"A Symbol of the New African": Drum magazine, popular culture and the formation of black urban subjectivity in 1950s South Africa.
Guldemann, Colette

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

For additional information about this publication click this link.
http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/handle/123456789/1814

Information about this research object was correct at the time of download; we occasionally make corrections to records, please therefore check the published record when citing. For more information contact scholarlycommunications@qmul.ac.uk
"A Symbol of the New African": Drum magazine, popular culture and the formation of black urban subjectivity in 1950s South Africa

Colette Guldimann

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Queen Mary, University of London
July 2003
Abstract

This thesis examines the emergence of black urban subjectivity in South Africa during the 1950s, focussing on the ways in which popular American genres were utilised in the construction of black urban identities that served as a means of resistance to apartheid. At the centre of this process was Drum magazine: founded in South Africa in 1951, it became the largest selling magazine on the African continent in 1956. Drum's success was due to the way in which it enabled the relocation of black identity from the "traditional" towards the "modern". The 1940s gave rise to widespread migration of black South Africans from rural to urban areas and this newly urbanised community was seeking models of black urban identity. Yet the Nationalist government was attempting to curtail the emergence of a black urban proletariat, which posed a threat to white political supremacy. Through apartheid legislation black identity was constructed as essentially tribal and rural. As a means of resisting this, urbanised black South Africans turned to, and appropriated, readily available forms of American culture. Drum published Americanised images, and stories: gangsters, black detectives, black comic heroes, and pulp romances. This popular material appeared alongside some of the finest investigative journalism ever published. While Drum magazine is widely acknowledged as having provided a platform for the emergence of black South African writing in English, its popular content has been dismissed by critics as apolitical escapism, imitation and capitulation to American culture. This thesis challenges the dismissal of the popular that has dominated analyses of Drum since the 1960s, arguing that such a position denies the agency of local writers and audiences. My analysis reveals that American forms were adopted in critically discerning ways and chosen for their ability to convey local meaning and create positions from which to resist apartheid.
Acknowledgements

My PhD at Queen Mary, University of London was made possible by the award of a Commonwealth Scholarship. I am grateful to the Association of Commonwealth Universities for the opportunity for intellectual stimulation and development.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Jacqueline Rose, for not allowing me to produce less than she knew I could and for challenging me to find my own voice.

Various people associated with Drum magazine in the 1950s have provided inspirational conversation and information. I would like to thank Lewis Nkosi for conversations, and suggestions, in Cape Town in April, 2001. Jurgen and Claudia Schadeberg were generous with enthusiasm and encouragement in Paris, 2002.

Chapter Two could not have been written without Edwin Hees, of the University of Stellenbosch, who generously shared his unique collection of archival film material with me in Cape Town, 1999.

I would like to thank the examiners of my MA dissertation, at the University of Cape Town, who urged me to continue my research into popular culture and Drum. Particular mention must go to Dorothy Driver and André Brink.

Leonard, at the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town, allowed me access to original paper copies of Drum, which gave me a sense of the magazine not possible from microfilm.

Research on the Pittsburgh Courier at Harvard University was made possible by Todd Wasson's generous hospitality in the United States. Thanks must also go to Todd for consistently challenging the limits of my imagination.

Thanks to Tim Sylvester for providing invaluable support and stimulation and for always having faith in the project, my ideas and my ability.
Contents

Introduction 6

1. From the Country to the City: "Drum come[s] to Jo'burg, but he was Jim no more." 43

2. Seeing Black: Come Back, Africa by Lionel Rogosin, Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi. 102

3. Re-framing the Politics of the Popular: Drum magazine and American Popular Culture. 160

4 Bessie Head's "Dramatic" Home Post Journalism. 211

Conclusion 283

Bibliography 290
Drum was a curious institution. It wasn't so much a magazine as it was a symbol of the new African cut adrift from the tribal reserve – urbanised, eager, fast-talking and brash.

The people here [Sophiatown] can't get passports, although many are keen to. It would burst your bloodsack to listen to them talk about ... "Home", by which they mean America.
Casey Motsisi, Drum magazine October 1957.
Introduction

On the 1st of April 1966 the South African Minister of justice, Mr B.J. Vorster, banned a list of forty-six writers -- who were all already in exile -- under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. The list of forty-six included the major figures associated with the emergence of black South African writing during the 1950s and the publication that is widely acknowledged as having provided a platform for this development: *Drum* magazine. The banned list included Can Themba, Todd Matshikzia, Bloke Modisane, Ezekiel Mphahlele, and Lewis Nkosi. Several other writers, who also wrote for *Drum* magazine, had already been banned under the act: Alfred Hutchinson, Dennis Brutus and Alex La Guma (Visser, 1976: 55). Between 1955 and 1965 South Africa was on the brink of what promised to be a "fully-fledged literary renaissance" represented by *Drum* magazine and its writers (Visser, 1976: 42).

From its inauguration in 1951 *Drum* magazine, written in English and aimed at a black audience, had by 1956 become the largest selling magazine on the African continent, outstripping sales of magazines in all languages. Its rapid rise to success was facilitated by a fundamental shift in the way in which black identity was represented within the magazine, which took place during the first year of its existence. This change occurred at the insistence of black readers, with the assistance of *Drum*’s black writers and it involved a relocation from the rural towards the urban, and from the “traditional” towards the “modern”. The decades of the 1940s and 1950s had given rise to previously unprecedented migration of black South Africans from the rural towards the urban areas. In 1946 the black population exceeded the white population in urban areas for the
first time in South Africa's colonial history, fuelling white fears that served as a precursor to the 1948 victory of the National Party and its policy of apartheid.

Yet while this new urban black community was in search of images that might represent black modernity, finding these in apartheid South Africa was no easy task. In the process of developing its policy of apartheid, the newly instituted Nationalist government was attempting to curtail the emergence of an urban black proletariat, which could threaten white economic and political supremacy. Through a series of laws, the Nationalist government attempted to halt permanent black settlement in urban areas and locate black identity as essentially ethnically, and rurally, based. A similar model was, unfortunately, made famous by Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* published in 1948. While the novel received international acclaim, its images of rural black identity, alongside its denial of black urban subjectivity, was a source of serious vexation to urban black South African writers of the 1950s. It was the novel they wrote against. With reference to Paton's novel *Drum* writer, Lewis Nkosi, explains that the *Drum* generation "had no literary heroes, like generations in other parts of the world" (1965: 7). Thus, to represent black modernity, South Africans had to look elsewhere and they turned to popular American and African-American images. *Drum* magazine's pages were filled with African-American jazz and its South Africa counterpart, boxers, gangsters, detectives and prominent African-Americans. *Drum* magazine combined its popular content with some of the finest investigative journalism ever to be written and thus provided political coverage of a crucial period in South Africa's struggle.

By 1976, however, just twenty years after *Drum* reached the first stage of its successful career, Visser was able to say about the "Renaissance that failed":
"today there is little evidence within South Africa that this ever occurred: all traces have been swept away in a torrent of restrictive legislation, censorship, and bannings" (1976: 42). The banning orders meant that these writers could no longer be read in South Africa. Perhaps never before, "has a movement of such intensity and magnitude been so thoroughly effaced -- to the extent that the names of many leading participants are no longer known to South African readers" (Visser, 1976: 42). In 1967, the year following the banning, Nadine Gordimer's warning rung out: these banned writers, and their works, would become "non-existent, so far as South African literature, South African thinking, South African culture, is concerned". "We shall not", she ominously predicted, "hear from them again" (Visser, 1976: 55).

Gordimer's words now have a sadly prophetic significance. In the 1970s a new generation of black South African writers expressed the difficulty of having to write without having recourse to the black literary tradition that emerged in the 1950s. In 1975 the poet, Mongane Serote told an African Literature Association conference in Austin, Texas, "about the disadvantages of learning to write without a vigorous, continuous, literary tradition of one's own" (Mzamane, 1989: 36): 1

When I started writing, it was as if there had never been writers before in my country. By the time I learned to write many people ... had left the country and were living in exile. We could not read what they had written, so it was as if we were starting from the beginning. (Quoted in Mzamane, 1989: 36-37)

---

1 This historical lacuna has been echoed by other figures, such as Richard Rive, one of the Drum writers of the 1950s. Black writers in 1970s South Africa didn't have "a precedent to fall back on" since the older writers had been banned, and new young writers had no access to them (Quoted in Mzamane, 1989: 37).
Thus, the banning of the *Drum* generation and their work not only made them inaccessible to readers in South Africa, but also meant that a whole generation grew up in ignorance of the previous generation's imaginative life (Addison, 1978: 9). There is, however, another tragic consequence of this banning for South African literary history. By the time the *Drum* writers were unbanned and their works made available in the 1980s, "the philosophy of Black Consciousness had reshaped the black self, driving writers to eschew involvement with whites" (Addison, 1978: 9). The *Drum* writers are separated from writers influenced by the philosophy of Black Consciousness by a traumatic turning point in South African political history: the events of Sharpeville, 1960. Organised by the Pan African Congress, Sharpeville was one of the sites of national anti-pass law demonstrations in which black protestors left their "pass" books at home and presented themselves for arrest at police stations. The "pass" was an identity document, which had to be carried by blacks at all times to prove their legality. The pass laws were the basic method used by the apartheid government to control the black majority in South Africa, since the laws determined where black people were allowed to live, work and even what work they could do (Pogrund, 1997: 2). At Sharpeville the police opened fire on peaceful protestors, killing sixty-nine, and shooting one hundred and fifty-five fleeing people in the back.² Shortly after this the Pan African Congress and the African National Congress were banned and a new violent and repressive period in South Africa's struggle was inaugurated. Thus, Black Consciousness and the literature it inspired "emerged in the midst of the political and cultural repression

² This information is from an annual Survey published by the South African Institute of Race Relations and quoted in Humphrey Tyler, 1995: 20.
which followed Sharpeville" (Mzamane, 1989: 37). Younger black writers who came to maturity after Sharpeville, were informed by Steve Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness, which advocated black liberation, physical and psychological, through the restoration of pride in black culture and identity and unifying black people. Black Consciousness rejected the non-racial approach enshrined in the African National Congress' Freedom Charter. These writers found themselves unable to relate to the previous generation, whose voices, silent for so long, now spoke from the other side of that historical and political divide. Thus the South African poets Mongane Serote and Mafika Gwala accused Drum writer Nat Nakasa of thinking that he was a "non-white", the Black Consciousness term for a black person whose aspirations are still white (Rive, 1989: 47; Biko, 1987: 48). Thus, for the post-Sharpeville generation, the Drum writers "died on the side of whiteness" (Rive, 1989: 47).

This harsh judgement, passed in retrospect from the 1970s, has extended to the whole Drum generation. The situation was summed up by one critic, in 1978, as follows: "today the [Drum] school as a whole stands accused by left-wing critics as having been elitists enjoying no firm bond with the masses. Even black writers are condescending about these literary predecessors of theirs" (Addison, 1978: 9). Surveying the critical canon on Drum, it is clear that while this judgement extended to Drum as a whole, it is also apparent that it is the popular genres in Drum that have inspired the harshest critical condemnation. As Addison points out, "popular mass literature has never been accorded a place in our understanding of the dynamics of political change" (1978: 9). It has been viewed as "investing the status quo with symbols of legitimacy, escapes and consolations for the common man, promises but no fulfilment" (1978: 9). A
distinction between the serious and the popular content of *Drum* has dominated criticism from the outset. While most commentators have been prepared to concede that *Drum* published politically serious journalism and "genuine literature", worthy of consideration, they have been swift to condemn the popular genres published in the magazine, as apolitical and escapist. The condemnation of the latter is justified through a comparison with the politically overt protest literature, which developed after Sharpeville and the emergence of Black Consciousness. Due to legislative restrictions by the South African government, protest literature was increasingly published outside the borders of South Africa. In setting up the comparison between *Drum*’s popular genres and protest literature, early critics of *Drum* created an unfortunate, and enduring, opposition between writing published within South Africa, and writing published abroad. This created a dichotomy between the "local" and the "global" and gave rise to an entrenched idea that local writers and audiences were less discriminating than their foreign counterparts. It is this idea, still prevalent in *Drum* criticism as recently as 1997, that I wish to challenge in this thesis.³

In 1966, the same year as the banning order on the *Drum* writers, Bernth Lindfors inaugurates a critical discussion of *Drum* magazine with the comparison described: he contrasts the American-style "pot-boilers" written for *Drum* magazine with protest literature in liberal publications. Lindfors suggests that "[t]oday African writers in South Africa can choose between writing innocuous fantasies for a South African audience or writing protest literature for a foreign audience" (1966: 62):

---

³ For an example of this, see Neville Choonoo (1997). I return to a discussion of Choonoo in this introduction.
If he writes for magazines such as *Drum*, he writes for an audience that wants entertainment, excitement and diversion. Stories of love, crime and violence are very popular, especially if they are told in a bold, authoritative manner. If he writes for liberal or radical publications, he writes for an audience that expects strong opinions, loud complaints, and a commitment to a cause. (1966: 55)

While Lindfors is clearly concerned with the prescriptive constraints of each genre -- "protest" or "fantasy" -- his literary and political contempt is reserved for a very particular aspect of *Drum*. The worst stories in *Drum*, he suggests, have been "imitations" of three types of American short fiction: "the true confession, the detective serial and the underworld comedy" (1966: 56). Lindfors characterises each as "ludicrously accurate imitations" that suffer from the "same affliction": "a talent for copying bad models well" (1966: 56). Commenting on a detective serial published in *Drum* about a black private eye, Lindfors claims that "nothing about him or his adventures can be identified as authentically South African" (1966: 57). Similarly, in underworld comedies "which try to show criminals in a sympathetic or humorous light", here again, "there is nothing South African about the language, the characters or situation; everything has been imported from America" (1966: 57). I address each of these three types of "American" fiction in my thesis: Bloke Modisane's underworld story, "The Dignity of Begging" in chapter one, Arthur Mairane's serial about a black detective in chapter three and the True Romance stories published in *Golden City Post*, *Drum*'s sister newspaper, in chapter four. In each instance I reveal that though the frame may be "American", it is being filled with local content and used to dramatise issues and debates that are very specifically South African.

It is fortunate, according to Lindfors, that the "excesses encouraged by *Drum* cannot be found in all of the African fiction in South Africa" (1966: 57-
The "most successful stories" by African writers are "hard-hitting realistic or naturalistic sketches of life in South Africa, stories which emphasize the plight of the African in a society ruled by whites" (1966: 58). We are left in no doubt as to the critical distinction between Drum's "accurate imitations" of American short-fiction in which there is "nothing South African" and the "realistic or naturalistic sketches of life in South Africa", texts that are able to "emphasize the plight of the African" (1966: 58).

With Don Dodson's influential and frequently cited article "The Four Modes of Drum" published in 1974, the fate of the popular content of Drum magazine shifts from being viewed as politically naïve to being part of the apparatus of oppression. I dwell at some length on Dodson's analysis since, as I will demonstrate, the critical groundwork he laid continued to dominate thinking about Drum for over two decades. Referencing banning in South Africa, Dodson makes the same distinction as Lindfors: he separates the local and the global. While "foreign readers have nurtured South African protest writing", censors in South Africa "have tried to root it out of the market with such tools as the Suppression of Communism Act" (1974: 317). Thus the "author who writes for a mass audience within South Africa must choose other modes of artistic response to oppression" (1974: 317). Turning, inexplicably, to Drum from 1960 to 1965, a time when, as other critics point out, Drum was in decline, Dodson identifies four modes of writing in Drum: humour, irony, realism and romance. He sets about analysing each of these modes in order to reveal their relationship to the problem of apartheid (1974: 318). With the exception of irony, these modes fail to supply

---

4 According to Addison, for example, Dodson's "study was carried out on Drum between [sic] 1960 and 1965, a period of decline, and furthermore Dodson
political enlightenment and thus provide merely a form of "escapism" from the political oppression that dominated black life. The popular genres in Drum thus implicitly assist apartheid by providing a form of opium for the masses.

Humour in Dodson's definition is "basically apolitical" and "has neither the rebellion of satire nor the subversion of irony" (1974: 318). Dodson chooses Casey Motsisi's writing as his example of humour in Drum and the shortcomings of this mode are revealed, once again, in comparison with protest literature, published outside the country: "Motsisi ... portrays justice, both legal and editorial, as totally arbitrary. Yet the arbitrariness is amusing rather than frightening. His oppressors are friendly adversaries, not terrible enemies as in protest literature" (1974: 326). The "humorous" description of police, landlord and tsotsis [gangsters]⁵ -- the three villains of protest literature -- "differ sharply in tone from most of the South African writing that has won popularity outside the country" (1974: 327). Thus humour serves the interests of everyone in an oppressive system except those who dare to change it. (1974: 328)

When turning to the mode of irony, Drum enjoys a brief reprieve. As his example of irony -- "a comic form in which there is a contrast between what is said and what is meant" -- Dodson chooses an unsigned column, entitled "Off Beat-Boy" (1974: 319). Dodson's praise for one of the stories published in the column, makes it sound remarkably reminiscent of protest literature:

paid no attention to the very evident fact that Drum's content reflected the emotional tenor of the townships" (1978: 8).

⁵ "Tsotsi" is the township word for a black urban gangster and is derived from "zoot suit", a reference to the flashy American-style clothing preferred by the "tsotsis".
It portrays a system of justice that punishes the failure to perform an illegal activity in a proper manner. And that system of justice, more significantly, mirrors a legal system that arbitrarily makes crimes of human foibles. Like many trials in South Africa, this one is a farce. (1974: 329)

The endorsement of Drum is short-lived since Dodson finds a "relative scarcity" of irony in Drum (1974: 331).

The third mode of Drum is realism and this is once again compared to protest writing: while "[e]mploying many of the same materials as protest, realism differs in its lack of commitment" as "it does not attempt to trace the links of cause and effect between people and institutions" (1974: 319-320). If the purpose of protest is to "change or persuade", the purpose of realism is merely to illuminate (1974: 320). Unlike protest, realism is, therefore, "not an immediate threat to the social order" and will be tolerated by authority "if it does not tread ... into the forbidden realm of analysis" (1974: 320). Realism thus illuminates the Drum reader's life "without showing any path out of the darkness" and it "does not help him cope with the environment" of apartheid (1974: 320).

The final mode identified by Dodson has the most significance for this thesis since it includes any writing that might be considered escapist: romance "is the most common mode in Drum and since it centres on love and adventure, it offers the escape that realism withholds" (1974: 335). Analysing pulp romance stories and two serials about black superheroes -- a photo-story serial about a black detective, "The Ghost", and the adventures of "The Spear", "ruthless enemy of the underworld" -- Dodson concludes that the "moral" of romance is that "[t]here isn't one!" (1974: 341, emphasis in original). "Political comment", he claims, "would be foreign to such literature" (1974: 341). In describing romance as "fundamentally anti-realistic" since its "relation to the real world of
its audience is tenuous at best" Dodson reveals that the comparison is, again,
with protest writing (1974: 341). Romance thrives, however, because it "seems
to fulfil some real needs -- political for the elite and psychological for the masses
-- of the entire hierarchy of oppression" (1974: 341):

Superiors in the scale of hierarchy permit it on the assumption that it will
keep the masses happy -- or at least diverted. Writers use it partly
because it is less demanding than other modes, partly because they know
it will have a large market, partly because they too must escape to endure.
And readers in South Africa, like all prisoners, desire escape. So
romance is the most likely of all literary modes of bolster the existing
social order. (1974: 320)

In Dodson's heavy-handed analysis, Drum readers' enthusiastic
derendorsement of these stories are dismissed as nothing less than "delusional"
(1974: 341). Dodson cites two letters to the editor of Drum: one praising a story
called "Love -- By Accident" because "[t]his kind of incident happens to many
people", while another remarks that "The Ghost" is "[a] lovely story" because it
"happens to many people" (1974: 341). Dodson's response is startling: "[s]uch
delusions", he claims, "may be dysfunctional for daily role behaviour" (1974:
341).

There are fundamental problems with Dodson's analysis. Like Lindfors,
he polarises writing within South Africa and writing which is published abroad,
privileging the latter for its overt political content. Dodson's political motivation
-- to defend black readers of Drum from a form of American cultural imperialism
that will merely prolong their political suffering by distracting them from
political protest and enlightenment -- is not in question. Yet, in his fervour, he
denies Drum readers the very sense of agency he is attempting to produce. To
accuse readers of being diverted, deceived and even deluded by popular cultural
forms is to deny a local audience any sense of critical receptive ability and to ignore the way in which local reception of imported American forms might function in Africa. Challenging the idea that Drum writers were merely imitating and transmitting popular American genres with no intervention, or political purpose, and that readers were passively accepting this material, lies at the heart of this thesis. In constructing a theoretical challenge I will draw on the recent groundbreaking work of Stephanie Newell, whose research is pioneering the field of African cultural studies. As Newell indicates in her seminal work on *Ghanaian Popular Fiction* (2000), the ideas underpinning Dodson's critique, have a long history in thinking about imported popular genres in Africa. In their response to the "spread of mass-communications networks from Western cities into far-flung ex-colonial societies" theorists have, says Newell, "sought to access -- in general and transcultural terms -- the impact of imported popular genres upon local populations" (2000: 1). The most common response "[w]hen metropolitan genres are absorbed and 'mimicked' by consumers for whom they were not produced", is for theorists to ask whether we aren't "witnessing another, more invidious form of colonialism, a type of invasion which occupies the very imaginations and fantasies of new audiences" (Newell, 2000: 1). Interrogating this idea, Newell's work sets out to "redefine the concept of mimicry", crucial to Lindfors and Dodson and the case of Drum, and "replace it with the idea that local authors and audiences employ quoting techniques which are far more dynamic and culturally located than allowed for by theorists" (2000: 2). What has been read as "apparent emulation", says Newell, "when local authors seem to 'adopt' familiar genres such as the romance, needs instead to be culturally contextualised and analysed for the ways in which this usage transforms existing
popular templates" (2000: 2). Drawing on Newell's theoretical lead, and recent paradigms from cultural studies, I challenge the dismissal of Drum's use of popular genres and the concomitant concept of an uncritical Drum audience. In the course of this thesis I examine the emergence of the urban-based short story, film, South Africa's first black detective stories, American-style comic strips, true romance stories and the romantic advice column. Far from being mere mimicry, devoid of local content and political commentary, I argue, that each of these forms is politically engaged in creating new spaces for black urban subjectivity that was in direct defiance of apartheid ideology.

In order to underscore the necessity for a new critical framework, I want to demonstrate how the terms of Dodson's critique continued to dominate the critical reception of Drum magazine for the next two decades, thus highlighting the contribution this thesis will make to a new critical vision of Drum magazine and to an understanding of the reception of popular culture in black South Africa.

Nicholas Visser's "The Renaissance that failed" is an account of the way in which censorship quelled the thriving literary renaissance of the 1950s and Visser claims that it would be difficult to overestimate Drum's contribution to the growth of black South African writing, since "[t]ucked in among the pin-ups and the advertisements for skin lighteners were some of the finest short stories and journalistic pieces that have appeared in Africa" (1976: 48). Yet, there is still a distinction between serious analysis, real literature and trash: Drum "is an incredible mixture of yellow-press and penetrating social and political analysis, genuine literature and the most ephemeral trash imaginable" (1976: 48, emphasis mine). In an unambiguous demonstration of the influential nature of this distinction, almost identical words are used by Paul Gready, some sixteen
years after Visser's article, in 1990, in his distinction between "genuine quality writing" and "ephemeral trash" in Drum magazine (1990: 144).

Another key issue that dominates critical writing about Drum is raised by Visser, who claims that these black South African writers were "middle class in aspiration and profession", but that due to apartheid, they were "restricted, by law, to the physical and social environment of the urban slum" (1976: 51). The idea that Drum writers aspired to, or occupied, a different class position from the majority of their readers, combined with their lack of overt protest writing, has proved to be a constant source of consternation to certain critics. Graeme Addison, for example, struggles to reconcile what he sees as contradictory elements in Drum magazine. "The curious things about Drum", in fact, "the problem" he says, "was that it appeared to function as a political instrument in spite of its tawdry, irresponsible air; that its commercial guise somewhat belied its importance as an articulator of the black experience and black aspirations" (1978: 5-6). What set the Drum writers apart from their journalistic predecessors, like Sol Plaatje, was that they had no sort of political ambitions for themselves; indeed some eschewed politics altogether (1978: 6). The commitment of the Drum writers has thus "been questioned" and "their status in history is by no means as secure as that of Plaatje" or later journalists who tended increasingly to conform to the "politician-journalist archetype" (1978: 6).

Despite the "problem" -- its lack of political commitment -- Drum is partially vindicated as a reliable source of political expose. Yet Addison is, once again, careful to separate the "serious" from the "escapist":
As far as the "serious" journalism is concerned, then, there is no basis for the charge that Drum functioned as an agency of white domination. This charge does seem to hold more substance when one examines the jazz and sportswriting, and particularly some of the escapist fiction which loaded many editions of the magazine. (1978: 7)

The publication, in 1989, of an anthology of stories and journalism selected from Drum magazine in the 1950s sparked a renewed critical controversy about Drum magazine and its position in South African literary history. The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s, published in South Africa by Natal University Press, was edited and introduced by the eminent South African scholar Michael Chapman. In seeking to restore Drum's position, and reassert its ongoing significance, in South Africa's literary history, Chapman addresses critiques of Drum that predate the anthology, and confronts the tendency of critics with "broadly Marxist-ideological sympathies" who find in the Drum writers an alienation, both personal and historical that precluded them from facing the "shift of social forces" (1989: 210). Drum writers may reveal what appears to be a "petty-bourgeois contradiction between identification with a specific local reality and the desire to find in art a universalizing, even a transcending image of experience" (1989: 220-221). Yet, claims Chapman, this universality was itself a historically precise concept in which the "universal" "was pitted not against the local, but against segregationist policies and practices" (1989: 221). Locating Drum writing within the context of urbanisation and the struggle for new forms of black identity under apartheid, Chapman suggests, for example, that the "bourgeois individualism", which proved to be so problematic for other critics, was a response to the "undifferentiated mass of black people" apartheid created (1989: 206). In discussing the detective serial created by the writer Arthur Maimane for Drum
magazine in 1953 Chapman has none of the disdain of Lindfors for "imitation", or Dodson for "escapism". Acknowledging the "nonchalant disdain" of the "Americanized black private detective" Chapman sees the detective, "Chester O. Morena [sic] [a]s another trickster-figure" in the folk tradition who "outwits all comers" (1989: 206). He claims that this story serves as "Maimane's own brief respites from a demeaning life", and is thus a kind of "bourgeois-individual" reaction to apartheid (1989: 206). In offering this re-evaluation of Maimane's story, Chapman demonstrates his distance from "the tendency of formalist criticism to identify 'good' and 'bad' texts" in Drum. (1989: 222). Yet despite recognising this story as a response to apartheid, he still views the story, mimetically, as "escapist trash" (1989:206).

A review of The Drum Decade inspired a debate about the function of South African literary criticism which is of immense significance for this thesis, since it addressed the intersection of aesthetic criteria and the politics of liberation in South Africa. The review by David Maughan-Brown covered two anthologies of material selected from magazines. Chapman's Drum Decade coincided with the publication of another anthology from a magazine, Ten Years of Staffrider: 1978 - 1988, and the almost simultaneous publication appeared to invite comparisons between the two books. Ten Years of Staffrider was edited by South African writers Andries Walter Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavic. As the preface informs us, the magazine was founded to "provide a forum for the literary and artistic work from the oppressed communities", "inscribed as it was with the imperative to resist officially sanctioned culture and its concomitant
aims of domination". (1988). The magazine's orientation was thus overtly political and its material aimed to provide "a seed-bed for the conceptualisation of a democratic perspective on culture and its important relationship to the resurgence of the national democratic movement" (1988). Even though Maughan-Brown expresses criticism of both anthologies, it is clear that his critique of the *Drum* writers is founded, yet again, in a comparison with their *Staffrider* counterparts.

The main thrust of Maughan-Brown's review consists of two critiques launched against Chapman's selection and attempted restoration of *Drum* 's historical significance. These are also recurring themes in the *Drum* critical canon: the dangers of celebrating "escapism" and a critique of the *Drum* writers' lack of political commitment, based on a comparison with protest writing of the 1970s. Maughan-Brown argues that Chapman's selection and celebration of the cultural "vitality" of the *Drum* writers and Sophiatown is representative of a wider problem. Retrospective reconstructions of 1950s fail, he claims, to "examine the extent to which the frenetic life-style depicted served as an escape from the social reality" (1989: 20). Maughan-Brown's concern with this "vitality" is related to the problem of apolitical escapism, since he claims that we need an insight into how this functioned "as an escape from social circumstance - of which the stories in the anthology offer only an inkling" (1989: 7). He doesn't see the possibility of this "vitality" engaging social circumstances.

---

6 These quotations are taken from the first two pages of a three-page preface to *Ten Years of Staffrider: 1978 - 1988*. The pages are not numbered.

7 Sophiatown, a cosmopolitan, multi-racial residential area, west of Johannesburg, was home to the *Drum* writers, black intellectuals and the heart of black culture in the 1950s. It was demolished by the Nationalist Government in
The second problem is that the anthology is celebrating "the essentially middle-class attitudes towards 'crime', gender, economic systems, and overt political commitment ... of the black petty-bourgeois professional" (1989: 12). He chooses Bloke Modisane's story, "The Dignity of Begging", as one example. Maughan-Brown complains that the story about a beggar who earns twice a normal wage from begging is "not positing an alternative ethic in the face of unbearable social and economic pressures" (1989: 8). In fact by encouraging the assumption that beggars are confidence tricksters making twice as much money by begging as they would by "doing an honest day's work" the story is, says Maughan-Brown, trivialising economic deprivation. The story is thus "less than revolutionary towards the economic dispensation it takes for granted" (1989: 8).

This recurring theme in Drum criticism is still in predominant circulation. As recently as 1997 a book about South Africa's Alternative Press, published by Cambridge University Press, edited by Les Switzer, renowned author of bibliographic guides to the black press in Southern Africa, contained an essay in which the author's critiques echo those already outlined in this introduction. Like previous critics Neville Choonoo is eager to assert that in "their exposés and short stories in Drum and Golden City Post ... African writers were active participants in marketing the promise of upward mobility" and "middle-class consumerism" to their "working-class readers" (1997: 257). Like Dodson, Visser, Addison and Gready, Choonoo is eager to assert the difference between two types of writing in Drum publications, yet he correlates these with two different kinds of audiences:

the late 1950s and replaced with a white suburb named "Triomph", meaning "triumph" in Afrikaans. I discuss Sophiatown at length in chapter two.
Journalists ... were writing to two different, and essentially incompatible, audiences -- the working class African, and the white-liberal and black petty bourgeois elite. For working class readers, they wrote short, entertaining stories in which they championed the resilient survivors of apartheid -- the tsotsi, the detective, the crime buster, the shebeen queens and their customers. For petty bourgeois readers, in particular white readers, they sought to use their stories to stir protest against the conditions wrought by apartheid. In essence, these literary journalists wrote stories to appeal to readers who sought to escape the reality of pain, but at the same time they sought to stir the conscience of readers who needed to be made aware of the pain. (1997: 260)

Once again the "escapist" entertainment is represented as a means to make oppression tolerable while the protest writing does the political work. What is enormously problematic in this dichotomy, is Choonoo's suggestion that working class audiences lack any critical reception and it is only the petty bourgeois, educated readers who are able to benefit from "serious" writing. This thesis will demonstrate Drum readers' selective responses to "escapist entertainment".

The value of this critical dismissal of Drum, demonstrated by Choonoo and Maughan-Brown, was interrogated by two eminent South African intellectuals who replied to Maughan-Brown's review: Njabulo Ndebele and Mbulelo Mzamane. The ensuing polemic turned not merely on Drum magazine, but on the culture and purpose of literary criticism in South African society of the late 1980s. This reflexivity was no doubt due to the momentous political changes of the late 1980s that led up to President F.W. de Klerk's watershed speech, on the 2nd of February 1990, in which he repealed restrictions on hitherto banned political organisations - including the African National Congress. In that same month, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after almost twenty-seven years.

In "The Ethics of Intellectual Combat" Ndebele claims that a response to Maughan-Brown should lead us to question what the aims and objectives of
academic criticism in South Africa are in the historic moment of 1989. After reading Maughan-Brown's review, he says, "you are not quite sure what the point of the essay really has been, since your attention is almost exclusively absorbed by the spectacle of intellectual combat" (Ndebele, 1989: 28). He provides a telling parody:

In general the convention works like this: read primary texts for the purpose of finding something to shoot down, and when you have found it, be relentless in your mission of demolition, of shattering myths, of pulling down false idols. When in our present case the dust clears, Can Themba, Bloke Modisane, Jordan Ngubane, Henry Nxumalo, Ezekiel Mphahlele are found dead, and there is not much else left beyond the authority of a critic who has taken us through a raging battle, leaving us bewildered. (1989: 28)

Concerned that "that intellectual disputation appears to have lost its liberating and humane social orientation", Ndebele asks whether "South African intellectuals have also internalised the violence inherent in their society?" (1989: 28-29).

While Ndebele does engage in defending the Drum writers against Maughan-Brown, this is, by his own admission, less pressing than questions about the role of criticism in South Africa, a question that still has significance for the future of the Drum writers. Ndebele articulates the necessity for "a rigorous, responsible and illuminating radical criticism, one in tune with the 'terrible beauty' of our times, which is able to push forward the frontiers of our literary and intellectual culture" (1989: 34-35).

The vital role of "responsible criticism" is taken up by Mbulelo Mzamane. "Progressive scholarship in South Africa", he says, is part of the process of restoring to Africans their history and culture and there are few in the world who feel the need, more than the disadvantaged and oppressed people in South Africa, to arrest the erosion of their culture and humanity by the
"dominant" and "largely superimposed culture in their land" (1989: 36). Yet with regard to Maughan-Brown's observations regarding the ideological deficiencies of the Drum writers in relation to the Staffrider generation, there are, claims Mzamane, historical reasons for such differences in political orientation that are not elucidated by Maughan-Brown: the great divide between the Drum writers and the Staffrider generation, the "traumatic period" that serves as a "dividing line" in political consciousness is Sharpeville, the ensuing political and cultural repression, and the concomitant rise of Black Consciousness (1989: 36).

Thus the status of Drum magazine and its writers, as well as the value of its legacy, is inextricably linked to a discussion about South African literary culture and its aesthetic criteria. That aesthetic criteria in South Africa are deeply rooted in the politics of resistance has been demonstrated by the way in which critical responses to Drum have been dominated by comparisons with protest writing, influenced by Black Consciousness, in which the Drum writers came out not merely second best, but in which all the popular "escapist" aspects of Drum were deemed to be apolitical escapism.

The debate about the role of literary criticism and culture in a changing society reached the South African public, and new levels of controversy, with the publication of a paper addressing the relationship between politics and South Africa's cultural imagination. Published in 1990 in the left-wing weekly paper in South Africa, The Weekly Mail, "Preparing ourselves for freedom" was originally delivered at an ANC seminar on culture, and was written by Albie Sachs. Sachs begins, like Ndebele, by pointing to the future that lies ahead and the extraordinary vigilance it demands: "We all know where South Africa is, but we do not yet know what it is. Ours is the privileged generation that will make
that discovery, if the apertures in our eyes are wide enough" (1990: 19).

Addressing the future leaders of South Africa, Sachs asks whether there is a sufficient "cultural vision that corresponds to this current phase in which a new South African nation is emerging". "Or are we still trapped", he asks, "in the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination?" (1990: 19). As a means of preparing for freedom, Sachs suggests that "our members should be banned from saying that culture is a weapon of the struggle" (1990: 19). He explains why, as someone who has previously supported the idea, it now appears not only banal, but also potentially harmful to art and culture. When there is more emphasis on ideology than aesthetics "[o]ur artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work, it is enough that it be politically correct" (1990: 20). The result says Sachs is that "[i]nstead of getting real criticism, we get solidarity criticism" (1990: 20). I want to suggest it is precisely this "solidarity criticism" that the Drum generation fell foul of. Politically correct art, Sachs continues, is overtly organised around protest and opposition: "the more fists and spears and guns, the better" (1990: 20). Ambiguity and contradiction have no place in these representations and instead:

whether in poetry or painting or on the stage, we line up our good people on the one side and the bad ones on the other, occasionally permitting someone to pass from one column to another, but never acknowledging that there is bad in the good, and, even more difficult, that there can be elements of good in the bad; you can tell who the good ones are because, in addition to being handsome of appearance, they can all recite sections of the Freedom Charter ... at the drop of a beret. (1990: 20)

Sachs is clearly making a political reference to the entrenched polarities of South African society and the necessary reformulation of aesthetic criteria, demanded by a new phase of South African history. Yet, it is also this very entrenched
dichotomy, of the politically "good" and "bad", that resulted in *Drum*’s relegation and I want to suggest that it is not merely legitimate to extend Sach’s argument, retrospectively, to a re-reading of *Drum*, for if we are to take Sachs, Mzamane and Ndebele seriously, this re-evaluation is politically imperative. Sachs acknowledges that in the midst of a political struggle there is no room for ambiguity: "[i]n the case of a real instrument of struggle, there is no room for ambiguity: a gun is a gun is a gun, and if it were full of contradictions, it would fire in all sorts of directions and be useless for its purpose" (1990: 20). Hence the necessity for oppositions. Yet the power of art, lies "precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions -- hence the danger of viewing it as if it were just another kind of missile-firing apparatus" (1990: 20). Throughout this thesis I will argue that *Drum* was doing exactly what Sachs suggests art should do: expose contradictions and reveal the hidden tensions.

In a curious historical coincidence the year that gave birth to South African’s first democratic elections, 1994, was also the year in which two critical responses to *Drum* were published that finally broke the repetitious mould of previous criticism. Both insist the use of American popular culture by *Drum* writers must be examined as more than merely instances of imitation, mimicry or escape, and seen as forms of resistance to the apartheid government’s attempt to construct all black identity as ethnically, and thus rurally, based. Ulf Hannerz suggests two major ways of considering culture: in the more dominant view, he claims, cultures are considered to make up a "global mosaic" (1997: 164). In this historical model, the integrity and purity of culture is localised in relation to

---

8 The article was first published in the *Journal of South African Studies* 20, 2 (1994). I am, however, referencing the version reprinted in Karin Barber’s *Readings in African Popular Culture* (1997).
territory and it is this view that informs the understanding of culture preferred by
the nation state. At its extreme, suggests Hannerz, this model also represents the
cultural policy of apartheid (1997: 164). Against this view, Hannerz posits what
he terms the "global ecumene", which "draws on the fundamental assumption
that as a collectively held organisation of meaning and meaningful forms, culture
belongs to social relationships, and sets of such relationships" and only
"derivatively" and "without logical necessity" to territories (1997: 164). Since
some meanings and forms travel more easily than others, "we can no longer
readily conceive of cultures as distinct packages of homologously distributed
items" (1997: 164). Addressing the use of America popular culture, and
Modisane's taste for both smoked salmon and James Joyce (both would be
considered escapist and elitist by critics scrutinising Drum for overt signs of
political protest) Ulf Hannerz claims that one could dismiss these -- routinely and
with some distaste, as many critics have done -- as more sad examples of the
overwhelming cultural power of the centre over the periphery (1997: 168). Yet,
utilising his definitions of culture, one can also see it in another way. The
Sophiatowners were confronted with an adversary: the Nationalist government
that was intent on inserting barriers of ethnic discontinuity into the cultural
continuum of hybridity that characterised Sophiatown. Thus the cosmopolitan
can become "a form of local resistance": "Accepting New York could be a way
of rejecting Pretoria, to refuse the cultural entailments of any sort of 'separate

Hannerz thus sees Drum's use of imported forms as more dynamic than
mere mimicry and his model is able to account for the use of popular forms more
adequately than "solidarity criticism" might. His model, however, still rests on
the opposition between the "local" and "global". While he recognises resistance, Hannerz still sees it located in the global, as opposed to the local. Cultural resistance, he suggests, doesn't necessarily have to draw its symbolic resources from local roots, and "it seems to have been in the logic of the situation to reaffirm the links between Sophiatown and the world" (1997: 168).

Rob Nixon's book, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, is an account of the cultural exchange between the United States and South Africa. Nixon's work is significant for my thesis since it advances the idea that black South African reception to American popular culture was critically discerning and that the context of reception crucially altered the meaning of texts. While claiming that "*Drum* was scarcely a dissident forum" Nixon does examine the way in which it gave "symbolic sustenance to urban identities that could not be reduced to the negative plight of `detrabilization’" (1994: 30). Embracing the Hollywood image of outlaw was one way in which Black South Africans "answered their imposed illegality", which was a result of the "oppressive legislation mounted during the 50s" that left black South Africans facing "the virtual foreclosure of the law-abiding life" (1994: 31). In his analysis of Sophiatown's adoption of the outlaw or gangster image from Hollywood movies, Nixon demonstrates how this could only take place because the young Sophiatowners "energetically resisted the moral resolution of Hollywood gangster movies" (1994: 35). The apartheid government carefully controlled the images that were disseminated to the extent that foreign films were censored if they offered any images of black identity that were not in keeping with roles of servitude, as I discuss in chapter two. The South African Board of Censors announced in 1956 that they were determined to exclude from South Africa any films where "Red Indians are shown as the good
fellows and the White man as a crook, because of the bad influence they would have on our natives” (1994: 34). Yet the head of Non-European Affairs department of Johannesburg reassured white citizens of the city that since in Hollywood crime films “the enforcers of the law routinely triumphed over the outlaws”, “crime movies could not possibly pose a threat to society’s moral fibre” (1994: 34). It is thus interesting to note that the official white attitude towards Hollywood films in the black community was similar to those of Drum’s critics, like Dodson: a form of escapism that ultimately reinforced the hegemony of apartheid.

To have this attitude is, however, “to deny the complexities of viewers patterns of identification” and thereby the potential for what Manthia Diawara calls “resisting spectatorship” (Nixon, 1994: 34). Thus, in their “imitation” of the Hollywood gangsters, it is clear that these young male Sophiatowners had resisted the “moral resolution” intended by Hollywood and the apartheid censors.

The first sustained study of the local use of American popular in 1950s Drum, is Mac Fenwick’s analysis of the shifting figure of the gangster in Drum. In the Hollywood gangster Drum writers found a figure they could identify with because he was "always/already foreign to and in conflict with the wider state apparatus in which he lived and parasitically thrived” (1996: 617). Thus as a "part of their wider project of resisting tribalisation and the credo of separate development, the Drum writers took this already subversive element of American culture and appropriated it to black South Africa” (1996: 617). Fenwick identifies three distinct stages in the evolution of the gangster-figure in Drum, which he correlates with historical circumstances. Through this extensive
analysis Fenwick demonstrates how the use of American popular culture was
directly related to, and a response to, local conditions.9

Fenwick makes a crucial distinction between real gangsters and their
representational use in Drum magazine, a point apparently overlooked by earlier
critics. He concedes that as real individuals "the gangsters were not a politically
effective group", since "they were constrained by their own devotion to
individualism, their entirely self-interested social vision and their lack of any
coherent ideology" (1996: 264). Yet the representation of the gangster-figure
within the pages of Drum offered a "subject-position" from which to resist the
white state: "Drum's gangster narratives took the image of the gangster that was
so admired ... and harnessed its subversive potential to Drum's larger project of
resisting tribalisation and the credo of separate development" (1996: 264-265).
Quite in opposition to regarding this as a passive imitation, or even as evidence
of the Drum's writers' apolitical stance, Fenwick actually claims that this was a
politically defiant, and effective, move and that Drum accomplished with the
gangster-image, on the level of cultural production, "what the ANC has failed to
accomplish with the gangsters themselves at the level of political agitation"

9 Fenwick demonstrates that the "high point for gangsterism" in Drum
coincides with the demolition of Sophiatown" and suggests that this represents
"the attempts by urban blacks to protect their unique culture" (1996: 622). Yet in
the early 1960s, once Sophiatown had disappeared and white domination had
finally set in, "the gangster narrative, and the figure of the gangster himself, all
but disappear from the pages of Drum" (1996: 622). This correlation would thus
suggest "not only a connection between the popularity of the gangster-figure and
urban black resistance, but an active use of that figure by that resistance" (1996:
622).

10 Fenwick's distinction between real gangsters and the image of the
gangster and its cultural production is reminiscent of Sachs' caution that while in
the real struggle there is no room for ambiguity, "a gun is a gun", we should
It is in the work of Stephanie Newell that the study of popular culture and its reception in Africa receives formal attention and well-overdue theorisation. Newell outlines the two standard critical responses to the importation, and use of, metropolitan genres in Africa. As already indicated with reference to Dodson, the majority of critics view this as yet another insidious form of colonialism. Others, however, have begun to suggest that cultural imports from the West are radically transformed by their new contexts. The former attitude has dominated critical responses, as demonstrated in this introduction with reference to Drum, and the study of popular forms in Africa has thus long been neglected. Popular narratives produced in Africa are still viewed as "conservative" or "reactionary" by literary scholars, in contrast with so-called "serious" African literature (Newell, 2000: 7). One of the problems Newell identifies is the way in which criticism is locked into "centre-periphery models of cultural transmission" (2002: 9). Some theorists have presented "local audiences in postcolonial societies as the passive consumers of a drug-like alien culture, slowly becoming "committed" to mass-produced Western forms" (2000: 3). This is connected to a "distinction between the cosmopolitan (who mediates between cultures) and the local (who simply received imported forms)" (2000: 3). Newell relates this to the centrality of the concept of migration in current postcolonial theory, which gives rise to a more or less submerged dichotomy between the "global" and the "local": a dichotomy that privileges the cosmopolitan migrant, or exile, over the local (2000: 2).

appreciate art's role and not view it, literally, as "just another kind of missile-firing apparatus".
Newell's work is directly applicable to the case of *Drum*. The distinction between the "compliant" local and the mediating cosmopolitan is apparent from the outset with Lindfors' distinction between the local African writer who is reduced to writing melodrama for *Drum* and the discerning "cosmopolitan" African writer who writes protest literature for foreign publications. Dodson upholds this dichotomy with his distinction between the "protest writing that has won popularity outside the country" and the local *Drum* writers who can do no more than offer their readers escapist consolation (1974: 327). Even Hannerz does not quite escape this dichotomy since resistance is still located on the side of the global cosmopolitan, rather than the local. Suggesting that the cosmopolitan can become "a form of local resistance" Hannerz tends to overlook the way in which "accepting New York" as a way of "rejecting Pretoria" involves a local reading, and appropriation, of America (1997: 168).

It is this neglect of the local -- and its "complex receptive environment" -- that Newell sets out to redress. One of the blind spots of Western commentators is that they tend to transpose Western economic and cultural conditions onto African societies, when analysing popular culture and thus "take for granted mass-production and mass-consumption when analysing popular genres" (2002: 4). Newell points out the spurious nature of this critical position since the "vast majority of African readers ... are excluded from definitions of 'popular fiction'" which typically depend upon the idea of mass-consumption, since "most printed literature costs too much for the non-elite reading public to buy regularly":

Given these fundamental structural and economic differences, popular publications in Africa cannot be seen to inherit and "mimic" the genres marketed by Western publishers. Frequently produced *outside* the genre-determining relationships that characterise Western popular fictions, African texts are less rigid in their adherence to literary formulas and in
consequence ... local authors remain receptive to wider varieties of intertextual currents.... (2002: 4)

Thus we need to recognise that when Western genres such as the romance or the thriller are utilised by writers "who are situated geographically and economically outside the centres of mass-production, then the ideologies commonly associated with the genres are detached" (2002: 4). Under these circumstances, the popular genre becomes an "uprising" form, "capable of conveying messages about gender and society which are saturated with new local meanings" (2002: 4). The groundbreaking nature of Newell's theoretical intervention is confirmed by Michael Chapman, in the current volume of Research in African Literatures, where Chapman claims that Newell's pioneering work has ensured the cognisance of the popular voice, "the hybrid, opportunistic city expression" (2003).

Newell's work also brings the study of popular culture in Africa into line with debates in cultural studies. Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture investigates the export, and local development, of American popular cultural forms in a wide variety of geographical and historical contexts. The authors assert that when American popular culture crosses national boundaries, its meaning changes. In introducing the essays, the editors, Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, ask questions about the export of American forms that are very directly relevant to the South African case of popular forms in Drum magazine. Posing questions that read like a direct response to Drum's critics, they ask: "did people in the

11 "African Literature, African Literatures: Cultural Practice or Art Practice?", Research in African Literatures. 34: 1. There is no page number as I am quoting from the electronic version of the article.
countries where these cultural products arrived simply role over and play dead in the face of the massive powers of American mass media?" (2000: 3). The alternative, which I will advocate in this thesis with regard to Drum, is that consumers adopted, and adapted, American cultural forms and in doing so they transformed the "original" to the extent where it was no longer American, but became indigenous (2000: 3). Newell, Wagnleitner and May insist that the local must form part of the study of globalization. In order to understand the "contours and limits of global culture we must also", according to Wagnleitner and May, "recognise resistance to hegemonic influences, as well as the appropriation or localization of imported ideas, goods, and institutions" (2000: 10).

