referred to as “soul jazz”, was embraced with fervour. (See 5.5.1.2). The medium by which the electric guitar and organ were introduced into the country, the adoption by local bands and the assimilation into modern syncretic music was delayed because of the style’s dependence on the expensive electric instruments. After so-called Cape Coloured groups such as the **Fantastics** showed the way, black groups in and around Johannesburg by the end of the 1960s included the **Black Hawkes** and the **Inne Laws** (*Hamm 1988:28,29*).

One of the biggest contributions of soul to the popular music of Africa in general is that by its essential nature, “taken to be an expression of black ethos and black pride” (*Hamm 1988:26*), it inspired the creation of original modern indigenous forms. “The period from 1969 to 1971 was one where musicians got away from the ‘copyright’ mentality of simply copying Western pop music. When Soul crossed over to Africa, young musicians made a quantum leap out of the copy-cat strait-jacket” (*Collins 1985A:84*).

Reggae has flourished in Africa. It is of interest to note that there is a “reggae-like Tukulor rhythm” known as “yella” which is indigenous to Senegal (*Sweeney 1991:19*). Reggae’s most

famous exponents in Africa are **Alpha Blondy** from Cote D'Ivoire and **Lucky Dube** from South Africa (*Sweeney 1991:32,69; Ewens 1991:24*).

Modern eclectic styles emerging from Africa in recent decades clearly reflect the presence of Afro-American idioms. The avalanche of rock and its derivatives which have hit the continent have affected young African musicians the most. Manuel contends that rock has remained “the single most pervasive musical influence on African music, and most current styles can be regarded as fusions of traditional characteristics with heavy rock rhythms and instrumentation” (*Manuel 1988:88*).

Modern African musicians of international stature who manifest elements of Western pop or rock in their nevertheless authentic African styles include:

- Cameroonian Manu Dibango (who made famous “Soul Makossa” in 1972). He has played “every kind of music from free jazz to techno-funk”, and yet “All of his music has a definite African feel to it ...” (*Bergman 1985:127*). (See 2.8.6 for a description of *Makossa*).
- The Afro-American elements present in well-known Nigerian bandleader **Fela Anikolapu Kuti**’s “Afro-beat” are jazz and soul, according to Collins (*Collins 1985A:13*). (See 2.8.5 for a description of *Afro-beat*).
- White South African **Johnny Clegg**’s multiracial groups, **Juluka** followed by **Savuka**, which even at the height of the Apartheid era achieved “a new genre of crossover music that has gotten multiracial crowds together” (*Bergman 1985:118*), are described as playing an “easy-listening *mbaqanga/rock mix*” (*Sweeney 1991:68*).
- Cross-fertilisation within the continent itself led to the same fundamental styles appearing in different countries (*Graham 1992: 2*) as well as the development of yet more hybrid forms.
- Congo-Zairean music has established the “continental dominance which Zaire has enjoyed over the last four decades” (*Graham 1989:26; Bender 1991:43*). While the creators of its original

prototypes were not without West African *highlife* influence (see *wa Mukuna* 1992:75), Zairean music and its derivatives became widely inspirational to the music of other countries (see *Graham* 1989:27; *Chernoff* 1985:154; *Manuel* 1988:101; *Kubik* 1981:100; *Stapleton & May* 1987:41; *Sweeney* 1991:58;61;64).

Although the popularity of the style spread as far south as Zimbabwe, whose *mbira* patterns played on electric guitars reflect Congo-Zairean music (*Manuel* 1988:105), the developing urban styles of neighbouring South Africa again proved to be the notable exception in that the influences were not as overtly evident.

- *Highlife* influenced the development of other indigenous styles on the continent, including *makossa* of Cameroon (*Sweeney* 1991:44), *Afro-beat* and *rokafil jazz* of Nigeria (*Sweeney* 1991:38) and *milo jazz* of Sierra Leone. All these later *highlife*-derived styles are strongly aligned with rock and disco (*Manuel* 1988:93).

The music of **Bembeya Jazz** of Guinea, described as “some of the most sublime ... on the African continent” (*Graham* 1992:69) included Ghanaian *highlife* along with other local rhythms in a blend of Manding and Cuban influences (*Sweeney* 1991:27). Famous **Fela Anikolapu Kuti**’s *Afro-beat* is essentially a *highlife*-derived style (*Sweeney* 1991:38).

- There is evidence of South African forms being of some influence on the music of other African countries (see *Kebede* 1982:115; *Bender* 1991:144,152,154,159; *Manuel* 1988:101/102,105,109; *Sweeney* 1991:61;64). For example, the distinctive national guitar style of Mocambique manifests South African elements amongst others, including Congolese music mentioned above (*Manuel* 1988:105).

Kebede mentions that *kwela* (a “powerful dance form among youth”) (see 3.9) was disseminated prolifically throughout Central and Southern Africa (*Kebede* 1982:115).

Because of the geographic proximity, it is not surprising that the music of South Africa significantly influenced the development of urban music in Zambia and Zimbabwe. South African

miners in the Copperbelt in Zambia, or Zambian miners in Johannesburg, were the major sources of musical dissemination, at least initially. Among the styles imitated were western-style choral music (see 3.3.1); *kwela* (see 3.9) and its associated dance styles such as *pata-pata* (which Bender spells “pata-pata”), *mbaqanga* and the variants it spawned such as *tsaba-tsaba*, *simanje-manje* (the name given to some of the first studio-sponsored *mbaqanga* styles) and the twist (*Bender 1991:144*). (See 5.4.1; 5.4.3)

In what was then Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, the nightclubs which developed in the townships after the sale of alcohol there became legalised, encouraged visits by black South African musicians. Bender specifies South African jazz as well as “American jazz (in the style of the mid-1940s)” among the styles which were emulated by musicians in Southern Rhodesia (*Bender 1991:159*). Presumably, therefore, the visiting musicians included swing and *mbaqanga* (as in South African ‘African jazz’) - type bands. (See 3.8.2)

With the democratisation of several African countries there has been a general broadening of musical horizons as part of a common trend towards pan-Africanism.

2.5 THE EFFECTS OF URBANISATION

The more significant cultural penetration of African music is not outward but inward. Kwabena Nketia, our leading African ethnomusicologist, once advised me not to be so preoccupied with identifying African prototypes that I neglected the fact that music needs places where it can be played. What is involved in calling a type of music “popular”, he noted, is that the common people have to be ready to get with the music. For the music to become something that is part of the culture, the people need technical means and certain social contexts to be in place, as a matter of development, before music moves away from its elite forms. At that point, the society itself has become something else (*Bender 1991:xvi*).

Colonial expansion in Africa meant the establishment of new borders, often with scant regard for ethnicity, and the urbanisation of rural societies. Implicit in the urbanisation of those societies was their inevitable confrontation with a transformed and unfamiliar “social and economic fabric” (*Harrev 1989: 103; Bender 1989:45*). This process invariably involved enormous adaptation and realignment of cultural norms accompanied by physical and psychological deprivations of estrangement, insecurity,

and impoverishment; furthermore, most of the aspirant city dwellers left their country homes because they were compelled rather than chose to do so (*Manuel 1988:85*).

Harrev recounts the emerging capitalism of the 1920s along with the growing middle class and the material trappings (such as gramophones, bicycles, watches, etc.) which became their symbols of prestige (*Harrev 1989:103*). The advent of the gramophone and radio, followed by the “Second Industrial Revolution”, based on the application of electricity to culture as well as to industrial manufacturing ...” afforded major, if not essential, impetus to the dissemination of forms which influenced the genres as well as the hybrid styles themselves (*Graham 1989:11; Harrev 1989:119*). The production of African popular music records commenced in earnest towards the end of the 1920s. Shellac 78rpm records were followed by vinyl, first 45rpm and then 33rpm. The next stage of development was marked by the introduction of the audio cassette tape and the battery operated cassette players which flooded the market and which “not only undermined the earnings of professional musicians but flooded the market with cheap copies of Western soul, disco, rock and reggae records” (*Graham 1989:2;1*). Record production ceased completely at the beginning of the 1990s, and despite the introduction of the compact disc, the audio cassette remains overwhelmingly favoured as the principal medium of music reproduction (*Graham 1992: 3*).

Life-supporting to urban popular music, the introduction of recorded music via radio, records and cassettes has had cataclysmic effects on traditional culture, threatened traditional music-making (*Kebede 1982:110*), completely annihilated several styles (*Graham 1989:11*) and irrevocably altered the tastes of the general populace: “traditional rural music will never sound the same. In a word, there is no turning back” (*Manuel 1988:22*). The involvement of the major multinational music companies in the music of Africa resulted in traditional culture being “rationalised into a few standard forms under the control of multinational companies who then assumed the role of interpreters of a nation’s cultural heritage. As the companies grew, so too did their capacity to manipulate taste and exploit musicians” (*Graham 1989: 12*).

However, commercialism of urban popular music has disseminated popular styles within Africa and abroad, and “left us with a treasure-trove of over 50 years of recorded sound” (*Graham 1989:11*).

2.6 ‘TRADITIONAL’ VERSUS ‘POPULAR’ AFRICAN MUSIC

Modern African music, with its strong foundation in tradition, has been a focus for the creative vitality of modern African societies ... They attain success by their ability to mediate, through their music, the disparate lifestyles of their pluralistic social environment (*Chernoff 1985:156*).

... Their music seems familiar to Westerners who are up-to-date with contemporary trends in American and European music, but it has developed in the nightclubs of African cities for African audiences who are sophisticated music-lovers and who dance many of the same steps both to electrified African pop and to village drumming and singing. Modern African musicians look inward and outward, backwards and forwards, and they have expanded their traditional music and adopted it to modern social contexts and modern musical technology. In typical African fashion, they have seen the new and the different as a means of adding to themselves, and they have turned adaptation into an agent of increase and not abandonment. The source of their musical vitality is their connection to their own African roots (*Chernoff 1985:152/153*).

The emergence of modern styles in the new urban environment induced a concomitant disparagement of essentially functional indigenous genres, where different occasions dictate specific music, rhythms and dances (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*). Those who viewed the apparently imminent extinction of the traditional forms with misgiving were provoked to painful introspection. Thus Katana, writing in 1950, is prompted to ask: “Why is it that within just half a century the African has come to look down upon his native methods of self expression?” (*Bender 1989:17; wa Mukama 1992:72*).

In the traditionally multi-ethnic countries of Africa, the tonal system of traditional music is a strong characteristic of ethnic identification and the juxtaposition of different tonal systems in one country or region is therefore not uncommon. As a feature of personal, social and historical identification, the traditional music of a particular tribe or group can be said to manifest an essential expression of ethnicity (*Harrev 1989:103*).

Manuel observes that ethnic exclusivity in popular music is not entirely eliminated. Distinctions such as specific languages and other associations with particular tribes occur. Effective “de-tribalization” requires specific conditions “such as when diverse ethnicities mix in a neutral context like a mining town” (*Manuel 1988:85*). In a contradictory generalisation Kebede states that “Urban society is not bound by the laws of ethnic culture. And *urban music* is an expression of this society” (*Kebede 1982:113*). This view is in fact the fundamental assumption implicit in the description of the genre by the great majority of writers (e.g. *Harrev 1989:103; Martin 1991:78; Ewens 1991:8,9,16;24;*

Chernoff 1985:159; Bender 1991:xiv; Kubik 1981:85; Kebede 1982:13; Bender 1991:62; Bergman 1985:8). Valerie Naranjo, who has done extensive research on the music of West Africa, including *in situ* research in Ghana for several consecutive years, maintains that urban popular music is by very definition pan-ethnic, emanating from the need to forge a more inclusive, specifically *pan*-ethnic, urban identity and expression in the developing cities (*Naranjo: writer's interview 23/8/94*). It is, however, interesting to note that the prerequisite conditions for pan-ethnicity as described by Manuel above, were those which presented in Zaire, parts of West Africa and South Africa. It is from these "major epicentres" (*Graham 1992:2*) - that predominant and decidedly pan-ethnic, modern syncretic forms germinated (*Manuel 1988:85/86*), despite insular political conditions and attempts at exclusivity as in Congo-Zairean rumba (*Ewens 1991:24*). And from these, or elements of these fused with other Western or Cuban styles, emanated more hybrid forms with ever-widening appeal, like ripples in a pond. The incorporation of foreign styles effectively lent a certain flavour of universality, functioning as a common denominator or bridge between nationalities, so that

While the traditional music of other cultures remains alien, popular music consumers have readily accepted calypsos played by Ghanaians, rumbas by a Congolese band or reggae from a South African. Yet all will proudly espouse their Africanness, and the need to keep in touch with their roots (*Ewens 1991:26*).

Bender maintains that it is "inept and misleading ... to apply our distinctions of popular and traditional music to African standards" (*Bender 1991:14*). "Popular" should not automatically be equated with the Western concept of "modern", nor "traditional" with exclusively "ancient" elements. Zimbabwean Thomas Mapfumo's *chimurenga* music is one example of a "popular" style which begs the classification of "modern", mainly because of the incorporation of Western rock instruments. However, "Here we are at an end with our pigeonholes, what we would classify as modern music from a technical point of view, the Africans call traditional" (*Bender 1991:163/164*).

Traditional music, in the commonly understood sense of the term, can be said to infer indigenous melodies and rhythms played on indigenous instruments and generally associated with specific functions or occasions, which may or may not include pure recreation. Such music, which Ewens refers to as "'folklore' or 'cultural' music" (*Ewens 1991:11*) continues to play a major role in large

areas of Africa in the 1990s, particularly in the outlying villages (*Naranjo: writer's interview 23/8/94; Manuel 1988:89; Graham 1989:9; Graham 1992:195*).

The essential nature of the urban music which is prevalent in the metropolitan areas is described by Ewens:

Much contemporary African music has been called 'transitional', bridging the gap between the traditional and the modern; the village compound and the nightclub dancefloor; the bush and urban environments, which have an equal pull on the affections and allegiances of today's young Africans (Ewens 1991:8).

Collins asserts that the primary differentiating factor between the "acculturated popular dance-music styles" which have developed from a fusion of African and Western influences in Africa and those of the New World, is that the African versions "have a direct and continuous link with the traditional music of that continent" (Collins 1989:221). Since every music represents both tradition and innovation (Graham 1989:15), Collins has

rejected the traditional-modern dichotomy entirely in favour of the concept of the urban-bush continuum wherein styles of music are situated somewhere along the continuum depending on the degree to which they approximate stereotypes of 'traditional' or 'modern' music. This is a much more dynamic approach to the classification of music and can indeed be extended further to encompass a metropolitan-periphery continuum reflecting the truly international dimensions of popular African music (Graham 1989:9).

"Popular" styles in which traditional forms are conspicuously evident, such as those "less prominent" ones from Zaire (Manuel 1988:100), the Zimbabwean *chimurenga* music mentioned above (Manuel 1988:88), and the popular music from Mali in which the *jali-griot* tradition is unmistakable (Sweeney 1991:21; Graham 1992:59/60), abound in Africa. *Mbalax* from Senegal and *juju* from Nigeria are good examples of popular urban forms which have transcended ethnic and even national boundaries while retaining a fundamental core which, in character and appeal, is traditional (Ewens 1991:23; Bender 1991:38; Sweeney 1991:39; Stapleton & May 1987:121). Modern syncretic forms in essence strive to convey the mediation between the seemingly incompatible lifestyles of the pluralistic and complex social environment which urbanisation has created for many Africans; an ongoing exploration of the relationship between modern social contexts and traditional music (Chernoff 1985: 166; Coplan 1982B:125; Ewens 1991:14).

The cross-fertilisation of cultures in the “global village” created by modern technology (*Kebede 1982:123*) has led to fears that the attempts to “reconcile the irreconcilable” (*Bender 1991:34*) by the assimilation of disparate Western elements will ultimately result in African music losing its identity (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*). Closely related to this argument is the question of whether the products of these fusions can be regarded as genuinely African: “Two generations ago, African popular music was viewed as an inauthentic type of syncretism, unworthy of discussion” (*Bender 1991:xiv*).

Kebede maintains that African music is transformed in a series of three, often interrelated, stages, viz.: musical “adoption”, “acculturation” and “innovation” (Hamm refers to the stages of “importation”, “imitation” and “assimilation”) (see pp xx) (*Kebede 1982:112; Hamm 1988:4*; see also *wa Mukuna 1992:79*). (See 4.7) Nigerian *highlife*, Congo-Zairean music and South African *mbaqanga* are all examples of the third and final period of the creative process.

To the Western ear, even the emergent styles of the intermediary period can sometimes sound like imitations of the foreign models and be interpreted as models of African cultural capitulation to the West. Instead, they reflect a single stage in a process of which the ultimate goal is the *Africanisation* of Western music, rather than the Westernisation of African music. They represent “the signs of a creative process in which a growing concern for characteristically African themes and sounds has given birth to a modern music that is as truly African as the styles of the oral tradition” (*Blacking 1980:196/197*).

African musicians took the instruments and technology offered them by the West, and after an initial period of “adoption” in which they familiarised themselves with the foreign “hardware” by imitating the foreign styles, local elements were incorporated until a new and unique indigenous genre had been created (*Stapleton & May 1987:7/8; wa Mukuna 1992:79,80/81*). (See also *Chernoff 1985:159*.)

Chernoff views the creation of modern syncretic forms as “the penetration of traditional elements into popular forms … the use of Western instruments to play traditional musical motifs … the way Africans infused Western social contexts with the motives of the traditional spirit” (*Bender 1991:xiv*).

2.7 THE RE-AFRICANISATION OF URBAN AFRICAN POPULAR STYLES

The modern urban music produced on the continent has been punctuated by periods of “re-Africanisation” which has manifested in various styles over the decades (*Ewens 1991:24; Bender 1991:60*):

- *fiji* music, which developed in Nigeria in apparent reaction to the Westernisation and “international outlook” of *juju* (itself an indigenous genre which had overtaken the popularity of the *highlife* “imported” from Ghana) (*Stapleton & May 1987:25; Sweeney 1991:39,40*).
- Zimbabwean *chimurenga*, derived from ancient Shona *m'bira* music, manifested as part of a “national revolution” (*Stapleton & May 1987:213*).
- The music of **Franco** (known for years as the “Top star of Zaire and ... the whole of Africa”) who enthusiastically embraced the post-independence negritude of the campaign of authenticity launched by President Mobutu in Zaire in 1972 (*Stapleton & May 1987:26; Sweeney 1991:50,51*).
- *Mbalax* (see 2.8.10) reflects the Africanisation movement which developed in Senegal in the late 1970s and influenced the various styles of urban popular music which developed there.
- In the Cote D’Ivoire **Francoi Louga** returned from France and embarked on a trend of “Africanisation” in his music. **Ernest Dje-Dje** also “entered the Africanisation fray” and relinquished soul music to launch *ziglibithy* (*Sweeney 1991:32; Stapleton & May 1987:27*).
- The 1980s in Mali saw a rise in prominence of predominantly female singers such as **Tata Bambo Kouyaté, Ami Koita** and **Nahini Diabaté**, who included in their music indigenous elements of the Fula and Manding traditions. This style, broadly categorised as “Sahelian”, has grown in international stature in the 1990s (*Graham 1992:59,60*).

The post-Second World War phenomenon of African nationalism which manifested in countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Ghana was demonstrated culturally as a resurgence of pride in things African. The intention was “to fight off European influence and reassert African values” (*Sweeney 1991:20,27,50*).

Some countries launched cultural revolutions. Others took a more laissez-faire attitude ... Yet across Africa, from socialist Ghana to capitalist Kenya and Zaire, new sounds burst in alongside the old. Highlife spread from Ghana throughout West Africa (*Stapleton & May 1987:23*).

In South Africa the issue of Africanisation “... was clouded by the racism of apartheid...” (*Stapleton & May 1987:27*). For a certain educated sector of black South African society, ethnicity, inherent in the very term “traditional” and the music so described, was to be eschewed since to embrace a “back to roots” traditionalism would be embracing the cultural identity the Apartheid Government promoted. (See 4.7.4) Within this context, Stapleton & May’s inference that *mbaqanga* grew predominantly in response to an “Africanisation” movement (*Stapleton & May 1987:28*) is discussed later in this work. (See Chapter 5)

2.8 MAJOR HYBRID URBAN STYLES

The following section contains brief summaries of the most prominent hybrid urban styles of the continent of Africa.

2.8.1 Congo-Zairean Music

But of all the post-war styles, few proved as influential as the Congolese guitar music that exploded from Kinshasa with the formation of the city's first modern band, African Jazz, in 1953. ... African Jazz absorbed Afro-Cuban rhythms and arrangements and reinterpreted them in a purely African way. ... The Congolese sound, with its sweet harmonies and increasingly African rhythms, carried across the continent: on records and radio and live, through the work of travelling Congolese bands (*Stapleton & May 1987:25/26*).

A pronounced feature of Congolese dance-band music is its gentle, lyrical quality, reflecting the oft-noted prevailing “cool” aesthetic of much modern African music. In spite of the dominance of percussion and electric guitars, the clean instrumental and vocal timbres and the tuneful melodies lend the music a gentleness which, upon hearing, contrasts markedly with genres like rock, *apala*, or Cuban *rumba* (*Manuel 1988:100*).

The widespread appeal and accessibility of Cuban music which manifested in the international popularity it enjoyed from about the 1940s, was quite out of proportion to the relatively small size of the country from which it emanated. As a contributing factor in the explanation of this phenomenon, Manuel offers the theory that the music was eminently suited to interracial and inter-class acceptance, having transcended these barriers within Cuba itself. The crux of this accessibility involved the presence of relatively equal ratios of European and African elements in the music, resulting from the tolerance and acceptance of “neo-African musical practices” in Cuba by the colonial authorities and society in general. As early as the nineteenth century, the *rumba* emerged as a “secular Afro-Cuban music and dance genre”, performed by black musicians (*Manuel 1988:26; 28/29*).

From about the 1940s, imported modern Afro-Cuban dance forms, the *rumba* and *son* in particular, received widespread and enthusiastic acceptance in Africa (*Manuel 1988:87*). The music had powerful impact on Guinea, Mali, Senegal and the Congos (*Stapleton & May 1987:21*). There is also evidence that it was known in East Africa as early as the 1940s, where “the African roots of the Latin American rumba were so clear that a sensation of shock - on recognising something familiar in a new garment - was bound to occur, and this was finally to have creative results in Central and East Africa” (*Kubik 1981:93,92*).

However, it was in the region of Congo (People's Republic of the Congo) and Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) that the Cuban forms inspired the creation of a syncretic style that “dominates Black Africa like that of no other nation, featuring in discotheques across the continent” (*Sweeney 1991:49; Bender 1991:42*). First known as *rumba* and generally referred to since about the 1970s as *soukous* (incorrectly, according to *wa Mukuna 1992:82*; see also *Bender 1991:42*), the music has been called a variety of names including African jazz, Congo jazz, Congo or Congolese music (*Bender 1991:42,52; Graham 1992:109; Manuel 1988:97; Bergman 1985:46; Collins 1985:61*) or “Zairean” music (*Sweeney 1991:49,54*). “Its principal ingredients are a skipping snare drum beat, tight, sweet harmony choruses behind a light, mellifluous lead voice and, above all, the famous multiple intermeshed guitar lines” (*Sweeney 1991:49*).

An important milestone in the development of the distinctive guitar style is the contribution of the guitarists from the Katanga region, today known as Shaba. A “mine workers’ culture” was prevalent

in this province and South African miners were among the foreign migrant workers who contributed to the society (*Bender 1991:43*). The idiosyncratic “dry” style which emanated from this area blended with traditional elements as well as Cuban horn and guitar lines to produce the Congolese/Zairean guitar style which was to become “one of the wonders of Africa” (*Stapleton & May 1987:137*; *Manuel 1988:98*). Important collaborators included **Antoine Kolosoy Wendo** and **Jean Bosco Mwenda** (*Sweeney 1991:50*; *Stapleton & May 1987:141*). According to wa Mukuna, 1930-1965 denotes the formative period of urban Zairean music and is stylistically referred to as “*tango ya ba-Wendo* (the era of the Wendos)”. Named after Wendo, a singer and guitarist who also composed prolifically, the era was characterised by the urban dance accompanied by an acoustic band, the *maringa*, and its response to the influence of the Cuban *rumba* (*wa Mukuna 1992:72*; *Stapleton & May 1987:135*). While Bosco is credited as being a “leading exponent” of guitar music, and “the precursor of the modern, plucked electric-guitar patterns” (*Stapleton & May 1987:16;144*), his specific role, noted by other authors (*Manuel 1988:98*; *Sweeney 1991:50*; *Stapleton & May 1987:141*) is given perspective by Bender:

In 1952, the songs of Mwenda Jean Bosco, Losta Abelo, Patrice Ilunga, and Edouard Masengo were released on 78 RPM shellac records by Gallotone. The selection of these guitarists was rather accidental. ... Tracey was able to record what and as much as he wanted. It was thus mere chance that Tracey found Bosco's playing interesting and recorded him. Bosco's fortuitous discovery does not at all detract from the quality of his music, but it indicates that there must have been many more guitarists playing similar music at the time (*Bender 1991:43*).

The introduction of the electric guitar, the newly-gained political independence in Zaire, and the post-war “second wave” of Cuban influence in the form of Latin-American records all contributed to the decline in popularity of the Katanga “dry guitarists”. The style exists today as “a rather rural phenomenon” (*Bender 1991:51*; *Stapleton & May 1987:136*).

Latin American orchestras and dance forms such as the *cha-cha*, *charanga*, *mambo*, *merengue*, *rumba* and *pachanga* (*wa Mukuna 1992:78*) inspired bands such as **African Jazz**, founded in 1953 by **le Grand Kalle** (born **Joseph Kabaselle**). Initially these new orchestras existed alongside the ‘*maringa*’ ensembles, but by the late 1950s their widespread appeal completely overshadowed that of the ensembles (*Graham 1992:109*). An initial imitation of Latin-American styles, sung in a combination of French and Lingala (the pan-ethnic language which developed as a communication medium for black colonial troops in the nineteenth century), lasted until the late 1950s (*Graham 1992:109*) or early

1960s, when “Congolese music began to break out of the Cuban mold (sic)” (*Manuel* 1988:98; *Stapleton & May* 1987:136; *Bender* 1991:51). The birth of the new music is partly attributable to Kalle’s African Jazz: his “Independence Cha Cha” in 1960 is regarded as a classic. The other notable influence was that of **O K Jazz**, led by **Franco** (born Luambo Francis Makiadi), and later known as **Tout Puissant O K Jazz** (*Stapleton & May* 1987:136).

The launch of modern Congolese/Zairean music was given immeasurable assistance by Radio Brazzaville. Previously Radio Free France, its powerful transmitters’ range was extensive. Four hours of Congolese music was broadcast each day from the late 1950s, giving the genre exposure across Africa which would otherwise not have been possible.

According to Stapleton & May and Sweeney, two schools or branches characterised the future development of Zairean music. A prominent exponent of the branch of urban music which sought to exemplify an indigenous ambience was **O K Jazz**, whose support for the *authenticite* campaign was manifested by the incorporation of traditional Zairean folk songs and rhythms into urban rumba (*Stapleton & May* 1987:136; *Sweeney* 1991:50). The other school, which included African Jazz and in particular, **Tabu Ley Rochereau**, who led **African Fiesta National** when African Jazz split, and later renamed his band **Afrisa International**, aspired to a more Western-influenced “urbanity and an international approach” (*Sweeney* 1991:51,50; *Stapleton & May* 1987:136). The distinctive approaches are acknowledged by Graham who asserts that orchestras such as O K Jazz and others such as **Negro Band** “replaced the maringa ensembles as the new champions of folklore legend” (*Graham* 1992:109). However, he provides the necessary perspective by remarking that African Jazz did not promote the contemporary to the exclusion of their indigenous roots. They represented

... modernism with their sharp Latin style and mastery of such rhythms as cha cha cha, samba, merengue, etc. However, they also paid some homage to their Congolese roots in songs like ‘Lemote’. The African Jazz rhythm section also utilised a variety of locally-made percussion instruments like tom toms, drums and cowbells. These instruments were played in a fashion directly inspired by traditional teaching (*Graham* 1992:109).

A band whose contribution is singled out by Graham as particularly important to the development of Congolese/Zairean music, is **Rock a Mambo**. Referred to only cursorily by Stapleton & May (*Stapleton & May* 1987:145,179) and not at all by Sweeney, Graham contends that their music

represented a fusion of the two strands of indigenous and modern, epitomised by O K Jazz and African Jazz respectively (*Graham 1992:109*).

An important musician, spawned from the bands of both Franco and Tabu Ley, is **Sam Mangwana**, whose **African All-Stars** is credited by Stapleton & May as introducing a new chapter in the development of the style and restoring its popularity in West Africa after a decline in the region. Described by Stapleton & May as “a ... mixture of soukous and biguine” (*Stapleton & May 1987:138*), Sweeney attests that Mangwana’s music is less representative of the distinctive music of the region: “His music, with its cocktail of influences from Angola, Zimbabwe, the Caribbean and elsewhere, is less purely Zairean in feel than that of many of his compatriots” (*Sweeney 1991:52*). Remarks made by Mangwana in the interview with Bender would suggest the pan-Africanism of his approach: “The older musicians did not have sufficient opportunity to meet each other ... to meet with musicians from different regions. With us, that is not the case anymore ... Only the exchange of ideas and cooperation among artists can help to create the African music of tomorrow” (*Bender 1991:63*).

During the early to mid-1960s Franco’s O K Jazz began to develop the “solid rumba rhythm”. The decade was to be distinguished as the heyday of rumba, replacing “the seemingly endless stream of boleros and cha cha chas of which Brazza and Kinshasa audiences were beginning to tire” (*Graham 1992:110*).

The rearguard of the era was **Orchestre Veve**, led by **Georges Kiamuangana (Verckys)**. Initially reproducing the sound of O K Jazz (which he had left), Verckys’s importance as a musician stems from his tendency to incorporate styles other than the rumba. As a businessman he is an important figure involved in management, promotion and sponsorship in the stage of Zairean music which Stapleton & May refer to as “a second form of revolution”; “a garage-band soukous whose wildness and echo define the new sound of Kinshasa” (*Stapleton & May 1987:151,157; Graham 1992:111*).

As leader of the vanguard of this “youth cult” movement which “took authenticity to new levels” with “enough new-wave energy to spark off a fresh musical boom”, Congo-Zairean music was revolutionised in the early 1970s by a group called **Zaiko Langa Langa** (*Stapleton & May 1987:153*). The word “Zaiko” is intended as an abbreviated combination of “Zaire-Congo” (*Graham*

1992:118). Their innovations, which have since become standard practice, involved the exclusion of brass from the instrumental line-up, giving prominence to the three guitarists and snare drum (*Sweeney 1991:52*). Whereas the role of the guitar in the by now classic rumba had been “rhythm and embellishment”, it was transformed in Zaiko’s unprecedented and novel style to that of a “blustering lead instrument” (*Stapleton & May 1987:153*). What was soon recognisable as the “Zaiko sound” was achieved by a combination of this “raunchy guitar sound” and a “tight snare drum played to almost militaristic precision” (*Graham 1992:118*).

Sprouting a veritable generation of new bands, erstwhile members who have left to form bands, some of legendary proportions, have spawned a whole new tradition of Congo music. (See *Graham 1992:118*.)

2.8.2 Highlife

Described as “one of Africa’s most popular and potent forms of music” (*Graham 1989:76*), *highlife* has been widely inspirational and influential to the development of contemporary urban styles throughout West and Central Africa (*Graham 1992:32*).

As opposed to the situation in Francophone West African countries where French cultural domination was pronounced, British colonial policy displayed an openness to and even promotion of cultural interaction (*Manuel 1988:89/90; Coplan 1978:98*). This factor undoubtedly stimulated the process of acculturation which led to the emergence of *highlife*, more particularly the ‘dance-band’ version of the genre.

The various sub- or proto-styles to which it referred were not collectively known as *highlife* until about the 1920s when the term was coined (*Graham 1989:76; Bender 1991:77; Collins 1989:222*). However, the origins of the style could plausibly be regarded as dating back to the nineteenth century (*Bergman 1985:34; Collins 1985B:1; Collins 1989:223*) when various syncretic genres developed in West Coast port towns from the exposure of traditional African dance music to Western influences.

Collins claims that the germs of the style were conceived on the Fanti coast of southwest Ghana (which has the distinction of the longest historical contact with Europeans) (*Collins 1976B:62*). Collins credits various early “Westernized” forms as “proto-Highlife” styles which were the products of the interaction of foreign elements and various Fanti recreational dance musics (*Collins 1976B:62*):

- the *Osibisaba* of the Fantis;
- Liberian sailors’ *Dagomba* guitar songs;
- the Creole melodies from Sierra Leone;
- the *Gome* or *Gombey* brought to Accra from Nigeria and the Cameroons by returning Ga migrant workers. Collins asserts that “*gome*” or “*gombey*” music from Sierra Leone is “Africa’s very first popular fusion-music” and that both *gombey* and the two styles to which it gave birth, *maringa* and *ashiko*, were later contributors to *highlife* (*Collins 1989:221*).

The above are defined as “proto-Highlife” styles which all comprised two basic rhythms. The majority were in duple or quadruple time, while those known as “the Blues” were in six-eight time (*Collins 1985B:2*).

Chernoff asserts that the roots of *highlife* are many and complex. While “no single traditional style can claim to be its progenitor”, he observes that “every Ghanaian culture has some form of music that can be considered prototypical highlife … Ko Nimo, one of the most famous highlife guitarists, counts at least twenty-five forms of Ashanti music alone that he considers to be roots of highlife” (*Chernoff 1985:156,157*).

The importance of the “vaguely defined intermixture of musical subtypes” which were ultimately labelled *highlife* was that they represented “the first terminologically discrete category of syncretic music to attain both national and international significance and distribution on the Guinea coast” (*Coplan 1978:97*).

Three major sources of Western influence are isolated, each one designated as responsible for the emergence of one of three streams of *highlife* which were flourishing in southern Ghana by the 1920s (*Collins 1976B:62; 1989:222*).

- **Colonial military brass bands** inspired the formation of brass and fife bands which played at public events such as parades, etc. and which specialised in a form of *highlife* known as *adaha* (*Collins 1989:222; 1976B:62*). The “poor man’s equivalent” of this type of *highlife*, *konkomba*, emerged in the 1930s and consisted mainly of choral *highlife* groups which used the same percussion as the brass variety - namely, tambourines, clips, bass drum and the local side drum called *pati* (*Collins 1976B:62*). Bergman maintains that further inland, *konkomba* developed as a dance form which featured contests between dance groups. Dancers dressed in shorts and peak caps, and sporting colourful handkerchiefs, performed in lines, “army-style” (*Bergman 1985:35*).
- The “christianized black elite” were responsible for the formation of ballroom orchestras and the coining of the term ‘*highlife*’. The effects of western Christian education were manifested in the tastes and social practices of the upper stratum of black society which frequented prestigious dances (*Bergman 1985:35*). An entertainment phenomenon which developed in the 1920s was that of the ‘vaudeville’ concert.

Exponents of the concert tradition included the headmaster **Teacher Valley** (whose Empire Day concerts in Sekondi in 1918 marked the beginning of the tradition in Ghana), comedians **Williams and Marbel**, and Afro-Americans **Glass and Grant** (*Collins 1976B:64; Stapleton & May 1987:35*). Preceding the concert by the showing of a silent film and following with dance-band music became a frequent institution.

Large “symphonic-type” dance orchestras played European, American, Afro-American and Latin-American dance music such as polkas, waltzes, ragtime, tangos, rumbas, etc. alongside orchestrations of “proto-Highlife” styles (such as those mentioned above). Dance bands of the thirties included the **Cape Coast Sugar Babies**, the **Winneba Orchestra** and **Teacher Lamptey’s Accra Orchestra**, whose members were drawn from his school fife band. It was hearing the orchestrated versions of “neo-folk” styles which had become familiar to ‘palm-wine’

and street music audiences which prompted the lower classes to label the sophisticated variety *highlife* (*Collins 1989:224/225; 1976B:62/3,64; Bergman 1985:35*).

Chernoff cautions that

... one should not overemphasise the Western influence on highlife. In the same way that Afro-American musicians found “blue notes” that bent the tonality of the Western harmonic system, African musicians played Western instruments in ways they had not been played before. Even the Latin American and Caribbean percussion instruments that found their way into highlife ensembles after the Second World War did not turn highlife into a variety of rumba. When Ghanaian musicians became familiar with other types of music, they worked from their own roots to find the inspiration that could solidify their aesthetic command of different musical forms (*Chernoff 1985:159*).