This thesis examines the use of popular genres in Drum magazine, as "uprising" forms: reinscribed with local meanings and adapted to create black urban subject positions, offering radical forms of resistance to apartheid. In chapter one I examine, and contextualise, the emergence of urban-based fiction in Drum magazine. Images of black South Africans in the 1940s and 1950s were dominated by the representation of the migration from the rural towards the urban areas. Representations of this journey -- both physical and the psychological relocation involved -- appeared in books, film, and the first short stories published in Drum magazine during 1951. Yet the location of black identity was a deeply politicised issue, as Ezekiel Mphahlele points out. The apartheid government was actively promoting literature, written by black writers, that advocated the rural as the appropriate place for black habitation since this reinforced its policy of separate development. Afrikaner capital was being used to subsidise the publication of material written by black writers that supported the government's policies (Mphahlele, 1962: 36-7). This is, unfortunately, also
the model of black subjectivity presented by Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which was serialised in the first year of *Drum* and deeply resented by the first generation of black *Drum* writers. In this context the first urban-based short stories in *Drum* take on an entirely new significance. Bloke Modisane's "The Dignity of Begging" is the earliest story to appear in *Drum* that deals with black urban life in the city of Johannesburg. Accused of "mimicry" by Lindfors and "trivialising economic conditions" by Maughan-Brown, I argue that Modisane's story must be read for its intervention in the existing discourses of apartheid at the time. Dealing, allegorically, with the "dependence" of black beggars, and contrasting stereotypes of simple rural blacks with tarnished black city dwellers, Modisane's story is far from being devoid of political commentary. Drawing on Saul Dubow's work on *Scientific Racism*, I show how discourses of "separate development" in South Africa were drawing an evolutionary model, ranking cultures in progressive order, from primitive to advanced. Cultivated fear about black "degeneracy" in urban society can be traced directly back to concepts of scientific racism. Therefore, a story that represents a thriving black urban independent beggar who outwits the apartheid system by manipulating white stereotypes about simple country black folk, is doing significant political work. Modisane may be making use of an American model for his story, but the content is distinctly local, and there can be no doubt that *Drum* readers would have understood the discussion of dependence and independence, as a metaphor for questions about the equality of black South Africans under apartheid.

Several films made in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s dramatise the journey from the country to the city, and in chapter two I focus on two cinematic milestones from this period. The first, made in 1949, is the first feature film
made in South Africa with an entirely black cast. *African Jim*, directed and produced by two British citizens, was a huge success with black South African audiences. While the film has been dismissed as patronising and unrealistic, I suggest that its success with black audiences stems from its vision of the possibility of progressive evolution, allowing for a version of black urban presence. While still a clearly problematic, and exclusive, representation of black urban identity, it does nevertheless defy the apartheid ideology of separate development. It is the counterpoint to Paton's negative vision of black urban degeneration.

The film that breaks the evolutionary mould, however, is *Come Back, Africa*, directed and produced by independent American filmmaker Lionel Rogosin, with a script created by *Drum* writers Lewis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane. It is the first film in the history of South African film to have been produced through a collaborative effort between a white filmmaker and black writers. Rogosin refuses to locate the starting point of the film in a spurious representation of Edenic tribal origin and the importance of the film lies in the way in which Rogosin uses experimental cinematic techniques to interrogate the opposition of the rural and urban, as opposed to maintaining them as visually discrete, racialised spaces and psychological states: the black, tribal country and the white, technologically advanced city. In the cinematic affirmation of the interconnectedness of the country and the city, the films breaks the linear narrative of evolutionary progression, or regression, represented by all the other films of the period.
Chapter three traces how popular American genres -- the detective narrative and the comic strip -- became vehicles for debates about black modern identity. In 1953 Drum journalist Arthur Maimane created a fictional black private detective character called O. Chester Morena, based on the American hardboiled tradition of Raymond Chandler. According to my research, Morena is South Africa's first black detective character created by a black writer. Despite this, the stories have been overlooked in South Africa's cultural history. While Maimane's stories have been dismissed as "imitation" and "escapist trash", I suggest that they are radically subversive in apartheid South Africa. Apartheid legislation circumscribed every area of black life from location, employment and movement, to marriage and sexual relations. Morena's method of detection is surveillance by means of a secret camera and the very idea of a black subject being the agent of surveillance, as opposed to an object under surveillance, presents an interrogation of apartheid legislation. In detective fiction, the private eye is traditionally the agent of rational deduction and thus usually a white male, while as "primitive people of uncertain temper, swayed by their fears and passions", blacks are "more suitable as villains than as detective heroes" (Bailey, 1991: xii). It is these very stereotypes that are interrogated in the stories, presenting a challenge to the conventions of the detective genre and an alternative to apartheid constructions of black identity.

My research has revealed a direct link between Drum and an African-American newspaper, The Pittsburgh Courier. Drum was reproducing comic strips from The Courier. These strips, drawn by black artists, had African-American heroes in the American comic book tradition. Research on The Courier shows that these strips were being used as part of a larger project of
writing African-Americans into American history and modernity. In an inversion of racist stereotypes, comic strips heroes are usually engaged in battles in which they represent the "modern" while their white opponents, represent "primitive" forces of evil. As opposed to a mere repetition, I argue that this African-American material was published precisely because it coincided with Drum's purposes in creating a modern black identity. Furthermore, I suggest that when the ideology represented in the comic strips no longer coincided with black South African needs, readers began to challenge their inclusion and their publication in Drum eventually ceased.

In the final chapter I turn to Bessie Head's writing for Drum magazine's sister newspaper, Golden City Post. Between 1959 and 1960, before she had published any fiction, Head worked for the women's supplement, Home Post, writing two columns -- an activity column for young children and an advice column for teenagers -- and she was also involved in the production of "True Romance" stories. Critics have dismissed this journalistic work by Head for over four decades. One of the first critics to comment suggested that it is of "scant literary value" (Gardner, 1989: 228). More recently Head's biographer, Gillian Stead Eilersen, claims that this writing does not constitute "dramatic journalism" (1995: 42). Head's production of popular forms thus suffers the same fate as the rest of the popular genres in Drum publications: it was neither of "literary value", nor serious journalism. Yet my research reveals the way in which Head made use of popular African-American texts to construct a radical version of modern black feminine identity for her teenage and adult readers. Head embeds quotes from the autobiography of African-American tennis star, Althea Gibson, I Always Wanted to be Somebody in her journalism. After her Wimbledon
victory in 1957, Gibson represented a unique international model of a successful black independent woman. By utilising Gibson's language, Head sets out to construct an image of modern black female identity that is revolutionary, not merely in South Africa, but one that intervenes within the existing discourses about modernity and gender in African-American texts.

Far from offering nothing but mere "imitation", I shall reveal that a serious study of the use of popular American and African-American genres in Drum have a great deal to contribute to an understanding of black urban culture and black urban subjectivity in 1950s South Africa. This thesis will examine previously unexplored, and unknown, links between African-American culture and black South African modernity. In doing so it will simultaneously contribute to a new understanding of the Black Atlantic exchange between African-Americans and black South Africa. The influence of African-American culture on Black South Africans dates back to the 19th century and by 1912 and the founding of the South African National Native Congress -- renamed the African National Congress a year later -- there was an established exchange between the South African leaders of this movement and African-Americans. Thus the emergence of black modern identity and political resistance in South Africa are inextricably linked to a dialogue with African-American modernity. Yet Ntongela Masilela has highlighted South Africa's absence from Paul Gilroy's model, and subsequent discussions, of Black Atlantic exchange (Masilela, 1996).

\[\text{\footnotesize 12 In 1890 Orpheus McAdoo and the Virginia Jubilee singers visited South Africa, introducing African-American spirituals and gospel music to a black South Africa intelligentsia, who embraced these musical forms as expressions of modernity. This paved the way for the later entrance of jazz into South Africa in the 1920s, adopted by the emergent black proletariat in the cities. See Ntongela Masilela, 1999: 52-53.}\]
There has been no study of the exchange of popular cultural texts between African-Americans and black South Africans that this thesis provides.

It is interesting to note that the idea of critical and selective borrowing as a foundation for black South African urban culture was addressed by one of the Drum writers in a book published as early as 1962: The African Image by Drum Fiction editor, Ezekiel Mphahlele. He offers a critique of Negritude and its failure to address problems facing blacks in "cultural transition". Where, asks Mphahlele, do blacks who are detribalized fit in? (1962: 27-28). In South Africa black people "are poised between the two main cultural currents" (1962: 28). The apartheid government was "using institutions of a fragmented and almost unrecognisable Bantu culture as an instrument of oppression" and, as a result, black writers "daren't look back [to African culture], at any rate not yet" (1962: 193). The very fashioning of an urban literature was thus an act of political defiance (1962: 192). "Detribalized" writers were "not accepted as an integral part of the country's culture" since they defied the boundaries of apartheid categorisation. Yet, says Mphahlele, they keep on, "digging their feet into an urban culture", which had to be "of their own making":

This is a fugitive culture: borrowing here, incorporating there, retaining this, rejecting that. But it is a virile culture. The clamour of it is going to keep beating on the walls surrounding the already fragmented culture of the whites until they crumble. (1962: 192)

That fugitive culture is the subject of this thesis.
1.

From the Country to the City: "Drum come[s] to Jo'burg, but he was Jim no more."

Beset by near failure and bankruptcy, shortly after its inception in March 1951, the South African magazine which began life as *African Drum* went on to become, by 1956, the largest selling magazine, not just in South Africa, but on the continent of Africa.¹ There were several editions covering the various parts of the continent: a South African edition was distributed throughout Southern and Central Africa, with independent East and West African editions.² In May 1956, shortly after its fifth birthday, Henry Nxumalo, *Drum* magazine’s investigative journalist, jubilantly informed readers that *Drum* magazine, as it was known by then, had become the largest selling magazine in Africa, surpassing sales of other magazines in all languages: "with this issue DRUM has become the biggest selling magazine on the continent of Africa! It has outstripped all other magazines, white or non-white, English, Afrikaans or vernacular" (*Drum* May 1956: 24). What, one must ask, brought about this extraordinary success, especially after *African Drum’s* near demise?

The inside cover of the first issue of *Drum* magazine informed readers that forty thousand copies of the first issue of the magazine were printed and that the target was to double that figure within the first year. After the first four issues, however, the money had run out and circulation had dropped first to twenty four thousand and then to sixteen thousand (Nicol, 1995: 25). Yet just

---

¹ The magazine was called *African Drum* from its inception in March, 1951, until the issue of October 1951, which was called *Drum* magazine. I discuss this change in the course of the chapter.

² This is documented by Switzer, 1979: 102
two years later, after its second birthday, Drum magazine had a circulation of 600,000 and was being hailed by Time magazine as the "leading spokesman for South Africa's 9,000,000 Negro and Coloured Population" (quoted in Sampson, 1956: 53). Drum magazine's success is all the more significant in light of the fact that it was not without rivals for readership. Initially, the main competition was a photo magazine called Zonk!, which predated Drum magazine by a year and half. Zonk! was launched in August 1949 and was welcomed by well known figures such as Father Trevor Huddleston, the British priest and activist who lived and worked in Sophiatown, who claimed that it "is indeed time that such a periodical should have been made available for African readers" (January 1950: 39). Professor D. D. T. Jabavu, son of the eminent journalist J. T. Jabavu, added his endorsement to the magazine, claiming that Zonk! could "prove to be the salvation of many young African lives seeking an outlet into true civilisation" (February 1950: 16).

In 1956 another magazine aimed at a black audience was launched in South Africa. This was Bona magazine. Zonk!, and later Bona, were Drum magazine's main rivals. While Zonk! and Drum magazine were both financed by independent white capital, Bona was published by Proteapers Bpk. (Protea Press Ltd), which was a subsidiary of Dagbreek (Daybreak) Trust of which Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the main architect of apartheid and Minister of Native Affairs at the time, was director (Bunting, 1959: 6). That Verwoerd made Bona compulsory reading in "Bantu schools" suggests that the apartheid government was aware of the power of this rapidly growing form of media.³ Verwoerd was

³ I am retaining the official South African terminology, "Bantu", here since it is the term that my source, Bunting, uses. The term "black" is also
also involved in the launch of a publication called Bantu in 1954, which had the overt aim of promoting apartheid (Switzer, 1979: 14). Thus the timing of Bona's launch, which coincided with Drum magazine's success, strongly suggests that it was created precisely to counter the widespread popularity and message of Drum magazine. What was this message and how did it speak to so many readers in the politically complex and socially volatile world that was 1950s South Africa?

I will cite a few examples of the complexities that are dealt with in detail in this chapter. The decades of the 1940s and 1950s had given rise to unprecedented migration of black South African men from the rural towards the urban areas. In 1946 the black population exceeded the white population in urban areas for the first time in South Africa's colonial history, fuelling white fears that served as a precursor to the 1948 victory of the National Party and its policy of apartheid. While the urbanised black community was in search of models of black modernity, the Nationalist government was, simultaneously, trying to halt the emergence of a detribalised black urban proletariat, through a process of retribalising, and fossilising, black identity. It was in this context that Drum magazine emerged as a symbol of the "new African" (Nkosi, 1965: 10).

The extraordinary success of Drum magazine during the 1950s was concomitant with a fundamental shift in the way in which African identity was represented in the magazine. African Drum magazine began by selling an image of Africa, and Africans, which was essentially rural, tribal, Edenic, unspoiled and exotic. The first list of contents, which remains constant between March and September 1951, is dominated by features emphasising not only the rural, but generally more inclusive including so-called "Coloureds" and "Indians". "Bantu" education fell under Verwoerd in his capacity as Minister of Native Affairs.
also tribal history and identity: "Music of the Tribes"; "Know Yourselves: History of the Tribes"; "African Folk Lore". The voice is crucial here, know yourselves: identity and history are being dictated. This issue also contained the first episode of a serialised version of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which continued in serial form for the first year, until April 1952. The photographs which fill the pages of the first few issues depict, almost exclusively, rural, Edenic, scenes. The third page of the very first issue, March 1951, carries an almost full-page photograph with the caption: "THIS IS AFRICA!" (*African Drum* March 1951: 3). The scene is dramatic: a cascading waterfall forms the backdrop to a partially naked young woman, dressed in traditional beads, kneeling in the foreground. On close examination of an original copy of the magazine, the image looks as though it has been created through cutting and pasting, with the young woman pasted into the scene. If this were indeed the case, it would lend strength to the idea that "Africa" was being quite literally constructed for the gaze. The suggestion is clear nevertheless: Africa as the virgin territory or, in the words of Anthony Sampson, the second editor of *Drum* magazine: "exotic and exciting" and "unspoiled by the drabness of the West" (1956: 15-16).

That this fantasy was a white recreation of Africa -- and one that was not shared by *Drum* magazine's target audience -- is indicated by the initial poor sales and dropping circulation figures. Black readers claimed that *Drum* had the "white hand on it" (Sampson, 1956: 20-21). It was a subsequent dramatic shift in editorial policy, leading to the appointment of a new editor, that gave rise to the doubling of *Drum* magazine's circulation figures, by which time it had become a very different publication.
This change was effected by Anthony Sampson, who went to work for Drum from the United Kingdom, becoming the second editor of the magazine in November 1951, and Drum's first black journalist, Henry Nxumalo, who later became well known to readers as "Mr. Drum" (Sampson, 1956: 22). Drum magazine was originally edited by Robert Crisp, "a local hero of sort -- Springbok fast bowler, a tank commander with the DSO and bar, a journalist ... who had fond dreams of selling his African magazine across the continent" (Nicol, 1995: 25). Jim Bailey, son of the mining millionaire, Sir Abe Bailey, provided the necessary finance for the venture (Nicol, 1995: 25). Crisp was the editor behind the early vision of Drum.

Sampson describes a visit to the Bantu Men's social centre in Johannesburg, with Nxumalo -- who took Sampson, Bailey and Crisp there -- to listen to black readers' comments about the magazine:

"Ag, why do you dish out that stuff, man?" ...
"Tribal music! Tribal history! Chiefs! We don't care about chiefs! Give us jazz and film stars, man! We want Duke Ellington, Satchmo, and hot dames! Yes, brother, anything American["]. (Sampson, 1956: 20)

"Give us girls man ... Tell us about gangsters... Cut out this tribal stuff. Show us things that matter..." There was no escaping the formula for selling papers ... The workers of the world were united, at least, in their addiction to cheese-cake and crime. (Sampson, 1956: 30)

Unlike Crisp, Sampson obviously took readers' requests seriously. By this time Bailey had assumed full control of the failing magazine and wanted to pursue a new, more lucrative, version of the magazine. There was disagreement between founding editor, Crisp, and proprietor, Bailey, until November 1951 when Crisp
left. Sampson, under Bailey's invitation, assumed the editorship of Drum. Under Sampson African Drum became Drum: the loss of the epithet "African" signifying a shift away from the rural and the way in which Africa and Africans had been inscribed in early issues of the magazine. The front covers of the magazine are indicative of the changes that were taking place. The first three covers (March, April and May, 1951) of African Drum, as the magazine was then called, are identical except for changes in the colour. Sampson describes them as follows: "the bright cover showed two Africans facing each other, symbolically, across the continent: one in a Western hat and suit, the other with African skins and assegai" (1956: 15). Like Zonk! magazine these covers were published in three colours; it is interesting to note that Drum magazine's first cover makes use of black, green and gold, the official colours of the African National Congress. The background to the top half of the page is green, the map of Africa is gold and the lower half of page representing the silhouetted city, at the foot of the African continent, is black. There are traditional African drums in the top left-hand corner. On the lower half of the page, two men, described by Sampson, face each other: the rural and the urban African: one representing "tribalism", the other "modernity".

A glance at the contents of the first issues leave little doubt as to which of the two images early African Drum magazine was endorsing, and promoting. After Sampson's arrival the cover that had been used for three issues gave way to photographs. The first (June 1951) was of a young Xhosa schoolboy looking at a globe. The text poses the question: "When he grows up what will the world be to him? At his feet; or a nut to open; or just a schoolroom globe that he need never have studied?" (June 1951: inside cover). This photograph, with its interrogative
caption, seems to capture Drum magazine's own dilemma in locating an African identity in relation to the Western world. This is followed in the July/August issue by a photograph of a young Basotho man in front of a hut. The contents still remain unchanged, although in the same issue Drum magazine announced its first list of "African Staff", which included the great pioneer of investigative journalism, Henry Nxumalo, as the Sports Editor (African Drum July/August 1951: 1). The September issue introduces a slight shift with a photograph of a young woman tennis player leaping over the net. The accompanying text tells readers that she's twenty-two years old and, more importantly, that she "belongs to Johannesburg" (African Drum September 1951: 3). This issue also carries the result of a reader's opinion poll: the favourite is the serialised version of Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country. At the bottom of the list, "Tribal Music" was the least favourite and Drum published a rather judgmental editorial:

Cry, the Beloved Country was a clear favourite and Music of the Tribes proved to be the least in demand. Is this an indication that the African of to-day is too much concerned with the 20th century and, possibly, juke boxes to be interested in his tribal antecedents, and environment? (1)

While the paternal tone of the first editor, Bob Crisp, is still apparent, Drum magazine was getting the picture. There is a slight adjustment in contents in this issue, with the obviously unpopular "tribal" features given the axe.

Then came the issue of October 1951, just prior to Crisp's departure.
Nothing, as Mike Nicol suggests, could possibly have prepared readers for this:

The cover shows a gangster in a Woodrow hat, his eyes manic, his lower face masked by a handkerchief, one hand raised, the other bunched, the dance of stab-kick-kill in his body. His legs disappear into the lights and building of a city at night. (1995: 42)
The headline is utilised for the first time on the cover: "Shadow over Johannesburg". *Drum* magazine takes on what, says Nicol, is to become almost an obsession: crime, gangsters, thugs, tsotsis (1995: 42). *Drum* magazine -- no longer "African" -- as this issue was named on the cover, had arrived on the scene.

This issue represents a watershed in the magazine's history. For the first time *Drum* magazine's black readers are being located, and addressed, in an urban environment. The sub-header of the cover story informs the reader that:

While you are reading this …
An African is being murdered
Or
An African is being robbed
Or
An African is committing a robbery
Or
An African is being raped. (*Drum* October 1951: 5)

Johannesburg is dubbed the "New Chicago". This is a significant moment: black South Africans are finally being addressed in their urban context, and America is introduced as a point of reference. These two ideas were to become the lasting themes of the heyday of *Drum* magazine. This article, along with further articles in the same issue, introduces a vocabulary that will dominate the texts of *Drum* magazine from this point forth. The cover feature article, "Inside Johannesburg's Underworld", introduces the various gangs on the Reef area: the Tsotsis, the Russians, the Americans, the Berliners. All of these gangs were to enjoy prominent exposure in future issues of *Drum* magazine. In this first feature article *Drum* magazine claims that while crimes against white South Africans are "widely known, and bad enough … the crimes by Africans against Africans are
far worse, and a staggering indictment of the conditions and circumstances that have brought them about” (Drum October 1951: 5).

Drum magazine sets about diagnosing the problem. The first are the appalling social conditions in the urban areas designated for black habitation, under the Group Areas act:

Bad housing, low wages and high cost of living, not enough facilities for education and recreation, few opportunities for advancement lawfully, and often no work. It is inevitable that frustration and apathy should turn weak-willed young men to the easy road of crime. (October 1951: 5)

Then a vital theme is introduced:

With little family discipline and family respect broken down, it is all too easy to understand how tsotsis are made. And every year more Africans flow into the towns, often straight from the Kraal and not knowing the ways of city life; and so every year crime becomes more uncontrollable and, gathers force. (October 1951: 5)

Here the article identifies a crucial social phenomenon that was taking place in South Africa, one that was complicated by the politics of apartheid. The period after the second-world war in South Africa gave rise to rapid, and unprecedented, influx of black people, or more precisely, black men, into urban areas. This movement, from the rural to the urban, was being represented in various forms during this period and “Jim-Comes-to-Johannesburg” became a cultural motif in South Africa. The expression is taken from a film of the same name, which will be central to chapter two. Also known as African Jim, it was released in South Africa in 1949 and was the first feature film to be made in South Africa with a

---

4 This article is attributed to “a Special Representative” and no author is named, although it was almost certainly written by Henry Nxumalo given that he was the only black journalist writing for Drum magazine during this period.
cast made up entirely of black South Africans. Several actors who starred in the film became instant celebrities within black South Africa and enjoyed prominent exposure in Drum magazine and Zonk!. The film represents the journey of a young man from his rural home in Swaziland to Johannesburg. It begins with Jim in his rural home, represented by typical Edenic scenery very similar to the early Drum magazine. The rural harmony is reinforced with representations of the community singing in spontaneous unison. Jim arrives in Johannesburg and, given his rural innocence, and lack of awareness of city vices, he is immediately conned and robbed by three other black men. The scene is reminiscent of the influential novel published, just the year before, in 1948, suggesting that it provided source material: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.

Although Paton's text is by no means the first representation of this rural-urban migration, it is most certainly the best known. Laurence van der Post's In A Province, published as early as 1934, tells a story very similar to Paton's published fourteen years later in 1948, revealing that this social phenomenon already had an established history in South Africa. Deborah Posel indicates that between 1936 and 1946 the urban African population grew by 57.2 per cent from 1,141,642 to 1,794,212 (1991: 24). In the same period the white urban population grew by only 31.5 per cent from 1,307,386 to 1,719,338 (1991: 24). This was the first time in South Africa's history that the black population exceeded the white population in urban areas fuelling white fears that no doubt contributed to the election of the National Party in 1948. This trend continued. Posel quotes statistics that show an urban population growth of 54.37 per cent (2,204,300 to 3,402,700) among Union-born Africans between 1951 and 1960. Thus, says Posel, "by 1960 the urban African population comprised 31.8 per cent
of the total African population, as compared with 23.7 per cent and 27.2 per cent in 1946 and 1951 respectively" (1991: 141). The National Party exploited white fears about black urban "swamping" and "degeneration" in order to reinforce legislation that attempted to curtail this development.

The significance of the way in which this journey from the rural to the urban is represented, along with any conclusions that might be reached, had immense significance in 1950s South Africa, due to the rise and implementation of the Nationalist government's policy of apartheid during this period. The 1950s, after the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, saw the introduction of various legal measures, as well as the reinforcement of previous legislation that enforced the policy of separate development, the cornerstone of apartheid ideology. In 1950 Hendrik Verwoerd was appointed Minister of Native Affairs. In that year alone the government promulgated several acts which would extend and reinforce apartheid. The introduction of the Population Registration Act of 1950 enabled the government to classify all the people of South Africa on the basis of race alone. The Suppression of Communism Act formed a backbone to arrests and prosecutions during the 1950s. While the prohibition of Mixed Marriages act of 1949 had outlawed marriage between people of different races, the Immorality act of 1950 extended this prohibition by banning sexual relations between people from different racial groups. The Group Areas act of 1950 extended laws on racial segregation of residential areas and pass laws. This was an elaboration of the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act, which had provided for residential segregation in cities and laid the foundation for influx control by making it illegal for black South Africans to remain in the city for longer than fourteen days, if they had not secured employment during this period (Posel,
1991: 41). The Natives Land Acts, of 1913 and 1936, had already allocated just 13% of the total land area of South Africa for black use. The areas designated for black habitation were largely in rural areas. This was further reinforced by the 1952 Native Laws Amendment Act that restricted and controlled the movement of blacks into the city. Without permission to work stamped into their "passes", black men were not allowed to remain in the city for more than seventy-two hours. This idea that all black inhabitants of South Africa were essentially rural people who belonged in their traditional tribal environment had its logical conclusion in the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act of 1959, which created separate black "homelands". Following that, the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 denied black South Africans South African citizenship and made every black person a citizen of a rural "homeland". Black South Africans were thus effectively legislated out of the city.

Thus, locating black identity became, during the 1950s, a deeply politicised issue. The apartheid government was actively promoting literature written by black writers that advocated the rural as the appropriate place for black habitation since this reinforced its policy of separate development. Ezekiel Mphahlele, Drum writer and fiction editor during the 1950s, describes how Afrikaner capital was being used to subsidise the publication of material written by black writers that supported the government's policies:

An Afrikaans press in Johannesburg has recently come into existence backed by Afrikaans capital in which the white Government has both political and material interests. The fiction this press is promoting and consciously boosting for publication, whenever it portrays a non-white character who comes to the city, shows him up as wretched picture of frustration. The hero must return to the rural areas. The reason for this? The white Government is consciously organizing legal machinery to control the influx of Africans into the towns and cities. Town folk are regarded as obstinate, intractable and too politically conscious as they
become absorbed by city life, and this makes them demand voting rights: something the white man cannot tolerate. ... But if a black writer can portray a character who goes back, it is regarded as a vindication of the white man's policies. No other perspective will be published by this press. And it has created a mighty empire because it enjoys the largest circulation in African schools which are all under the Government now. ... How does an adult literature grow in such conditions? (1962: 36-7)

It was for this reason that the first generation of *Drum* writers were also deeply suspicious of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* with its model of black rural regeneration and, concomitant, urban degeneration. A better understanding of how Paton's vision, unfortunately, coincided with the racist thinking underpinning apartheid policy, will reveal why it was source of such consternation to writers like Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, and Bloke Modisane. This will also explain how the same generation of writers had no models of black modern identity to draw on. In his retrospective on the 1950s in South Africa, *Home and Exile*, published in 1965, Nkosi explains that Paton's rural hero, Stephen Kumalo, provided only an anti-hero to urbanised black South Africans:

I write so much at length about the hero of Paton's novel not in any effort to give a full critique of the novel as a work of art, but in order to show that when we entered the decade of the fifties we had no literary heroes, like generations in other parts of the world. We had to improvise because there were no models who could serve as moral examples for us in our private and public preoccupations. (1965: 7)
Cry, the Beloved Country: The Country and the City:

Stephen Kumalo's journey from the rural township of Ndotsheni to the city of Johannesburg -- a journey made in the footsteps of his son and his sister and so many others -- is a journey from the country to the city. These words, "country" and "city" are, as Raymond Williams has suggested, "very powerful" since they both stand for the experience of human communities. "Country", he reminds us, in English, "is both a nation and a part of a 'land'; the 'country' can be the whole society or its rural area" (1973: 1). Paton's text draws on the long history of associations that have developed around these forms of life, which Williams describes, indicating the extent to which his novel, though situated in Africa, is embedded in Western paradigms. His novel draws directly on the idea of the "connection between the land from which directly or indirectly we all get our living and the achievements of human society" (Williams, 1973: 1). Equally he makes use of the powerful feelings that have gathered around these two forms of existence, as described by Williams:

On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communications, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times. (1973: 1)

On the opening page of the novel Paton describes his ideal "country" in Edenic terms:

The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the
ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed. (1988: 7)

This pastoral vision is Paton's gospel: one that will eventually be enacted by James Jarvis whose farm lies in this untainted, unspoiled paradise. Yet, the distinction between the "country" and the "city", as articulated by Williams, is not complex enough to encompass the divisions that mark the "country" in South Africa. Space, within both the "country" and "city" is marked by race. The reader is quickly made aware that the opening description of the Edenic paradise is the "white" country, the "black" country is of a very different nature: "the rich green hills break down. The fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature":

For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and the mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned it. Stand shod upon it, for it is coarse and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. ... The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them anymore. (1988: 7-8)

Through using this inversion the opening page Paton's text draws attention to the fact that experience of the land in South Africa, the "country", is in fact determined by race. It is this great divide, between the ground of Carisbrooke and the stones of Ndotsheni, that Paton attempts to heal within his novel: yet the text only attempts to bridge this divide within the "country", he makes no similar attempt in the "city". Bearing an unfortunate resemblance to existing racial legislation, which was bolstered by apartheid policy, Paton's text espouses the view that some people belong in the country, as opposed to the city.
In a comparison between Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* and Van Der Post's *In a Province*, David Medalie points out that "both novels firmly rule out the possibility of a viable urban black culture" (1998: 94). This is particularly, and significantly, also the case as far as the future is concerned. The city and "various phenomena of modernity are represented in each case as vitiating indigenous culture and identity" (1998: 94). For Paton's white protagonists the movement from the country to the city is both plausible and even progressive. For them the city represents precisely the enlightenment that Williams talks about. It is in the city that Arthur Jarvis learns about his own country, as opposed to the farm in the country where, of South Africa, he "learned nothing at all" (Paton, 1988: 150). Similarly after his son's death, James Jarvis is educated through reading his son's writings; this enlightenment takes place in the city. Yet for Kumalo, and his community, the city represents a very different space. In the scene where Kumalo arrives in Johannesburg, the description embodies Williams' description of the negative associations that have grown up around the city. Kumalo is unable to read the signs of the city:

> It is too much to understand. He is silent, his head aches, he is afraid. There is this railway station to come, this great place with all its tunnels under the ground. The train stops, under a great roof, and there are thousands of people. Steps go down into the earth, and here is the tunnel under the ground. Black people, white people, some going, some coming, so many that the tunnel is full. He goes carefully that he may not bump anybody, holding tightly onto his bag. He comes out into a great hall, and the stream goes up the steps and here he is out on the street. The noise is immense. (1988: 18)

The representation of the city as a noisy, bewildering and disorientating place, for Kumalo, will continue throughout the text. This scene gives rise to a metaphor which is crucial in the novel: Kumalo refuses to let himself become
one with the crowd: "he goes carefully that he may not bump anybody". Unlike his son and his sister before him, and - significantly - his brother John, Stephen Kumalo resists being assimilated by the crowd and, by implication, the city.

Medalie, like other critics, regards this emphasis on individualism as crucial to Paton's vision, which, he claims, is borne out of the politics of liberalism. He demonstrates his argument with reference to the representation of Paton's two black urbanised characters: John Kumalo, the political agitator who is the brother of the rural priest and the urban priest Msimangu. The contrasting way in which Paton represents John Kumalo and Msimangu's language when they each address a crowd is significant in this regard. When John Kumalo addresses the crowd his "great voice growls in the bull throat" and he causes "the people [to] growl also" (Paton, 1988: 158 and 160). Thus John's oratory, while it cannot be denied, becomes a "potentially base form of behaviour (Medalie, 1998: 97). In a "strange inversion of the Edenic situation, where language is meant to distinguish humankind from the animals", here Paton associates John's language with a tendency to "regress and become animalistic, a betrayal of the higher faculties and aspirations of humankind" (97). This representation is contrasted with Msimangu preaching at the Chapel in Ezenzeleni: the situation could not be more different, even though he is also addressing a crowd. Just as Stephen Kumalo resists assimilation into the crowd, so the ultimate endorsement of Msimangu and his message lies in the fact that, although he addresses a number of people, each person in the audience feels as though the words are being addressed to him or her individually:
Part of the redemption that Msimangu offers is the redemption of language, purging it of demagogy -- which is equated in the novel with "political" forms of persuasion only, and no other tendentious use of language -- and instead of inflaming the crowd, as John Kumalo does, his words induce calmness and reflection in them. Whereas John Kumalo is shown to be hypocritical (self-seeking and cowardly, in contrast to what he urges others to do), here the prefect internal consistency of the golden voice, the golden heart and the golden word -- "found in one place together" -- establishes Msimangu as the pinnacle of human (and humanistic) evolution, almost creating a prelapsarian world where language has not yet been corrupted and there is no discrepancy between intention, conduct and utterance. (1998: 97-98)

This locates the text's anxiety about urban black degeneration in the crowd, rather than in the individual, who refuses to be assimilated into the collective. This is why Msimangu's address to the crowd is transformed into a series of intimate interpersonal communications "rescuing the individual from the collectivist danger" (98). While John Kumalo's oratory is deceptive, as he "speaks the one meaning, and means the other meaning", Msimangu "speaks as a Christian and as a liberal; not, it would seem, as a demagogue" (Paton 1988: 160; Medalie, 1998: 98). Msimangu's message is essentially very similar to the one propounded by Arthur Jarvis: "The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended" (Paton, 1988: 25).

Yet if, as Msimangu suggests, "the white man has broken the tribe" and "it cannot be mended again" where, one must ask, lies Paton's solution to the problem? While their responses to the adequacy of Paton's message have varied, critics have consistently read Paton as espousing a liberal solution to the problem indicated in the text. As Stephen Watson puts it: "Paton wrote his ... novel at a time when liberalism still seemed to provide an answer to South Africa's problems" and thus "against the multiple problems caused by detribalization and urbanization he advances the solution of love" (1982: 29 and 35).
I want to suggest, however, that the situation is far more complex and that exploring the complexities will lead to a much better understanding of why the first generation of *Drum* magazine journalists despised the novel with such vehemence, despite its popularity in *Drum*'s reader's poll. Returning to Medalie's discussion of John Kumalo and Msimangu, I want to suggest there is a crucial element left out of his analysis: Msimangu makes his speech in Zulu -- "the Zulu tongue was lifted and transfigured" -- while John Kumalo prefers to speak English (Paton, 1988: 81).

In order to create an impression that Zulu is being spoken, even though the novel is written entirely in English, Paton invents a form of English designed to suggest that the speaker is speaking in Zulu. The manner through which he achieves this representation is the subject of a study by J. M. Coetzee. Paton creates the impression of Zulu through several devices: the transcription of Zulu words like umfundisi; through words that are designed to indicate a Zulu original, like "fire-sticks" instead of dynamite; ungrammatical use of the English definite article and an adjustment of syntax. Yet Coetzee indicates that what Paton creates is not so much an English approximation of Zulu but, rather, a phantom form of Zulu. This is demonstrated in a scene where Kumalo is travelling to Johannesburg and the other men on the train are explaining mining to him: from the context it is clear that the conversation takes place in Zulu:

> We go down and dig it [the ore] out, umfundisi [sir]. And when it is hard to dig, we go away, and the white men blow it out with the fire-sticks. Then ... we load it on to the trucks; and it goes up in a cage, up a long chimney so long that I cannot say it for you. (Paton, 1988: 17)

It would thus appear to the reader that Zulu lacks words for the concepts of dynamite, mine shaft, taking cover and that as a result "the speaker is using the
best approximations his language provides, and that Paton has given literal
translations of these approximations" (Coetzee, 1988: 127). This conclusion is,
however, quite false, since Zulu does indeed have words for these very concepts.
The Zulu for “mine shaft” is “umgodi”, a word quite distinct from umshimula
(chimney), whose English origin is clear (127). The Zulu word for “dynamite” is
“udalimede”, which has nothing to do with fire-sticks. The word “banda”,
meaning “to take cover”, is clearly distinguished from “suka”, “to go away”
(127). What then is the purpose of Paton’s practice? While the overt purpose is
"to make the reader imagine the words he is reading have a foreign original
behind them", there is another dimension: "The artificial literalism of
passages like the above, however, conveys in addition a certain naiveté, even
childishness, which reflects on the quality of mind of its speakers and of Zulu
speakers in general" (127-128). This can be clearly seen in the first
confrontation between Kumalo and Jarvis, after Kumalo’s son has murdered
Jarvis’ son. We are told that this conversation takes place in Zulu:

[Jarvis]--You are in fear of me, but I do not know what it is. You need
not be in fear of me.
[Kumalo]--It is true, umnumzana [sir]. You do not know what it is.
[Jarvis]--I do not know but I desire to know.
[Kumalo]--I doubt if I could tell it, umnumzana.
[Jarvis]--You must tell it, umfundisi. Is it heavy?
[Kumalo]--It is very heavy, umnumzana. It is the heaviest thing in all my
years. (Coetzee, 128)

What motive, Coetzee asks, "can Paton have for writing be in fear of instead of
be afraid of, desire instead of would like, heavy instead of serious", since "in
each case the synonyms translate the same putative Zulu original"? The "first
member of each pair has a touch of archaism" and "this archaism makes for a
certain ceremoniousness in the verbal exchanges" (128). Yet, according to
Coetzee, this is not merely a stylistic device. The archaism of the English used implies the "archaic quality of the of the Zulu behind it":

as if the Zulu language, Zulu culture, the Zulu frame of mind, belonged to a bygone and heroic age. The Zulu implied by Paton's English is both unrelievedly simple -- there is a minimum of syntactic embedding -- and formal to the point of stateliness. (128)

Thus the Zulu, or rather Paton's Zulu, seems to belong to an earlier and more innocent era in human culture. It is for this reason that I suggest that it is not insignificant that Msimangu's celebrated sermon takes place in Zulu, while John Kumalo's address to the crowd takes place in English. Coetzee draws the distinction between the use of English and Zulu into his analysis: "From the fact that Kumalo's politician brother prefers to use English, the reader may further surmise that Zulu is as inhospitable to lies and deception as it is to complexity and abstraction" (128). Thus the phantom Zulu of Cry, the Beloved Country is in fact less the medium through which Paton's characters speak than part of the interpretation Paton wishes us to make of them. "It tells us", Coetzee suggests, "that they belong in an old-fashioned context of direct (i.e., unmediated) personal relations based on respect, obedience, and fidelity" (129).

These very values are epitomised in an episode towards the end of the book. Jarvis has begun to send milk to the children in the black village of Ndotsheni. The man who brings the milk to the priest, Kumalo, makes the following statement about his white employer, Jarvis: "I have worked only a week there [at Jarvis's farm], but the day he says to me, die, I shall die" (quoted in Coetzee, 1988: 129). There are two significant interpretations to be derived from this. Firstly, that Paton clearly approves of the "self-sacrificial loyalty" that won, for the Zulus, the admiration of Victorian England. Yet the words of the
Zulu worker also suggest that through his "Zulu" qualities, "Jarvis has crossed
the barrier between white and black and taken the place of the chief in his
servant's heart" (129).

Thus the Edenic language spoken by Msimangu evoking, in the words of
Medalie, "a prelapsarian world where language has not yet been corrupted"
becomes associated with Paton's Edenic landscape described in the opening page:
"even as it came from the creator". Zulu is associated with a bygone age that
reaches right back to paradise. It is this that saves Kumalo and Msimangu in the
city: since they speak Zulu, they occupy a different space, even when they are
within the physical space of the city. The country and the city are thus not
merely physical places in Paton's text; they are states of existence. It is
significant that Jarvis is able to enter into this "Zulu" condition, as chief, only
after the process of transformation, brought about through his reading of the
writings of his dead son. It is more significant, however, that while Jarvis seems
able to move comfortably between English (the city) and Zulu (the country), any
movement by Paton's black protagonists can, with the text's approbation, only
take place one way. The English-speaking John Kumalo, who has adopted the
corrupt ways of the city, remains vilified within the text. Why is it then that
Paton is so insistent on the corruption of the Zulu people within the city, a
corruption in which English is included?

South African fiction written by whites is "full of examples of people
(and peoples) to whom a language limited in range and simplified in various
ways is attributed and whose range of intellection and feeling is by implication
correspondingly limited and simplified" (Coetzee, 116). While this point has
already been made in relation to Paton's use of phantom Zulu, Coetzee's
introduction to *White Writing* puts this statement in context. One of his concerns in *White Writing* -- writing by people no longer European, not yet African -- is "the idea of cultural progress, the idea that cultures can be ranged along a scale of evolutionary ascent from 'backward' to 'advanced'" (10). It is his elaboration of this statement, which has relevance for his study of Paton's "Zulu":

Through this schema the European enabled himself to see in South Africa, layered synchronistically one on top of another as in an archaeological site, hunters, pastoralists, early agriculturists, advanced precapitalist peasant agriculturists, and even agriculturists regressing to nomadic pastoralism, all of whom belong to "simpler" stages of evolution, could be understood as "simple" people, thinking simple thoughts in their various simple languages. (10)

At various points in the novel Paton emphasises the need for, and desirability of, just such simplicity: Msimangu speaks "such simple words" that reach the hearts of his listeners. Thus underlying Paton's phantom Zulu is the idea of evolutionary Darwinism.

South African historian Saul Dubow can be used to illuminate, and expand, the connection between Paton's text and evolutionary thought. According to Dubow the theory of segregation in South Africa was influenced by scientific racism, on the one hand, and liberalism, on the other, and was most often presented as a compromise between the "repressive" tendencies of the former and "assimilationist" ideas of the latter. South African policies about race followed a trajectory similar to social theories in England, where the second half of the nineteenth century gave rise to a demise of cherished liberal ideals. This was partially in response to economic depression in the 1880s in Britain and an increase in working class radicalism. As a result, there was
a growing consciousness of the need to preserve social order and an awareness that the problems of poverty and social welfare could not be solved by laissez-faire policies alone. Thus social reformers began to embrace measures which were by nature collectivist rather than individualist. (Dubow, 1987: 71)

One important measure of this change was the "spectacular explosion of biologically based racial science in the second half of the nineteenth century" (72). Despite the differences within theories of scientific racism Social Darwinists, Spencerians, Lamarckians, craniologists, physical anthropologists "all set themselves the task of classifying the world's races according to a natural hierarchy" (72). This idea of the natural ascent from "backward" to "advanced" drew on the metaphor of the family, an area where subordination could be "legitimised". This in turn gave rise to notions of "dependent" "child" races, which "in the Imperialist context was transformed into conceptions of `separate development"" (72).

A similar process took place in South Africa where nineteenth century amalgamationist policy of Sir George Grey was gradually replaced by a strategy of segregation. Grey's amalgamationist policies "had sought to promote `civilisation by mingling', but by the turn of the twentieth century the Liberal government had given up "the mid-Victorian objective of turning Africans into black Europeans" (74). This shift can be ascribed to the historical experience of colonialism as well as to the teachings of "pseudo Darwinian Science" (74). The influence of social Darwinist ideas is clearly visible in the fear of racial "degeneration" following upon the uncontrolled development of a black and white proletariat in the cities, clearly the concern in Paton's novel as well. Thus:
In the view of many Africans were "naturally" part of the land. Cities were portrayed as an "alien environment" for which Africans were supposedly not yet ready. To the new migrant the city was seen as the site of vice and immorality, "influences far too potent for his [the African's] powers of resistance". (Dubow, 1987: 75)

The influence of these ideas, derived from social Darwinism, can clearly be seen in Cry, the Beloved Country, since this "degeneration" is precisely what happens to Absalom Kumalo along with many others in the novel.

In South Africa the politics of race thus gave rise to an ironic reversal of the classic modern paradigm, where "the city represents progress and the agency of mature citizens against what Marx famously called the 'idiocy of rural life'" (Kruger, 1997: 566). Johannesburg, "came to signify the threat of barbarism", a "threat" that was "conventionally represented by the urbanizing black masses flocking to the cities despite influx control" (Kruger, 1997: 566). Yet, as Loren Kruger points out, this threat also "took the form of a more ambiguous figure: the English-speaking intellectual "native":

From their ideological vantage point on the land, Afrikaner ideologues led by Hendrik Verwoerd, then Minster of Bantu Affairs, saw the greatest threat to the racial and cultural purity of Western civilization in Africa in integrated urban enclaves such as Sophiatown. (1997: 566)

It is thus unfortunate that Paton's text produces a similar "ironic reversal" of apartheid's "pervasive modernity" since Kumalo and his community belong naturally to the rural: even when Kumalo is learning to find his way around the city, he still "live[s] in the slow tribal rhythm" (Paton, 1988: 99). The text's solution is rebuilding the broken house, the broken tribe or devastated "culture". Yet it is clear, from the function of phantom Zulu that Paton's text proposes a policy of segregation, rather than assimilation. Segregation "encompassed a
conservative and backward-looking horror at the levelling and atomising consequences of capitalism" (Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 11). A policy of segregation, therefore, "appealed to conservatives who inclined to romanticize the countryside as a source of social order, tradition and deference" (1995: 11).

It is also precisely the idea of preserving or restoring culture -- suggested by Paton's broken tribe -- which came to replace the concept of race in the discourse of segregation:

The developing anthropological notion of cultural relativism was readily adopted by segregationist ideologues who proclaimed the need to preserve the distinct identity of different cultures and the internal coherence of African societies. (Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 11)

Nineteenth century evolutionism was common to both scientific racism and liberalism, yet while classical liberal thought held to the doctrine of inevitable progress, scientific racism emphasised that cultures were as likely to regress as progress. In the segregationist compromise between these two, a popular notion of "culture" came to serve as a linguistic peg upon which the compromise was hung.

An early example of this can be seen in Smuts' celebrated 1929 Oxford lectures. On the one hand Smuts rejected the racist idea that saw the "African as essentially inferior or subhuman, as having no soul, and as being only fit to be a slave" (Dubow, 1987: 84). Yet he also rejected the converse idea of the "African now ... a man and brother" (84). Smuts suggested that although this latter view had given Africans a semblance of equality with whites, it also involved the ruthless destruction of "the basis of his African system which was his highest good" (84). The solution was to be found in a policy of differential segregation: "The new policy", of cultural segregation would, according to Smuts, "foster an
indigenous native culture or system of cultures, and cease to force the African into alien European moulds" (84). A further example can be seen in the South African government ethnologist's G. P. Lestrade's doctrine of "cultural adaptionism". Given that this was to become a crucial organising principle for the proponents of segregation and that the South African Native Economic Commission affirmed its adherence to adaptionism, Lestrade's 1931 formulation is worth quoting:

... there is a middle way between tying [the native] down or trying to make of him a black European, between the repressionist and assimilationist schools ... it is possible to adopt an adaptionist attitude which would take out of the Bantu past what was good, and even what was merely neutral, and together with what is good of European culture for the Bantu, build up a Bantu future. (quoted in Dubow, 1987: 84-85)

Although Paton's text is obviously far less crude and overt in its racism, its solution -- a curious blend of western liberalism, Christian and traditional African tribal values (only when the latter are not inhospitable to the former) -- sounds curiously like only a slightly more enlightened, version of Lestrade's "adaptionism". Medalie points out that in Cry, the Beloved Country the tribal context is admired only when is it compatible with Paton's liberal and Christian perspective:

in Cry, the Beloved Country, Msimangu's criticism of the role played by colonialism in the destruction of tribal life -- "The White man has broken the tribe" -- deliberately excludes indigenous or traditional religious practices from the tribal legacy which is being mourned: 'It was a white man who brought my father out of darkness'. (1998: 98)

Yet it is also clear from the incident cited by Coetzee -- where Jarvis' employee declares his undying loyalty to his new boss, in the vein of tribal allegiance to the Chief -- that traditional "tribal" forms of behaviour are being reinscribed within a
new order. While *Cry, the Beloved Country* does reveal that the rural Chiefs had no real power to deal with the effects of rural overcrowding, as a result of the 1913 land act, in coming to the rescue of Ndotsheni, Jarvis, symbolically, assumes the role of the now powerless tribal Chief.

While Arthur Jarvis' writing suggests a critique of the segregationist system, the influence of the evolutionary ideas about culture, discussed by Dubow, is clearly at work behind this thinking:

> The old tribal system was, for all its violence and savagery, for all its superstition and witchcraft, a moral system. Our natives today produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is in their nature to do so, but because their simple system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed. It was destroyed by the impact of our own civilization. Our civilization has therefore an inescapable duty to set up another system of order and tradition and convention. ... It is true that we hoped to preserve the tribal system by a policy of segregation. That was permissible. But we never did it thoroughly or honestly. We set aside one-tenth of the land for four-fifths of the people. Thus we made it inevitable, and some would say we did it knowingly, that labour would come into the towns. We are caught in the toils of our own selfishness. (Paton, 1988: 127 italics mine)

Despite the liberal voice of Arthur Jarvis and its critique of segregation, the "traditional" order is referred to as "simple" and illustrates Coetzee's reading of the ideology at work in Paton's phantom Zulu. Civilisation is clearly located in white culture, and along with that comes the responsibility of the civilising mission.

Thus while Paton has traditionally been read as a liberal and *Cry, the Beloved Country* has been placed in the line of liberal novels in South Africa, I suggest that drawing on Dubow's work enables a more complex reading of the novel. Furthermore, Dubow's work reveals that the ideology of "pure" liberalism attributed to Paton by critics such as David Medalie, Richard Rive, Stephen
Watson, was no longer accessible in the uncomplicated way that they suggest Paton is using it, in South Africa in 1948.