The musical effects of the Second World War included the introduction of swing by British and American troops stationed in West Africa. As a result, large dance orchestras were replaced by small dance bands. The vanguard of this movement was Scottish sergeant **Jack Leopard**’s multiracial **Black and White Spots**. Another swing band formed in Accra at about the same time, and which, like the Black and White Spots, played mainly for foreign troops, was the **Tempos** (*Collins 1989:225*). Coplan observes that the “highlifes” played by dance-bands up until World War II would be included in the repertory of Western dance music. Consisting primarily of Akan melodies in ≡ time, which were “given a Western feel through ‘correct’ four-part harmonization”, a “steady Westernization and modernization of instrumentation occurred” despite the increasing popularity and influence of calypso and other West Indian styles (*Coplan 1978:107*).

The end of the war brought the innovations of returning musicians: a combination of the schooling in street, church and school bands of their youth and those influences absorbed from the West Indies and North America (*Coplan 1978:107*). From 1947 the **Tempos**, denuded of foreign members who left after the war and under the leadership of **E.T. Mensah**, “created a highlife style that had a swing touch to it” (*Collins 1989:226*). Known as the “King of Highlife”, Mensah is credited as the first musician to orchestrate indigenous rhythms as well as themes for dance band in a form which is described by Coplan as reflecting “the influence of contemporary swing, cha-cha, and calypso more than that of the fox-trot or quickstep” (*Coplan 1978:107/108*); and by Collins as a “combination of highlife, swing, calypso and Afro-

Cuban music" (*Collins 1989:226*). Mensah's innovations and the Cuban influences brought to the band by drummer Guy Warren, subsequently known as **Kofi Ghanaba**, transformed the group into the most important West African exponent of dance-band *highlife* of the decade. (*Collins 1989:225; Collins 1976B:64*). Bands inspired by and modelled on the **Tempos** included:

... dance-band leaders Bobby Benson, Rex Dawson and Victor Olaiya from Nigeria; ... the Ticklers dance-band of Sierra Leone and from Ghana a whole host of bands such as the Red Spots, the Rhythm aces, the Rakers, the Hotshots, the Stargazers, the Shambros and, of course, King Bruce's Black Beats (*Collins 1989:226*).

- **Foreign sailors**, including black Americans, West Indians and Kru (from Liberia) introduced sea shanties and folk songs which were assimilated by local musicians. These forms together with the introduction of instruments such as the harmonica, concertina, and particularly, the guitar, led to the development of the "palm-wine highlife" style (*Collins 1989:222; Bergman 1985:35; Collins 1976B:62*).

"Low-class guitar bands" consisted of acoustic guitars, indigenous hand drums, rattles and hand pianos and their style is characterised as a "less-Westernised Highlife" than that played by "the posh urban bands" (*Collins 1985:2*). Maintaining a close musical connection with indigenous forms, guitar-band *highlife* played a mediating role in the urban-rural continuum. Not confined to urban centres as their dance-band counterparts were, guitar bands travelled to rural areas, at one and the same time symbolising, criticising and explaining modernisation. The lyrics of the guitar-band genre reflected the traditional and functional aspect of music as a medium of "social commentary, communication, and control" (*Coplan 1978:109,108,110*). The most famous of all early guitarists and the first to record the style, was **Kwame Asare** (*Collins 1976B:64*).

Rather than identifying with the ideals of the Westernized elite by trying to bring African elements into "civilized" Western musical tradition, guitar highlife developed from the needs of the ethnically heterogeneous Ghanaian urban working class to express emotional response to the conflicts inherent in the new social environment. The very name *highlife* in this connection connoted the performers' disapproval as much as their envy of the elite's high-living ways; and the lyrics of guitar-band songs included much adverse comment on the social, political, and economic wrongdoings of people in high places (*Coplan 1978:108*).

A boost in popularity for guitar-band *highlife* in the 1950s resulted in their supplanting brass band *highlife* groups (*Sweeney 1991:34/35*). The electric guitar dominated the medium from the late 1950s, signalling either the demise of older-style dance bands or the addition of the instrument (*Manuel 1988:92*). Prolific recordings of the style were made by bands led by **Kwaa Mensah**, **Yebuah**, **Otoo Lartey**, **Appia Adjekum** and **E.K. Nyame** (*Collins 1976:65*). Leading exponents of the “new guitar highlife” in the 1960s were the **African Brothers** led by **Nana Ampadu**, who helped to change public perceptions of the guitar band as being inferior (*Sweeney 1991:35; Stapleton & May 1987:46*).

From about the early 1950s the popularity of the concert had spread, both geographically and across social barriers. The elitist vaudeville version which had emanated from coastal towns had diffused to the more provincial concert parties, such as the **Axim Trio**. **E.K. Nyame** formed his own **Akan Trio** and revolutionised the institution by replacing the traditional ragtime music with guitar-band *highlife*, thereby effectively combining the concert and guitar band traditions (*Stapleton & May 1987:35/36; Collins 1976:65*). Existing bands such as those of **Kwaa Mensah**, **Onyina** and **Kakaiku** followed this example (*Collins 1976B:65*). This form of folk theatre, with music provided by guitar-band *highlife*, has continued in Ghana to the present day.

Manuel maintains that *highlife* has never quite recovered from the mid-1960s onslaught of other popular forms such as disco, soul, reggae and Congolese music. According to Coplan, “This is due as much to its loss of social relevance and symbolic significance since independence for the elite as it is to the hegemony of the electric guitar in other styles” (*Coplan 1978:111*).

Nevertheless, the style continues to have “a somewhat attenuated existence” (*Manuel 1988:93,92*). *Highlife* stars of the 1970s include **A.B. Crentsil** and his band, the **Sweet Talks**; **C.K. Mann**, **Pat Thomas** and **Jewel Ackah**.

While the popularity of *highlife* in Nigeria was replaced by that of the indigenous *juju* and *Afro-beat* which it inspired, Sweeney notes the existence of three major trends in Ghanaian *highlife* at the end of the 1980s:

- Traditional guitar *highlife* exemplified by **Alex Konadu** and his International Band;
- “A more polished modern form of highlife” of **Ben Brako** and other partially Europe-based musicians, inspired by the “Eurodisco-modified” *burgher highlife* of **George Darko**;
- “A number of rough-voiced traditional street entertainers” such as kalimba-player **Onipa Nua**, who are achieving unprecedented popularity (*Sweeney 1991:35,36*).

2.8.3 Juju

Juju music, which became popular at about the same time that American soul music and American black pride were helping Fela to find his roots, has several traditional functions within modern Yoruba society. Therefore, the music is strongly supported in Lagos, which despite its apparent disorder, has a very strong Yoruba substructure; it is dominated by this one ethnic group (*Bergman 1985:77*).

Juju is “a progressive music, always moving forward in terms of performance and instrumentation” (*Graham 1989:36*). In essence continuing the Yoruba tradition of praise singing (*Bergman 1985:82*), idiosyncratic characteristics include “call-and-response vocals, rhythm patterns, the use of religious folklore in the lyrics” (*Stapleton & May 1987:78*). Bergman describes the characteristic guitar style as incorporating “the bell-like legato of Zairian guitar into short phrases and rolling patterns” (*Bergman 1985:81*).

It is generally agreed that the precise origins of this Nigerian style are obscure (*Graham 1989:34; Johnson et al 1990:32; Bergman 1985:78*). Graham mentions several hypotheses, including the tracing of the term itself to a “small hexagonal tambourine … with possible roots in the Lagos Brazilian community”, and noting that on the sleeve notes of the compilation entitled “Juju roots 1930s-1950s”, “Chris Waterman traced the emergence of juju to 1932 as a specifically Lagosian variant of the palm-wine style of music” (*Graham 1992:35*).

In similar vein, Alaja-Browne credits its establishment to **Tunde King** in the 1930s in the Olowogbowo area of Lagos (*Alaja-Brown 1989:231*). (Note that Graham refers to a Tunde

Nightingale as having introduced a “recognisable juju sound” by 1944 (*Graham 1989:34*). A man of this name is also referred to by both Bergman and Sweeney in relation to *juju* in the 1940s (*Bergman 1985:78; Sweeney 1991:39*). However, Alaja-Browne credits **Tunde (Nightingale) Thomas** with important innovations to the style in the 1960s (*Alaja-Browne 1989:236*). Alaja-Browne contends that the music was born from a fusion of church-hymn melodic and harmonic elements, “allusions and oblique references” to *asiko* dance music (a genre that had emerged from indigenous music) and three other important foreign elements. The first and most important of these was the adoption of the tambourine drum, chosen for its “potential as a ‘talking’ drum”; second, the use of the *samba* as a stylistic resource; thirdly, the “melodic structural influence” derived from the folksong, sea shanties and instruments of the Liberian Kru sailors. Of particular importance was the two-finger guitar style, referred to as *krusbass*. The tambourine drum (which was known as “eight corners”) was believed to be empowered to heighten spiritual consciousness. As a result, the name ‘*juju*’, a “magical term” used by colonialists to refer to African indigenous beliefs and practices, was given to the music (*Alaja-Browne 1989:233/234*).

Isaiah Kehinde Dairo, commonly known as **I.K. Dairo**, is referred to as the “Father of Juju” (*Sweeney 1991:39*) and synonymous with the term ‘*juju*’ (*Johnson et al 1990:32*). He introduced the accordion and mouth organ to the guitar-band style and by adding “regional modes of singing, rhythms and melodies” (*Alaja-Browne 1989:235*), he succeeded in deepening the constituency for the music locally while simultaneously widening its appeal (*Alaja-Browne 1989:235; Johnson et al 1990:32*). “He even tried to dodge the cultural barriers within Nigeria by incorporating rhythms from different parts of the country into juju music” (*Bender 1991:94*).

The process of “modernising” and yet concurrently “Africanising” *juju* (*Graham 1992:35*) is an early manifestation of the phenomenon which was to be oft repeated in the development of other African popular genres.

Graham mentions that “Juju took a gigantic step forward after the Second World War with the introduction of amplification and the talking drum” (*Graham 1992:35*). While Bergman acknowledges Dairo as the innovator who included the talking drum and guitar (*Bergman 1985:80*), no other author (including, notably, Alaja-Browne) specifically credits one single musician with these modernisations.

Sweeney refers to ‘Chief’ Ebenezer Obey, the instrumental line-up for whose band **The International Brothers** included talking drums, as the creator of the “modern juju style” (*Sweeney 1991:39*).

According to Collins, the change in the status of *juju* was brought about by the Nigerian Civil War, which began in 1967 and resulted in the exodus of many *highlife* musicians from Lagos (see also *Graham 1989:36; Alaja-Browne 1989:236; Sweeney 1991:38*). Up until that time, the style had remained “a poor relation to Highlife, as it was street music played in palm-wine bars, at weddings and traditional functions” (*Collins 1985:19*). Bender maintains that the social acceptance of *juju* after independence was brought about as a result of the general re-evaluation of traditional music (*Bender 1991:94*). The popularity of *highlife* is now confined to the east of Nigeria (*Graham 1989:36; Collins 1985:19*) and *juju* “has been the single most popular form of contemporary music played in the country since the 1960s” (*Stapleton & May 1987:78*).

Manuel states that the *juju* of **Ebenezer Obey** and **King Sunny Ade** “has drawn closer to rock and lost some of its distinctive Yoruba flavor” (*Manuel 1988:94*). Apart from these two musicians, important modern exponents include **Segun Adewale** and **Dele Abiodun** (*Sweeney 1991:40; Bergman 1985:90*) as well as **Sir Shina Peters** (*Graham 1992:18,21*).

2.8.4 Fuji

Today, fuji has become one of the truly great African styles, described as a percussion orchestra of enormous power and stamina. Western listeners may occasionally be put off by the Islamic vocal inflexions but on no account should the style be ignored (*Graham 1992:22*).

As yet another example of the cyclical re-Africanisation of urban African music (*Bergman 1985:92*), *fuji*, “the latest Islamic dance music in Nigeria” (*Bender 1991:98*) which first emerged in the 1970s from traditional Yoruba forms such as *Apala*, *Sakara* and *Waka* (*Graham 1989:46*) is defined as “juju with nothing new added: on the contrary, all the instruments are dropped except for percussion. On top of this, a singer declaims incessantly in a Mediterranean singing style. *Fuji* is the new hot music of the Lagos underclasses” (*Bergman 1985:92*).

An acoustic style employing only percussion instruments such as talking drums, bata drums, bells and shekere, *fuji* “is more African in feel than the more Westernised Juju” (*Johnson 1990:33; Stapleton & May 1987:91*). The abandonment of western instrumentation implies a re-acknowledgement of traditional roots, but “vitally contemporary” texts assure its relevance and popularity, which culminated in the “*fuji boom*” of the 1980s (*Manuel 1988:94; Graham 1992:22; Johnson et al 1990:33*). Towards the end of the 1980s **Kollington** introduced the Hawaiian guitar into the *fuji* style “thereby adding a slightly lighter touch without sacrificing percussive power” (*Graham 1992:23*).

The most prominent exponents of the style are **Sikiru Ayinde Barrister** (who claims to have invented the name of the style); **Wasiu Barrister** and **Ayinla Kollington** (*Graham 1992:22/23*).

2.8.5 Afro-Beat

A long introduction builds the rhythm section with polyrhythms and funk syncopations by the rhythm guitar, usually in minor chords with a good amount of sevenths and ninths. The horn section enters with startling unison, then keyboard riffs are added. Then Fela begins singing in his reedy voice backed by the unison call-and-response chanting of women. During the songs, there are solos by Fela and the other horn players that have a hint of jazz, but are simpler scales against one or two chords. The riffs repeat without let up for a good ten or fifteen minutes (*Bergman 1985:64*).

The stylistic features of this distinctive music are briefly described by a few authors and include the following characteristics: dominant percussion and a distinctive beat and tempo; “jazzy” keyboard and brass improvisation; a call-and-response structure which includes chanted choruses and “Fela’s own lazy baritone singing”; and unusually politicised and outspoken lyrics sung in pidgin English (*Sweeney 1991:38; Stapleton & May 1987:63; Johnson et al 1990:34/35*).

Fela Anikulapo Kuti, “For many years ... one of the few African musicians known all over the world” (*Bender 1991:106*) who established and named the style and whose “central position to the genre is so all-powerful that his own output can be said to define it” (*Stapleton & May 1987:63*) initially played “highlife-jazz” (*Graham 1989:63*). Impressed by the soul singing of visiting Sierra Leonian Geraldo Pino and a period of “political awakening” in the United States, he formed the band **Africa 70** and began producing the “dynamic and original” music which Manuel contends is derived primarily from

Afro-American soul (*Manuel 1988:94*). Stapleton & May comment that the elements of the genre which theoretically display much similarity with Afro-American music are played in such a way as to make them “as assuredly African as the call-and-response vocals which are to be heard alongside them” (*Stapleton & May 1987:65*). This “Africanised soul” genre has been widely disseminated in West Africa and added to the repertoires of dance and guitar bands (*Collins 1976B:65*).

2.8.6 Makossa

The name comes from the verb ‘kosa’, to remove suddenly and roughly, the dancers’ movements simulating a form of striptease (*Stapleton & May 1987:98*).

Makossa developed in the 1950s in the port town of Douala (*Sweeney 1991:44*). Referred to by Collins as “the Cameroonian form of Highlife” (*Collins 1985A:49*), Stapleton & May assert that the style, originally a folk dance which became a guitar and percussion medium, has incorporated influences from *highlife*, rumba and merengue alike (*Stapleton & May 1987:98*). The acoustic group of guitarist **Ebanda Manfred** is acknowledged as providing “the foundations for modern makossa”, which then infiltrated the dance-band orchestras of the 1960s such as the **Black and White Jazz Orchestra**, **Los Negros** and **Black Styles**. Attempts by the government of Cameroon to restrict the playing of imported music on radio promoted the popularity of indigenous forms such as *makossa* (*Stapleton & May 1987:99*). However, it was international star **Manu Dibango**’s “Soul Makossa”, recorded in Paris in 1972, which boosted the popularity and status of the style to that of “national dance rhythm” and that of Dibango to international proportions (*Sweeney 1991:45; Bergman 1985:126*). The next step in the evolution of the style included “the arrival of a strong bass sound that puts *makossa* alongside mbaqanga as one of Africa’s heaviest musics” and the incorporation of Antillean rhythms so that “makossa and zouk became more and more alike” (*Stapleton & May 1987:99; Sweeney 1991:46*). Whereas Sweeney and Bergman attest to the popularity of *makossa* in the 1980s (*Sweeney 1991:46; Bergman 1985:123*), Graham contends that “by the late 1980s the *makossa* movement was steadily losing steam with neither Sam Fan Thomas, nor Moni Bile able to replicate the dance-floor success of earlier years” (*Graham 1992: 98*). However, Sweeney cites **Guy Lobe**, **Charlotte M’Bang**o and **Epee** and **Koum M’Bengue** as musicians who, in the late 1980s or

early 1990s, form part of “an inexhaustible stream of makossa singers whose hits succeed each other in filling nightclub floors at home and in Paris” (*Sweeney 1991:47*).

2.8.7 Chimurenga

As chimurenga, pioneered and typified by **Thomas Mapfumo** ... the new Zimbabwean roots rock music was closely connected with the anticolonial struggle and with the armed opposition to the white minority breakaway regime of Ian Smith in the 1960s and 1970s; for this reason a good deal of revolutionary spirit still attaches to it (*Sweeney 1991:61*).

During the 1940s and 1950s black Zimbabwean music was dominated by popular South African township styles. *Kwela*, in particular, proved to be very popular. This trend continued into the 1960s, and included Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga*, sometimes colloquially referred to as *simanje-manje* (*Stapleton & May 1987:215; Sweeney 1991:61*).

In imitation of modern Zairean practice with its counterpart in that country, the *likembe*, the melodies of the Shona *m'bira* began to be transposed to electric guitar (*Sweeney 1991:61*). *Chimurenga* music, with its idiosyncratic *m'bira* sound (*Sweeney 1991:62*) emerged during the armed liberation struggle of the same name which took place during the 1970s. “The authentic sound of modern Zimbabwe” (*Stapleton & May 1987:213*), its popularity was boosted by an anti-regime propaganda programme broadcast daily by Radio Mocambique known as “Chimurenga Requests”. Despite being banned by the then Southern Rhodesia broadcasting authorities, **Thomas Mapfumo**, the chief exponent of the style, achieved enormous popularity (*Bender 1991:160,161*). After independence, Mapfumo and his newly-formed **Blacks Unlimited** “became a musical figurehead for the government of Robert Mugabe” (*Sweeney 1991:62*).

While the music has not penetrated the South African market (*Johnson et al 1990:44*), Mapfumo’s *chimurenga* achieved a measure of international success in the early 1980s (*Graham 1992:195*).

2.8.8 Jit-Jive

Capitalising on “the major eighties vogue for African music”, the **Bhundu Boys** from Harare, Zimbabwe, developed a fast dance music which transmits a “raw energy”, which they named *jit-jive* (*Sweeney 1991:63; Stapleton & May 1987:221*). Named “Bhundu” (“bush”) in obvious association with the ‘bush war’ of liberation, they combine certain ingredients which are inclined to gain international attraction, such as “political militancy, which appealed to white liberal sentiment everywhere” and “dance-floor acceptability” (*Graham 1992:195*).

Sweeney and Stapleton & May agree that, generally-speaking, *jit-jive* is unrelated to the *m'bira* sound and the “spiritual, political intensity” of Mapfumo’s music (*Sweeney 1991:63; Stapleton & May 221*). Essentially, it is “a fast guitar-and-snare-drum dance beat, quite like rock and roll in some ways, of great appeal to a younger generation” (*Sweeney 1991:63*).

However, Stapleton & May insist that cursory homage is paid to tradition: the influence of Mapfumo’s “mbira guitar style” is evident, and traditional songs are used as resource material (*Stapleton & May 1987:221*).

2.8.9 The Griot style

Graham states that the increased sales in African music which have been evident since the mid-1980s have revealed a simultaneous increase in fragmentation of consumer preference. While, generally speaking, Africans were attracted to dance music, whites in the twenty-year-old to forty-year-old age group showed a preference for “the more sedentary styles of the Sahel Region” (*Graham 1992:3*) in which a dominant musical influence is that of the Mandingo people, who inhabit most of the former French West Africa (*Bender 1991:5*).

The most influential style of this region is the essentially traditional genre of praise-singing and musical recounting of legendary events with which the *griots*, as hereditary, oral transmitters of historical culture and customs, are synonymous (*Bender 1991:18*). A supreme example of the blurring which

exists between the common (Western) perceptions of ‘traditional’ or ‘rural’ and ‘modern’ or ‘urban’ (*Graham 1992:59; Bender 1991:14*) styles which emanate from, in particular, Mali and Guinea, show imaginative assimilation of traditional idioms into more contemporaneous media (*Graham 1992:59; Sweeney 1991:26,28; Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

The word ‘*griot*’ (denoting a male, the female form is ‘*griotte*’) does not belong to any African language. It was adopted into French as “*guriot*” in the eighteenth century, and its present spelling was employed from the nineteenth century and disseminated in Francophone Africa. *Griots*, essentially court or wandering musicians, are known by different names in different countries (see *Bender 1991:17*). Of the terms used for these musicians in Mali, *jalis* is the most common employed by writers (see *Stapleton & May 1987:105,337; Graham 1992:59; Sweeney 1991:20; Bender 1991:20*).

Instruments traditionally used by *griots* include the *kora* (a “harp-lute”, according to Bender), a lute known as *khalam*, (a lute known as “*konting*”, according to Stapleton & May) a *balafon*, or type of xylophone, and various drums (*Bender 1991:20/21; Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

Stapleton & May assert that, prior to Malian and Guinean independence, traditional *griot* culture and the developing (predominantly Western) urban popular forms were obviously alienated (*Stapleton & May 1987: 105*). A predilection for *griot*-related music was spurred and nurtured by the post-independence ‘re-Africanisation’ policy pursued by Sekou Toure. The resultant and influential popularity for things traditional was engendered by the National Ballet of the Republic of Guinea (founded by the son of a *griot*, Keita Fodeba) (*Stapleton & May 1987:22,107; Bender 1991:2/3*) and similar dance troupes in neighbouring countries which were inspired by its example. However, Bender maintains that the “bureaucratization of culture” which took place in Guinea and resulted in its secularisation and infusion with “heightened political consciousness”, deprived the music of its “essential content”: “The revolutionary cultural policy was able to accomplish with much greater efficiency what the colonial attack on traditional culture was not able to achieve” (*Bender 1991:9*).

Guinean government sponsorship produced a plethora of new bands and, more importantly, a manifestation in not only Guinea, but also in neighbouring Mali, Senegal and Gambia, of pride in their authentic (and to a significant extent, common) musical roots (see *Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

Current African musicians, among them the famous **Salif Keita** from Mali and **Mory Kante** from Guinea and bands such as the Guinean **Bembeya Jazz** and Malian **Rail Band** (later **Ambassadeurs Internationaux**) provide examples of elements of traditional *griot* styles fused with, or influenced by, Ghanaian *highlife*, Cuban music and Western rock idioms. However, it would appear that the “modern hi-tech” (by inference and deduction, eminently danceable), electric sound aesthetic produced, while undeniably African and often including traditional *griot* instrumentation, does not entirely conform to the ‘sedentary’ classification stipulated by Graham as currently enjoying unique popularity among Europeans (*Stapleton & May 1987:27,107,108,110,112,114,116,120*; *Sweeney 1991:20,21,24/25; Bender 1991:14/15,21,24/25,26*; *Graham 1992:3*).

Sweeney refers to **Bazoumba Sissako**, also known as the “Old Lion”, as “the greatest *griot* of post-independence Mali”. Although he died in 1988, his influence continues to be felt in a multitude of successors. The Kouyate clan (who claim to be direct descendants of Bala Fasigi Kouyate, *griot* and court musician of the emperor Sunjata Keita of the great Manding empire which existed around the thirteenth century) and the Diabate clan are prominent examples of families of hereditary *griots*. **Sidiki Diabate** and his son **Toumani** are referred to as “the best-known traditional kora players in Mali today” (*Sweeney 1991:21,20*).

However, it is the female singers (predominantly from Mali) who of late appear to have dominated the limelight of the more traditional *griot* styles (*Sweeney 1991:21; Graham 1992:59*). While Sweeney unambiguously refers to “female *griottes*” (the Malian term appears to be “*jalimusa*”) (*Sweeney 1991:21*), Graham and Bender appear to concur that male *griots* are accompanied by female *singers* (see *Graham 1992:59; Bender 1991:27*). This distinction, made especially confusing by the fact that some women performers are descendants of traditional jali clans, is not clearly explained in the available literature. However, it is deduced that the differentiation is based on the fact that females are traditionally forbidden to play instruments, with the single exception of the bell percussion (see *Sweeney 1991:27*). (It would appear that current female instrumentalists, including the Guinean all-female band, **Les Amazones** and **Sona Diabate** - from the famous family of *griots* - have espoused a ‘dance-band’ style [see *Graham 1992:69*.]) Epitomised by **Fanta Damba** and **Mokontafe Sako**, one genre associated with these *vedettes* (“stars with very broad appeal” - *Bender 1991:27*) is “the gentle Manding style”, as opposed to the more masculine Bambara hunter’s style. (The latter influence on the

Malian band, **Super Biton**, results in “faster, funkier rhythms” (*Sweeney 1991:23*). **Tata Bambo Kouyate**, Damba’s main rival, is a member of the *jali* clan of the Kouyate who, with the arranger **Boncana Maiga** (who has similarly directed Guinean **Djanka Diabate** as well as **Ami Koita** and **Nahawa Doumbia**) in the Abidjan studios, achieved “an outstandingly successful updating of pure Manding music, in which a spare, heavy bass guitar and minimal touches of synthesizer added a contemporary feel to the raw simple melodies and traditional ngoni and balafon accompaniment” (*Sweeney 1991:21*; see also *Graham 1992:61*).

Other female singers who simultaneously continue and transform *griot* tradition include **Fanta Sacko**, **Ami Koita** (whose 1989 cassette “*Tata Sira*” was extremely popular) and **Nahini Diabate**, “non-hereditary musicians” such as **Nahawa Doumbia** and **Oumou Sangare** (whose primary influence is the Bambara tradition, her success an example of Malian female singers appropriating traditionally male musical styles) (*Sweeney 1991:21,22; Bender 1991:29/30; Graham 1992:61*).

2.8.10 Mbalax

To the tough, rural music, N’Dour added a range of modern instruments: a base of rolling, almost flamenco-like guitars, from which the talking drum explodes, along with fuzz-box guitar solos, inspired perhaps by the excesses of Western rock but offering, more significantly, a distinctively blurred or ‘dirty’ tone (*Stapleton & May 1987:120*).

Classified by Bender as part of “the Griot Style” (see *Bender 1991:35*), **Youssou N’Dour** was himself a descendent of *gaulo* or “courtly singers”. N’Dour’s *mbalax* was also part of the Senegalese response to the impetus for Africanisation provided by Guinea (*Bender 1991:36*). According to Stapleton & May, “Modern Senegambian music, the sound of Youssou N’Dour, Super Diamono, Ifang Bondi and Orchestre Baobab, owes its existence partly to the ancient music of the kora, balafon and talking drum and partly to the Afro-Cuban sounds that rocked west Africa in the 1940s and 1950s” (*Stapleton & May 1987:116*).

The name *mbalax*, originally denoting a particular Wolof rhythm, was first given to the “modernised indigenous sound” of **Youssou N’Dour**, described in 1990 as “currently Africa’s most favourite son”,

and his band *Etoile de Dakar*, renamed *Super Etoile de Dakar* (*Sweeney 1991:18; Johnson et al 1990:40*). The ensuing “new generation of electric Wolof pop” which has followed in the wake of N’Dour’s innovations fall under the same umbrella term. An integral element in Youssou’s music is the interpretation of traditional rhythms by a blend of electrified modern and traditional instruments. By transposing traditional Senegalese ceremonial music, specifically the *Mbalax* percussion rhythm, to a mélange of electric keyboard and guitar as well as traditional drums, the *sabar* and *tama*, the idiosyncratic sound which has gained international recognition was achieved (*Sweeney 1991:18; Johnson et al 1990:40; Stapleton & May 1987:120*).

The observation that “the current interchange between musicians from different countries but playing within the same basic style makes a nonsense of current political borders” (*Graham 1992:2*) is true of many of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. (See 1.7.6) However, available research to date indicates the virtual exclusivity of the evolution of South African black urban popular forms, which, along with the musics of Zaire and Nigeria, are cited as a major source and influence of the continent’s pop (*Graham 1992:2*).

2.9 THE COMPARATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN POPULAR MUSIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

The unique socio-political circumstances in which black South African music evolved is the major distinguishing factor in its history and may be the principal reason for its relative insularity in so far as its development on the continent of Africa is concerned. The major source of influence and inspiration to which it has turned with greater or lesser attraction at various points in its development is Afro-American music. The less obvious ingredient in the developing South African genres has been the Cuban music which has influenced the rest of Africa. Whether in Latin-American or Afro-Cuban guise, and while included at least to an extent in the big-band era, these forms are less conspicuous in the syncretised, African versions that followed. Three reasons for this phenomenon are suggested by Manuel:

- Unlike Afro-American music, Cuban styles are incompatible with indigenous South African forms, in which overlapping vocal responsorial patterns are characteristic and the instrumental tradition is relatively undeveloped when compared to other African countries. Consequently, the more simple rhythmical structures of Afro-American music appealed to South Africans rather than the “intricate, percussive, often polyrhythmic” Cuban styles. Moreover, the periodic use of overlapping responsorial patterns in swing numbers lent greater familiarity and therefore attraction (*Manuel 1988:106*).
- Secondly, since the white community in South Africa was larger than in other parts of Africa, the white society’s preference for Afro-American styles was substantially more influential on the black population of South Africa than that of whites on the black communities elsewhere.
- Thirdly, a psychological and ideological kinship exists between South African and American blacks. In their common struggle for liberation from white oppression, the aspirations and victories of black Americans became symbols of hope and motivation for their South African brethren, and an ideological identification with Afro-American music occurred (*Manuel 1988:106*). (See 4.7.1)
- Other points of comparison in the development of South African and other African urban musics include:
 - The social conditions under which the urban popular music of South Africa and that of other African countries developed are very similar. In developing, industrialising centres across Africa, missionisation and urbanisation resulted in the emergence of a black, mainly Christian, elite who embraced European values and musical practices, usually to the detriment of their own traditions (*Stapleton & May 1987:10*). Generally speaking, the catalysts in the emergence of modern, syncretic styles were the inter-ethnic lumpenproletariat. The cosmopolitan communities of the major industrializing areas in Ghana, Zaire, and South Africa were ideally suited to nurture the creation of hybrid forms which transcended ethnic boundaries. From these centres emerged *highlife*, Congo-Zairean music and *mbaqanga*, respectively.
 - Blacking observes that with the exception of Shangaan-Tsonga music and some examples of Venda and Pedi music, “the tempo of most South African music is slow, especially in comparison

with the music of central Africa, where the same metric patterns may be found at twice the South African speed" (*Blacking 1980:209*).

- The development of West African *highlife* and South African jazz shows certain parallels:

Lamptey's "school orchestra" in the form of the "Drum and fife Band" (*Bender 1991:78*) and its effect on dance orchestras is reminiscent of the inspirational practices of Caluza's Ohlange school musicians. Their influence on developing South African urban musical forms (at a more-or-less similar point in their development), as well as institutions such as tea meetings and school concerts, was substantial.

The similarities between the Ghanaian concert parties and the South African institution known as "Concert-and-Dance" (see 3.8.2), where vaudeville troupes would perform various sketches accompanied by musicians who would then play for the dance which followed, are obvious. Both inspired by the Afro-American genres of minstrelsy and vaudeville, the notable difference is that the Ghanaian variety was accompanied by guitar bands, while the South African bands were predominantly jazz bands with a classic Western-style jazz instrumentation line-up. Unlike South Africa, the Ghanaian institution continued to thrive into the 1980s (*Chernoff 1985:167*). The early Afro-American influences were basically the same for the two genres. In Ghana, the swing and other ballroom styles played by Leopard and His Black and White Spots for wartime audiences were the same as the early "copyright" music played by South African jazz bands. Indigenous elements were then incorporated in the course of the development of *mbaqanga* and *highlife*, respectively.

The urbanisation of the various countries of sub-Saharan Africa and the process by which the musics developed concurrently, share certain commonalities. However, it would appear that the black South African product is as unique as the tortuous socio-political history with which it is inextricably linked.

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF MILESTONES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN STYLES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to provide a broad perspective of the development of the early urban popular music styles of South Africa, as well as the socio-historical contexts in which they evolved.

While several specialist research documents have been produced, there is a dearth of literature providing a chronological history of the urban popular styles of this country. The existing body of published literature which does attempt to provide an overview of both definitions and a broad chronology of the development of black South African urban popular styles is small and its usage limited. A thorough study of this literature reveals a rather confusing, sometimes contradictory, and often superficial treatment of South African urban styles. Those that attempt such a perspective include:

- Coplan's *In Township Tonight* (1985), derived from his PhD thesis, can feasibly be described as the only serious academic attempt at providing a broad overview of South African urban popular music history from approximately the nineteenth century to the 1980s. This book is divided into sections focussing on styles which, broadly speaking, represented the musical pre-occupations of the different classes. These sections, of necessity, contain elements of overlapping or convergence.

While this work is undeniably valuable and provides a good framework for future research, the structure and style prove to be problematic, with a lack of cross-references and inadequate, or even contradictory, definitions. As a result, it is difficult to glean succinct descriptions of the major styles as they emerged, in more or less chronological order. Furthermore, the classification of style in terms of class-based analysis is not without some controversy.

- Andersson (1981) has attempted a chronology and compilation of musicians from the 1920s to the early 1980s. These include white South African musicians who, while classifiable as political ‘activists’, are often representative of popular western, rather than African styles.

As a result of the breadth of the spectrum covered, discussion of each style becomes too limited, if not simplistic, to offer comprehensive descriptions of the music or the contexts in which it evolved.

- Kivnick’s book (1990) contributes a somewhat emotional and haphazard account of South African styles. This work was possibly never intended as an academic handbook, but because of the lack of available literature on the subject, is used as such. Her research findings, which are presented as a warm-hearted tribute to the spirit of black South Africans, make easy reading but provide minimal insight into the development of the music.

A contribution toward the remedying of this situation is therefore the prime motivation for this chapter.

3.2 A SUMMARY OF EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

Born out of and influenced by the painful political history of South Africa, nascent urban South African music has developed in spite of (and at times because of) hostility, arrogance, indifference and attempts to frustrate its growth. The critics and spoilers have not emerged exclusively from amongst the ranks of whites, but sometimes, as conscious or unconscious convoluted counter-attacks or defences against the influences and suppressions of apartheid, from within the black community itself.

Characterised by ongoing, albeit often insidious, cultural exchange between different nationalities, the urban music of the new millennium is a jubilant, triumphant attestation to the yearning for expression and the proud survival of an irrepressibly exuberant culture.

In different areas and at different times, the process was punctuated by the evolution of integrated societies which developed as a result of industrialisation. Coinciding with the general development

trend in Africa, the most notable momentum was gained in those areas where migrant, integrated populations flourished.:

It was in these bars, on the street corners and in the back yards, rather than in the town halls, salons and official residences, that the scene was set for the emergence of lasting and typically African forms of popular music. ... street and folk musicians reworked local rhythms on imported guitars, banjos and accordions to create a broad musical tradition that persists to this day (*Stapleton & May 1987:13*).

The development of an eclectic modern African popular idiom was notably slower in South Africa than in other coastal and industrial areas of the African continent distinguished by the intermingling of foreign populations. This is largely attributable to the assumption that the permanent white population of this area were intent on cultural insularity in order to preserve their identity, effectively building “a solid wall between local and imported cultures” (*Stapleton & May 1987:8*).

... black popular music in South Africa during the pre-World War II period is urban music, new music assembled from a wide range of traditional sources. Its evolution is tightly interwoven with the growth of towns and the emergence and nexus of a wide spectrum of social classes within that society, and it is music of opposition to the hegemonic white society. It is all these, but it is also a bridge across class barriers and a way of making elements of the dominant society work for the black laboring classes (*Erlmann 1991:20*).

In certain geographical areas, viz. the Eastern and Western Cape, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Natal, significant musical development occurred en route to the emergence of modern genres of urban popular music.

Notably, the germs of this evolutionary process are to be found at the coast at the site of the first cultural intercourse to take place in South Africa. Beginning with the interaction between the Dutch and the Khoi-Khoi in the early 1700s and following the Dutch East India Company's importation of slaves from different countries, the Cape became a cosmopolitan society and hotch-potch of musical cultures. These included representatives from Holland, the slave communities of India, Java, Malaya, West Africa, Mocambique and Madagascar as well as immigrants from England, France and Germany.