There is one further aspect of the idea of culture and cultural adaptionism that is relevant to any discussion of black identity in the 1950s. Cultural adaptionism was widely appropriated in the political domain, where a tribally based culture came to be seen as the only alternative to class warfare. It was thought that the policy of assimilation merely substituted class for race and would therefore "lead to the evolution of a native proletariat inspired by the usual antagonism of a class war" (Dubow, 1987: 86). This is why urbanised "detribalised" Africans were so feared and so much legislative effort went into attempts to curtail the growth, and development, of this group and to halt the process of detribalisation, while simultaneously maintaining an available urban workforce. This also indicates how the theoretical groundwork for apartheid had already been laid long before 1948, when Paton's novel was published. In the age of apartheid, Christian Nationalist thinkers embellished the idea of the primacy of separate cultural identity among both Afrikaners and Africans in order to establish their policy of separate development: "[t]hey presented cultural differences in a highly idealised and distorted fashion and went further than segregationist thinkers in equating such differences with national, ethnic and racial identities" (Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 11).

These highly idealised and distorted connections between identity and culture is precisely what the Drum writers were opposing and interrogating through the fiction that was published in the magazine, as I will go on to discuss in this chapter. Fiction represents a vital space, which can contribute a great deal to understanding the tensions and contradictions between legislation, and
practice, within the South African experience. What is revealed through fiction is the way in which apartheid could be used against its intended purpose. In 1953, another of the narratives of rural-urban migration was published, written by Peter Lanham, based on the autobiographical story of A. S. Mopeli-Paulus, "a descendent of the great Basuto Chief, Moshoeshoe", and author of several books in Sesotho. Mopeli-Paulus' autobiography was serialised in Drum magazine during 1954. The novel, written by Lanham, Blanket Boy's Moon, deals with the relationship between the rural and the urban in ways that differ significantly from Paton's model. One of the most interesting of these departures is the way in which it is suggested that black people made use of the stereotypes created by apartheid: rather then being manipulated by these stereotypes, they, in fact, manipulate them. In a court scene after the main protagonist, Monare, has been arrested, he plays on the stereotype of precisely the "simple" African that Paton creates. Although he has been in the city for a considerable period and is very successful there, he pretends to be a simple, rural black person, who doesn't understand the ways of the city. In doing this, Monare, plays on white suspicions about urbanised blacks, as opposed to the idea of the honest, but simple and easily duped rural black person:

Thus did the cunning Monare establish a reputation for himself as a simple countryman.
The lawyer said:
"You can see your worship, that the man is ignorant of the whole issue and, on such grounds, although ignorance of the law is no excuse, I ask for Monare's discharge." (1953: 71)

---

5 This information is given on the inside back cover of the dust jacket of Blanket Boy's Moon (1953).
Here is a distinct case where the law is in fact being turned against itself. It is also a scene that turns Paton's model on its head, suggesting that the idea of the "simple" rural African was a position that was adopted when it benefited black South Africans to play into white stereotypes. There is a similar court scene in a story published early in Drum magazine, written by Bloke Modisane, where he also makes use of white stereotypes of blacks, mimicking them, in order to avoid a prison sentence. This was one of the first stories that was indicative of Drum magazine's shift from the rural into the urban and one of the first to adjust the pattern of trajectory in the magazine. Yet before examining Drum magazine, it is necessary to begin by looking at its rival publication and predecessor, Zonk!. This will establish a context for the transformation that took place within Drum.

Zonk!

Zonk!, Drum's main rival, was launched in August 1949 and was one of the first magazines of its kind aimed mainly at the growing black urban community. Its significance to my argument lies in the fact that, like Drum, the magazine underwent a significant shift in the first year of its existence. Yet Zonk!'s change was an inversion of Drum's: while Drum moved symbolically from the country to the city, Zonk! started in the city, and then made a rather anxious retreat to the country. Rather than developing in opposition to apartheid, Zonk!'s transformation falls in line with growing apartheid legislation, which presumably accounts for the changes I will discuss. While Zonk!'s content initially endorses the possibility of a black urban subjectivity, after the first year the material underwent a significant shift, which made it impossible for the magazine to provide a vehicle for black modernity: a role left to Drum.
Like *Drum* magazine, *Zonk!* made use of the three-colour cover. The first issue, however, quite unlike *Drum* magazine's stylised cover, featured a photograph of Dolly Rathebe, who was about to become a celebrity in black South Africa after the release of a film called *African Jim* in October of 1949. The film was, as already stated, the first ever made with an entirely black cast. It is of no small significance that this film was made by the collaboration of two British visitors to South Africa: scriptwriter Donald Swanson and actor, Eric Rutherford, directed and produced the film. Just as it took a British editor, Anthony Sampson, to transform *Drum* magazine, Swanson and Rutherford could see a black South African culture, which apparently remained largely invisible to white South Africans of the period. In addition to a feature article over three pages in the inaugural issue, the December issue of *Zonk!* published the story about the world premiere, which took place in Johannesburg in October of 1949. That this was no small event in the life of black South Africa is indicated by the fact that the opening speech is made by Dr. Alfred Xuma, president of the African National Congress until February of 1949. The article featured photographs of the two lead actors -- Dolly Ratebe [sic] and Dan Adnewmah -- with the caption, "1st AFRICAN FILM STARS" (December 1949: 17). The commentary offered by *Zonk!* on the significance of this event, is telling indeed: "This new development is important not only from the point of view of entertainment but because it immediately opens up a new industry for the African people, and marks a further step in our progress" (*Zonk!* December 1949: 19).

The influence of evolutionary Darwinism, where cultures are ranged on an evolutionary scale ("a further step in our progress") is clearly at work in this
discourse. This is thrown into relief when compared with Trevor Huddleston's commentary in his message of goodwill to *Zonk!:

> The world is rapidly becoming smaller through the influence of radio, air-travel and international co-operation. All the more necessary, therefore, has it become for the African people to realise the contribution they can make, and indeed are making already, to its culture and civilisation. (January 1950: 39, emphasis mine)

In Huddleston's message (world) culture and civilisation is, significantly, in the singular and Africans are clearly already included in this. While the article about the film is written from the perspective of a black person ("our progress") there is no real evidence to suggest that *Zonk! had any black writers of feature articles at this time. The birthday issue in August 1950, carries two pages of photographs, with the heading: "Discussion and work at the ZONK Office" (*Zonk! August 1950: 26-27). There are photographs of black journalists at work. However, no names are given except for the photograph of Sam Maile at his typewriter: "Sam Maile, music correspondent, types this month's Music Box" (August 1950: 26-27). Sam Maile had acted in *African Jim* and written some of the music for the film and he wrote a music page for *Zonk!, which was always given a by-line. The rest of the articles -- or photographs -- carried no by-line or credits. An article in September of 1950 is the only one, during the whole of 1950, to have a by-line: "Bantu Programme by Henry Nxumalo." (*Zonk! Sept. 1950: 4-5).

It seems logical to conclude, therefore, that if *Zonk! did have black writers they would have been named. It is not until the editorial page of October

---

6 Les Switzer (1979: 124) indicates that *Zonk! did have black journalists, though he does not make it clear whether they were present from the outset or not.
1950, some fourteen months after the magazine's launch, that the editor is named: Jane-Eliza Hasted. The photographic editor is named as John Lee. Yet unlike Drum magazine, no names of journalists are included. When it comes to fiction, the situation is very similar. There is very little evidence to suggest that Zonk! was publishing fiction written by black writers. The first short story published in the inaugural issue of Zonk! is attributed to the very obvious pseudonym of "Kitty Kraft". The reader is informed that this is "based on a true story" (August 1949: 44). The narrator is Jonas, who is in hospital, where he watches and falls in love with the nurse, Selina, whom he would like to marry. The reader learns that he is in hospital since he risked his own life to save other miners' lives, when a slimes dam burst. He is handsomely rewarded for his loyalty and bravery and this reward gives him enough money to marry Selina, since he has money to pay for her bride price.

This story is interesting for several reasons. In some ways it is typical of the "official" idea propagated under apartheid of migrant worker's life: work in the city often was often presented as a necessity only in order to earn money to buy the cattle for the traditional practice of the bride price, lobola. In this version the migrant has no need to remain in the city once he has secured the necessary money, hence his permanent return to the tribal home. These ideas are nowhere more clearly represented than in a film made by the South African Chamber of Mines, for the purposes of recruiting migrant workers, to be discussed in chapter two. Called Pondo Story, and made in 1948, it depicts the story of a young man from Pondoland, who goes to work on the mines in Johannesburg, in order to earn money for lobola. Like Jonas in the Zonk! short story, the main protagonist also saves the life of the white shift boss during a
rock fall and his financial reward enables him to return home and pay for the

cattle for his lobola. Such films obscured the fact that economic conditions and

overcrowding in the rural areas made a return to tribal life virtually impossible.

It is this reality that Cry, the Beloved Country does attempt to address, although

the solution is rural regeneration, rather than urban reform, and as such it falls in

line with official apartheid policy. In the Zonk! story, however, Selina is not in

the tribal home: she is at work as a nurse and there is no suggestion that they will

return "home". He gets the money to continue the traditional practice of lobola,

but there is no sense of maintaining a "tribal" life. The fact that this story is

written in the "true romance" genre -- which was later to dominate Drum

magazine and its sister newspaper Post -- could account for this. The story is

entitled: "The Best Reward: Love waited for him -- on the other side of danger"

(August 1949: 44). Romance stories traditionally obscure issues of class and

race.7 This story is thus a curious blend of traditional values (the reward for

selfless, self-sacrificial behaviour, lobola) translated into the romance frame.

It is after its first birthday issue (August 1950) that Zonk! undergoes a

very significant change. In September there is an uncharacteristically self-

reflexive editorial, which examines the content of the first year of Zonk! and

subsequently "confesses" to readers that the focus of the magazine has been too

narrow:

... the soul, the spirit is the great link between one man and another. We

all know how we live ourselves. Our friends are among those whom we

work and play [sic]. Our families are those who were born or who have

married into a relationship with us. But, as each day comes and goes, we

7 Linda K. Christian-Smith, for example, argues "that romance fiction's

version of femininity is actually rooted in a particular class and race, although it

masquerades as a universal identity" (1990: 6).
forget to look around on all those who do other work, live other lives, whom we never see, whom we never meet.

We forget the brotherhood of the African race.

Has ZONK even perhaps forgotten this? Have we left out of account the daily lives of men and women? Yes. It is hard to say but it is true. We must tell a wider story, show more of those whose labours are different from our own, whose daily experiences are just as important as ours, of whom we perhaps thought too little. (September 1950: 3)

The editorial then presents the extremely interesting revelation of where exactly Zonk! thinks it has gone wrong:

For that reason in this issue we begin to tell the story of the land, the earth of our Africa and the men who farm it and raise our daily food. We think also of the daily lives of those who work on our great mines. The farming people are far from the city, the mining men are deep underground. Thus we have forgotten them until Bishop Bonner's visit reminded us that all men can live the life of the spirit and their days are as important as our own. (September 1950: 3)

It's very difficult here to attempt to locate the position of "our own", which Zonk! speaks for, and from. There is the interesting suggestion, firstly, that there has been too much emphasis on the urban and that "farming people are far from the city". Zonk! abruptly embarks on the Edenic discourse about the country, similar to the one that will dominate the early issues of Drum magazine. This issue of Zonk! carries the first of a new "Land of Africa" feature with the dramatic headline: "Land comes first" and the claim that "FARMING IS AFRICA'S PAST PRESENT & FUTURE" (8). Curiously this is introduced as "a page for our farming readers" at a time when farm labourers were so poorly paid that they would not have constituted the readership of magazines such as Zonk!. It is also unlikely in the extreme that anyone literate, especially in English, would have
been working as a farm labourer where conditions were among the worst in South Africa, a topic later to be the subject of Mr. Drum's first exposé.

It is the other new feature that would appear to provide clues about what was underlying Zonk!'s dramatic transformation: the "mining men ... deep underground". On Page six, in a "Men of the Mines" feature, Zonk! greeted "READERS IN GREAT GOLD MINES". This was introduced as "Our Mining Page" since "[t]housands of ZONK readers work on the mines" and "[u]p till now, no page has been set aside to tell the story of their lives" (6). The "our own" editorial voice is now introducing "our mining page". The use of this pronoun continues: "This page stands dedicated to those readers who work in what is still the greatest industry of our country, the mining of gold". "Gold", Zonk! readers are told, "is our national metal" (6, emphasis mine). It is useful to see whose voice speaks in the article, which is a vindication of the mining industry. The (low) wages are explained in terms of the great expenses and risks involved in mining and there is much emphasis on the way in which the mines supply facilities for miners (such as housing and facilities for recreation). This is almost identical to the propaganda in the official Chamber of Mines recruitment film, Pondo Story.

As the feature continues it reinforces not only the position of white capital in mining, but also the official apartheid version of migrant labour. A photograph contains the caption: "Mr. And Mrs. J. Motebang are seen outside their new quarters provided by Western Holdings Ltd., Welkom, O.F.S. Writing to Zonk a few days ago, Mr. Motebang said: "We are living a happy life!" (9). The life of the migrant labourer is portrayed in "One man's story" about Simon Umfana who comes from Umtata, where he is immediately placed in a tribal
context, as readers are informed that this family live under the Chief Umbiza. In keeping with the official version Zonk! tells readers that "[a]t that time he was saving up his money to buy cattle" (9).

While Zonk! separates, spatially, the farm and the mines ("farming people ... far from the city, ... mining men ... deep underground"), in the economic reality of apartheid they were not that far apart. Labour tenancy had become the dominant source of agricultural labour since the 1920s (Posel, 1991: 29). These tenants generally worked for between twelve and twenty-four weeks per year in return for the right to plant crops and graze cattle on a portion of the farm. In addition to these labour tenants there were also full-time labourers and seasonal migrant labourers making up the farmers' labour pool. While grinding poverty and malnutrition were suffered across the board by all farm workers, the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, however, saw an unrelenting deterioration in the conditions of labour tenancy. By the late 1940s "it was common practice for white farmers to concentrate labour tenants on so-called 'labour farms', deliberately relegated to the least fertile portion of the farmer's lands" (Posel, 1991: 29). Thus,

the more unproductive the labour tenants plot, the less its contribution to his family's subsistence, and there the more reliant he became on a cash wage. His obligatory service to the white farmer typically earned him very little, so that his family's survival depended on securing an additional cash income, usually on the mines or in the towns. (Posel, 1991: 29-30)

Thus while Zonk! addresses the farming people and the mining men as discrete groups, there is in fact an economic reality linking the former to the latter. Zonk!'s mystification of the circumstances surrounding these industries obscures the economic reality of workers in both industries. Yet the most significant shift
that seems to take place is that in its "spiritual" relocation, *Zonk!*, and black identity along with it, is removed from the city unless -- in the words of the Stallard Commission of 1922 -- blacks were there "to minister to the needs of whites" and to "depart therefrom when [they] had ceased so to minister" (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 1989: 15). Thus, quite against *Zonk!*'s intention, the voice which speaks of "our lives" in the editorial and then "our mines" and "our gold" merge. Yet rather than including them *Zonk!*'s new voice speaks from a position that excludes the very voices of the "farming people" and the "mining men".

It is a story written by a black author and published in the fourth issue of *Drum* magazine (June 1951) which makes the connections, obscured in *Zonk!*, visible. The story brings to the fore the oppressive legislation circumscribing rural farm workers. Before discussing this story, however, it is necessary to see it in the context of early *Drum* magazine, in order to reveal how this represented a significant departure from the model set up by Robert Crisp.

**From *African Drum* to *Drum* magazine: towards an urban subjectivity**

The first fiction ever published in *African Drum* magazine was on page five of the magazine and it was a poem by African American poet Countee Cullen. From Cullen's distant position, the nostalgic and romanticised vision of the land of his ancestors coincided perfectly with the vision of Africa Crisp was attempting to sell to his African readers:

```
What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea
Jungle star or jungle track
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
```
When the birds of Eden sang? (March 1951: 5)

Yet it is the commentary accompanying the poem that is the most revealing.

We are privileged to begin the first issue of "The Drum" with a great poem by a great American Negro poet. We have never read anything yet that expresses so brilliantly and so beautifully the bewildering thoughts that beset the 20th Century African -- even after 300 years of civilising away from Africa. (5)

The discourse here could not be plainer: "after 300 years of civilising away from Africa" (5). The journey of slavery is represented as one that takes place towards civilisation. Yet the tone of this commentary is quite at odds with the suggestion of Cullen's own poem where the narrator laments the fact that his so-called civilising required sacrifices:

My conversion came high-priced;
I belong to Jesus Christ
Preacher of humility
Heathen Gods are naught to me (5)

In the last stanza he confesses that, as result of this conversion, in his heart he always "play[s] a double part": Wishing he I served were black / Thinking then it would not lack". The narrator continues, addressing God, saying, (that like his heathen ancestors): "Lord, I fashion dark Gods, too / Daring even to give to you / Dark despairing features ... / Crowned with dark rebellious hair". The end of the poem is fascinating:

Lest the grave restore its dead
Not yet has my heart or head
In the least way realized
They and I are civilized (5)
The narrative voice of the poem straddles a curious divide. He expresses his desire for a black God. This immediately undermines the model of slavery "civilising" Africans in America, and replaces it with one of colonialism. It seems curious that a poem like this would be included in Drum magazine. Yet the last lines, which suggest that the narrator, even "three centuries removed" is still fundamentally African, would have translated into apartheid South Africa as the idea that he was still, at some level, part of Africa, which stood outside "civilisation". Thus the evolutionary scale of culture and civilisation is quite clearly at work in the first issue of African Drum magazine, possibly explaining why black readers despised the early African Drum magazine, as much as they did.

The same patronising tone is clear when the rest of the fiction in the first issue is introduced. At the end of the first instalment of Cry, the Beloved Country, the reader is addressed as follows: "You will have discovered by now that “Cry, the Beloved Country” is a beautifully told story, told in manner that you will all understand because it is told by a man who understands you" (9). With the commentary introducing the first story written by a black writer the tone of African Drum's editorial begins to sound remarkably similar to Paton's text. Readers are informed that the story, "Rhodesia Road", "such as we present it here is a condensation from the original MS written in one of the original Nyasaland languages" (16). The original author was Alfred David Mbeba. The editorial voice frames the story and claims to have access to Mbeba's motivation for writing this story:
Mbeba wrote "Rhodesia Road" so that his country-folk would be aware of the difficulties as well as the attractions and excitement of the journey to the south in search of work. We think that the story may have a wider appeal, for it tells of an experience common to all Africans. There is in "Rhodesia Road" a freshness, *simplicity and immediate rendering of emotions and experience* that make it a good story. Mbeba writes about what he knows without trying to appear brilliant or cultured, *the result is a story remarkable for sincerity and genuine feeling*. (16, emphasis mine)

The ideas here of simplicity and immediacy are exactly those that Coetzee has attributed to Paton's Zulu language and, by extrapolation, to Zulu speaking people. Mbeba is praised for writing what he knows about, the country, and for not trying to appear "brilliant or cultured". This locates Crisp's desire for an ideal rural black person, revealing the white distrust, and fear, of urbanised, detribalised black South Africans.

The story itself is a conservative one in which a group of young men leave the country in search of work. After they've worked for a while and seen the city, they are reminded of "home" and return to the country. Yet there are several interesting ideas introduced in this story. The city is presented as the place of the commodity and it is this that initially draws them away from the country village.

There was a day in a village between Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia when, as the sun was setting, two young lads saw a number of men passing by who had been at distant work [sic]. The heart of one, Yakusoza, was filled with envy. He longed for a share from the things which he guessed must be in the loads which they carried. (16)

The journey towards the city is more gradual in this story, since they first find work, herding cattle on a farm. Then two of the protagonists go and visit a friend
who works in the city. The emphasis is once more on the commodities in the city:

On they went among the shops where they saw clothes to break one's heart, gay cloth of all colours, hats and wearing apparel that reduced them to silence. "Could anyone have enough money ever to buy all these things?" said Kamuthimbuke.

"As for me," said Yakusoza, "I am speechless." (17)

... Turning around they saw a young lad who must have put on clothing regardless of cost, a hat on his head, a tie round his neck, a watch on his wrist, speaking boots on his feet and a pair of spectacles on his eyes! (48)

The response of the two protagonists to the city is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's description of the new forms of behaviour brought about as a reaction to the city, in nineteenth century Paris: "Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the eye over the activity of the ear" (1997: 38). The response of the two young country men to the city is one of visual amazement: "As for Karnuthimbuke all he could say was, "My mouth is bone dry. I have only eyes to gaze. What takes the eye, though, is this putting on of clothing" (African Drum March 1951: 48).

Two events seem to break the spell of the city. The first is the spectacle of women in the city, and the description of these women is in sharp contrast with the description of the finely dressed man they have just seen, where the desire and admiration is evident. The women inspire no such approval: they see women with "their clothing awry and loose around their breasts, their bodies slim as if they never ate at all, shoes on their feet and cigarettes in their lips. And reeking of scented oils!" (48). It is clear here that "modernisation" has very different meanings, and implications, for men and women. Two years later in Drum magazine, in a series of stories about an urbanised, urbane black detective,
promoting a male urban subjectivity, the text asks: "have you seen the horror that’s an African girl who uses lipstick[?]" (September 1953: 25).

The second event is a violent fight that breaks out, described in terms that once again privilege the gaze, and they flee:

But even as they watched there was a sudden tumult of cries if "Jeke! Jeke! Jeke!" They saw two men struggling together, crashing blows at each other. The one took the other's fist right in the eyes. Shower of stars! And he was down. He lay like dead. Yakwindula took one look. "Lads of our home!" he said, "there is no room for us here! Come on! We must go or we will be called as witnesses in the morning!" So, in silence, they stole away back to their hut. (*African Drum* March 1951: 48)

There reason that "there is no room" for these men here is interesting. The one city dweller, who knows the ways of the city, and whom the other two are visiting, tells them: "[w]e must go or we will be called as witnesses in the morning!" (48). It is fear of the police in South Africa that prevents these men from staying on the street. This underscores once again how the black South African experience of the country and the city was circumscribed by legislation. This indicates how race rendered the category of the urban unavailable to black men and women in different ways in Southern Africa. It further suggests that any models of urban identity that fail to take race and gender into account are inadequate, when dealing with the South African situation. After this experience in the city the two protagonists return to their work of herding and singing and "what they sang turned their thoughts towards home so that they threw up their work and set off back to the village" (48). The narrative thus suggests that the spell of the city has been broken by this experience and that they subsequently long for the country.
Thus while the first issue of *African Drum* presents readers with two narratives of the journey from the country to the city -- the first instalment of Paton's novel and "Rhodesia Road" -- they are both narratives that warn readers about the horror and degeneration that awaits black people in the city. The journeys embarked on in both of these texts will take its protagonists "home", to the country.

The second issue of *African Drum* reveals male anxieties about migration and what happens to the women: in the country and the city. The first, in keeping with the tribal emphasis of the magazine at this time, is in a section entitled "folk lore". It is a tale of magic and it doesn't have much significance unless read within the context of the rural - urban migration of the period and its concomitant anxieties. It is entitled "The Faithless Woman" by Guybon Sinxo (*African Drum* April 1951: 9). The folkloric narrative tells the story of a certain young man who was so ugly that no woman would have him for her husband. He chops down a tree and chisels it into the form of a woman. An old woman who was, unbeknown to him, the kind fairy of the forest, tells him to drive a big wooden peg into the head of the form. The dead tree then turns into the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. He names the woman "Mpiyo, the beautiful!" (9). "At that time", the narrative, continues, "a great drought gripped the land" and, as a result:

the happy man had to leave his wife and go to search for food in a far-off country. He was away from home for a very long time, and when he came back he was shocked to discover that his wife had run away from home with another man. (9)

He calls two doves and sends them to his wife to ask for various items belonging to her. Not wanting to be disturbed with her new lover, she gives the birds what
they ask for. On the third night he sends the doves to ask for the pin in her head. She is asleep and the lover searches her head, finds the pin, pulls it off and the woman turns back into a tree. This spectacle drives the lover mad. Mpiyo's husband, who is never named, goes to collect the dry wood. The ending, where he burns the tree, is startling for its angry tone against women, and seems to break the discourse of the folkloric narrative:

He could easily have brought her back to life as he had the magic pin, but full of the greatest anger he made a great fire and putting the dry wood in it he exclaimed: "Burn to death O, faithless woman, as all faithless women should!"
And the woman was burnt to cinders. (9)

Yet this story makes perfect sense when read as a story about male anxiety about leaving women behind in the rural areas, when they're forced to go and work in the city. The drought can obviously be read as a metaphor for rural poverty in general, yet it also has a basis in reality as indicated by Posel:

The year 1942 was one of severe drought, which exacerbated what was for most an already desperate situation [in the rural reserves]. The decade thus saw an accelerating exodus from the reserves to the urban and peri-urban areas of the country. ... Many of those heading for the towns were single man bread-winners. (1991: 28)

The other short story presents the inverse scenario: the evil woman in the city. "Nomoyo! Of the winds" by Randolph Ben Pitso is presented as two narratives. The frame narrative, located in the country, is about Nomoyo, "[p]roud daughter to a once-powerful Swazi family" who leaves the country to pursue life in the city as "Marion Mabaso, ready-groomed and pinned-up for a good time" (African Drum April 1951: 14). The city narrative reveals that Marion has been involved in robberies with a man called Patrick Lofafa and she hides the money
on her person: "all the time Patrick had been safe in sunny Bechuanaland, and she innocent as a dove had sought refuge in church, rolls of stolen banknotes hidden between her breasts" (14-15). This idea about woman's duplicity in the city, and the role played by women's bodies in this, is one that will recur in *Drum*. Patrick murders Marion, when she wants to confess, and an innocent man is blamed for her murder. Thus while the frame narrative suggests that woman is at one with nature, and her intended role, in the country, the city narrative suggests that chaos ensues when women adopt the ways of the city.

A story in the June issue of *African Drum* published another story dealing with the relationship between the country and the city, yet "The Harvest is Waiting" raises fascinating issues that are occluded in other narratives. It is written by Dyke Sentso, who later became a regular contributor of stories to *Drum* magazine. Sentso is the first author featured in *Drum* magazine's famed short story competitions with its lucrative cash prizes. What makes this story particularly interesting is that the action turns on characters' tacit responses to a piece of South African legislation known as the "Native Service Contract Act", which was introduced in 1932. Though the act is never named in the narrative, it is clearly what drives the action of the story. The act "enabled farmers to call on a worker and his family to provide labour services and introduced penalties to keep workers from escaping these services" (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 1989: 17). These penalties included dismissal from the land, overtly represented in Sentso's story. This was part of the government's attempt to protect the white farmer by preventing farm labour from seeking work in the city, a common practice due to the appalling conditions of farm work. Posel points out that in the 1930s and 1940s the greatest migration to the urban areas came, not from the
subsistence-based rural reserves, but from the white-owned farms. As much as "40 per cent of the increase in the urban African population between 1936 and 1951 came from 'the European farms and other rural areas', as opposed to 8 per cent from the reserves" (1991: 29). Thus the Native Service Contract Act was a bill of "unsurpassed repression". As documented by David Duncan, its chief clauses

strengthened the power of African parents to enter into binding contracts on behalf of their children; allowed the farmer to evict the whole family if one member failed to render service; prevented labour tenants from acquiring "seek-work" passes for the towns without the farmer's written permission. (1997: 36)

While the narrative is focalised through different characters at various points in the story, it begins and ends with white characters. At the outset of the story, the farmer, Scholtz, is surveying his harvest. He watches a black man approach him, initially pleased by the man's display of subservience. The black man is disappointed, however, that the white man doesn't recognise him. It becomes apparent that the black man has saved the white man's life when he nearly drowned as a child:

The white man looked hard at the black man in front of him, then looked away with a distant look in his eyes. A strong impulse to hold the black man and shake his hand vigorously, welled within him. He wanted to tell the black man, Man you saved my life. I would have been dead. But such an action is not easily done. Instead he stuck his hands in his pockets, fixed his eyes on the ground, lived momentarily over the incident, shuddered slightly and said simply:
--You are a good Native! (African Drum June 1951: 4)

The black man, named April, has come to ask Scholtz to give him a job since his last boss, Pringler, has given him the "pas", as he explains to Scholtz. He has a son who attends school and, under the provisions of the Native Service Contract
Act, Pringler demanded that the son work on the farm during the harvest. Since April refuses to take his son out of school, Pringler gives him the "pas". We are presented with the white man's attitude towards the "Native Service Contract Act":

He has always taken the view that Natives could do what they liked with their children but that the white man in his turn deserved the right to do as he pleased with both Natives and their children ... and now here was April whom he owed a good turn asking him to revise his views and change his policy.

... All logic and sense told him to tell April that he did not need him, but something stopped him. (5)

Scholtz proceeds to question April about why he is sending his children to school:

--Do all Native parents want their children educated?
--Yes, Baas.
--Why do they not all refuse to service their children like you?
--Because they are afraid of the "pas," Baas. (5)

April's explanation as to why he refuses to go along with the practice reveals the poverty -- both material and psychological -- of black farm workers: "I am afraid o [sic] the 'pas,' Baas", he tells Scholtz, "but here is nothing I can leave my children except the education I can give them. ... My cattle are gone, my sheep are gone, my home is uncertain" (5). This poignantly reveals the interregnum of transition that farm workers found themselves in: they no longer held traditional wealth -- cattle -- to pass on to their children, who are prevented from acquiring education by legislation designed to protect the interests of white farmers.

Scholtz does give April a job, which would appear to suggest that April has been successful in resisting the terms of the Act. In the second half of the
story, however, April does have a son working with him on the farm and it is unclear whether this is the same son, who has been removed from school, or not. Yet the very act of dramatising resistance to this act is of immense political significance and it is thus possible that the story was edited, either by the author or by Drum editorial process, to tone down the political implications, hence the incoherent narrative. Or, as Chapman suggests, "Sento's narrative patterns show signs of collapsing under the pressure of the human story-experience" (1989: 200). The political resistance, in this story is still, however, reliant on white cooperation and understanding, in this case from Scholtz. Thus while the story itself deals with the devastating effects of the Native Service Contract Act, it does not move entirely beyond Cry, the Beloved Country, in terms of its model of action.

It does, however, signal a turning point in Drum: both in terms of its representation of the implications of legislation and in terms of a new, albeit ambivalent, attitude towards the city. The latter is demonstrated when April's son begins to talk about going to work in the city to supplement the family's cash income, in the process documented by Posel. April's response to his son's suggestion sheds light on the values placed on the country and the city and it is interesting to notice that the city is perceived as the place of progress:

He sensed what his son was driving at and knew that he would offer reasons too weak to convince even himself. It was not the first time he had pitted his love of the land and quiet against the progress, sophistication and apparent wealth of that large city ... to his cost. (African Drum June 1951: 49)

It is interesting that here, for the first time in Drum, the "cost" of staying on the land, in the country, is counted. The "progress" is demonstrated by April's son's
justification for going to work in the city: he does not wish to remain a farm
labourer:

--Well, father, I have been thinking about this Johannesburg.
--Thinking deeply, my son?
--Very, very deeply father, and I feel that if I go there maybe I can bring
mother four blankets and you two suits and a watch.
...
--But what about your mother son?
--I should then be able to bring her a nice dress for Sunday. You do not
wish me, father, to spend all my life here and bend double like you father,
do you? (49)

April's final response is ambivalence: "he decided neither to agree nor to refuse"
(49). This very undetermined attitude towards the city, marks a distinct shift in
_Drum_: away from Paton's celebration of rural virtues and towards a more
politicised form of representation.

The first real shift into the urban, both in terms of physical location and in
terms of language and style, appears in the story published in September, 1951.
This story is of immense significance since it marks the first appearance of the
new _Drum_ style: "racy, agitated, cynically amused by its own urban air"
(Chapman, 1989: 201). The story, entitled "The Dignity of Begging", was
written by William "Bloke" Modisane. It is Modisane's first published story and
the first time that writing by Modisane, who became one of the main journalists
on _Drum_, appears in the magazine. It tells the story of Nathaniel Mokgomare, a
young man who is cripple and, as a result of this, a beggar in Johannesburg. He
is educated and he begs, not because he can't work, but because he can make
twice as much money that way than by working. It is also a narrative about rural
- urban migration -- since Nathaniel leaves his family home in the country in
order to practice his profession, as a beggar in Sophiatown -- but one in which a
very different form of consciousness is presented. When Nathaniel is arrested for begging, he makes a very moving speech in court about the difficulty of being cripple, viewed by society as "dependent" on charity, thus producing a "performance" in order to avoid a prison sentence:

> I can see my freedom at a distance of an arm's stretch, here is my chance to put on my act; a look of deep compassion and a few well-chosen words can do the trick. I clear my throat and squeeze a tear or two.  
>
> I can see from the silence in the court that everyone is deceived, the magistrate is as mute as the undertaker's parlour. I read pity spelled on the faces of all the people in the court. Perhaps the most pathetic face is my own. *I am magnificent, an answer to every film director's dream.* I know that I have said enough -- enough to let me out that is." (African Drum September 1951: 5 emphasis mine)

This is the first representation in *Drum* magazine of someone who is smart and streetwise enough to outwit the system, in a similar fashion to the character of Monare in *Blanket Boy's Moon*. "The slick sophistication", as Chapman points out, "acts in defiance of the retribalizing mentality" (1989: 201). It is thus extremely significant that in Modisane's story, the city, as opposed to the country, becomes the place where independence is possible. Nathaniel informs the reader that, after leaving his family home in the country, a new life opened up: "I got myself a wife, a property in Pampoenfontein, and a room in Sophiatown complete with piano. Within two years I had begged well over two hundred pounds" (African Drum September 1951: 5). The piano, a crucial object in the plot, becomes a symbol of independence: "That piano means everything to me, nobody is going to cheat me of it. It is the one concrete proof that I can work for what I want, just like any other man; it represents my entire life" (21, emphasis mine). Modisane is thus presenting quite a different model of subjectivity here. The references to being a film director's dream, along with the
fact that he wins an extraordinary amount of money gambling (£670) and gets away with it, suggests the influence of contemporary film on Modisane's writing at this point. In the film African Jim, the main protagonist, robbed shortly after his arrival in the city, also wins money gambling. 8

It is interesting to note that Modisane rewrote this story for inclusion in an anthology of African writing, Darkness and Light, published in 1958. A comparison with the later version sheds interesting light on the first Drum version published in 1951. In the earlier story there appears to be some anxiety about locating the story permanently in the urban and Nathaniel does eventually return to his family home in the country at the end, due to the death of his son. There he finds that his father has rescued his beloved piano -- in which his "earnings" are hidden -- from his landlady in Sophiatown and brought it to the family home in the country. In the later version published in 1958, however, Nathaniel has the "brilliant idea" of forming a "United Beggars Union" and the story ends with Nathaniel reiterating his need for life in Sophiatown: "I have to come back. I owe it to the profession" (Modisane, 1958: 58). Thus in the original Drum version, the story line appears less unified and shifts from the ironic tale of the beggar into an "ambiguous celebration of rural homecoming" (Chapman, 1989: 17). Yet this very lack of unity in the theme and structure of the earlier version of the story indicates a "deeply problematic response to the conventional polarities of the city and the country" (Chapman, 1989: 201). In the Drum version, Chapman suggests that the two generations of "urban" son and "rural" father, "conspire at some not fully articulated level to introduce new 'city'
expectations and gratifications to the (literary-mythical) 'innocence' of the pastoral landscape" that is the country (Chapman, 1989: 201-202).

While Chapman does not elaborate on this point about the "rural" father and "urban" son, I want to suggest that the early version of Modisane's story, published in Drum, must be read in the context of Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country, still serialised in the magazine at the time. It is Paton's rural fathers -- Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis -- who attempt to retain, and even restore, the innocence of the pastoral landscape. There is no dialogue between these rural fathers and their urban sons in Paton's model: significantly neither of the urban sons can return to the rural since both sons -- white and black -- are killed by the city.

It thus seems remarkable that Modisane's story has been read as lacking in local South African content or even as apolitical, by critics as far apart -- chronologically and ideologically -- as Lindfors (1966) and Maughan-Brown (1989). As part of his critique of the American-style imitation in Drum, Lindfors accuses Modisane of writing, in the "idiom of Damon Runyon", "underworld comedies ... which try to show criminals in a sympathetic or humorous light". (1966: 57). In his Marxist critique Maughan-Brown is even harsher, suggesting that "in encouraging the assumption that beggars with twisted legs" are "confidence tricksters ... making twice as much money by begging as they would by 'doing an honest day's work' the story is trivialising [the] economic deprivation" of apartheid. (1989: 8). Thus "far from offering a commentary of the criminalisation of begging in a society characterised by gross inequalities in

---

8 Modisane was one of the people to collaborate in making Lionel Rogosin's brilliant "docudrama" about black urban life in the 1950s, Come back, Africa.
the distribution of income and wealth", the story, according to Maughan-Brown, "implicitly endorses such criminalisation (8). In its apparent endorsement of luck and gambling it offers a form of escapism, making the story "less than revolutionary" (8). In reading the story against the standards of protest writing, Maughan-Brown's analysis loses sight of the very obvious metaphor in the story, which would have certainly been apparent to readers: the analogy between the "dependence" of cripple beggars and black South Africans. Modisane explains in this autobiographical Blame Me on History, first published in 1963:

I projected myself into the character of Nathaniel Mokgomare, an educated African capable in any society of earning himself an independent living, but handicapped by being black in a society which has determined that being black is the condition of being dependent on white charity, in the same sense that a cripple is dependent for his existence on public charity. (1963: 88)

Nathaniel's "performance" about the prejudice against cripple people, and their desire for independence, makes the analogy between the way disabled people are viewed in society and the way black people are treated in apartheid South Africa patently clear:

"Your honour most of us beg because we have been ostracised by our families; they treat us as though we were lepers." I say, wiping off a tear. "They want us to look up to them for the things that we need, they never encourage us to earn our own keep. Nobody wants to employ us, people are more willing to offer us alms than give us jobs. All they do is show us pity. We don't want to be pitied, we want to be given a chance to prove that we are as good as anyone else["]. (African Drum September 1951: 5)

In this denunciation Modisane is providing a vital critique of the liberal concept of patronage, and the alms provided by Jarvis, in Cry, the Beloved Country, and the manifesto in this story is the desire for black urban independence.
Modisane's stories continued to vie with the more conservative voices in *Drum*. Nowhere is this clearer than in January 1952, where another story by Modisane follows directly after "Farm Boy" by E.A.P. Sixaba. "Farm Boy" is about Makhaya Mahlathi who "knew nothing about the towns" and "hated the thought of working in one" (*Drum* January 1952: 17). When forced to go and work in town in order to earn money for *lobolo*, his initial experience is similar to that of Stephen Kumalo. However, he "meets a European who speaks a little Xhosa and who gives him a job" (17). The city becomes the place of progress: Makhaya "taught himself many things", like how to speak English (17). He loses his prejudice towards the city: "he began to realise that all the people who live in the towns are not as stupid as he once thought" (17). Yet, in a curious twist this enlightenment also includes the traditional values of loyalty and devotion to his employers. Makhaya learns "how to be honest and faithful to his employers" and "was so happy and pleased with [their] treatment that he made up his mind never the [sic] leave until he was old, or until his son could take his place" (17).

In total contrast, on the following page, *Drum* published Modisane's second story. This is the first narrative in *Drum* located entirely in the city: there is no more migration. It tells the tale of a thoroughly "modern" couple negotiating gender roles. In "The fighter that wore skirts", Kate is married to Vincent, who is a boxer. She wants to be in control and "wear the pants". "You may be the champion of South Africa" she tells him, "but to me you're still plain Vincent. There'll be no changes in this house, I still have the last word, I'm wearing the pants in this house" (19). Vincent eventually wins this battle too and Kate backs down, accepting his authority. One could certainly read this story as an example of the reassertion of a black urban patriarchy, in the face of the
breakdown of the tradition social relations. Yet in the exchange between Vincent
and Kate, there is also an intriguing suggestion of the way in which the transition
from traditional models of relationships to the modern, necessarily involved a
certain amount of fictional creation, since there were no models for black urban identites:

"I thought it was the man that wore the pants."
"Only in story books."
"Why can't we make-believe we're story characters?"
(19)

These modern black identities are "story characters" at several levels. The idea
of Vincent, black boxing "Champion of South Africa" is a fiction in apartheid
South Africa, where black and white boxers were prevented from fighting, since
a black victory would undermine the ideology of white supremacy. The
necessity of invention for Drum writers, due to the lack of models and literary
heroes, has been clearly stated by former Drum journalist, Nkosi. It was Drum
that gave writers like Modisane and Nkosi the space to invent the symbols of a
new detribalised African identity. The fifties, says Nkosi, were "the most
shaping influence of our young adulthood" and Drum publications, "in the
buzzing centre of all national activity", "seemed to be the place to be in for any young man trying to write" (1965: 9). Examining the shifts in early Drum, where
a variety of discourses seemed to blend and clash, it is entirely understandable
that Nkosi describes Drum, as a "curious institution" (1965: 10). During the
1950s that curious institution became "a symbol of the new African cut adrift
from the tribal reserve - urbanised, eager, fast-talking and brash" (1965: 10).

The last word on Drum's relocation of black identity, must go to Henry
Nxumalo, "Mister Drum", the extraordinary journalist who played an
indispensable role in the success of Drum magazine. In March, 1952, the first birthday edition of Drum published the first of what was to become a tradition -- sadly short-lived -- of undercover investigative reporting by Nxumalo as "Mister Drum". The investigative genre was inaugurated in Drum magazine's first birthday edition, which carried the shocking story of the deceitful recruitment and appalling treatment of black farm workers in the rural area of Bethal. This story catapulted Mister Drum and Drum magazine into the national and international limelight. Sampson recalls that after the introduction of "[p]icture features, bright covers, jazz, girls, and crime stories" to the early African Drum, the magazine's circulation rose to 35 000 (1956: 37). Yet a year after the Bethal story, Drum had become the largest selling publication, aimed at black readers, in South Africa with a circulation of 60 000 (1956: 54). Mister Drum's investigations became a regular feature and, conducted at great personal risk -- like getting himself arrested in order to report on conditions in black prisons -- eventually lead to his death in December 1956. In a retrospective published earlier in the year of his death, after Drum had become the most successful magazine in Africa, Nxumalo comments on Drum's success, due to its migration from the country to the city. In a characteristic display of brilliance, Nxumalo combines several discourses, simultaneously drawing on, and undermining, the language of evolution. Comparing the progress of Drum to the development of the wheel, he suggests that early African Drum was still "geared to the [slow] wheel of the ox-wagon" (Drum May 1956: 24-25). This identifies the original colonial vision, yet it also does something far more subversive: Nxumalo compares the migration of Drum and its relocation from Cape Town to Johannesburg, to the Great Trek, sacred to Afrikaner history. He cites the
progress of Drum as inevitable -- "the urges in the country were spinning the wheel faster, faster" -- and yet in relocating it in the city, he discards the stereotype of the naive rural Jim, of which Stephen Kumalo was just another incarnation:

In March 1951 DRUM was started in Cape Town. It was rather slow and rather proper, still geared to the wheel of the ox-wagon. But soon the urges in the country were spinning the wheel faster, faster. DRUM had come to Jo'burg, but he was Jim no more. (Drum May 1956: 24-25)
2.

Seeing Black: *Come Back, Africa* by Lionel Rogosin, Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi.

By the time he [Rogosin] was ready to start filming we had accepted him as an African, conditioned him to see black, to feel black and to react black, but to be black he had to become a piece of the problems around that colour.
Bloke Modisane (1986: 280)

What *Come Back, Africa* represents is a shift from white people trying to express a vision for blacks, and allowing blacks to express themselves, to be in control of their own discourses.
Lewis Nkosi (quoted in Davis, 1996: 59)

Two South African feature films, *Mapantsula* (1998) and *Sarafina!* (1992), made within a few years of one another, but separated by that momentous, watershed year 1990, were hailed as the "New South African cinema", providing the country with its first black cinematic perspective (Maingard, 1994: 240). While these films were made by white directors, both had black scriptwriters and the result of this, it has been suggested, is to offer us a black viewpoint. In the case of *Mapantsula* the script was co-written by Oliver Schmitz, the director, and Thomas Mogotlane, who acted in the lead role. The screenplay of *Sarafina!* was written by the actor and playwright, Mbongeni Ngema, adapted from his 1980s stage production of the same name and the film was directed by Darrell James Roodt, renowned for seminal anti-apartheid films in 1980s South Africa and, subsequently, for a new film version of Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995).

Besides the fact that they are both collaborations between white directors and black scriptwriters there are many other points of similarity between the films. Both films deal with the complexities of black identity and political life in the township of Soweto in South Africa and both of the main protagonists -- partly through their experiences in detention -- reach a new level of
consciousness by the end of the films. They are both set in Soweto in the late 1980s. While Mapantsula was made during that period (1988), Sarafina!, made in 1992, approaches it from the retrospective position of the 1990s and the emerging new South Africa. The issues that dominated life in Soweto are dealt with by both of the films and thus the boycotts that characterised the 1980s are features in both. The students’ boycotts of black schools in the 1980s form part of the narrative of both films, Mapantsula represents the rent boycott in Soweto and the plot of Sarafina! endorses the consumer boycotts embarked on by township residents. Both films thus endorse one of the tenets of Black Consciousness, which is the moulding of the black community together into an effective power and force of resistance. Mapantsula appears to be informed by the Black Consciousness emphasis on the development of a mental state that will lead to solidarity amongst black South Africans. The main protagonist, Panic, a classic gangster at the beginning of the film, undergoes a conversion that involves a shift from self-interest towards political awareness. This has all the echoes of the Black Consciousness concept of political enlightenment. Sarafina! attempts to take this to the next developmental phase. It was made in the wake of 1990 when Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the wheels for multi-party negotiations leading to a democratic election were set in motion and thus in the turmoil of an emergent new South Africa. Sarafina's new consciousness is a rejection of violence and an attempt to move away from the binaries that dominated the South African apartheid system -- and that must similarly dominate a movement like Black Consciousness -- towards something as yet undefined, but "bigger".
The groundbreaking significance of Mapantsula, the earlier of the two films, lies in the fact that it breaks with the tradition of films like Richard Attenborough's film about Steve Biko, Cry Freedom, where the black character's experience is always mediated by a liberal white character and the black character's chief function becomes to "reflect the humanity of the white protagonist" (Davis, 1996: 119). This has been attributed to the fact of the film's black scriptwriter Mogotlane, who claimed about writing Mapantsula:

So I felt that now, it will be wonderful writing something about myself, writing something about my situation, about my people, which would be authentic and true. ... Not to let somebody write something about me, meantime, meanwhile, he doesn't know me, anything about me. (Mogotlane quoted in Davis, 1996: 120)

Yet while Mapantsula might be accurately hailed as the first South African feature film to be written by a black South African, it is most certainly not the first film made in South Africa written by black scriptwriters, nor the first film to offer an "authentic" black perspective. There is a precedent set more than thirty years before Mapantsula, in the 1950s, one that has been largely, and tragically, lost in the history of South African cinema.

It is interesting to notice the debt that both Mapantsula and Sarafina! owe to the period that produced the earlier film I am alluding to: the 1950s and the area that epitomised the period, Sophiatown. Both films make use of actors who owe their fame to the fifties and are still associated with that period. In Mapantsula a virtually forgotten Dolly Rathebe returns to the South African screen after an almost forty year absence to take the role of Ma Modise. Rathebe was the first black film star in South Africa after playing the lead role in the first feature film ever made in South Africa with an all-black cast: African Jim, made
in 1949, which I discuss in the course of this chapter. In a strikingly similar fashion Miriam Makeba plays Sarafina's mother in *Sarafina!* in 1992. Both women were singers of the 1950s: Makeba is now internationally renowned, while Rathebe launched an extremely successful South African musical career on the basis of her film success, and both women are historically associated with Sophiatown, known as the home of black South African jazz throughout the fifties. Through the choice of these actors, Lesley Marx suggests that:

> [t]he generation of exuberant hope and appalling despair that was Sophiatown is resurrected in what Toni Morrison (1987) would call a "rememory," linking the elided histories of black South Africa in a film [Mapantsula] that is itself made clandestinely, dramatizing in its very conditions of production the struggle to be seen and heard. (Marx, 1996: 22)

There is, however, a solitary film that captured precisely the "exuberant hope and appalling despair" before Sophiatown was lost forever, after the apartheid government demolished it in the late 1950s, under the euphemistically labelled "slum clearance", in order to erect the white suburb of Triomph, which means "victory" in Afrikaans (Modisane, 1986: 5). A film written by two black South African writers and intellectuals in association with an independent American filmmaker, already renowned as a maker of "documentary" film, though this is a descriptive category that he rejected (Rogosin, 1960: 21). The extraordinary result of this collaborative effort was *Come Back, Africa* (1959) made by Lionel Rogosin with *Drum* writers Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi. Like *Mapantsula*, it was made clandestinely. Schmitz got permission to shoot *Mapantsula* in the townships in the turbulent late 1980s on the pretext that it would be a "meaningless" gangster movie, and then used the frame of the gangster film to produce a striking indictment of apartheid, which was banned by the apartheid
government. Similarly, *Come Back, Africa* was filmed in secret while Rogosin convinced the South African authorities that he was making an African musical, of the kind that had been made previously by foreigners. *African Jim* was the first of many such films. The history of how the film came into existence is documented by co-writer of the film, Bloke Modisane, in his autobiographical account of life in Sophiatown, *Blame Me On History*, and by Rogosin himself, in several articles and interviews.

By the time Rogosin arrived in South Africa in 1958, he had an internationally established reputation as a filmmaker. John Cassavetes, on whom Rogosin's work had a seminal influence, once described Rogosin as "probably the greatest documentary filmmaker of all time" (Breitbart, 1987: 23). Rogosin was born into a Jewish family in New York in 1924 and was brought up on the left-wing anti-fascist struggles of the 30s and 40s (Davis, 1996: 47). He graduated with a degree in chemical engineering from Yale, then spent four years in the Navy during World War II. After a decade in business he decided to become a filmmaker. He had been an admirer of the documentary films of Robert Flaherty and Vittorio de Sica since his youth. His first film was the seminal, and phenomenally successful, *On the Bowery* (1955). It won the Grand Prize and the Venice Film Festival and it brought Rogosin to the forefront of the documentary movement (Breitbart, 1987: 23). It also won a British Academy Award. It was a "harrowing story about life among the dead-beat alcoholics of New York's Lower East Side" (Davis, 1996: 47). It was also "one of the first films to show the 'underside' of America -- from the inside" (Breitbart, 1987: 23). Ntongela Masilela summarises its seminal influence:
Lionel Rogosin's first film **ON THE BOWERY** (1955) depicted New York's skid-row; it made possible the emergence of the New American cinema of Jonas Mekas, John Cassavetes, Frederick Wiseman, and the consolidation of the British Free Cinema of John Schlesinger, Lindsay Andersen and Karel Reisz. ... Its poetic intermixture of documentary and fiction was a culmination of Flaherty's documentary tradition as well as the beginnings of a lyrical experimental documentary form that was to find extreme expression in the work in Santiago Alvarez. (1991: 64)

Rogosin's background as an independent filmmaker, his blend of documentary and fiction and use of non-professional actors, drawn from Flaherty is, I am going to argue, crucial to the achievement of **Come Back, Africa**, since much of the film's meaning is dependent on Rogosin's innovative use of montage.

Rogosin had planned a film about South Africa before making **On The Bowery**, a plan that was deeply rooted in a desire to promote social change and his concern about the similarity of apartheid to Nazism:

> I had heard about South Africa and the rise of apartheid and the National Party and it sounded very ominous to me. I was very concerned about the reawakening of fascism ... we had defeated fascism during World War II, but I didn't feel it was defeated ... I thought it would re-emerge and continue in different forms. So I was alarmed at what was happening in South Africa. (Davis, 1996: 47)

Although he had been given the names of possible contacts by Trevor Huddleston in England, Rogosin was concerned that South Africa was a police state and was afraid of being trailed. He went instead to the United States Information Service, where he was referred to journalists working on **Drum** magazine and **Golden City Post**. Nkosi documents that by the "end of the fifties DRUM and POST had become so widely accepted as the most authoritative newspapers on the life of black South Africans that visiting writers and journalists would almost inevitably call at the DRUM offices" (Nkosi, 1965: 30).

The first person Rogosin came across at **Drum** was Bloke Modisane and he
explained his desire to "put on cinematic record the system of apartheid" (Modisane, 1986: 279). Modisane records his initial scepticism, since there were too many filmmakers who had come to exploit blacks as a cheap acting labour source. He became convinced of Rogosin's sincerity when he discovered that Rogosin was struggling to get visas for his crew: "anyone who was in trouble with the South African Government inspired in me a sense of identity" (1986: 280). There is no doubt that Rogosin's American identity worked in his favour. One of the reasons Rogosin was accepted by the community of writers that made up Drum magazine was that some of them had seen his first film, On the Bowery, another the fact that he was American, as Drum writer Arthur Maimane explains:

Lionel's first plus was that he had directed On the Bowery. A few of us had seen On the Bowery, and so we knew that this guy is a serious filmmaker. Two, he was an American, and an American who is in the film business for us, who had been brought up on American films, you know, he was away and running as soon as he ... introduced himself. And also of course there was the difference between white South Africans and white foreigners, the white South Africans were the people oppressing us, and there was a belief that all white foreigners were much more liberal in their thinking and their attitudes than our own local white oppressors. (Maimane quoted in Davis, 1996: 49)

The fact of Rogosin's foreignness is interesting to note here, since foreigners had a seminal influence on the history of film and the representation of black South Africans. The makers of the first feature film to feature an exclusively black cast, African Jim (1949), were also two foreigners. Their film gave rise to a several other films made by South African directors in response to the success of African Jim. Even thirty years later, in the 1980s, Oliver Schmitz, the director of Mapantsula, spent a considerable period working in Germany and it was through exposure to German news coverage of South Africa, representing images
censored in South Africa, that Schmitz formed the germ of the idea for Mapantsula (Davis, 1996: 116). It is also significant to recall that, as we saw in the previous chapter, the editor responsible for Drum's transformation, Anthony Sampson, was British. Foreigners to South Africa seem to have been able to see things that were invisible to local white vision. Rogosin was, through his association with the Drum writers Modisane and Nkosi, eventually credited with being able to "see black".

If Rogosin's identity as an American film maker worked, initially, in his favour it was because black urban life in South Africa was so influenced by American culture. In Johannesburg Rogosin, "did not have a sense of being in an alien country" and he "felt that he knew black South Africans in the same way that he felt a familiarity and ease with black Americans" (Davis, 1996: 48). Nkosi recalls the lengths black youths in South Africa were prepared to go to participate in the allure of American culture, as a result of American films: they were writing to America for catalogues "showing special shoes like Florsheim shoes", that were "Can't Gets" in South Africa:

And when these boys were going to parties, they would pull up their socks and show you these shoes, because you couldn't get that shoe in Johannesburg, they said: "This one comes straight from New York, man, it's a Can't Get!" And it was all the influence of the films, and watching people who were very much like you, who were black like you. (Davis, 1996: 49)

Rogosin wanted a film "that came directly out of the black South African experience" and he spent six months in South Africa before writing anything, getting to know the situation as Modisane and Nkosi took him around
Sophiatown, which was illegal because he was white. In an interview conducted by Peter Davis in his documentary, *In Darkest Hollywood: Cinema and Apartheid* Nkosi points out that Rogosin was taking risks, "which a less than conscientious filmmaker would have simply by-passed" (1994). Rogosin did something that had not happened in South African film making before: From the outset "he worked directly with Africans, taking them into his confidence, asking them for their advice, valuing their judgements" (Davis, 1996: 50). According to Modisane, "Lionel became an exhaustive enquirer, penetrating into the squalor of the locations to feel the heart-beat of the Africans":

I took him into the shebeens which were reeking with sweat and the smell of stale beer to listen to the people talking, sometimes with bitterness, but always with humour, about the injustice, the misery, the poverty which was a part of their lives. (Modisane, 1986: 280)

Nkosi confirms this experience in Davis' documentary: "We spent a lot of time just drinking together, talking an awful amount" (Davis, 1994). Maimane recalls Rogosin's openness to the black perspective and his willingness to learn: "He was asking questions all the time, he didn't have preconceptions" (Davis, 1994). Modisane recalls how, in a Sophiatown shebeen, Rogosin was made an honorary Zulu and taught to do the Zulu war dance (Modisane, 1986: 280). It was after this period that Rogosin told Modisane and Nkosi that he wanted them to help write the script and the story of *Come Back, Africa* was entirely the work of Nkosi and Modisane. The film's narrative is neither unusual nor coincidental

---

1 Rogosin's statement about not writing anything for the first six months is taken from an interview with Lionel Davis in his documentary, *In Darkest Hollywood: Cinema and Apartheid* (1994).

2 This information was given to me in conversation with Lewis Nkosi, in Cape Town, April 2001.
given the social context of 1950s South Africa with black rural-urban migration taking place on a large scale with the concomitant social flux in black identity between the country and city. The road was, symbolically, already a well represented one. It was the journey *Drum* had made just a few years earlier from the country to the city.

The story of black migration to the city had already been made famous first by Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It was translated into film in 1951 by Hungarian director Zoltan Korda in a version faithful to Paton's text, with Paton himself having written the screenplay and co-produced the film. *Come Back, Africa* is the story of a rural man's experience in Johannesburg. Like Paton's text, it is set mainly in Sophiatown, yet the Sophiatown of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Come Back, Africa* are virtually unrecognisable as the same place.

Trevor Huddleston, who worked in Sophiatown prior to its destruction, is quick to point out the difference between Paton's representation of Sophiatown and the way he knew it. The name Sophiatown, he says, "will awaken faint echoes in the memory of some who recall that it was to Sophiatown that Kumalo came seeking Absolom, his son" in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but "they will never remember what I remember of it" (1956: 117). Similarly the vision of Sophiatown that Modisane and Nkosi made visible to Rogosin's cameras is very different from Paton and Korda's representation. The difference between what Rogosin's camera captured, and other representations of black identity in the city, must thus lie in Modisane's claim that "by the time he was ready to start filming we had all accepted him as an African", and "conditioned him to see black, to feel black and to react black" (1986: 280). Yet for Rogosin "to be black"
Modisane continues, "he had to become a piece of the problems around that colour", and he did (1986: 280).

One of the major problems Rogosin did encounter as a result of "seeing black" was getting permission to make the film in apartheid South Africa and, in fact, he never did get permission to make *Come Back, Africa*. He received permission to make another film, which was never made, while the real film was made clandestinely. Rogosin claims that he knew, in making *Come Back, Africa*, he would have to make one of two conflicting decisions: "either show the real situation in South Africa, which the authorities obviously did not want to be shown, or strive for the highest esthetic and technical quality possible" (Rogosin, 1960: 20). Rogosin concludes, "a portrayal of the true situation was of greater importance" (1960: 20). He had made up his mind that *Come Back, Africa* "was to be a film concerned essentially with human conditions as they exist in the Union of South Africa under the ruthless policy of the present regime" and that that alone "would be an objective worth aiming at" (1960: 20).

It is hardly surprising that given his close association with Drum writers Modisane and Nkosi, Rogosin made the film clandestinely. *Drum* established a tradition of using clandestine photography to expose the atrocities of apartheid. As discussed in chapter one, it became a tradition for *Drum*’s birthday edition to publish an annual exposé article written by Mister Drum. In *Drum*’s 1954 birthday issue, clandestine photography played a crucial role in a feature about Mister Drum in jail, which revealed the appalling conditions in black prisons and treatment of black prisoners. A now infamous photograph, taken clandestinely, by *Drum* photographer Bob Gosani, accompanied that story. The photograph showed prisoners forced to undergo, naked, the humiliating "tausa" dance to
reveal that they had nothing hidden in their rectum. The political significance of this kind of photography is revealed in the fact that this Drum feature article led directly to the promulgation of the 1959 Prisons Act that made it unlawful to publish photographs of prisoners without the written authority of the Commissioner of Prisons. Mr. C. R. Swart, Minister of Justice in South Africa in 1959 cited the photograph published in Drum magazine as justification for the act.³

Yet the consequences were more far-reaching than merely the technical concessions Rogosin knew he would have to make. The South Africa government was furious when the film was released and South African newspapers carried damning reviews when the film was shown at the Venice Film festival, where it won the critics' award in 1959.⁴ South Africa's major weekend newspaper, the Johannesburg Sunday Times published a review with the headline "Ace liar hoaxed South African Police while making film, now uses it to besmirch union abroad" (6 September 1959). As a result the film was banned in South Africa in 1961 and was not shown publicly in South Africa until 1988, thirty years after it was made.⁵ In an ironic twist 1988 was also the year that South Africa would see the second black and white filmmaking collaboration after Come Back, Africa - Schmitz and Mogotlane's Mapantsula. As a result Come Back, Africa, its vision and its achievement, has been lost to the history of South Africa cinema and Mapantsula has taken its place as the first of the "new South African cinema".

³ Discussions of this information are contained in several sources. My source here is Elaine Potter, 1975: 123.

⁴ This information about the critics' award is cited in Balseiro (1997).
Internationally, critical response to *Come Back, Africa* has been erratic. Both at the time of its release and in more recent critical work, many critics seem unable to reconcile Rogosin's blend of fiction and documentary. Many have praised the "documentary" aspects of the film, while finding the "fictional" story of Zachariah weak and unconvincing. By "documentary" critics appear to mean the representation of the "real" events: the surreptitiously filmed footage of underground miners, the documentation of the last days of Sophiatown and the shebeen scene, where real-life intellectuals discuss apartheid. The fictional aspect is the personal narrative of Zachariah and Vinah. The ending particularly, where Zachariah's wife, Vinah, is murdered by the tsotsi, or gangster, Marumu, has been the source of much chagrin and has been read as Rogosin portraying the plight of black South Africans as "hopeless" (Hey, 1980: 65). In the most damning article about the film, Rogosin's trademark use of non-professional actors and improvised dialogue and the technical weakness of the film caused by the conditions of its production are branded politically irresponsible:

> With unbelievable dialogue, ineffective situations, weak acting, overlong scenes, poorly edited shots, and a confused structure, *Come Back, Africa* ... seems to cloud the issues and make the situation appear unalterable. For a documentary, that is a dangerous, harmful and tragic flaw. (Hey, 1980: 66)

I want to argue that it is a mistake to read the "documentary" aspects apart from the "fictional" narrative in the film. The two must be read intertextually. Nor is the end of the film intended to provide the film's "solution" to the problem of black urban life in South Africa. Given that the story was conceived by Modisane and Nkosi and that they are present in the "documentary" strand of the

---

5 The ban is reported in *The Times* in Britain on 16th November, 1961.
film, their discussions must inform our understanding of black urban identity and a reading of the character of Marumu. The film's great achievement can perhaps only be fully recognised within the social context of 1950s South Africa. It is for this reason that I have chosen to locate my reading of *Come Back, Africa* in a comparison with two other films, made in South Africa in the preceding decade.

These two other films, I argue, represent different poles of thinking about race in South Africa, yet both essentially rely on that structure drawn from evolutionary thinking and scientific racism as discussed in chapter one. It is that tradition that, I believe, *Come Back, Africa* breaks. The way in which the other two films deal, representationally, with the question of black urban identity will shed light on the radical nature of *Come Back, Africa*. The other two films are also both curious blends of documentary and fiction. The first, *Pondo Story*, released in 1948, like Paton's novel on the dawn of apartheid, lays claim to documentary status, yet it is clearly fictional in many respects. The second film, *African Jim*, released in 1949, is a musical feature film that makes use of a documentary frame, yet in many ways it reveals more truth about black urban life than the "documentary" *Pondo Story*. They are both stories of black rural-urban migration. While their conclusions about the nature of black identity could not be further apart from one another, they are, nevertheless, at different ends of the same ideological structure.
**Pondo Story (1948)**

*Pondo Story* was directed by Ray Getteman and made, as the opening credits inform viewers, for "The South African State information Office in collaboration with the Transvaal Chamber of Mines by African Film Productions". It is likely that the film was commissioned for the purpose of recruiting mineworkers after the black miners' strike of 1946 when 74 000 workers brought eight mines to a standstill (Hees, 1991: 80). African Film Productions has been one of the most powerful film production companies in South African film history, a company which pioneered images of South Africa on screen, forging a visual mythology of the landscape and its people. It inaugurated South African cinema in 1916 with a film called *De Voortrekkers/ Winning a Continent*. An American director, Harold Shaw, was invited by African Film Productions to direct this film.

Masilela suggests that the two most important films made in the history of South African cinema were both made by American directors: Shaw and Rogosin. The first, Shaw, drew the racist iconography for *De Voortrekkers/ Winning a Continent* from D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, released just the year before in 1915. Made on the epic scale of Griffiths' film, this iconography, says Masilela, poisoned the whole of film culture in South Africa for approximately four decades, until another American director was to overturn the terms of its dominance: that second director was Lionel Rogosin (1991: 63). African Film Productions dominated the distribution network in South Africa, closing many channels for independent filmmaking and distribution within South Africa.

While the film is made as a documentary it opens with an ethnographic frame, and the film attempts to appropriate the ethnographic documentary mode
to legitimate its representation. In the opening sequences a white narrative
voice-over informs viewers that:

This is the story of Amampondo, a simple peasant people, offshoot of the
once warlike Zulu nation. We carried cameras and sound equipment far
into the heart of their land to bring you scenes of their way of life and the
sound of their songs. Yes, this is the story of the Amampondo, and of
one of them in particular. (Getteman, 1948)

The accompanying visual image is of a white man on horseback, travelling far
into this rural heartland. It is interesting here that the initial journey of Pondo
Story is from the city to the country, the white man into the rural countryside.

That this journey must be undertaken before the black man can come to the city
has the rather sinister implication that the Amampondo could not have come to
the city without the invitation, and technological sophistication, of the white
man. This initial journey, the first image of the film, immediately introduces
spatial distance and difference: the physical and cultural distance between the
sophisticated, superior, technologically advanced society of the white man and
the distant, rural, simple, tribal society of the Amampondo. Although viewers
are told about cameras in the opening narration these are never seen and the
process of representation, foregrounded in the first narration, disappears with the
introduction of the second narrator. The white man on the horse comes to a halt
and the camera pans to a black man dressed in traditional tribal blanket. At this
point he begins to speak in Xhosa, facing the camera, and shortly afterwards we
hear another English voice-over, this time with a black South African accent.

This black narrator will continue to interpret the language of the main
protagonist, Mtchopi, throughout the film. It is interesting to note that while
there is a credit for the black narrator, Grinsell Nonguaza, no similar credit
appears for the opening white narrative voice. The main protagonist informs viewers, via the translator, that he has "lived in this country since [he] was born". By the end of the film the implied meaning of this "country" will be Pondoland, and not South Africa. He presents viewers with an Edenic landscape:

Look now at this land of the Amampondo for I must go to the fields to work. Our land has long rolling hills and deep valleys, covered in some places by forests. We graze our cattle on the steep hillsides and plough these valleys to grow our food. Our neighbours have joined us as we join them to make a working party to reap the fields. (Getteman, 1948)

He then introduces us to the other narrative thread that will propel the action of the film: the romance narrative: "Today my eyes are looking for a girl for I wish to work near her". The romance narrative will be incorporated into traditional ethnic practices. Mtchopi proceeds to explain and interpret the ways of Pondo people to the viewer:

Soon shall we finish the field and all will go home except the girls to change into their party clothes for my father gives a beer drink. Kutchwe will not be there tonight. Her parents will come instead for it is not good that a young girl drinks too much of our beer. (Getteman, 1948)

The film thus attempts to present itself as an authentic black perspective. The story narrative is as follows: Mtchopi, the main protagonist, is in love with Kutchwe and wants to get married, but his father doesn't have enough money or cattle for the lobola. Rural poverty is not explored as a reason for this and the opening representation of rural Edenic plenitude misrepresents the reality of rural poverty, which the Cry, the Beloved Country draws attention to, and is fully explored in Come, Back Africa. The "traditional", ethnographic narrative of
Pondo Story is intertwined with the popular romance story: it is while waiting around outside the trading store in the hope of seeing Kutchwe, that Mtchopi sees a recruitment poster for working on the mines. This results in him setting out to earn money for his lobola. Not surprisingly for a film commissioned by the Chamber of Mines, conditions of the mines are gloriously represented: the notoriously primitive, bare and overcrowded mine hostel accommodation looks more like a hotel room with bunks. All Mtchopi's needs are catered for, especially all his tribal needs: food, beer and recreation. He gets injured while risking his own life to save the life of his white shift boss and is handsomely rewarded, after a period in hospital, replete with luxuries such as physiotherapy.

Yet Mtchopi's journey is not one from the country to the city, since we only see him travel from the mine compound to the actual city of Johannesburg on one solitary visit. He is content on the mines and there appears to be no need, or desire, to visit the city. Quite unlike the other films of this period, he seems to undergo no culture shock, and accompanying disorientation, in the city. That is, however, because he never really enters the city space: he is too untouched by the ways of the city to even make the transition that is required, in order to experience a sense of dislocation. He is represented walking through Johannesburg, wearing his tribal blanket, and he remains external to Johannesburg, which is a white city. We see him gazing up at the tall buildings, wondering only, we are told, if he could see Pondoland from the top of them.

Edwin Hees points out the extent to which the film's producers go to present Mtchopi as "alien" to white technological civilisation. About half way through the film Mtchopi goes through a number of medical inspections, including a chest x-ray. Surprised that the doctors could see into his chest without cutting
him open, he expresses his amazement in the words: "Truly, the ways of the white man are strange" (Hees, 1991: 84). The ethnographic frame, and Mtchopi's narration, is used to suggest the immense distance between Mtchopi and white technological civilisation.

At the end of his contract he returns happily to Pondoland to marry Kutchwe. Migrant Labour, in *Pondo Story*, is represented as a process that enhances rural life and identity and enables the black South African to return to his rightful place: in the country.

**African Jim (1949)**

*African Jim* bears the legacy of being the first feature film to be made in South Africa with a cast made up entirely of black people. The film had a curiously international conception. It was produced and directed by two British men, an actor of Scottish descent, Eric Rutherford, and screenwriter, Donald Swanson. The original suggestion for making a feature film with a black cast came from none other than Orson Welles, while in conversation with Rutherford in a bar in Florence, Italy (Davis 1996: 22). The variety of influences - Welles, the liberal vision of inexperienced filmmakers Rutherford and Swanson and the influence of a South African Jewish woman, who later became Rutherford's wife, Gloria Green - perhaps goes some way to account for the exceptionally curious blend that comprises this film. It is a combination of liberal idealism, integrationism, Hollywood influences including the musical, the gangster imagery, and the detective form. Rutherford claims that at the time they hoped that making films with black South Africans would eventually lead to a black-run film industry in South Africa. Curiously *African Jim* did lead to a variety of films made with
black casts, but they were unfortunately mostly made by African Film Productions. The company was so angered when they didn't get the distribution rights to *African Jim*, given its enormous success with black audiences, that they went out and made their own films with black actors (Davis, 1996: 30-31).

Like the other films *African Jim* begins in the rural and, like *Pondo Story* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, portrays the journey from the rural countryside to Johannesburg. Yet while the main action of the film depicts Jim's rise to success in Johannesburg, the opening sequence locates Jim within in a rural and tribal environment. Viewers are informed via text superimposed over the image that the film is:

> The first full length entertainment film to be made in South Africa with an all native cast. It is a simple film and its quaint mixture of the naive and the sophisticated is a true reflection of the African Native in a modern city. (Swanson, 1949)

Despite the fact that this is a fiction feature film, the opening makes use of documentary frame - "a true reflection of the African Native". Like all the other films discussed in the chapter, it lays claim to truth. *African Jim* also makes use of a black narrative voice-over in the opening sequences. This is, however, particularly curious since this voice-over disappears once Jim gets to the city, at which point the film switches to dialogue. The genre seems to shift, from the documentary frame, to fiction. It seems as if, imaginatively in 1950s South Africa, the city could not be represented without a rural and tribal origin, framed through an ethnographic documentary mode. Why, one might ask? The answer, I am going to suggest, lies in that white anxiety about the black presence in the city already seen in chapter one, and this "ethnographic" frame is a way of locating black identity within a linear framework of evolutionary thinking about
race. This ethnographic frame, common to both Pondo Story and African Jim, and several other films at the time is a way of mediating urban blacks by emphasising their tribal origin, either with the purpose of returning them to the rural, or "allowing" them to "progress" into an urban, Westernised mode of existence.

It is a narrative voice-over, with a black accent, that introduces viewers to Jim in the opening sequences where Jim is represented in the rural society, in ethnic dress, carrying out his tribal duties:

This is the story of a Native boy in Africa, the story of one of my brothers. His name: Jim Jabulani Twala. But we will simply call him Jim. This is the country where he was born and grew to manhood, where he lived in the freedom of the wide hills and valleys, tending the crops, herding the cattle. It was a simple life and a good life and Jim was happy. (Swanson, 1949)

Again we have the image or rural plenitude simplicity. Yet the reasons for Jim's leaving indicate there is a significant shift from Pondo Story:

But, to many of us there comes a time when we feel the urge to leave our villages and to travel to the cities. Often the young men go for a year, sometimes two years or even more so that they may earn money and then return to their people and buy cattle, and marry. Sometimes it is just a spirit of restlessness and adventure that sends them travelling. So, one day, changing into town clothes that were amongst his proudest possessions, Jim said goodbye to his parents and set out to go to Johannesburg. (Swanson, 1949)

There is a similar structure to Pondo Story here: the white narrator who opens Pondo Story is replaced by the opening text giving us the director's message about the film. Then the black voice-over continues the film's opening suggestion that this film will give a black view about migration to the city. The narrator locates Jim's origin in the rural, which is equated with simplicity: "a
simple life and a good life and Jim was happy". Significantly it is here where he grows to manhood, yet there is sense in which this black tribal manhood will be insufficient for the sophisticated city and during the film Jim will acquire another form of manhood, which will win him the admiration of a city woman in Johannesburg. There is already a vast shift from Pondo Story: Jim has city clothes to put on. That they are "amongst his most prized possessions" sets up a hierarchy between the country and the city, but that he has access to them suggests a dialogue between the country and the city not present in Pondo Story. While the spirit of "restless and adventure" also belies rural conditions, the significance of the freedom of black mobility implied by this statement should not be overlooked in 1940s apartheid South Africa.

A brief plot summary will make the Hollywood influences clear. Jim goes to Johannesburg and shares an initial sense of disorientation and naivety with Stephen Kumalo. He is unfamiliar with the ways of the city and he is robbed almost immediately on arrival. Three black gangsters, who clearly recognise that he is new to the city, knock him unconscious, steal his suitcase, money and shoes, under the guise of helping him to find a place to stay. Jim is later discovered by a night watchman, who befriends him, and helps him find a job. The first two jobs, for the same white man, play on Jim's country simplicity for comic effect. Employed first to water the garden, his lack of familiarity with the use of a hose leads to several comic scenes. As a "house boy" he is no more successful, since he is distracted by music played on the radio and sacked by his white employer. Jim does, however, succeed in winning his money back in a gambling game played on the street before being unsuccessfully pursued by policemen. He then gets a job as a waiter at a nightclub, which is owned by a
black man. In the club it is discovered that he can sing and the film ends with Jim winning a recording contract and the heart of the female star of the club. While working as a waiter at the club he serves the gangsters who robbed him and overhears them planning another burglary. He and the night watchman, Sam, intercept, and catch, them.

This summary indicates the fantastic nature of the action and political naivety of the film, one that denies many of the realities of black urban life in South Africa. The film was, nevertheless, a huge success with black audiences, a success, I want to argue, that should be taken seriously. It created South Africa's first black film stars, particularly Dolly Rathebe who went on to star in The Magic Garden (1951) and launch a successful musical career. The media coverage of African Jim published in Zonk! has already been discussed in the previous chapter. African Jim is referenced as being the source of the desire to act, and the realisation that it was possible for Black South Africans to become actors, by several well-known actors including John Kani and Thomas Mogotlane of Mapantsula (Davis, 1996: 26 and 117). Kani recalls: "It was like a miracle, we saw black people in this movie, we saw black people talking ... we could scream, 'That's Dolly!'" (Davis, 1996: 26). Maimane claims that because black audiences recognised the streets and the people, films like African Jim became like home movies: "sometime it was difficult to hear the dialogue because people were shouting ... 'Hey, that's my street, I live down that street!'" (Davis, 1996: 27).

It is clear that the narrative action of African Jim locates black identity within an evolutionary mode, from primitive, simple, tribal, towards sophisticated city. Jim undergoes this process of "progression" within the
narrative of the film. It does nevertheless make important statements in South Africa of 1949, with its newly elected Nationalist Government. To suggest that a black South African could - unproblematically - make the transition to a successful city life was a nothing less than a revolutionary idea. Quite unlike Pondo Story, Jim not only makes that transition, but makes it as something other than a servant, serving white needs. While he fails as a servant, due to his country ineptitude, he succeeds - in Hollywood style - as an entertainer. At the end of the film, the white record producer turns out to be the same man who sacked him earlier in the film and he says: "You're no good as a servant, but my boy you certainly can sing". The significance of this statement must seen against the South African context in which any films that represented black advancement were censored for black viewers. In October 1955, an article in Drum expressed outrage about "Films banned to Africans": in terms of censorship in South Africa, black viewers were classed with white children under 12 (October 1955: 53). Representations of black people in roles other than servitude were actually cut out of foreign films before they were deemed suitable for South African viewers. Thus while Louis Armstrong was cut out of the film of "The Glen Miller Story", blues singer, Ethel Waters was not, because she appeared as a servant:

One can hardly imagine anything more ridiculous than the careful clipping out of Louis Armstrong's part in "The Glen Miller Story." It is not so much that intermingling has occurred, for it is clear that where Ethel Waters appears as a servant quite a lot of intermingling does take place. (Drum October 1955: 53)

Jim's success is, however, still mediated by a white character; the film still requires the liberal white figure. This is, no doubt, one of the many problems
within the film, and a problem that has been associated more recently with the white liberal vision, as represented in *Cry Freedom*. Yet the significance of his success as something other than a servant - and the fantasy of the film - should not be overlooked, especially in light of the immense success of the film. In the face of influx control legislation, that was attempting to restrict black entry into the city unless it catered to the needs of white capital, this film is quite extraordinary.

One of Jim's roles in the film is as a detective catching, and taking revenge on, the gangsters, who outwitted him. The detective genre traditionally demands a presence of mind and vision which has been the privilege of white men. Nowhere in South Africa, at this time, was there any suggestion that a black person had the mental acuity to take on this role. Blacks were criminalised by apartheid. As I discuss in the next chapter, four years later in *Drum* magazine, Arthur Maimane would create South Africa's first black detective in the hardboiled noir tradition of Raymond Chandler. It is common, during this period, to find a negative representation of black urban identity in the form of the criminal: the detribalised and disorientated black man corrupted by the city. One has only to turn to Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

While the figure of the black gangster is present in *African Jim*, there is no suggestion of universal black degeneration in the urban, as in the film version of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Jim successfully goes through the evolutionary progression from country bumpkin to city sophisticate. Yet the limits of the film's liberal ideology of the possibility of progression is visibly borne out by representational strain in the film. The majority of the action of the film takes place at the nightclub where Jim works as a waiter and outside the building
where Sam, the night watchman, works. The city, or the township, hardly enters the frame. The only scene that appears to have been filmed in the city is the scene where Jim arrives at the station after this journey from Swaziland, which, one assumes from the title, is Johannesburg. He gets off the train and leaves the station via the same exit as white people. This is an unlikely scenario even before grand apartheid and its separate amenities act. This is the only scene in the entire film where Jim is actually in a crowd. The gangsters then lead Jim off into a deserted area, against the isolated backdrop of a corrugated iron wall. The gangsters' getaway car is parked outside a derelict building in an empty street. This sense of "emptiness" is the most pervasive visual sense in the film and one that makes any representation of the city space appear completely disingenuous. This, I want to suggest, is a result of conflicting ideological strain. African Jim attempts to create a black city and the possibility of black progression, without representing, or acknowledging, the most feared aspects of the city: the black influx and white anxieties about urban degeneration and the rise of a black proletariat. The streets Jim walks through are largely empty, there are no crowds: an unlikely scenario in South Africa's overcrowded black townships, where African Jim was filmed.

African Jim is located, both physically and ideologically, in some fantasy place that didn't exist in South Africa. The nightclub itself is a curious amalgam of conflicting ideology - which bears no resemblance to a real shebeen. In the décor the film's many conflicting agendas seem to be played out: there are visible aspects of the black urban township, the American-style music and clothes, but these mingle alongside images of tribalism reminiscent of Hollywood representations of "primitive Africa" (Davis 1996: 23). No township shebeen
would have been decorated with "ethnic" décor, indicative of rural tribalism. Everyone sits politely at individual tables and orders tea, even the gangsters. The absurdity of this was presumably for the film to remain within legal parameters, which forbade the sale of "white" alcohol to black people. *Come, Back Africa* will provide a very interesting commentary on this.

What one sees in *African Jim*, I would argue, is a liberal projection of a black urbanism that is not threatening because it is founded on the ideal of individualism. There is a scene in the film that makes this perfectly apparent. After leaving work at the nightclub, walking down a typically deserted street, Jim and Dolly come across a group of eight workmen loading a heavy crate onto a truck. Except for the scene, early in the film, where Jim arrives at the station, this is largest number of people seen on the streets in any scene in the entire film. The men are chanting, in rhythmic Xhosa, as they co-ordinate their movements to lift up the heavy crate. They are dressed in work overalls, while Jim stands and watches them while wearing a smart suit. In this lengthy scene, while they stand on the side of the road watching the men at work, Jim and Dolly are clearly separated from the workers. While one would be tempted to account for this in terms of class, as opposed to racial, division and while that element is no doubt present, there is something more complex being negotiated. Sam, the night watchman, who befriends Jim and is Dolly's father, is also clearly a worker, though he is admitted to the film's select world on the basis of being an individual. The workmen are defined only as group. Working while chanting in unison in Xhosa, they bear more resemblance to the rural workers working and

---

6 Unbeknown the film's British director, the workers were using a traditional Xhosa slogan, which meant: "God damn the white people!". This would obviously have contributed to black audiences' enjoyment of the film.
singing together in the opening scenes in rural Swaziland, than they do with the urban identities set up in African Jim. Their unkempt appearance makes it clear that they occupy a different social space from Jim. The only other group of people we see operating in the city during the film, is the group of the three gangsters. Like the group of workers, the audience is never admitted narrative access to their perspective and we only ever see the gangsters colluding in a group. By the end of the film they will be displaced from the urban landscape, outwitted by Jim's master plan. Groups of black people remain external to the film's perspective: they are either left behind in the country where they are not threatening, displaced by a black urban individualism, or simply left out of frame: which would account for the eerily empty streets as Jim comes to Jo'burg.
**Come, Back Africa (1959)**

Against the other films' insistence on the idea of the different evolutionary stages represented by the country and the city, it is extremely significant that Rogosin locates the origin of his film and his subject, not in some mythic tribal time, but in a universal present: the film opens with the text, "Anno Domini 1959", superimposed over the first image of the city. The effect of this is to break the evolutionary mould in which the other films are cast. In *Come, Back Africa* there is no original moment located in the Edenic rural or the tribal. The journey to the city, which signifies either evolutionary progression, or urban degeneration, in the other films, is left out of *Come, Back Africa*. It is this very idea of the cultural progression of black South Africans that *Come, Back Africa* will critique and revise.

In the opening sequences the camera pans across an empty city: bleak and silent. This silence is immediately broken by the shrill, menacing sound of a siren, the kind that would signal worker's shifts. These scenes of the empty city are followed by the sound of loud banging on a door suggesting, perhaps, the intrusion of police into someone's home; thus prefiguring the scene, later in the film, where police burst into Vinalf's room during the night and arrest Zachariah for sleeping in his wife's room without a permit. In this way the opening scenes immediately suggest that what lies beyond the frame of the eerie emptiness and silence of the city, is the black presence in the city, a presence that is continually under threat.

After this silent, foreboding opening, the black urban township soundtrack begins and we are thrust into the crowds of Johannesburg's street: seeing first a predominantly white crowd on one side of the street and then a
predominantly black crowd, jostling along the pavement, on the opposite side. After watching the other films, it comes as a relief to see crowds and a peopled city. The camera immediately zooms in on Zachariah amongst the crowd. One of the few critics to write about the film in recent years, describes our visual introduction to Zachariah as follows:

Throngs of workers file along the sidewalk looking somewhat bewildered. Among them we find Zachariah clutching a suitcase. We see him from a low angle shot, the camera looking up at him in medium close-up. Then we watch him gaze at the towering building above as the camera takes up his vantage point. We begin to see the city through his eyes, noticing a dizzying mass of bodies moving forward ahead of him ... The film visually captures the interplay between the collective and individual consciousness through the transition from one scene to the next. Transitions are marked by the repeated image of hundreds of blacks marching into and out of packed trains and buses ... No respite is allowed them, as a constant flow of human beings devoid of individuality moves always forward. (Balseiro, 1997: 4)

There are several points in Isabel Balseiro's statement that I would like to return to in my discussion of the film. For the moment, however, I want to extend her observation. Rogosin, quite unlike any other directors of this period, has no anxiety about representing black crowds in the city. These crowds represent the variety that constituted black urban life in South Africa in the 1950s: there are the clearly urbanised black people in smart suits and men wearing their tribal blankets and Zachariah in a shabby jacket, belonging clearly to neither group. Given his lack of racist anxiety about representing black urban habitation, Rogosin is able to let the camera assume Zachariah's position walking through

---

7 I am quoting from an unpublished draft paper given to me by the author in 1997. A revised version of this paper is forthcoming as "Come Back, Africa: Black Claims on 'White' Cities" in To change reels: Film and film culture in South Africa, edited by Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003: 88-111. The published version is not available at the time of writing.
the throngs of people, the crowd, devoid of individuality, giving us an image of
the city from a black perspective. This is Rogosin's willingness to "see black".

While we watch Zachariah walk through the city crowds, the following
text, introducing the film as a documentary, is superimposed on the images:

This film was made secretly in order to portray the true conditions of life
in South Africa today. There are no professional actors in this drama of
the fate of a man and his country. This is the story of Zachariah ... one of
the hundreds of thousands of Africans forced each year off the land by the
Regime and into the Gold Mines. (Rogosin, 1959)

These opening titles, signify the distance of this film both from other films made
at the time, as well as from apartheid ideology. The economic reality
underpinning migrant labour and urban migration, mystified in the other films, is
made manifest here. The "truth" of the other films will be systematically
undermined by Come Back Africa, both in terms of the story narrated and,
visually, through Rogosin's powerful use of montage. Rogosin's distance from
Getteman, and the opening of Pondo Story, is immediately visible in the fact that
although Zachariah has made the journey from rural Zululand to Johannesburg,
Rogosin makes no attempt to locate him in his tribal past and the referent of "his
country", is quite clearly South Africa. Yet the film will, visually, give birth to
an image of a South Africa where the boundaries between the "country" and the
"city" can no longer be upheld, where dialogue between the tribal and the urban
is possible and where new African identities are forged in the flux.

Indicating Zachariah's transitory position in the city, the opening city
scene soon reveals that having arrived in Johannesburg, Zachariah has not yet
reached his destination: he is on his way to the mines. In the opening scenes,
Zachariah is making his way through the city crowds towards the station to travel
to the mines. In making Zachariah's first screen journey the one from the city to the mines, Rogosin is setting up a the first two terms of a visual montage that will be reinforced throughout the film: the camera's movement between the city of Johannesburg, the Mines and, later, Sophiatown. In this way Rogosin sets up, visually, the relationship of interdependence between the mines, the city and black habitation in the city: a relationship that the other films have all sought to deny.

It is through discussion with fellow miners in the hostel that *Come, Back Africa* sets forth the real reasons for workers coming the city. It is not as *Pondo Story* suggests a temporary sojourn to earn money in response to an isolated financial problem, nor is it, as *African Jim* would have us believe, merely about wanderlust. The first dialogue that takes place in the film is when Zachariah arrives at the mine hostel. This dialogue takes place in Zulu, and is subtitled. Although Zachariah clearly understands English and later speaks to his employer in English, he doesn't speak English to his friends until he arrives in Sophiatown. Nkosi points out the significance of using Zulu dialogue. Rogosin "makes a whole lot of languages available to the film-maker": "What you see is not only black intellectuals articulating their own experiences so far as black life in the cities is concerned. You even hear African languages being spoken in the film as dialogue" (Davis, 1996: 55).

When asked by a fellow worker in the hostel why he left the land to come and work on the mines Zachariah replies, "We are troubled by famine - we must leave our women and the children" (Rogosin, 1959). He then indicates his real reason for coming to work on the mines was to seek work in Johannesburg and that he was deceived by the mine recruitment officer: "The recruiting officer said
the way to get work in Johannesburg was to sign a contract with the Gold Mines". The discussion continues:

Unnamed Man: That is not true - your contract says that after you finish here you must go back home.

Zachariah: You mean I cannot go to work in Johannesburg?

Unnamed Man: For that you must go back home and get a special pass from the Native Commission and that is difficult. You may have to remain home.

Zachariah: But there is not enough to eat.

... I must get to Johannesburg to find work. I can't manage on less than 4 pounds a month

Unnamed Man: Me too I have very little left to send home at the end of the month -- I don't know what can be done. (Rogosin, 1959)

Thus Pondo Story's representation of all the money that Mchopi collects at home in addition to the gifts he bears, take on a very different light here. Zachariah, in fact, writes a letter to his wife, Vinah, in which he requests that she ask his mother to sell two cattle in order to send him money:

Tell my mother if she can be kind for me ... sell two cattles and you must send me money. Here in mine I'm not getting enough money. It [his contract] be finish very soon and I want to come back at home. Really, I'm really lonely for you. (Rogosin, 1959)

It is interesting to note that Zachariah, not surprisingly, echoing the loneliness of the life of migrant work, desires to go back home at this point in the film, a position he maintains until he gets to Sophiatown.

It is with this understanding of Zachariah's economic position that we see him arrive in Johannesburg, for the second time in the film, this time to work for
a white woman, Myrtle, as a "house boy". This portion of the narrative, where Zachariah works for Myrtle is crucial for three reasons. Rogosin uses it to reveal different white attitudes towards urban Africans, thus preparing the viewer for the discussion in the shebeen scene about white liberal patronage. In contrasting scenes of treatment by his white employers with the commentary that Zachariah and his co-workers offer on their conditions of employment, Rogosin presents South African cinema with its first black perspective. In the final scene in which Zachariah is sacked, the film provides a crucial revision of a similar scene from *African Jim*.

Myrtle tells Zachariah that she will call him Jack, because Zachariah is too difficult. This begins an intertextual reference with *African Jim*, since "Jim" sounds like a name commonly used in place of a given name that whites found "difficult" to pronounce. Zachariah angers his white "madam" by throwing away some soup, because she has told him to wash the pot it was in. While the hysterical, and overtly racist, Myrtle argues that Jack is incapable of following her orders, and he will never learn civilised ways, her husband suggests an attitude of liberal paternity, reminiscent of Arthur Jarvis in *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

[Husband:] You know Myrtle, I don't think you're treating this chap, Jack, quite right. After all he's only a native. He's not educated in the way that we are.

[Myrtle:] There's only one way to treat these people

[Husband:] Yes and the way that you're treating them hasn't brought us anywhere ... There's something wrong with us, there's something wrong with our approach to them. They're only simple country natives who come here and they're completely inexperienced.

---

8 Since the screenplay has not been published, all quoted dialogue is transcribed from watching the film and is as accurate as possible.
[Myrtle:] these people are uncivilised. I tell you if you could've seen the way he looked at me in the kitchen. For two pence he would have slit my throat. They're just savages, savages! (Rogosin, 1959)

Directly from the violent shrieking Myrtle the camera cuts to a scene outside with the "savages": Zachariah is discussing his employment with his fellow workers. He tells them that there is no satisfying his employer since she's always yelling at him. He is jovially informed that that is the way all black workers are treated and that the whites are never satisfied. In the direct contrasting of these two scenes -- from Myrtle's hysterical complaints to Zachariah's exchange with his fellow domestic workers -- Rogosin is doing something unique in the history of South African cinema. One is presented with the comparison between Myrtle's racist hysteria and Zachariah's calm discussion of the situation and the latter scene invites us to reinterpret the first. In doing so, both of the white ideologies represented by Myrtle and her husband -- that Zachariah is incapable of progression or that he requires more help to become civilised -- are dispelled as one hears the black workers' sharing identical stories about their white employers. Maingard has argued that Sarafina! creates a black perspective through the alternating between black and white contexts, thus contrasting the two social situations (1994: 240). This seems to me is exactly what is taking place in Come Back, Africa, some thirty years earlier.

The prohibition of "white" alcohol to black people plays a crucial role in the final shebeen scene in Come, Back Africa and it is also what gets Zachariah fired from this job. Pondo Story and African Jim both go to great lengths to emphasise the absence of western alcohol: in Pondo Story Mtchopi is delighted when he is provided with his "own" kind of beer at the mines. African Jim
attempts to move away from this tribal idea but replaces it, rather ludicrously, with only tea being visibly served at the nightclub. Zachariah is not only shown drinking whiskey, but the scene in which this happens enacts a crucial revision of an almost identical one in African Jim, with its on-screen prohibition. We see Zachariah's first signs of bold response to his employer brought on by the alcohol. While cleaning, Zachariah discovers Myrtle's whiskey and drinks some of it. After drinking the whiskey he puts the radio on and, enjoying the music, begins to dance, with Myrtle's stole around his neck. In African Jim, there is an almost identical scene, and both result in the protagonists being fired by their white employers. Yet the two scenes could not be more different. Jim puts on the radio while washing the floor and begins to listen to the "Bantu music programme" as the obviously white announcer informs us. These were programmes by the white South African Broadcasting Corporation playing music that whites thought African audiences should be listening to, encouraging notions of tribal ethnicity. The music, sung by a choir, is traditional African singing and Jim reclines on the floor, in order to enjoy the music. At this point one of the most curious and anomalous scenes in the film unfolds. In a flashback, Jim is transported back to his homeland and there is a sequence of rural Edenic African landscape, complete herds of antelope and Jim and his tribal peers hunting, in a moment that seems more like a fantasy than one from rural Swaziland. This is the only point at which the linearity and progression of the film's narrative, from the country to the city, is broken. Given the crucial role music plays in Jim's success in the film, this scene -- connecting music and tribal harmony -- endorses the suggestion that his singing success is still somehow essentially related to his tribal origin.
When Zachariah switches the radio on, the tune playing is "Tula Ndiville" recorded in 1954 by the Manhattan Brothers and Miriam Makeba, who was singing with the Manhattan brothers at the time. The recording included well-known South African artists like Kieppie Moeketsi, on clarinet, and Mackay Davashe playing the tenor sax. As the name implies the Manhattan Brothers were influenced by African-American and American rhythm and blues and their first big selling recording was "Patience and Fortitude", first recorded by the Andrew Sisters (Allingham, 1999: 7). The Manhattan Brothers have been called South Africa's first "superstars" and in the 1940s and 1950s "their music was heard everywhere: on the radio, behind the closed doors of suburban servants quarters, pouring out of township backyards and shebeens, and shaking a circuit of jam-packed halls and theatres" (Allingham, 1999: 2). Regularly featured in both Drum and Zonk!, and idols to a generation of young males who modelled their speech and dress on the Manhattan Brothers, this group epitomised black urban culture. Myrtle comes home to find "Jack" dancing to this music. First she complains about the mess and then she sees her stole around his neck. She accuses him of drinking and then when she threatens to call the police, Zachariah confidently tells her to go ahead. As he walks past her to leave, she warns him not to come near her, indicating white female anxiety about black men and the effects of alcohol. This scene thus enacts a powerful revision, and politicisation, of Jim's simple and thus easily distractible nature as suggested by the scene in African Jim. Through the introduction of the popular township music of the time, Come Back, Africa turns this into a confrontation between urban black culture and repressive white attitudes.
It is losing this job, and accommodation, that catapults Zachariah into Sophiatown. In the scene following his dismissal, we find him with his friend Steve in the shebeen. It is in Sophiatown that Zachariah speaks English to his black friends for the first time. Prior to this scene English was reserved for this white employer and his conversations with friends and fellow workers were subtitled. This is the first of several significant shifts that will take place as Zachariah discovers the black urban landscape of Sophiatown.

In the shebeen where he is introduced to Eddie, who will take him to his next job, and where he meets "nice time girl" Hazel. His interaction with her and subsequent discussion in Steve's room brings to light the social problems of the migrant worker's life. Hazel takes his money to buy a drink and then offers to "make him happy". Her city sophistication highlights Zachariah's social ineptitude. After initially accepting her offer, he pushes her away and tells his friend Steve that he wants to go home. In the scene with Hazel in the shebeen we are clearly invited to be sympathetic to Zachariah's commitment to his wife, Vinah. Yet Come, Back Africa doesn't heap any of the blame on Hazel, usually reserved for "nice time girls". When Zachariah tells Hazel that he might not be in Johannesburg for long, obviously misreading her sexual invitation as a desire for something more permanent, she says, rather wearily, that "it makes no difference" (Rogosin, 1959).

Significantly, it is only after he has been introduced to Sophiatown that Zachariah, in discussion with Steve in his Sophiatown room, first conceives of the possibility of permanent relocation to the city, a plan that also involves bringing his family to join him. While the dialogue locates Zachariah's decision at the intersection of the difficulty of rural life and the loneliness of migrant life,
it is only within the vibrant urban community of Sophiatown that this vision of
the future is possible:

Zachariah: You know if I can get a job I will try to get a house too.

Steve: If you could find a job here ... and then you could bring your wife
along this way.

Zachariah: I don't think to stay here, I like our place you know, but a man
has got it difficult. You can't get enough food, you can't get enough job.
But still I like that place because I like our people, I can't stay very far
from our people, man.

Steve: That's why I'm suggesting that you bring your wife along, you see.