According to Gibson et al, the essence of the “sound aesthetic” that was to become a distinctive characteristic of black South African popular music for over three hundred years was formed as a result of interactions and intermarriages between these cultures and the assimilation of instruments such as:

- the indigenous instruments of the Khoi (e.g. the drum or *khais*)
- the three- or four-stringed guitar from Malabar (which subsequently became known as the *ramkie*); and
- Western instruments introduced by colonists and sailors (*Gibson et al 1992:243*).

Perhaps notable in the light of references made earlier to the attempted preservation of white cultural identity, is the fact that after two hundred years of intercultural contact (1700 - 1900), it was the ‘coloured’ people of the Cape to whom the development of a distinctive and original syncretic style could be attributed (*Nixon: writer's interview 3/2/95*). It was the essence of this style, which included Eastern and Western influences amongst its indigenous resources, which the migrant Cape coloured musician contributed to the musical ‘puree’ of the Kimberley diamond fields (*Gibson et al 1992:244; Coplan 1985:11,14,15*).

eDiamani, Kimberley, City of Diamonds, was a major cultural landmark in South Africa's industrial revolution. While a minority of blacks had experienced some urban life in the Cape, the almost frenetic expansion of an urban population of diverse cultures which took place in Kimberley established this city, along with Johannesburg, as a founder of black urban society. Certain social patterns and cultural trends which developed as a result of intercultural and interethnic contact in the cramped, squalid and economically deprived living quarters are of special significance, for they were to set the pattern for similar developments in first Johannesburg and later other industrialised areas of South Africa:

- a proportion of the black population remained true to rural culture and this was reflected in their performance practices;
- affected by western ‘civilised’ norms and values promulgated in mission-school education, a minority so-called elite remained aloof from proletarian entertainment and confined themselves to cultural practices, mainly western choral singing, approved of by the Church;

- “a proletarian majority ... lived by their wits in the shadows and shanties of the mushrooming locations, creating hybrid styles of cultural survival that permanently shaped black music and drama” (*Coplan 1985:5*).

Black migrant workers were literally bombarded with new musical influences, which included:

- the ‘honky-tonk’ piano styles of the American prospectors;
- the guitar, concertina, banjo, violin and piano styles of the white South African diggers;
- the Khoisan servants' dance-tunes improvised on home-made violins;
- the traditional music of the Cape Coloureds which was to prove to be the most influential on black urban performance practices (*Coplan 1985:14*).

A sector of the mining population consisting mainly of Cape or Natal Nguni were influenced by the music of these Coloured musicians who worked local musical influences into new styles. (The term *Nguni* is used here to refer to the Mfengu, Xhosa, Zulu, and Bhaca-speaking tribes (*Coplan 1985:15*). Note that elsewhere Coplan refers to the term *Cape Nguni* as describing the Xhosa and Mfengu (*Coplan 1985:25*). Hamm and Kivnick, supported by Kirby, use the name as an umbrella term for Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi-speaking people (*Kivnick 1990:195; Hamm 1988:5; Kirby 1982:269*). Dargie describes the term *Nguni* as including the Xhosa-speaking chiefdom clusters of the Xhosa - the Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, Mfengu, Bhaca, Xesibe, Zizi, Bhele, Hlubi, Ntangwini - as well as the Zulu, Swati and Ndebele (*Dargie 1988:4,22*).

These people occupied a unique position in African society in that they identified with neither the highly Westernised products of the mission schools nor the sectors of the population who remained loyal to rural, traditional modes of behaviour and cultural practices. They were referred to as either *abantu abayi esontweni* ('dressed people') or *abaphakathi* (or *amakumsha*) ('those in the middle' or 'those in between') (*Koch 1983:151*) implying

... a superficial adoption of European culture, a limited command of Afrikaans or English, lack of interest in Christianity, and an individualised, opportunistic social outlook ... They became acquainted with the value of the material trappings of European life but did not fully adopt the social and moral patterns and restraints of their adopted culture (*Coplan 1985:15,16*).

However, describing Xhosa society in the Lumko district, Dargie refers to a group of people who are outside missionary or other white sphere of influence, but who nevertheless practise “certain forms of Christianity”. Known as *amaGqobhoka* – “converts” or “pierced people” (the idea being that the preaching of Christian doctrine had perforated their hearts - see *Hodgson 1981:11*), otherwise known as *abantu basesikholweni* (“school people”), they are categorised “somewhere in between” the traditional lifestyle of the *amaQaba* (“red blanket” people, who “live in the old way”) and the sophisticated mainline Christians and well-educated professionals. While the *amaGqobhoka* identify “to some extent with the doctrines of Christianity”, their way of life is founded largely on the traditional. Musically, the importance of the *amaGqobhoka* lies in the fact that they, like the *abaphakathi* described above, “have developed their own songs ... the *Gqobhoka* songs have absorbed a variety of techniques and influences: Western (from mission and from popular music), but also extraneous African - not only from other Cape Nguni, but also from Zulu, from the mines, and perhaps from elsewhere as well” (*Dargie 1988:32*).

Portable trade-store instruments such as concertinas and guitars as well as violins and keyboard instruments were used to create a genre which was to prove to be one of the most important Coloured and Afrikaans contributions to the development of black urban popular music.

Even at these early stages, fashionably disdainful attitudes manifested amongst blacks who for different reasons disapproved of the incorporation of Afrikaans Cape melodies into their traditional music. “Africans who combined their indigenous melodies and rhythms with the Western Cape idiom were regarded with some resentment by other blacks, particularly by Christianized Africans who regarded the music as having been cheapened by the integration of the two styles” (*Gibson et al 1992:245*).

3.3 CHURCH-INFLUENCED BLACK URBAN MUSIC

Note: Unqualified references to ‘church’ in this section refer to the ‘mainline’ or ‘established’ churches of the various Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, rather than the separatist Zionist and Ethiopian churches (see Mgoma 1981:61).

In 1960, Henry Weman, a scholar of Christian music overseas, lamented the rapid intrusion of missionary music into southern Africa: Western civilization has marched into Africa like a conqueror in triumph. The missions taught the African to think and speak like a Westerner, and to sing like a Westerner (Stapleton & May 1987:10).

Organisations involved in early mission work in South Africa included the Wesleyans, the American Congregationalists, the American Board (under whose auspices the “Native Home Missionary Society” was established), the Anglicans, the Free Church of Scotland, Lutheran Societies from Scandinavian countries and Germany, and the Roman Catholic Missions (Sundkler 1961:25,26,27,29). Mission schools and churches were powerful, if not brutal, catalysts for change and innovation amongst Africans. They were responsible for what can - from a certain perspective and with the wisdom of hindsight - be viewed as gross cultural displacement.

Observing that “Education has ... always been a way of controlling how people in South Africa think”, Sole notes that the potential for control of the educated population by the church was great. In 1917 a mere three black schools out of several thousand in South Africa were not under the auspices of the church (Sole 1983:69).

One of the basic tenets of the mission church was to effect the Western acculturation or “civilisation” of the indigenous black population. (It would appear that this principle was applied to the extent where it would produce citizens suitably equipped for a “modernising agriculture”, while discouraging subjects such as writing and arithmetic which could lead to a “disrelish for laborious occupations of life” (Erlmann 1983:133).)

Traditional music - comprising traditional rhythms, lyrics, instruments and dancing - was pronounced heathen and to be eradicated at all costs (Coplan 1982A:366). Apart from the fact that the music was associated with what was perceived as pagan dancing and ritual, Coplan states that Christianity was less enthusiastically received in communities which displayed strong

traditional customs and practices (*Coplan* 1985:25,28). However, non-mission communities were indirectly but significantly affected by mission-inspired practices through “migratory labour and proletarianisation” (*Coplan* 1982A:366).

Generally speaking, the non-Christian migrant, proletarian class sought expression in ways which were generally frowned upon by their more educated Christian brethren for whom aspirations of “civilisation” by definition excluded the developing urban popular music. Among a large sector of urbanising proletarian blacks in the city, trade-store instruments quickly replaced traditional instruments which acquired a negative, “uncivilised” image. Soon these new instruments were identified with non-Christian music to such an extent that mission-educated Christian blacks shunned them as part of the “pagan” armoury (*Coplan* 1982A:363). This typically middle-class attitude is articulated by Ewens, who quotes an erstwhile member of that section of early urbanites’ society:

Musical instruments were always hard to come by, as musician, writer and filmmaker Molepho Pheto explained. “When it came to instruments like saxophone and trumpet (sic) and so on, that was a total mountain to climb ... the money was just not there. If you wanted those, it took ages. They were not available in the ghettos. But the guitar was so common, people didn’t think much about it, and they didn’t think much about the player. Religion, remember, was a very strong influence on us, and the guitar was the instrument of Satan. The religious attitude was that if you played guitar you were going to Hell, whereas if you played the trumpet you were going to Heaven. Well, it’s in the Bible somewhere that trumpets shall sound ... The Salvation Army had brass instruments all over the place, but no guitar. In fact, to this day I’ve never seen a guitar there” (Ewens 1991:188).

3.3.1 Western-Style Choral Singing

The triadic harmonies (of black sacred and popular music) have been very, very strongly influenced by the church. And somehow people who have not had the background and the history have come to accept that it is the way of the African ethos to sing in harmony, whereas originally, indigenously, we *didn’t* sing in harmony. It’s been adopted and adapted. It’s a process of socialisation (*Ngoma - writer’s interview: 14/2/95*).

Following the example of Charles Hamm (*Hamm* 1991:162), the genre which shall be referred to as ‘western-style choral singing’ is essentially the style which exhibits the features of the western choral idiom, and which, from the nineteenth century, was introduced to South African blacks by white (initially) European missionaries. The Wesleyan or “baroque Christian hymn”, the major

style of church music at the time of initial Christian religious infiltration into African societies, has become the most dominant western musical form used by black South Africans (*Mthethwa 1980:23; 1987:28*).

Reasons for the inclusion of an examination of the development of this genre include:

- While its roots lie in the harmonies and rhythms of European-style church hymnody, hymn-singing is included but not exclusively referred to by the term, which later incorporated the singing of traditional songs arranged in a western idiom for choir, English ‘light classical’ and popular choral songs, and American and African songs arranged in “ragtime style” (*Coplan 1985:38,39,72*).
- The triadic harmonies of this medium have influenced popular styles, not least through the effect of the genre on societal structures and the musical practices which were subsequently influenced by them.
- The importance of the various forms of reaction (or lack thereof) to this imposed westernisation in the subsequent development of popular styles. “In fact, modern African popular music is an offshoot of the baroque hymn” (*Mthethwa 1987:28*).
- Since the style for many years was the medium for what were perceived (correctly or incorrectly) by the white regime to be protest songs, it can be argued that even certain sacred forms are popular to the masses. The famous *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, now part of South Africa's national anthem, but for many years the anthem of the African National Congress, is one such example.

3.3.1.1 *The Use of Other Terms*

A term commonly used by writers to refer to the genre described above, is *makwaya*. The premise stated by Nketia in which “the principal instruments used in a given musical type may also provide

the name of the music" (Nketia 1974:25) obviously lies at the root of the practice, since *makwaya* is the Nguni term for *choirs*.

The term is defined by Erlmann as "nineteenth-century choir music" (Erlmann 1991:123) and referred to elsewhere as an "idiom" (Erlmann 1983:136). Referring to the black church music of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), Lenherr classifies "*makwaya* style" as the "re-creation of Western choir style with a short leader's part" (Lenherr 1968:34). Essentially dealing with church music, Hodgson defines "*makwaya* style" as "that style affected by African musicians in attempting to perform or compose in European choir style" (Hodgson 1980:72).

The name is initially used in Coplan's text as: "*makwaya* (choir) music" (Coplan 1985:72), the umbrella term for the western choral styles as described above. The term is defined in the glossary as "African sacred or secular choral music developed by mission-educated Africans, combining European classical song and hymnody, American popular song and African traditional choral music" (Coplan 1985:267).

Manuel refers to *makwaya* as a "syncopated choral genre" (Manuel 1988:106). A feature of "acculturated", middle-class African society, it is described as a syncretic, vocal style which originated in the late nineteenth century

variously integrating hymn-derived European harmonies or ragtime elements with traditional (predominantly Xhosa) rhythms and overlapping choral formats ... *Makwaya* also represented an early attempt to find a form of musical expression that could be pan-tribal, "civilized", and yet African (Manuel 1988:107).

Kivnick uses the term *makwaya* to label the "genre of formal choral singing" (Kivnick 1990:197). Imitating Coplan's use of the word, *makwaya* is used as the descriptive term with which to indicate a *style* of singing (e.g. "... ended their long *makwaya* song ..." - Kivnick 1990:201). It embraces western-sounding, Christian congregational singing; components of spirituals, minstrelsy, and ragtime integrated into Western classical compositions; the arrangement of traditional material for four-part Western choir; and the creation of new, syncretic forms incorporating elements of traditional singing (Kivnick 1990:197,198).

While white academics such as Muller (*writer's interview 2/2/95*) and Dargie (*personal communication: 4/3/95*) readily acknowledged the use of the term as referring to black western-style choral singing, black record industry personnel (*Mcineka: writer's interview 31/1/94; Salume: writer's interview 2/4/94; Radebe Petersen: writer's interview 17/10/94*), musicians of other genres (*Masondo: writer's interview 18/1/95; Piliso: writer's interview 1/11/94; Tshomela: writer's interview 17/10/94*) and choral music practitioners such as Ranthro (*writer's interview 31/1/95*) and Khumalo (*writer's interview 15/2/95*) claimed that the term was being incorrectly used to refer to the style in question. Henry Kolatsoeu, black music librarian at the SABC for twenty-five years, and Yvonne Huskisson, first Organiser and then Head of Black Music at the SABC from 1962 to 1985 and author of "Bantu Composers of South Africa" were significantly ignorant of the term (*Kolatsoeu - writer's interview: 30/1/95; Huskisson - writer's interview: 2/2/95*).

Prof. Khabi Mngoma clarifies this mystifying situation by explaining that *makwaya* is the term which was adopted by, and subsequently limited to, missionised blacks in the Cape to describe their singing of western choral forms. Despite implications in the literature to the contrary, the usage of the term has remained localised to that specific geographic area.

Makwaya is used a lot in the Cape, but it's not countrywide. Among the Zulus, *makwaya* would be a mere interpretation of the practice ... *Makwaya* ... is (used to refer to music in which) ... there's a person conducting in front, and very likely the music learnt from notation. But you do get group singing ... that has no choreography, that has no body movement, also referred to as *makwaya*, but mainly in the Cape - both Eastern and Western Cape.

It's not a nationally accepted one (*i.e. term*). It actually emanates from the Cape, and it's used in ... (that) context, referring to group singing that imitates formal western choral singing (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Judging from the opinions of those interviewed, it would appear that in Gauteng and Natal no single term is commonly used by black choral music practitioners, popular musicians, or, for that matter, the population at large, to categorise the western-style choral singing which was the direct legacy of white missionary influence in South Africa.

While Coplan uses the word *amaculo* to refer to hymns (*Coplan 1985:72*), Dargie defines *amaculo* as "both (mission) church hymns and school songs" (*Dargie 1988:33*). Prof. Mngoma maintains that "*Amaculo* means all songs, not necessarily categorised to refer to (church hymns and

school songs) ... That's bandying the meaning a little too far. *Iculo* is from *cula*, meaning 'to sing'. *Amaculo* are songs, in any context, any style" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Victor Masondo's suggestion for the term "hymn-singing" was *umculo wesonto* (*Masondo - writer's interview: 18/1/95*). However, Prof. Mngoma thinks that the term is too broad, since it would include *amachorus*, the improvisatory chorus-singing which has replaced hymn-singing in schools (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Prof. Khumalo observes that the term used colloquially to refer to *white* music (as opposed to *western*) music is *umculowesiLungu*: "It means white music ... The Western concept is not really easily available in Zulu. We never really speak of *isintosaseWest*, we speak of *isintosasiLungu* ... 'white' rather than 'western'" (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

3.3.1.2 Africans' Adoption of Four-Part Singing

Hamm maintains that western-style choral singing was accepted more easily into black South African culture than elsewhere in colonial Africa. This was primarily because the traditional music of many South African ethnic groups was characterised by predominantly choral styles (*Hamm 1991:162; Blacking 1982B:297; Rycroft 1982B:315; Marniel 1988:106; Andersson 1981:14,15; Kivnick 1990:195*).

Since tones in African speech determine meaning, parallelism of voice parts resulted from the necessity of voices rising and falling together (*Kirby 1954:922,925,926*). Rycroft states that such parallelism is often avoided in indigenous South African music by the use of antiphony, non-simultaneous voice entries and different voices singing different texts (*Rycroft 1982A:303*). Kirby asserts that, generally speaking, ceremonial songs (as opposed to "domestic", single-line melodies) were usually performed in a kind of polyphonic style which featured "two or more voices proceeding in a parallel progression in which certain intervals used in European harmony were prominent" (*Kirby 1982:271*). However, Mngoma states that "When you study indigenous music, (you find that) it is antiphonal, but it is usually in octaves. You do get responses ... at a fifth or a

fourth in the same tonality, but the textures are really not in the triadic, western sense" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

For the most part, Kirby argues, Africans were at the same stage of musical development as were Europeans in the tenth century. (The parallelism of fourths and fifths, common in English church music of the tenth century, Kirby states, is part of the "natural harmony" of the Nguni peoples, "the natural and inevitable result of tone in language" (*Kirby 1982:272/273*).) Thus the missionaries were able to facilitate the "four-parts-at-any-price" ecclesiastical tradition in black church singing, effectively "short-circuiting" the centuries (*Kirby 1982:271*).

Mngoma was a product of missionary education: the Salvation Army school in Eastern Native Township; a Methodist school in Annievale in Dannhauser, Natal; St Peter's Secondary school in Rosettenville; Plimiton High School in Silverton and finally, Adams College. He states that:

It's really mainly with communities that had the exposure to western Christianity, that these harmonies became a part of their music-making experience. So, it's a process, I think, of socialisation. They became used to it, and liked it, and continued to use it. To the extent that, later when I was a child, it became 'natural' to sing in harmony. It was quite abnormal to find a community that sings in unison and does not adopt harmony. I grew up in a culture where these harmonies are used. But I'm quite sure that ... communities that have not had the exposure to Christianity ... especially hymn-singing ... didn't adapt to this (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Blacking's viewpoint is that urban blacks' ability to harmonise new melodies 'spontaneously' must not be confused with or always perceived as an imitation of western music, but rather as an example of the continuation, if modified, of indigenous musical practice. Traditional music appears to be derived from "a conceptual framework of chords rather than single tones" (*Blacking 1982B:295*) - where alterations in melody necessitated by speech tones, or the "filling out" of a melody by the addition of extra melodic lines - involved systematic selection of tones which occur in these "chords" and which "implicitly accompany each shift of tone in the basic melodic pattern" (*Blacking 1982B:295/296*).

Mngoma argues that the incorporation of western harmony into African choral singing was facilitated by the African's inherent vocal ability. He postulates that the natural resonance of African singing generates both the fundamental and overtones of the harmonic series, allowing for a predisposition to hear - and therefore to sing - these harmonies (*Mngoma 1981:62*). This factor,

combined with the attractive intrinsic qualities of the music, made their acceptance an easy, almost natural, process.

My own argument, usually, about Africans' acceptance of this four-part harmony is: ... We are by nature, I think, a very loud-voiced type of people, [which] sometimes disturbs some of the western-oriented people, who feel we are very noisy and become uncomfortable about that]. Now, ... it was easy to adapt to this (western-style four-part harmony) because each voice in fact does create this harmonic series in its own resonance, so that as you speak, sub-consciously or consciously, ... you do 'feel' the third and fifth in your voice. So it was easier to adapt to that. And then the dissonances that occur in the music itself, causing the natural tensions and the resolutions back to consonance, made it pleasant to make music using these textures (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Interestingly, it would appear that Kirby also alludes to this theory by stating that it was "the power and resonance of the male voices of their African converts" which led missionaries "to endeavour to teach them to sing their hymns in four-part harmony" (Kirby 1982:271). Mngoma states that the African's inherent ability to harmonise results in "an abundance of harmony" in the folk songs, the sonorities of which are used by the black composers of western-style choral - or what Mngoma referred to as 'art' (and Huskisson, 'serious' (*Huskisson 1969:XII*)) music – "even when the chord progressions often tend to be 'learned' and Western folk elements are always present" (*Mngoma 1981:62/63*).

In addition to rhythmic inflection, the pitch contours of speech are semantic in all the indigenous African languages of South Africa (*Dargie 1988:68*). Apart from the tonal inflections of words, *sentence* intonation, or the speech contours of sentences, are also a consideration in indigenous music. Rycroft observes that while the relation between melodic sequence and speech contours in traditional music-making are not always exact, "'essential tone' patterns of words are abstracted from sentence intonation, and serve to intermodulate with overall contours that are musically determined, instead" (*Rycroft 1982A:310*).

Most writers concur that the most negative impact of the imposition of western hymnody on African musical practice, was the sacrifice of the rhythms and prosody of normal, essentially tonal African languages, in which the tones and inflections vitally determine the meaning of words, in order to conform with western musical forms (Kirby 1982:272; Erlmann 1991:123/124; Erlmann 1983: 134,135; Rycroft 1982A:313; Hodgson 1980:75; Hodgson 1981:3; Hansen 1968:2; Huskisson 1969:XVII; Kivnick 1990:198; Manuel 1988:86). However, referring to

indigenous choral singing, Rycroft does assert that “it may often prove misleading merely to make a direct comparison between a sung melody and the sequence of pitches used in a spoken rendering of the same text. From existing studies ... it seems that exact melodic imitation of the pitch contours of speech throughout an entire song is of very rare occurrence” (*Rycroft 1982A:306*).

In his study of Venda children’s songs, Blacking notes that while the melodies and rhythms tend to be influenced by the fluctuations of speech-tones, the melodies “are never slavish imitations of speech-tone” (*Blacking 1967:167*). He quotes examples in which “speech patterns are sacrificed almost entirely for musical considerations” (*Blacking 1967:168,201*). While Mngoma concedes that “you do get cases where the speech accents are deformed or abused”, he maintains that it was mainly in the missionaries’ *translations* of hymns into the vernacular that unacceptable distortions of speech tones and rhythms occurred. In most cases, the vernaculars tended to have more syllables than the original western texts. Linguistic distortions occurred when these were put to original hymn melodies without the rhythmic adaptations necessary to accommodate the syllables.

Mngoma contends that in the works of black composers of original western-style choral material in the vernacular, the so-called ‘incorrect’ usage of speech tones and rhythms was usually incurred by the composers’ specific design. Subject to the “same influences that obtained in the development of western vocal music”, melismas and rising or falling tones which do not conform exactly to those of speech are not only *tolerable* but commendable in the sense that they comply with and express the intention of the composer - namely, to enhance the meaning of the word:

... It depends on what the composer wants to highlight. It doesn’t necessarily affect the meaning. It may affect the meaning (when) taken in isolation, but in context, that shock effect might be what the composer wanted ... in order to highlight the significance ... This is an ongoing debate ...

Speech is speech, and music is music, and indeed they do influence each other, but it is not a factor that determines whether music is going to survive or not. Because they tried to emphasise the importance of that text, by having put it to that music.

... Baroque music is not condemned because there are so many distortions. When you listen to a Bach choral work, you hardly listen to the words themselves, but it has not restrained people from listening to Bach (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Polyphonic vocal styles found in South Africa (generally-speaking, the predominant indigenous medium - see *Rycroft 1982B:315*) traditionally feature at least two voice parts and typically consist of one or more solo voices in a call-and-response dialogue with the larger group. This style proved

to be particularly conducive (or susceptible) to transformation to four-part Christian congregational singing (*Mthethwa* 1980:23) in which indigenous polyrhythmic features present in traditional vocal performances (*Kirby* 1982:298/299) were suppressed. Free-moving parts in overlapping call-and-response patterns were “straightjacketed” into diatonic “four-square melodic structures” (*Erlmann* 1983:135) where

- four-part harmony and four bar phrases replaced the free, flowing African phraseology and polyphony;
- single melody lines with harmony replaced parallel melodies;
- Western major and minor tonalities replaced African tonalities;
- a harmonic range of three basic chords, i.e. tonic, dominant and subdominant, dictated by a prominent melody, was introduced;
- traditional dancing, gestures and work movements, intrinsically part of traditional singing, were strictly forbidden (*Stapleton & May* 1987:10; *Kivnick* 1990:197,198; *Coplan* 1985:28,72).

Thus what can plausibly be referred to as an example of an “invented tradition” (see *Erlmann* 1991:71), western-style choral singing was forged within Christian ideology as espoused by mission schools: aspirations of a ‘couth’ society and ‘civilisation’ went hand in hand with eschewing African musical influences (*Mthethwa* 1980:23). Symbolizing “both advancement and stagnation, both expression and repression” (*Kivnick* 1990:97), the practice of western-style choral singing demanded the exorcising of the ‘uncivilised’ and ‘primitive’ from their tribal past by suppressing Africans’ natural rhythmic and melodic inclinations. According to Erlmann, the rejection of their own musical heritage by black cultural leaders such as the Christian minister Tiyo Soga, was “not without its ambiguity and certainly not without painful psychological side-effects, a conflict which was to characterise the subsequent history of the African elite” (*Erlmann* 1983:134).

Lovedale College in the Cape was at the forefront of the promotion of the innovations which were intended to eradicate heathenism. The first college and teacher-training institute for blacks, it

represented the vanguard of what Erlmann refers to as “cultural disruption”. It was chiefly responsible for producing a small but influential black elite who would disseminate values and standards of an “emerging petty bourgeoisie” (which included the elimination of traditional music practices) in the newly industrialising cities (*Erlmann 1983:135,134*).

Gradually a shift in attitude relating to these practices began to manifest among the burgeoning black middle class. Cautious doubts were expressed about the wisdom of a blanket embracing of western ‘civilisation’ in the light of a growing cynicism as to what the ultimate results of such espousal would be, given the evident racialistic convictions of most white colonists.

Erlmann maintains that a situation in which “converts had accepted the supposed superiority of the symbols of Western civilization such as four-part choral hymnody over autochthonous forms of cultural expression such as Zulu prosody” (*Erlmann 1991:123*) persisted in vernacular compositions until 1911, when John Dube’s collection *Amagama Abantu* became the first published example of western choral style composed by an “elite” composer in which “the integrity of Zulu speech modes” was preserved (*Erlmann 1991:124*).

Coplan credits John Knox Bokwe as a writer, poet and musician who “tried to repair some of the damage done to the Xhosa language in mission hymnody, and inserted indigenous melodic and structural features into their songs” (*Coplan 1982A:370*). Referred to by Erlmann as “the first African composer of national stature” (*Erlmann 1983:136*), Bokwe’s most important works were the four hymns (which were published between 1876 and 1884) based on the work of a Xhosa prophet, Ntsikana, of whom his grandparents were followers (*Hodgson 1981:7*). Ntsikana’s renowned indigenous sacred works (the fourth or ‘Great Hymn’ being particularly well-known) employed traditional Xhosa musical style, but without traditional dress and dancing (*Erlmann 1983:136*) “as an authentic African expression of Christianity” (*Hodgson 1980:1*). Bokwe used tonic-solfa to arrange these hymns in a song cycle, and while incorporating Western elements such as the dominant seventh chord and what Erlmann refers to as the ‘toleration’ of “slight distortions of pitch-speech tone relationships and stolid rhythm”, adhered to general rules of traditional Xhosa music such as the “characteristic falling melodic line and frequent tonality shifts between the first and second degree” (*Erlmann 1983:136*).

Kirby notes, however, that whereas the *accentuation* of Xhosa speech was corrected by Bokwe, the problem of incorrect *intonation* (i.e. the rise and fall of speech tones while singing) in four-part European harmony remained inevitable. This occurred particularly in the bass part, which of necessity moves in contrary motion to the melody (*Kirby 1982:272*).

Dargie maintains that “non-Xhosa elements are numerous” in Bokwe’s arrangements of Ntsikana’s hymns. These include the presence of the perfect fourth, “atypical” use of the dominant and dominant-seventh chords and the incorrect use of speech-tones. The “total lack of rhythmic feeling”, the “dependence on the barline” and the “stolid $\frac{3}{4}$ metre” of the “Round Hymn” (according to Hodgson, incorrectly referred to as such – *Hodgson 1981:11*), as well as the writing and singing of different lines of text to the same melody without variations are all described by Dargie as “non-Xhosa”. Furthermore, in Bokwe’s arrangement of the ‘Great Hymn’ “many of the accents fall incorrectly, with the additional rhythmic distortion that arises when semiquavers are followed by heavy regular crotchets” (*Dargie 1982A:9*).

While Bokwe’s work became “repertoire standards” for middle class choirs throughout the country and the “daily bread for African schoolchildren” (*Erlmann 1983:136*), its significance lies in its being one of the first examples of the adaptation of the white man’s medium in order to create a musical vehicle for rousing black nationalistic feelings. This phenomenon was to develop into the use of black choral singing as a powerful agent for the passionate expression of feelings, including those of protest.

Mngoma acknowledges that the “virile” rhythm of the “eclectic” African composers’ work, bound as it is by the bar-line, lacks the polyrhythmic features and freedom of indigenous music. Despite this, and the limitations of the tonic solfa notation used by the majority of black western-style choral composers, he maintains that their “Africanness still comes through strongly” (*Mngoma 1981:63*).

Mngoma refutes the theory that the significance of either Bokwe or Dube lies in their correction of vernacular speech tone or rhythmic accentuation. Referring to the “rhythmic distortion” in Bokwe’s work alluded to by Dargie in the quotation above, he contends that this should be viewed from within the context of “contemporary compositional tendencies and creations” as well as “the

influences of psychology ... where issues of dissonance are taken as necessary shock to emphasise significance ... (This has existed) right from the time of the expressionists ... (It is a matter of) tonal inflections for whom, for what era?" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Both Bokwe and Dube wrote in staff notation rather than tonic-solfa. According to Mngoma, the significance of Bokwe (whose repertoire, with the exception of Ntsikana's hymns, was in "western choral style") and Dube lies in the inspiration conveyed by their texts (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Hodgson maintains that the images used in "the 'Great Hymn' and in Ntsikana's prophecies have not only influenced Xhosa writing over the years but have become symbols of Xhosa nationalism too, which have far-reaching political implications even at the present time" (*Hodgson 1981:2*).

Erlmann states that "It is perhaps no coincidence that Bokwe's hymns roused nationalist feelings", since Ntsikana's original hymns had resulted in similar audience responses in 1874. In this year an anonymous writer in the *Kaffir Express* had declared:

We have heard only one Kaffir hymn, which deeply moved the congregation of worshippers. It was composed by a chief named Tsikana ... and the Kaffirs, from the circumstances of its composition, look on it with a kind of national feeling, especially now that they droop their heads from the loss of national freedom, and the dominance of the white man (*Erlmann 1983:136*).

3.3.1.3 'Folk' Music

Along with a nascent black pride, there arose a need amongst cultural leaders such as Dube, Caluza, and others, to create an authentic but modern African culture: one that would provide a framework for the promotion of a positive black self-image while disregarding the hitherto sacrosanctity of Christian musical practices.

Erlmann describes the situation in Natal where a cultural osmosis, as it were, began to occur between the two hitherto mutually exclusive classes of traditional peasants and *amakholwa* (see 3.6) landowners. As part of a general trend among beleagured *amakholwa*, previously shunned traditional musical practices referred to as *isiZulu*, while still frowned on by missionaries, "provided

a common, genuine framework for the expression of Zulu ethnic identity in opposition to the virulent racism of Natal's white settlers" (*Erlmann 1991:71,74*).

However, black elite ideology, bent on approbation by and admission to white society, dictated that "traditional" be defined from **within the context** of black intellectual preconceptions of a refined and so-called purified cultural heritage. Thus the "invented tradition" of "folk music" emerged as "the appropriation of peasant traditions by urban elites". It is described as

the product of a culturally and politically conscious reworking of "traditional" performance styles by the black intelligentsia under the conditions of the urban ghetto. As such it is distinguished from popular music which, although equally grounded in traditional music, is the product of a much greater amalgamation of styles from a much wider range of cultural and class sources in which the laboring masses have a far greater stake than in folk music (*Erlmann 1991:72*).

Mngoma states that "With the upsurge of nationalism among Africans especially from 1950 onwards, there was a conscious effort among those who wrote music to include features in their music that were identifiably African" (*Mngoma 1981:61*). He quotes supreme examples of the incorporation of 'folk music' into the 'art music' of composers such as Mohapeloa, Caluza, Raseleso, Tyamzashe and Qwesha, renowned for their mastery of black western choral compositions. He describes the newer varieties of "Folk music of the contemporary African cultural scene" as showing "a healthy 'bastardisation' which is part of evolution and even conscious development ... These are now sung for entertainment as well as to reinforce a Black cultural identity" (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

3.3.1.4 The Social Effects of Missionisation

Both Erlmann (*Erlmann 1991:4*) and Ballantine (*Ballantine 1991A:121; 1993:11*) convincingly expound the blurring of lines of distinction - or the danger of regarding them as watertight - between various classes and music styles in industrialising South African cities.

However, citing Johannesburg, possibly the supreme example of industrialisation in South Africa, Coplan articulates the establishment of broad but complex "patterns of social organization" which were the results of urbanisation: missionised and educated Africans "attempted by word and deed

to direct the processes of urban acculturation affecting their more ‘backward’ brethren” (*Coplan 1979:136*).

Mindful of the perspective 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 1983:68*), it can be stated that broad patterns of social stratification manifested as a result of “the social and cultural discontinuities between mission station and pagan African community life” (*Coplan 1982A:366*). These patterns influenced, at least to a degree, musical practices, particularly in the 1930s and early 1940s. “At the top of a social universe severely constricted and depressed by white segregationist policy was the culturally self-conscious elite: Africans who made a genuine and partly successful effort to solve ‘the problem of African music’” (*Coplan 1979:138*).

Mission-school graduates who had been pressurised into renouncing both traditional and urban cultural practices regarded these as not only heathen, but uncivilised and therefore inferior (*Gibson et al 1992:245; Coplan 1985:24; Erlmann 1983:134*):

Clearly the ideas and language of a hegemonic culture pressed in on the black middle class at many points - in the press, the civil service, the law courts, the church. Above all, the schools inculcated modes of behaviour, values, forms of speech, which had an immense effect. No adequate study of these schools exists - their curricula, the origins and nature of their staff, their changing patterns. From Lovedale to Adams college the schools reproduced elements of the English and Scottish educational system and sought to produce a new class ... Behind the walls of these schools young Africans lived a life of relative freedom and security where the promise was held out that progress and equality were realisable. Political, social and economic events in the outside world did not tally, however, and the relatively liberal movement (though conservative in many respects) as represented by the mission schools did not triumph in wider South African society (*Couzens 1985:353*).

For a considerable period, black western-style choral singing was to remain primarily the domain of the educated black elite and it generally formed part of the programme at ‘couth’ entertainment structures such as tea meetings, evening concerts, etc. Referring to the programme content and ‘strategy’ of Radio Bantu in the 1950s, Hamm unequivocally states: “Choir music, cultivated chiefly by educated blacks, proved useful in attracting persons of this class to Radio Bantu” (*Hamm 1991:163*).

Culturally speaking, however, “migratory labour and proletarianisation” brought about a considerable infiltration of “missionary influence” into the non-mission-aligned communities. Fur-

thermore, in reaction to missionary demands for the total abdication of both traditional and urban “pagan” cultural practices, mission Africans themselves “developed alternative institutions” in which Christian and heathen traditions were strategically combined in cultural practices which provided a unique “basis for community life” (*Coplan* 1982A:366). Mthethwa makes the point that it was necessary for the hymn to undergo a process of “secularization” in order to fulfil the desire for music to accompany all aspects of African life, rather than solely to satisfy religious requirements (*Mthethwa* 1980:23).

More importantly, one observes the birth and growth of a mindset which was to play a pivotal role in the later development of black urban popular music: Western Christian education espoused the values and norms of the white man, therefore the quest for acquisition and demonstration of those values and norms became part of the quest for social status, and ultimately, integration into white society (*Erlmann* 1983:134). (See 4.5)

That this quest would eventually prove to be futile, and indicative of the prejudiced white viewpoint which was to continue for decades, was summarised by a critic for a colonist paper in Cradock, *The Midland News and Karoo Farmer*. Reviewing the performance of a Zulu Choir's rendering of works by composers such as Handel, Rossini and Donizetti, he applauded the standard of excellence obtained, but nevertheless remarked:

Such shows ... will only tend to intensify and make more difficult the race question in Africa. We take leave to doubt if the Kaffir is to be raised by means of his musical faculties, promising as they undoubtedly are. He can no more escape the primal curse than the man whose skin is of lighter hue, and we thus feel constrained to look upon ... (such) ... efforts - praiseworthy as they are in some points - as being on the whole detrimental to the interests of the natives themselves (*Erlmann* 1983:135).