Zachariah: Oh, I think that will be better for me, you know.
(Rogosin, 1959)

As Zachariah and Steve go to sleep, Rogosin uses an aerial montage sequence to
mark the transition between this and the next narrative sequence. Rogosin now
adds the third term to the aerial scenes of Johannesburg and the mines:
Sophiatown. The camera pans across the streets and rooftops of Sophiatown,
then Johannesburg and then shifts to the mines. In using this as a linking
technique between the action of the narrative, Rogosin sets up, for the first time,
a visual vocabulary of interconnection between these three urban spaces. Other
films of the period tried to maintain these as discreet spaces. While in Pondo
Story the distance between the rural countryside and the mines is traversable, the
boundary between the mines and of the city of Johannesburg remains an
impenetrable barrier for black miners. Permanent black settlement isn't possible
within the discourse of the film. African Jim attempts to set up this possibility,
but does so in ways that limits access to the city to a few select individuals.
One film that does admit this possibility, and attempts a visual representation of a vibrant black urban community is *The Magic Garden*, set in Alexandra township. This was made in 1951 by Donald Swanson, the director of *African Jim*. Yet while Swanson intended to make a film set entirely in a township and, while the film appears, like *African Jim*, to have been filmed in a township, the film also contains the curious opening documentary-style, voice-over narrative. The action of the film takes place entirely within Alexandra, where peoples' lives are represented as a blend of tribal tradition and modern western city ways. Yet the film opens with street scenes in Johannesburg and the black presence in the city. Given the film's township setting, the opening frame is even more at odds with the main narrative of the film than was the case with the opening of *African Jim*. The voice-over "explains", and mediates, the overwhelming black presence in the city and positions Alexandra in a hierarchical relationship with Johannesburg. The narration goes to great lengths to emphasise that, even in the city, the black South African is still in tribal space:

The visitor to Johannesburg will find much to interest him but without doubt he will almost immediately be struck by the number of African natives who throng the busy streets; for the African is the messenger boy, the rickshaw boy, the cleaner, the nurse girl, the clerk. He is the worker of the city. From the scattered kraals and distant villages the African has brought to Johannesburg many of his curious tribal customs and quaint ceremonies. Traditional games, strange to the eyes of the white man, lend a romantic air to the sidewalks of the city. His love of getting dressed, and personal ornaments, add a touch of colour to the sunny streets. His leisurely ways and cheerful smiles are a characteristic of his sunny nature, for the hustle and bustle of western ways has scarcely touched the African. (Swanson, 1951)

The position of the "African" as a crucial part of the city, a worker, is moderated to the role of adornment, lending to the city a "romantic air". Yet while the workers bring their ways to the city, this movement is in only one direction, since
the city "scarcely touch[es] the African". The hierarchy, implied by terms such
as "quaint", continues into the representation of the economic relationship
between the workers and the city:

On the outskirts of Johannesburg lie the native townships, which house
the thousands of Africans whose livelihood depends upon the city. It is
here in Alexandra township that our story has its setting. Alexandra,
where all the tribes of Africa meet and mingle: There are Mosothos [sic]
from the mountains of Lesotholand clad in the blankets, which are their
national costume; there are Zulus; there are Shangaans from the Northern
Transvaal with kilted skirts and heavy bangles; there are Xhosas and
Swazis and many others. All go to make up the population, which has
been estimated at about sixty-five thousand of which forty-five thousand
appear to be children. (Swanson, 1951)

While the African is "the worker of the city", the voice-over informs viewers that
the residents of Alexandra "depend upon the city" for their livelihood. There is
no similar suggestion that the city depends, for its livelihood, upon its workers.

The reason for this opening voice-over, I would argue, is to mediate the
visual image of crowds of urbanised Africans in the city. The visual image of
large numbers of Africans is moderated, textually, in three ways: by replacing the
African in an essentially tribal space, by dividing Africans up into tribal groups,
and by infantalisation: all three techniques bear an unfortunate resemblance to
apartheid policies.

If Swanson attempts to negotiate the contradiction surrounding urban
dependence on black labour by suggesting the separateness of the worker from
the city, Rogosin presents a constant visual reminder of the connection that exists
between black labour, the mines, the city and black urban habitation. He
interweaves those elements that the other films have tried to separate into
discrete spaces.
Sophiatown

Whatever else Sophiatown was, it was home; we made the desert bloom; we made alterations, converted half-verandas into kitchens, decorated the houses and filled them with music. We were house-proud. We took the ugliness of life in a slum and wove a kind of beauty; we established bonds of human relationships which set a pattern of communal living, far richer and more satisfying -- materially and spiritually -- than any model housing could substitute.

Bloke Modisane (1989: 16)

Sophiatown! How hard it is to capture and to convey the magic of that name! Once it is a matter of putting pen to paper all the life and colour seems to leave it ... and I cannot put my memories on paper, or, if I do, they will only be like the butterflies pinned, dead and lustreless, on the collector's board. ...

When Sophiatown is finally obliterated and its people scattered, I believe South Africa will have lost not only a place but an ideal.

Trevor Huddleston (1956: 117-8; 137)

It is no coincidence that Rogosin chooses Sophiatown, as opposed to any of the other black residential areas around Johannesburg, as the location for Come Back, Africa. In his autobiographical writing about his life and work in Sophiatown, from 1943 until its destruction in 1958, Trevor Huddleston, as indicated earlier, suggests that the name "will awaken faint echoes in the memory of some who recall that it was to Sophiatown that Kumalo came seeking Absolom, his son" in Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country (1956: 117). He is quick, however, to assert distance between his experience of Sophiatown and the image that is most commonly conjured up by Paton's novel: "they will never remember what I remember of it" (1956: 117). The image of widespread hopelessness and the spiritual degeneracy of black urban life is summed up in Paton's novel by Msimangu's speech to Kumalo about the young woman pregnant with Absolom's child:
- You can do nothing here, he said. Let us go.
- My friend ...
- I tell you, you can do nothing. Have you not troubles enough of your own? I tell you there are thousands such in Johannesburg. And were your back as broad as heaven, and your purse full of gold, and did your compassion reach from here to hell itself, there is nothing you can do. (Paton, 1988: 62)

While this young woman resides in Pimville, Msimangu's all inclusive term "Johannesburg" is clearly intended to diagnose the condition of all black urban life surrounding the city and, as I have argued in chapter one, no positive representation of urban life is offered outside of Msimangu's individualised Christian voice in Paton's novel. Yet it is interesting that while it is the image of the pregnant, abandoned, morally questionable young woman that symbolises Pimville, the threat in Sophiatown is represented by the other end of the spectrum: Stephen's brother, the politically active, urbanised, John Kumalo, about whose character Paton's text inspires a singular distrust. *Come Back, Africa* offers a very different representation of politicised urban black intellectuals, as well as a very different representation of the location where this thriving life took root: Sophiatown.

Sophiatown was, from its inception, different from other black urban areas in that it not designated by the government as a place of black urban residence and it was, uniquely, a place where ownership of urban property was possible for black South Africans. It was historical coincidence that gave rise to black land ownership in Sophiatown: "in 1897 an investor named H. Tobiansky bought 237 acres of land four and half miles west of the centre of Johannesburg" (Proctor, 1979: 57). Tobiansky tried to sell this land to the government as a "Coloured Location" and, having failed, planned a private leasehold township for low-income whites, named after his wife, Sophia. Yet several factors made
Sophiatown unattractive to white buyers. One of the first reasons was that the western area of Newlands, adjacent to Sophiatown, was chosen as the site for Johannesburg's municipal sewage works. By 1910, according to Proctor, "plots were being sold, without discrimination, creating a racially mixed area that became increasingly black" (1979: 57). When Tobiansky sold freehold properties to African purchasers he was "establishing a unique situation", making possible an "African -- or at least a non-white -- suburb in Johannesburg" (Huddleston, 1956: 120). Several factors contributed towards black habitation in the western areas of Johannesburg. The first world war, as Huddleston points out, brought not only a wave of industrialisation, but also the need for African labour. The only existing "location", Pimville, was ten miles from the centre of town and there was a need for housing for workers closer to the town (119). The Western Area was designated and this led to the Johannesburg City Council's establishment, in 1918, of Western Native Township on the Newlands site. "Sewage disposal and a native location" Huddleston suggests, "seemed to go together" in the minds of the planning authorities (120).

According to Huddleston accommodation for three thousand families was built and a tall iron fence erected around Western Native Township. These parts - the Western Native Township, Sophiatown and the surrounding suburbs of Martindale and Newclare - became known as the Western Areas and soon constituted the largest suburban black residential area in South Africa (Proctor quoted in Coplan, 1986: 143). Due to the shortage of accommodation for labour the government exempted Sophiatown from the ownership restrictions of the Urban Areas act, but since it was not recognised as an official black "location", municipal services were not provided for the ever-expanding population. The
population of Sophiatown more than doubled in less than ten years, from 12 000 in 1928 to 28 500 in 1937, a figure near the planned capacity for the Sophiatown area (Coplan, 1986: 143). By the mid-1950s the population had, according to Huddleston, who lived in Sophiatown, more than doubled again and had reached twice the planned capacity: "the density of the population is about twice what it should be, 70,000 instead of 30,000" (1956: 121). This was due in part to housing not keeping pace with the influx of people, but people had, however, also shown an early preference for Sophiatown. People moved to the freehold area of Sophiatown while houses in the municipal locations, like Western Native Township, were vacant. In contrast with the other accommodation available to black urban dwellers, and against the instability that characterised black urban life, Sophiatown, while sharing the "social and economic problems of the slumyards and municipal locations … offered a greater sense of permanence and self-direction" because "ownership of real estate gave Sophiatown a sense of community, with institutions and a social identity that served as a defence against the dehumanisation of the labour system" (Coplan, 1986: 144). Come Back, Africa is the only film to provide visual images of the vibrant Sophiatown community and also the only one to record the sense of loss, as Sophiatown was, in 1958, in the throes of destruction. In a long sequence, filmed in documentary style in the streets of Sophiatown, Zachariah walks through the town to go and visit his aunt to talk about accommodation. The discussion between Zachariah and the aunt articulates the importance of freehold rights within the instability of the black urban community; they are equated with dignity and humanity:
Zachariah: We are looking for a place to live
Aunt: Do you have a permit? They'll arrest you without it.
Zachariah: Why are there so many broken houses?
Aunt: They don't want us to own our own houses.
Zachariah: What is the reason for that?
Aunt: Because the government doesn't want us to live like people.
Zachariah: But we must find a place soon.
Aunt: Next door they are moving to Meadowlands. Would you like to see their room?
(Rogosin, 1959)

One of the problems in Sophiatown, as in all black urban townships, was crime. Like Paton, Rogosin, Modisane and Nkosi grapple with crime in Sophiatown and the way in which the experience of the city and urbanisation has impacted on black life. Yet the conclusion drawn by *Come Back, Africa* could not be further from Paton's. Much of the criticism directed at Rogosin's film -- both at the time of its release and in the meagre subsequent commentary -- has viewed the film as bleak and offering no solution to the problems it raises. Part of the reason for this, as I have already indicated, is the film's stark ending, where Zachariah's wife, Vinah, is murdered in Sophiatown by the tsotsi, Marumu. Critics at the time of the film's release also tended to view Rogosin's inclusion and representation of Marumu as an attempt to convey -- in authentic documentary style -- a balanced view of black South Africa, showing both the positive and negative, represented by Zachariah and Marumu accordingly. Reading the film this way it is conceivable how critics might, in a rather facile manner, regard the end of the film as bleak and hopeless, the triumph of the evil criminal over the good, but overcome, citizen. Part of the reason for this is no
doubt an inevitable comparison with Rogosin's first award winning film, *On the Bowery* about alcoholics living on New York's skid row. The bleakness of their lives on skid row is offset by the fact that one of the film's main characters turns away from his alcoholic life at the end of the film.

Yet the fact that there is no possibility of "escape" for Zachariah at the end of *Come Back, Africa*, does not mean that the film "dangerously" offers problems without a solution, as Hey argues. Instead, I would argue that the end of the film and the film's representation of Marumu must be read in context of Can Themba's discussion in the shebeen scene and that -- quite in opposition to being the villain of the piece -- Marumu becomes a poignant symbol of urban black South Africa and an example of the psychological violence that must result from both apartheid policies of repression, and liberal paternalism, in South Africa (positions already introduced through Myrtle and her husband).

Although he has been warned by Steve to keep away from tsotsis, Zachariah has a scuffle with Marumu. Not being familiar with the ways of the city nor the reverence with which gangsters must be treated, Zachariah takes offence when Marumu pushes him out of the queue at the shop in Sophiatown. Marumu is waiting outside the shop to teach Zachariah a lesson. He and Zachariah fight and Zachariah gets the upper hand, almost strangling Marumu. Steve eventually pulls Zachariah away. The scene following this is the justly famous shebeen scene where *Drum* journalist and editor, Can Themba, discusses Marumu and diagnoses the problem of urban criminality. The scene in the shebeen falls into two main sections: the first is the discussion about Marumu, his repression and the resultant violence. This gives way to an argument about white liberals and their attitude towards black South Africans.
Bloke Modisane tells Zachariah that if he was going to fight with Marumu he should have "finished him" because Marumu would eliminate him. Zachariah, protesting that he never kills anyone, is clearly trying to understand what the problem is with Marumu. Modisane, declaring that Marumu is "bad", "rotten", "no good", is interrupted by Themba's startlingly eloquent soliloquy about Marumu:

Themba: No, no, no, no, no, no .... Let me explain Marumu. I lived with him when he was young and I saw him grow up. ... When we were young, we had our little fun. In the first place it was just fun. ... But later when his father died ... it worried his mother no end ... she thought that just like his father who on a cold winter night walked down the streets of Sophiatown and got brutally butchered by some tsotsis, she thought that would happen to her son too. ... The mother repressed him; she kept him from the things that he wanted. First it was legitimate things like having a couple of sweets from the shop or having a little fruit from the fruit shop.

Modisane: But Can, those things happen to all of us ...

Themba: Ja, except that he wanted bigger things, he wanted to, to grapple with things that were bigger and the only way he could get those things were through force. ... So he [thought?] in terms of force. It happened to all of us. We wanted some kind of force. But we weren't prepared to go to the extent that he was. He wanted money, he wanted bigger things, he wanted a bigger, better way of life. And he had to use force and the result of all that was the only way he could get the things that he wanted was to kick in people, to bully people, to get tough about people. .... Now he has become a man who thinks that the only way he can get things is to get them from force. And sometimes he forgets the things he wants and he only remembers the force. (Rogosin, 1959)

It is thus significant that Themba attempts to locate and explain black urban violence here, thus giving a sociological context to Marumu's behaviour, rather than merely branding him as "bad". Balseiro suggests that "rather than allowing Marumu to disappear behind the anonymity of 'native' crime statistics, Rogosin situates him in the context of a violent environment": 


The film thus focuses the viewer's attention on the overarching effects of apartheid legislation on township life. Instead of demonizing the city as a source of evil, Rogosin portrays a brutalized (and brutalising) Marumu at odds with a police state that provided both the conditions and the provocations for blacks to break the law. (Balseiro, 1997: 22)

While I agree with Balseiro's suggestion that the narrative of the film provides a context that invites viewers to sympathise with, and understand, Marumu's behaviour, there is still nothing to suggest that Themba's explanation is any more valid than, or even significantly different from, Paton's diagnosis of the "broken tribe". As with Paton, the black family is torn apart by black urban violence. Yet it is the connection that Themba makes between repression, violence and race and the way in which Rogosin uses it as a link from the discussion about Marumu to the discussion about white liberals that leads to me suggest that there is something very different from a liberal sociology of the ghetto being presented here. The discussion about Marumu and "force" gives way to a discussion about how racism, rather than the urban slum, is the underlying cause of violence:

Themba: We live in a world of violence and violence has become such an important part that people judge us according to our racial characteristics, which shouldn't apply. It doesn't matter if you are an Indian or a Jew or a German or an Afrikaner, but if people can label you, they label you easily.

Modisane: Now you're really going overboard, aren't you?

Themba: I know I am but I'm trying to explain the bigger things. The reason why we were are being labelled like this is just because it's easy to label us racialistically ... because it's easy to distinguish one colour from another, because people think they can get away by playing one colour against another. ...

Morris: Like this group areas act?

Themba: now we're getting somewhere, now you're beginning to appreciate it.

(Rogosin, 1959)
Themba's solution to "playing one colour against another" is a dialogue between equals, or what he calls "getting at" someone:

I'd like to get people to get at each other, to talk to each other. If I could get my worst enemy over a bottle of beer, maybe we could get at each other. It's not just a question of just talking to each other, but it's a question of understanding each other, living in the same worlds. (Rogosin, 1959)

It is at this point that Morris, a so-called coloured, suggests that "the liberals are tying to meet [them] half way", a comment met with ridicule, which inspires a scene that, I believe, lies at the heart of *Come Back, Africa*’s achievement: Lewis Nkosi's astute and insightful critique of white liberalism, and Alan Paton in particular.

Nkosi: What liberals? Do you know who is the liberal in this country? The exquisite white lady who gets to the party and wants to insist that you must drink that cup of tea. And don't be afraid, don't be afraid to drink that cup of tea. Do you? Are you afraid? Don't be afraid of whites.

Morris: what's wrong with drinking tea?  
[Very noisy response to this question].

Nkosi [shouting above background noises]: They take it for granted you're not grown up because you are a native.

Modisane: You want to sell your humanity over a cup of tea?  
(Rogosin, 1959)

Nkosi's use of repetition about drinking a cup of tea at a party, filmed in a shebeen where everyone is "illegally" drinking hard liquor, along with his ironic tone indicates the absurdity inherent in the liberal's law-abiding position. It also indicates Rogosin's distance from the liberal position, since he personally supplied the alcohol for the shebeen scene (Modisane, [no date]: 19). Morris continues to defend white liberals:
Morris: I don't quite understand. You people don't seem to appreciate the liberals' point of view.

Nkosi: It was embodied in Alan Paton's book.

Modisane: Ja, that slimy slickly Reverend Kumalo came to town and said 'yes baas' to every white man, 'yes baas'.
(Rogosin, 1959)

While speaking Modisane bows his head in a mocking gesture of obedience, while simultaneously making a praying gesture with his hands. The critique is ruthless with Modisane adopting a facial expression of mock obsequiousness. It is Nkosi who continues the discussion about Kumalo giving the scene, and the film, its climax:

Nkosi: The chap never grew up, he went back to the country still the old reverend gentleman who thinks a world of whites ... And what does he do when he gets back to the country? He builds a church [much laughter in response to this statement]. That's the moral of the story. But I'm telling you, the liberal just doesn't want a grown up African. He wants the African he can sort of patronise, pat on his head and tell him that with just a little bit of luck some day you'll be a grown up man, fully civilised. He wants the African from the country, from his natural environment, unspoiled.

Themba: [adding to Nkosi's statement]: uncontaminated.
(Rogosin, 1959)

In this discussion Nkosi identifies the discourse of evolutionary progression that underlies the liberal paternalism, of which Paton is an outstanding example. Yet this discussion has much wider reaching implications than merely a critique of Paton's representation. Nkosi's critique of liberal paternalism makes explicit the link between idealised images of the "simple" rural and tribal life and the discourse of evolutionary progression. His analysis thus also becomes a critique of any images locating urban blacks within this model -- a model that, in various
ways, underpins all the other films made during this period. Rogosin's film not only visually breaks this mould but also identifies it and confronts it head-on. All the other films begin with an original moment of innocence in the country because they locate black identity within an evolutionary earlier and simpler time. The idea that the liberal wants an African he can patronise, pat on his head and tell him that with just a little luck, soon he’ll be grown up and fully civilised is certainly the model that is reminiscent of African Jim. Jim first has to make the journey from the country to the city, grow up once again in the city, yet at the end of the film his ultimate success is still dependent on the generosity of the white record producer. The lack of alcohol also becomes a far more sinister signifier of patronisation.

Yet while Jim can progress towards civilisation and be admitted selectively on the basis of his success, no such journey is possible for Mtchopi in Pondo Story, who remains external to the possibility of progression. What I want to suggest is that these two films present a visual representation of two different strands of thinking about race in South Africa. In the first chapter I outlined Saul Dubow's argument that the liberal policy of amalgamation or assimilation gradually gave way to a strategy of segregation in South Africa. Part of the reason for this, Dubow suggests, was the teaching of pseudo Darwinian science and other theories of scientific racism which all set themselves the task of classifying the world's races according to a natural hierarchy. This idea of a natural ascent from backward to advanced drew on the metaphor of the family, where subordination was legitimised, and this in turn gave rise to ubiquitous notions of dependent child races. This is clearly what Nkosi is referring to in Come Back, Africa. Similarly it was also Social
Darwinism that gave rise to fears about urban degeneration, following the uncontrolled development of a black and white proletariat in the cities.

Nineteenth century evolutionism was common to both scientific racism and liberalism. Yet while classical liberal thought held to the doctrine of inevitable progress, scientific racism emphasised that cultures were as likely to regress, as progress.

One can clearly see an evolutionary mode at work in the opening of Pondo Story and African Jim, both emphasising the simplicity of rural life, placing it in an earlier evolutionary context, out of western time and the narrative of progress. Yet while African Jim suggests that progression is possible, Pondo Story denies this possibility. What Pondo Story represents, therefore, is not a documentary, but racist repression and its attempted naturalisation in tribal culture. African Jim on the other hand struggles to maintain a liberal assimilationist or integrationist vision, while negotiating the anxieties about urban degeneration surrounding that position, hence the empty city into which Jim is allowed only as a select, and selected, individual.

I would suggest that the discussion about, and the character of, Marumu takes on a different perspective in the light of the fact that he is clearly diagnosed as "repressed", "kept from the [legitimate] things he wanted". Marumu is not then, as he has been read, the evil counterpart of Zachariah, the degenerate urban black. He is the result of what happens what blacks are not allowed "to live like people". The story that culminates in Marumu killing Zachariah's wife, Vinah, is far from being Rogosin's heavy handed documentary attempt to present a "balanced" view of the "good" and "bad" black South African in the city. It is that very structure -- with its debt to evolutionary thinking, which the other films
depend on -- that *Come Back, Africa* is shattering. I believe that the real ending of the film reinforces my argument: that the "documentary" aspect and the fictional story must be cross-referenced in order to grasp the full meaning of the film.

A crucial feature of the film overlooked by those who criticise the bleak "end" of the film -- Vinah's murder -- is the montage sequence that closes the film, after the death of Vinah. A grieving Zachariah banging his fist in frustration on the table leads into a parallel montage sequence. In the first scene his banging fist becomes the rhythm of road workers' pick axes hitting the ground. This cuts to an aerial shot of black commuters, ant-like, streaming out of trains at a crowded station. This is followed by another aerial shot of the crowds of a Johannesburg city street, which leads into the last two scenes in this sequence: on the mines. In the first, of two underground scenes, black miners fill the frame, streaming down the cage-like mine walkways into the mines. The final climactic scene that ends the film is of the miners underground, faceless and invisible, except for the lights on their helmets moving in the darkness. Over these moving lights, "The End" is superimposed. These are all scenes capturing the dehumanisation that characterises the black experience in the city. This montage sequence unites the two strands of the film: documentary footage, of the mines for example, with the "fictionalised" story of Zachariah. As we have seen Zachariah in all of the scenarios in the montage sequence, this serves as a repetition, and thus a culmination, of our understanding of Zachariah's experiences in the apartheid city. Yet since all these scenes are of de-individualised groups of black labourers it also serves to remind us that the story of Zachariah stands for the black collective. This is why, according to Rogosin,
the person in the lead role of Zachariah was of vital importance and why he spent weeks in the streets searching for the face of Zachariah. In his essay on "Interpreting Reality" Rogosin explains that it was important to use non-professional actors because he didn't want to make films about star personalities, he wanted to create a true national hero:

I want to give man a new dignity, to make a true national hero of a Nebraska farmer, a Pennsylvania coal miner, a Harlem taxi driver. One of the mainstreams of American art -- from Whitman to Flaherty -- aimed at precisely this goal. (1960: 23)

In a telling comment he suggests that De Sica "used a labourer in The Bicycle Thief not only for the sake of authenticity but also to make the labourer a national hero" (1960: 23). In using montage to make the individual character of Zachariah stand for the experience of millions of black people in South Africa Rogosin is engaging in a tradition of political film making, used in films like Kuhle Wampe, made in Weimar Germany in 1932, written by Bertold Brecht and directed by Slatan Dudow.

A brief comparison will serve to illustrate the radical nature of Rogosin's use of montage. Through the use of montage, Kuhle Wampe makes it clear, in the opening minutes of the film, that the experience of the young unemployed Boenike is representative of the five million unemployed in Germany. Boenike gathers with other young men and women daily to wait for the newspaper advertising employment, and after scrambling for copies, they get on their bicycles to ride to all the places advertising jobs, only to be turned away and continue in their search. The use of repeated medium shots of the bicycles, framed so that only the feet pumping the pedals are seen, connects Boenike visually with the unemployed collective. This is reinforced through a shot of him
filmed through the spokes of the bicycle when he arrives home for the last time. Shortly after this he commits suicide and the sequence of the riders' legs on their bicycles reappears, as does Boenike's bicycle hanging in the hallway downstairs, through which he was filmed on his last entry into the house.

In *Come Back, Africa* Rogosin makes use of techniques that are very similar to those used by Dudow in *Kuhle Wampe*, both in the use of montage and the cues given to the viewer to decode the meaning of the montage. The use of parallel montage of the cyclists in *Kuhle Wampe* makes the viewer connect Boenike's individual plight with the five million unemployed. Yet we only know that there are five million unemployed because of the opening montage of newspaper headlines. Rapid shots of entire front pages roll upwards out of the frame inform the viewer of the increasing number of unemployed Germans:

'2.5 million without work, the result of Mr Schacht's policies'
'3/4 million unemployed!'
'Four million! Increase of unemployed under pressure of young'
'Unemployment increases! 2,700,000 seeking jobs in June'
'4.1 million unemployed. Rapid increase in unemployment in August'
'Almost 4.5 million unemployed / Increase of 180,000 in second half of December' 'Almost 5 million unemployed / On 15 November 4,844,000 / Increase since 1 November is 220,000'
'Over 5 million unemployed & part-time workers / Unemployment increases again' '315,000 unemployed in Berlin 100,000 unemployed without support'

(Dudow, 1932)

The viewer thus has the necessary information to connect Boenike's individual story to that of the collective. Rogosin does something similar, by giving the viewer the information to understand that Zachariah's plight is also those of the literally faceless miners in the closing of the montage sequence, and the film. At the outset of the film the viewer is informed that the film "is the story of Zachariah ... one of the hundreds of thousands of Africans forced each year off
the land by the Regime and into the Gold Mines" (Rogosin, 1959). This similarity between *Come Back, Africa* and *Kuhle Wampe* is hardly surprising considering that Dudow worked in Moscow in the 1920s, where he met Sergei Eisenstein, the acknowledged father of montage (Kemp, 1998). Rogosin has expressed his admiration for Eisenstein's montage techniques.9

The montage sequence documents the dehumanisation of black urban subjects under a government that "doesn't want [urban blacks] to live like people". It is interesting to note, given Rogosin's use of experimental film techniques, that the Nationalist government became extremely suspicious about "foreign", avant-garde styles of experimental filmmaking. In 1964 a film called *The Anatomy of Apartheid* was made for the South African Department of Information to promote the so-called "self-government" of the Transkei, as part of the apartheid policy of ethnically based "homelands". Yet the film, directed by Anthony Thomas, was turned down by the Department of Information. Part of the reason for this, it has been suggested, is that "the signs of its political leaning were there in the excessively self-conscious 'avant-garde' style of filmmaking" (Hees, 1991: 95). To Verwoerd, foreign interference in South Africa was intolerable and "the aesthetic frame of reference for *The Anatomy of Apartheid* was clearly the 'foreign' experimental film and its production values" (Hees, 1991: 95). It is worth noting that *Mapantsula* also makes use of experimental narrative techniques, telling the story of the Gangster, Panic, backwards through the use of constant temporal shifts and flashbacks, introduced without the conventional visual cues.

---

9 Rogosin discusses his admiration for Eisenstein in an interview in *Indian Film Culture*, (1963) No. 2. April-June.
Thus, through his use of montage Rogosin connects Zachariah's and Marumu's dehumanising experiences, rather than positioning them as "good" and "evil", at opposite ends of a continuum of progression or regression in the city. In the shebeen scene Can Themba suggests that they have "left it too late", that they should have talked to Marumu, initiated dialogue with him, thirty years ago, then they might have been able to bring him into the midst of their society. This sounds strikingly like a metaphor for dialogue in South Africa and echoes of the fear, articulated in Cry, the Beloved Country by Msimangu, that when the whites have finally turned in loving, the blacks will have already turned to hating (Paton, 1988: 38). The fact that immediately after this comment about Marumu, Themba launches into a discussion about dialogue and "getting at" your enemy -- understanding each other, living in the same worlds -- suggests the urgent need for dialogue between the different worlds of black and white South Africa -- a dialogue based on equality -- and the sinister implications if that opportunity is not taken.

The possibility was, in 1959, about to be lost in the events of Sharpeville in 1960 and Themba's warning about not leaving it too late, was to be played out in the history of South Africa. It was to take another thirty years before South Africa would see another black and white film collaboration and longer for the dialogue so passionately advocated by Can Themba. This film, and the work of Rogosin, Modisane and Nkosi, should not suffer a similar fate to the moment of hope it represented.
3

Re-framing the Politics of the Popular: Drum magazine and American Popular Culture.

A novel published in South Africa in 1996 was hailed for breaking new ground, and for founding a new genre, in black South African literature: the Black Detective Story. More specifically, a black detective created by a black writer. The novel in question is The Secret In My Bosom. The author, Gomolemo Mokae, is a medical doctor and political activist in South Africa and it is this very function of healing -- the body and the body politic -- that characterises the black detective he creates. Never before, apparently, prior to 1996, had a black South African writer adopted, or adapted, the popular detective genre in a novel. That Mokae's novel is written self-consciously in the popular vein is obvious from its epigraph: a quote from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. Why this infinitely adaptable genre, which has flourished under such diverse social contexts and translations, has not made an earlier appearance in black South African fiction writing -- especially when crime, thriller and detective writing have been popular forms for white South African writers -- is a question that must be posed.

Dennis Porter, for example, referring to the "quasi universality" of the genre's appeal suggests that although the "fixity of the investigative action ... is the generic sine qua non", this gives rise to a limited number of roles, "which may be distributed among characters most of whose attributes are no more inherent in those roles than are the red and white uniforms in the functions of

---

1 The praise for Mokae's novel comes from writer, Zakes Mda, and is quoted on the back cover of The Secret In My Bosom (1996).
players in a team or the black and white colour in the power of the pieces in a 
game of chess" (1981: 127). Why then, is this form a new one for black South 
African writers?

The answer is alluded to in *The Secret in my Bosom*. While Mokae's 
小说 is set and published in post-apartheid South Africa -- where the police 
force no longer represents the obvious threat to black South Africans that it did 
under apartheid -- it is possible for him to create a black policeman, like Colonel 
Makena, the detective hero of the novel. Even the character, Makena, however, 
struggles with the legacy of having been a black policeman prior to 1994 and 
constantlly asserts his identity as an investigator, distancing himself from the 
racist, apartheid activities of the Security Branch of the police force, the "sworn 
enemy" (1996: 45).

The idea, however, that there was a complete lack of detective fiction by 
black South African writers prior to *The Secret in my Bosom* is not quite true. 
The praise for Mokae's novel as ground breaking, which came from acclaimed 
South African writer, Zakes Mda, overlooks a vital precedent in South African 
literary history. That precedent is -- according to my research -- no less than the 
first detective fiction ever written by a black writer in South Africa, a writer who 
gave South African readers their first black detective. The writing I am referring 
to was published forty-three years prior to Mokae's novel. South Africa's first 
black writer of detective stories, however, faced a very different, and difficult, 
social context, which perhaps goes some way towards explaining why his stories 
have been dismissed and forgotten, "lost" to the extent that Mokae can be hailed 
as the creator of this new form. In 1953 *Drum* magazine published a series of 
stories about a black detective. These stories were written by a *Drum* journalist
Arthur Maimane and published under a pen name, Arthur Mogale. In their mastery of the popular American hard-boiled detective genre and their bold, confident assertion of black urban identity they suggest the culmination of the transformation that took place within Drum magazine, and its reconfiguration of black identity in 1950s South Africa, as discussed in chapter one.

If there was a symbol that was integral to the transformation of Drum, its rise and continued success, it was the figure of the detective and the act of investigation. One of the crucial features in Drum's success with black audiences was the annual exposé by "Mr. Drum", created and written by journalist Henry Nxumalo. As I have already outlined in chapter one, for Drum's first birthday issue in March 1952, Nxumalo went to work undercover, posing as a labourer, at great personal risk, to expose the appalling conditions, and treatment, even murder, of black farm labour in the Bethal district of South Africa (Drum magazine, March 1952). This article created "Mister Drum", who became synonymous with Drum magazine's investigation into atrocities committed under apartheid. This annual exposé by Mister Drum subsequently became a regular and celebrated feature of Drum, one that continued even after Nxumalo's death.

Fifty years later, Nxumalo's work remains extraordinary in the history of investigative journalism, both internationally and in the history of South African writing, since there was no model for this kind of writing in South African news media at the time.

Nxumalo's journalism has been fairly consistently praised for the ways in which -- citing Njabulo Ndebele, as one example -- it "revealed much of the gross ugliness of the economic exploitation in South Africa" (2002: 135). Yet Maimane's fictional detective has had a very different history of critical
reception. In an influential essay, "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary", first published in 1986, South African writer Njabulo Ndebele defined what he saw as the spectacular nature of black South African writing: "The history of black South African literature has been largely the history of the representation of spectacle" (2002: 134). Different generations of writers have, according to Ndebele, responded in various ways to representing the spectacle of apartheid.

In Drum writing, the spectacle is present, but not politicised:

In Drum magazine we see a similar penchant for the spectacular, although the symbols are slightly different. It is not so much the symbols of oppression that we see in most of the stories in Drum, as those showing the growth of sophisticated urban working and petty-bourgeois classes. The literary ingredients for the dramatic in these stories are: pacey style, suspenseful plots with unexpected ending, characters speaking like Americans, dressed like them and driving American cars. (Ndebele, 2002: 134)

He singles out Maimane’s detective stories and is one of the few critics to comment on Maimane, writing as Arthur Mogale:

Perhaps the detective story serials of Arthur Mogale typify this kind of writing. Detective Morena is a self-made man, confident, fast-talking, and quick thinking, playing the game of wits with his adversaries. He wins. Clearly, it the spectacle of phenomenal social change and the growing confidence of the urban African population that we see being dramatised here. (2002: 134)

---

Yet directly after discussing Mogale's version of the spectacle -- social change and urbanisation -- Ndebele delivers a judgement, rather damning for Mogale's detective: "It might be asked why the majority of these stories in *Drum* show an almost total lack of interest in the directly political issues of the time" (2002: 134). Michael Chapman provides a succinct summary of Ndebele's argument with the *Drum* writers:

... Ndebele makes it clear that he could not have approved many of the *Drum* stories. For too many offer the spectacular display of individual talent rather than the analytical response to prevailing conditions. The crux of the problem for Ndebele is that the "event" can easily be foregrounded at the expense of processes of recognition ... the writer might, in consequence, offer only a limited understanding of the dynamics of the South African social formation and thus end up confirming, rather than seeking to transform, current relations. (1989: 225)

Ndebele relegates the *Drum* writers of the 1950s, in favour of the protest literature that began to emerge after the 1950s. It is in protest literature that we discover "the dramatic politicisation of creative writing" and this is contrasted with *Drum*: In protest literature, "there is a movement away from the entertaining stories of *Drum*, towards stories revealing the spectacular ugliness of the South African situation in all its forms" (2002: 135). Given Ndebele's stature, as writer, literary critic, and cultural commentator in South Africa it is no surprise that Maimane's detective has received no subsequent serious critical attention.

The can be little doubt that the political urgency of 1980s South Africa provides a context for Ndebele's criticism, or that it added fuel to his argument with the *Drum* writers: the country was in political turmoil with the political struggle reaching its peak and "state of emergency" legislation imposed by the apartheid government. Yet I want to suggest that taking a closer look at the way
in which the popular detective forms function in Drum will reveal a complex process of translation and not a mere submission to American imperialism and an ideology of individualism.

While theories of globalisation pay much attention to the export of American popular culture, there has been practically no serious sustained study of the way in which American and African-American culture functioned in the formation of black modern identity in South Africa. Ntongela Masilela has lamented South Africa's exclusion from studies of the Black Atlantic and he highlights the contribution a discussion of South Africa will contribute to an understanding of Black Atlantic exchange (1996 and 1999). Yet while recent research has begun to interrogate the literary connections between writers of the Harlem Renaissance and Sophiatown, there has been no sustained study of the exchange of popular culture between America and black South Africa.

Two recent studies, outlined in my introduction, have begun to provide the critical framework for this necessary research and both point to an issue that has been occluded in the critical canon on Drum magazine: audience response. Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture (2000) investigates the export, and local development, of American popular cultural forms in a wide variety of geographical and historical contexts. It thus provides a useful illustration of how the map of the transatlantic journey of American popular forms to South Africa might be drawn. Its relevance to this chapter lies in the fact that the editors assert that when American popular culture crosses national boundaries, its meaning also changes. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May ask whether people in countries where American cultural products arrived simply rolled over and played dead in the face of the massive
powers of American mass media or, whether, audiences accepted American popular forms because they "matched and fitted local trends and desires" (2000: 3). In arguing for the latter case, I want to suggest that the imported American forms in Drum, discussed in this chapter, were transformed to fit local needs, to the point where they can no longer be called American (2000: 3).

Stephanie Newell, who is pioneering the theoretical reformulation of the role of popular fiction in Ghanaian writing, also focuses on the importance of audiences. She suggests that both "local authors and audiences employ quoting techniques which are far more dynamic and culturally located than allowed for" by the concept of mimicry (2000: 2). Thus, while writers transform the American products in re-writing them, audiences also bring local knowledge to their interpretations of these forms. Following Newell's lead, and suggestions by Wagnleitner and May, I intend to argue that popular forms were being appropriated by Drum writers in ways that were nothing less than politically subversive. My first example is Arthur Maimane's use of the genre, and tradition, of the American hard-boiled detective. I will follow that with a discussion of the popular American-style comic strips published in Drum. My research has revealed that Drum magazine was reproducing comic strips from African-American newspapers. I will examine the imported African-American form, its reception by readers and a locally created comic strip obviously influenced by its American counterpart but with crucial differences. In this chapter I will thus present previously unknown and thus unexplored links between African-American culture and black South African modernity.

The distinction that is often made in criticisms of Drum, between the serious journalism and the merely entertaining fictional stories, such as
Maimane's, is inherently problematic. While Maimane's debt to his self-confessed reading habits of American writer, Raymond Chandler, and British writer, Peter Cheyney, is clear, he has also claimed that the detective series was based on stories he heard from real gangsters in the shebeens, which he could not report, factually, for fear of his life. Maimane has said that fiction was the only way of telling the gangster's stories (Nicol, 1995: 115). In his book about Drum, A Good-Looking Corpse, in which Maimane's claim is documented, Mike Nicol expresses scepticism; "it was a lot of stories to come across so conveniently" (1995: 115). Maimane, however, insists that he eventually had to leave South Africa for fear of his life because of one of the stories he had written:

I left South Africa because I knew I would be killed by the gangsters if I lived there any longer ... After I had done one story on one of them they put a contract out for my life and I decided that I had stuck my neck out enough times for Drum." (Quoted in Nicol, 1995: 115-6)

Journalist, Don Mattera, who was the leader of a Sophiatown gang, known as "The Vultures", at the time Maimane's stories were published, corroborates Maimane's claim:³

We all knew he [Maimane] was Arthur Mogale and I can tell you the Berliners [a Sophiatown gang] especially were pissed off with him. Maimane was very scared and very afraid. I remember there was word out once that we should wipe this guy off. The guy was reporting shit about the Americans, the Vultures, the Berliners. I tell you, there was a hit ticket on this man. And this guy had to flee Sophiatown to live in Alexandra township, and he had to flee from there as well. (Nicol, 1995: 115)

³ For Mattera's story about this life as a gangster, see Gone with the Twilight: A Story of Sophiatown (1987) by Don Mattera. London: Zed.
While Nicol's scepticism seems to emerge from the fact that Maimane's stories "were part Raymond Chandler, part Peter Cheyney", and thus owed too much to the popular American genre to contain the truth about the South African townships. I want to suggest, however, that the blend of popular forms with reporting was neither unusual in Drum, nor unique to Maimane's stories and that this is precisely the reason they should be seriously investigated. There is often little to distinguish the "real" investigative features Drum magazine published from the fictional detective stories.

It is significant, in this regard, that in Maimane's first story, his detective character constructs a secret camera that bears distinct similarities to the "secret camera" that Drum would publicise, in factual reporting, two years later. Maimane's fictional detective records acts of crimes with a cine camera hidden in a book, the lens flush with the back of the spine, while the "two foot release cable snaked out of the book and hung from [his] button hole" (Maimane, 1989: 25). In the previous chapter I discussed the way in which Drum photographer Bob Gosani used clandestine methods to film the humiliating "tausa" dance black prisoners were forced to perform, an act which led to the promulgation of new legislation about publishing photographs in South Africa. In October 1955, Mister Drum's editorial celebrates Drum's "secret" camera and its achievements once again. While reminding readers of the "tausa" photographic scoop, he introduces photographs -- advertised in the previous month's magazine as forthcoming -- of black and white boxers sparring:

Dear Readers,
That wonderful secret camera of ours! You remember the camera which got those photographs of the "tausa" business when I went to goal? Well, we've brought it out of storage again. In this issue you'll see the pictures of the great African fighter, Jake Ntseke, sparring in Johannesburg with
Robert Cohen just before the title fight with Willie Toweel. This sparring was supposed to be secret, as we reported last month. But DRUM's ace non-white photographer, Bob Gosani, somehow managed to get next to the ring while the sparring was going on, and he scooped this picture without any of the trainers and managers seeing. (Nxumalo, Drum magazine October: 1955: 5)

In language that clearly conflates a serious journalistic tone with the language of the popular detective, Nxumalo also indicates what's forthcoming from Drum's secret camera:

And next month there's a sensational article about a certain place in Pretoria, with photographs taken again by Bob Gosani and his special machine. You can actually see a policeman standing right in front of the camera in one of the pictures -- and he did not know that anyone from DRUM was within a mile of the "secret" place. How does the secret camera work? Buy next month's DRUM and maybe you'll know. (Nxumalo, Drum magazine October: 1955: 5)

In September 1955, the month preceding the photographs of the black and white boxers sparring, Drum published a telling commentary, publicising these forthcoming photographs. With the headline "Why keep it Secret?", Drum revealed that black boxers had long been the sparring partners of white boxing champions, yet these black opponents were never named, or the fights publicised. The headline is provocatively accompanied by a constructed image of white and black boxer fighting. In an interesting move, and one that takes the reader by surprise given the popular subject matter, this silence surrounding the names of these black sparring partners is compared to the deaths of unnamed black workers in South Africa, whose names are not reported in the media.

How they've kept it silent! Through all these years since the war South Africa's great black boxers have been the sparmates for world champions and would-be world champions in training sessions -- yet the facts have hardly ever been allowed to slip out. Once in 1952, when champion Vic Toweel was floored by an African bantamweight, a trickle of information
appeared in the Press. But otherwise sporting articles have simply referred to “sparring partners.” Unless they were white, no mention of why they were or what they were. It was all very anonymous and modest.

It remained one of those official mining announcements: “A European miner, Mr. J. J. Smith was injured in a fall of rocks yesterday. Nine Natives were killed.” No names, just unknown “sparring partners.”

(Mogapi, Drum magazine, September 1955 17)

The significance of a black boxer beating his white opponent has obvious political implications in apartheid South Africa, as does the very fact that white boxers were making use of their black counterparts as sparring partners. Yet what is interesting here is the way in which the article situates the "secret" photography as a politically subversive activity. It also, very significantly, draws together the discourses of the popular and the political: the popular narrative of the photographer-as-detective; boxing as a popular, and politicised, sport; apartheid conspiracy and Drum's political detection are all intertwined in a remarkable fashion.

The article ends of a note of proclamation: "Meanwhile, don't let's keep it a secret that our non-white fighters spar with the leading whites. Let's bawl it out aloud to the whole world" (Drum magazine, September 1955 17). The article is credited to Sy Mogapi, who also wrote sports articles for the weekly newspaper, Golden City Post. The biographical information, given at the end of the article, is once again, imbued with an Americanised language more reminiscent of detective fiction, than serious journalism: "Tough fearless and straight-from-the-shoulder boxing critic Sy 'Kittybow Mogapi' who writes this article, has seen many sparring sessions between white and non-white boxers" (Drum magazine, September 1955 17).
This demonstrates the extent to which the language of popular American culture permeated Drum and how Drum often made use of this frame for its own purposes. What I want to claim is that these popular forms and languages were engaged, not merely because there were available, but rather, because they provided vehicles suitable for Drum’s subversive content. To reject the popular content of Drum -- in addition to the specious nature of the distinction between the popular and the serious -- would be to deny the crucial role Drum played in appropriating American models as vehicles for a new black modernity, and political critique, in South Africa.
I Against the Law: Black Detective O. Chester Morena

Three serialised stories were published in Drum during 1953: “Crime for Sale” from January to March; “Hot Diamonds” from April to July and “You can’t Buy Me!” from August to December. Each monthly story was usually between 1500 and 2000 words. They are clearly written in the American hard-boiled detective style. The pace is fast, the tone ironic, the plots intricate and there is an obvious “cinema noir” influence on the writing. This is remarkable, to say the least, since there was no black writing set in an urban context prior to 1951 and the emergence of Drum magazine. The main protagonist is a black private detective in Johannesburg, named O. Chester Morena. The character develops quite distinctly over the three series. He is introduced to the readers in the first story:

Yes ladies and gentlemen. This is me. O. Chester Morena, private detective and what not. These uneducated crooks call me “Chief”. Anyway, that’s what my last name means. Me, I’m smart. I know all the angles. I’ve been plenty places. They kicked me out of university during my second year, and my father kicked me out of the family. I became a gangster, a pick-pocket, robber and all round crook. But I played it scientifically. Still, after a few years I decided the old saying “crime doesn’t pay” was correct. I joined the police force in Pretoria – where I wasn’t known.

After a few years excellent service I sent in my resignation. After I’d convinced the Inspector I meant it, and told him my plans, he pulled a few strings to get me a private detective licence – and one for a gun. Of course you all know such creatures don’t exist in Johannesburg. Well I don’t exist either – except on paper. (Maimane, 1989: 24, emphasis mine)

The name “Morena” (glossed above as “chief”) is particularly interesting since it recurs in South Africa thirty years later in the play Woza Albert, where Morena

---

4 Arthur Maimane’s serialised stories of The Chief were also published in Drum’s sister newspaper Golden City Post during its first year of publication, 1955.
is the name used for Jesus Christ, who returns to 1980s apartheid South Africa. While the Morena figure in Woza Albert is used to undermine the idea that apartheid was founded on Christian principles, as claimed by the Nationalist Government, I want to suggest that, 30 years earlier, Morena the detective is a similarly subversive figure in 1950s South Africa.

After he has introduced himself, Morena informs his readers, not merely that he doesn’t actually exist, but also that he knows they know he doesn’t really exist: “Of course you all know such creatures don’t exist in Johannesburg. Well I don’t exist either – except on paper” (Maine, 1989: 25). While noting the sophisticated use of textual self-reflexiveness here — the text announces itself as fiction, a technique associated with self-consciously post-modern texts — one might examine why he would be saying this. What is so remarkable about a black private detective in 1950s South Africa? I want to begin answering from a more general point of view and then lead more specifically into the South Africa context. The very concept of a black detective, during the 1950s is an unusual one, and not merely in South Africa. Despite the fact that the detective genre flourished during the 1940s and 1950s there were very few black writers writing detective fiction during this period. The African American writer Chester Himes, who lived and wrote from France, whose first detective stories were published in 1957, created what was probably the first real pair of black police detectives: Ed Coffin and Gravedigger Jones.

In his historical survey of black characters in detective fiction Frankie Y. Bailey points to the three reasons that explain, historically, why there were so few fictional black detectives. The traditional model for the detective hero has been a white male and even "when women were admitted to the ranks of fictional
detectives, it remained an enterprise open to whites only" (1991: xi). The reason for this, Bailey speculates, is that "black males who were acceptable to whites did not possess (or at least display overtly) such masculine qualities as courage and resourcefulness" (xi). Bailey's second point has particular relevance in South Africa: "blacks ... unacceptable because the detective hero or heroine must be able to probe into the lives of the people involved in the criminal event" (xii). Thus "for an author to suggest that a black might be allowed to engage in this type of activity in a white community in which psychological and physical boundaries restricted black movement was ludicrous" (xii). The third factor is one that made blacks "more suitable as villains than as detective heroes" (xii).

Historically, in the eyes of whites, says Bailey, blacks were savages: "Captured and brought into Great Britain and the United States from the 'jungles' of Africa, they were primitive people of uncertain temper, swayed by their fears and passions". It is because of this perception that "blacks were more likely to disrupt the order of a civilized community than to restore it", an indispensable characteristic for the detective (xii).

The latter point, of the black villain as a "savage" is nowhere better illustrated than in the following two extracts from detective fiction published during the 40s and 50s. The first quote is from Chester Himes' 1959 novel set in Harlem: The Real Cool Killers. Himes uses two descriptions of an African American perpetrator, given by the African American and white policeman respectively, to illustrate the racism at work:

"What's your prisoner look like?"
"Black man, about five eleven, twenty five to thirty years, one seventy to one eighty pounds, narrow face, sloping down chin, wearing light grey hat, dark grey hickory-striped suit, white tab collar, red striped tie, beige chukker boots. He's handcuffed." (1959: 22)
That is the response of Grave Digger, the African American policeman.