An example of an alternative institution to overtly pagan and Christian models and one which was developed as part of an apparent two-pronged strategy to meet the norms of Christian and white civilisation simultaneously, is that of the English church “tea meeting” (*Coplan* 1985:76; 1982A:367).

Tea meetings were recreational functions at which, at least initially, no liquor was served (automatically implying a certain level of decorum, ergo possible and generalised insinuations of class affiliations). The term originated within the church society of British settlers at the Eastern

Cape, but soon broadened to include other members of the community (*Coplan* 1985:76/77). Tea meetings and school concerts, the “universal training ground of middle-class performers” (*Coplan* 1985:122) traditionally under the auspices of mission churches, became profitable forms of entertainment at which ‘coon’ groups, ragtime, together with Western choral music (*makwaya*) were performed. These institutions were important vehicles for the establishment of the concept of variety entertainment as well as the popularising of performance traditions of black America. After completing their schooling, many school performing groups formed what Coplan and Ballantine refer to as “minstrel companies” and “vaudeville companies” or “troupes”, respectively (*Coplan* 1985:123; *Ballantine* 1991A:133,131; 1993:23,25,21). Thus “mission-school people”, i.e. the burgeoning black intellectual elite, “were among the primary transmitters of black American cultural influence to the wider African population” (*Coplan* 1982A:371).

Certain institutions, established within the arena of the educated elite, were assimilated into and transformed by proletarian communities (e.g. *Coplan* 1979:137). Coplan notes that in the mid- to late nineteenth century the practice of “tea meetings”, in original and variant form, had been adopted by Cape Nguni. In Johannesburg the mine compounds provided the context within which tea meetings, along with other mission-influenced cultural practices, were introduced to migrant workers, and where “*amatimitin*” became “occasions for music, individualised dancing and beer-drinking” (*Coplan* 1982A:367).

These “occasions” of music and dancing were to become both the common denominators and points of confluence for middle-class and working-class cultural expression:

One thing middle class voluntary associations and the shebeens had in common was music and dancing. From before the First World War until the mass removals to the new government-owned townships like Soweto in the 1950s, no social function of a middle class association was complete without a choir, a variety concert, or a western-style dance orchestra (*Coplan* 1979:137).

3.3.1.5 Western-style Choral Competitions, Both Secular and Sacred

With its roots bound in the educated black’s attempt to embrace the white man’s ‘civilisation’, western-style choral singing gradually became the flagship of black middle-class society’s endeavours to justify its equality of stature with whites and fashion a convincing identity for itself in

the cities. Tea-meetings and choir concerts (including the Eisteddfods of the 1930s and the Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival of the 1940s) established the style as the axis around which elite social entertainment revolved.

A phenomenon of both church and school, choir competitions, originally initiated by the missionaries, became a regular feature of middle-class life and spurred composition. Inter-school, inter-district and inter-provincial competitions began in 1935, and church choir competitions became annual events (*Huskisson 1969:XIX;XX*). Teacher associations organised National Choir Competitions from 1860.

Since the body of choral compositions initially available was in either English or Afrikaans, black composers felt the need for African music in the repertoire. Expressing “a type of black consciousness” and “in order to make up for the prohibition of indigenous music in the church”, composers such as Dube, Bokwe and Caluza composed western-style choral music, much of which was secular, in the vernacular (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

Mngoma asserts that, despite the fact that for the first half of this century African composers tried to be “as un-African as possible”, the use of vernacular texts influenced melody and rhythm, imposing “an African character” on their compositions (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

3.3.1.6 The Indigenisation of Sacred Choral Singing

Having been rejected by white society to whose cultural practices they had willingly submitted, blacks developed white-inspired choral singing into an idiom which adequately reflected their desire to embrace Westernisation while maintaining a proud African identity. However, inferences that the appropriation of this western idiom involved an intrinsic and simultaneous indigenisation of the music are incorrect. While Khumalo asserts that “the truth about hymn music is that most of it is not really in black style; most of the hymns are in western style, even today”, he observes that “The only thing that’s indigenised are these choruses, because these choruses … are in typical African style” (*Khumalo - writer’s interview: 15/2/95*).

Michael Rancho, veteran choirmaster and adjudicator of choir competitions, maintains that the indigenisation of church music from within the confines of the Anglican church (with the instigation of which he was formally involved) is still in its infancy. The performance practice of indigenous styles in orthodox churches, as observed by Helen Kivnick (*Kivnick 1990:16*) is relatively new, and, although there are definite and important exceptions, the greater proportion of hymn-singing in these churches, even in the 1990s, remains in the European, Wesleyan four-part hymn style.

Khumalo maintains that the only indigenisation that has taken place in black western-style choral singing is that in the *practice* of the genre, speech nuances in the vernacular songs, particularly those of the Nguni, have been incorporated:

... the one thing that has happened is ... that, particularly with the people who come from the Nguni language grouping ... they have in their languages these consonants that have an effect on the tone of their language. We usually call these tones and these segments “depressors” ... (e.g.): b. d. g. Now, ... when the Zulu Nguni speak, when they get to these segments - there are about eleven of them in the Zulu language - if you go high toned on it, that high tone rises, and then sometimes another aspect of it is that if you've got a long syllable, then it falls.

Now, what happens is that these speech nuances, these rises and falls that you get in the language, get transferred into the singing, so that if I say something like “ibola” - can you hear? “I-bo” – it’s rising. It’s rising because of the effect of the consonant and the tone ... You’ve got to be very careful if you are teaching them an English song, to make sure that the intonation is just perfect for English singing, that they do not include what ... would have been the case if they were singing a black language.

It (i.e. western-style choral singing) hasn’t remained as it was ... It’s effects like ones I’ve been describing that have come into the singing in the vernacular. ... (Whereas) the English hymns have a way of being performed which is independent of the quality of the words (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

Huskisson states that “the Bantu ear never did wholly accept the Western scale and in this, his music-making, even at the outset of his composition efforts, bore a slightly different musical hallmark” (*Huskisson 1969:XXII*). Mngoma, who has a fascination for the debate surrounding the use of tempered and acoustical pitch, trains his choirs to use tempered pitch when singing from notation and accompanied by a tempered instrument, and acoustical pitch when singing *a cappella* in the vernacular (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Hodgson observes that the need for the indigenisation of Xhosa worship was articulated as long ago as 1871 in a vain plea by a white correspondent to the Kaffir Express. Expressing concern that the dull Christian life would be rejected by converts, he bemoaned the fact that the western church had not provided Africans with a suitable sacred substitute for the traditional singing and dancing

of which they had been deprived (*Hodgson 1980:78*). Writing in 1981 Hodgson laments: “A century and a half later the Church still struggles to reach a vast mass of people because of its failure to use indigenous vehicles of communication in conveying its message” (*Hodgson 1981:2*).

The Roman Catholic Church (specifically, Fathers Oswald Hirmer and Fritz Lobinger of Lumko Missiological Institute in the Transkei) began the indigenisation of church music, commissioning the Xhosa composer Benjamin Tyamzashe to compose traditional liturgical music in traditional Xhosa style in 1964 (*Hodgson 1980:79*). Tyamzashe, then aged seventy-four, had until that time predominantly composed in the western choral style, and his inspiration was drawn directly from the only notated indigenous music available, Bokwe's transcription of Ntsikana's hymns. Techniques used by Ntsikana, such as polyrhythms and harmonic patterns using raised fourths (typical of Xhosa music - see *Dargie 1981:15; 1982:9A; 1988:8,19,87; Hansen 1981:37,38*) are found in “African style sections” in which participants are instructed to clap or dance (*Hodgson 1980:79*). While certain orthodox and independent church hymn repertoires have included Ntsikana's hymns (*Hodgson 1980:20*), Dargie laments as late as 1982 that “It is a pity that the singing of the hymns of Ntsikana in Roman Catholic worship has only recently begun” (*Dargie 1982A:7*).

Significantly, while Ntsikana's musical compositions provide a vital landmark in the history of the indigenisation of church music in this country, his followers and descendants returned to the use of European tunes and traditional western church verse form (*Hodgson 1981:3*).

3.3.1.7 Separatist Church Music

A situation existed within mainstream western churches whereby the Christianisation and ‘civilisation’ of blacks did not alter their inferior status in the eyes of white, albeit Christian, society. The irony of racialism in a Christian context did not escape black converts and was perhaps the most significant factor in the development of the separatist or independent church movement.

Mthethwa suggests that African responses to the imposition of western Christian religious expression manifested in different ways:

- One such response was ridicule: The Zulu folk music oral tradition repertory includes “vulgar” songs, the texts of which have been fitted to western Christian hymn tunes.
- A second response was the transformation or Africanisation of repertory and performance style. Mthethwa maintains that, while scholars have noted the lack of new composition by African Christians (*Sundkler 1961:193*),

the focus of African worship lies not so much in the original music, as it does in the way in which worship is performed. In this regard, it is believed that the holy spirit is imparted to western hymns specifically through the use of polyrhythms and polyphonic melodies. Thus, the technique of call-and-response is believed to enable the spiritually ‘weak’ western Christian hymn to come alive in African religious worship (*Mthethwa n.d.:5*).

Two main branches of the Separatist Church movement exist: the Ethiopianists and the Zionists. The impetus for the formation of the two movements can be broadly, if somewhat simplistically, expressed: that of Ethiopianism was essentially motivated by black consciousness and a desire for black political assertion; integral to the formation of Zionism was a desire for indigenous religious expression and ideology.

The rapid growth of Ethiopianism is attributed to the absorption of disaffected members of missionary churches in the towns. The philosophy of black spiritual and material self-reliance it championed, soon resulted in the Ethiopian preachers being viewed by white society as responsible for the promotion of subversive, anti-white sentiments (*Coplan 1985:42/43*).

Proletarian Christians who not only baulked at the contradictory ideologies of western Christianity mentioned above, but also manifested a desire for uniquely African modes of worship, formed the Zionist church. Both rural and urban Christians found articulation for their religious beliefs in an environment in which traditional rituals and practices were enthusiastically embraced. This movement was to grow into the largest and most influential black church movement in South Africa and continues as such to the present day.

Coplan attests that the music of the black American church, in particular that of the black Baptist, Pentecostal and Methodist churches was a strong influence on the music which was created in a distinctly African ambience (*Coplan 1985:80*).

Isaiah Shembe, founder of the Nazarite sect, was a major contributor to the growing crusade to “re-Africanise” songs of worship. However, whereas Coplan infers the Nazarite “sect” (see *Coplan 1985:80*) to be classified as Zionist, Muller designates this influential religious movement as more Ethiopianist than Zionist, “constructing a regime of cultural truth in opposition to the hegemonic rule of the South African state” (*Muller 1994:394*). Mthethwa proclaims Shembe to be the “embodiment of the Africanisation of Christianity” (*Mthethwa n.d.:56,49/50*). In response to the prevalent notion among white clergymen and Christians that God’s arrival in Africa was marked by the first shipment of (white) ministers of religion, Shembe’s religious ideology contained a message of racial equality and an inherent black pride (*Mthethwa n.d.:56*).

Based on western versions, the performance of his hymns became essentially black or more correctly, Zulu, in character by virtue of their inclusion of idiosyncratic African musical devices. Shembe’s church attracted the masses “by his message of cultural and spiritual autonomy”. Essentially a proletarian institution, the Nazarites were “ignored or despised by most mission Africans” (*Coplan 1982A:369*). Of special significance is the fact that Shembe’s music heralded the incorporation of dancing as well as drum accompaniment into separatist black church music (*Coplan 1985:81*).

Mthethwa suggests that God, *Mvelinqangi*, “understands rhythm, and is to be communicated to through the language of rhythm” (*Mthethwa n.d.:34*). In traditional African belief, the rhythmic appeal of a particular hymn is used to evaluate its depth of spirituality. The deprivation suffered by African converts denied the rhythmic bodily movement which was integral to their indigenous music was perceived as an intense spiritual impoverishment of the music.

3.3.1.8 *Amachorus*

While the style of *amachorus* is known nation-wide, it is not documented in any of the available secondary literature. Reference to this improvisational style of hymn-singing is pertinent: elements of the style and technique of composition employed in the genre were later to be found in the popular urban music arena - most significantly, in the protest songs which emerged and typified the liberation movement from the 1970s onwards.

Mngoma asserts that the essence of this style - community singing - "has been around as long as I know. It was happening when I was born, 1922, and that's a long time" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Its roots lie in the use of the style as a gentle admonishment for practices of which the community disapproved. For example, a song would be composed to articulate the community's objection to some form of deviant behaviour on the part of a leader, to whom it would be difficult to vocalise such disapproval in speech:

And everybody will sing it with impunity, because it is music. And if he is sensitive enough, the leader will get it, but usually because the community sings it, some of his lackeys will pick it up and he will get the message ... So it is a very, very important form of communication (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Missionary influence in schools, perceived by the Apartheid regime to be encouraging the challenging of the status quo, was summarily eradicated by 'Bantu Education' which was introduced in South Africa in 1952/53. Along with other changes to the curricula, religious assemblies - in the form of morning and afternoon prayers with singing of the hymns of the relevant Catholic or Protestant denominations - were removed from the school system (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*). Possibly manifesting the germs of the confluence or grey area between sacred and protest song, it would appear that the chief motivation for this draconian decision was the manifestation of what can be viewed as early 'liberation theology':

... religion - for instance, morning prayers and so on - was where many people were able to say a lot of political things, with the support of the Bible. So, religion was taken out of the school system as such, especially the morning and afternoon prayers. (At) morning prayers, as a rule, especially at day schools, there was a lot of hymn-singing. Once the missionary influence - because most of them were under missionary control - (was removed), they were taken over by the State. So the different denominations didn't have ... a hold in ... getting the community to sing their hymns (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

The use of the *amachorus* at school assemblies emerged to fill this void. Encouraged by the headmaster of the school, scholars would be asked to sing in the style of the antiphonal call-and-response *amachorus*.

Non-denominational and forming the 'popular' link, as it were, between the various denominations of the mainline churches, the recent incorporation of *amachorus* into the sacred repertoire of black

churches represents a notable shift in stance from its predominant use of western-style choral singing (*Rancho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*). Since its introduction in schools in the early 1950s coincided with the simultaneous abolition of missionary influence and the emergent popularity of American gospel (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*), it can be hypothesised that the incorporation into the church repertoire of this traditional genre of community music-making which incorporates western elements, depicts a uniquely dichotomous idiom of indigenisation in the South African urban sacred milieus.

Mngoma stresses that while the popularisation of this *a cappella* form in schools coincided with the gospel singing influence, the two forms were distinctly different:

Gospel singing is quite different in that it has to have ... an instrumental component to it. In most cases it has to be very aggressive, comparatively. *Amachorus* (always sung *a cappella*) can be very appealing, very subdued; it expresses sorrow, it expresses one's spiritual longing ... The whole tone, the whole style ... has a very strong religious base (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Generally-speaking, the lyrics of the *amachorus* sung in churches are based on Bible texts which relate to current events in the church calendar:

... they might take a snippet from the Bible which relates to what happens: epiphany, resurrection, and things like that. Just a snippet from that, and hit upon a melody, which is picked up and sung - sung so long that by the end, everybody knows it. So the next time it starts, everybody will recognise it. It's sung in church, it's sung at funerals ...

So it is, I would say, it is an adaptation as far as the harmonic structures in the responses, ... greatly influenced by hymn singing, but inevitably, in all of them, virtually without exception, there is antiphony. The leader makes a statement and there is a response, either a repetition of the same statement or a response which is different texturally to what is being sung by the leader. The text becomes quite important: it can become a repetition of the text, or it can be something else that is responded (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

In the 1950s, inter-church activities resulted in a repertoire of *amachorus* being sung by different denominations and thus becoming familiar to "the community at large". While Khumalo and Mngoma concur that direct missionary influence is evident in the western four-part harmonisation used by the responding chorus (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95; Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95, 16/2/95*), body movement, anathema to western-style choral hymn singing, is integral to the style. The choreography, usually initiated by the leader and which "varies also according to the creativity of whoever leads", is usually simultaneous, thereby denoting group

identity. However, Mngoma observes that individuals “can embellish, can vary slightly, very subtly” to show independent musicianship (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

However, it was to be another two, and in some instances, three, decades before the genre became a vital part of mainline, as opposed to separatist, church worship. Mike Rancho maintains that while other African countries manifested elements of indigenisation in church worship much earlier, South Africa had “become too westernised” and “resisted this indigenisation” (*Rancho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*).

It would appear that, in terms of that period (i.e. the 1950s) and from within the context of the black intelligentsia with whom he identified, Mngoma espouses theories which Muller describes as “radical”: the notion that one could “be civilised without losing your cultural identity” (*Muller - writer's interview: 2/2/95*).

Rancho maintains that the Maseki (Anglican) movement, to which he belonged and for whom he was a choirmaster of note, was in the forefront of the crusade among Churchmen to encourage indigenisation and its integral component of body movement. However, even from within this milieu, Rancho asserts that “it is taking ages for them to accept any movement”. A large section of the congregation, generally the older generation (possibly belonging to the mindset which is a direct legacy of missionary education) still “resists movement and feels very uncomfortable with the idea” (*Rancho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*).

Khumalo laments what he regards as “one of the greatest tragedies with African music here”: “having been taught to look down so much upon it”, those schooled in missionary culture are unable to “react to” music of traditional flavour (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

Relating the essential differences between the *amachorus* of mainline and separatist churches, Khumalo describes the melodies and harmonies of *amachorus* as “set”, the western harmonies of the responses “always coming in blocks”. While the song develops into a number of variations, they tend to be “not too long”. The Zionists, by comparison,

continue for a long, long time, because they're more inventive in their singing, and ... they keep just building up as they sing and it can go on and on and on ... You see, with the Zionists, that (*i.e. western harmony*) is not what they use. When the other voices come, they come at different times and they don't come together and they do not form a harmonic block. They are all different, interesting melodies of their own, that are sort of sweetening what is the main melody (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

3.3.1.9 Protest Songs

Articulating the confluence of style in the spiritual vehicle of *amachorus* and protest songs, Khumalo maintains that

There isn't too great a difference. The difference is mostly in the lyrics. But the musical style is not too different. You see, the lyrics of the *amachorus* are all religious, whereas the lyrics of this music are not religious. But ... if you look at some of the earlier protest songs, they actually came from some of them (which) had been religious. So that you sometimes find that the same melody with the same harmonies and rhythms will be used in some instances as a chorus and in others, with different lyrics, used as a protest song (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

While protest songs are generally conceived from within a different ethos to that of *amachorus*, the same basic call-and-response, improvisatory framework is used. However, the lines of delineation between the two media do become blurred in certain situations:

The text quite often is taken from the Bible, just a snippet ... which is relevant to this particular situation: it may be an expression of sorrow, expression of anguish. If it's a political funeral: expression of anger ... revenge, and things like that (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Furthermore, the subjects of *amachorus* lyrics can be adapted to protest songs:

But the protest songs can adapt an *amachorus* item ... Or it can allude to a biblical situation - like crossing the Jordan, crossing the Red Sea, receiving ... of Manna - according to how pertinent it is to any given situation that is being lived through at any particular time (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Generally-speaking, though, protest songs differ in that while they may contain elements of "spiritualism", the ethos of their expression is more aggressive than that of *amachorus*. The lyrics of protest songs are more topical, expressing issues that cause anger and resentment to the black community (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

This form of protest, as a youthful articulation of Black Consciousness, was most pronounced in the period which Mngoma refers to as “the worst part of apartheid, before the actual 1976 explosion”. Texts vocalising the wrath and resentment of the young people vis-a-vis “a leader, or white oppressor, anything that ... rubs them the wrong way” would be invented.

Some could be quite base and very, very vulgar, with swearing. Others could be denigrating ... They pick up these words and then a tune would be evolved, would be developed, and it would be picked up, until it ‘sets’ (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

An initial chant by a leader, regarded as most sensitive to the issue involved, verbalises the anger and concern of the community and instigates a response from the chorus. Mngoma emphasises the need for this introductory chant to be “very, very telegraphic”, expressing the emotion of the body of people in only a few words. The leader invents a tune and choreography by which to express the communication, and this is developed, embellished and contributed to by the company until it ‘gels’ into a set form which is recognisable at a future date.

Muller (*writer's interview: 2/2/95*) concurs with Mngoma’s deduction that

in African music-making, the capacity to initiate music activity correlates very closely with the leadership potential of the individual ... The ones in the group that are stronger in character, will invent much more effective themes, either melodically or rhythmically, and this is likely to influence others, who’ll want to imitate it and identify with the supporters (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

3.3.2 Brass Bands

A phenomenon introduced to this country by German missionaries, the marching brass band first captured the imagination of Pedi and Tswana communities in the then Transvaal province, probably since it represented a relatively easy transition from their traditional reed-flute ensembles. Coplan maintains that the Tswana people, dispersed by war, had effectively been deprived of national power and were enticed to Christianity more by the prospect of missionary protection than by religious convictions (*Coplan 1985:83*). Tswana marching brass bands attached to missionary establishments became a regular feature in the Transvaal.

During the late nineteenth century, brass bands were established in every region of the country (*Ballantine 1991A:137; 1993:30; Coplan 1982A:368*). These held significant appeal and were soon imitated by separatist churches, where new ceremonial dances evolved from elements of western military drill and traditional dances.

Soon brass bands were absorbed into secular life, offering performance opportunities for musicians outside the church. Here a genre inspired by the current practices of the separatist churches was created in which traditional African polyphony and ornamentation blended with urban rhythms and predominantly European marches and songs.

Ballantine states that tribal-affiliated brass bands, wearing uniforms “sponsored by traditional chiefs”, appeared in the Transvaal in the 1880s. The growth of locations in the cities resulted in “proletarian” brass bands losing their tribal identity: Modikwe’s Band and the Mokgoros Band from Bloemfontein are two examples (*Ballantine 1991A:139; 1993:30*). Some of these ‘proletarian’ bands were seconded to the vaudeville stage.

This tendency to merge diverse musical influences into new, innovative forms of distinctly black music was one which was to set the course for the future development of black urban popular music.

3.4 POPULAR VOCAL MUSIC FROM MINSTRELSY UP TO ISICATHAMIYA

The history of urban black South African music is signposted by popular music influences from America. The first significant American musical contribution to this country’s popular music idiom can be pinpointed as the visits of the first American minstrel troupes to South Africa.

3.4.1 Minstrels

This idiom (*i.e. vaudeville*) was already so close to the Cape coloured syncretic style (coming as it did from similar roots), that the songs of Louisiana and Stephen Foster were a familiar sound ideal to the Western Cape, and the spirituals were a stone’s throw away from the Afro-Christian hymns of South Africa (*Gibson et al 1992:246*).

It would appear that ‘black-face’ white minstrel troupes performed in Cape Town as early as 1848, followed by more of the same in the 1860s. These were followed by black American groups, with whom local black audiences felt obvious rapport, and there is evidence of local imitation in the form of at least one African minstrel troupe performing in Durban in the 1880s (*Ballantine 1993:4; 1989:306*). Amongst other examples of American popular style, the spiritual in particular was a genre gleaned from the minstrels whose direct as well as indirect influence was profoundly felt in developing urban music for decades. Possibly because of aspirations to attain the “civilised” status as exemplified by black minstrel musicians themselves, or possibly because of a perceived relevance in the lyrics which articulated the suffering and longing for freedom of the blacks on this continent, the spiritual was eagerly embraced by South African blacks:

The spirituals provide the first example of black music as a music of survival: It has provided as a cultural form a means of survival, “a secret language of solidarity, a way of articulating oppression, a means of cultural resistance, a cry of hope” (*Pratt 1990:50*).

In the 1890s minstrel troupes singing spirituals became known as ‘jubilee’ singers. The troupe to achieve the most fame and exert the most influence on developing popular styles was Orpheus McAdoo’s Virginia Jubilee Singers, who toured the country several times between 1890 and 1898. The development of one such style to be affected was to play a major role in urban popular music and later became known as *isicathamiya*:

McAdoo’s visits became so deeply ingrained in popular consciousness as a turning point in black South African musical history that Thembinkose Phewa, member of the legendary Evening Birds under Edwin Mkhize, declared: “Our oldest brothers, the first to sing *isicathaniya*, were the Jubilee Brothers. That was in 1891” (*Erlmann 1991:159*).

Another important popular genre influenced by the minstrels was vaudeville, where obviously the concept of a “show” consisting of various acts was of direct influence, while the all-important ‘coon’ songs, which were often indistinguishable from ragtime (*Ballantine 1991A:130; 1993:18*), had tremendous impact.

Erlmann highlights a most important legacy of the minstrel theatre in terms of laying the foundations for the spirit and ethos of later developments in black South African music, both in terms of black pride and of gaining white approval:

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*).

3.4.2 The Contributions of Reuben Caluza

A leading innovator in the swell of cultural re-assertion - and pioneer of the mindset which Ballantine refers to as the “Liberal View” (*Ballantine 1991B:130; 1993:40*) - was Reuben Caluza. A graduate of and later teacher at Ohlange, he was influenced initially by the minstrel shows and later by American popular music in general, focussing and articulating black South Africans’ infatuation with that continent which was to last for decades.

Rofes Dhlomo said that “not only will Caluza triumph, but (so will) every blackman”. Caluza’s songs inspired him to write:

The progressive Native,
See how he progresses;
Oppressed and shunned by others;
He rejoices in the fact - that this is the land
For which his sires died - so he
Aspires! Aspires! Aspires! (*Couzens 1985:56*).

Fanning the flames of emerging African nationalism in general and Zulu nationalism in particular, Caluza contributed to the development of western-style choral singing by his arrangements of traditional Zulu songs, hitherto taboo with educated composers. Perhaps of even greater significance in the long-term were Caluza's innovations in combining traditional African and popular American elements to produce a novel, syncretic style in which the image of the black man as a sophisticated urbanite with a unique and proud culture, engendered self-respect.

One style which germinated from Caluza's work and which illustrates this feature, was known as *isikhunzi* (coons). Regarded as one of two important forerunners of *isicathamiya*, a major genre which is popular to this day, Caluza characterised *isikhunzi* as a unique combination of Zulu song, usually in four parts, synchronised dance steps and actions and piano ragtime (*Erlmann 1991:159,32; Coplan 1985:72,73*).

Caluza was exposed to one of the first and most brutal manifestations of black oppression. The passing of the Land Act of 1913 resulted in the confiscation of land from countless black landowners as well as squatters for whom such expropriation represented the deprivation of “their rural base of subsistence”. Opposition to the proposed measures led to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANN) in 1912, later to be called the African National Congress (ANC).

Caluza was “sensitive to any injustice”, but a-political to the extent that he did not join the ANC or view “the articulation of popular protest as a form of organized political response”. Erlmann describes the “spiritual source” of his essentially black nationalist songs which “solemnly underscored black demands for freedom and justice” (*Erlmann 1991:123*) as a “blend of moderate nationalism with a moral, Christian viewpoint”. Songs such as “Silusapho Lwase Afrika” (which became the anthem of the SANN in 1913), “Vulindhlela Mtaka Dube” (“Pave the Way, Dube”), “Bashuka Ndabazini” (“What is Congress Saying?”) and “Yekan’Umona Nenzondo” (“Don’t be Jealous”) are technically indebted to choir composers like John K. Bokwe and Enoch Sontonga (composer of “Nkosi Sikele iAfrika” which in 1919 replaced Caluza’s work as official anthem of the ANC) (*Erlmann 1991:119,120*).

As choirmaster of the Ohlange Choir at Ohlange Institute which he joined in 1915, the practice of annual tours of Natal and Johannesburg, “... an unusual, high-profile, and almost political enterprise that ran numerous risks”, begun a few years earlier in order to raise funds, was continued (*Erlmann 1991:121*). It was within the medium of these choir compositions that one of Caluza’s paramount contributions, significant both in terms of its musical and social function to the genre of urban popular music, emerged: namely, *iRagtime*. The syncopated melodies of this style, which together with *isiZulu* (traditional Zulu genres - *Erlmann 1991:71*) and *imusic* (Western, mainly European, music and hymns - *Erlmann 1991:59*), became recognised categories of black urban performance, proved more compatible to the transposition of Zulu speech patterns than had the “*makwaya* of the mission-educated elite” (*Erlmann 1991:121,123*).

Caluza developed the existing mission school-inspired Zulu practice of *ukutamba* (“action song”). This term essentially denoted singing accompanied by synchronised movements which had earned missionary approval and were both similar to and could be combined with British school action songs (*Coplan 1985:72/73*). Movements imitated from minstrel and ragtime shows and known as *ukureka*

(“to play ragtime music, engage in movement during music of African songs”) were added to this genre, transforming it “into a professional African musical variety tradition that smoothly integrated Zulu song, piano ragtime, and interpretive, synchronised step dancing” (*Coplan* 1985:73).

Erlmann maintains that Caluza “revolutionized the entire concert and stage practice of Natal’s black middle class” by

- the introduction of *urureka*;
- his insistence on the polished and accurate execution of movements;
- the use of stage costumes and “the ‘dramatization’ of his songs”; and
- the use of humour or comedy (existing in Zulu urban genres such as *ukukomika*) (*Erlmann* 1991:139 140,141).

However, the importance of Caluza as a landmark figure in the overall development of urban music is underlined by the fact that his work also appealed to and influenced those outside the confines of the educated middle-class (*Coplan* 1985:78). This reinforces the theory expressed earlier that distinctive musics did not develop to the absolute exclusion of certain classes. His innovative performances “made ragtime respectable and elite choral music popular”, influencing the composition of both genres within the South African urban context (*Coplan* 1979:139):

the tours ... provided cultural models able to satisfy the needs of the entire spectrum of black society by expressing an overarching black identity. Unlike mission-type concerts of *imusic*, Caluza’s shows attracted audiences made up of “all classes, from everywhere”. Over the years the concerts developed into one of the earliest-known forms of variety show for blacks that combined brass band performances, *imusic*, sketches, dress competitions, and more unusual attractions such as ballroom dancing, film shows, traditional drum-and-reed-flute ensembles, *isicathulo*, and back-to-back dances (*Erlmann* 1991:122).

To at least a degree providing the germs of Ballantine's theories regarding jazz and its links to oppositional politics (*Ballantine* 1993:8,39-62; 1989:308/309; 1991B:129-152), Erlmann states that

The reception of Caluza’s music ... demonstrates how “ragtime” songs blended with the cultural symbols fostered within the emerging black nationalist movements in South Africa. Rather than thought of as derogatory

and racially biased, syncopated music was seen by many South African blacks as an expression of racial pride (*Erlmann 1991:126*).

Hand in hand with the creation of the symbolism of “ragtime” as the expression of black nationalist and “antiwhite” sentiments, Caluza’s work articulated and reflected the dilemma of the black elite, who, in Durban as elsewhere in the country, were “caught between a self-conscious urbanism and rural nostalgia, and hemmed in between white hegemony and black popular opposition” (*Erlmann 1991:127*). Caluza’s work can be said to have emanated from, and to a degree reflected, the anomalous phenomenon evident amongst Natal Christian elite: the emerging African nationalism manifested by this stratum exposed “a strong admixture of Zulu ethnic pride”. Their Christianity was a source of alienation from traditional communities

... and they played an active role in the Natal Native Contingent in the British destruction of the Zulu state in 1879, and most of them were of Nguni clans not strictly part of the Zulu empire. Nevertheless, Natal Christians identified with the glory of the Zulu past. They referred to themselves as Zulu and attempted to create a national culture based on an adaptive blend of Zulu, Afro-American, and European elements (*Coplan 1985:70*).

Furthermore, Caluza’s lyrics revealed his own ambivalence “toward the value systems and cultural formations” evident in urbanising black society (*Erlmann 1991:127,135*). His ideology vis-à-vis traditional or rural customs and practices is described as “janus-faced”: one which “could be read and instrumentalized for quite diverse interests”. To whites, threatened by the cultural symbols of black urbanisation, those reflecting traditionalism or “rural harmony” represented an affirmation of white superiority and cultural hegemony. To black elite leaders, traditional symbols “were used to legitimize and mystify their class position” (*Erlmann 1991:135*). “Clearly, in Caluza’s mind there was no contradiction between loyalty to the hereditary leaders of the Zulu, the continuity and legitimacy of traditional customs in a modern industrial state, and the search for a secure position *as middle class* in that society” (*Erlmann 1991:136*).

3.5 ISICATHAMIYA

Isicathamiya, described by Ballantine as “arguably the most important purely vocal style to have emerged in South Africa this century” (*Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307*) (in the 1989 publication the term *mbube* is used) exists today as an extremely popular and characteristic component of the body of South

African urban popular music. The genre was given unprecedented international exposure by Paul Simon's *Graceland* album, on which South Africa's unquestionably most famous modern *isicathamiya* group, **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, was featured.

Kivnick alludes to the fact that the style has been called various names over the course of its development: "... *mbube* (lion), *ingomabusuku* (sic) (night song) *cothozamfana* (walk steadily, boys) or *isicathamiya* (to walk stealthily or on one's toes)" (*Kivnick 1990:114*).

Stapleton & May refer to the style as "*ingoma ebusuku*" and appear to confuse the style with that of western-style choral singing (see reference to *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* - *Stapleton & May 1987:191*). Coplan, who states that "Since the Second World War ... *isicatamiya* (sic) is performed almost exclusively by people who may be considered urban, but not Western, in culture" (*Coplan 1985:67*), uses the terms *ingom'ebusuku* ("Zulu: 'night music'") and *isicatamiya* (sic) ("Zulu: 'a stalking approach'") (*Coplan 1985:65*) interchangeably. However, a somewhat confusing account of the development suggests that the change from *ingom'ebusuku* to "*isicatamiya*" (sic) could have marked the assimilation of *ukureka* (ragtime) (*Coplan 1985:66*). Musicians Donald Tshomela and Louis Radebe Peterson assert that the terms are perceived as synonymous today - (*Tshomela - writer's interview: 17/10/94; Radebe Petersen – writer's interview: 17/10/94*). With no allusion to earlier names, Erlmann simply refers to the genre as *isicathamiya*, while *mbube* (or *imbube*) is classified as "the first genuine *isicathamiya* style" (*Erlmann 1991:165*).

While Erlmann provides the perspective of the genre's roots as being "only one set of symbols among many heterogeneous cultural resources available to migrants" (*Erlmann 1990:201*), Ballantine describes the style, which was developed by Zulu migrants in the early 1930s and which has "hymnodial roots" (*Erlmann 1991:53,56*), as "an extraordinary performance style, vibrantly alive with echoes of American minstrelsy, spirituals, missionary hymnody, Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood tap dance ... as well as Zulu traditional idioms" (*Ballantine 1993:4/5; 1989:306*).

The unique, resonant and characteristic sound aesthetic of "overlapping antiphonal harmonies in distinct ranges ... sung in medium to slow tempi" (*Manuel 1988:109*) produced by the male a cappella men's voices has reverberated through the decades. It captures the distinctive, peculiar expression of the ethos, the feeling world - with all its pathos, joys, contradictions, insecurities, challenges and

passions - of the Zulu migrant worker. Suspended in a “strangely oscillating experience” (*Erlmann 1990:203*) between two worlds, these migrants appropriated a cultural space in which to communicate on the one hand and define on the other, their unique identity.

In the most detailed account of the evolution of the style available, Veit Erlmann’s article entitled “Migration and Performance: Zulu Migrant Workers’ *Isicathamiya* Performance in South Africa, 1890-1950” corrects the more simplistic perception of the process which is gained from Coplan (*Coplan 1985:65,66*) and more so, Kivnick (*Kivnick 1990:119-121,225*).

Ultimately, a picture of a tradition emerges that is characterized by a deep-reaching articulation of urban and rural cultural elements. This characterization entails the simultaneous existence of very different orders of meaning and of communicative channels that are not necessarily expressions of and do not transmit one view of the world alone. Zulu-speaking migrant performers do not perceive themselves as puppets entangled in the strings of a “dual” economy of some sort. Nor do they portray themselves as wanting to assimilate completely to the urban lifestyle. Rather than being a strategy of urban adaptation, the osmosis in migrant performance genres such as *isicathamiya* is a result of the increasing articulation of South African black migrants’ heterogeneous worlds (*Erlmann 1990:202*).

According to Coplan, traditional *ingoma* dances were transformed by secular urban innovators, most notably *amagxagxa* (“vagrants”) who, in an analogous predicament to the Xhosa *abaphakathi* discussed earlier, found themselves conforming to the social and moral norms of neither the Christian nor traditional groups. *Ukureka*, “Caluza’s skillful combination of dance, action, and Zulu topical lyrics”, is recognized as cardinal to the development of *isicathamiya* (*Erlmann 1991:159; Coplan 1985:65*).

Erlmann highlights the “osmosis” of rural and urban elements in the development of *isicathamiya*. Rural material was influenced by the urban environment and transported back to a rural setting where this new influence was reabsorbed and reworked with a rural flavour, before the process began again (*Erlmann 1991:158,157*).