The text continues with the white sergeant asking:

> Which one did he kill? The White man, Grave Digger said.  
> ... Rope off this whole goddamned area, the sergeant said. Don’t let anybody out. We want a Harlem dressed Zulu. Killed a white man.  
> (1959: 22)

Thus Grave Digger’s scientific police description changes into “a Harlem dressed Zulu” in the mouth of the white police man. The hat, suit, white tab collar, red striped tie, boots” are stripped away by the white policeman to reveal the idea that any Black man who kills a white man, is just a savage from Africa, a Zulu. The civilized exterior is just a veneer for a savage African underneath: a Harlem dressed Zulu.

That the discourse of social Darwinism, on which this model of evolutionary progression and regression relies, is at work in the detective narrative is nowhere clearer than in Raymond Chandler’s classic *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), which is also set partially in Harlem. The following is a description of an Indian man:

> He had a big flat face and a high-bridged fleshy nose that looked as hard as the prow of a cruiser. He had lidless eyes, drooping jowls, the shoulders of a blacksmith and the short and apparently awkward legs of a chimpanzee ... His smell was the earthy smell of primitive man, and not the slimy dirt of the cities. (2000: 262)

Thus, in hard-boiled detective fiction the characteristics of nineteenth century Social Darwinism recur in the guise of the urban black ghetto. The idea of the Dark Continent, replete with racist signifiers, is unconsciously invoked through the twentieth-century myth of the urban ghetto, which is archetypically black.
As Sally Munt points out, just as nineteenth-century explorers depended on Social Darwinism to justify their superiority and, thus, intervention, so the twentieth century casts those on the streets as lowlife on the social hierarchy (1994: 93). So what then, one might ask, is Maimane doing with this tradition in the shape of O. Chester Morena, the Chief, who cruises South Africa’s black ghettos?

Before answering this question one has to look at the social context of apartheid in 1950s South Africa and answer the question about why it is that Chester Morena doesn’t — and, in fact, can’t — exist in Johannesburg. Having suggested some of the general difficulties facing black creators of detective fiction, I want to turn more specifically to South Africa. As I have detailed in chapter one, precisely the same discourse of social evolution — drawn on in Chandler’s text, and underscored in Himes’ text — was being appropriated by the Nationalist Government in South Africa in support of its policy of apartheid, which was being laid out during the 1950s. In order to curb the rapid expansion of black urbanisation during the 1950s, and thus preclude the development of a united black urban population — since such a group could pose a serious political threat to the apartheid government — black South Africans were being culturally, and legally, constructed as essentially rural people, having a tribal identity and base: people too “primitive” to adapt to the urban city and western life.

In 1950 Hendrik Verwoerd, the chief architect of apartheid, was appointed Minister of Native Affairs. The Group Areas act of 1950 had extended laws on racial segregation of residential areas and pass laws. This act provided for residential segregation in cities and regulated that black people had to carry special papers to be allowed to stay in the cities. This was reinforced and
extended by the 1952 Native Laws Amendment Act, which restricted and controlled the movement of blacks into the city even further. Without permission to work stamped into their "passes", black men were not allowed to remain in the city for more than seventy-two hours. Black South Africans were thus effectively legislated out of the city. Thus Arthur Maimane's O. Chester Morena, the hard-boiled, urbane and urban, street-wise, independent, self-employed agent is a model that was not merely in total defiance of apartheid policy, it was legally impossible in 1950s South Africa: a fiction.

It is interesting to note that Maimane's stories replaced the serialised novels in *Drum* magazine. The first of these was, as discussed in chapter one, Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country*. I have discussed how, in keeping with the contents of the early *African Drum* magazine, Paton's black protagonists belong in the rural. The city is a place of disorientation and bewilderment, destruction and chaos that results in the disintegration of morality and selfhood. A black urban subjectivity does not seem possible in Paton's text. Yet it is crucial to add here that Paton's novel also, unfortunately, reproduces the classic stereotypes of conventional detective fiction: the black villain and the white victim. The race that ensues, between the white police and black "detective" priests, to trace the perpetrator is one in which the police succeed and the black priests, Kumalo particularly, lack precisely the presence of mind and ability to read the signs required by the black detective. It is thus once again understandable that to the first generation of *Drum* writers Paton offered only a negative model: "it was the book they wrote against" (Nixon, 1994: 26).
Yet it was this very lack of history, and predecessors, that gave rise to an invigorating sense of invention described by the first Drum photographer, Jurgen Schadeberg:

Influenced by Humphrey Bogart, wide brimmed hats and fast-talk, Satchmo’s jazz and Peter Cheney’s raciness, reactivity and inventiveness flourished. Everything was a novelty, everything was new. The models were the first ever models, the covergirls the first ever covergirls, and the modern city musicians and writers were also the first ever. There was no limit, there were no restrictions; they set their own pace, initiated their own rhythms and style. Blacks, rejected socially by the whites of South Africa, looked up to the Black American as their model. (1994: 16)

It was thus in the midst of this context that we find The Chief, South Africa’s first black private eye. I want to examine how Maimane adopted the American hard-boiled genre, how he translated this into a South African context and question – in the vein of work pioneered by Newell, Wagnleitner and May – whether this was a mere adoption of the American form, or a far more sophisticated translation, which offered possibilities for asserting an urban black identity and thus, subversion.

As already mentioned Morena’s primary detective method in the stories is surveillance by means of a secret camera, at the time that Drum magazine was producing pictures taken in ingenious ways. The very idea of black people being able to undertake any form of surveillance in 1950s South African is a remarkable one. They were the objects under surveillance, not the agents of surveillance. Apartheid legislation during the 1950s began to circumscribe every area of black life from location and movement, through to marriage and sexual relations. So the very notion of a black detective is an extraordinary one, since the 1950s hard-boiled detective is essentially the unseen seer. Morena is no exception:
I then went shopping. I bought the smallest cine camera in town. And one of the biggest books. Photography has always been my hobby, you know. But now it was going to be my business. I cut out the middle 100 pages of the book so my camera could fit snugly in. The lens peeping through a small hole was flush with the back cover of the book. And the 2-foot release cable snaked out of the book and hung from my buttonhole. (Maimane, 1989: 25)

With this camera The Chief films criminal activities and tries to sell the film to the victims, so that they can recover their goods. The first episode he films is a white woman being robbed by black pickpockets. Yet when The Chief takes the film to her, Maimane allows the realities of apartheid South Africa to intrude.

Rather than displaying gratitude, the first question the woman asks him is: “how did you know where I lived?” To which he answers: “Ah Madam, I said looking very knowing – which I am anyway – it shows that I am a good detective, doesn’t it?” Unimpressed “she muttered a good bye and left me on the stoep” (Maimane, 1989: 26). Thus the Chief is left with no option but to sell his detection, his films, back to the crooks themselves. He does so, ironically, by threatening to hand over the films to the police as evidence if they don’t pay up. Here is the first example of the way in which race and apartheid gives rise to an adjustment to the traditional detective genre. I will return to a discussion of this point, since this problematic negotiation recurs in the Black detective comic strip published in Drum a few years after the Chester Morena stories.

One of the conventions of detective fiction is that it only exceptionally raises questions concerning the code; the law itself is accepted as given. Thus in detective fiction the law itself is never on trial (Porter, 1981: 122). This obviously presented a problem in 1950s apartheid South African where merely to be black was to be criminalized. There was, in Rob Nixon’s words, a "virtual foreclosure of the law-abiding life" for urban black South Africans (Nixon, 1994:
31). Thus the tension between the traditional genre, which Maimane inherited from America, and the realities of the South African situation, gives rise to these fascinating moments in the text, where race disrupts genre.

The Chief operates on the boundary, in the twilight zone, between the criminals and the law. He describes filming events and then running to get away before the cops arrive. He becomes the middle-man between the cops and the crooks and there is an emphasis on getting away from both, without being seen.

As my coupe jerked forward with headlights on, the sqad car screeched around the corner with blinding lights. I braked hard as it screamed to a stop, blocking my way. I excitedly jumped out and ran towards their waiting guns, shouting, “They’ve gone that way – three vans!” (Drum magazine, February 1953: 35)

The “cinema noir” influence on the writing here is unmistakable. Yet the South African reality continually interrupts the American frame:

“Who the hell are you dammit!” the car commandant cursed my frightened self. “You look like one of them to me!” “Oh no sir!” I shouted, fumbling in my pockets, “I’m a private detective, and I was doing my rounds when I stumbled on them here – here’s papers!”

After examining them and he muttered something about frightened fools, threw them at me, and jumped into the already moving car. Whew! I thought as I drove off, that had been a close call. I’d put on a good act. I vowed to never again have to show a policeman my credentials under such conditions. (Drum magazine, February 1953: 35)

Reading the last statement by Morena out of the context of the rest of the paragraph, one could be forgiven for assuming the "papers" he is showing the policeman are his "pass" papers. The only "papers" that would be shown to a policeman in South Africa would be precisely those that made the idea of the black detective impossible: the "pass” papers. Vowing to never again having to show his credentials to a policeman under such conditions thus reads like a direct
reference to apartheid. Yet Maimane's solution to the problem is another American image:

> It was then I decided to buy this Buick and have it souped up. … With the thousand quid I bought the Buick and had it hot-rod
dded. From then on when the Squad arrived, I ran with the boys. The Squad shot at me and so did the boys — they got to know whose the extra car was. I passed them so fast at one-thirty their eyes only got to focus on me when I was some blocks away — so they never got to see my car clearly. (Drum magazine, February 1953: 35)

The emphasis on being invisible is not unusual for the private eye, but here it is extended to being invisible to both the crooks and the police, since as a black detective in South Africa Morena can never be on either side. The one side is precluded by genre, the other by law. This scenario complicates Porter's idea that the limited number of roles within detective fiction "may be distributed among characters whose attributes are no more inherent in those roles than are … the black and white colour in the power of the pieces in a game of chess" (1981: 127). It is precisely the inherent attribute of race that here precludes the very possibility of a clear-cut side for Chester Morena.

The third series -- with the seemingly ironic title "You Can't Buy Me!" -- has the most intricate and sophisticated plot, where The Chief advances to investigating a murder. The story opens with a young "coloured" woman, Sheila, asking The Chief to investigate her husband who is having an affair, since she wants grounds to divorce him. It begins with a typical hard-boiled, noir opening: detective in back office, alluringly attractive woman seeks his assistance. The husband's employer, an Indian man named Keshavej, then tries to buy him off the case by offering double what Sheila as offered to pay him.

There is an interesting racial confrontation when The Chief goes to Keshavej's
office. He is addressed in typically racist terms by the Indian receptionist, who calls him "boy", the commonly used term for a black "African" man in apartheid South Africa. This is an interesting confrontation since Maimane's text critiques not merely white-on-black racism, but the way in which apartheid was constructing a more complex racism through its policy of "divide and rule".

Here it is Indian-on-"African" racism:

"Yes boy, what can I do for you?" she says in a not very unfriendly way. But she gets my goat.
"Look, Mary," I tell her. "I was playing marbles with your daddy long before you were even an idea. So don't give me that "boy" stuff. What you can do for me is tell your boss I want to see him." And I give her my card.
She'd been all ready to curse me, but when she sees my name she changes colours too fast for me and flounces in to the inner office. It looks like she's been warned about my being an important "client" - and I mean important! (Drum magazine September 1953: 24)

It seems to me that the person "changing colour" here is not so much the receptionist, but Morena himself who is suddenly treated with respect when it is revealed that he is a private eye. When Sheila is murdered, and the murder is made to look like a burglary, The Chief sets out to find Sheila's killer since the police will take no notice of it because she's "Coloured": "The burglary-dressing, I reckon, is a red herring to keep the cops away, who are never too interested in the murder of a non-European, anyway" (Drum magazine October 1953: 33).

Thus The Chief sets out, not merely to solve a murder, but also to rectify what's wrong with the racist system in South Africa. It is interesting to notice that Colonel Makena in Mokae's 1996 novel has similar motivations for becoming a detective: the abduction and subsequent disappearance of his twin brother, Lentswe, and police inefficiency in the investigation. He begins by stating that when he joined the police force, during apartheid South Africa "black
policemen did not have to have brains", suggesting the reason why his brother's case remained unsolved:

"At the time the police made what seemed to my young mind fundamental errors in investigating the case ... That's when I made up my mind to join the force on completion of my matric -- despite strong objections from my family who felt the police force was not for someone with my brains." (1996: 24-25)

... "Believe me, I'll never again have the feeling of joy I had when I cracked the case over three decades later["]. (1996: 25)

The Chief's motivation, like Makena's, is a crucially important revision of conventional detective fiction. In conventional detective fiction, published during the 1940s and 1950s, the murders of black people are rarely investigated. The text of Chandler's Farewell, My Lovely (1940) is strewn with black bodies, yet the investigation only begins once there is a white corpse: the black bodies are quite literally, just props in the story. At one point Philip Marlowe, the novel's hero, asks the policeman about the inquest into the death of an African American: "'When is the inquest on the nigger coming up?'". The policeman responds with "'Why bother?' Nulty sneered, and hung up" (2000: 224). At another point in the novel Marlowe says, somewhat ironically, to the policeman, Nulty: "'Well, all he did was kill a Negro,' I said. 'I guess that's only a misdemeanour.'" (2000: 246). Thus The Chief's investigation of the murder of a black victim, especially in apartheid South Africa, becomes a political statement.

I want to conclude the discussion of Maimane's text with a final moment from "You Can't Buy Me!" where Morena goes to buy equipment and constructs a sophisticated recording device, concealed as a radio, which he uses to record Keshavej's confession, unbeknown to him. This is another example of Morena's sophisticated use of technology.
“I buy myself a portable radio for 20 quid. The salesman is so surprised at seeing so much money on me I have to tell him I'm sent by my boss or he would have called for the cops. I've made a list of the other gadgets I want, so he believes that I really am sent. I pay close on 50 quid for all the stuff.” (Drum magazine December 1953: 28)

By juxtaposing the image that the white salesman had of “Africans” with the sophisticated character of O. Chester Morena, Maimane once again uses the detective form to produce a critique of apartheid. Arthur Maimane’s O. Chester Morena is a seminal figure, not merely in South Africa but the in the world of detective writing by black writers. These stories have the potential to add to the understanding of the relationship between detective fiction, race and ideology. Maimane’s work contributes to an understanding of the way in which popular American forms and images were appropriated, translated and subverted in 1950s South Africa in order to create black urban-based writing and identity; an identity that was a direct defiance of apartheid.
II Don Powers and Goombi: from African-American to African comics

The episode ... reminded me of how I had started writing. I grew up in a household of novels and comic strips and Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald. It was a cosmopolitan Mayville, in Durban, in the 1950s, where all of us were oblivious to the gargantuan appetite of the Group Areas Act. Here, I shared my comics with the Parboo brothers next door, Manilal and Premlal....

What was important about that time was that Mayville gave us the scope to dream. I started drawing, mainly stick figures that finally got fleshed out when I took drawing lessons from Mr. Parboo himself ... I was doing whole complete comic strips, my inspiration being Big Ben Bolt, Rip Kirby and the Heart of Juliet Jones, and told visual stories about the township as I saw it.

... But what to do with all this stuff in pen and ink? I was advised to try and peddle my wares at ... the offices of [the newspaper] Ilanga Lase Natal. ... Surely they would understand the need to use a different medium to tell a story that had been waiting to be told, about the loves and lives of black people?

Mandla Langa (2001: 2-3)

In May 1952 Drum introduced its first American comic strip produced in the American comic-book style. This comic strip was called "Don Powers" and it was to prove immensely popular in Drum, its publication continuing for over five years, until August 1957. Its popularity, and political significance, is clearly indicated by the fact that at the climax of one of the serialised stories, a frame from Don Powers appears on the front cover of Drum with the headline: "KARG -- CLIMAX!" (Drum magazine, February 1955: front cover). Karg was Don Powers' opponent at that point in the comic strip narrative and, as the headline indicates, the confrontation between the two reached its climax in that issue of the magazine. The political significance of this is thrown into relief by the story that occupies the other heading on the front cover, below the Don Powers headline: "HOW I MET REGINA BROOKS By Sergeant Kumalo" (Drum magazine, February 1955: front cover). The main part of the front cover is
occupied by a photograph, taken by Jurgen Schadeberg, entitled "dancing at the Ritz". The left-hand side of the page has two boxes with text and image, advertising the features in that month's Drum: an image of "Karg" on the top left and the headline of the Regina Brooks story below. Regina Brooks was a white woman, who had grown up on a farm in the politically conservative, Afrikaans-speaking area of the Orange Free State. In the previous issue of the magazine, January 1955, Drum had published Regina Brooks' life story. She claimed that as a child she spent more time with the black farm worker's children than other white children, and had learnt to speak Sesotho and Zulu more fluently than English. Brooks had subsequently taken up life as a black South African and was, at that time, living with a black policeman, Richard Kumalo, in a black township. Brooks and Kumalo had been charged under the immorality act and been sentenced to four month's hard labour. Accompanying this story in Drum was a photograph of the crowd outside the court where the two had appeared under the Immorality Act with a hat being passed around for contributions to their bail, set at £25 (Drum magazine, January 1955: 20-21). Claiming to have "gone native", Brooks took her struggle all the way to the Supreme Court and was eventually reclassified black, so that she could live with Kumalo and their daughter. Her story was prominently featured in Drum magazine since her chosen lifestyle was in open defiance of apartheid. She became a "folk hero" (Nicol, 1995: 197).

Yet, the following month, the Don Powers comic strip is given equal space on the front cover of Drum with the continuing Regina Brooks and Richard Kumalo story. While critics of Drum's use of American genres would no doubt read this as yet another example of privileging of escapism over more overtly
political issues, I intend to argue that the Don Powers comic strip is given the headline because this particular episode -- the climax of the context between Don Powers and an adversary named "Karg" -- is fulfilling a political purpose that was perhaps even more significant than the story of Brooks and Kumalo.

The main character, after which the comic takes its name, is Don Powers, an African-American boxer. Powers is a boxing hero who fights for various good causes, such as raising money to build a hospital in a poor black area. By the time the strip vanished from Drum, in 1957, Powers was involved in the Cold War, saving America from international humiliation in a fight against his Chinese opponent, Chong (Drum August 1957:35). Although neither the creator of this strip, nor its source, is given a credit in Drum magazine, my research in the history of African-American comics has revealed that Don Powers was created by Samuel Milai and was originally published in the Pittsburgh Courier, from the mid-1940s onwards (Jackson, Cartoon Gallery 1, 1998: 6). Founded in 1910 by lawyer Robert L Vann, the Pittsburgh Courier emerged as one of America's leading black newspapers during the 1930s and 1940s. Mike Nicol has documented that Henry Nxumalo, Mister Drum, worked as a foreign correspondent for this African-America newspaper, which suggests that Nxumalo must have had access to copies of the Courier. Yet despite this, there has never been any attempted comparison between the Pittsburgh Courier and Drum magazine. When reading copies of the Courier from 1955, the year that Drum has the Don Powers frame on the front cover, I was astonished to come across a request for pen pals, from a South African reader, published in the Courier. An article entitled "Wants News about Race in America" introduces Courier readers to Theophilus Musi, from Newclare, Johannesburg, along with a
picture of Musi and his address. Musi expresses his wish to learn about America and "the truth about people of [his] color in America" since, he claims, the only news he hears is "through the unreliable publications of [his] oppressors (Pittsburgh Courier 25 June 1955: 2). It is an extraordinary revelation that black South Africans during the 1950s were obtaining and reading copies of this influential African-American paper. The article informs readers that Musi "learned of the Courier through a mutual friend" (Pittsburgh Courier 25 June 1955: 2). This fact, in addition to Nxumalo's connection, makes a study of the Pittsburgh Courier -- its relationship to Drum and its influence in South Africa -- all the more relevant.

Although there were already two other comic strips, also originally from the Pittsburgh Courier, published in Drum during 1952, the significance of Don Powers should not be underestimated, since Don Powers was, in all probability, the first black comic super-hero Drum readers had ever come across and the first black super-hero to appear in South African media. Black super-heroes were also uncommon in American popular culture at that time. In a survey of comic books in America, between 1945 and 1954, William Savage claims that an examination of comic books during this period might lead one to the conclusion there were "hardly any black people in America" (1990: 75). Black characters featured in American comic books as either absence or stereotype. The few who were represented in comic books "were perfectly content with bowing and scraping to the white folks who employed them as menials" (Savage, 1990: 75). These figures were represented in stereotypical fashion with "rolling eyeballs, exaggerated speech, and the white-rimmed mouth reminiscent of minstrel show performers" and their only purpose was comic relief. Apart from these
stereotypes, concludes Savage, "there seemed to be no blacks in comic-book America: no black heroes, super or otherwise; no black citizens living in Gotham or Metropolis; no blacks out west, no blacks anywhere in the United States" (1990: 76). Savage registers surprise that while other major historical events were being incorporated into, and appropriated by, comic culture, the civil rights movement of the early 1950s didn't feature in comic books, nor did it impact on the representation of race in the comic books of the period. If one were to judge by the comic book representations of the early 1950s "there was no civil rights movement, nascent or otherwise" (Savage, 1990: 75).

During the early 1950s, Jack Schiff, the liberal editor-in-chief of the comic giant Dollar Comics, known as DC, that gave the world Superman and Batman during the late 1930s, introduced educational features to point out "the need to improve society through liberal solutions" (Wright, 2001: 64). Thus in 1951 in a single page, entitled "Know your Country", a character called Superboy urges readers to "respect people of different races and ethnic backgrounds because 'no single land, race or nationality can claim this country as its own!'" (2001: 64). In 1952 DC used a story in Superman to expose racial prejudice and warn readers "not to judge anyone on the basis of their colour or beliefs" (2001: 65). Yet, as Bradford Wright points out, "as well-meaning as these educational features were, DC failed to heed the spirit of its own message by including nonwhites [sic] in its comic books stories":

Superman may have spoken eloquently about the problem of racial prejudice in one-page features, but he remained conspicuously silent on the issue of his own comic books. There were no African-Americans anywhere in Metropolis or Gotham City -- not as heroes, villains, or even passers-by. (2001: 65)
As the leading and most respected comic book publisher, DC was in a unique position to advance progressive educational messages, and it did in fact do so often more than most of its competition. The limit of this liberal vision, however, is betrayed by the fact that it failed "to integrate racial minorities into its comics" (2001: 65).

It is significant to recall here that DC changed the course of American, and indeed global, popular culture through its launch of the first comic book title devoted to a single character: the comic hero, Superman, in 1939 (2001: 9). This was followed closely by Batman, launched as a single title in 1940 (Brooker, 2000: 34). This set the trend for the future of comic books in America. Yet it was not until over thirty years later, in 1972, that the first comic book devoted to an African-American hero appeared: Luke Cage, published by Marvel Comics in 1972 (Wright, 2001: 249). Luke Cage was inspired by the success of the early seventies "blaxploitation" film genre, Shaft (1971) and Super Fly (1972), yet enjoyed only marginal commercial success and failed to attract the sizeable audience enjoyed by his white superhero peers (Wright, 2001: 247-249). Marvel writer and editor, Roy Thomas, believes that the problem lay with the market. According to Thomas, "you could get blacks to buy comics about whites, but it was hard to get whites to buy comics in which the main character was black" (Wright, 2001: 250). Yet Tony Isabella, one of the few black artists working in the field at the time, has a different perspective. The problem, according to Isabella, was that the black comic heroes of the 70s were still being created mainly by whites and "even open-minded whites found it difficult to portray minority characters in a way that was not offensive or patronising" (2001: 249). While Marvel Comics employed African-American artist, Billy Graham, to assist
with the covers of *Luke Cage*, and occasionally the strips, the series remained in the hands of its white creators at Marvel (2001: 247).

Yet while there were no comic books being produced solely by African-American artists during this period, the medium did take root in African-American newspapers of the period, suggesting that it was lack of opportunity rather than lack of talent, or enthusiasm, that kept black artists out of the comic book industry. The history of the representation of African-Americans, or their absence, in comic books in America, makes the examination of comic strips being created by African-American artists in African-American newspapers during the 1940s and 1950s a particularly urgent task. These strips offer invaluable insight into how African-American artists were using the comic medium to represent questions of race and identity. That these comic strips provided a medium for political commentary is nowhere more apparent than in a strip published in the *Courier* during 1951, called "Jive Gray", in which an African American hero goes to save black South Africans from their white oppressors. Jive Gray was the work of Ollie Harrington, creator of the *Courier*’s brilliant political cartoon feature "Dark Laughter". Harrington later left America to settle in East Berlin.

If black superheroes were unusual during the rise of the post-war civil rights movement in America of 1950s, they were positively unheard of in South Africa. Yet in the relocation of comics from the pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier* to *Drum* and 1950s South Africa, some very pressing questions about racial identity and modernity are thrown into relief. When Don Powers commenced in *Drum* in May 1952, there were two other comic strips being published simultaneously and a brief comparison will serve to highlight the difference
between Don Powers, whose genesis lay in the post-war 1940s, and his predecessors. The two strips being published alongside Powers were "Sunny Boy Sam" and "Woody Woodenhead". The names already contain clues to the stereotypes involved in these comic strips. These strips were both published in black and white -- while Powers was in colour -- and neither bore any resemblance to comic book heroes. They were generally between 3 and 5 frames and the narrative, such as it was, was concluded within the few frames and did not carry over to the next issue of the magazine, as Don Powers did. "Sunny Boy Sam" has been described as a "daily life sort of gag strip that ends with a gag line and could run in any order and nobody'd really notice" (Jackson, Cartoon Gallery 2, 1998: 3).

Sunny Boy Sam was created by Pittsburgh Courier political cartoonist, Wilburt Holloway. During the mid-1920s Robert L. Vann, editor of Pittsburgh Courier, employed several new writers, and introduced new features, in an effort to increase the circulation of the magazine. Among these was Holloway, who produced incisive political cartoons for the Courier's editorial page. Prior to this most of the political cartoons had been borrowed from the white dailies, since there was no source of political cartoons drawn by African-Americans (Buni, 1974: 140). Holloway's political cartoons enjoyed immense success and, accompanied by Vann's editorial, were influential in swaying the black vote from Republican to Democrat in Pittsburgh during the 1930s (195-197). During the late 1920s Holloway introduced "Sunny Boy Sam" to the Courier. Yet despite his politically incisive cartoons, his comic-strip characters initially "reflected a prevailing derogatory image of African Americans ... derived from 'black face' Minstrel shows performed by White men in make up preforming [sic] gross
parodies of Black life" (Jackson, Cartoon Gallery 2, 1998: 2). The characters initially spoke a primitive Ebonics accent never used by actual Black Americans. Yet the strip quickly evolved and by 1931 "Holloway dropped the dialect language, however the exaggerated lips and bucking eyes remained" (Jackson, Cartoon Gallery 2, 1998: 2). By the time they appear in Drum, in 1952, the comic characters have escaped much of their derogatory appearance and language. They are clearly, however, not comic heroes.

The character in the other strip "Woody Woodenhead", also drawn from the pages of the Pittsburgh Courier, contains a "Southern Black Pinocchio with all the denseness of wits associated with his Italian counterpart" whose "rather innocent replies to people's questions are mistaken ... resulting in his being rebuffed" (Jackson, Cartoon Gallery 2, 1998: 3). In the last frame, he is always left rather perplexed, often with the little stars circling his head, asking "Now what'd I say?". These two strips clearly have their roots prior to the emergence of the comic-book style hero pioneered by DC in the late 1930s, which is why Don Powers, with all the attributes of the comic-book style hero, could not but have come as revelation to black readers in America and even more so in South Africa.

Powers is introduced to Drum readers, with a story in which he is attempting to win a fight in order to donate his winnings to build a hospital in a black slum area. As the serial progresses in Drum, he fights a variety of opponents: first a “Yugoslavian Hercules”, then an “ape-man” known as Karg, featured on the cover of Drum in February 1955. The fight with Karg is billed as the battle between “modern man” and “pre-historic brute savagery”. It is significant that here it is Powers, the African-American, who represents “modern
man" while the pre-historic ape-man, Karg, is drawn as a white character. There is thus an interesting revision of American history being written into Don Powers here, since it was African-Americans who, especially during the period of slavery in America, had been characterised as being without writing, and thus civilisation or history, and thus part of pre-history. In an inversion of this, the representation of Karg brings to mind nothing less than the Africa described by Hegel. Africa, for Hegel, summarised by Henry Louis Gates "is no historical part of the word, it has no movement or development to exhibit". Thus what we "properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature" (Gates, 1987: 20).

It is unfortunate that it is this idea of Africa that had also taken hold in mainstream comic books published in America. While there were no blacks represented in comic books within the borders of America, there were "blacks aplenty in Africa" (Savage, 1990: 76). Since the success of Tarzan in the late 1930s, comics had increasingly drawn on Africa as a location for its white heroes, as a place where their superiority could be contrasted against the inferior indigenous people and their culture. Like Tarzan, the other rules of the "jungle" were always white and, according to Savage, virtually every chronicling of the adventures of a white ruler of the jungle demonstrated several things about black Africans:

Left to their own devices, they inevitably got into trouble by selecting a rotten chief or falling for the false pronouncements of some false god fobbed off on them by a devious shaman. Whenever such things happened the Africans proved congenitally unable to rectify the situation, coming to depend instead in the good offices of a bikini-clad white hero or heroine who was always bigger, smarter, stronger, and possessed of greater stamina and ability than any native and all wildlife. Africans in the jungle comics were superstitious, gullible, morally weak, and attempting to function with seriously diminished physical and moral capabilities. (Savage, 1990: 76)
As children socio-culturally speaking, Africans could not help themselves (Savage, 1990: 77). In terms of their visual representation they appeared "either as brute savages or minstrel-show stereotypes with the huge eyes and white rimmed lips" and their speech was an "imbecilic hybrid of pidgin English and exaggerated African American slang" (Wright, 2001: 37). In Don Powers, it is Karg who is drawn as such a brute savage, speaking in primitive monosyllables, expressing basic desires of brute force. There is thus an important revision of the racist American comic-book formula written into the Don Powers comic, where it is the black hero, Don Powers, who represents modernity and civilisation and the white figure of Karg who represents the uncivilised, prehistoric brute. The commentary on, and revision of, racist practices in the Don Powers comic -- in its use of the opposition between Karg and the black hero Don Powers -- is made abundantly clear in an episode published in Drum in December 1953. In an attempt to ascertain exactly what Karg is, scientists examine him, take extensive measurements of his head, and his chest and conclude that he is indeed "Pre-historic Man" and that "[h]is simple mind knows only two things -- To Live and to Kill" (December 1953: 27). In a climax, hailed as a victory for civilisation and modernity, Don Powers wins the fight against Karg.

This racial revision being enacted in the Don Powers comic strip was part of a much wider attempt in the Pittsburgh Courier to reconfigure African-American identity; its history and place in American society. The idea that African-Americans had no established history, prior to slavery and their introduction into Western culture and history was being repudiated in various ways, and levels, in the Pittsburgh Courier. One of the writers at the forefront of the attempt to establish a history and historical tradition for African-Americans
was journalist and writer J. A. Rogers. Rogers wrote a weekly column in the Courier entitled "Your History". The subtitle of this column informed readers that their history "dates back beyond the Cotton Fields in the South [and] Back Thousands of years before Christ". As the subtitle suggests, Rogers attempts, in this column, to establish a tradition and trajectory of African-American history that rivals, and surpasses, the official Western "white" historical canon. Significantly, this column was illustrated, in the 1950s, by Samuel Milai, the creator of the Don Powers comic strip. There is thus a direct link between the Courier's attempt at a historical revision and the creator of Don Powers, which suggests that Don Powers might be read as one manifestation of a greater political agenda within the pages of the Courier.

Rogers wrote several books about African-American history, most of which he published himself. These were sold by mail order, and advertised in the Pittsburgh Courier. Some of his books were also serialised in the Courier. The "Your History" columns - written by Rogers and illustrated by Milai -- were published in book form by J. A. Rogers, entitled Facts about Negro History. This book, along with his other titles -- such as World's Great Men of Color 3000 B.C. to 1946 A.D. and 100 Amazing Facts about the Negro with Complete Proof -- attempt to redress common assumptions about African-American identity and history.

In addition to Rogers' "Your History" column, the issue of African-American history was being championed all over the Courier. In his weekly news column "Rogers Says", Rogers also addressed the question of the representation of African-American history in a more direct fashion. In a column subtitled "Many Doubt Negro History" in February 1955, for example, Rogers
states that the "belief that the Negro had no history until he was dragged into slavery in America is so firmly established that when you assert the contrary you're ridiculed" (Pittsburgh Courier 12 February 1955: 6). In the following month, a different column continued this discussion. The Courier Magazine section published a regular column called "Treasure Trove" by Ric Roberts and in March 1955, Roberts' addressed the question of African-American history. Indicating the vital importance of African-American history to the community, and paying tribute to Rogers and Milai, he wrote a column subtitled "Our Historians Lifted all of Us". He begins by citing how, in 1915, "our Charles Victor Roman, declared 'The Negro never made history, because if anybody made any history he was not a Negro' " (Courier Magazine 12 March: 2). In history written by white historians at the time, claims Roberts, "we of the minority are a joke" (Courier Magazine 12 March: 2). "This was the hour", claims Roberts, "when the chronicling genius of Joel L. [sic] Rogers began repudiating the racial nonsense of the nineteenth century" (Courier Magazine 12 March: 2). Samuel Milai's illustrations are credited as having particular importance in this process of repudiation and the "burgeoning tide of growing racial esteem":

... Mr. Rogers served, along with the effort of other Negro Scholars, to set the record straight. The Pittsburgh Courier, combining the limitless Rogers' intuition for unearthing facts, with artist Samuel Milai's gifted ability for historical depiction, with pen and brush, served to supplement the efforts of thousands of classrooms. Mr. Milai's drawings reached millions who never saw inside a school, as well as those who would never again find time to attend any school! (Courier Magazine 12 March: 2)

It is extremely interesting that Roberts credits Milai's illustrations of the "Your History" column as being of the same -- if not superior -- significance as
Rogers' historical texts themselves, indicating that many who might never read historical texts would be informed by the drawings. This, I want to suggest, has implications for Milai's work as a comic creator. Many Courier readers, who might not have read books written about African-American history, would have read the comic strip Don Powers with its black hero as representative of culture and modernity, while the white Karg represented the barbarian. Given Milai's work with Rogers in illustrating the history column, he was obviously aware of the debates and currents in historical revision and this was obviously influencing the content of Don Powers.

Yet Don Powers, and his battle with Karg, was not the only comic strip in The Pittsburgh Courier where a battle between "modern man", represented by an African-American, and "prehistoric man" was taking place. Another comic strip, published in the Pittsburgh Courier during 1955, is about an African-American astronaut, Neil Knight, "lost on a planet where prehistoric life is duplicated" and Neil Knight finds himself -- an agent of the modern -- back in prehistory. Neil is captured by a "Cave Man" and his fight to free himself is described as "PRIMITIVE MAN VERSUS MODERN MAN!", with the question "WHO WILL WIN?" (Courier Magazine, 5 Feb. 1955: 13). This is almost a replica of the scenario in Don Powers with Karg: here Knight, the African-American is once again the person representing skill, culture and civilisation, fighting brute, but primitive, force. Knight is trapped on the planet since he has lost his spaceship and he becomes a Promethean figure to the primitive cave dwellers: he teaches them how to make spears to hunt and to make, and use, fire and the

5 The artistic creator of Neil Knight was not credited in the strip and remains unknown.
primitive dwellers of the planet worship him as a God. The language of the comic continually employs a Darwinian discourse of evolutionary progression. References to the "Pleistocene" age, flying reptile "pteranodons" and ancient deer, "protoceras", locate the comic in prehistory. Yet the idea of evolutionary advancement is interrogated by the discourse of the comic and used in quite a different way from the way in which mainstream comic books employed it to represent Africa as belonging to another, prehistoric, era. It is interesting to recall that it was the concept of evolutionary progression that underpinned the discourse of scientific racism in South Africa, and it is thus extremely significant, that it is being used to quite different effect, in Neil Knight. After introducing the "primitive cave men" to fire, Knight tells them: "You don't know it but you've just advanced another million years or so, pals! Before I'm through with you you'll be the most advanced cave men anytime anywhere!" (Courier Magazine 4 June 1955: 12). Here Knight is positioned at the most "developed" end of the evolutionary spectrum, yet when he finally leaves the "primitive cave people" he raises questions about the value of this line of thought. Since they worship him for the superior knowledge he has brought them, Knight's primitive followers don't want to let him leave and he resorts to escaping in the middle of the night, with the following words: "All of 'em sound asleep. I figured they wouldn't be advanced enough to leave a sentry! It took man millions of years to learn stuff like that" (Courier Magazine 13 August 1955: 13). This apparent endorsement of the discourse of evolution is completely undermined in the next frame, where Knight continues, ironically, "Today man knows all about posting sentries ... and making wars and all kind of jive like that. Yeah -- he's real advanced now!". He continues to the tell the
primitive people he leaves behind that they might be better off without progression: "Y'know, kids ... maybe you'll be better off if you never learn about posting sentries. So long Pals ... the first million years are the easiest!" (Courier Magazine 13 August 1955: 13). Thus while both comic strips -- Neil Knight and Don Powers -- invert the racist discourse of evolutionary progression, Neil Knight seems take the move one step further by offering a critique of the very notion of civilisation and the civilised world.

It is, however, once the African-American comic strips are reproduced in Drum and read within the South African context, that the significance of a black hero representing "modernity" takes on a truly revolutionary nature, since "modernity" was an epithet reserved for whites, while blacks were placed further back on the evolutionary scale of development, as I have demonstrated in my first two chapters. It is thus not surprising that when Drum started a locally produced comic strip, the influence of the Pittsburgh Courier model is quite apparent and many of the same conflicts are animated within its frames.

The locally created comic strip, Goombi, was introduced in Drum in 1956. Goombi replaced a Pittsburgh Courier comic strip about a detective, called, Mark Hunt. All the imported African-American comic strips disappeared from Drum magazine at various stages, including the long published Don Powers, in 1957. The publication of these strips sometimes ceased, often in mid-story, in the American newspaper, often due to the writer's other more pressing commitments as were there no professional African-American comic creators at this time. Most writers, like Milai and Harrington, had to rely on other journalistic work to earn a living. After Goombi's inauguration, it was the only comic strip published in Drum magazine.
Goombi is not only first locally created comic strip published in Drum magazine, it is in all likelihood the first of its kind in South Africa. That, and its attempt to translate the American private eye into a local Sophiatown setting, makes it extremely significant in the history of the way in which American forms were appropriated by black South Africans in the 1950s and, indeed, for South African cultural studies. Drum placed great emphasis on Goombi’s introduction in the magazine. There is a preview of Goombi in September, 1956, where readers are prepared for his arrival the following month. In October the first episode occupies a full page, unlike the half page, or less, devoted to the American comics. The text below the first strip introduces readers to Goombi:

That’s him. Goombi, our brand new, ace private dick. He’s a guy who has been pushed around a lot by toughs and roughs in the townships. You know how it is with a small man. He couldn’t go to the movies .... He couldn’t even keep his place in the bus queues without some brawny, brainless thug showing him to the rear. But one day they went too far. He was going down Victoria Road, Sophiatown, with one of his best girls when a big-mouth big-shot took him by his laundry, dashed him into the gutter and said: “What do you do with a nice girl like that, small-fry?” From that day Goombi made up his mind that he didn’t like big-boys at all. So he took up judo and got himself a license to become a private dick to clean up the townships. (Drum Oct. 1956: 42 - 43)

A significant shift which takes place as a result of the switch from the American comic strips to Goombi, is one of the first consistent attempts in Drum magazine to use the kind of language spoken in the townships: a blend of English, Afrikaans, indigenous languages and American slang. There is also an attempt at representing this vernacular, as spelling is significantly adjusted. The first time he speaks, he says: “SURE AMA QUIET DORP THIS JOH’BURG”. The text below the frame is in standard English and translates what Goombi is saying: “Hi Folks! Call me Goombi. I’m sitting quietly in my office in
Sophiatown when suddenly ...” (Drum Oct. 1956: 42 - 43). This sets up an interesting dialogue between the two forms of language. This attempt to represent a new form of Black English is an extremely interesting one, given that in the 1980s critics were still lamenting the lack of the development of black South African English.  

One of the most interesting changes that the locally produced comic allowed was an intertextual link between the narrative of the comic strip and the magazine’s contents. During 1957 a singer called "Dolly", who has been kidnapped, seeks Goombi’s assistance (Goombi Drum Aug. 1957: 42). This is an almost exact parallel of a feature article published in Drum magazine four months earlier about women in the townships being “abducted” by gangsters who are prospective suitors. The article reports Dolly Rathebe’s and Miriam Makeba’s narrow escape from such kidnapping or, as Drum magazine referred to it, “Love by Martial Law”:

> For the bright boys have thrown overboard all the art and all the finesse in love-making, and have resorted to force. Love by force, or love by “martial law,” as the boys so colourfully put it.... Sometimes women and girls vanish suddenly and for days their relations haven’t the slightest idea where they are. Only to learn that their womenfolk are kept “kidnapped” in some remote shanty or back-yard shack. And “kidnapped” means “abducted”. (Drum magazine June 1957: 20-21)

It is fascinating to notice that when this practice is practically recreated in the Goombi comic strip two months later, it is represented in quite a different light. In the original article the practice is blamed partly on the women themselves --

---

6 Jeremy Cronin (1985), for example, quotes the South African linguist L. W. Lanham, who noted that whereas it is possible to speak of a West African English, or an Indian English, in South Africa the emergence of an African English is being considerably stunted.
too many "womenfolk accept 'martial law love' as the normal thing" -- and partly on the social conditions created by apartheid:

Obviously in a world where crime is the only powerful item of culture, where recreational facilities are devised from the street, where parental and community control are non-existent, where boys grow into young men and young men grow into men without much visible hope in the future for self or for race, then all ordered living breaks down and people act by and for themselves only. And when they do that the only law they know will be "Eat or be eaten." There is no time or encouragement to consider the delicate graces of life. There are only the directest [sic] routes to achieving desires, and civilisation becomes its own cruellest joke. (Drum June 1957: 23)

Yet when Dolly, the jazz singer character, is captured in the Goombi comic strip, her captive, Blackbeard, abducts her to trade her for gain: it has nothing to do with "love". The ace private detective tracks Dolly down in Durban, and back in history, to the kraal of Shaka. There her abductor is bartering with the chief for the possession of Dolly. As Goombi arrives on the scene the chief says, "50 cattle it too much. But well worth her. All is settled" (Drum Dec. 1957: 47).

While the feature article about "kidnapping" almost defends the practice, arguing that it is an inevitable result of apartheid, the comic strip, Goombi, reveals the practice as a cattle market in which women are objects, traded between men. It is extremely significant that Dolly is captured to be taken back in history to the historical kraal of the Zulu King Shaka. This is a return to the rural, the tribal, the country, as opposed to the city, and thus to and a way of life that was continually being repudiated in Drum. The discussion about the "50 cattle" sounds remarkably reminiscent of the traditional practice of lobolo. Thus when Goombi sets out to find Dolly it is not merely to rescue her from abduction, but also to save her from the rural, tribal "kraal", and to return her to the present, the city and thus modernity. Goombi the private detective, thus becomes the
symbol, and saviour, of the “modern” in almost exactly the same way that Don
Powers represented modern identity in the African-American comic strip.

The next serialised Goombi story -- "Goombi and the Payroll Robbers" -- may at first appear to be a departure from the conflict between modern black
subjectivity fighting against the return, or eruption, of prehistory. In this
narrative Goombi is brainwashed by a white Bishop and turned into a criminal,
zombie-like, creature who commits crimes for the white Bishop. Yet this can be
read as the same conflict: represented here by the binary opposition of the
modern "rational" thinking consciousness of the detective and a primitive,
unthinking creature who represents only basic brute force and whose mind can be
controlled and manipulated by superior mental skill. In this narrative Goombi
shifts between these two states: from being the modern detective he is turned into
a zombie only to finally recover his rational capacity at the end of this story line.
In his induced, "Devil Man" state Goombi bears a distinct resemblance to the
Karg character from Don Powers, speaking only monosyllables, expressing basic
aggression and urges, an image which would have concurred with the stereotype
of the "uncivilised" nature of black men in apartheid South Africa, demonstrated
in Come Back, Africa, when Myrtle calls Zachariah a "savage".

The comic strip Goombi, I want to suggest, makes use of this scenario to
comment on contemporary South African affairs and the ideology of apartheid.
Thus, one can still detect the influence of the African-American comics on
Goombi, after Drum has discontinued publishing the Pittsburgh Courier comics.

In "Goombi and the Payroll Robbers" Goombi infiltrates a gang of
payroll robbers, presumably in order to bring them to justice. Before he can,
however, he is recognised by the gang chief, "Big Boy Don Juan", who tells his
men, "You've got Goombi the private dick, to the snake pit with him -- he's a police boetie" (Drum July 1958: 55). The Afrikaans word "boetie" while meaning literally "little brother", indicates here that Goombi is a friend of the police. In the snake pit, surrounded by snakes, Goombi takes out his penny whistle and charms the snakes. There is a humorous, and revealing, comment from Goombi, who says: "No wonder London fell for kwela -- it's sure soothing these snakes" (Drum Aug. 1958: 75). This is obviously a comment about the export of black South African jazz during this period. The significant point is that it is informing Drum readers of the value of black South African culture abroad. Goombi escapes by tying the snakes together to get through the window.

In the following month's strip Goombi goes to a church to talk to a white Bishop to ask for his help in locating the crooks. The bishop gives Goombi a cup of coffee into which he places a tablet with the words "Tot Siens" written on it: the Afrikaans word for "goodbye". Following this, the bishop, drawn with devil-like features for this speech, triumphantly proclaims: "Ah! I got Goombi at last. My boys wanted to feed such a man to the snakes, STUPID boys. I'm now gonna turn him into a best crook brain in all of AFRICA" (Drum Sept. 1958: 75). In the next frame Goombi is laid out, in a room that resembles Victor Frankenstein's laboratory, on the Bishop's "Devil Man" machine, "which make [sic] good men into Devil men". Goombi emerges from this transformation as an enraged monster with the words "kill" and "murder" written around him. In the last frame a group of depraved looking men say: "Now you're one of our gang. We've got lots of jobs for a Devil Man like you" (Drum Sept. 1958: 75).

The following month Goombi is in full swing as a primitive killing machine, using basic language expressing base desires, exactly like Karg in Don
Powers: "WEEAAHOH", "KILL - KILL", "AHEEHOH - KILL - KILL" (Drum Oct. 1958: 73). At this point, before he can carry out his mission as a Devil Man, agent of the Bishop, Goombi is struck by lightning, instantly reversing the effects of the Bishop's machine. He reverts to being the thinking, rational, detecting Goombi. While this series doesn't lead Goombi into an obvious conflict between modernity and the prehistoric, elements of both, and their staged confrontation, are nevertheless present in this story. At the beginning of this story, Goombi represents the agent of modern rationality in the criminal underworld. When is transformed into a "Devil Man" his behaviour bears all the characteristics of Karg, or a "prehistoric" savage.

There is an intriguing suggestion in "Goombi and the Payroll robbers", that it is whites who are responsible for turning blacks into "Devil Men" and the Devil-making-machine is apartheid itself. This would concur with the general tone of much of the journalism in Drum, where apartheid is identified as the source of social evils in black society. The "Love by Martial Law" article is an example of this. At another level, however, I want to argue that Goombi's shifting position and identity represents the difficulty of the black subject to maintain a position of modern agency in South Africa. Like The Chief, O Chester Morena, Goombi is caught between a modern, American identity and the realities of race in South Africa. In the first series, The Chief has to resort to selling films back to the crooks themselves, since he cannot realistically sell them to white clients in apartheid South Africa. Thus his identity as detective conflicts with racial solidarity and there is thus racial denial involved in assuming the role of detective. This might account for the ways in which
Chester Morena, and Goombi, shift between the positions of detective and criminal.

It is worth recalling that the gang leader accuses Goombi of being a "police boetie". This was an extremely derisive label in South Africa for a black person who collaborated with the police force, often as an informer. In his 1971 manifesto "The Definition of Black Consciousness", Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness movement, proclaimed that black policemen could not be called "black", since they were betraying the cause of black liberation. Defining "being black" as a "reflection of a mental attitude" and not a matter of pigmentation, Biko claims that the term black is not all-inclusive (1987: 48). He takes the racist term "non-white" and reclassifies it to represent a black person with white aspirations, who thus supports apartheid: "If one's aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that person is a non-white" (1987: 48). There are certain activities that define one as a non-white, one of them is being a black policeman: "Any man who calls a white man 'Baas', any man who serves in the police force or Security Branch is ipso facto a non-white" (1987: 48). One might thus read this narrative in Goombi as being about the anxiety of a black subject occupying a position of modernity via popular culture, in a context here where he is required to, but cannot, align himself with the law.