... rural and urban performance practices were modalities of the same culture that had begun to permeate the whole society. Rural cultural practices not only depended for their survival, evolution, and functionality on the feedback from the cities, in certain areas and during specific historical periods they were even inseparably enmeshed with urban culture (*Erlmann 1990:200*).

The participation of migrant workers in *isicathamiya* performance rather than soccer, disco dancing, and other such solidly urban cultural activities and the choices different groups of migrant performers make about dress, dance, and vocal style in *isicathamiya* do not allow us to determine criteria of successful urban adaptation, to

“tell the migrant worker who is urbanizing from the one who is not” (*Erlmann 1991:157; see Coplan 1982B:114*).

Erlmann attributes the first “urban” source and prehistory of *isicathamiya* to the second half of the 19th century when the impact of the American minstrel shows was felt by the black South African community. In particular in the 1890s the effect of the visits of Orpheus McAdoo’s Minstrel, Vaudeville and Concert Company were to become “deeply ingrained in popular consciousness as a turning point in black South African musical history” (*Erlmann 1990:203; 1991:159*).

Erlmann observes that the South African minstrel troupes formed in imitation of McAdoo and other white South African blackface troupes were not exclusively from an educated urban middle - or “intermediate” - class, but sources included rural mission stations as well as mining compounds. However, the style which came to be known as *isikhunzi* is credited as the earliest prototype of *isicathamiya*. The image of the sophisticated “coon” and “its corresponding musical style” merged in the minds of the migrant audience (*Erlmann 1991:159*). It is described as a

... distinctly urban, middle class style, whose proponents were regarded by working-class audiences and performers such as T. Phewa ‘as a better group, as a different breed, a class of their own’ (*Erlmann 1990:204*).

Inspired by positive images of the slick and sophisticated city dweller - the “coon”, as portrayed in the shows of Caluza’s Ohlange Choir - the characteristics of *isikhunzi* included:

- “low-intensity and low-range idiom in four-part harmony” (*Erlmann 1990:201*);
- westernised balancing of parts;
- westernised open voice quality.

Isikhunzi infiltrated rural performance practice as a result of the influence of returning migrants. *Ingoma* dance and song, by inference affected by the new urban style, emerged as the second source of *isicathamiya*. *Isishameni*, an *ingoma* dance, was adapted from the *umqonqo* dance by Johannesburg timber worker, **Jubele Dubazana**, who combined the “upright body posture” of this dance “with raised hands and kicking, stamping leg movements” (*Erlmann 1991:160*). The elements of *isishameni*

dancing retained in *isicathamiya* are negligible. However, the significance of the style as a developmental landmark is evident in the extent to which it was remodelled in terms of “terminological shifts of performance roles and internal group organization” so as to reflect “the realities of industrial labor and urban living”:

- *isicathamiya* choirs are often referred to as “teams”, by contrast *ingoma* dance groups are known as *isipani* (“oxen plough spans”);
- early *isicathamiya* teams often appropriated names that were popular with soccer teams or criminal gangs;
- *isicathamiya* choirs refer to the lead part as the “*khontrola*” (“controller”) (as opposed to the *ingoma* “*ifolosi*” or “lead oxen”); and the voice parts are labelled by “anglicized names such as *bes* (bass), *thena* (tenor), *altha* (alto), and *soprano* or *fas pathi* (first part)” (*Erlmann 1991:160/161*).

Adding to the rural-urban mêlée from which early *isicathamiya* emerged, modern *ingoma* performers such as Jubele created a new style of song by fusing traditional vocal styles with *izingoma zomtshado* wedding songs. These were themselves products of fusion with Western hymns and urban musical practices and, by the 1920s, the choreography was highly influenced by Caluza’s “ragtime” movements (*Coplan 1985:65*). (This same influence is strongly evident in the slow “*ukureka*” (ragtime) steps that are performed to this day at *isicathamiya* competitions as choirs file into the hall in rows from the door.)

The characteristic feature which distinguished early *isicathamiya* from the similar styles of *ingoma* dance and wedding songs was the western concept of strict allocation and control of voice parts in four-part harmony (*Erlmann 1991:161,162*). Coplan infers that *ukukomika*, a “form of self-parody and dance humour”, was a precursor to and component of *isicathamiya* (*Coplan 1985:65*). While this is quite feasible, since *ukukomika* is classified by Erlmann as an *ingoma* dance (*Erlmann 1991:100/101,141*), and “comic” and “laughing” songs were “staple items” in both black school and mission concerts (*Erlmann 1991:141*), this element is not specifically referred to by Erlmann in his detailed account of *isicathamiya*’s development (*Erlmann 1991:156-174*).

The pioneers of *isicathamiya* groups were the **Crocodiles** - led by Lutheran preacher and farmer **Mzobe**, the **Durban Evening Birds** under the leadership of **Edwin “Siqokomo” Mkhize** (not to be confused with his namesake to be discussed later in this section), and a group called **Amanzimtoti**, the details of which remain elusive because of conflicting reports. Their repertoire varied “indiscriminately” from material which could be classified as *isikhunzi* to traditional or modern *izingoma zomtshado* wedding songs, folk tunes and hymns (*Erlmann 1990:209*).

The history of *isicathamiya* was significantly influenced by the contribution of **Solomon Linda’s Evening Birds** (not to be confused with the earlier group of the same name which had been led by his uncles Solomon and Amon Madondo and in which Linda had participated). Of particular significance is their innovative and landmark hit, “*Mbube*” (Lion). *Imbube* (or *mbube*), subsequently became the name synonymous with the modern *isicathamiya* style whose emergence this song heralded. This viewpoint is supported by Coplan: “Urbanized styles of choral music sung by non-westernized Zulu migrants was recorded, both in the more traditional (but not rural) *bombing* mode, and in the more westernized *mbube* form made famous by Solomon Linda” (*Coplan 1979:144*).

Innovations introduced by Linda in “*Mbube*” were to become distinctive features of the new *isicathamiya*:

- In a return to traditional ceremonial performance practice, Solomon abandoned the *isikhunzi* practice of one singer per voice part and strengthened the bass part by two additional singers. While early *isicathamiya* groups usually consisted of between six and eight singers, this principle of predominant bass voices continued even after much larger groups became the norm in the 1950s.
- The I IV I6/4 V7 ostinato harmonic pattern (already being used by western genres of urban popular music) became the standard characteristic of all *mbube* music and the link between *isicathamiya* and these other genres “because it formed one of the lowest common denominators of all early urban African music regardless of class origin and specific ideological functions” (*Erlmann 1990:212*).
- An extra-musical innovation introduced in 1938 was that Linda’s Evening Birds became the first group to wear uniforms in the form of striped suits:

To interpret Linda's innovations, however, as indications of a clear shift toward an adaptation to urban values and life style, is to misunderstand the "space" in which migrants such as Linda's Evening Birds developed and pursued strategies of survival that made use of the best of both worlds, the urban and the rural (*Erlmann 1990:213*).

Erlmann expounds on "the difficulty of determining a class basis of African cultural studies" and reiterates and endorses Middleton's assertion that "musical forms and practices stand in a problematical relation to class forces" (*Middleton 1985:30; Erlmann 1991:4*).

Concurring with Coplan, who states that "*Ingom'ebusuku* participants at first included people of varying degrees of urbanisation and Westernisation, and the style itself could be varied accordingly" (*Coplan 1985:67*), Erlmann stresses that in the late 1920s and early 1930s specific *isicathamiya* styles were not the exclusive domain of specific classes: Groups whose members came from a certain stratum in black society did not exclusively appropriate specific styles: a choir such as Amanzimtoti who were regarded as a working-class group also performed (albeit "occasionally") Western-inspired *imusic*, *isikhunzi* or *iRagtime*, while mission-educated musicians included *isiZulu* in their performances (*Erlmann 1991:164*). Erlmann strenuously eschews the blatantly unequivocal stance of Coplan who maintains that *isicathamiya* is "a form of working-class choral music" (*Coplan 1985:134*). "Since the Second World War social sectors and categories have hardened, and *isicatamiya* is performed almost exclusively by people who may be considered urban, but not Western, in culture" (*Coplan 1985:67*).

However, the emergence of "*imbube*" in the mid-1930s as "the first genuine *isicathamiya* style" is presented "against this background":

... it was not until the consolidation and expansion of the country's manufacturing industry in the mid-1930s that working-class formation reached a stage where it produced the cultural forms, the dance clubs, trade unions, sports organizations, and musical performance practices that form the bedrock of present-day working-class culture in South Africa (*Erlmann 1991:165*).

Isicathamiya competitions again represent a fusion of two sources of inspiration: the already-established urban middle-class practice of school concerts, and the rural practice of *ingoma* dance competitions (*Erlmann 1990:214*). Whereas *ingoma* was characterised by strong, virile fighting movements, *isicathamiya* footwork was by contrast 'subtle' or 'stealthy' and almost silent. Groups such as the **Evening Birds** preferred the slow step-by-step movements; **Isaac Mzobe's Crocodiles**

introduced a version of fast, synchronised, “fidgeting” tap dancing known as *istep*, possibly inspired by tap dance troupes or American movie stars (*Erlmann 1990: 216*).

Models other than the above which served as inspiration of the ideal African were initiated by rural missions and it is to these that Erlmann credits the rise of the other predominant style of *isicathamiya*, namely, *isikwela jo*. This was pioneered in Natal and transported to Johannesburg where it first became known as *isikambula* (gambling). The title “*isikwela jo*” (“attack, Jo!”) alludes to the cues given by the lead singer to provoke the high-pitched, yelling sounds that are distinctive of the style. During the war the style was renamed *mbombing* (bombing) because of obvious comparisons to the sound of exploding bombs. Inspired by the immobility of church choirs, all dancing was banished from *isikwela jo* competitions.

An important development in *isicathamiya* practice to emerge in the 1930s was the association between *isicathamiya* groups and the African labour movement. The affiliation of the **Alexandrians** under the leadership of **Mkatshwa** with the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU), signalled a significant and what was to become distinctive aspect of *isicathamiya*, namely its linkages with and perception as a musical medium for protest in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Erlmann states that after 1930, the Natal branch of this organisation, the ICU Yase Natal “had ceased to exist as a political force of any importance in Durban’s black popular resistance”. Thereafter, “for more than a decade the union club played an important role in the construction of a politically conscious, popular cultural alliance in Durban” (*Erlmann 1991:87*).

Erlmann isolates another important function of groups such as the Alexandrians and the Evening Birds. The ICU had come to be perceived as a middle-class organisation propagating black nationalist rhetoric. *Isicathamiya* groups played the role of social brokers, helping to bridge the ideological gap between proletarian migrants and ICU middle-class members by playing both the rural songs of the former and nationalist hymns of the latter. An example of “this peculiar aesthetic marriage” is the Evening Birds’ “Mayibuye Afrika” (“Come back Africa”) (*Erlmann 1990: 215*):

The use of new songs in *ingom’ebusuku* style represents a significant manipulation of ‘traditional’ African culture for purposes of positive self-identification and unity in a modern political context. Gramophone recordings of these songs helped to widen their distribution among Africans (*Coplan 1985:135*).

3.6 MASKANDA

The most famous modern-day protagonists of *maskanda* style, or at least derivatives of the style, are **Johnny Clegg** (together with his band, **Savuka**), and **Phuzhushukela**.

An essentially indigenous street music style developing alongside first *marabi* and then jazz, elements of *maskanda* (particularly guitar) style appear to have crept surreptitiously into the commercial *mbaqanga* of the 1960s without, it would appear, even the knowledge of certain of its chief proponents. West Nkosi, erstwhile saxophonist for Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, claims that *maskanda* has “nothing to do with *mbaqanga*” (*Nkosi - writer's interview: 14/11/94*). Neither Nowotny nor Hamm, in their specialist papers on *mbaqanga* (Nowotny’s being the only attempt at a stylistic analysis of Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga*), make any reference to the contribution of *maskanda* guitar style (*Nowotny 1993 (unpublished); Hamm 1985*). Andersson confines her obvious but unnamed reference to the style to her description of the development of **Juluka**, Johnny Clegg’s first band (*Andersson 1981:161/162*). Stapleton & May (*1987*), Bender (*1991*) and Roberts (*1972*) make no mention of *maskanda* or its contribution to the development of syncretic styles.

Marks Mankwane, lead guitarist and composer of note in the foremost and definitive model of 1960s commercial *mbaqanga*, **Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens**, acknowledges the influence of the style as a distinctive component of his playing (*Mankwane - writer's interview: 17/10/94*).

Derived from the Afrikaans word ‘musikant’, *maskanda* (Mthethwa spells the word *maskanda*, Clegg and Coplan use the z - see *Clegg 1980:2; Coplan 1985:186*) is the umbrella term used to describe the playing of essentially Zulu indigenous musical forms, in what was initially predominantly “self-accompanied solo style”, using Western instrumentation (*Rycroft 1977:221,216; Mthethwa 1980:24; Coplan 1985:186*). The most commonly adopted Western instruments were those that were readily and cheaply available at trade stores (or mine shops, “so-called Jew shops” - *Clegg 1980:2*) and included the guitar, violin, harmonica, auto-harp, jew’s harp and concertina. Rycroft speculates that “it would seem likely” that missionaries neither played nor encouraged the playing of these instruments (*Rycroft 1977:219*). However, Clegg notes that the concertina, initially referred to as “*izibambo zika Satan*” (“Satan’s handles”), was finally incorporated into traditional culture and associated with *umnumzana* (a homeowner, a person of substance), who would “sit down at the end of a week’s

labour, call his children together and play the concertina for them". The guitar, by comparison, associated as it was with "*isidolopho*, township values and traditions", was "incontrovertibly bad" and shunned by both traditionalists and Christians (*Clegg 1980:6*).

In addition, home-made replicas of the western guitar (one example of which, encountered by Rycroft in southern Natal, was referred to as *igqongwe*) and variants or derivatives of the violin (e.g. the Mpondo *isigankuri* and the Swazi *sikhelekehle*) (*Rycroft 1977:234,243*) can be regarded as media of the style since the instruments are Western-inspired rather than indigenous. Sipho Mchunu, who together with Johnny Clegg formed the band **Juluka**, reputedly learnt to play Zulu guitar style on a home-made "petrol-container" tin guitar prototype (*Andersson 1981:160*).

Clegg maintains that "even some of the more developed styles of *mbaqanga* playing have their roots in an indigenous acoustic musical guitar tradition" (*Clegg 1980:7*). Since the guitar and concertina are the two instruments of the commercially-available variety which have the most exposure in and can therefore be said to have contributed to present-day urban popular forms, their role in the development of the *maskanda* tradition will be briefly examined.

Davies maintains that *maskanda* "... is strongly rooted in indigenous Zulu music. The fact that Western instruments are used to perform the music is of little consequence to the musicians in that they seem to regard these as 'indigenous' instruments" (*Davies 1992: 35*).

Rycroft notes that Western instruments were virtually never adopted by women, whether rural or urban. Their use by "sophisticated townsmen" in urban idioms which obviously incorporated Western musical elements is a "relatively recent phenomenon" (*Rycroft 1977:218*). It would appear that the practice of making indigenous music on Western instruments goes back further in history, with suggestions that the guitar was introduced to the Zulus by the Portuguese explorers in approximately 1880 (*Clegg 1980:3*). However, certain characteristic features of the *amagxagxa* (see below) proletarian musicians developed in the period of - and as a result of - the urbanisation and acculturation experiences of Zulu migrant workers in the (then) Natal (as opposed to Kwazulu) area from about the 1920s onwards (*Clegg 1980:3; Coplan 1985:186*).

These proletarian styles constituted what became known as the *gxagxa* tradition. *Amagxagxa* (according to Vilakazi, a synonym used in the 1920s was *abaqhafi* - Rycroft 1977:221) is the derogatory classification for the Zulu in an analogous predicament to the *abaphakathi* discussed earlier, whose status falls between the *Amabhinca* (“fervent” traditionalists) and the *Amakholwa* (Christians; the term is used by Erlmann to refer to mission-educated elite - see Erlmann 1991:60) (Clegg 1980:2). Described by Rycroft as those who are “outside the sphere of mission influence” but remain “attached to indigenous Zulu culture” (Rycroft 1977:219), the adoption of the instrumentation of the West and the musical forms of the traditionalists is one of the indications of their intermediate or transitional societal position, “problematically situated” between the *Amabhinca* and the *Amakholwa* (Clegg 1980:2):

They are young men whose roots are in the country, who came to town as temporary manual workers. They seek to emulate Western customs to a certain extent in order to dissociate themselves from the “backwoods traditionalists” they have left behind in the country. Yet, lacking education, they do not fit into sophisticated African town life, and consequently occupy the lowest social and economic strata in town society (Rycroft 1977:221/222).

The primary musical resource for these proletarian migrants was the song repertoire of the young rural girls which was played on the *umakhweyana* bow (this instrument was the inspiration of Zulu guitarists, in particular) the *umhhube* mouth bow, the *isitolotolo* jew’s harp and the *imflishi* mouth organ (which was of specific importance in the development of concertina styles). Associated with *ukuhlaza* (“greenness, rawness, uncouthness”), the period of a girl’s virginity when she is known as a *tshitshi*, the lyrics reflected the rural, idyllic wishes of the young women as well as proverbs and proverbial sayings and traditional war songs (Clegg 1980:2,5,7).

Clegg refers to the tradition of young men playing these instruments as one which was developed slowly by *ubusoka* (handsome young “fops” known for their “courtship craft”) in the Msinga area of Weenen, Colenso, Estcourt and Ladysmith. According to Clegg, the Zulu in this area have historically occupied an “interstitial” position in Zulu culture, seeing themselves as both “apart from the Zulus and apart from the English”. While this reference is somewhat confusing and unexplained in the context of his paper, their importance to the development of the *maskanda* tradition would appear to lie in their credo of “*Sa 'bantu basesihlungwini*” (“We are the people from the white man’s farms”) which engendered a type of ‘anti-establishment’ mindset which Clegg epitomizes by the words: “We have developed our own tradition, we have confronted problems which *abantu bomdabu*, the original

people in Kwazulu have not confronted - we have our own world view" (*Clegg 1980:3,2*). According to Clegg, the people (farm labourers and presumably also migrant workers in Durban) from this area are responsible for the development of a unique concertina form called *Isichumu*, two original forms of dance and a style of singing linked to *Isishameni* dancing (*Clegg 1980:3*). (However, the development of the Zulu guitar style is described later as directly related to the "woman's musical tradition, from the *umakhweyana* bow" (own emphasis), developing, in the hands of migrants and using the Western guitar, into a "very masculine musical tradition" (*Clegg 1980:5*.)

Besides the mine compounds, the "initial breeding ground" of guitar and concertina music was the municipal compounds of eastern Durban. The first concertinas were imported from Germany, followed by Italian products which were marketed under the label "Bastari", a name which was assimilated into the Zulu vocabulary as *Ibastari*. There is evidence that the Xhosa shaking dance was accompanied by the concertina in approximately the 1920s, while the development of original Zulu concertina styles was mainly concentrated in Ndwedwe (*Clegg 1980:3*).

The traditional resource pool of concertina styles is the music of the *imflitshi* mouth organ tradition as developed by young girls. One such style, in which the influence of the 'boere orkes' is also evident, is *Isichumu*, developed by the Chunus in the Msinga area. In Zulu concertina playing, the left hand button-playing forms the bass part, the right hand, the melody. Whereas in *isichumu* style the bass took the form of "some vague shaping of chords", in *umzansi* style, from Ndwedwe, Durban and southern parts of Natal, the guitar influence becomes evident. Like the thumb-playing bass part on the guitar, individual notes are now played by the left hand as traditional songs are interpreted on the concertina in what must obviously be a more polyphonic style. Earlier, Clegg mentions that the people of Ndwedwe developed a unique style of playing which involved innovations such as the introduction of the pentatonic scale, and necessitating the dismantling of the instrument and changing the buttons in order to accommodate the special techniques of playing. Whereas the style related to these adaptations is not named, it would appear that these innovations would be more related to the *umzansi* rather than the *isichumu* style. The "creative progressions" - from one melody structure or scale to another, perhaps even involving a change of rhythm - of the accomplished concertina player, like that of the guitarist, should occur smoothly and "insiduously" (sic). In many instances the songs are played while walking, and these progressions should occur without the player altering pace. In concertina street

competitions, the same categories or criteria for judgement as those used in guitar competitions are applied (see below) (*Clegg 1980:6,7*).

Rycroft states that the Western guitar “has adopted almost exactly the functional role previously fulfilled by the *umakhweyana* gourd-bow” (*Rycroft 1977:228*). Zulu guitar material is classifiable by three “levels of projection” or “development”, in which the role of the guitar in terms of assuming the function(s) of other participants in traditional Zulu music-making situations is analysed. At the first level, the guitar, like the gourd-bow (either the unbraced *ugubhu* or *umakhweyana* referred to above) simulates the part of the chorus only, as related to that of the solo part of the singer, whose leading phrases enter at varying starting points. At the second level, the role of the guitar is polyphonic: while a lower ostinato phrase functions as the chorus part, an upper melody line is played in unison with, or sometimes replaces, the voice of the singer. At the third level the bass ostinato is again found below an upper melody line. However, in this instance the melody line both reinforces the solo voice part and to some degree provides independent, antiphonal phrases, which often begin where the singer’s leading phrases end (*Rycroft 1977: 230,233/234,225*).

Clegg, on the other hand, describes the earliest technique of *maskanda* guitar style as *ukuvamba*, which basically refers to strumming (*Clegg 1980:3*). Coplan maintains that in the 1940s *ukuvamba* was disseminated to Southern Rhodesia by two Ndebele singers from Bulawayo, George Sibanda and Josaya Hadebe (*Coplan 1985:186*). Davies asserts that *ukuvamba* was the most common technique used in guitar playing until the 1950s and even extending into the 1960s.

Influenced by Hadebe, a young Zulu guitarist by the name of **John Bhengu** appeared in Durban in the late 1940s. Under the stage name of **Phuzhushukela**, he (aided by producers Cuthbert Matumba and particularly H. V. Nzimande) was to be responsible for the popularisation and wide dissemination of the *maskanda* guitar style in an urban, commercial idiom (*Coplan 1985:187*). According to Davies, Phuzhushukela is regarded by many as the best exponent of Zulu guitar music (*Davies 1992:40*). Phuzhushukela claims to be the first musician to introduce the *ukupika* ‘picking’ style of guitar playing which involved the retuning of the guitar (the top string of the guitar was brought down a tone from E to D, in unison with the second D string). Clegg observes that there are “older practitioners” who maintain that they were playing in the style before the advent of Phuzhushukela’s influence. However,

Clegg credits Phuzhushukela with the development and modernisation of the *ukupika* style, which he says was probably influenced by Western folk styles:

... he is by far the person who influenced the technique the most, explored with it, worked out its limitations, took it to its furthest dimensions and, even today, he is the first person who actually thought about using electric guitars, with this particular technique, working out different parts for the bass guitar and the drums, - working out a whole rhythmic section behind it (Clegg 1980:4).

Davies maintains that *ukupika* (also called *ukuncinza*) is currently the only technique considered acceptable by *maskanda* practitioners (Davies 1992:38).

Characteristics of the early form of Zulu guitar style include:

- The music is often performed while the player is walking (Rycroft 1977:221,229).
- Diverse tuning systems and a range of individual plucking styles are used (Rycroft 1977:230).
- Different scales are used for different songs.
- Only very rarely are more than five frets used; for the greatest part of the playing, the use of only two frets is the norm.
- The first three strings of the guitar are used for the treble, the last three for the bass.
- The bass line is played by the thumb. Every beat of the basic rhythm is played in this line, which also functions as a counterpoint melody line.
- The treble is played by the fourth finger, which intersperses the melody line against the “constant thumb” of the bass.
- A lot of the song repertoire (presumably, particularly initially, before the advent of ubugaku [see below]) was drawn from the women’s umakhweyana bow tradition. The introduction of the

metaphor of stick fighting into the street music competitions helped to transform the genre into an autonomous and masculine one.

- Nostalgic lyrics were soon replaced by pertinent and political topics which affected migrant life (*Clegg 1980:5*).

A guitar style which developed in the 1940s is, according to Clegg, the precursor to *mbaqanga* music. A variant of *inkindlane*, named after its best exponent, **Inkindlane**, it is known as *isimondolini* since its sound is similar to that of a mandolin. In a reverse of the tuning necessary for *ukupika*, in this style the D string is replaced by a second E.

The Zulu guitar genre flourished in the period between 1960 and 1974 when street musicians abounded and participated in street guitar competitions. The format of street music competitions was based on, and metaphorically similar to, that of stick fighting. These competitions took place on an informal and ad hoc basis when two musicians met in the street or at a hostel or shebeen, etc. The ‘challenge’ was normally made on the behalf of one musician to another by the supporters of one of the musicians. Each guitarist’s performance was divided into three categories: *Izihlabo*, the introduction, the purpose of which was to announce the scale and the type of song which was to be played, as well as to flaunt the player’s technique (in a manner akin to brandishing their stick movements in *ukugiyia* prior to the actual fight). The performance of the song followed: whereas before 1960 this merely involved the transposition of a traditional song to the medium of guitar, *ubugaku* now became the category in which the inventiveness and originality of the playing and lyrics were judged. *Ukubonga*, the third and final section follows in which the player praises his people, his chief, the environment and area from which he comes:

You will do this rapidly, very quickly and so, in fact, you’ve got a tension being built up between appreciation of the actual music that’s going on and what is being said at the level of praise poetry. These two are, in fact, juxtaposed in a jarring way but in a way which is very pleasant and you’ve got to open your ears, again, and listen to the words, what he’s saying, appreciate the cadence, the fall, the way he structured the words as he’s saying them and at the same time, listen to the way he’s controlling the melody line. He hasn’t lost one beat as he’s doing it (*Clegg 1980:4*).

Clegg states that the songs are generally antiphonal, with the singer taking the lead part. Audience participation indicates that those listening have been “sufficiently moved” by the musician’s playing to

be motivated to contribute to the performance, and is a signal that the musician in question has won the competition (*Clegg 1980:5*).

While Coplan claims that “these competitions still take place wherever migrant Zulu musicians gather” (*Coplan 1985:187*), Clegg stated five years earlier that “The present situation is one where there has been a decline in guitar music especially - you don’t see street musicians any more” (*Clegg 1980:4*).

Until the 1960s, *maskanda* music was used mainly for self-entertainment. The enthusiastic public response with which Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga* was received in the 1960s led to Phuzushukela and his contemporaries switching from acoustic to electric guitar. In addition, instrumental backing, initially in the form of bass guitar and drums were added. Davies maintains that this transformation led to the emphasis of previously latent elements of the music – namely the inherent dance beat and the bass melody. Also influenced by dance forms, the tempo of the music gradually increased (*Davies 1992: 42/43*). In this way the trend of *maskanda* bands, so popular in KwaZulu Natal, was catalysed.

3.7 MARABI

Marabi: that was the environment! It was either organ but mostly piano. You get there, you pay your ten cents. You get your scale of whatever concoction there is, then you dance. It used to start from Friday night right through Sunday evening. You get tired, you go home, go and sleep, come back again: bob a time, each time you get in. The piano and with the audience making a lot of noise. Trying to make some theme out of what is playing (*Ballantine 1993:28/29; 1991A:136 - quoting Wilson Silgee, interviewed by Eddie Koch*).

One of the most significant landmarks in the development of urban music (*Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307*), and certainly providing the catalyst for its future direction and much of its essential flavour, an exuberant dance music known as *marabi* emerged in the 1920s as the musical vernacular of the slumyard. Symbiotically associated with *shebeens*, home of the illicit liquor trading which “became central to African working-class social and cultural as well as economic reorganization” (*Coplan 1982A:363*), and providing opportunities for the cultural expression of a new, pan-ethnic urban African identity, this propulsive, hypnotically repetitive, single-themed genre (*Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135*) represented

... more than just a musical style. As music it had a distinctive rhythm and a blend of African polyphonic principles, restructured within the framework of the Western ‘three-chord’ harmonic system. As a dance it

placed few limits on variation and interpretation by individuals or couples, though the emphasis was definitely on sexuality. As a social occasion it was a convivial, neighbourhood gathering for drinking, dancing, coupling, friendship and other forms of interaction. Finally, *marabi* also meant a category of people with low social status and a reputation for immorality, identified by their regular attendance at *marabi* parties (Coplan 1985:96).

Luring the dancers to wild abandon at all-night *shebeen* parties, *marabi* music was fundamentally a keyboard style, but not uncommonly played on guitar or banjo (Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135) while the percussive element sometimes consisted of no more than the rattling of a tin can filled with stones (Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:135). Coplan observes that the first “professional musicians” employed to perform in the *shebeens* were predominantly Xhosa men from the Eastern Cape who had incorporated both English sacred and secular styles as well as American ragtime into traditional Xhosa music (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:47). *Marabi* music was intoxicating and exciting to its participants, and vociferously denigrated by non-ghetto dwellers.

An indictment on the lack of foresight of the SABC as well as the music industry of the time is the fact that archival collections of early *marabi* music do not exist (Ballantine 1989:305; 1993:3). In defence of “commercially-oriented recording companies” of the time, Coplan suggests that

... an answer may lie in the fact that they had as yet no real knowledge of the African market, and took advice from elite artists like Radebe (whose *nom de plume* was ‘Musicus’) and Griffiths Motsieloa who considered that *marabi* did not merit preservation on wax.

Alternatively, the cause of this omission may have been the professional urban musicians themselves, who were beginning to have to compete for their established audience with the gramophones which some *shebeen* owners were using in place of live musicians. In these circumstances it seemed unwise to put one’s music at the disposal of the competition for the price of a few shillings recording fee (Coplan 1979:144).

As “seminal to South African popular music as the blues was to American” (Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307), this “musical expression of an outcast people” (Callinicos 1987:215) and the fundamental roots of much of South African urban popular music is thus lost to students and musicians of the present day.

Possibly as a means of expressing frustration, certainly in an ambience of sexual innuendo, *marabi* music encouraged physical movement. Listing the different styles of traditional dancing among the various ethnic groups of this country, Bender infers that *marabi* music provided the urban proletariat with an essential component, viz. the opportunity to dance in what was perceived as a suitable context and medium for their new way of life (Bender 1991: 175). One such dance, “performed to attract the

attentions of male spectators” and known to the Sotho proletariat as *famo*, was “a rather wild type of choreographic striptease” which was the specialty of prostitutes, “abandoned women” and shebeen owners or “queens” (*Coplan 1982A:363*). It must be noted that, unlike traditional rural dances or those rural dances transformed by migrant workers, *marabi* dancing had no formal steps. Rather, it was a personalised interpretation of and response to the music in which “the only apparent theme ... was expressive sensuality” (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:53*).

What may be referred to as the idiosyncratically ‘urban African’ spirit of exuberance conveyed by the music has reverberated through the decades in later forms of instrumental township music. Apart from this, the most important legacy of *marabi* which has become fundamental to other forms of urban music and particularly important to the development of South African jazz, was the repetitive and cyclical harmonic pattern. Using one chord in each bar, the basic I-IV-I6/4-V cycle stretched over four bars. Typical of traditional African music, the use of this ostinato harmonic progression leads Ballantine to conclude that “from a structural and harmonic point of view, *marabi* is properly to be understood as a form of neo-traditional music” (*Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135*).

Influences detected in *marabi* melodies and rhythms included traditional Nguni music, Cape Malay *ghommaliedjes* and “types of coloured-Afrikaans and white-Afrikaans dance music known as *tikkie-draai* (sic) and *vastrap*” (*Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:136*).

Coplan & Rycroft maintain that knowledge of certain traditional music practices as well as historical musical influences of the performers is necessary to an understanding of the principles involved in *marabi* music (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:50*). A few essential characteristics from examples of musical forms that were present in *marabi*’s “historical musical environment” and the influence of which can be detected to a lesser or greater degree in the style, are provided:

- Xhosa choral music such as *uXiamugezile uSindindlu Ngodaka* (“The Iguana is Very Silly”). Here traditional Xhosa melody is combined with tonic sol-fa harmonies typical of those promoted by mission-schools and the distinctive rhythm of American ragtime. Traditional features include the prominent deep bass and the alternation of voice parts.

- The influence of the rhythms of Afrikaans folk music on Xhosa recreational (as opposed to ceremonial) forms is evident in the harmonica-accompanied *Mohweni Nonke* (“We Greet You All”). This is a *mbayizelo* (“roaring”) dance song performed by Nqgika Xhosa rural men from the Peddie District in the Eastern Cape.
- Xhosa *tickey-draai* is performed by Herman Magwaza’s Guitar Band in *Hamba Carolina*, demonstrating the combination of African melody with the working class Coloured’s “guitar dance music”. A distinctive feature is the use of western harmonic sequence root progressions.
- Typical of the wedding song melodies which were incorporated into *marabi*, *Yakhala Ingana Encinane* (“The Baby (i.e. bride) Cries”), traditional to the Baca and Nguni tribes from the northeastern Cape is in “characteristically Nguni multimetric organization”, so as to orchestrate the movements of group step dancing. When *marabi* musicians transformed these songs into 4/4 metre, the multimetric accents became syncopations.
- Recreational *ndhlamu* dance song melodies such as *Ngibanjwe isigebengu 'sentombazana Swazini* (“I Made Love to a Swazi Girl of Bad character [a criminal]”) were used extensively in *marabi*.
- Coplan & Rycroft maintain that the off-beat rhythm usually furnished by a shaker in *marabi* was derived from the characteristic rhythm and vibration of the Nqgika Xhosa one-string bow. *oNongayi Ndlobogana* (“The Bothersome crows [policemen]”) in which traditional phrase structure and relationship of parts is evident, is an example of the music played on this instrument.
- The progression from what is viewed by Coplan & Rycroft as “neo-traditional guitar song of the kind analysed by Rycroft (1977)” to the neo-traditional type of “Zulu guitar *marabi*” of the migrants and newly-urbanised street musicians is evident in the examples provided:
 - ⇒ *Inkani* (“Discord”), by Joseph Nzuza, is an example of Rycroft’s “neo-traditional guitar song” model.
 - ⇒ *Temba Lami* (“My Hope”), on the other hand, while it maintains the features of bass ostinato and solo voice, illustrates the typical I-IV-V root progression of *marabi* and other South African urban popular styles (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:50/51).

In one of the only such analyses available, Coplan & Rycroft provide a summary of the transformation of traditional music principles in the compositional elements of “Highbreaks”, “a classic keyboard marabi” performed in 1976 by a professional musician of the 1930s *marabi* parties, **Aaron Lebona**. (It should be noted that *marabi* compositions, which generally had titles, often contained no recognised lyrics (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:51,53*)). Briefly, the main findings are:

- A four-bar ostinato I-IV-I6/4-V7 root progression sequence occurs. While the use of two, four, or six-bar ostinato sequences is characteristic of traditional South African music, the use of the specific I-IV-I6/4-V7 sequence is only found in syncretic urban styles. Coplan & Rycroft state that this four-bar chord progression ending on the dominant may reflect “a segmentation” of harmonic sequences commonly used in the blues.
- “Staggered” melodic phrases, alluding to additional parts with individual entry points, are played against this bass progression, reminiscent of the vocal polyphony created by the non-simultaneous and overlapping voice parts of traditional singing as well as Nguni bow and guitar songs (see *maskanda* guitar style). As in traditional bow music, the specific notes of the bass ostinato limit the selection of melodic notes. Variation is provided by the distinctive “prolonged dominant descant”, which provides a resting point in the perpetual motion created by the root progression and staggered phrases. This feature is common to traditional South African music as well as jazz and other Afro-American forms. While variation is provided by phrase shifting, some “melodic digressions” may represent snatches of other songs in the player’s repertoire.
- In the right hand part, short melodic sequences consist of single-note passages interspersed with chord sequences which for the most part move in parallel motion (see score, *Coplan & Rycroft 1981:59*). Parallel motion is to some extent idiosyncratic of traditional South African music, but Coplan & Rycroft deduce that the phenomenon is probably the result of retaining the fingers in a more or less consistent position. “Irregular” chords which do not conform to western harmonic principles are sometimes used. The phrase scheme for the first twenty measures is analysed as: AA' (repeat) BA" (repeat) CC'C'C".
- The “cadence to tonic” progression in melodic phrases which recurs frequently in “Highbreaks” is common to traditional bow and guitar songs. Interestingly, in “Highbreaks”, these cadences (V7-1)

usually do not occur at the end of the root progression (i.e. on measure 4), but generally at the onset of measure 3.

- An off-beat rhythmic pattern, played by two pebble-filled tin shakers, accompanies “complex and interesting features” derived from early jazz, including syncopation and hemiola (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:52/53*).

Referring to variants of “mainstream *marabi*” associated with “certain groups of Xhosa- and Zulu-speakers”, Ballantine writes of the Zulu version of the genre, *ndunduma*, as “really a kind of ‘concert and *marabi* dance’ developed by Zulu migrant workers in Johannesburg” and named after “the minedumps that seemed to symbolise that city”. He identifies the Xhosa version as *thula n'divile*, “after the words of a song first made popular by migrant workers in Durban in the late 1920s” (*Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:136*).

Erlmann (whom Ballantine quotes as his source for the above information) provides a description of *thula n'divile* which would render the definition of the style as a Xhosa version of *marabi* as oversimplistic. Erlmann attributes the original tune of “*Thula ndivile*” (sic) to the Durban composer **Willie Mdholzini** (*Erlmann 1991:82,81*). While conceding (by inference) the lack of sophistication manifested by the style (*Erlmann 1991:82*), he observes that

Together with other examples, Mdholzini's songs appear to demonstrate that as a genre *thula ndivile* concerned itself primarily with the collapse of traditional value systems under the constraints of urban living. Mdholzini's song “Ikhiwane Elihle”, for example, blames the alcoholism among urban slum dwellers on the breaking up of family ties ... Another *thula ndivile* tune, “Ulixoki Lomfozi”... criticizes the decline of traditional gender roles in the urban environment (*Erlmann 1991:81/82*).

However, Radebe Petersen’s understanding of the term *thula n'divile* as an early urbanisation of “Xhosa lullabies” appears to lend support to Ballantine’s explanation, at least insofar as the meaning of the term within the context of Johannesburg’s slumyards was concerned (*Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94*). Coplan & Rycroft refer to the style as “a variable form of African ragtime”. Their verbatim and apparently ‘eyewitness’ account of *thula n'divile* practice from “musician and cultural organizer” Dan Twala, would appear to be another apparent rebuttal of the generalisation of Erlmann’s description of *thula n'divile* as a kind of moralizing, philosophizing medium:

You saw that from house to house, where there was drinks or parties, you could hear the piano playing *tula n'divile*. It was not as polished as *marabi*, it was an advertisement to say, come this way! From the Xhosas came *tula n'divile*, meaning ‘You keep quiet, you haven’t heard what I’ve heard, I’ll tell you!’ Everybody was trying to come with his own little style, because they want you to buy drinks at their *timitin* (“tea-meeting”) there (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:48).

Erlmann’s description of *indunduma* concurs substantially with that of Ballantine:

Far more sophisticated and ethnically less unambiguous than *thula n'divile*, and more directly perceived as an imitation of ballroom dances unknown in traditional Zulu dance styles, was *indunduma* (mine dumps), the first truly urban dance form in Durban after the war. Usually performed on keyboard instruments and tin shakers, *indunduma* was connected with *marabi*, a style that originated in Johannesburg, and it is through returning Natal migrants that *indunduma* possibly filtered back to Durban (Erlmann 1991:82).

Developing concurrently with the Concert and Dance phenomenon (to be discussed from page x), and in another implication of the class-linked orientation of the music, Coplan maintains that *marabi* cultivated its own version of the genre in the form of “working-class concert and dances” (Coplan 1985:105).

With the exception of the apparently inaccurate, or at least ill-defined, inference made by Graham that *marabi* was created by professional jazzmen (Graham 1989:258), it would appear that there are those (e.g. Coplan 1979:136,138; Coplan 1985:94,97,108,121; Koch 1983:158/159,163/164; Manuel 1988:108) who share with Sole the conviction that *marabi*, as an original keyboard genre played at *shebeens* and *stokfels* (Sole 1983:83; Coplan 1985:104), was born out of, expressed by and was largely functional to the lives of the working class:

Disapproved of by whites and middle class blacks of the time, *marabi* has since been extolled as the first authentic example of black working-class cultural expression. While this is an exaggeration, *marabi* nevertheless remains noteworthy. It was a discernible form of culture which flourished in a specific environment and faded with the destruction of that environment in the late 1930s (Sole 1983:83).

It also remains true that *marabi*’s popularity insidiously infiltrated the dance halls and other essentially middle-class domains, and became an important element in the development of the music which was concurrently evolving there. However, it can be broadly stated that in the 1920s and 1930s - that is, as long as *marabi* continued to survive in its original form as an integral part of *shebeen* society - it remained polarised from the cultural activities of the black elite:

in South Africa nothing could be firmer proof of the class component in culture among black people than a comparison of, say, the *marabi* parties in the Johannesburg slumyards of the 1930s with the soirees and concerts of the BMSC and Inchcape Hall during the same period (*Sole 1983:76*).

Because of what Coplan describes as “contradictions in middle-class culture during the inter-war period”, “Middle-class Africans regarded command of Western culture and disassociation from both the ‘primitive’ traditions of the past and the proletarian *marabi* of the present as essential to their progress” (*Coplan 1985:138*).

3.8 SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ AND VAUDEVILLE

Perceiving the commonalities of oppression, exclusion from the dominant white society and economic hardship in their respective conditions, and aspiring to the economic and social gains made by black Americans as they appeared to gradually surmount their evidently analogous situation, blacks in South Africa identified with their brethren in the United States (*Hamm 1988:36*). (See also *Couzens 1985:83-87,107-114; Manuel 1988:106*.) This identification, which manifested in the appropriation of black American cultural practices as common and appropriate modes of expression, began as far back as the nineteenth century (*Hamm 1988:2*).

The steady tide of American cultural influence, which began with the earliest missionaries and first minstrel troupes to visit these shores, resulted in the use of American popular musical styles gradually becoming endemic in South Africa. In the 1920s, this tide grew into an overwhelming wave which engulfed black urban society. The onslaught was channelled through films where ‘stars’ portrayed modes of behaviour, dress and presentation to be emulated, while the gramophone became the hallmark if not standard possession of the urbanite, through which could be gained easy access to American performance culture.

The music of the jazz bands, playing ragtime, followed by dixieland and then most significantly, swing, had a profound and resounding effect on black musicians. The 1920s saw the mushrooming of black jazz bands modelled on American prototypes, initially particularly so in the predominantly black urban areas in and around Johannesburg.

It was in the espousal of jazz that certain strata of black South African society, like their counterparts in America (*Hamm* 1988:36), demonstrated an adherence to a social strategy aimed at the approval of and acceptance by white society, which Ballantine names the “Liberal View” (*Ballantine* 1993:40; 1991A:130) and which will be referred to in this work as the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’, or merely the ‘liberal approach’ (see 4.4).

3.8.1 Brass Bands as a Training Ground for Jazz Musicians

The musical panorama into which the phenomenon of black swing bands emerged was rich and varied, and included *marabi*, *isicathamiya*, *makwaya*, sacred and secular brass bands.

Brass bands were idiosyncratic to most mission institutions, including Lutheran missions, the Salvation Army and the separatist churches (*Coplan* 1985:82,83).

As secular performance opportunities grew, brass instrumentalists began to infiltrate entertainment structures outside the sphere of the church. (Early examples include **Modikwe’s Band** from Rustenburg and **Jeremiah Nlatseng’s Mokgoro Band** from Bloemfontein (*Ballantine* 1993:30; 1991A:139).) These bands played a diversity of styles and it is in the use of this *variety* that the long-term significance of the introduction of this medium to popular urban music lies: history proved it to be the first step in the tradition of assimilating different and varied genres within a Western idiom. This trend was subsequently developed in the maturation of South Africa jazz .

... the brass-band institution tended to be appropriated for differing ideological ends. The ‘repressed elite’ adopted it for the symbolism of its Christian, Eurocentric affiliations, and its usefulness as a means of social discipline; in these hands it was fostered by organisations such as the Transvaal African Eisteddfod in the early 1930s. Whites, after the missionaries, also continued to establish black brass bands, and for not dissimilar reasons ...

Towards the lower end of the class spectrum, brass bands proliferated as well - but served quite different goals, usually related broadly to community needs such as economic support and solidarity. Most common were the marching bands that drummed up support for the *stokvels* (*Ballantine* 1993:31; 1991A:139).

Stokfels are informal credit societies or ‘clubs’ in which every member contributes a specific amount of money each week or month, and each member in turn receives the total sum contributed (*Sole* 1983:82; *Coplan* 1985:102). Generally, a party for paying guests would be given by the recipient of the

lump sum, the purpose of which was to generate a profit for the host or hostess. While Bantu World reports these events as occurring on a Sunday in Western Native Township (*Bantu World* 17 September, 1932:9), Mngoma asserts that in Eastern Native Township where he lived as a young boy, *Stokfels* took place on a Thursday afternoon. *Stokfel* members, dressed in uniform, would march to the party accompanied by brass band ensembles hired for the occasion. Included in their repertoire were

... already established Tswana songs that we heard played, for instance, by the *Babilegi* Women's Clubs who used to strut around - usually, I don't know why, it coincided with Thursdays which was normally, according to the church, set aside for services in the different denominations. Now these *stokfels*, especially among the Tswana women, used to have their meetings on Thursdays. Each of them - we used to have two or three - would have a marching band that accompanied as they strutted from one venue to another, all dressed up in their different uniforms ... Apparently those had developed from ... around Rustenburg, where there was a strong Lutheran tradition, with huge brass bands ... Now these had got to places like Western Native Township and Eastern Native Township (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

The band's chief function was this heralding parade. They would make only a brief appearance at the party itself, whereafter *marabi* was the standard fare. The use of alcohol served as a common denominator – and also blurred the lines of distinction – between *marabi* parties and the marching *stokfel* brassband. (The *stokfel* concept, including a *shebeen*-type party at which recorded music is used for dancing, still exists today in proletarian township society, but the marching bands are a thing of the past.)

3.8.2 The Concert and Dance Tradition

An entertainment structure which was the principal medium by which black urban jazz was to become a significant, if not dominant, force in black popular urban music of the 1930s and 1940s, was the institution known as the 'Concert and Dance' (*Ballantine* 1993:12; 1991A:122; *Coplan* 1985: 149/150; 1979:139).

In imaginative reaction to repressive pass laws and night curfews, a typical Concert and Dance was a nocturnal indoor entertainment form: the concert component was provided by a vaudeville show which would last from 8pm to 12am; the dance followed immediately after and jazz music would be played from midnight to 4am, "when curfew laws again allowed Africans to walk the streets of the city"

(Coplan 1979:139). Ballantine emphasises the “symbiotic relationship” between the jazz and vaudeville artists: “It was a crucible in which the two styles were seldom totally distinct; instead, despite some obvious differences, they fed off each other” (*Ballantine 1993:13; 1991A:122*).

Vaudeville shows, begun in imitation of the minstrel troupes who visited the country from the 1800s, were an established tradition in South Africa since the First World War. The ragtime or ‘coon’ songs and the spirituals were part of the legacy and were to become established components of the vaudeville tradition. The momentum of this tradition, established by the minstrel troupes and the inspired local groups which began in their wake, had been carried in school concerts (Coplan 1985:123). An innovator of note whose contribution to the genre is of significance was Reuben Caluza.

Variety was the keyword to the vaudeville troupes’ shows. The evening’s programme line-up could include routines varying from impersonations, juggling, acrobatics, tap dancing, mime and comedy sketches, to solo or ensemble vocal or instrumental items. The most popular vaudeville troupes included: the **African Darkies**, **Versatile Seven**, **Darktown Strutters**, **Harmony Kings**, **Pitch Black Follies**, **Mad Boys**, **African Own Entertainers**, **Midnight Follies** and **Syncro Fans** (*Ballantine 1993:6; Coplan 1985:123*).

Louis Radebe Petersen, “meticulous observer of the local jazz and vaudeville scene since the 1920s” (*Ballantine 1993:42; 1991A:133*) was pianist for first the Manhattan Stars and then the Manhattan Brothers, which he left in approximately 1949. “Vaudeville companies” or “troupes” and “jazz-based vocal groups” (*Ballantine 1993:7,13,35*), Radebe Petersen maintains, belong “all in one category” (*Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94*). Support for this viewpoint is inferred by Coplan’s categorisation of the **Manhattan Brothers**, **Gay Gaieties**, **Syncro Fans** and **Pitch Black Follies** as “stage companies” (*Coplan 1985:149/150*).

In practice, certain jazz bands and vaudeville troupes regularly appeared together in the same programmes. The bands were often required to provide music for the troupes’ singing items; sometimes band members supplemented the troupes’ cast.

Landmark jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s included the **Jazz Maniacs**, the **Harlem Swingsters**, the **Rhythm Kings** and the **Jazz Revellers**. The leading dance band of the time was considered to be the

Merry Blackbirds, who regularly appeared with the **Pitch Black Follies**, generally regarded as the country's leading vaudeville troupe. The Merry Blackbirds' greatest rivals were the Jazz Maniacs. This band was less skilled at music reading than the Merry Blackbirds, but nevertheless, like them, constantly attained levels of performance which left audiences confounded by the similarity, if not almost exact imitation, of the original American recordings.

The Jazz Maniacs, led by **Solomon "Zulu Boy" Cele** until his death in 1944 and thereafter by **Wilson "King Force" Silgee**, featured some of the jazz musicians whose names are now legendary, including **Zakes Nkosi, Mackay Davashe and Jacob Moeketsi**. Important pioneers for the development of orchestrated "African jazz-marabi", Andersson claims that "they carried the spirit of marabi through to the dance halls, and they provided inspiration for a new breed of jazzmongers - Dollar Brand, Hugh Masekela, Kiepie Moeketsi, Jonas Gwanga, Gwigwi Mwrebe, Bra Sello and the like" (*Andersson 1981:25*).

The imitation of American, specifically *black* American, music can be seen as the continuation of the trend of adulation and emulation of American cultural models. Originating as far back as minstrelsy, it was to have long-term significance and repercussions in the forging of not only jazz but other urban popular styles. Perhaps this fascination with black American culture was engendered by the fact that the black American and black South African "worlds"

... were part of the same socio-economic system, and the similarities of experience have been reinforced by the mass distribution in South Africa of black American performance culture. This culture attracted Africans trying to adapt positively to their own urban environment, and the international recognition given black American performers made the temptation to copy them, rather than develop problematic African models, almost irresistible (*Coplan 1985:148*).

A slightly different perspective is provided by Hamm: consciously or unconsciously, black South Africans held a "long-cherished dream that the American model of evolutionary, non-violent social and political change could serve for South Africa" (*Hamm 1988:37*).

American jazz of the 1920s became the primary resource pool of inspiration: repertoire to be imitated; American musicians to be emulated. In general, attempts were made to establish the musical subculture of the 'Africans in America'. Interestingly, and possibly pre-empted by Caluza's work in popularising

jazz, this obsession caught the imagination of the proletariat and middle-class alike. Disapproval emanated from the isolated and elite quarters of lone critics and educators (*Coplan* 1985:121,122).

Local music resources formed a much smaller and less frequently used basis for material and inspiration. Nevertheless, this basis is important to note, since it ultimately proved to be the vital component for the germination of South African jazz. A seminal feature of South African urban music for decades to come, the tendency to look both outward to America and inward to black roots occurred to varying degrees in the different decades. Ultimately both sources were fused into one syncretic form, the essence of which was to become the distinctive sound aesthetic of South African township music.

It would appear, however, that from the onset of the ‘jazz craze’ in the 1920s until the end of the era of ‘swing fever’, the local component was, generally speaking, of secondary importance to American jazz. A typical repertoire of predominantly American jazz music at a Concert and Dance function would invariably include one or two familiar *marabi* tunes, possibly to incorporate a ‘local’ flavour, possibly to please certain sections of the audience.

Ballantine, who stresses that jazz musicians were not exclusively represented or supported by the elite stratum of black urban society, nevertheless concedes that the tastes and predilections of jazz followers in the 1920s and 1930s were such that the inclusion of occasional *marabi*-based pieces in this period may be viewed almost as a form of “tokenism”, rather than as a concession to the music containing any real worth (*Ballantine - writer's interview: 1/11/1993*).

Within the Concert and Dance structure, it was the vaudeville component that was to initiate the incorporation of traditional elements in the form of songs, dances and traditional sketches (*Ballantine 1991A:133; 1993:23*). Four reasons which could have motivated the inclusion of local influences are suggested, namely that:

- the need to preserve a cultural heritage became apparent;
- musicians and critics became aware of creative possibilities flowing from these traditional sources;

- the importance of preserving a cultural heritage for future generations became obvious;
- included in the Concert and Dance audiences were people of differing educational and socio-economic backgrounds. This is possibly the most persuasive reason. The inclusion of local elements and flavours can be viewed as an attempt to accommodate them; to transcend some of the contradictions that existed within and between classes (*Ballantine 1991A:133/134; 1993:23-25*).

The jazz bands' local concession was restricted to the inclusion of single *marabi* numbers:

The association of *marabi* with illegality, police raids, sex, and a desperately impoverished working class ... stigmatised it as evil and degrading in the eyes of those blacks whose notions of social advancement rested on an espousal of Christian middle-class values. Yet, though both the bands and their audiences included members of this latter group in significant numbers, the heterogeneous nature of black ghetto society meant that there were also strong pressures towards the *inclusion* of *marabi* in the bands' repertoires ... Even band members who grew up in homes that deeply disapproved of *marabi*, knew the style and its tunes well. Many would be able to say with Silgee - who grew up in such a home but used to watch and listen to *marabi* 'at the window' - 'It got itself infiltrated in me' (Silgee 1986). Not even the prestigious Merry Blackbirds steered clear of *marabi* (*Ballantine 1993:29; 1991A:136/137*).

The ethos of *marabi* was essentially hedonistic and not "overtly political", a factor which Koch attributes "in no small way ... due to the hard-drinking milieu it embodied" (*Koch 1983:165*). Propponents of "marabi culture", typified by the "itinerant marabi pianist" of the shebeens, also included "small combinations of jazz musicians" epitomised by the **Japanese Express**, a band that began to play orchestrated marabi towards the end of the 1920s (*Koch 1983:160*).

In the 1940s, the arrangement of *marabi* for dance-band instrumentation led to the emergence of *tsaba-tsaba*, a relatively short-lived but significant phenomenon. As in other African urban forms, *tsaba-tsaba* is the name given to both a specific dance and the musical style to which it is performed. Allen cites two differing descriptions of the *tsaba-tsaba* dance: Kubik's offering involves "jazz dances seen in films" (presumably 'the jive') and features dancers holding up a hand and wagging the forefinger (*Allen 1993:18*). The second version concurs with Donald Tshomela and Khabi Mngoma's account of the *tsaba-tsaba*, and is a variant of the dance described by Mphahlele (who remembers the same action and dance steps, but describes it as being performed as a formation dance). It would appear that the dance was performed by a couple, who danced towards each other in what is described by Mensah as "rubber-legged" style. As the couple were about to make contact, "*Tsaba!*" or "*Tsaba-*

Tsaba!" was shouted and they jumped (not merely 'danced', as Mensah describes) backwards. Tshomela, Mngoma and Mphahlele emphasise that the jump backwards was accompanied by an exaggerated shaking of the shoulders and chest area (*Tshomela – writer's interview: 24/4/94; Mphahlele – writer's interview: 27/5/98; Mngoma – writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

The Jazz Maniacs recorded a number called "Tsaba Tsaba", and this is used as representative of the early 1940s style. In the 1950s, August Musarugwa recorded an example of "Rhodesian *tsaba-tsaba*" entitled "Skokiaan". The common denominator between the two was the fast, "straight" beat (MM=232) which "dynamically propels the music forwards" (*Allen 1993:19*).

While Allen states that *tsaba-tsaba* was "influenced by, if it was not actually, *marabi*", she maintains that Piliso could distinguish between *tsaba-tsaba* and *marabi* on two recordings by the Jazz Maniacs (the one is actually named "Tsaba Tsaba"; the flipside, "Izikhalo Zika Zulu Boy", is defined as a *marabi* number). Interviewed by this author, however, Piliso maintained that he could not detect any stylistic difference between *marabi* and *tsaba-tsaba*, and could not remember the latter as a distinct style at all (*Piliso – writer's interview: 18/8/95*).

Nevertheless, following the two compositions by the Jazz Maniacs referred to above, a unique style of African jazz which was the first to bear the name *mbaqanga*, was born. Ballantine states that the main elements of this style are identifiable as:

- The cyclical harmonic progression of *marabi*;
- An African 'stomp' style, the rhythm of which "is immediately recognisable as the typical *indlamu* rhythm" (*Ballantine 1993:61*)
- The forms and instrumentation of American swing;
- A "languorous and syncretic melodic style owing less to the contours of American jazz than to those of neo-traditional South African music" (*Ballantine 1993:60/61; 1991B:150*).

Allen feels that African jazz is “more satisfactorily described as Americanised African music” (*Allen 1993:26*). Piliso describes African jazz as the absorption of *marabi* into American swing (*Piliso – writer's interview: 1/11/94*). Allen states that the feature which distinguishes African jazz from both *marabi* and *tsaba-tsaba* is that African jazz “must be rhythmically influenced by American swing”. The Jazz Maniacs’ two recordings referred to above show no such influence (*Allen 1993:21*).

Allen describes “Tomatie Sous”, as played by the Harlem Swingsters (although it was first popularised by the Nu Symphonators from Bloemfontein – see 5.4.1) as a seminal African jazz composition. In essence, the bands had taken the Cape *vaststrap* song,

... slowed down the tempo by half and superimposed a swing beat. This way their audience could dance the Jitterbug to their own songs. The response was electric, “Tomatie Sous” became an overnight rage (*Allen 1993:22*).

African jazz is based on the cyclical repetition of short two- or four-bar chord progressions, which controls the structure of the composition. The primary chords are always used and no more than three pitches are sounded together (so that the tonic is customarily left out of the dominant seventh). Unlike American swing, there is no ‘bridge’ or intersection with a different chord progression from that of the ‘head’. Eight bars are played ‘straight’, followed by improvisation based on the same chord progression (*Allen 1993:24*).

It must be stressed that *mbaqanga* or African jazz as it was played by the big bands of the concert hall era, was referred to as *marabi* throughout the 1940s. The first regular references to the style of “African jazz” occur in the 1950s, and then only by certain publications. The regular columnist for *Zonk*, Gideon Jay, wrote a column, “Pick of the Discs: Off the Record” throughout the 1950s. He makes two references to its ‘birth’:

Round about the year 1948, the indigenous Jazz idiom was born, and we looked around for a tag ... a name which would describe this form of music adequately and yet avoid the confusion of overseas influence. We called it African Jazz, and since then, much music has flowed under the bridge of the Big Bass Fiddle ... (*Zonk February 1955:45*).

A year earlier, though, he had written:

1952 saw the birth and growth in popularity of a new type of music amongst our urban Africans, and the file continues to grow for recordings on all labels of what I originally described as “AFRICAN JAZZ” (*Zonk March 1954:440*) (uppercase as in original).

What is hinted at in these excerpts, is that there were two varieties of African jazz: the dance-hall variety played by big bands of the swing era, and the commercial version promoted by the smaller combos which could be accommodated in the studios of the recording companies. Ntemi Piliso maintains that the essence of both were the same (*Piliso – writer's interview: 1/11/94*). However, musicological analysis beyond the scope of this work is required to prove or disprove this assertion. (See Recommendations - 6.2)

As deduced from the vast majority of informants to this research and from a broad perspective of all press articles, it can safely be stated that for the most part, the term 'African jazz' was used throughout the 1950s to refer to the style which was captured on vinyl recordings, and of which the **African Swingsters**, the **Nu Symphonators** and above all, the various bands led by **Zacks Nkosi** can be said to be archetypal.

The recording industry which was midwife to and lifeblood of African urban styles, including African jazz of the 1950s, was the subject of fierce controversy. (See 5.4.1) Related styles such as *kwela* and jive (often confusingly used to refer to African jazz, but apparently more accurately used to refer to 'sax jive', 'vocal jive', etc.) were spawned as its by-products.

A caption to a photograph in Zonk in 1956 describes the "music mobile" which was the feature of an effective marketing strategy of recording establishments in the 1950s, catalysing the record and radio-buying and –listening frenzy in black South African society so denigrated by certain intellectuals and 'progressive' jazz enthusiasts:

Here is a van with built-in record playing and amplifying equipment, which a well-known South African record distributing company is using to bring music to locations and townships. Filling a long-felt need, this "music mobile" is serving the double purpose of bringing to the African music written, played and sung by Africans, and of brightening up location life. The "music mobile" carries a staff of two, Michael Smandla and Ezekil August, and here you see them on the job. Michael is giving a description of the record he is about to play while Ezekil is handing a leaflet to an interested spectator. It is hoped that the "music mobile" will eventually cover every location in the Union – so watch out for it, it will be coming your way soon! (Zonk June 1956:43).

It must be noted that definitions and descriptions of the commercial styles of the 1950s are not attempted here. Reasons for this include:

- There was in the 1950s no tacitly accepted glossary of terminology. Terms used in the press for the recorded African styles were ambiguous and confused, making the deciphering of styles a painstaking and difficult task. The introduction of the term ‘jive’ as an umbrella term for fast-tempoed *African* music was applied to anything from *kwela*, as well *majuba* (itself a generic, if not ambiguous, term), *mbaqanga* (of the big-band, as well as smaller, studio-combo variety), vocal groups of various styles, including ‘vocal jive’, as well as sax-jive, *patha-patha*, etc. Similarly, the term *msakazo* was used as a generic name implying commercial music of African flavour and indeterminate style.
- Single bands, or combos, used to record under different names at the recording studios. Ntemi Piliso’s Alexandra All-Stars, for example, used various names which included the name “Kitty Joe”, followed by various epithets, amongst others.
- Categorisation alone would require many months spent at Gallo archives in Johannesburg and would require musicological analysis which is beyond the scope of this work. (See Recommendations – 6.2)

3.8.3 Sophiatown and the ‘Modern Jazz’ Enthusiasts

To the black arts communities in general and jazz enthusiasts in particular, Sophiatown - this now legendary, racially-mixed freehold area to the west of Johannesburg - represented simultaneously the last gasp as well as pinnacle of authentic, vibrant urban community performance practices; a final *encore* before they were effectively extinguished in the cross-fire of the implementation of Apartheid laws.

Characterised by colourful, diverse types of music, a distinguishing feature of Sophiatown society was the enthusiasm displayed for jazz. Sophiatown’s jazz society i.e. those who appreciated or at any rate appeared to appreciate the music, replaced the shebeen with the nightclub. In places like the “Thirty-nine Steps”, “Aunt Babe’s” and the “Back of the Moon”, jazz sessions and dance crazes like the jitterbug held feverish sway while the very destruction of the community was being premeditated by the architects of Apartheid.

Significant to the discourse of not only the history of the music's development, but also the reasons for the eventual demise of jazz, is the jazz played at the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club. This club was founded in 1955 by gifted local jazz musicians interested in experimenting with less popular modern jazz styles emanating from the United States.

Hamm's summary of features common to virtually all 'new' or 'modern' jazz in America in the period of approximately two-and-a-half decades following 1945 is as follows:

- There was a shift from large bands to small ensembles.
- A greater emphasis was now placed on solo improvisation than had been the case during the swing era.
- The music was characterised by concern with more complex harmonic, rhythmic and formal patterns.
- The above two factors led to the deliberate detachment of jazz from dance music.
- A new equilibrium between black and white musicians occurred, with both races contributing almost equally to the new style of jazz (an assertion disputed by other writers – see 5.5.1.1).
- In general, there was now a more intellectual approach to jazz on the part of both performers and audience. A new aesthetic in jazz had emerged (*Hamm 1983:538*).

Interracial 'jam' sessions, popularly known as "Jazz at the Odin", were sponsored at the Odin cinema on Sundays. Individual performers, rather than formal bands, played at the Odin. Nevertheless, the **Jazz Epistles**, consisting of some of South Africa's most eminent and now famous jazz musicians, including bop stylist Dollar Brand (piano), Kippie Moeketsi (alto), Jonas Gwangwa (trombone), Hugh Masekela (trumpet), Johnny Gertse (guitars) and Early Mabuza (drums) (*Coplan 1985:172*) was formed as a result of these sessions.

Coplan maintains that “the bebop styles of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were a powerful influence on local musicians” and specifies innovative groups who were playing the new jazz, including Mackay Davashes’ “Shantytown Sextet” and Elijah Nkonyane’s “Elijah Rhythm Kings” (*Coplan 1985:171/172*). However, Ntemi Piliso, erstwhile member of the Harlem Swingsters and Alexander’s All-Star Band as well as founding member of the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club, maintains that the bebop style, attempted in earnest by the musicians, was never greatly successful because of its technical difficulty (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*). Notably, Coplan comments that “The music was not well understood by the population as a whole. Yet the prestige of jazz and of black American performance culture drew in the most urbanised people of Sophiatown” (*Coplan 1985:172*).

Apparently, the jazz following was sustained, at least initially, by the fact that membership of jazz society signified a coveted mark of status, “even among *tsotsis* and gangsters” (*Coplan 1985:172; Dan September, a member of the notorious Sophiatown gangsters, the “Americans” - writer's interview: 15/1/95; see Lodge 1983:349*). By the time the new styles had gained “a genuine appreciation” amongst the population in the late 1950s, the destruction of Sophiatown had already begun (*Coplan 1985:172; Lodge 1983:337*).

3.9 KWELA

Kwela was the first authentic urban South African music to achieve major acclaim in the black South African market as well as a modicum of international recognition (*Bender 1991:177/178*), to penetrate the white South African market and, in the words of Ntemi Piliso, to cause a vital “change of trend” (*Piliso - writer's interview: 1/11/94*) which was to have important ramifications in the history of black South African urban music.

The fact of the matter is that *kwela* was propelled to popularity by white economic muscle and a major music-industry marketing exercise: for the first time in the evolution of black South African music, the full impact of the commercialism of the music industry was felt. In South Africa, talent scouts Walter Nhlapo of Gallo and Cuthbert Matumba of Troubadour recruited and made famous young pennywhistlers such as Spokes Mashiyane, brothers Elias and Aaron Lerole and Lemmy ‘Special’

Mabaso. The result was the birth of a ‘*kwela craze*’, whereafter new dances such as *kwela*, *patha-patha* (literally, “touch-touch”) (*Coplan 1985:79; Bender 1991:180*) and others were spawned. These fast-tempo dances gave a new lease of life to ‘jive’, one result of which was the blurring of lines of distinction between certain styles, all of which could be ‘jived’ to and which subsequently became inaccurately, synonymously and somewhat confusingly known as ‘jive’.

The idiom, whose beginnings Andersson assigns to Alexandra in the mid-1940s (*Andersson 1981:28*) and to which the pennywhistle is both integral and idiosyncratic, is described by Stapleton & May as “remodelled swing and boogie-woogie on pennywhistles” (*Stapleton & May 1987:28*). Gibson and her co-authors call it “the South African version of the London skiffle sound ideals of Lonnie Donegan” (*Gibson et al 1992:250*). Ewens refers to *kwela* as “a poor boys’ interpretation of American big-band swing” (*Ewens 1991:195*); Andersson finds that *kwela* developed amongst youth who admired both the *marabi* jazz musicians like Zacks Nkosi and the American style jazzmen, implying that *kwela* was a unique fusion of these styles (*Andersson 1981:28*). Allen suggests that whereas American jazz numbers like “In the mood” by Glen Miller were influential, most informants to her work claimed a greater affinity for and inspiration from *mbaqanga* numbers like “Tomatie Sous” (*Allen 1993:29/30*). (See 5.4.1)

The pennywhistle’s entree into the urban music panorama stemmed from humble beginnings: at first used predominantly by urban youngsters who could not afford the instruments of their counterparts in adult dance orchestras, the inexpensive “small metal cylinder with six finger holes and a whistle mouthpiece” (*Hamm 1991:165*) elevated street music to a vibrant and important component of township musical life.

The tradition of reed ensembles was a long established one among the Zulu (*lithlaka*) and Tswana (*umtshingo*) (*Coplan 1985:156*), and according to Roberts, similarities of phrasing occur between the traditional mode and that of the *kwela* era (*Roberts 1972:259*). Possibly influenced by this legacy, the pennywhistle was absorbed into the musical vernacular of young urban street musicians. The first medium in which it flourished was that of the ‘marching bands’, formed by township youths in imitation of Scottish military bands and Coloured ‘coon’ street bands (*Coplan 1985:155*). With names like “Phalanzani Scots Band” and “Scotches” (the one to which Prof. Khabi Mngoma belonged as a youngster in Eastern Native Township), members of these smartly-dressed “Scottishes” - the colloquial

generic term for the marching bands - roamed the townships and surrounding areas, their music and well-drilled antics eliciting money from appreciative audiences:

We used to have what we called marching bands, all togged up in the Scottish attire that we would get some of our seamstresses in the townships to make ... We would have ... leggings, without shoes, marching into town, playing these pennywhistles. We used to make our own drums from goatskins, which we got from Eastern Native Township at the time. And that sort of activity took me away from home over weekends ... playing in places like Belgravia, Yeoville, Doornfontein ... (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

The band members bought their instruments at concession stores found outside mine compounds, such as the one near City Deep, south of Eastern Native Township where Mngoma lived. The relatively inexpensive merchandise carried at these stores was determined by the target market of mineworkers and included concertinas, guitars, mouth organs, jew's harps (or *tholotholo*) and pennywhistles.

Heralding the birth of kwela's idiosyncratic tone, the youngsters experimented with the pennywhistles and exploited the inherent variations of timbre to create what they believed was a satisfactory substitute for the tone produced by Scottish bands which rehearsed at the Union Grounds at weekends: "We were enchanted by the husky tone that we heard from those marches. So we used to play the pennywhistle *skewed* in at an angle, so that it didn't have a shrill sound, it had a sort of muffled, husky sound" (*Mngoma: writer's interview 14/2/95*).

Years later, Coplan was to maintain that the appeal of the music lay in the "tonal flexibility and vocal quality" which could not be easily reproduced on standard Western instruments (*Coplan 1985:160*). Kubik describes the idiosyncratic sound as produced by unique playing methods:

... kwela flautists push the flute relatively far into the mouth ... rotating it towards the inner side of the right cheek. The oblique embouchure guarantees that the edge and window remain open between the lips of the player and a full and round tone is obtained, much louder than if it is played in a Western manner. The flute also sounds almost exactly a semitone lower than the factory-tuned pitch. By means of their own special fingering techniques they play glides, 'blue' notes and chromatic passing notes (*Sadie 1980:330*).

Mngoma attributes the harmonic structures used in the music to the triadic, western textures of the church:

They (*i.e. the marching bands*) were influenced by the church, because we were all school-going, and hymn-singing in school was a regular thing. The harmonies, as far as I remember, were monophonic. They were

usually three-part harmonisations, because we didn't have a bass part. Two or three parts. We always had an accompaniment, and of course, we had to have a beat (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Each piece evolved from a process of "group composition" to which all the members contributed. Immediate sources of melodic inspiration included existing melodies played by the brass bands which accompanied Tswana women from the *Babilegi* Women's Clubs, as they "strutted" to their venues, mainly on Thursday afternoons. Mngoma ascribes the influence of this music, in turn, to the brass bands emanating from the Lutheran tradition in the Rustenburg area, which had filtered to the likes of Western Native Township and Eastern Native Township (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Other melodies, which "just came in as little snippets" were derived from township ditties, as it were, and concerned the lives of urban people, "but you have to be in the culture to know what they refer to". Being in the (old) Transvaal, many of them were of Tswana origin. An example of such a song is "*Emotswala*", a song which alludes to prospective weddings. At the time, marriages were authorised in Pretoria. It was expected of "a man of status" - a symbol of which was a bicycle - to transport his bride to Pretoria in order to have the marriage officially ratified. Since the likelihood of a breakdown was ever present, his wisdom was demonstrated by carrying a spanner (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Yet other of these little township tunes stemmed from the Free State. Strongly influenced by neighbouring Lesotho, "*Serantabule*" concerns the norms of the blanketed people of "Lesotho proper". The song alludes to the necessity for or status of a very attractive, bright-coloured blanket which would reflect the sun, "really more for the visual impression it would make" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Blocks of apartments in white suburbs like Jeppe, Troyeville, Belgravia, Yeoville and Doornfontein, and occasionally train terminals (there were no bus stops at the time) were the marching bands' main areas of operation. The inevitable concentration of people at these locations invariably represented more financial reward to the youngsters:

We would swing and swagger as we marched along. We did ... formation marches. We'd get to a flat, and one of us - I was one of these - would play and actually do antics to drum beating. Somebody would be holding the drum, and I'd be beating it, doing all sorts of tricks, ... and of course money would come pouring down from the flat-dwellers ...

We had a regular drum player, but for this sort of exhibition ... where we'd have an audience who'd be responsive, I would do the demonstration on the drum. Then I'd get back into formation and somebody else would play the drum, but this drum I would then perhaps hold on his back and play it from the opposite side, swinging out my legs ... doing all sorts of antics, crossing hands to the music (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/94*).