There can be no doubt that what the Drum writers were doing was no capitulation to American imperialism; they chose American genres because they provided the only possible frame for black modernity and they certainly transformed these American products to the point where they were no longer American. A fascinating example of the very local nature of the use of the comic
genre lies in the fact that all the African-American comic strips published in *Drum* were discontinued at various stages, often abruptly and in mid-narrative. It is interesting to notice that the cessation of publication appears to coincide with the African-American hero’s entry into the Cold War, on behalf of America. Unlike other African-American newspapers of the period, like the *Chicago Defender* and the Harlem based *Amsterdam News*, the *Courier* had a long tradition of being staunchly anti-Communist; the legacy of its first editor, Robert L. Vann (Buni, 1974: 236-237). A survey of the *Drum* letters page reveals that *Drum* readers had become critical of these anti-Communist tendencies, thus demonstrating readers’ shifting attitudes towards the African-American comic strips. In February 1953, a person named as A. D. Dube from Bethal writes to defend the comics. In a letter titled "Comics are fun" Dube claims to be "a voracious reader of comics" because "they’re full of jokes and educative" and "as amusing as the bioscope" (*Drum* magazine, February 1953: 36). In a similar letter three months later, M. G. Pillay also defends the inclusion of comics in *Drum*, in a letter titled: "Hands off the comics!" (*Drum* magazine, April 1953: 46). Yet moving to 1955, after Don Powers had defeated the Ape-man Karg and his new opponent is the Communist Chong, there is a critical letter from Faith Madola, about the new "Red" version of "Karg":

**Red Karg**
How can you come with this new Don Powers comic, showing the Chinese and Russians as such wicked people? Can they really be so, or is it more American Propaganda!
Faith Madola (*Drum* magazine June 1955: 9)

With the developing alignment between the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress during the 1950s, the African-American comic-
strip plots were increasingly, and conspicuously, out of place in *Drum*, as Madola's letter in *Drum* points out. This response from readers points to the importance of reception, an aspect that has been ignored in critical work on *Drum* magazine.

Alex La Guma used the comic strip medium to comment on these very developments in "Little Libby: the adventures of Liberation Chabalala", published in the *New Age* newspaper (Odendaal and Field 1993). While La Guma's influences included popular newspaper comic strips like Juliet Jones and the Katzenjammer Kids, he used the comic frame to animate debates about the individual and the collective and comment on historical political events like the treason trial. Yet despite his fascinating appropriation of popular American comic strips, Roger Field points out that very little attention has been paid to Little Libby as a comic strip and it is usually used to bolster arguments about La Guma's fiction. This maintains the dichotomy of "popular" and "high" culture (Field, 2002: 171).

Given the way in which popular culture clearly provided a vehicle for both the *Courier* and *Drum* to reconfigure black identity, the lack of critical attention to these comic strips is truly astonishing. This is a denial of the crucial role *Drum* played in reconstituting black identity in South Africa in the 1950s and well as the way in which it appropriated American and African-American models as vehicles for black modernity. Yet in the relocation of America to black South Africa, the use of these forms was neither as passive as critics like Ndebele suggest, nor was the transformation quite as smooth as Wagnleitner and May might suggest. The characters of Chester Morena and Goombi suggest a much more complex negotiation, one that must be taken seriously, since *this*
investigation is crucial -- if we are to have a full understanding of the complexities of black modernity, as it emerged in 1950s South Africa.
4.
Bessie Head's "Dramatic" Home Post Journalism.

The relationship between the well-known African writer, Bessie Head, and Drum publications has been marked by critical controversy. In 1982 Drum magazine published her autobiographical piece entitled "Notes from a Quiet Backwater". This contained Head's autobiographical description of her South African origins and it is there where she articulated her family romance: her white mother belonged to the top racehorse owning strata, while her black father "worked in the family stables and took care of their racehorses" (MacKenzie, 1990: 3).

While the factual nature of Head's autobiographical narrative has been disputed, there is, however, another issue of representation that I seek to challenge here. The title given to the piece reinscribes a traditionally held view in the critical canon on Head's work. This is a longstanding idea about Head's position in relation to Drum magazine, and one that I wish to challenge in this chapter.

According to Head's biographer, Gillian Stead Eilersen, Head had submitted this work to Drum magazine, with the title "Biographical Notes: A Search for Historical Continuity and Roots" some time prior to its publication (1995: 244). I want to suggest that Drum did Head a disservice in changing the title from "Biographical Notes" to "Notes from a Quiet Backwater". While the latter phrase is taken from Head, since she claims to "need a quiet backwater" this title

---


2 The factual nature of Head's autobiographical narrative has been recently refuted by Head's biographer, Gillian Stead Eilersen (1995), and Head's mother's family (Kenneth Birch, 1995). Both claim that the family never belonged to the social class of racehorse owners. I return to this discussion in the chapter.
marginalises Head’s position in relation to the metropolitan concerns of *Drum* magazine and reinscribes her writing as removed from politics and urban life.

This is not the first time that Head’s writing for *Drum* has been perceived as marginal to metropolitan life in South Africa and the issues involved in the continual struggle for an urban black modernity. It is a well known fact that between 1958 and 1960 in South Africa, prior to her departure for Botswana in 1964 where she would become one of the most acclaimed African writers, Head had a short career as a journalist with *Drum* publications. She wrote, not for *Drum* magazine, but for *Golden City Post*, a weekly tabloid, that was one of South Africa’s most influential, and widely read newspapers of the 1950s and formed part of *Drum* publications, that published and took its name from the famed *Drum* magazine.

While the *Drum* writers have been the subject of critical discussion and while the last few years have given rise to escalating critical attention to Head’s work, her journalistic writing has been consistently dismissed by critics for four decades. Susan Gardner, who compiled the first bibliography of Bessie Head, claims that the only revelation to be found in this early journalistic writing is how little resemblance it bears to her later fiction, and that it is of "scant literary value" (Gardner, 1989: 228). Critic after critic has agreed with Gardner’s judgement. There seem to be two reasons inherent in this dismissal of Head’s journalism. The first is that she wrote for *Golden City Post* and not, as was previously thought, *Drum* magazine. Gardner, who brought this to critical attention, claims that "one of the most interesting discoveries when compiling the bibliography concerned the cliché that Head was one of the *Drum* magazine ‘school’ of writers" (1989: 228). Gardner emphasises that Head wrote for *Golden
City Post, in a manner that implies writing for Golden City Post was less important or politically significant. Similarly, in the introduction to his collection of Head's autobiographical writings, Craig MacKenzie stresses that "she was on the periphery of the Drum world" because Golden City Post was not part of Drum magazine itself (1990: xiv).

Although Head wrote for Golden City Post and not Drum, the two publications shared offices and journalists in both Cape Town and Johannesburg and encouraged a common readership since Drum carried regular advertisements for The Post, as it became known: "Every Drum reader read Post". The influence of Golden City Post, alongside Drum magazine, is indicated by Lewis Nkosi's claim that "[b]y the end of the fifties DRUM and POST had become ... widely accepted as the most authoritative newspapers on the life of black South Africans" (Nkosi, 1965: 30). In his bibliographic guide to the black press in South Africa, Les Switzer documents that by the late 1960s Post had emerged as the most successful black commercial publication in Southern Africa (Switzer, 1979:115). The Drum writers almost all wrote for Post as well. The social significance of Post makes the absence of any serious attention to Head's journalism astonishing. This is all the more so in light of the posthumous publication in 1993 of The Cardinals, a novel by Head that fictionally recreates Drum publications during the 1950s. Through representing the struggle of the main protagonist, Mouse, to be taken seriously as a writer, Head fictionally recreates the circumstances facing black women journalists in the 1950s. Mouse's problem is similar to Head's: while the male journalist, Johnny, goes out to cover the political news in the township, Mouse's assignment is to find a wheelchair for a woman and write a story about it. In her biography of Head,
Eilersen records that in Cape Town, Head was the only female journalist working for *Post* and "this meant that she was always being given stories connected with women and children, 'while the men reporters got murders and politics to do'" (1995:39). Here lies the crux of the matter, revealing that the reason why Head's journalism has been overlooked is due to the nature of her writing: its popular form and its publication in a women's supplement.

Head began working for *Golden City Post* in Cape Town in 1958 where, after a trial period as a freelance reporter, she was appointed as a staff reporter (Eilersen, 1995: 41). Yet since she was not given a byline, this work has proved impossible to trace (Eilersen, 1995: 40). In 1959 Head moved to Johannesburg where she went to work for the new pull-out women's supplement to *Golden City Post*, known as *Home Post*. Here, under the name of "Bessie" and "Bessie Emery", her maiden name, she took over writing an advice column for teenagers, called "Hiya Teenagers!" and a story and activity column for younger children, called "Dear Gang". During this period she also published a book review which, I will argue, is crucial to understanding the significance of Head's journalism. According to several sources Head also participated in the writing of "True Romance" stories that appeared on the front page of the supplement. As this is such an early and, as yet, undocumented period of Head's life, one which has only recently begun to elicit critical interest (largely due to the posthumous publication in 1993 of her early novel *The Cardinals*), the extent of Head's involvement with these romance stories is not certain. While these stories were always published under pen names, as the true romance stories of readers' themselves, Susan Gardner recorded Lewis Nkosi referring to Head "having churned out weekly true romance stories" (Gardner, 1989: 229). This has been
corroborated more recently by Margaret Daymond stating that Head "help[ed] Dolly Hassim [the editor of Home Post] to produce ... escapist love stories" (1993: viii). Eilersen's biography documents the "the weekly love story [Head] wrote in the Post" (1995: 192). Head refers, unfortunately rather vaguely, to this activity in a letter written to Drum magazine in 1979. "I well remember the days when I worked with Dolly Hassim on the woman's magazine page of Post. I used to type out one true romance story a week ...."3 I want to suggest, in this chapter, that there is sufficient intertextual connection between Head's various journalistic writing to indicate that she was most certainly writing some of the romance stories published in Home Post.

All the journalistic writing that can be identified as Head's, is thus published in the women's supplement, Home Post. Eilersen points out that Head had now moved even more onto the Drum periphery, by moving from Golden City Post to Home Post and that while "her approach obviously appealed to young people" -- "[d]ramatic journalism it was not" (1995: 42). Thus while one might argue that Golden City Post could be as important as Drum magazine, it is clearly the popular content and style that separates Head, critically, from the Drum school. Eilersen lists the Drum journalists Head got to know in Johannesburg in the offices shared by Drum magazine and Golden City Post -- Lewis Nkosi, Can Themba and Dennis Brutus -- yet does so only in order to distinguish Head's writing from theirs. These were all journalists of considerable reputation, men who were, in the words of Lewis Nkosi, "supposed to exhibit a unique intellectual style, usually urbane, ironic, morally tough and detached"

3 Bessie Head letter from the Khama Memorial Museum, Botswana, dated 28 February, 1979. I would like to thank the South African critic, Prof. Margaret Daymond, for bringing this letter to my attention.
(Nkosi quoted in Eilersen, 1995: 42). Eilersen reproduces Nkosi's claims that as a Drum reporter, it was assumed that "one couldn't deal professionally with urban African life unless one had descended to its very depths as well as climbed to its heights" (1995: 42). Yet, neither of these states, claims Eilersen, could be considered part of Head's life (1995:42). Eilersen's judgement sounds reminiscent of MacKenzie's introduction to his edited collection of Head's autobiographical writings, which is framed by "Notes from a Quiet Backwater". What separates Head from the Drum school of writers for MacKenzie is her style, which was evident from the outset: "Where the Drum writers are noted for their racy, wordly-wise, often sensationalist journalistic style, accompanied by an overtly political content ... Head from the very start adopted a personal 'apolitical' approach" (1990: xiv). Yet it is perhaps Gardner who makes the reasons for Head's exclusion from the Drum school most clear. It is, she says, "inappropriate, politically or stylistically, to group her with writers such as Nkosi, Can Themba, Todd Matshikiza or Richard Rive, since she was writing columns for teenagers and younger people in a domestic supplement, the Home Post" (Gardner, 1989: 228).

In my last chapter I argued for the politically subversive potential of popular forms and for taking seriously the reasons why writers might have adopted them, as opposed to viewing them merely as vehicles of American cultural imperialism. I intend, in this chapter, to argue for taking Head's journalism seriously for similar reasons. I believe that just like her Drum counterparts, Head was drawing on popular culture to create, and present, a form of black modernity to her readers. While the true romance stories have been dismissed as pulp "escapist love stories", to use Daymond's words, I intend to
argue that many of the stories are far more interesting than this reading suggests, and that several bear distinct traces of recurring themes in Head’s writing, albeit in submerged form. These stories are clearly attempting to usher black South African women into a version of modernity, through the transition to modern romantic love, and while they are most certainly propagating an ideology of romantic love, this must be read within the context of the struggle for black modernity taking place within Drum publications.

Central to an understanding of what Head is attempting to do in her journalism, however, is a review of the autobiography of the African-American Wimbledon tennis champion, Althea Gibson, entitled I Always Wanted to be Somebody, published in 1958. As a well-known black sports champion Gibson was regularly featured in the black media in America and South Africa during the 1950s -- even before her Wimbledon victory -- as an example of what a black person could achieve: in this case, victory over white opponents. Gibson was regularly featured in the Pittsburgh Courier and there are several articles about her in Drum magazine. The significance of a black player’s victory over a white opponent had obvious political implications in apartheid South Africa where sport was racially segregated and, as discussed in my last chapter, black and white boxers were not even officially allowed to spar. The representation of Gibson became a controversial feature in Drum magazine management and led to a dispute, resulting in the resignation of Drum editor, Sylvester Stein. Yet this is the figure that Head chose to present to readers in a lengthy review, published in two instalments, in place of the usual True Romance story which, in accordance with the rules of the popular romance genre, always ended with

---

4 I will return to this in the discussion of Head’s review.
marriage. The anomalous, and radical, nature of this representation must be read as Head’s bold assertion of a new form of black female modernity.

Yet Head takes her model of modernity even further. Given the obvious influence Gibson’s text exerted on her, I argue that she uses Gibson as inspiration for her childrens’ and teenagers' columns and that careful reading reveals how Gibson’s language continually reappears in the columns. Head draws on Gibson to fashion her own biographical image for her readers and to fashion a form of black female modern identity, which is in striking contrast with the dominant ideas being propagated in Drum magazine. I argue that she presents a seminal revision of influential African-American and South African views about the relationship between black women and modernity. In effect, rather than hampering her writing, I believe that the very nature of the women’s supplement enabled Head to publish ideas that would most certainly have been viewed as controversial, had they appeared elsewhere in the paper, where they might have been subject to more editorial scrutiny. Thus, far from being apolitical and personal, I believe that Head is an important figure in the creation of metropolitan black modernity and that her journalism is crucial to tracing the influence of African-American modernity and its texts in South Africa.
"Dressed like a lady ... play[ing] like a tiger": Bessie Emery's review of Althea Gibson's *I Always Wanted to be Somebody*

During August 1959 Head wrote an impassioned review of the autobiography of African American tennis star, Althea Gibson's *I Always Wanted to be Somebody*. My research indicates that this is the only piece of journalism published in *Golden City Post* under Head's full name, Bessie Emery. The review was published over two weeks on the front page of *Home Post*, the place of the usual "True Romance" story. The fact that Head's review was published in this slot, as opposed to anywhere else in *Home Post*, lends credence to the idea that she was responsible for the front page of the *Home Post*, and thus producing the True Romance stories. I want to argue that, as her enthusiastic endorsement suggests, this text exerted a seminal influence on Bessie Head and that its effect can be seen, quite visibly, in her columns for children and teenagers published in the weeks preceding, and following, the review. I want to suggest, furthermore, that the influence of ideas drawn from Gibson extend to Head's fictional writing in the form of *The Cardinals*, written shortly after this period of journalism with *Golden City Post*.\(^5\) The first part of Head's review, published on the 9th of August, 1959, appears under the headline "From Tomboy to Star" (*Home Post* 9 Aug. 1959: 1). This headline is an interesting variation of another very similar headline, which occupied the front page of *Home Post* just two weeks previously, on the 26th of July, 1959. This was a "True Romance" story called "The Tomboy Falls in Love", by Claudia Smith (*Home Post* 26 July 1959: 1). The theme of tomboys, and their conversion into feminine women, recurs in the True Romance

\(^5\) In her introduction to *The Cardinals*, Margaret Daymond claims that Head wrote the novel between 1960 and 1962 (1993: vii).
stories and when Head introduces herself to the readers of her columns, she chooses to classify herself as a tomboy. It is, therefore, worth exploring the earlier story, as it sets out the conventional trajectory for the tomboy, a trajectory which always concludes with an acceptance of femininity and its corollary: marriage. Head's review of Gibson, however, takes quite a different form. While the true romances equate modernity with romance and marriage for women, Head works hard -- taking the lead from Gibson's text itself -- to present an active, ambitious, successful, single woman, who becomes the symbol of an alternative version of modern black femininity. A brief comparison with the story that was presented to readers of Home Post just two weeks earlier will reveal the striking contrasts in Head's review of Gibson's text.

In "The Tomboy falls in Love" the narrator, Claudia, is converted from being a tomboy into a serene woman, through falling in love with a man called George, who is described as an awe-inspiring "cross between Professor Higgins and St. George" because of the manner in which he effects Claudia's transformation (26 July 1959:1). Claudia grows up as the only girl in a household full of "rowdy, rascally brothers" and the narrator claims that she was indistinguishable from the boys: "you couldn't tell the difference between them and me when the fighting and fun and games were on. I could hit as fast and run as fast as they [sic]" (26 July 1959:1). At this point the True Romance story resembles Gibson's autobiographical text, since Gibson describes, in great detail, her physical struggle for survival in Harlem. There is, however, little doubt that she takes great pride in the ability to defend herself, and others, if necessary. If Head was writing these True Romances she would have been reading Gibson's autobiography and preparing the review at the time that Claudia's story was
written. So there is the possibility that the image of girls, who can run as fast and hit as hard as boys, was derived from Gibson's animated description of her days as a tomboy:

She has just got through calling me a pig-tailed bitch when I let her have it. I brought my right hand all the way up from the floor and smashed her right in the face with all my might. I hit her so hard she fell like a lump. Honest to God, she was out cold. Everybody backed away from me and just stared at me, and I turned around like I was Joe Louis and walked on home. It wasn't only girls I fought, either. (Gibson, 1960: 15)

It is only once Claudia goes to work at a factory, "in the company of about 600 girls" that she discovers "boys were not only born for the purposes of roughing around, but also for such things as dates and falling in love with and getting married to" (26 July 1959:1). Work is typically associated with a route to marriage, rather than any form of independent existence or economic necessity. After a first romantic experience with a boy called Tony, Claudia claims that she wanted "the kind of man who could sweep [her] off her feet, who was more grown up and responsible than [she] was" (26 July 1959:1, italics in original). Then George comes along, and does something far more significant: he paints her and this is how they fall in love. Yet he does more than merely reproduce her in paint; he produces her, as a woman, in the act of sketching her. She is a restless person and yet he paints her sitting still: "You're a restless person," he said, "tonight was the first time I saw you sitting still, and I don't think I've seen a more lovely picture ... ["]your face has a kind of still, sad elf-like beauty when you are thoughtful and quiet." (26 July 1959:1). Since she falls in love with George when she sees this image of herself, the text appears to be suggesting that she falls for the image of the "woman" that she becomes through George's creation. From the "wildest tomboy" George creates a serene woman.
The description of George being a cross between Professor Higgins and St. George is worth interrogating since Professor Higgins creates the identity of Eliza Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's play "Pygmalion". There are, however, several versions of this story. In the original play Eliza, who is "just a successful experiment" to Higgins, "assert[s] herself as a human being and reject[s] Higgins" at the end of the play. "Yet the film adaptation of 1938, which Shaw approved, brought Higgins and Doolittle together at the end" (Ousby, 1988: 810). It was this version which was made into the extremely popular musical comedy My Fair Lady in 1956, just three years before this story was published. Thus, one might assume that the popularised version of this play and the one that would have had currency in the late 1950s, after the musical, was the one in which Eliza Doolittle falls in love with her creator in the end. The use of the mythological references to Saint George and Shaw's play as an intertextual reference in this story, are intriguing and would appear to belie a narrator who worked in a factory and had no interests other than dating. Head is clearly interested in the process of a woman being recreated through a romantic relationship, since this is what she explores in the relationship between Mouse and Johnny in The Cardinals. Since The Cardinals was written shortly after Head wrote for Home Post, it seems likely that the story about Claudia was her creation as well.

This was not the first time that George Bernard Shaw had inspired a response from the "Women's Corner" of an African newspaper as there is a fascinating earlier precedent for intertextual dialogue with George Bernard Shaw in another African newspaper. In 1932, at the age of seventy-five, George Bernard Shaw visited Cape Town with a mission "to persuade whites to abandon
race and class and markers of social difference and adopt in their place a revolutionary mode of thinking" (Newell, 2000: 70). According to Stephanie Newell, "Shaw offended many whites with his revolutionary pronouncements, but he also charmed South Africans with his verbal and physical antics" (2000: 70). During his stay he wrote a satirical short story "The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God", modelled on John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Voltaire's Candide. In his story "Shaw transforms the landscape of the protagonist, creating an African setting and an African girl to convey his challenge to the 'pseudo Christianity of the churches'" (Newell, 2000: 71). After its publication in Britain, this story stimulated a satirical response from Ghanaian writer Mabel Dove, "The Adventures of the Black Girl in her search for Mr Shaw". According to Newell, this was published, in serialised form, under Dove's pseudonym "Marjorie Mensah" in the "Women's Corner" of the Times of West Africa between September and October 1934 (Newell, 2000: 71).

The intertextual use of Shaw in Claudia's True Romance story might not be as conservative as it first appears, in relation to Claudia's recreated identity. While I have described the drawing that causes Claudia to fall for George, the story ends with another painting, one with quite different implications. One evening, Claudia and George "wandered down to the sea and a fresh stiff breeze was blowing" (26 July 1959: 1). Claudia, who "could never resist the urge to run against the wind" reverts to her "wildest" younger days: "I let my hair down and streaked away down the beach, leaving George alone" (26 July 1959: 1). George captures Claudia's scene of flight in paint and the painting seems to be all that remains of the old Claudia, since shortly afterwards she marries George: "We married soon after and still have a reminded [sic] of that evening. On our wall is
a water colour of a girl running along the beach and behind her are the impressions of her swiftly flying feet in the wet sand" (26 July 1959: 1).

The language at the end of the story is striking for its rebellion, resistance and flight: running "against the wind", "streak[ing] away", "leaving George alone". That freedom and rebellion seems to be captured in the image of Claudia in a manner that is strikingly similar to the relationship between painting and desire, as symbolised by Head in her novel Maru, written ten years later. Margaret Cadmore's desire for a different life with Moleka, one that she will never have, appears only in her painting. Thus in Maru painting becomes a repository for Margaret's desire while she, like Eliza Doolittle, has been a "successful experiment" at the hands of others (Guldemann, 1993: 58). Thus the True Romance story which begins with reformed tomboy, Claudia, "telling the world what a wonderful institution marriage is" ends on a strikingly ambiguous note (26 July 1959: 1).

This earlier story, about the tomboy who fell in love, enables one to appreciate the magnitude of Head's gesture when, just two weeks after Claudia's story, when she fills the front page of Home Post with a story that has a very different ending: this time the tomboy is not falling in love and becoming a woman, but becoming a star. Unlike other celebrities featured in this slot Althea Gibson was a single woman and her story does not end in marriage. It is interesting to see how Head endorses and celebrates this picture of a single, successful woman, one which goes against everything that the True Romance stories were suggesting about women's lives.

She begins the review with a statement about autobiography as a genre:
Autobiographies are not my favourite reading matter as I feel it's difficult for the persons concerned to write frankly and objectively about themselves. Perhaps there is some facet of their lives that they would be afraid to reveal or perhaps be too modest or leave out with the sceptical feeling that all they claim about themselves couldn't be quite true.  

(Home Post 9 August 1959: 1)

This provides a fascinating glimpse into the way Head felt about autobiographical writing and explains why she chose fiction, rather than autobiography, as a medium for her own writing, despite the fact that much of her fiction has an autobiographical aspect. Given that Head had to resort to fiction to fill missing parts of her past, her own reservations about autobiography make perfect sense. In *The Cardinals*, Head creates a female character is who is so unaware of her history that she, unwittingly, engages in a relationship with her father.

Given her scepticism about autobiography, one might ask what it is that caused Head's fascination with Gibson's book, since she claims to be riveted: "I can't remember" she relates "when last I picked up a book and failed to put it down until I had read the last word, or been so stimulated by a writer's vitality and personality" (Home Post 9 August 1959: 1, emphasis in original). Yet it is not difficult to discern the reasons for Head's fascination with Gibson's text since there are many parallels that can be drawn: the relevance of aspects of Gibson's tale to South Africa is striking. One clear example is Gibson's description, on the second page of her autobiography, of her family's move to Harlem, since she was born in South Carolina. Just like the *Drum* generation, Gibson's family made the journey from the Country, South Carolina, to the City, Harlem, New York. The description of her father's arrival in Harlem is strikingly similar to that of
Stephen Kumalo's arrival in Johannesburg in *Cry, the Beloved Country* or Jim's arrival in the city in *African Jim*, since the first experience he has in Harlem is of someone taking advantage of his country naivety:

... when the train pulled into Pennsylvania station he asked the porter how to get to Harlem. The porter said it was pretty hard even for somebody who knew his way around the city, but that he could spare an hour to guide him if Daddy wanted to pay him five dollars for his time and trouble. Daddy agreed and the porter took him over the subway and got on with him. After about twenty minutes, he led him out on the sidewalk at 125th Street and said: "Here you are, Mr. Gibson. This is Harlem." And so Daddy started his life in the big city by paying five dollars for a nickel ride on the subway. (Gibson, 1960: 8)

This bears remarkable similarity to Alan Paton's description of Stephen Kumalo arriving in Johannesburg for the first time, where he is similarly deceived by a man, who pretends to be assisting him:

A young man came to him and spoke to him in language that he did not understand.

-- I do not understand, he said.
-- You are a Xhosa, then, umfundisi?
-- A Zulu, he said.
-- Where do you want to go, umfundisi
-- To Sophiatown, young man.
-- Come with me and I shall show you.
... they came to the place of many buses.
-- You must stand in the line, umfundisi. Have you your money for the ticket?
Quickly, eagerly as though he must show this young man that he appreciated his kindness, he put down his bag and took out his purse. He was nervous to ask how much it was, and took a pound from the purse.
-- Shall I get your ticket for you, umfundisi? Then you need not lose your place in the line, while I go to the ticket office.
-- Thank you, he said.
The young man took the pound and walked a short distance to the corner. As he turned it Kumalo was afraid. The line moved forward and he with it, clutching his bag. And again forward, and again forward and soon he must enter the bus, but still he had no ticket. As though he had suddenly thought of something he left the line, and walked to the corner, but there was no sign of the young man. He sought courage to speak to someone, and went to an elderly man, decently and cleanly dressed.
-- Where is the ticket office, my friend?
The journey from the Country to the City was still dominated, in South Africa, by Alan Paton's model of Stephen Kumalo's disorientation in the city. It is easy to see how Gibson's text, written from the perspective of a successful black urbanised person would have immense appeal to black readers in South Africa. Gibson is thus the urban daughter, the female answer to Modisane's "urban" son, discussed in chapter one, since she grew up in Harlem. Throughout her text, particularly on her travels outside the United States, she presents herself as an agent of the modern. Given Head's clear attempt to fashion an alternative form of modern femininity, it is easy to see the allure of Gibson's text.

Examining the opening page of Gibson's text, which Head does not quote in her review, it is similarly easy to see how, given the circumstances of her own life, Head identified with Gibson's description of her itinerant life:

"I always wanted to be somebody. I guess that's why I kept running away from home when I was a kid even though I took some terrible whippings for it. It's why I took to tennis right away and kept working at it, even though I was the wildest tomboy you ever saw and my strong likings were a mile away from what the tennis people wanted me to do. It's why I've been willing to live like a gypsy all these years, always being a guest in other people's houses and doing things the way they said, even though what I've always craved is to live the way I want to in a place of my own with nobody to answer to but myself." (1990: 5)

It is extremely significant that Head adopts Gibson's language of "being somebody" to inspire her teenage readers, revealing that, like the other *Drum*
writers, she was drawing on popular African-American sources and adapting them to create a model of identity for her teenage column. Given Head's own peripatetic existence, it is easy to see why she found Gibson's description of herself as a gypsy engaging. Gibson's description of tennis being opposed to her "natural likings" as she was the "wildest tomboy you ever saw", reveals the source of Head choice of headline, "From Tomboy to Star", for this first part of the review. It is, however, striking to turn back, at this point, to the previous story, "The Tomboy falls in Love" and note the similarity between Gibson's description of herself on the opening page of her autobiography and Claudia's description of herself. Claudia's describes herself, before her transformation, as follows: "In my younger days I was the wildest tomboy you ever could find" (Home Post 26 July 1959: 1). This is almost identical, word for word, to Gibson's opening claim: "I was the wildest tomboy you ever saw" (1960: 5). This similarity in wording in the True Romance story, published at the time when Head would have writing her review of Gibson, seems to provide irrefutable evidence that she wrote the True Romance stories. If so, it further reveals the extent to which Gibson's influence permeated her writing. While the constraints of the True Romance genre dictated that Claudia had to be transformed from her wildest tomboy days, it is interesting that -- even before she presents Gibson's text as a radical alternative -- Head writes encoded resistance into Claudia's story. One might speculate that the very reason Head does not refer to, or quote, Gibson's opening page in her review, lies in the extent to which she has already drawn on the language of this opening page, in her teenage columns and in the True Romance story.
After her opening preamble about her fascination with Gibson's text, despite her reservations about autobiography, the review that follows consists of Head quoting large extracts from Gibson's text, interspersed with her summaries to fill in the narrative of Gibson's story. Head begins by summarising Gibson's description of her childhood before she quotes a lengthy story from the text. Yet her summary of Gibson's text also sets up a comparison between Harlem and South African township life:

In the first part of the book she gives a vivid description of Harlem slum-life and the escapades she and her pals used to get up to. It's real and one can see a replica of those cheeky, mischievous little devils in our Vrededorps, Windemeres and Sophiatowns. (Home Post 9 August 1959: 1)

This is a truly fascinating statement from Head about the relationship that exists between African-American city life and South African township life. The relationship between the "real" and the "replica" is particularly intriguing. It's difficult to distinguish, from Head's comment, which ratifies the other. She appears to be saying that Gibson's description of Harlem life is "real" because the "replica" can be seen in South African township life. Therefore, the South African township reality lends credence to the original, Harlem. Whichever way one reads this statement, it is an extremely important comment about the adoption of African-American culture in South Africa. It is worth noting that the "cheeky, mischievous little devils" are Althea and female friends. The application of the term "cheeky, mischievous little devils" to Sophiatown would usually conjure up images of men. Yet in Head's review, Gibson is allowed to maintain her status as a tomboy, and her activities are vindicated.
After relating a story about how Althea steals a yam to roast with her friends, Head turns to the fact that "Althea had very little home life, mostly because of her habit of running away" (9 August 1959: 1). It is noteworthy that while Gibson states the reason that she ran away from home is because she was beaten, this is not reproduced in Head's review. In her autobiography Gibson relates how she heard about the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and takes refuge there, when she is too frightened to go home. Head merely describes it as follows:

During this time the somewhat wild, undisciplined Althea "who wouldn't stay at home and wouldn't go to school" was taken under the wing of the Welfare Department and they got her a furnished room in a private home and a small allowance ... "All I had to do was report in once a week and pick up my allowance". (Home Post 9 August 1959: 1)

It is fascinating to note, once again, that these details about Gibson's life are similar to those which Head recreated in The Cardinals. They are also reminiscent of Head's own life when she left school, which would add to the reasons that she found Gibson's book so engrossing and her story, of survival and success, so inspirational. These similar narratives are all about single women operating outside of the confines of the family that usually regulates young women's lives. Placing Gibson's story, which includes her dysfunctional family life, in the place of the True Romance story is perhaps one of the strongest critiques of the nuclear family that Head could present. Although she makes her endorsement of Gibson's running away from home quite unambiguously clear, Head does, nevertheless, go to pains to quote Gibson's love for her father, while

---

6 See Eilersen, 1995:32 for the biographical similarities I am suggesting.
the information about his abuse is limited to Gibson's statement about how her father's "whippings" were in the interests of making her behave like the other kids in the family.

It is after running away and living on her own in the "never-never land", which came courtesy of New York Welfare Department, that Gibson discovered tennis. In the final section of the first part of the review Head quotes Gibson explaining her opening statement about why she stuck to tennis and how she discovered that, even though she was the "wildest tomboy", tennis could accommodate her strongest likings, after all. Head provides the following quotation from Gibson's book:

"After a while I began to understand that you could walk out onto the court like a lady all dressed up in immaculate white, be polite to everybody, and still play like a tiger and beat the liver and lights out of the ball". (Home Post 9 August 1959: 1, emphasis in Head's review)

Head obviously found this statement significant enough to reproduce it in italics. On the tennis court, Gibson has the right to "play like a tiger"; in spite of the civility that is associated with tennis this is a space where Gibson can give legitimate expression to her "wildness" and yet still be acceptable, even a star. Yet immediately after this bold statement from Gibson, Head finds it necessary to defend her femininity, saying, "Althea is not really the aggressive 'manly' woman that she got the reputation for being". In the full text of Gibson's autobiography the statement about playing "like a tiger" is part of an explanation about how she originally resisted attempts to make her more ladylike. She explains that she was willing to listen to her tennis coach on - but not off - the court: "I was willing to do what he said about tennis but I figured what I did
away from the courts was none of his business. I wasn't exactly ready to start studying how to be a fine lady" (Gibson, 1960: 29). In the original text Gibson extends the metaphor, and the full quotation reveals just how edited Head's extracted version is:

> After a while I began to understand that you could walk out on the court like a lady, all dressed up in immaculate white, be polite to everybody and still play like a tiger and beat the liver and lights out of the ball. I remember thinking to myself that it was kind of like a matador going into the bull ring, beautifully dressed, bowing in all directions, following the fancy rules to the letter and all the time having nothing in mind except sticking the sword into the bull's guts and killing him as dead as hell. I probably picked up that notion in some movie I saw. (1960: 29-30)

Head thus reproduces a severely abridged version of the original statement, in which Gibson moves, boldly, from comparing herself to a lady, to the rather violent image of herself as a matador. Head's circumspection and defence of Gibson might at first appear curious. Yet this must be read within the context of the True Romance slot and the representation of sport and gender more generally in Drum publications. Merely to present a professional sportswoman was a radical departure from the usual True Romance stories. The sports heroes in the stories published in Home Post were all men. The female personas and narrators of the story always present themselves as sadly lacking in comparison with the sports heroes.

A typical story is "Dance, Little Lady" by Doreen Roux (Home Post 15 March 1959). Doreen is "thin" and "mousy-looking" but she is a good dancer. At a dance she is approached by the desirable football hero, Dennis, who dances with her and asks her why her brother has never told him about her:

"Now why," Dennis went on, "did he not ever tell me about you?"
"Probably," said I, "because I am not anything to write home about --
never mind talk about to a friend who is a big handsome football hero!"

(Home Post 15 March 1959: 1)

Then Dennis tells Doreen why he likes her. While he knows that she is a wonderful dancer, "there is another reason": "a tiny, fragile thing like you", he tells her, "needs someone big and strong to care of you" (1). Doreen's smallness is matched by Dennis' largeness. Although Doreen is not beautiful, her petite fragility makes up for this. Jeanne Dubino refers to this tendency in romantic fiction as the "Cinderella complex" and suggests that physical smallness is symbolic:

[only with a beautiful, firm and small body can ... heroines of romance fiction have access to love. Western society requires that women be small, like Cinderella, and not in the physical sense only. Cinderella wins her prince not because of merit --- her stepsisters are as obedient to their mother's wishes as Cinderella is --- she wins him because she has the smallest feet, and because she is the most self-effacing of the three women. (1993: 115)

Another story published just three weeks before Head's review of Gibson reinforces these stereotypes. In "Mr Wonderful and the Mouse" by Charmaine Harris (Home Post July 19 1959) "plain", "unpopular" and insecure Charmaine is asked out on a date by "brains and brawn" Dick Richards after he injures himself while playing cricket and Charmaine dresses his wound for him. He eventually tells her that he wants to marry her because she has so much more than glamour. Dick Richards sees the "real" woman underneath the shy, "plain" exterior. It is while she is dressing his wound that Dick has a vision of her as a composite of the feminine characteristics of nurturance, silence and modesty: "Now I know something more [about you]. You have a gentle touch, you don't giggle or
chatter and you blush" (1). The theme of women "nursing" men is one that occurs throughout these stories and, according to Janice Radway, throughout the genre of the popular romance where [the ideal heroine's ... true femininity is never left in doubt":

she is always portrayed as unusually compassionate, kind and understanding. Typically, some minor disaster occurs in the early stages of the story that proves the perfect occasion for her to display her extraordinary capacity for empathetic nurturance and tender care... This characteristic, early demonstration of the romantic heroine's ability to transmute the sick into the healthy reassures the reader that the heroine is, in reality, a "true" woman, one who possesses all the nurturing skills associated by patriarchal culture with the feminine character. (1987:127)

Given that Home Post's True Romance stories conform, in some ways, to these generic norms, it is understandable that Head finds it necessary to defend Gibson's femininity.

Drum magazine did, occasionally, publish features about women sports players. It is interesting to note that an expression very similar to Gibson's playing "like a tiger" is used in article about women hockey players that appeared in Drum magazine in October, 1957, written by Drum journalist Casey Motsisi. In "Hockey, The Ladies' Sport", Motsisi begins by stating that women "have taken up this rough-and-tumble unladylike sport and made it their own" (30). While it is called the "ladies' sport", it remains "unladylike". Men, he claims, do not play hockey and while they used to play it way back in the 'forties, they have since lost interest, or their nerve. This may at first appear insignificant, but the rest of the article indicates that it might be condoned as the "ladies' sport" because men no longer play it. In Motsisi's article the women players emerge
from a feminine, domestic position: "[t]hese women surprise you with their energy and skill ... [a]fter doing all their womanly chores at home before the match you would expect them to pitch up on the grounds unkempt and virtually on their knees" (30). He describes the players on the field as "tigerish hellcats", yet this description is only applied to them as he is striping them of that title and they are being magically transformed back into "females":

After the match the girls were stripped of all the masculinity they had displayed on the battlefield, and were as feminine as a wisp of white cloud as they walked towards the dressing room. It was as if they had been magically transformed from the tigerish hellcats that they were a few minutes ago into ... well, FEMALES! (Drum October 1957: 30, emphasis in original)

The language of Motsisi's article makes it very clear that a display of sportsmanship was not compatible with modern femininity, as it was being constructed in Drum magazine. The "girls", all married women, have to exit from a domestic position, and enter the "battlefield" in order to enter into representation as sportswomen. Yet, Motsisi reassures his readers that afterwards these tigerish hellcats are magically transformed into back into females. Dorothy Driver points to the fact that that "this change happened 'as they walked towards the dressing room' ... as if Motsisi's litany, and not the actual use of 'powder puffs' was all that was required to transform these unnatural beings into the most natural of things, 'wisp[s] of cloud'" (Driver, 2002: 158).

There is, however, another way in which Motsisi and the other Drum writers tamed the representation of "tigerish hellcats": glamour:

I asked one cutie whether they padded themselves ... "No", she panted at me. "Everything we've got is our own!" ...Who says men aren't interested
in hockey or is it the players that are the big attraction? (Drum October 1957:31)

It is precisely this lack of either domesticity, as seen in Motsisi's hockey players, or glamour, that makes Gibson so difficult for writers to deal with. In October 1956 she was the subject of the "Masterpiece in Bronze" column, written by Ezekiel Mphahlele. The "Masterpiece in Bronze" column celebrated the achievements of black people throughout the world, in a similar vein to the Pittsburgh Courier's "Your History" column. It is interesting to notice that Gibson was, in fact, the subject of the "Your History" in 1955, the year before Mphahlele's "Masterpiece in Bronze" column (Pittsburgh Courier 19 Feb. 1955: 7). According to Mphahlele, although she is a "long-legged net queen", she is "not glamorous." (Drum October 1956: 35). The reason for Gibson's lack of glamour is suggested by an article published in the same issue of Drum in which Motsisi's article about Hockey appeared. Here Gibson is described as "ruthless in action" (Drum October 1957: 37). Thus the "tennis for glamour" caption that accompanies a photograph of an "18-year-old" who "shows ... how graceful a tennis player can be" does not fit Gibson (Golden City Post 18 October 1959: 13). It is this context that makes the picture of Gibson presented by Head so anomalous and interesting. While the metaphor of Gibson's playing "like a tiger" is similar to Motsisi's "tigerish hellcats" there is a fundamental difference in Head's extract of Gibson. Gibson can walk out on to the court "like a lady ... and still play like a tiger". The two states are simultaneous and one does not displace the other as they do in Motsisi's article. In reproducing this bold statement by Gibson in place of the usual True Romance story, Head thus attempts a fundamentally different representation of women in the modern world: a space
where an independent woman can engage in tough, competitive sports without having to relinquish her femininity.

While Motsisi’s Hockey players are shifted between domesticity as wives and mothers, "tigerish hellcats" and "cuties", the space in which Head chooses to leave Gibson in the minds of readers at the end of the first part of the review, is in the family home of Gibson’s friend, Rosemary. To challenge claims that Gibson was aggressive and manly, Head says that the "opinions of her closest friends belie that" and in defence of Gibson, Head chooses to tell of her experience with the Darben family. Gibson lived with the Darbens for several years and, in I Always Wanted to be Somebody, she claims that they "were like my own family" and that she "tried to be like family to them" (Gibson, 1960: 73). Head ends her review with the words of the Darben’s daughter, Rosemary: "You won’t have to worry about Althea, Mom. She’s the down-to-earth type. You won’t have to fuss over her" (1960: 73).

This conclusion perhaps attempts to reinstate some faith in the family, challenged by the details of Gibson’s youth. Yet it is a curious choice. While in the rest of the review, Head has followed the chronology of the book, she skips three chapters in order to quote this particular example. In doing so, Head overlooks far more obvious examples of family life contained in the omitted chapters: the two doctors and their families who took Gibson in, while she was finishing high school and being coached in tennis, and to whom the book is dedicated. One reason for this might be that Gibson didn’t fit in at the school in Wilmington when she lived with Doctor Eaton, and her description of her experiences there reinforces the idea of her being "manly". The extract below,

---

7 Drum, October, 1957, p. 37, There is no author attributed to this article.
from Gibson's text, might explain why Head glosses over this part of Gibson's life:

It used to hurt me real bad to hear the girls talking about me ... "Look at her throwin' that ball just like man," they would say, and they looked at me like I was a freak. I hated them for it. I felt as though they ought to see that I didn't do the things they did because I didn't know how to, and that I showed off on the football field because throwing passes better than the varsity quarterback was a way for me to express myself, to show there was something I was good at. (1960: 46)

Yet a closer look at the scene Head does choose is revealing. In describing the homely banter in the Darben household, Gibson relates the following conversation, which does not appear in Head's review:

Sometimes when I'm telling them about some place I've just been, Mom Darben will interrupt and start teasing me. "Oh, my," she'll say, "when you first came in this house, you were just like a little Mouse. We couldn't even get you to open your mouth. And look at you now." I always talk back and tell her, "I didn't say nothin' when I first came in here because I was scared["].
(1960: 74)

It is significant that it is this moment of the silent, frightened Gibson that Head chooses to counteract claims of Gibson's manliness, even though the text quoted in the review is limited to Gibson being the "down-to-earth type". What is startling is the similarity to the way in which the character called Mouse receives her name in Head's novel, The Cardinals. In light of this comparison, it is interesting to recall that the True Romance story, published three weeks before the Gibson review, was entitled "Mr. Wonderful and the Mouse" and also has a character referred to as Mouse because, in the words of the hero of the story, she "doesn't giggle or chatter". Dick Richards sees beyond the lack of glamour and
recognises Mouse's true nature, in the same way that Gibson clearly yearns for someone to recognise that her apparent manliness was "just a way for [her] to express [her]self". In *The Cardinals*, Johnny is attracted to Mouse because of the "inside part" (Head, 1993: 65). These similarities, between the True Romance story, Gibson's text and *The Cardinals* suggest, once again, that Head was writing the stories, but more importantly, it illustrates the seminal influence of Gibson's autobiography on Head's writing.

In the second week of the review the emphasis on Gibson being a good player and still being feminine is maintained and this appears to determine the content of material Head extracts from the autobiography. Summing up the previous week's review, Head claims that it revealed

> [t]he tomboy who didn't care for the 'polite manners of the game' at first, but gradually discovered that she could walk on to the court dressed like a lady and still play like a tiger. And Althea's determination to make good as a tennis player and as a lady. (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)

Head's attention to Gibson's "making good as a lady" occupies a significant portion of the second week's review. Head returns to the first page of the autobiography where Gibson talks about her desire to be somebody. Head quotes Gibson expressing her admiration for Sugar Ray Robinson: "I worshipped Sugar Ray Robinson. It wasn't just because he was [sic] wonderful fellow, and good to me when there was no special reason to be. It was because he was somebody" (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1). Head then makes a smooth narrative connection between Sugar Ray Robinson, who was somebody, and Gibson's desire to be somebody: "It was that same restless drive to BE SOMEONE that made Althea return to school and the discipline of living in the house of Dr. Eaton" (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1). Head apparently
experiences no difficulty in switching between Gibson's masculine role model, a boxer, and Gibson's ambition. Yet she once again goes to great lengths to retain Gibson's femininity alongside her ambition. Head reproduces the story of how, while teaching at Lincoln University, Gibson developed interests other than tennis, like dating, and she quotes:

"Tennis no longer seemed like everything in the world to me. I was much more interested in going out on dates and having a good time". (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)

The representation of Gibson, produced by Head here, is of a normal young woman interested in dating and fun, without too much ambition. While teaching, Gibson got involved in a relationship with an older man, a captain in the army, and as a result of that relationship she almost gave up tennis. Head quotes Gibson's words:

"But two things worked against it. There was the captain's feeling that he was too old for me, and there was a nagging doubt in me that I was giving up something that I'd put so many years and so much sweat into." (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)

While the choice between a career and love is not an unusual one for the True Romance slot occupied by the review, the outcome is: in the "True Romance" stories nothing is ever represented as being equally, or more, important to women than their relationship with a potential husband-to-be.

Home Post had previously published a romance story dealing with the career of a married celebrity. In a departure from the usual "True Romance" story of Home Post reader, in May 1959 Home Post published the story of Margot Fonteyn's marriage (31 May 1959). The narrative tells how "[o]n the eve
of her wedding" Margot is faced with a question about the future of her career after marriage. When asked whether she will retire "Margot looked across the room at Roberto with a smile: "My husband has not yet made any plans for me to do so. If he had, I suppose I should" (Home Post 31 May 1959: 1). While the answer is ambiguous, there is, nevertheless, the suggestion that even the careers of celebrity performers, are subject to the plans of their husbands. Admittedly, however, the case of Fonteyn was different from Gibson since as a ballerina Fonteyn's image was compatible with the physical image of the "smallness" of the Cinderella Complex.

One of the stories that is presented as a reader's romance, deals with the question of career in quite a different way. In "Dear Enemy" (4 October 1959) the protagonist becomes a doctor because she is competing with her prospective husband. This is the story of the "Girl who fought through life with the Clever Boy" by Gloria Dixon. Gloria works hard at school to beat a boy through primary school. Significantly, Gloria is also originally a tomboy and her rivalry with John stems from the fact that she is prevented from fighting with him on the playground: "I didn't take it quietly and we were having a lovely 'scrap' when the teacher came out and spanked us with the ruler. That started it all off" (Home Post, 4 October 1959:1). Although her parents can't afford to send her to high school she begs to go, merely in order to be with him and subsequently comes top of the class, once again only in order to beat him. Then she goes to Medical school because this is what he has always said he wants to do. In the end her competitiveness falls away, revealing its true nature: love. Thus, at first reading, the whole story of a woman acquiring a professional education is structured around her rivalry with a man which will "mature" into love. While this is
clearly in keeping with maintaining marriage as paramount in a woman's life, the very idea that a woman might aspire to the professional stature of a doctor is clearly anomalous and it resembles Head's advice to teenage girls to aspire to professional roles. Thus although the overt suggestion of this story is that competition is merely a disguise for love, there are once again submerged themes that suggest this story was written by Head.

The very idea of competitiveness between husband and wife is addressed quite explicitly in Drum magazine a few years prior to this story in the "Drum parliament", a forum where Drum would pose a question and solicit readers' responses. These parliaments often dealt with the conflicts between traditional and modern ways. In May 1954, Drum magazine invited readers to say whether Women should have equal rights with Men. With each debate they would provide examples of arguments from those for and against the suggestion. In this particular case, the "NO!" argument was supported by Mrs Ruth Mofolo, who was nineteen years old and the winner of the Drum beauty competition "Miss Africa" in 1953. In her argument against women's equal rights with men she specifically cites competitiveness as a problem:

> There would be no order in my house if I became equal to my husband. His sympathy for me as a woman would cease: we would become competitors. I would lose my feminine charm which is spared for him only and for lack of feminine admiration for me he would divert his interest to something else, for good or ill. (Drum magazine, May 1954: 31)

The result of readers' votes in this parliament provided a decision with one of the widest margins in any of the parliaments: one hundred and one readers voted "No" to women having equal rights with men, while only fifty-eight voted "Yes".

It is in light of this that the radical nature of a True Romance story endorsing,
even encouraging, competition between men and women becomes visible.

Against the background of *Drum*’s parliament Head’s attraction to Gibson’s text takes on a new significance. It also becomes clear that the review of Gibson’s autobiography represents a less disguised encouragement to women to be "somebody".