The marching street bands are yet another illustration of the osmosis between classes as they related to distinct styles, as well as the extent to which mission-school influence permeated popular styles. Bearing in mind that his parents did not entirely approve of the occupation, Mngoma recalls that the *kwela* band to which he belonged was made up of (church) school-going members, certain of whom, including himself, attended George Koch Primary School, at which the principal (who was also his piano teacher) was none other than the respected and elite musician, Mark Radebe. Mngoma remembers the many nights he would spend curled up in the outside lavatory, having returned home from the occupations of the 'Scotches' at too late an hour to enter the house, and the wrath of his parents that these events would incur. Fearing that he was on the verge of juvenile delinquency rife in the townships at that time, the young Khabi's marching band activities were summarily curtailed and he was sent to Mission School at Annievale in Natal.

Early pennywhistle music of the marching bands exhibited the variety of rhythms inherent in the myriad influences which formed part of its evolution:

It is influenced by a whole range of styles: the *mbholoho* types - the music that is sung at community concerts. ... *isicathamiya*, the various children's styles ... the *indlamu* songs, the play songs - all these have a different character. And then of course you have the school influence.

As I say, we adapted any tune, any type of rhythm. It did not necessarily conform to any particular rhythm. If, for instance, it lent itself to marching, or we bent it to make it (suitable for a) march ... The timing varied, depending on what use we wanted to make of it ... some became set for use in marching, some to accompany the drum-beating demonstrations, some to use for formation marching. If, for instance, we stopped, some of the things we did was this drum demonstration and others were formation marching within a confined space, moving in and out, and so on (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Aside from uniformed marching bands, youngsters also formed smaller bands consisting of pennywhistles and homemade instruments. According to Kubik, the "standard" *kwela* ensemble consisted of one or more pennywhistles, one or two (acoustic) guitars and a "one-string bass", presumably often of the tea-chest variety. In these bands, players developed techniques of fingering and blowing which facilitated the production of idiosyncratic American jazz notes such as 'blue' notes, chromatic passing notes, and 'glides' (*Coplan 1985:157*). Accompanied by home-made guitars

(*isiginci*) made from paraffin tins, tea-chest one-string basses and milk-tin rattles, *marabi* elements were incorporated into their basically jazz idiom to produce an improvisational genre of street music based on principles of African music (*Ballantine 1989:308; Coplan 1985:157; Andersson 1981:28*).

The origins of the name “*kwela*” are unclear and at times, confusing. One translation for “*khwela*” (note spelling) is provided as “(to) climb; ascend; mount” (*Doke & Vilakazi 1948:423*). Kubik, who mentions that “*kwela-kwela*” is one of the colloquial names given to the South African police van, asserts that the South African musicologist Elkin Sithole relates the first musical use of the word to the “bombing style” of *isicathamiya*. (See 3.5) In order to elicit response from the chorus, the leader would shout “*kwela*”, while “*kwela-kwela*” denoted their ongoing responses (*Sadie 1980:329*).

The use of the term is ascribed by some writers to the fact that dancers at parties would shout the word to encourage non-participants to join in (*Coplan 1985:158; Bender 1991:180*). Bender maintains that a more likely origin is from the name “*kwela-kwela*” given to police vans, since police used to use the words “*kwela, kwela*” to demand their arrestees’ entry into them (*Bender 1991:180*). Kivnick’s version provides for the term originating from “the sound made by police vans against whom the boys played their whistles as a warning and a kind of general camouflage” (*Kivnick 1990: 229*). Andersson agrees that the term “*kwela-kwela*” was used to refer to police vans - whose chief objective was to apprehend illegal gamblers. At the impending approach of a van, evidence of the illicit game would disappear and the playing of the pennywhistle would seem to be the attraction for the apparently innocent gathering (*Andersson 1981:28*). A similar version was furnished on BBC radio by the South African soprano, Elizabeth Connell (*The Star Tonight, Monday April 11, 1994: 11*).

Stapleton & May credit the popularisation of the style to its inclusion in the film “The Magic Garden”, in which a young boy, **Willard Cele**, played “boogie on a pennywhistle” (*Stapleton & May 1987:188*). Catapulted into the limelight in 1951 by the release of the film, Cele was the first pennywhistler to achieve fame and is widely held to be responsible for the birth of the pennywhistle craze of the 1950s. Coplan states that the clear association of the name with the music only began after the release of the international hit recording “Tom Hark” by Aaron Lerole in 1954. (See also *Stapleton & May 1987:188*). Street-corner gamblers are interrupted by an approaching police van. One shouts “Daar kom die *khwela-khewla!*!” (sic) while they hastily pack away their dice and commence playing their pennywhistles (*Coplan 1985:158; Andersson 1981:28*).

In a confusing and apparently inaccurate reference which implies that *kwela* and *mbaqanga* (or “*simanje-manje*”, itself a misappropriated term for *mbaqanga*) are synonymous, Kubik draws attention to the fact that the umbrella term “jive”, as applied to *kwela*, was also used for other styles (*Sadie 1980:329*). However, Hamm, who maintains that *kwela* represents one stage in the development of the larger genre of ‘jive’, a term which came to be applied to dance music of the overlapping jazz and *kwela* eras (*Hamm 1985:172*) provides the observation that

Some pennywhistle pieces included the word ‘kwela’ in their titles, and Western ethnomusicologists began using this word, inaccurately, for the entire pennywhistle repertory as well as similar pieces using other instrumentation ... In fact, ‘kwela’ was the correct designation only for pieces using rhythmic patterns appropriate for the *kwela*, a popular social dance of the time (*Hamm 1991:165*).

Acknowledging both the marching bands and ‘skiffle-type’ street corner bands as important evolutionary stages in its development, Allen, in her outstanding analysis of the music which came to bear the name “*kwela*”, concludes that the most widely-accepted broad definition of the style is “*marabi*-based pennywhistle and solo saxophone music composed between 1954 and 1964” (*Allen 1993:59*).

The reader is referred to Allen’s detailed analysis of the structure of *kwela* composition. A summary of some of the most idiosyncratic characteristics, as provided in her work, follows:

- *Kwela* music is structured on the call-and-response principle of African and African-American musical traditions: the most common form consists of motifs alternating with solo passages.
- The music consists of repeated, short harmonic cycles which are usually 2 to 4 bars long. Most compositions have four crotchets to a bar. The primary chords are always used. Chord changes take place every bar or half bar.
- Above the repetitive harmonic cycle, a series of short melodies, usually the length of a cycle, are repeated, varied and interspersed with improvisatory episodes. Melodic repetitiveness is an idiosyncratic characteristic. The most common of all *kwela* forms is one in which two motifs alternate with solo section (of which “Copper Avenue”, played by **Lemmy Special Mabaso** and **Spokes Mashiyane** is a prime example.) However, three motifs interspersed with solo work are also regularly found.

- The second type of *kwela* form is the ‘Solo-over-Ostinato’ Form. Here a chorus of pennywhistles repeats one or more ostinato riffs, above which a soloist improvises throughout. The famous “Tom Hark” played by **Elias (Lerole) and his Zig Zag Jive Flutes** is an example of this type.
- A small number of *kwela* numbers combine the above two forms.
- “Harmonic progression constitutes one of the fundamental areas of continuity between *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga*” (*Allen 1993:77/78*). The most frequent progressions are I I IV V and I IV V I.
- Rhythm is a distinguishing characteristic which differentiates *kwela* from other styles. The guitar, rather than the drums, which were not present in original street bands, provides the basic rhythm in *kwela*. Whereas *marabi* and *mbaqanga* are based on a “driving straight beat”, *kwela* is ‘swung’ to a “lilting shuffle”, the most common of which is approximated as follows.
 - The strumming technique of the guitar, in which the short, soft upstroke precedes the downward stroke as a spontaneous result of the wrist movement, produces the “definitive *kwela* shuffle-type rhythm”.
 - Derived from “Count Basie-type swing”, equal emphasis is given to all four beats in the bar.
 - The transformation of *kwela* into the *mbaqanga* of the 1960s was characterised by the change from a “swung” to a “straight” beat.
- Instrumentation is a vital characteristic of *kwela*. Although a composition may contain typical features of *kwela*, it is not classifiable as such without the sound of the pennywhistle or solo saxophone. The most stereotypical *kwela* line-up is that of solo pennywhistle backed by pennywhistle chorus (such as in “Tom Hark”). However, from 1958 *kwela* recording included saxophonists as both soloists and members of backing choruses.

- The move from the street bands to recording studios was characterised by the advent of drums and bass. Allen maintains that this resulted in street-corner bands imitating the sound aesthetic of recordings, and introducing the tea-box bass into their line-up.
- As *kwela* developed, guitar parts became more sophisticated. Gradually, both a rhythm and lead guitar became the norm. Allen states that electrification was concurrent with the introduction of the lead guitar. In the late 1950s, this phenomenon heralded the birth of the second style to bear the name *mbaqanga* (Allen 1993:58-102).

This version of *mbaqanga* was catalysed to fame by one Simon Nkabinde, alias *Mahlathini*, whose characteristic growl was enthusiastically backed by a group of singing and dancing women; thus forming *Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens*. A seminal milestone on the map of South African music, this style has been both denigrated (*Ballantine* 1993:8) and praised (*Mngoma – writer's interview: 22/4/95; Piliso – writer's interview: 1/11/94*). While in-depth examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this work, some of the ideological issues which surround the debate will be examined in chapter 5.

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 response 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 Sync Schools such as the Sync 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 overhurried”. 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 operatie (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 Dorsey 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 Trewhela'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 Rezant’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-aware 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 Mbobo, 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 liaise 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 undiscriminating 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 (“jazbantie” (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 co-operate 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 cout (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; Umzeteli 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 couth 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 Duboisism. 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 Rezant, 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 (*Rezant - 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 nguye 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 thraldom 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 slumdwellers 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 Mtshimbilikwane 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 slumdwellers for slumdwellers. 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” (*Mtshimbilikwane - 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 Syncro 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 achieved 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 imitress 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.

CHAPTER 5

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

5.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

5.2 THE APPROACH OF ‘URBAN PROTEST’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3 BALLANTINE'S EXPOSITION OF THE 'RADICAL VIEW'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIANITY

Sir,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ballantine asserts that in the early 1940s:

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

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

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

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

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

The above statement is expanded in a further discussion:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3.2 Elite Attitudes to African Culture as a Reaction to the Failure of the ‘Liberal Approach’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3.3 African Jazz in the Early 1940s

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“OH, THIS TSABA-TSABA!”

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

...

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

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

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

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

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

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

The result: A lilting three-chord sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While it would appear to be an undisputed fact that the *tsaba-tsaba* enjoyed significant popularity in the early 1940s, this fact must be contextualised by strong evidence of two sobering facts. Firstly, the dance craze was short-lived. More importantly, the *tsaba-tsaba* was characterised as a decided *novelty* feature, included as a moment of light-heartedness at the end of a function dominated by American and English ballroom music (*Mphahlele – writer's interview: 27/598; Mngoma – writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Intelligent interpretation” of works which included

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3.4.1 *New Africanism*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE NEW AFRICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Couzens states that:

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

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

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

5.3.4.2 *‘Africanism’ or the ‘Africanist Impulse’*

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

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

The last paragraph in Couzens’ book is appropriate here:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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

Fame and Fortune Without Politics

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

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

Cultural Bodies

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

Commerce and Culture

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

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

The last paragraph is perhaps the most significant:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goodbye, Nineteen Fifty Seven. You were a STINKER.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEMOCRACY – OR BUST

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

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

Surely that’s not the last word.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IT'S DEMOCRACY OR BUST.

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

...

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

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

...

THE EDITOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTER

HE LIKED “SANGOMA”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.4.3 ‘Msakazo’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.5 THE DECLINE IN POPULARITY OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ

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

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

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

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

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

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

A BEEFY BOUNCER That's What Sophiatown Jazz shows Need

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sole maintains that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.5.1.1.1 *Swing*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.5.1.1.2 Bebop/Bop

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.5.1.1.3 *Cool*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANNEXURE TO CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE ‘LIBERAL APPROACH OF MORAL PERSUASION’

1 Optimism

A characteristic of liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s was a buoyant optimism that black aspirations would be met (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 23, 1937:11; Bantu World May 28, 1938:8*). This was based on a characteristic belief of black liberals, articulated in 1948 in the face of the Nationalist Party election victory as what could well be called the credo of Bantu World: “historically the forces of tyranny have never prevailed against those of righteousness” (*Bantu World October 23, 1948:2*). Despite bouts of dejection, this sentiment would resurface time and again, invariably accompanied by “thrills of hope” or “renewed hope and encouragement” (*Ilanga Lase Natal December 29, 1933:9*), even after the Nationalists came to power in 1948 (*Bantu World September 3, 1949:2*).

A common motif of editorials promoting black liberalism is that black South Africans should bear with tolerance and patience the seemingly slow progress of political transformation, the end result of which they were assured (*Ilanga Lase Natal December 30, 1932:9*). While it would be easy to distrust the white man’s intentions, the wise African realised that white liberals and “progressives” constantly had to contend with racists among them, whose potential conversion to enlightenment on recognition of black achievement and ability is inferred throughout (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 2, 1941:13*). Optimism was expressed that the future generation of Afrikaners were “outgrowing” the traditional antagonism towards blacks (*Bantu World October 1, 1932:6*), and in the white population in general, racists were in the minority (*Bantu World September 13, 1941:4*; and even five years later - *Bantu World December 7, 1946:4*).

Closely linked to the optimistic view of white intentions and intrinsic goodwill was the early belief that quasi-government institutions in which blacks participated, as well as those established by liberal whites for the purpose of fostering black progress were effective, positive structures. In the 1930s and early

1940s, Advisory Boards, Native Representative Councils and Joint Councils (which Bantu World in 1932 declared to be inspired by the interracial councils of the southern states of America), which were later to be denigrated by Africanists and even conservative black newspapers, were enthusiastically praised in the black press. These were viewed as opportunities to demonstrate black ability to effectively participate responsibly in urban western society (*Bantu World December 3, 1932:1; December 30, 1939:4*).

2 Moderation

The black journalist of this period made a real attempt to understand the fear of ‘Europeans’ vis-a-vis black advancement. The white population was continually reassured of black acceptance of social inequality; black liberal demands were confined to the right to “develop without ... hindrance from the powers that be” (*Ilanga Lase Natal October 2, 1931:9*).

Insight into ideological thinking which permeated the black leadership for the first half of the twentieth century (and thus was fundamental to the ‘liberal approach’) is gained by the views expressed *inter alia* in an editorial entitled “Equal Rights”, written by Plaatje in the Bechuana Gazette in 1902. (Plaatje was founder-member of the SA Native National Congress, forerunner of the African National Congress.) The comments were apparently considered to be valid and relevant, since the editorial was reproduced in the 21 December 1904 edition of the Gazette.

We do not hanker after social equality with the white man ... We do not care for your parlour, nor is it our wish to lounge on couches in your drawing-rooms. The renegade Kaffir who desires to court and marry your daughter is a perfect danger to his race, for if his yearnings were realised we would be hurrying on the path to the inauguration of a generation of half-castes ... For this reason we advise every black man to avoid social contact with the whites, and the other race to keep strictly within their boundaries.

All we ask is our just dues; we ask for our political recognition as loyal British subjects ...

Under the Union Jack every person is his neighbour’s equal. There are certain regulations for which one should qualify before his legal status is recognised as such: to this qualification race or colour is no bar (*Willan 1997:64*).

In the same vein, in the 1930s, much journalistic effort was expended in reassuring the South African ‘European’ that he had nothing to fear from blacks, who were not hostile to whites (*Bantu World September 30, 1939:4*). On the contrary, every opportunity was used to express the friendliness of blacks towards whites (*Bantu World December 22, 1934:8*)

In the 1930s, black political editorials and political comment were epitomised by a tone of contented resignation to black political subordination (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 7, 1930:9*). Polite language couched attempts to allay white fears, which were to be avoided at all costs, since this, more than any other factor, would delay the advancement of the black South African. Thus Africans were not hostile to ‘Europeans’ (*Bantu World March 16, 1940*); and “would elect the best men regardless of colour” (this comment was made by Chief Luthuli, who in 1949 would be elected leader of the ANC for the 1950s) (*Bantu World July 23, 1949:2*). Rather than threatening western civilisation, the black South African was striving to attain standards of education and sophistication which he perceived as synonymous to such civilisation (*Bantu World January 20, 1940:4*). In this way, black musicians were “ambassadors of their race”, as Mseleku, western-style composer of note, declared at a function at the Y.M.C.A. in Durban in 1955: “you are trustees ... so remember to go forth and do your good work. Do not misuse this previlage (sic), for you represent us (to) the world at large” (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 20, 1955:16*).

Bantu World, in particular, often employed a tone of hand-wringing gratitude which bordered on the obsequious (“Under a good and benevolent government Bantu interests are being carefully looked after ...” and the like) - (*Bantu World May 31, 1941:9; May 8, 1943:4*).

In 1948, Bantu World, as mouthpiece of the ‘liberal approach’, was stated by R.V. Selope Thema to be a

... journal (which) has never been, and will never be a propaganda medium but an organ of education, enlightenment and appreciation. It guides and counsels the African people on lines of sane and steady progress, along the lines of western civilisation and in co-operation with Europeans, because the Bantu World believes that South Africa owes its amazing progress to the white man’s brain and the black man’s brawn (*Bantu World June 26, 1948:1*).

Any signs of militancy or defiance, such as the miners' strikes of 1946, were met with hostility by journalists. Representative of the educated elite, rooted in an ideology of liberalism expounded for decades, their reply was synonymous with the puritan stance on overt defiance which was articulated in the press, particularly in the 1930s: acts of defiance would result in white fear as well as the lowering of white opinion of the black South African population *as a whole*. Whites would confuse the hostile actions by these irresponsible representatives of the black race with the benevolent intentions of the (inferred) majority of the black population. Most importantly, individual effort on the part of black liberals to convince whites of their goodwill would be in vain, and lead to the "destruction of freedom" (*Umteteli wa Bantu January 2, 1943:2*).

Music was an indispensable medium for communicating benevolence, and examples of music creating bridges of friendship abound in the black newspapers of the 1930s and 1940s. In one such article, the Jazz Maniacs band (here referred to as an "orchestra", as jazz-bands often were), was credited with having created at one performance "enough friendliness which, if constantly done, would temper down the weather in race relations" (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 2, 1946:16*).

A hallmark of the 'liberal approach' in the 1930s and 1940s was the appeal, rather than demand, for 'equal status'. However, this appeal was tempered by the concession that 'social equality' - which was translated as the social mixing of races - was neither achievable nor desirable. The development 'along their own lines' proposed by whites was as nonsensical as the "white ghost" called social equality" (*Bantu World January 14, 1933:1; December 3, 1949:2*). Here too, they were taking their lead from perceived black American objectives, as expressed in an article by a white Southern American, Mark Ethridge. While recognising the fundamental principle of the elimination of white "prejudice and ignorance", he adds: "I have nowhere mentioned the abolition of segregation or so-called 'social equality', because I have nowhere found these steps to be among the Negro's aspirations" (*Bantu World August 26, 1939:4*).

What was envisaged by exponents of the 'liberal approach' in America and hence in South Africa, was a "tilting of the racial line from the horizontal to the vertical", whereby blacks and whites on either side of this line could enjoy the "rights and privileges" to which they were entitled as full citizens of the

country (*Bantu World* August 26, 1939:4). This sentiment was echoed repeatedly in the black South African press (*Ilanga Lase Natal* January 16, 1931:9; April 24, 1931:9; *Bantu World* June 4, 1932:4; January 14, 1933:1).

However, in the 1940s a subtle but definite shift in thinking took place. It was more often reported that Western music, the flagship of the ‘liberal approach’, was trampling politically-induced obstacles between white and black, thereby hinting at the possibility of social mixing in an ideal future. The “pleasant” task of reporting on the success of jazz bands and vocal groups at ‘European’ functions for which they had obviously been hired, fell to the famous music critic of *Bantu World* and correspondent and commentator of other newspapers, Walter M.B. Nhlapo. Listing the white-sponsored events at which the Merry Blackbirds, De Pitch Black Follies, the Jazz Maniacs and the Sync Down Beats had admirably acquitted themselves as representatives of black South Africa, he mused: “Hm, these European night clubs are serving a great factor to a better South Africa. They are breaking slowly but surely the segregation barrier set up by dirty politics” (*Bantu World* December 6, 1941:9).

In response to encouraging statements by white liberals like the member of parliament in the Smuts Government, Jan H. Hofmeyr (“We have ruled out the complete domination of the one race upon the other”) (*Bantu World* August 20, 1932:4), Senator Heaton Nicholls (“There will be never (sic) a South African nation until every person, irrespective of race or colour, is proud to call himself a South African”) (*Bantu World* February 10, 1940:4); and Col. Deneys Reitz (who opened the Union’s Civil Service to blacks, which was perceived as a turning point in the commitment to fulfilling hitherto empty promises to the black populace) (*Ilanga Lase Natal* August 2, 1941), political demands and utterances by black liberals were characterised by moderation and politeness.

Setbacks to black advancement were borne stoically: the “Anti-Native mentality” displayed by the Union Minister of Defence, “the Hon. T. Roos”, for example, motivated the editorial response: “How many pin-pricks have the Natives patiently bore (sic) with incredibly and rare docility: ... But the Native Africans have all along bore (sic) it with wonderful patience with the hope that a time will come when the South African (white) public mind will see the right policy and follow it” (*Ilanga Lase Natal* February 15, 1935:7).

Despite its tendency to greater realism and a generally harsher tone at times than found in Bantu World, *Ilanga Lase Natal* largely supported the bourgeois elite of the African National Congress in the 1930s and 1940s. When Elliott Tonjeni “and a few other Cape firebrands” who were branded guilty of introducing “a Communistic bias” resigned from the organisation, the action was “hailed with a sigh of relief”. Added to the assurance of loyalty to the white government was the promise that grievances would be redressed by lawful means, while “wild and irresponsible talk” would not be tolerated by “an organisation which includes the Chiefs and the respectable classes of Native Society” (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 28, 1930:9*). Appeals to white better-judgement and goodwill, for “sane legislation” and concessions in recognition of demonstrations of ‘civilisation’ are a constant theme of letters and editorials (see for example *Ilanga Lase Natal January 9, 1931:9*).

Reassurances of loyalty to white rule were reiterated time and time again (*Ilanga Lase Natal October 2, 1931:9; Bantu World September 30, 1939:4*). “Extravagance and abuse” were to be eschewed, since these would inflame, rather than soothe, the “embers of racialism and colour prejudice” (*Bantu World December 13, 1941:4*). In the early 1940s, which according to Ballantine was a transitional phase in which a “New Africanism” articulated a “broad groundswell” which culminated in a period of “militant protest” (*Ballantine 1993:55; 1991B:146*), Walter M.B. Nhlapo (the influential writer whose comments Ballantine quotes as an example of support for the expression of this “New Africanism” in music (see *Ballantine 1993:60; 1991B:149*)), states that the efforts of politicians who were trying to incite militant defiance in opposition to pass laws are “doomed to failure” because of their “extremist attitude”: “It is not profane extreme provocative words (sic: no commas) that will emancipate us from the burdensome ‘scraps of paper’ but calmness and reasoning of a sane nature” (*Bantu World February 1, 1941:9*).

One reader of Bantu World insisted that, “if only the Oppressor would pinch a bit harder, the African progress would accelerate its advancement”. “Automatic” emancipation would be the result of applying cooperative “diplomacy, psychology and tact” in matters of education, economics and commerce (*Bantu World August 2, 1941:5*).

While the Bantu World editor noted that the “growing demand” amongst educated Africans for

responsibility and leadership of their own affairs was becoming more evident, he hastened to reassure whites that “What they are asking for is not the right to rule the country but the right to participate in the administration of the affairs of their people” (*Bantu World June 5, 1943:4*).

Petits bourgeois attitudes of the ANC leadership are epitomised by the polite tone of the plea sent to Prime Minister Smuts in protest of mass arrests in 1944: “We strongly protest, and in the name of democracy, christianity and human decency, humbly and most respectfully request and urge you to remove these acts of racial discrimination, injustice and oppression in preparation to (sic) your participation in the San Francisco Conference” (*Bantu World March 31 1944:4*).

As late as the 1950s, liberal sentiments and exhortations to evoke the implicit, dormant goodness and racial tolerance from black and white were still to be found in Bantu World, in particular. The staff at Bantu World, the editor maintained, still believed that it was not impossible for both white and black South Africans to emphasise the constructive factors “that hold South Africa together” such as cooperation and goodwill, and reject the prejudice and hatred “that pull it apart”.

On both sides of the colour line there are men and women who have too great a regard for human dignity to surrender their souls to the dictates of race and colour prejudice. It is our firm conviction that these men and women can, if stirred to action, bring about a better and mutual understanding between white and black, and thus eventually provide a solution to a problem which at present seems to baffle the minds of men (*Bantu World September 30, 1952:7*).

The liberal editor of the Bantu World remained firmly committed to moderate and reasoned bargaining. During the heated debate on exclusive Africanism versus inclusive African Nationalism which featured prominently from the 1950s, the paper continued to plead for sane reasoning and the avoidance of “high sounding” ideals “which everybody knows is unattainable” (*Bantu World December 10, 1949:2*). However, it is in the dawning of the realisation in this decade that even the most moderate ideals and aspirations were ultimately unattainable, and that the reality of Apartheid was more vicious, and cared less for the educated, than the most dire predictions of perceived ‘radicals’ could forecast, that a subtle shift from the extreme ‘liberal approach’ of the paper in the previous two decades is detected.

It is significant that, rather than viewing the ‘liberal approach’ as politically passive and ultimately

ineffective, Rezant viewed the role of the Merry Blackbirds as active political emissaries, proving to whites the capabilities of blacks, both intellectually and musically. When questioned as to whether he believed that his band had filled a political role in this way, he replied: "Very, very much so ... No doubt about that." Secondly, as an inspirational model of achievement, they hoped that their example would compel others to strive to improve their position in life. Because of this broader objective, he was proud of the achievements of other bands, including those of their biggest rivals, the Jazz Maniacs (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

3 The Vacillating Hopes of the 1930s

In the 1930s, general feelings of discontent at the lack of earnest attempts by the Government to address the 'Native question' are starkly contrasted by effusive optimism in anticipation of imminent liberation. A rather volatile graph could depict the oscillating pattern of hope and despondency expressed in *Ilanga Lase Natal* prior to the Second World War: the fluctuating high and low tides of liberal sentiment were directly affected by, and occurred in response to, white political statements. A white reactionary statement would be met with flat tones of disillusionment and despair, an encouraging remark by a white liberal would result in the expression of optimism. Liberals like Jan H. Hofmeyr seemed regularly to bolster the flagging faith of black intellectuals with soothing words of reassurance and support. For example, in 1937, the May 29 edition of *Ilanga Lase Natal* verbalised deep pessimism about the fate of black South Africans, particularly the educated, in the future (*Ilanga Lase Natal May 29, 1937:11*). Two months later, the same publication expressed soaring hopes in an editorial headed: "Swelling Tide of Liberalism: Black man's advance in the scale of civilization could not be checked". Here the heartening words of Hofmeyr, at that stage Minister of Mines and Education, and oft-quoted author of many liberal comments in the press, praised arch-liberal Lieut. Col. James Donaldson for his "sane advice", which included telling "us to make the Natives our friends". Hofmeyr, the *Ilanga* editor said, believed South Africa "could never permanently secure the wealth and prosperity of the White man by keeping the Black man poor and depressed" (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 3, 1937:11*).

The more forthright manner of the Natal newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, is clearly distinguished from the obsequious Transvaal-based Bantu World in this decade. In response to the formation of the coalition government in 1933, it was firmly stated that “Native public opinion definitely expects an early, earnest and serious attempt to deal with the Native problem” (*Ilanga Lase Natal April 7, 1933:9*). Disillusionment was verbalised at the failure of their white ‘wards’ or ‘elder brothers’ “to help the Africans to develop into manhood” (*Ilanga Lase Natal April 7, 1933:9*). Bantu World, by comparison, enthused: “Since the formation of the coalition government a new spirit is abroad in the land, a spirit of optimism and confidence ... It is to be hoped that this new spirit of goodwill between Boer and Briton will be extended to the Bantu people” (*Bantu World April 15, 1933:6*).

The liberal views articulated by journalists in the optimistic moments of the 1930s are characterised by a superlatively expressed, glowing optimism. Bantu World states that the newly-awakened “conscience of white South Africa ... will no longer tolerate injustice and oppression” (*Bantu World September 10, 1932:4*). A year later, Bantu World again declared that the “conscience of white South Africa had been awakened”, and that through “persuasive” rather than “abusive” speech, white public opinion would be swayed “to the side of fair play, liberty and justice” (*Bantu World April 29, 1933:8*). *Ilanga Lase Natal*, for example, voices the hope that a “new consciousness” of “justice and fair play” is awakening amongst white South African legislators. One manifestation of such consciousness is the “enlightening” report on the social and economic conditions of South African blacks by the Native Economic Commission (*Ilanga Lase Natal September 29, 1933:9*), the establishment of which in itself signalled “to the whole world” a change in governmental stance (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 17, 1933:9*).

In an exuberantly positive front-page lead article in May, 1933, Bantu World articulates the liberal approach as epitomised by the character of the Joint Councils Movement (*Bantu World May 20, 1933:1*). This article is important precisely because it refers to the militancy which existed amongst sectors of the working class and their leaders (such as Clements Kadile of the ICU, who had been prominent in the 1920s), and clearly shows the cleavage which appears to have existed between the elite journalists promoting the liberalistic spirit of Washington over workers who espoused the militant ethos of Garvey:

JOINT COUNCILS CREATE SPIRIT OF GOODWILL
Direct Action and Revolutionary Measures Have Landed Some
Misguided People In Gaol And Others In The Graves.
Wanted: True Leaders Of Vision

The Joint Council Movement ... has created a new spirit in South Africa. It has made men realise that ... in the civilised life of to-day (sic) the economic and political interests of white and black are inseparable.

Although there are die-hards and rabid racialists on either side of the colour line, the fact remains that this new spirit will prevail in the end, for it has found a splendid response (sic) in the universities and colleges of this country. The Fort Hare Bantu-European students conference of about four years ago has proved that young South Africa is determined to shake off the bitterness of the past and go forward in a spirit of goodwill and true fellowship.

There are still die-hards among Bantu leaders, men who maintain that direct action is the only weapon that will enable the Bantu people to gain their freedom and improve their conditions. Revolutionary measures they hold will bring the Bantu into the Promised Land of Freedom. Communism and not religion, they say, will lead the Bantu to Paradise.

All those leaders who do not agree with their doctrines and their propaganda are stigmatised as "good boys," as the tools and agents of capitalism, and men who are betraying their race. But all this talk has not improved the conditions of the Africans ...

It is needless to point to the spirit of Philanthropy manifesting itself in every sphere of activity in this city (*Bantu World May 20, 1933:1*).

By comparison, *Ilanga Lase Natal* declared just two months later that attitudes displayed by the new coalition towards 'Natives' provided "ample reason for regret and resentment". In the 1920s, this newspaper had been under the impression that white opinion regarding black progress and development "had undergone a considerable change for the better". The editor bemoans the sudden deterioration of the situation. "By a stroke of the pen, the whole position has been changed", he sorrowfully says, and the chief cause of this lamentation is that the new Minister of Native Affairs, unlike his predecessor, has already proven to be quite unsympathetic to the 'Native' cause. The previous incumbent of the Native Affairs portfolio, epitomising liberal beliefs of whites in general, had been essentially benevolent to the black cause: "since Union the Minister of Native affairs (sic), quite apart from his political leanings, has been looked upon as a wise and just counsellor, a Father, so to speak, to whom the Natives could bring their troubles with hope and confidence" (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 14, 1933:9*).

The notorious ‘Native Bills’ were an effective blow to optimism. In response to the Native Representation Bill which resulted in uniform disenfranchisement of all Africans in South Africa, black hopes were “dashed to the ground” (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 1, 1936:9*). This Bill, Bantu World told its readers, would “establish once and for all the policy of political segregation” (*Bantu World March 14, 1936:8*).

It was in these moments of doubt regarding the ability of the liberal concept to induce benevolence from white rulers that a spirit of black assertiveness and brief glimpses of black defiance were first evident in the black press. The conservative and normally servile and fawning Bantu World was motivated by the inherent repression of the Hertzog legislation to modulate the usual key of the liberal spirit to one in which proof of equal status of blacks to whites would *compel*, rather than encourage, whites to recognise African rights of full citizenship:

It is the achievement of the race as a whole that will compel, much against their will, those who despise us today to recognise that as human beings we are entitled to all human rights, economic as well as political.

The task of our leaders, therefore, is to launch a campaign of organising (sic) the masses of our people, who must be educated on their rights and duties (*Bantu World July 4, 1936:8*).

Very significantly for this discourse, the above article was juxtaposed to an article on the Pan-African Conference, and even more importantly, to an article entitled, “Africa Awakens From Sleep”, in which the writer expresses a recognition that the burgeoning feelings of unity of all Africans would ‘embolden’ black South Africans “in our dreams of a new Africa” (*Bantu World July 4, 1936:8*).

Liberals’ hopes were once again revived by Hofmeyr’s call for white South Africans to “make a fresh start in the building up of a new liberalism, a liberalism of the mind and of the heart”. The Bantu World editorial in which Hofmeyr’s encouraging speech is discussed at length, concludes with his words: “The white man has awakened the Native; he has ended his savage life; he has set his feet upon the long road which leads to civilisation. It is a path on which there can be no retreat. And the white man has no option save to adjust his thinking and policy to the realisation of these facts!” (*Bantu World August 22, 1936:8*).

In 1939, the editor of *Bantu World* declared that the earlier incumbent of the portfolio of Native Affairs had “won for himself the respect of a large section of our educated community” through the exercise of consulting the “enlightened men of our race” (*Bantu World September 23, 1939*:4). Obviously this practice of consultation did not occur often enough, for a year later the same editor complained that “One of the mistakes Europeans make is to omit Bantu intellectuals in their programme in things connected with the Bantu people” (*Bantu World December 21, 1940*:9).

4 Fluctuating Sentiments in the War Years

In the early 1940s editorials are filled with optimism, roused on more than one occasion by encouraging speeches from none other than Prime Minister Smuts. In 1942 he addressed a meeting of Members of Parliament and spoke of “the awakening of South Africa’s social conscience”. This, the editor of *Umteteli wa Bantu* assured his readers, was a summary of a general desire for an improvement of race relations; “a movement which has been gaining strength throughout the country for some time past” (*Umteteli wa Bantu September 5, 1942*:2).

No single impetus was more influential in fermenting the black liberal cause than the hopes which were aroused during the course of the Second World War. Firstly, the cause of the war itself was decidedly in black interest: if Hitler won the war, Prof Julius Lewin, lecturer in Native administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, told a gathering of intellectuals at the elite Gamma Sigma Club, “you will be slaves and stagnant in progress”. If Britain won, however, “Africans will receive back their independency (sic)”, albeit with a proviso quite in keeping with liberal thought: “but only when they are educated to administer themselves” (*Bantu World August 3, 1940*:6).

The liberal-minded Col. Deneys Reitz of the war-time Smuts Government was benevolent and encouraging to black liberals. In the face of racist opposition, stigmatised as a “Negrophilist”, his war-time liberal utterances together with those of General Smuts, again spurred the effusive *Bantu World* to flowery prose of liberal hope (*Bantu World August 9, 1941*:4; *December 6, 1941*:4).

Envisaging a “post-war world in which racial disharmony will be unknown” (*Bantu World September*

6, 1941:4), the particular expectations of black South Africans as articulated by the liberal elite were expressed by the editor of *Bantu World*: “non-Europeans” supporting the South African war effort, he wrote, anticipated the granting of “democratic rights, privileges and duties”. To this end, the education of public opinion should be begun without delay (*Bantu World October 18, 1941:4*). By 1943, “so great a man as Field-Marshal Smuts” was voicing opinions which were “pointing the way out of our inter-racial difficulties” (*Bantu World February 20, 1943:4*). The hopes of black South Africans were most clearly enunciated by Michael J.L. Kunene, in an article entitled, “There Is a Good Time Coming”. He exhorted blacks to join the forces to bring about not only the victory of the Allied Forces, but the victory of their own liberation, which was to be their reward:

Africans! I say wake up! This is a revolutionary war and a reformation must emanate as the consequence ... we are not laying down our lives for ourselves only, but also for the future African generations ... I can visualise a day when South Africa will afford freedom for her people no matter to what colour they belong.

... Our leader, the Rt. Hon. Field Marshall J.C. Smuts, has said time and again during this war that it is time that South Africa recognised the Africans (*Bantu World May 8, 1943:4*).

The decision to arm black South African soldiers, the previous denial of which had been cause for much resentment, prompted glowing praise and pride in *Umteteli wa Bantu*. More than contributing to the defeat of Nazism, wartime feats of African soldiers had “set up a milestone on the road to the realisation of African aspirations”. Most important was the praise from white South African soldiers of their black counterparts. The spirit thus cultivated was cherished as “one which cannot be brought about by political or legislative efforts” and was reiterated throughout the rest of the war (*Umteteli wa Bantu May 9, 1942:2; December 5, 1942:2; Bantu World February 27, 1943:4; March 4, 1944:4*). As part of “a more liberal attitude” displayed by the Smuts government, and especially Col. Deneys Reitz, during the war, the hated pass laws were relaxed as an experiment to determine their effect on crime. Spurred on by the success of this concession and the promise that the situation might become permanent, black liberal hopes flourished (*Umteteli wa Bantu July 4, 1942:2*).

In an editorial in 1943, black South African expectations for a post-war South Africa were most clearly spelt out:

In the struggle into which Hitler has plunged the world, Africans are playing a part which entitles them to a great measure of freedom than is the case today. After the war they will certainly not be satisfied to remain under the conditions prevailing to-day. There will have to be such radical changes in the Union's Native policy that the African people will be filled with a new hope and be proud to be citizens of South Africa (*Bantu World February 27, 1943:4*).

A growing sense of frustration and bitterness among Africans was clearly stated in the usually polite and liberal Bantu World in December 1948 when it became clear that African war hopes had been dashed. Hostile measures, such as the complete dissolution of the 'Native Military Corps' of the Defence Force, the exclusion of black South African ex-servicemen from increased war pensions given to white soldiers, and the refusal to make a grant for the feeding of African school pupils combined to clearly convey the antagonistic and unsympathetic attitudes which were to be directed at blacks in the place of the longed-for rewards hinted at by the Smuts wartime government (*Bantu World December 4, 1948:2*).

The caption to a photograph of an old and obviously dejected man on the front page of the World in 1960 is symbolic of the shattered expectations fostered during the Second World War. Described as a "hero of World War II", the caption declares ex-Sergeant Berry Gazi to be the first member of the Native Military Corps to have won the Military Medal for bravery during the course of his work as a stretcher-bearer. Now totally forgotten by the country to which he showed allegiance, he is penniless, in ill-health and out of work (*The World June 11, 1960:1*).

In the music arena, Peter Rezant recalls a poignant moment illustrating the general perception which existed at grassroots' level that the end of the war would mean the simultaneous end of Apartheid. The disillusionment which ensued when this was discovered to be false was great, and reality dawned for the average black man at the level of 'petty Apartheid', which regulated such matters as entry to venues and functions:

But in Cape Town ... the Coloureds and the Africans wanted to almost cause a riot, because they would not be allowed (*entry to the American pavilion at the Liberty Cavalcade*). They said, "But the war is over! And we thought Apartheid is finished, now (that) it's over! We want to go here, and it is a black band that is playing inside there!" (Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98).

A New Year's Day editorial in 1949 eloquently articulates the characteristic liberal traits of national inferiority, the faith in white goodwill, and the patience needed to see black aspirations realised as a result of white persuasion of black 'civilisation', as well as moderation and reciprocal goodwill, which typified the school of thought and which was to have repercussions for the next decade and beyond:

... the moulding of public opinion is essential to progress; and that, like any form of education, is a slow process. We who urge our fitness to govern ourselves cannot, without deliberately shutting our eyes, fail to see that there are still signs of immaturity among us ...

What will help us most is the growth of goodwill and sympathy among those who are able to do more for us than we can for ourselves. The late Colonel Donaldson was an outstanding example of that goodwill and sympathy translated into practice ...

There will be troubles and difficulties to be met during the coming year, but we can look forward with courage and hope to overcoming them with the help of our friends and our own honest efforts to be guided by reason (*Umteteli wa Bantu January 1, 1949:3*).

Margaret Ballinger was a white liberal within the Smuts-led United Party who was perceived to be a great friend of black South Africans. In parliament in 1943, she clearly enunciated the sinister intentions of the policy of segregation, singling out Hertzog's Native Acts of the previous decade as solely intended to force blacks "into a position that would enable Europeans to secure and exploit their labour" (*Bantu World February 27, 1943:4*).

The flames of black liberalism were intermittently fanned by statements from the white Liberal Party, whose policies included: the abolition of white supremacy; equal rights for all South Africans; the introduction of a qualified franchise for a "transitional period" (thereby favouring educated blacks); and above all, the conviction that such transformation should be effected peacefully (*Post June 16, 1957:4*).

In 1940 the book "South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit" ("A book that should be read by every intelligent and thinking African") by well-known white liberal and President of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Prof. R.F. Hoernle, was suitably prominently advertised in *Bantu World* (*Bantu World January 27, 1940:12*).

Successful ventures or accomplishments such as the opening of facilities for blacks, including

entertainment venues like the Bantu Social Centre in Durban, always involved gratitude expressed to ‘European’ friends for their help in their establishment (*Ilanga Lase Natal August 30, 1941:16*). This habit of drawing attention to ‘European’ presence as the symbol of success or status of a function aroused comment from a certain Rev. Mpitso in what appears to have been a speech criticising the practices of black pressmen. Rather than appear contrite, Walter Nhlapo is provoked to retaliatory comment:

The Reverend gentleman remarked that Bantu reporters only attended shows sponsored by Europeans and reported same (sic). In such gatherings they would name Europeans present and when it comes to Bantus, they’d say: “and many others” ...

The Rev. Mpitso is correct to an extent ... In European press (sic) the important people are included in the report. With Africans, everybody thinks himself more important than his neighbour (*Bantu World January 11, 1941:9*).

In 1954, a Bantu World editorial was devoted to a remark made by a white liberal ex-municipal official, Mr. E.H. Haveman, bemoaning the loss of contact between ‘the African’ and ‘the European’. Referred to by the editor as one of “the bitter fruits of apartheid”, he nevertheless reassures his readers that “complete apartheid is, of course, an impossibility”, and avows that “whatever else may create bitterness between the different racial groups in our country, it must not be ignorance born of lack of contact” (*Bantu World November 6, 1954:2*).

The influence of white liberals in the music sphere is significant. For example, Peter Rezant, leader of the famous Merry Blackbirds, a band which can be justifiably called the flagship of the ‘liberal approach’ in the jazz arena, was taught by George Louitt (note spelling according to Peter Rezant - see *Ballantine 1993:34; 1991A:141*), a member of the (white) Railways and Harbours Band. Rezant proudly states that this man “became my very good friend” (*Rezant - writer's interview: 8/4/98*). John Mtshimbilikwana was “struggling with this trumpet”, and had been refused assistance from various other teachers, when he met a “gentleman” from England who was a trumpeter with the Municipal Orchestra in Cape Town. “He was the only (white) person that stood up and said, ‘I will teach you’, because he thought this would be a good thing to teach somebody of a different race group” (*Mtshimbilikwana - writer's interview: 4/7/97*).

5 Education

There is only one force that can gradually sweep away the colour bar and that is the power of learning ... In every separate community there must be those who inspire their fellowmen to greater efforts to learn, then surely, in time to come the people will grow into a grand nation fit and able to take their place in all the affairs of the country (*Bantu World January 20, 1934:14*).

Couzens observes the black educational elite's characteristic adoption of the "great man" theory of history" together with the credo of "progress". S.V.H. Mdhluli, in his book, "The Development of the African", uses the word "progress" or its variants no less than 37 times in the total 57 pages of the book (*Couzens 1985:27*).

The necessity of education as a primary requisite of the 'progress' which would result in liberation was evident in newspaper articles throughout the 1940s. A Bantu World reader declared in 1949: "as long as our people do not realise the necessity of making education their battle-shield, so long shall we remain at our present state of backwardness" (*Bantu World December 24, 1949:7*).

In 1951, the entire 'Reader's Forum' page bore the bold headline: "Anti-illiteracy campaign is more important to Africans than the fight and wrangle in politics". The first letter referred to the apparent futility of ANC conferences, which in the writer's opinion had effected no meaningful change in the situation in South Africa (this after the formation of the ANC Youth League, which in Ballantine's view, inaugurated a period of 'militancy'):

Politics will benefit us nothing and I suggest that these mighty men should concentrate all their energies toward the educational improvement of our people.

... To my mind the government will only change its attitude when we are all educated (*Bantu World March 24, 1951:5*).

Ezekiel Mphahlele succinctly summarises the premise on which the desire for education rested: "The misconception was that if we were educated, as educated as he [i.e. the white man] is, he will take us as equal. Many people thought that. Also, the missionary schooling created that kind of feeling, you see" (*Mphahlele – writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

That western education meant an automatic capitulation to white culture was expressed on more than one occasion: here the American ‘negroes’ had followed the example of the Japanese and Turks by adopting European culture. For their efforts in this regard, European missionaries were as always the objects of black elite gratitude in an article entitled “Education Is the Key to National Progress and Salvation”:

... the greatest nations of to-day (sic) rose from obscurity, passed through slavery and oppression and faced and surmounted all difficulties and hardships such as are confronting us to-day (sic).

... European missionaries, following in the footsteps of the Great Master, are ceaselessly working for the emancipation of our race from ignorance and superstition.

... We must change and adapt ourselves to the new life. But we cannot do this unless we do what the Japanese did over sixty years ago. When the Japanese discovered that the ancient life of their race was not suited for the conditions created by Western civilisation, they decided to westernise their way of life (*Bantu World November 16, 1940:9*).

Generally speaking, the newspapers of the 1930s and 1940s are permeated with comments to the overall effect that the repressive laws initially imposed by whites had been to some degree warranted by virtue of the inferiority of the uncivilised and inherently ‘evil’ state of African primitiveness as opposed to the vast superiority of white civilisation. Closely linked to this trend was a perception evident in the press of the late 1930s and early 1940s and which was to evolve in significance and assertion in later years: indigenous, ‘tribal’ pursuits were encouraged by well-meaning but ignorant liberal white friends as well as sinister racists, to the detriment of the black’s goals of urbanisation. What is fundamentally an insightful but gentle voice of objection against essentially benevolent Europeans (who were evidently in the majority) in this article, was to become a veritable howl of assertive protest on the part of certain journalists, by attitude if not words, in the late 1950s, and particularly in the 1960s. In other words, for many thinking black liberals in these decades, ‘Africanism’ (as in a pride in being African, and therefore embracing African culture), was the direct antithesis of ‘Westernism’ (or a pride in being ‘western’, and therefore embracing western culture). It is the more subtle beginnings of this mindset which is verbalised in an editorial in the perspicacious *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1940. The column was entirely devoted to a discussion of the current practice by Natal whites to encourage and promote Zulu *ingoma* dancing. These dances, the editor predicts, would soon become popular “as a branch of sport” and as a tourist attraction. However, they represented the antithesis of black progress:

All of our European friends and officials, we think, should be filled with the desire and efforts to raise the Bantu in the shortest time possible and this cannot be accomplished by encouraging us in the retention of those of our customs which are and were not elevating to us. These dances do not by any means raise the status of our people on the upward path.

We have seen some people who do not care for African education becoming enthusiastic in encouraging us to retain our old customs in preference to education and pursuit of projects likely to open our eyes to see the benefits of education ... Without this education we may dance ourselves as high as we can but this does not bring to our people progress and upliftment.

... there are more and regrettable effects in that this being arranged for Sunday afternoon these games have depleted the Christian churches of worshippers to an alarming degree as the example set by Europeans is irresistible for a people who are not trained to think for themselves (*Ilanga Lase Natal July 27, 1940:15*).

Five years earlier, Bantu World had perceived that possibly derisional white motives for the presentation of an ingoma function near Johannesburg, had been suitably rebuffed. The significance of the sub-heading “African Art Forcing Its Way to Realisation” lies in the fact that the writer of the front-page lead article displays some ambivalence as to whether the occasion’s promotion of tribal dancing is praiseworthy or not. Certainly the reason for the prominence of what is no more than a review is the fact that the compliments paid to African art, and the prophecy that the true art of South Africa will “spring from the black races”, emanate from none other than “Miss Sybil Thorndyke, the famous English actress”, of whom a large autographed photograph appears. However, lost in a mire of confusion resulting from the flattering praise from so eminent a source, but smarting with his own inferred humiliation caused by the display of tribalism (“one cannot help feeling that the object was to show the Pressmen of the Empire how backward the Africans were”), the journalist grasps at the flagship of the ‘liberal approach’, western music, as the sure and unambiguous interpretation of black standards and aspirations:

The playing of “I want to be happy”, “Tipperary” and “The more we are together” by the Bachopi Orchestra thrilled all those who were present and was loudly applauded.

... Here the delegates were told at the outset that the African also want (sic) “to be happy”, to enjoy life and participate in the benefits of civilised life. Nay, they were told that given a chance the African can develop his talent and thus make a distinctive contribution to the gathering achievement of the human race (*Bantu World March 2, 1935:1*).

Most tenets of black liberalism were characteristically expressed in a mild and benevolent idiom.

However, it must be noted that for some black South Africans, this hunger for education implied at least a modicum of protest or confrontation: some intellectuals perceived that they were fighting a psychological war against Government opposition to their progress. In 1939 Bantu World declared that: "Since 1910 Act after Act has been placed on the Statute Book to prevent the rising tide of African progress" (*Bantu World January 7, 1939*:4). In 1940, a review of the book, "Africa's Peril", is described as a true enunciation of the vicious goals of segregation ("he does not cloak his idea of segregation with fine, meaningless phrases. No, he calls a spade a spade"), and its clearly defined opposition to the liberal hopes of both black and white. Most particularly, the author of this book defines the black South African's desire to be educated as the biggest danger to segregationist ideals. Important for the discourse to follow is one concept of liberalism whose significance to the discourse is to be magnified later, namely, the disownment of African culture and all that pertains to it. The (white) writer of "Africa's Peril" declares that Africans are "entering on (sic) their greatest struggle - the attempt to become as we are, civilised men with equal rights. We must divert them to whence they came" (*Bantu World March 30, 1940*:4) (own underlining).

Es'kia Mphahlele says that the need to fight Government repression of black progress was not always coherently articulated, or perhaps even perceived as such, in the era under discussion. Nevertheless, it could be intuitively derived as a motive emanating even from those who had not had the benefit of education:

... for them, it was a way of helping you to stand against the white man. Not in any articulate way ... (instead it was deduced from) the *way* in which they said things to us; the way they said: "You have got to go to school, learn to read and write. You see the white man is 'standing on his feet'" - which is a literal translation of the Sotho (phrase) which means, 'he is out to resist you' (*Mphahlele - writer's interview: 27/5/98*).

By 1951, a more directly confrontational approach was used by H. Selby Msimang when he stated: "you will be impressed more than anything else that the Government and the white people of this country will go to any lengths to keep an African in a sub-economic strata (sic) as the only effective instrument for the preservation and perpetuation of domination over us ad infinitum" (*Ilanga Lase Natal January 20, 1951*:20).

6 Christianity

Christianity was an indispensable component of education (*Bantu World December 28, 1940:5*). Education without Christianity could not produce the ‘civilised’ status to which the educated black of the 1930s and 1940s aspired. In fact, education without Christianity resulted in a man remaining “uncivilized at heart”, and was positively dangerous to society, as Professor D.D.T. Jabavu declared at a meeting of the “South African General Missionary” (sic) in Pretoria in 1932. Significant to the discussion on American influences, is the comment that the ‘unChristianised’ but educated man is “merely an educated barbarian - a Chicago gangster” (*Bantu World July 9, 1932:4*). It was against “this type of civilisation” (i.e. the Chicago gangster-type) which Prof. Jabavu and another white Professor, J. du Plessis, were issuing warnings. The problem lay in the fact that the black population had absorbed “material civilization” of the “superficial” rapidly, without proper understanding of the “moral and spiritual precepts of the white man”. Thus it was essential that the blacks enter the “open door to the white man’s spiritual values” - which were synonymous with liberal theoretical ideals of “generosity, public spirit, self-sacrifice, a sense of justice, fairplay and a respect for religion” (*Bantu World July 9, 1932:4*).

In the 1930s editorials, many of which sounded like Christian sermons, were devoted to eloquent arguments for the necessity of embracing Christianity as the only salvation for both South Africa and the world. In the 1950s these were less likely to be found in editorials, but articles and short sermons about the importance of the role of Christianity in civilisation were still found regularly (*Bantu World November 18, 1939:4; Ilanga Lase Natal August 31, 1940:15; Bantu World July 23, 1949:2; August 12, 1950:3; August 19, 1950:2; October 13, 1951:6; February 16, 1952:1; April 11, 1953:11*).

An important facet of this belief in Christianity as the salvation for oppressed South Africans, is the fact that racism, as much as primitiveness, was regarded as an “evil force”. It was recognised that within Christianity in South Africa, there were elements of “racialism and nationalism”, which needed to be expunged (*Bantu World July 11, 1942:4*). The occasional voice of sympathy from within the Dutch Reformed church, commonly regarded as the bastion of Afrikaner Christianity, and from whose doctrine a scriptural basis for Apartheid was supposedly found, was eagerly reported. For example, in

1942 the Rev F.J. Berning Malan, at a conference significantly held at Fort Hare University, declared that legislation which resulted in the denial of common citizenship or full liberty to any citizens of a country was un-Christian (*Bantu World May 16, 1942:4; July 11, 1942:4*).

Coupled with the thesis on Christianity and its potential to gain full citizenship for black South Africans, was the reiterated point by Bantu World that the black African race in its primitive state was inherently evil, and that unChristianised urbanites who indulged in uncouth behaviour and crime were committing sins “as a legacy of our forefathers” (*Bantu World August 19, 1950:2; August 9, 1941:4; January 14, 1933:1*). Thus a national inferiority complex was a distinguishing trait of one school of liberal thought (*Bantu World July 9, 1932:4; Ilanga Lase Natal August 31, 1940:15; Bantu World September 15, 1951:6*), the spontaneous result of which was a rejection of Africanness, and was to persist into the 1950s and beyond.

Perhaps the single most striking feature of identification, or essence, of black South African liberal thought was the concurrent adoption of westernisation and Christianisation to the simultaneous exclusion of all forms of African culture and tradition. First promoted by the missionaries as barbaric, ergo evil, the intuitive response to all repressive Government laws was an immediate perception that white South Africans wanted, by their relegation of blacks to tribal life, to exclude blacks from the civilised, western status to which they (blacks) aspired and which had been insinuated by the missionaries to be their reward. This urge to demonstrate their ‘westernness’ followed a convoluted, but nevertheless evolving path, and the important point here is that this ideological feature was retained to greater or lesser degree by a substantial, predominantly intellectual, sector of the black population, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

Early missionisation involved an automatic and simultaneous rejection of Africanness: there were those for whom this remained true throughout the 1950s and beyond, and it is this sector that remained representative of the ‘liberal approach’. According to Prof. Mngoma this was especially the case with the majority of older intellectuals and a significant sector of young educated people of his acquaintance. Rare insightful individuals like Mngoma saw the value of promoting African culture, and specifically the incorporation of African elements into urban music styles, including African jazz and other

commercial styles of the 1950s, but he stresses that his view was not at all representative of the majority of the educated elite (*Mngoma – writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

A somewhat misleading heading of an editorial in 1941, “A Plea for Bantu Music”, stresses the importance of the teaching of (by implication, *western*) music in the education and progress of the race. As such, Adams College in Natal is owed “a great debt of gratitude” for being the first African educational institution to recognise the importance of music as one of “those higher arts which make life ever so much more beautiful for the individual”, and, therefore, establishing the first black music department. It is strongly implied that these ‘arts’ denote a vital element of ‘civilisation’, or sophisticated western urbanisation. For over eighty years, the editor writes, the ‘Bantu’ have been fed “poisonous praise” of their innate musical ability, the result of which has been the development of “a careless attitude” and a “sense of complacency that has become a poison”. In a clear enunciation of the use of western music as part of a liberal strategy, the editor appeals to the school-going population of the 1940s “to take music more seriously than has been done by the generation now in its prime, and to go back to the standards set by those stalwarts of forty, fifty years ago, who felt so keenly that they had to prove that the Bantu could reach up to the heights other nations had attained and won us the praise we so little deserve to-day” (*Bantu World - Children's Newspaper & Family Supplement February 1, 1941:1*).

On the subject of tribalism and ethnicity, as distinct from Africanism (or even from a more generalised pride in being African), there was no ambiguity. Black liberal thought was totally opposed to the “Demon of tribalism” and its promotion by any source, be it benign or sinister. To this end it would brook no interference with those perceived to want to promote tribal divisions, such as those whites who were promoting the written form and literature of individual black languages. To these people the Bantu World issued a stern warning: “The Bantu people must be given a chance to build their own languages. It is futile to force them into the conditions of the past. The caravan of their progress is passing on despite the puny efforts of those who live in the past and endeavour to clog its wheels” (*Bantu World September 3, 1932:4*).

The conviction that Christianity - as presented from within the ideological framework of the

missionaries - was a major tool with which to fight oppression goes hand in hand with the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ in its original and unadulterated form. The subtle change in stance or concept of the *purpose* of Christianity in their struggle for freedom was for some black South Africans an important and pivotal psychological Rubicon, which, when crossed, heralded the end of early black liberal views so clearly articulated in the 1930s and to a lesser degree throughout the 1940s. Whereas Christianity was the differentiating feature of *white* civilisation (and was an essentially ‘white’ religion), the introduction of Separatist movements saw the inception of forms of African nationalism in religious worship. Secondly, and probably of more importance for this discussion on the ‘liberal approach’, is the fact that a gradual realisation was unfolding (from within at least some sectors of the orthodox black Christian denominations) of the failure of the Christianisation process to have achieved liberation.

Early signs of this tendency included an editorial in *Bantu World* in 1947 which reported on a conference of African Ministers. This series of meetings was held under the auspices of the African Ministers’ Federation, an organisation established in the mid-1940s to co-ordinate efforts to achieve the long-held goal of leading blacks “out of the darkness of Africa’s ancient life” (*Bantu World January 18, 1947:4*). However, the shift in ideological perception is articulated by the Rev. J. A. Calata, the president of the Federation, who, amongst other ills in black society, drew attention to “the tendency among the educated (blacks) to regard Christianity as a white man’s religion whose purpose is to keep the black man under the white man’s tutelage for all time” (*Bantu World January 18, 1947:4*). Events such as the “African National Day of Prayer”, in May 1953, was a “united effort in praying for the African people”. More than this, its existence was necessitated because “the African has reached the breaking point”, and God was asked to intervene as he had “intervened among the Israelites of old”. The most important objective of this praying was the achievement of African unity; “an African united front against all evils - persecution, oppression and all kinds of discrimination because of colour” (*Bantu World May 16, 1953:6*).

7 Cultural Elitism

Fanon states that the intention of the white “settler”, synonymous with the white liberal, is to ‘break in’ the “native”; the task is not complete until the “latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the

white man's values" (*Fanon* 1963:43). "On the other hand, during the period of liberation, the colonialist bourgeoisies looks feverishly for contacts with the elite and it is with these elite that the familiar dialogue concerning values is carried on" (*Fanon* 1963:44).

In 1951, the characteristically petit bourgeois Bantu World complained that the image black Americans were receiving of Africans via the medium of "the bioscope" was commonly that of the "raw" African. Instead, "there should be those who are busy showing him (i.e. the black American) the cultured and Christian African. I personally do not object to the showing of the backward African, but I strongly object to a picture that leaves out the cultured African" (*Bantu World June 9, 1951:6*).

An apparent result of the predominance of black liberal thought was the creation of an elite band of educated blacks, for many of whom the demonstration of 'civilisation' with inherent social and political rewards, both potential and real, meant the simultaneous eschewal of African culture. "The elite initially wanted to be white and wanted to be as *unAfrican* as possible in order to identify (with whites); in order to gain political favour. In order to gain acceptance in white circles, they had to adopt all sorts of manners (so as) not to be thought crude, (or) to be undeveloped" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 23/4/95*).

The difficulties experienced by those aspiring to levels of Christianised urbanisation, but living amongst uneducated blacks frequenting shebeens, and by inference, part of *marabi* culture, is expressed in a letter to Bantu World in 1940. Here the age-old distinction between tribal and detribalised (or 'sophisticated', synonymous with 'urban' and 'rural') Africans is drawn, which Mphahlele highlights as the single most divisive factor in urbanising black South African societies until the beginning of the 1950s (*Mphahlele – writer's interview: 21/11/97*).

Just now, it is a question how (sic) the Bantu intend (sic) to master full urbanity despite such a conglomeration of traditions within and around him. The urban Bantu could have shown by now some vast difference between the rural ways of living and the urban modes of life, but the influx of territorial Bantu plays havoc in (sic) the general progress of the urban Bantu.

I think the only possible means to civilise the urban Bantu or to make him understand himself civilised is by enforcing some residential segregation between those called "detribalised" and those still "tribalised" ... The brewing and selling of kaffir beer by the Bantu in these urban areas should be totally prohibited for

it is the food (drink) belonging and appreciated mostly by the territorial Bantu under tribal laws, and it is now playing havoc with the urbanised Bantu who are mostly individualistic in outlook (*Bantu World December 14, 1940:5*).

At least officially, proponents of the ‘liberal approach’ avoided *marabi* and its environment. There are very few references to the music and its associated practices of drinking and improper dancing in the 1930s and 1940s. From this fact alone one deduces that such excesses were a by-product of urbanisation not to be advertised. In a front-page lead article in which Sybil Thorndyke praised African art, mention is made of a song by Shangaans in which shebeens were referred to. These shebeens, and presumably the musical practice of *marabi* associated with them, are declared to be “social evils created by the white man’s legislation” (*Bantu World March 2, 1935:1*).

The following article by Walter Nhlapo is most significant for the discourse and will be referred to again. It reveals his desire for black South African bands to raise their standards, and at the same time betrays his prejudice against ‘low-class’ entertainment structures like the *stokfel*. It allows the reader to glimpse the prejudice against jazz which still appeared to exist in at least certain elite individuals, and which his comments are obviously trying to overcome:

BANDS ON PARADE

Do you remember Monday, August 18 when six popular Bantu dance bands appeared at the Ritz Hall in what was billed, “Who’s Who?” Today we write about that night of nights when bands gave dancers one damn hot thing after another, until dancers’ limbs were wearied and soles worn-out (sic).

DISHEARTENING RESPONSE

A somewhat disappointing response to our appeal to fans of the bands to give ratings was more than anticipated. But some enthusiastic persons took full advantage of the unique opportunity to give us their ratings.

HOW WE RATED

...
We now know the developing and progressive bands and those fit to play in Stockfells.(sic) It has been an easy task for us to sift wheat from chaff but unfortunately we reserve our judgement, and as a result every band will think it played the best and put life in the dancers and wallflowers.

JAZZ AN ART

Whether you play jazz as blues, stomping, boogie woogie, swing or contrasting it is jazz, and jazz playing [though considered by many low and vulgar] is art. Have you heard Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Chuck Webb, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Jack Teagarden, Jimmy Runceford, Bert Ambrose, Jimmy

Dorsey, Louis Armstrong and many others on the records?

TASTY PLAYING

... One or two of our bands are on this fine rating, the rest should be liquidated to Stockfells (sic) (*Bantu World October 25, 1941:9*) (bold type as in article).

In 1940, "Aureole", the music critic for *Ilanga Lase Natal*, referred to the proposed music department at Adams College. Obviously referring to the need to study serious western music, a tone of (albeit mild) protest, characteristic of this publication, is noted:

All that we have to do to advance in music is to study the art, for we are sure that we as human beings are quite capable of 'speaking' this language (*i.e. western 'serious' music*) of human beings if we but study. We shall not allow anything to keep us from what we can get at will and what shall enrich our cultural standard (*Ilanga Lase Natal November 23, 1940:6*).

Broadly speaking, both the B.S.C. (Bantu Social Centre) in Durban and the B.M.S.C. (Bantu Men's Social Centre) in Johannesburg were institutions which functioned as symbols of the cultural 'progress' which epitomised the spirit of the 'liberal approach'. A review in *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1953 serves as a good example of the 'high' cultural tone engendered at the B.S.C. by the organisational secretary, Howard Mehlomakhulu, by the staging of a show which featured the soprano, Pattie Masuku, and tenor, Ignatius Themba, "two of Durban's leading singers", along with the Melody-Makers, Tango dancers, and a "dance and singing twosome, Petro Majola and Percy Mkhize". The second half of the programme consisted of the play, "Exclusive Model", written and produced by three whites. The columnist bemoans the fact that the hall was only half-filled. "Is it possible", he asks, "that the Durban public is allowing itself to deteriorate in the appreciation of programmes of cultural value?" A typically elite lecture on the importance of cultural advancement follows, along with assurances that "progressive" black South Africans will support "whatever he (Mehlomakulu) does for the sake of the cultural advancement of our community", which included the proposed establishment of 'Sigma' clubs, 'Musical Revues' (or variety concerts) and the founding of a Choral Society (*Ilanga Lase Natal April 25, 1953:16*).

The expression of liberal thought included a substantial measure of English ballads, madrigals, etc.

(*Mngoma – writer's interview: 14/2/95*) as well as western compositions in the vernacular which were composed by Africans. An entertainment review from the Bantu World presents vocal music representative of the liberal approach and a subtle glimpse of how western styles were part of the strategy to achieve liberation:

The Follies, the main stay (sic) of the programme, depicted various phases of African life in dance and song. After an absence from the group, Snowy Mahlangu (Nee Radebe) made her debut that night.

The Pretoria Minstrels ably rendered the Negro Spirituals which were well chosen and received by the audience.

Phyllis Mqomo sang "Lullaby", "My Task" and "On Wings of Song". She has a sweet, cultured voice and received an ovation. She was accompanied on the piano by Todd Matshikiza, whose colourful playing was an inspiration to the singer.

The highlight of the day was the rendering of Mohapeloa's Sotho compositions "Linoto" and "Obe" which were rendered with great dramatic effort by the Orlando choir. Mr Mothopeng, the conductor, is spectacular and thrilled the audience. ...

It was fitting for such a show to have "Plea for Africa" as its concluding item. – "Excelsior" (*Bantu World July 31, 1948:11*).

Apart from embracing 'high' or 'serious' western art, in the 1930s and 1940s the cultural demonstration of 'civilised finesse' in the entertainment sphere was ballroom dancing. This form of recreation was not *solely* the pre-occupation of the educated elite. However, there is sufficient evidence, both in newspaper references and from oral testimony, to attest that ballroom dancing was *perceived* - after some initial objection to its introductory association with foreigners (*Rezant - writer's interview 8/4/98*) - to be the ultimate expression of urbanised sophistication. Its proponents included those who felt that they had already attained this status, as well as those aspiring to, or wanting to be seen to be associated with, the perceived cultural refinement of the upper echelons of society (*Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94; Rezant – writer's interview: 8/4/98*).

From the press reports of the Gamma Sigma Club, the association can be viewed as a couth and refined manifestation of the 'liberal approach', in which the activities of discussion, debate and public speaking are a demonstration of the levels of civility and sophistication of its participants. References to the activities of this association occur in the 'Social Activities' pages of the black

press. However, in recounting the events which led to its emergence in 1921, Couzens portrays workers' hostile and aggressive attitude to whites, which would most comfortably fit the 'radical' period - the beginnings of which Ballantine attests occurred approximately twenty years later. Couzens describes how Ray Phillips, an American Board missionary who won the confidence of many black South Africans and a staunch proponent of the 'liberal approach', describes a massive strike which was being planned in the then Transvaal. It was to involve approximately 200 000 miners and another 100 000 domestic and industrial workers. Their brief, amongst other plans, included the capturing of mines, the looting of shops and banks, and the killing of whites "in their beds". Phillips, who attempted to win the confidence of the "embittered native leaders", was met with the response which typifies Ballantine's 'radical' view: "You are not wanted here. You had better go back home. There's not a white man in South Africa who cares the snap of his fingers for the black man. Peaceful measures have failed. We are being forced to try violence" (*Couzens* 1985:94).

It is in the measures which were adopted in order to quell this proposed violence (such as the formation of the Gamma Sigma Club) that the genre of liberalism reminiscent of that which Fanon scathingly articulates, is enacted. "The colonialist bourgeoisies" (as represented here by Phillips), appears to have the same interests as the colonised elite - in this instance the educated 'petits bourgeoisies'. These two groups meet in order to achieve "non-violence", which Fanon declares, is "an attempt to settle the colonial problem around a green baize table, before any regrettable act has been performed or irreparable gesture made, before any blood has been shed" (*Fanon* 1963:61).

Cracks in the self-satisfied ideology of the 'liberal approach' were expressed occasionally, and most often these concerned the arrogance of those in black leadership, who were generally also those who promoted black liberalism most vociferously. For some, the perception existed that there were many among the educated leaders of the race who were more concerned with the achievement and retention of personal status than the welfare of others. This ethos had resulted in a "wild ... scramble" to gain "personal eminence and security in business, educational attainment, and the profession." Glimpses of an African nationalism are to be seen in this article:

Each person who succeeds in this “individual battle” feels he is liberated, powerful, honoured. He does not think of the Masses, and is not even prepared to co-operate (sic) with his successful upper ten comrades ... To put it better, the contention is that Africans must produce great men in education, in profession, and in business first, to prove to the European that the black man can do this and that; second, to make the masses point out to these men as examples of African latent power; or to be inspired by them.

It was salutary, therefore, to hear a different point of view stated clearly and strongly. Dr. E. Roux's point of view is that of African Trade Unionists, Mass leaders ... In “The Trek” he points out that African Intellectuals etc. can never have freedom and status and respect until the Africans as a whole move forward. ... The task of the intellectuals should be to go down and help the submerged masses, not to hanker after security, personal glory and wealth. Here are two points of view, and you may debate them (*Ilanga Lase Natal February 17, 1945:12*).

In a convoluted defence of black intellectuals who had been accused of egocentric motives and actions, the editor of Bantu World claimed in 1941 that a distinction should be drawn between these selfish men and those who, despite education, have “humble intentions”. These are the black South Africans to whom allegiance is owed, not only because they “had protected their lowly fellowmen from victimisation”, but notably because “They are the people who have won us friends among Europeans” (*Bantu World November 15, 1941:4*).

These sentiments were by definition class- and education-based, and invariably involved superior attitudes of the intellectual elite. The importance of these sentiments lies in the slowly evolving idea among, it must be stressed, a few black politicians and journalists, that black liberation would only be achieved by the unification of the masses and the elite. In an article by “Optimus” in 1946, the belief is expressed that, while the realisation that education would help to achieve progress had not weakened, the “present system of (predominantly church and mission-school) education” was cause for dissatisfaction: “The tendency in our education is to isolate the learned from the untaught, and to endeavour to foster a class-standard which will make the literate to look down upon the man-in-the-gutter” (*Bantu World April 20, 1946:14*). The ‘man-in-the gutter’, as representative of the masses, would be necessary for the liberation of the black South African race. It must be emphasised that this opinion was *not* the majority one amongst intellectuals in the mid-1940s.

The present upheavals at Orlando have, for instance, been allowed to go unchronicled and unchallenged by the educated section of the Orlando community. They have not even identified themselves with the struggles of their people. Instead, ostrichlike, they have hidden their heads in the sand (*Bantu World April 20, 1946:14*).

At least in theory, elite ideals seemed to embrace a need for this state to be achieved by all members of the population. An ‘oppositional stance’ did not imply the Africanisation of the masses; progress, the inevitable result of education in western norms and civilisation, was to be the tool by which liberation would be achieved.

At the epicentre of the elite liberal period, respected critic Walter M.B. Nhlapo unambiguously placed himself firmly within the domain of the ‘civilised’ elite that promoted the precepts of this social philosophy so vigorously. Evidently criticising both the format and content of a “Students’ Reception” at the fairly select venue, the Ritz Hall, at which the prestigious Merry Blackbirds and Jazz Maniacs played, he appears to bemoan the loss of the prestigious ‘school concert’:

Students’ receptions are not what they were years ago. In this city, the name is for mere exploitation and thus these once upon a time worth attending gatherings have degenerated socially and educationally.

There was a time when in these gatherings students rendered musical items; most schools participated and were attended by outsiders of a much more responsible type and the occasion was a top-hole. But now it is not so. They dance from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. And what a dance!

Merry Blackbirds and Jazz Maniacs were in attendance (*Bantu World August 30, 1940:6*).

With most of the ‘sketches’ presented by the vaudeville troupes, whose material showed the first signs of incorporating African elements onto the entertainment stage, Nhlapo remains unimpressed:

This fact our people must bear in mind. The plays we see ... on our vaudeville stage lack beauty of style, felicity of expression, power of description, keen sense of humour or other outstanding qualities that make plays enjoyable and successful. So far as I know there is no playwright but one, Mr. H.I.E. Dhlomo and I am becoming too annoyed with headless and tail-less plays (*Bantu World January 11, 1941:9*).

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