Head devotes a considerable part of the second instalment of the review to Gibson’s description of her tour of South East Asia in 1956. At the end of 1955 the United States State Department asked Gibson to form part of a Goodwill tour of South East Asia along with three other tennis players. The other woman in the group was Karol Fageros whom Gibson described as pale, blonde and pretty as a movie star. In contrast with Fageros’ glamour, Gibson describes how on their first stop, in Rangoon, Burma, she had to wash her hair. This is the longest single quotation that Head extracts from Gibson’s text, even lengthier than the extract from her speech after winning Wimbledon. The obvious significance it must have held for Head makes it worth reproducing:

"I had to do my hair, and for a Coloured girl ... that’s a real problem ... I’d brought most of the things I needed -- a pressing comb, a curling iron, a can of hair grease, and even an old soup can with the top cut off so that I could make a fire in it and heat the iron. I went into the bathroom and washed my hair ... when I walked back into the room [Karol] took one look at me and jumped on the bed and started rolling around and laughing. I didn’t mind a bit. I was a sight. When I first wash my hair, it absolutely stands up straight. "Go ahead" I told her, get your kicks. You’ll see when I get finished". When I got through Karol came over close to me and touched my hair and said "Gosh you’ve got really fine hair". And I said "that’s because I pressed it. If I don’t press it with a hot iron like that it would be a mess". (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)
Head provides no commentary on this extract, although it is quoted at such length. She continues instead, in a humorous tone, about how Gibson took a lively interest in Indian customs and food, and relates an incident in which Gibson ate too much and became ill. One is left wondering about the purpose of this grueling description of Althea doing her hair. Given the review's opening statement about Gibson making good "as a player and as a lady" one wonders whether this extract isn't another attempt to reassure readers about Gibson's femininity. Yet this extract simultaneously points out what a complicated negotiation modern femininity is for an African-American woman like Gibson. This is made clear in part of the description as it originally appears in the autobiography, but that Head omits from her extract. While Gibson is busy going her hair, Fageros, who is watching, asks whether she isn't afraid that she'll burn herself. Gibson's response is to get up and go into the bathroom:

I guess I got a little sensitive about it because I picked up all my stuff and went into the bathroom with it, but Karol kept getting up and peeking in to see how I was doing. And she kept laughing and laughing. She wasn't being mean, mind you, she was my friend; but she'd never seen anything like it before and it positively fractured her. I remember I said to her, "Don't laugh at me, honey, I can't help it. Us coloured girls don't have hair like yours, that's all. This is what we got to do for it." (Gibson, 1960: 84)

There are several reasons why Head might have left this exchange out of her extract. Gibson indicates the difference between black and white women in relation to modern identity, and deconstructs the "naturalness" of her appearance. In the True Romance slot where modern femininity was presented as "natural" with no reference to race, this extract is clearly out of place. Another possible reason is the extended personal intimacy displayed between Gibson and Fageros, who were sharing hotel rooms on the tour in order to save money, which would
have been taboo in apartheid South Africa. Gibson's position in the white world of tennis had already caused problems in Drum magazine. Drum editor, Sylvester Stein, resigned in 1957 when proprietor Jim Bailey refused to let him publish a cover of Drum with a photograph depicting Althea Gibson embracing her white opponent after her Wimbledon win. According to Stein's successor, Tom Hopkinson, former editor of Picture Post, "Bailey had thought the use of it likely to outrage South African sensibilities" (1962:16). Bailey was understandably concerned about censorship and at the end of March in 1960 the South African government instituted emergency regulations and the Drum office was raided and copies of the April 1960 edition of Drum seized. Presumably, therefore, there was an official or unofficial form of self-censorship taking place at Drum publications. Head censors the sentence by Gibson that appears directly after the extract reproduced. About her exchange with Fageros, Gibson says, "We were getting to know each other a whole lot better" (Gibson, 1960: 84). In apartheid South Africa, this is understandably excised from Head's Home Post review.

Yet there is a further complication to Gibson's tale about her hair in her autobiography that, given Gibson's comments, understandably never makes its way into Head's review: her location in Asia. She explains to Fageros that she "didn't usually have to fool around with it herself" and that back home she could have it done at a beauty parlour, but while travelling she didn't have any choice (1960: 84). In Calcutta Gibson goes out in search of a hairdresser: "I figured I

---


had a pretty good chance of getting what I wanted because most of the people in Calcutta are dark-skinned, and it seemed like the beauty shops ought to be used to my kind of hair" (1960: 85). The Indian hairdresser takes no notice of Gibson's requests and proceeds doing her hair against her instructions. The result of this visit, according to Gibson, is a disaster. She delivers a telling commentary:

The worst part of the whole evening was that we had to go to a fancy cocktail party that evening, and I'll bet we had to pose for fifty pictures. ... I'll never have a chance to forget what that Indian hairdresser did to my poor hair. I look like a [sic] Ubangi medicine man in every one of those pictures. (1960: 86)

Even as an African-American Gibson constructs her modern self-image in opposition to Africa, which is represented as primitive and backward. This moment illustrates a version of the complexity of racism that Head would later explore in Maru, where everyone defines themselves against another, less "advanced" racial group.

Understandably this description never appears in Head's review. Given this problematic use of Africa in Gibson's text, one might question Head's admiration for her. Yet as problematic as Gibson's representation of Africa may be, seen in the context of Drum and 1950s South Africa, Gibson does nevertheless represent a symbol of black femininity. Gibson represents herself as an agent of a modern black identity in Asia, an example and source of inspiration. In her description of the tour Gibson makes it clear that, as a black person, she had a special significance in Asia:
I was obviously the principle attraction of the group. Inasmuch as we were travelling among dark-skinned peoples, that was completely understandable. ... Because I was a Negro, the Asians were not only particularly interested in me, they were especially proud of me. The kids looked at me, as I played, with awe and amazement. They couldn't believe that any Negro could play tennis so well. I can testify that they loved Karol, who not only played fine tennis but also looked like a Hollywood movie star, but they unquestionably got a special kick out of me because of my colour. (1960: 93)

When confronted with women in Pakistan and their arranged marriages, Gibson expresses her surprise at how westernised the women are in their ways, but then makes a fundamental distinction:

The girls go out on dates, go to movies, play tennis, go on swimming parties, much as we do at home. The only difference is that they don't ever go out with anyone except the boy to whom they have been betrothed. Although, if you ask me, they would very much like to. (1960: 92)

She thus expresses the idea that the westernised American way is preferable and that the women in Pakistan would choose it if they were given the choice. It is significant to notice Head's choice in extracting quotations from this section of the autobiography. She chooses to quote the paragraph that appears directly after Gibson's statement about looking like an "Ubangi medicine man". She relates an incident about how Gibson became ill in Rangoon after eating too many oriental delicacies. She also quotes the paragraph that appears directly after Gibson's discussion of the Pakistani women. Since neither of the two extracts quoted -- about Gibson's overindulgence or her commentary on Pakistan -- are particularly significant, Head's pattern of quotation seems particularly curious. What is clear though, is Head's fascination with Gibson's text at this point.

I have already suggested that Gibson's text provides a source for Head's writing, or rewriting, of the True Romance stories and it is interesting to notice
that there is a True Romance story dealing with the shift from arranged marriage to modern romance, published less than a month after Head's review of Gibson. This story, published on the 6th of September, 1959, makes a shift from traditional arranged marriage to modern romance. The story highlights the oppositions that Gibson suggests and illustrates her notion that all women would like to choose their partners, if only they had the choice. "Bibi" is "The Quiet Widow" and the standfirst informs the reader that "[t]hey belonged to different worlds: hers was narrow and lonely; his was unconventional and exciting" (Home Post 6 September 1959: 1). At the outset of the story Bibi relates her past: she comes from a small country town and at sixteen she is taken out of school to prepare for marriage to a husband chosen by her parents. She dutifully accepts: "it never occurred to me to disobey. Just as it never occurred to me to follow any path save the one that the women in our family had dutifully trod for so many generations" (1). Yet, despite her protestations of happiness, there are several clues to the reader that this is a less than fulfilling union for a woman:

My husband went out quite often and never told me where he was going but I didn't worry much because it was s small town and I know he liked to spend his time with his friends. I did not feel so lonely with the baby.... (Home Post 6 September 1959: 1)

When she is nineteen years old, Bibi's husband dies and she is left a widow. She is very depressed about having to go back and live with her parents again and feels suicidal. On the advice of the doctor, she is sent to visit her married sister who lives in a large town where she has become "modernised". The scene presented contrasts with Bibi's conventional and predictable lifestyle:
On the first day I got here I knew I was in a completely different world. My sister had changed too. She was no longer the quiet girl I once knew. She laughed a lot too and there was a feeling in that house that something unexpected would happen ... It certainly changed me. I felt alive and well, excited and interested in life as I had never ever been before and something happened to me to bring about such a complete change that I have not since felt like the old Bibi -- I fell in love. (Home Post, 6 September, 1959: 1)

The man Bibi falls in love with finds her "old world ways" very amusing and as a result Bibi cuts her hair and lifts her hems. This bears a curious similarity to The Cardinals, where Johnny makes Mouse "cut two inches off those hems" in order to be more "ship-shape", after she moves in with him (Head, 1993: 73). The parents of the man Bibi falls in love with object to her because she is two years older than their son is and she has a child from her first marriage. She realises that she could not "break away entirely from the way she had been brought up" and she leaves in an attempt to go back and forget the way she has changed. She finds, however, that she no longer fits into the old world: "The older people would hardly speak to me and I could see them thinking: 'You see what happens when you send your daughter away from home and she learns strange ways''" (Home Post 6 September 1959: 1). While the town where Bibi's sister lives is "not far away from home", the discrepancies between the two worlds sounds far more like the Pakistan Gibson contrasts with America. Yet these distinctions might apply quite equally to the differences between black South African rural communities and the cities. The man involved follows Bibi and asks her to marry him, in the romantic tradition. Bibi says yes, but is concerned that it is all "contrary to custom". However, this "modern young man" cared "nothing for custom" (Home Post, 6 September, 1959: 1).
Since the change that takes place in this story is a shift from the traditional towards a modern romantic union one might be tempted, at this point, to draw on theories of the romance genre, and suggest that this story advances an ideology of romantic love through displacing tradition. Janice Radway has argued that the ideology of romantic love is propagated in all romance stories "insisting thereby that marriage between a man and a woman is not an economic or social necessity or a purely sexual affiliation but an emotional bond freely forged" (Radway, 187: 170). While Radway's comment could certainly apply to this story, viewing it in the context of Drum publications in South Africa, shows that merely reading it in terms of a feminist critique of the ideology of romantic love would be insufficient to reveal the many complexities at work in this text.

Bibi's story, along with other stories published in Home Post, are part of the transition from the traditional towards the modern that took place during the decade of the 50s in Drum magazine. The narratives produced in this vein describe, almost exclusively, the male journey to the city, representing the male struggle to acquire modern identity. The True Romance stories published in Home Post are clearly dealing with this transition and represent the only female versions of this journey. Paton's vision of black womanhood corrupted by the modern ways of the city is rarely contested. In this context, the True Romance story of Bibi becomes particularly important.

The end of the story sets up a dialogue between traditional customs and the new possibilities offered by the modern. When Bibi marries her "modern young man" they do not move back to the large town where her sister lives, they stay in Bibi's hometown in the country. While Bibi returns to the country, she takes her modern ways with her, thus becoming an agent of the modern:
there were some unpleasant whispers at first. Unexpected things are always hard for people who live quietly, to accept. But I think my husband is doing a lot to break down the conventions and sameness of living in this small town. 

_We have become quite popular and now have a lot of firm friends among the younger people._ (Home Post, 6 September, 1959: 1)

We are once again confronted with two generations discussed, in various forms, throughout this thesis: the rural parents and, in this case, the urban daughter. The end of the story, however, returns to the urban son and gives the credit for social transformation to Bibi's husband and Bibi remains within a domestic space, albeit a new modern one that she has chosen herself. The story does, however, embrace and encourage modern ways for women and suggests the mobility that modern life might offer women. It seems appropriate to note that very much later Head wrote a short story called "The Lovers" which also deals, albeit in a different context, with the question of arranged marriage and the shift towards a modern version of love (Head, 1989). Bibi's story is clearly limited by romance genre and its formulaic necessity of concluding with marriage and the story thus reveals why Head embraced Gibson's alternative version of a modern black womanhood, problematic as it might have been. The divergence between Gibson's story and the True Romance of Bibi reveals, once again, the radical nature of the image of black modern womanhood that Head was presenting by placing her reviews of Gibson in the usual True Romance slot.

As the review progresses, Head continues the topic of Gibson as a representative of a black modern identity. She extracts a quotation from the autobiography in which Gibson describes how, after the tour she became "a special sort of person":
"I became a Negro with a certain amount of international significance. It was pleasant to think about but hard to live with [...] after that there was nothing more. I thought if only I had someone of my own, someone I could completely relax with and let my hair down with. I could be happy...." (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)

This is a plea repeated in Gibson's text. Just before playing the Wimbledon finals in England, she expresses the desire for someone to let her hair down with: "At a time like that, when you're building up more and more tension every day, you like to be with people of your own kind, people you can relax with, and let your hair down with, and never have to be on guard with" (1960: 119). The text thus produces a real sense of the strain Gibson was under, constantly being held up as representative of what an African-American woman could achieve. Given the gruelling earlier description of doing her hair, one cannot help but wonder if her pleas for someone she "could let [her] hair down with" isn't more than just a figure of speech.

The climax of the review is Gibson's Wimbledon victory in 1957. In her description of the run-up to the final match Gibson goes to great length to describe her outfits, and her dedication to manners, presumably to reassure her readers that she was no longer a tomboy. While this is not reproduced by Head, it is worth quoting since it reveals that Head's strain to represent Gibson as feminine was due to her attentive reading of, and fidelity to, Gibson's self-representation. Her outfit for the women's singles match is described in detail, uncommon in Gibson's text: "I brought along a pretty new tennis outfit, Terrylene pleated shorts that the English designer, Teddy Tinling (who designed Gussie Morgan's famous lace panties), had made for me, and a Fred Perry shirt" (1960: 120).
Gibson goes to similar length to describe her commitment to getting the Wimbledon rituals, like curtsying on front of the Duchess of Devon, right: "I was a little bit worried about the curtsy because I'd never tried it before, but I'd seen it done lots of times in the movies, and I was sure I could manage it" (1960: 118). Given her lack of knowledge and experience, Gibson, like the Drum generation, fashions her behaviour on American films. She reiterates this after she has won and has to curtsy to the Queen: "I remembered that backing-away business from the movies too" (1960: 122). Yet none of these descriptions appear in Head's review, as one might expect in a women's supplement dedicated to fashion and feminine etiquette as Home Post was. Head chooses, instead, to focus on Gibson's speech at the Wimbledon ball, given in honour of the champions. In that speech Gibson appropriates the words of Winston Churchill's "The Finest Hour" speech, given at the House on Commons on the 18th of June, 1940.10

"In the words of your distinguished Mr. Churchill, this is my finest hour. This is the hour I will remember always as the crowning conclusion to a long and wonderful journey.

10 Churchill's words: "What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"
"It all started in one of New York's play streets when Buddy Walker, a play-street supervisor, reached beyond his grasp of a handful of youngsters playing paddle tennis. (Home Post 16 August 1959: 1)

In a gesture that, coming from an African-American woman, has to be subversive, Gibson appropriates the language of Churchill and incorporates his words, regarding the survival of civilisation, into her narrative about emerging from Harlem. Gibson reveals, in her text, that she worked on the speech for days before the women's singles finals in preparation for the fact that she might win, so one can assume that her choice of Churchill's speech was carefully chosen (Gibson, 1960: 120). By using Churchill's speech, Gibson seems to emphasize the significance of her own "victory", over her white opponent, "the California girl", Darlene Hard (Gibson, 1960: 120). As an African-American woman, using Churchill's words about the survival of civilisation, Gibson enacts a revision of the very meaning of civilisation, and writes herself into modern history. By presenting this image to her readers, Head invites black South African women to be inspired by Gibson's example.
"She Wants to be a Pilot!": Modernity, Race and Gender in Bessie Head's
columns

I have suggested that the influence of Gibson's text extends to Head's columns
and Head's willingness to experiment with popular American forms is apparent
soon after she began them. On the 28th of June 1959, five weeks after she began
writing the columns, the "Hiya Teenagers!" section bears the Headline "Too
Many Girls' Sez One Boy! 'I'm lonely.' Sez T'Other", revealing Head's
willingness to experiment with Americanised language (Home Post 28 June
1959: 7). On the same page, in the "Dear Gang" column for younger children,
Head introduces herself to the younger readers, in terms that, I suggest, can be
traced back to Gibson's text. Since this column was published five weeks before
Head's review of I Always Wanted to be Somebody, one can assume that she
would have been reading Gibson's book while writing these columns. That Head
was constructing a fictional life to present to her young readers, is made apparent
by the second week after she began writing the columns, since in her second
"Dear Gang" text, she presents a cosy picture of her home life to her readers.
She relates a story about how she picks up a stray cat and takes it home to Mum,
who "kicked up a fuss at the 'dirty little black thing covered in grease and full of
fleas'" (Home Post 7 June 1959: 6). Head continues: "When I got home that
evening Mum and Garridge [the stray cat] were the best of friends" (6). This
obviously bears no resemblance to Head's biography. It was three weeks later
that Head introduced herself to her readers and - five weeks prior to her review
of Althea Gibson's text - she chooses to construct herself as a tomboy:
I think I’m an adventurous sort of person and because of that I always seem to be getting into trouble. When I was small I often got a good box on the ears because I was forever going down to the river near my home or climbing in the hills when I should have been in the back yard playing with dolls. Agh! I just hated dolls. I wanted to know all about boxing and race-horses and everything a girl shouldn’t know about...

A short while ago I was a school teacher and it seemed to me that I wasn’t going to see the world that way, so I gave it up and so far I’ve been around quite a bit. (Home Post 28 June 1959:7)

This description is remarkably similar to the "True Romance" published a month later on 26 July 1959 -- which I have already suggested also bears similarity to the opening page of Gibson’s text -- "The Tomboy Falls in Love":

In my younger days I was the wildest tomboy you could find. My legs always had innumerable scars from the scratches I received climbing trees, scrambling through barbed wire fences and the falls I took during the wild games we played. (Home Post 26 July 1959: 1)

Yet while the "True Romance" narrative of youth is similar to Head’s description of herself, the difference between the two soon becomes apparent as the "True Romance" text continues, "Now the few, almost invisible scars that remain are usually concealed by sheer, silk stockings" (Home Post 26 July 1959: 1, emphasis in original). While the heroine of the story is transformed, Head’s description of growing up bears far more resemblance to Gibson’s text, since Head presents herself as a tomboy in her childhood and an adventurous adult and she shifts between her past childhood and her present adulthood with apparent ease and continuity. Unlike the "True Romance" where there is a break, albeit strained, between the childhood tomboy and the adult woman, there is no suggestion in Head’s text that she is any different as an adult woman. In fact, quite the contrary is suggested. Like Gibson’s description of her itinerant life on
the opening page of her autobiography, Head's narrative self-construction is one of continual movement; she is "adventurous", and "climb[s] in the hills" as a child and then as an adult leaves the teaching profession to "see the world". She thus constructs herself as someone who was, and is still, continually on the move.

Both Head's and Gibson's texts begin with a tale of punishment as a result of transgression, yet in both the desire motivating the transgression is greater than the fear of punishment. In Head's text it is the desire for adventure and knowledge, in Gibson's text it is the desire to be somebody. Returning to Gibson's opening at this point reveals the comparison with Head's construction:

I always wanted to be somebody. I guess that's why I was always running away from home when I was a kid even though I took some terrible whippings for it. It's why I took to tennis right away and kept working at it, even though I was the wildest tomboy you ever saw and my strong liking were a mile away from what the tennis people wanted me to do. It's why I've been willing to live like a gypsy all these years, always being a guest in other people's houses and doing things the way they said, even though what I've always craved is to live the way I want to in a place of my own with nobody to answer to but myself. It's why, ever since I was a wild, arrogant girl in my teens, playing stickball and basketball and baseball and paddle tennis and even football in the streets in the daytime and hanging around bowling alleys half the night, I've worshiped Sugar Ray Robinson. It wasn't just because he was a wonderful person, and good to me when there was no special reason for him to be; it was because he was somebody and I was determined that I was going to be somebody, too -- even if it killed me. (Gibson, 1960: 5)

It is important to recall that Head was writing for children and Gibson's "terrible whippings" is replaced by Head's milder "box on the ears". Yet Head's narrative of transgression continues: as a girl she wanted to know "all about boxing and race-horses and everything a girl shouldn't know about" (Home Post 28 June 1959:7). The reference to boxing echoes Gibson's admiration for Sugar Ray Robinson, yet the reference to race-horses is noteworthy for several reasons. Given Head's later fictional familial construction of her biological father as a
groom and her mother’s family as race-horse owners one cannot help but notice that \textit{race-horses} are part of everything a girl shouldn’t know about.\textsuperscript{11} Race-horses are thus connected with both prohibition and transgression of this prohibition. The connection between prohibition and race-horses in this fictional construction of Head’s childhood invites one to question her choice of family romance. Since Head might have chosen any fictional circumstances for her parents one wonders whether it wasn’t her mother’s racial transgression of the immorality act that served as the basis for this recurring fiction about \textit{race-horses}.

In the same issue of \textit{Home Post} the "True Romance" called "Love at the Races" also deals with race horses: it is set at the Durban July - South Africa’s most celebrated annual horse-racing event. The protagonist "Margaret", who is a poor factory worker, buys an expensive hat and goes to the races for the first time. While masquerading as "Cinderella for a Day", Margaret bets on a horse called "Masquerader". Predictably she meets her Prince Charming but flees from him thinking that he must be wealthy and educated and that they are not of the same "type". After meeting him again in the city of Durban, she confesses her poverty and he says that he is "just an ordinary working guy" (\textit{Home Post} 28 July 1959: 1). One might recall that "Margaret" is also the name of the main female protagonist in Head’s novel \textit{Maru}, named after her adoptive mother, Margaret Cadmore. The fictional Margaret Cadmore is based on a teacher, of the same name, at St Monica’s home, where Head spent her teenage years, who "made a

tremendous impression on Bessie" (Eilersen, 1995: 29). Mary also deals with the question of identity and masquerading set in a romance frame: Margaret is given the opportunity to masquerade as "coloured", which would inspire admiration from the local community. She chooses instead to identify her "Masarwa", or "bushman", origin and face the ensuing racial prejudice. Like Margaret in "Love at the Races" Margaret Cadmore's honesty is also "rewarded" with marriage.\textsuperscript{12}

It is in the weeks preceding Head's review of Gibson's text that its influence on Head's columns, and the constructions of identity offered to her readers, becomes most apparent. When Head took over the "Hiya Teenagers!" from the previous writer, "Sharon", it was largely an advice column where teenagers sent in their problems and received advice. Sharon Davis was a pen name used by journalist, Juby Mayet, who wrote the children's and teenagers' columns before, and after, Head and was one of the few women writing for Drum during the 1950s.\textsuperscript{13} Head immediately set about attempting to change the conventional formula set by Mayet. As Margaret Daymond points out, "she broke abruptly with the earlier assumption that ... teenage readers were moody, self-centred, love-lorn 'kids' and worked hard to turn their interests outward, to the actual world around them" (1993: viii). It is certainly true that throughout the eleven-month period during which she compiled this column Head encouraged teenagers to engage in a process of dialogue with herself and with one another, through the column. Head tried hard to introduce new topics of discussion and debates into the column and in the latter she certainly appears to have succeeded

\textsuperscript{12} See Guldimann, 1993.

\textsuperscript{13} This information about writing the columns for \textit{Home Post} was confirmed by Juby Mayet in a telephonic conversation held in February 1998.
as the letters take issue with her and there is often a lively, and witty, exchange.
Yet I want to suggest that Head was doing something even more significant than
Daymond suggests: she was constructing, and offering her readers, alternative
versions of modern black identity, constructed in dialogue with Althea Gibson's
text and, thus, popular culture.

One of the letters during Head's first week on the column is typical of
what Daymond indicates. A teenager named Laura from Durban complains that
she cannot go to the cinema very often and is not allowed to talk to boys because
her mother won't let her. While the previous, and subsequent, writer of this
column, "Sharon", would usually agree with teenagers that their mothers were
unreasonable and old-fashioned, Head adopts a conciliatory tone:

This is a time in your life when your mother should
be your best pal ... Few mothers are deliberately
"nasty" or spoilsports ... so try to cultivate some
interests around the home, such as reading and
getting that patch of garden in order. (Home Post
31 May 1959: 6)

It is poignant to see Head, who "lost" one mother during her teenage years, only
to find that she had already lost her biological mother, and for whom the lack of
a mother loomed so large, articulating the value of mothers to teenagers girls. It
also seems extraordinary that the advice dispensed here about "reading and
getting that patch of garden in order" delineates activities that will dominate
Head's own later life. From suggesting that Laura shouldn't be interested solely
in dating and talking to boys Head becomes more explicit in her attempts to
restructure the column several weeks later (5 July 1959) with the headline "Don't
rush to Marry". By 12 July 1959 her exasperation with attempts to introduce
new topics of discussion is unambiguously stated at the end of the column in a "PS":

"Those Other Problems"
P.S. A word to all love-lorn or love-lost teenagers: Please send me some of your other problems too -- like the careers you want to choose or what you think should be done about this muddled-up old world.

... My definition of a teenager is: "One who is gay, slightly crazy and always up and doing things -- no not always falling into complications like ... LOVE. (Home Post 12 July 1959: 8)

It is, however, in her response to one of the letters published in that week's column that Head begins to use language that will dominate the teenage column in the ensuing weeks. There is a letter from "Daniel", of Johannesburg, who writes to Bessie because his father has died and he has had to leave school to support his mother. He describes himself as "ambitious" but that he doesn't seem to be "getting anywhere" because his wage is too low to allow for study. He asks Bessie whether he will "ever get anywhere in this world" (Home Post 12 July 1959: 8). At the end of an encouraging letter, Head tells him that "Success" or "'getting somewhere' is always a struggle" (8). While this is reminiscent of Gibson's words, the following two weeks leave no doubt about the source of Head's advice.

The following week's column is devoted to a letter from a teenager who apparently responded to Head's plea for other topics of discussion. The Headline of the column announces that "She wants to be a Pilot!" Head begins in her already typical style: "We forget this week all those problems that complicate and mix us up to much" (Home Post 19 July 1959: 6). She claims that she
received a letter from a fourteen-year old girl with "the great ambition to be a PILOT":

"One day", her letter said, "I would like to be a pilot. I've always loved aeroplanes and read quite a lot of books on them. I'd like to own my own 'plane some day." Of course I just could not believe it. So I paid a visit to Cynthia at home and found a determined young lady who firmly claimed that if she did not become a pilot then she would like to do something else that was equally difficult and important. She wants to GET somewhere, be SOMETHING. (Home Post 19 July 1959: 6, Capitalisation in original)

The language certainly seems to come straight from Gibson's "I always wanted to be Somebody". The use of Gibson's language is unambiguous in the following week's column when Head introduces a guest writer, Ismail Khan, who speaks about his life in words that are strikingly similar to those used about Cynthia Smith the previous week:

I am 19 years old and the only thing that is important to me is success in life. I WANT TO BE SOMEBODY.

... "And the thing I think least about is getting married. I feel that getting to be something first is more important." (Home Post 26 July 1959: 8, capitalisation in original)

Ismail Khan's column reproduces Gibson's title almost verbatim, revealing that Head was using Gibson as a source to inspire young black teenagers in South Africa. Nor is this the only reference to popular American culture. Cynthia Smith claims that she was born on the same date as Elvis Presley: "You can see we're very poor," she said, "and if I want to study further it's going to be difficult, but I was born on the same day as Elvis Presley (January 8) and if he could be successful then why can't I?" (Home Post 19 July 1959: 6). It seems striking that
while using Gibson's language to describe Cynthia Smith's ambition, the model of success is also drawn from popular American culture. Here Head's use of popular American culture becomes apparent: she is attempting to instil Gibson's sense of ambition in black teenagers by using her words to describe Cynthia's ambition. Yet since there are no popular black role models for her readers to aspire to, Elvis Presley becomes the popular model of success. Yet what Head is doing is far more complex than merely offering her readers a popular American myth of success.

Head describes Cynthia's dinging-room as being full of pictures of Elvis Presley and one of an air hostess, yet Cynthia insists that she doesn't want to be an air hostess, she wants to be a pilot. Cynthia thus rejects the more appropriate "feminine" equivalent to being a Pilot. What makes this picture extraordinary, is that a young black teenage girl would not have been allowed by the South African authorities to become an airhostess in apartheid South Africa, let alone a pilot. Cynthia would have been barred from being a pilot on account of both race and gender. That Head's representation in this column is a fantasy -- in terms of race and gender -- is tacitly acknowledged in the column a month later. There is a letter from "A.D.S." of Johannesburg who is at University and whose parents want him or her (the gender of A.D.S. is not apparent) to become a doctor. The writer, however, claims that he or she would like to be a pilot, yet acknowledges the reality of the South African situation:

I'm interested in mechanics and would possibly like to be a pilot, but I realise that I would leave home and study overseas as there is little scope in South Africa for someone like me, in that line. I do not want to leave my country.... (Home Post 16 August 1959: 3)
This letter thus appears to be a realistic redaction of the one that appeared from Cynthia Smith a month before. Yet while Head's representation of Cynthia Smith's ambition might be criticised as being an unrealistic fantasy, I want to argue that Head is doing something extremely significant by giving black South African teenage girls the symbol of flight and technology.

In the tradition of black literature since Richard Wright's *Native Son*, says Barbara Hill Rigney, the privilege of flight, at least in airplanes, is mostly reserved for white boys. Black men's desire to fly and their exclusion from flight has a lengthy history in African-American writing. Beginning with Wright's *Native Son* (1940), this tradition is revised by writers like Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* (1952) and Toni Morrison, whose male characters "imagine themselves in flight and are almost all in love with airplanes" (Rigney, 1991: 28).

I want to suggest that Head offers a seminal South African revision of this tradition of the male desire for flight, and more importantly, its implications for identity and modernity. Since it is an established fact that the *Drum* writers were reading African-American writers, it is entirely possible that, under the same influence, Head read Wright's work. It is thus worth turning to the original moment in this tradition, since the commentary on the restrictions on flying for black people in *Native Son* are similar to those revealed in Head's second revised column, about the impossibility of becoming a pilot in South Africa. Early in *Native Son*, Bigger and his friend Gus are out on a South Side Chicago street, warming themselves in the sun because it is warmer than the radiators at home. While complaining about the white landlords, Bigger looks upward and sees "a slender steak of billowing white blooming against a white sky", it is a sky writing plane, spelling out the message: "use speed gasoline":
A plane was writing high up in the air. "Look!" Bigger said.
"What?"
"That plane writing up there," Bigger said pointing.
... They squinted at a tiny ribbon of unfolding vapor that spelled out the word: USE ... The plane was so far away that at times the strong glare of the sun blanked it out from sight. ...
"Them white boys sure can fly," Gus said.
"Yeah," Bigger said wistfully. "They get the chance to do everything."
...
"I could fly one of them things if I had a chance," Bigger mumbled reflectively, as though talking to himself. Gus pulled down the corners of his lips, stepped out from the wall, squared his shoulders, doffed his cap, bowed low, and spoke with mock deference:
"Yessuh."
"You go to hell," Bigger said, smiling.
"Yessuh," Gus said again.
"I could fly a plane if I had a chance," Bigger said.
"If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane," Gus said. (Wright, 2000: 46-47)

The passage draws attention to the boys' physical and symbolic distance from the plane and the possibility of flying. When Bigger expresses his desire to fly, Gus mockingly treats Bigger as white. Thus Bigger's desire to fly is met with derision, because of his blackness, even from his black friend. The discussion continues with Bigger linking the restrictions on flying to racism and voicing a correlation between flying and political retribution:

For a moment Bigger contemplated all the "ifs" that Gus had mentioned. Then both boys broke into hard laughter, looking at each, through squinted eyes. When their laughter subsided, Bigger said in a voice that was half-question and half-statement:
"It's funny how the white folks treat us, ain't it?"
"It better be funny," Gus said.
"Maybe they right in not wanting us to fly," Bigger said.
"Cause if I took a plane up I'd take a couple of bombs along and drop 'em as sure as hell..."
"Use Speed Gasoline," Bigger mused, rolling the words slowly from his lips. "God, I'd like to fly up there in that sky."
"God'll let you fly when He gives you your wings up in heaven," Gus said. (Wright, 2000: 47)

Once again it is Gus who indicates the unrealistic nature of Bigger's fantasy. Houston Baker Jr. suggests that "the appearance of the plane in both *Invisible Man* and *Native Son* signifies what might be called a traditional dynamics of Afro-American place" (1990: 86). I want to draw on his argument as a way of understanding and pointing out the significance of Head's column about the black female desire for flight. The plane soaring above Bigger's head suggests the enormous confinement of black life and "the dreadful dichotomy between black and white experience in the New World" (Baker, 1990: 86). These airplanes are "signifiers of American industrial/technological arrangements that make traditional Afro-American geographies into a placeless place" (1990: 86).

According to Baker, Bigger's South Side lacks the quality of place as it is traditionally defined. Essential to the formulation of place is a valuing of human agency, since "for place to be recognised as actually PLACE, as a personally valued locale, one must set and maintain the boundaries" (1990: 87). If, however, one is constituted by and within boundaries set by a dominating authority, "then one is not a setter of place but a prisoner of another's desire" (1990: 87). "Under these conditions", Baker continues, "what one calls and, perhaps, feels is one's own place, would be, from the perspective of human agency, placeless" (1990: 87). Nowhere could this lack of place, as delineated by Baker, be more acutely experienced than in apartheid South Africa's system of pass laws and influx control. There is thus, according to Baker, just reason for Bigger to want to fly, for it is, "in effect, flying machines that connote the
abilities of their owners, their pilots and their lawgivers, to control all boundaries" (1993: 202).

At one level then, Head's two columns dealing with the desire to fly and its impossibility might be read as a commentary on, and critique of, the same sense of black confinement and lack of agency, since her columns, like Wright's novel, draw tacit attention to the fact that black South Africans are not allowed to fly. Yet, curiously while Head adopts the same language, derived from Althea Gibson, in her two columns about Cynthia Smith and Ismail Khan, the desire to be a pilot is attributed to female, Cynthia Smith, and the discussion about wanting to get somewhere before marriage, to male guest writer, Ismail Khan. Given the gender conventions one would expect to find it the other way around. It would thus appear that Head sets up the female desire for flight quite intentionally. In searching for a way of reading this gesture, it is useful to continue with Baker's argument about the dynamics of place in Richard Wright. Baker turns his discussion to the history of the placeless in African-American culture as represented in Wright's 12 Million Black Voices and specifically the generation who are the "first-born of the city tenements" (1990: 97). In an attempt to forge a new African-American, who is able to share in the Western mechanical dream, these "Men in the Making" project a vision that is a "merger of Afro-American males with progressive forces of Western industrial technology, a merger that, by the very nature of women's calling and consciousness, excludes them" (1990: 98). Baker demonstrates this by quoting from Wright's "Men in the Making" in 12 Million Black Voices:

It is in industry and we [black men] encounter experiences that tend to break down the structure of our folk character and project us towards the
vortex of modern urban life. It is when we are handling picks rather than mops, when we are swinging hammers rather than brooms, it is when we are pushing levers rather than dust-clothes that we are gripped and influenced by the world-wide forces that shape and mould the life of Western civilization. (Wright quoted in Baker, 1990: 98)

Thus the vortex of modern urban life becomes essentially masculine since, according to Wright, for African-American women who worked mainly as domestics "the orbit of life is narrow -- from their kitchenette to the white folk's kitchen and home again". These women "love the church more than they do our men, who find a large measure of expression of their lives in the mills and factories" (Wright quoted in Baker, 1990: 98). African-American women are thus excluded, by Wright, from modernity: "More than even that of the American Indian, the consciousness of vast sections of our black women lies beyond the boundaries of the modern world" (Baker, 1990: 98). Baker suggests that Wright's "scandalising of the name of African-American women is a function of a desperately felt necessity for the black male narrative voice to come into 'conscious history'" (1990: 98). While black men's work had changed significantly with their migration from the plantations to the Northern cities, women's roles remained largely domestic, as Wright's quote indicates. This kept women connected to a history of slavery and folk culture that the first male generation in the cities felt they had left behind, a past which they felt it was necessary to repress, in order to enter into Western modernism (Baker, 1990: 101).

Strikingly similar ideas about black women's relationship with modernity and technology were being reproduced in Drum magazine during the 1950s. Drum played a crucial role in the reformulation of black identity in its relocation from the rural and traditional towards the urban and modern. Re-defining gender
roles in the city was a crucial part of that negotiation. The initial shift away from African Drum and traditional, or tribal, identity appeared, for a while, to create a debate about new possibilities of women's role in the modern city. In September 1952 Drum magazine published a feature asking the question: "IS A WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE HOME?" (Drum magazine, September 1952: 11). It is clear from the fact that the question was being posed, that Drum magazine and its readers were trying to decide how, and where, women should fit into the new urban structure. Drum asked: "Should Wives go out to socials and meetings with husbands, or should they stay at home to look after family and house?" (Drum magazine, September 1952: 11). Drum solicited the opinion of several prominent figures. The response of Mrs C.L. Mampuru of Orlando, a former teacher, social worker and freelance writer serves as a good example of the transition which women had undergone, as well as the pressing economic realities of women's lives:

"A Woman's place is all over"
I think a woman's place is all over. Originally women had to keep at home to look after the children and plough the land. A woman accepted that type of life and was proud to be at home to do what her custom and tradition imposed on her. Every woman should be at home, but enlightened women of today cannot always be at home. This applies particularly to professional women, such as social workers. ... Anyway the economic position today is such that even the non-professional woman finds herself compelled to work and help her husband make ends meet. (Drum magazine, September 1952: 11)

The appropriate place for women is clearly different in the country, where women should plough the land, and in the city, where women are compelled to work, even the "non-professional" or domestic worker. This text expresses ambiguity about the appropriate place for women and makes an obvious class
distinction between professional and non-professional women: women's place remains in flux.

Yet less than two years later, in May 1954, *Drum* held one of its polls for readers, the "*Drum* Parliament", posing the question: "Should Women have Equal rights with Men?" Letters representing diverging opinions, on which *Drum* magazine readers could base their voting decision, were published. Saying "Yes!" was Kabe Mngoma, a supervisor at the Moroka Centre, whose words are even stronger than those of Mrs Mampuru:

> A great deal of our women's potentiality is not given expression: men suppress them. ... Men argue that they are the bread winners and women are the helpers. It's all nonsense: women are as much bread winners as the men are. (*Drum* magazine May 1954: 31)

One has, however, only to turn to the letter urging readers to vote "NO!" -- from Ronald Tinker Kweyama (43), a law clerk in Johannesburg -- to see what Kabe Mngoma's words might mean, since this letter bears distinct resemblance to the words of Richard Wright:

> Our women haven't reached a stage where they could be in equal terms with men. They still adhere to obsolete traditions and parents still demand lobola for their daughters. God said: let us make a man to my image; so that men are direct representatives of God. (*Drum* magazine May 1954: 31)

In this representation women's consciousness also "lies beyond the boundaries of the modern world" as Wright suggests. While in Wright the obsolete practices were in the kitchen and the church, which had been replaced for men by the public world of Western progress, in Ronald Tinker Kweyama's letter in *Drum*, quoted above, Christianity is the sign of Western Progress replacing traditional African practices. In either case women "still adhere to obsolete traditions" and a
similar theory of evolutionary advancement that is being drawn on in both the South African and African-American texts. The results of this Drum parliament were published two months later, in July 1954. While in other Drum parliaments there was usually a small margin between "yes" and "no" votes, in this particular case -- about women's equal rights -- there was an overwhelming majority: "DRUM readers vote NO!: 101 said No!" while only "58 said Yes!" (Drum magazine July 1954: 16).

It is clear that something transpired in Drum magazine between 1952 and 1954 to consolidate arguments against women's equality. Yet it is also clear that something very complicated was happening here between the discourses of race, gender, modernity and Westernisation. The arguments of "development" that are being used by black South African men against women are, ironically, the very same arguments that are being used against the development of blacks by the apartheid government, as is apparent from its policy of "separate development", as discussed in my first chapter. This is similar to the effect of Richard Wright's texts. Baker indicates that by relegating African-American women to domestic spaces and effectively excluding them from modernity, Wright is using the same arguments against women that white Southerners in the United States used against slave men (1990: 99).

This debate took place in Drum magazine just five years before Head's column in Golden City Post, and against this background it is striking that she sets up her model of modern female identity in its most radical form: the entry into technological modernity. This alternative vision continued to dominate Head's teenage column, as Head continued to advise teenage girls against focussing all their attention on the domestic space of marriage. Head's position
vis-à-vis romance is admirably summarised, and satirised, in a letter written to Head, which appeared on 1 November 1959. Head says that "young lady who calls herself 'just Morgana' has written me a very long and admonishing letter in which she decided to put me right on a few points:

Who do you think you're kidding? Not me, I assure you. My grouse is that you're trying to make us teenagers believe that there is nothing like young love. Week after week I read such advice as: "Forget him, make other friends" or "you're too young to know what love really means". Well, I'm telling you you're wrong. We do know the meaning of love. We cannot forget so easily. From the way you talk I'd say you have never been in love once in your life. (Home Post 1 Nov. 1959: 6)

Head's response must be quoted, if only for its display of her witty, humorous repartee:

No kiddin'
I'm not attempting to kid anyone, old girl, I'm speaking from experience. As for saying I haven't been in love! That accusation is a terrible understatement when I think of Harry or John and all those heartaches and how each time I thought the end of the world had come or this was the real thing ... well when it all came to nothing I got over it all right and the world went on and I made other friends. (Home Post 1 Nov. 1959: 6)

In spite of, perhaps because of, all the opposition Head claimed she received to her attempts to dissuade teenage interest in love and romance, only two weeks later she was again attempting again to restructure the column to include "those other problems":

Hiya Teenagers: Take a look at your page today ... Quite a difference isn't there? From now on we're going to discuss our problems in a different way. Each week we will deal with a different aspect of teenage life -- careers; how much pocket money we should get; at what time should we be
home at night; how old a girl should be before she is allowed to use make-up or have a boyfriend -- that sort of thing. (Home Post 15 Nov. 1959: 6)

Although this concept did not appear to take off as there are no letters to this effect, on 29 November 1959 the column is taken up with a single letter from a boy, calling himself "Thoughtful" and talking about intelligent girls. The heading reads: "His Girl Friends Must Be Beautiful and BRAINY". The opening of the letter sheds interesting light on the way "Thoughtful" (and thus perhaps other teenage readers as well) perceived Bessie:

"You know Bessie", he writes, "I can just hear you say 'oh yes', in a very condescending way, when I say that I usually choose only beautiful girls to go out with. But wait a second and I'll tell you that there's some other quality that is a guide in helping me choose my girlfriends -- and that is intelligence.".... (Home Post 29 Nov. 1959: 6)

"Thoughtful" suggests that when he started going out with girls he assumed that they would only be able to talk about "girl's things":

"When I first started going out with girls I accepted as natural that we should talk about ordinary everyday things such as who was our favourite actor, what songs we liked on the parade or just plain gossip.""
"Then I met a girl who could talk about things most people do not usually talk about. At first I thought she was quite crazy. She'd get stuck on a speech that we had a soul and things like that. "She was always onto something abstract, and I often used to laugh at her and tell her that most of her ideas were improbable.""
"But secretly I liked the way she talked... What I am trying to say is that it was stimulating to be with her. She could pose a question and we'd work it out together."" (Home Post 29 Nov. 1959: 6, emphasis in original)
It is intriguing that "Thoughtful" "secretly" likes the way this girl talked and then lets this "secret" out in the "Hiya Teenagers" column. Yet he talks about her in the past tense and the letter ends on an ambiguous note:

"[""]Of course, I still have a preference for pretty girls even if they are dull company; but I don't think there is anything more satisfying than going out with a girl who can talk intelligently!"
(Home Post 29 Nov. 1959: 6)

There is a movement in the letter between the commonly represented and propagated ideas about what boys like in girls and the secret (which is that boys actually like intelligent girls); a secret which is uncovered but then (almost) covered up again. It is fascinating to note that Head is represented, in "Thoughtful[s]'" letter, as someone who will condescendingly disapprove of a boy who only likes "pretty girls". The suggestion is thus that she approves of his liking intelligent girls and although the letter may be slightly ambiguous, Head's position is not. These ideas are strikingly similar to Head's own later expressed in a letter to Randolph Vigne where she claims the following: "I really live with my heart and my mind not my looks. Even if someone had to love me, it would surely be infantile of him to love my looks. He might love my heart or my mind" (1991:71). This would suggest that Head, always an avid letter-writer, was writing these letters too.

Two weeks later "Thoughtful II", a girl this time we are told, replies to "Thoughtful". The response to "His Girl Friends Must Be Beautiful and BRAINY" is "This is What A Girl Wants In A Boy" (13 December 1959).

"Thoughtful II" claims that "Thoughtful's letter in Home Post, November 29, made me do some thinking too. She adds, ironically, that not being highly
intelligent, that took her a little time ...". "Thoughtful" she claims, seems confused:

Now I ask you what exactly does he mean when he talks about the "value of the company of an intelligent girl" and then expresses his preference for a pretty but dumb cluck? (Home Post 13 Dec. 1959: 6)

This description of pretty girls as "dumb cluck[s]", along with the witty, sardonic opening and the astute analysis of "Thoughtful[s]' letter suggests either a very confident female teenager or that, as suggested, Head wrote this letter herself.

"Thoughtful II" misquotes "Thoughtful" and accuses him of some things he didn't actually say -- certainly in the published version of the letter. She ends by chiding "Thoughtful" because, according to her reading of his letter, he's never the first to start a conversation, he enjoys listening, but he also enjoys looking and it's obviously this looking that annoys "Thoughtful II": "Thoughtful should learn that conversation is an interchange of ideas on both sides. Something that both parties should enjoy and participate in" (Home Post 13 Dec. 1959: 6).

Yet Head is once again constructing something quite revolutionary, for the idea that women could participate in intelligent dialogue with men is not a familiar concept in Golden City Post and Drum magazine of this period. The "True Romance" stories often represent the ideal woman as one who doesn't "giggle or chatter" and Drum frequently suggested that this was all women were capable of doing. According to the legendary "Mr Drum", who "tackles" housewives in October, 1956: "About their being overworked, he explodes -- IT'S A FARCE!" (Drum October 1956: 63). What housewives do "[e]very second of every day" is "YAK-YAK-YAK! Yak-Yak-Yak" (Drum October 1956: 63). They don't just "yak, yak, yak" on their own however, they do it to their men:
"my girl is the ORIGINAL nagger", the husband of one of the Drum pin up girls told Casey Motsisi. "You should hear her yak, yak, yak" (Drum Apr. 1956: 40-41). The only "solution" is thus a woman who will be as silent as a mouse.

Head's character called Mouse in The Cardinals seems to be a response to this idea. Head's Mouse gets her name because she is timid yet she develops a voice through writing.

The only alternative representation, in the popular black media of the 1950s, to women who are either as silent as mice or women who "Yak-Yak-Yak" all day, is a powerful female political figure like Lilian Ngoyi. Ezekiel Mphahlele describes her in Drum magazine in another "Masterpiece in Bronze" column in March 1956, just months before Althea Gibson would be the subject of the column. In her analysis of Mphahlele's article, Driver has claimed while Ngoyi's body is reproduced "in terms of conventional space-gender dichotomies" -- "tough granite on the outside, but soft and compassionate deep down in her" (2002: 157). Her voice, however, "was less easily managed":

Quoting a member of the audience -- "She almost rocks men out of their pants when she speaks" -- Mphahlele added: "She can toss an audience on her little finger and get men grunting with shame [and] a feeling of smallness." (Driver, 2002: 157)

While one may be tempted to read this as a positive representation of a strong woman's voice it seems to me, following Driver's suggestion, that the metaphor of her emasculating voice is clear ("men out of their pants" and "a feeling of smallness"). Thus when women do break out of the "YAK-YAK-YAK" and speak with a powerful voice this is represented in terms of castration to men.

Given the limited possibilities for women's speech, it would appear then that the possibilities for dialogue between men and women become impossible. And yet it is this very possibility that "Thoughtful II" suggests in her letter, and that Head suggests throughout the "Hiya Teenagers" column.

On the 10th of January, 1960, Head tells teenage readers about her hope for the new year:

I have wanted you to use this page as a forum where you can express yourself, and where we can all get together (in mind) and discuss things positively. Well this is the page for you to discuss those things with other teenagers. There will be a space for everything and everyone's ideas. Isn't that a lot to hope for? (Home Post 10 Jan. 1960: 6)

It is interesting that this begins in the past tense because three months later Head was to leave Golden City Post. Yet in the eight months or so that had passed since Head took over the column she had indeed created the possibility of a space for everything and everyone's ideas, and fashioned a radical version of black South African identity and dialogue for her readers. Head's desire for "a space for everything and everyone's ideas" is still a lot to hope for.

During the first few months of 1960 Head wrote these columns for the last time. "Sharon" resumed the columns in May 1960. Yet given that the last few columns were written during the build up to the Sharpville massacre of 1960, Head's pertinent comments on these events cannot be ignored. During March 1960, as Eilersen points out, Head abandons the advice column and "writ[es] on a specific subject" (Eilersen, 1995:45). Eilersen claims that "the article that first week [with the new format] proved to be of no little historical significance" (1995:45). Bessie talks to a jazz musician who says that "[i]f young people like jazz, which is really great music, then these young people are just great too".
The musician was Dollar Brand, who would later change his name and become the internationally acclaimed jazz artist, Abdullah Ibrahim. Head's interest in the possibilities of jazz as an alternative form of communication, recurs in The Cardinals.

Yet there is another reason why the week's columns were of no little historical significance: they were published the day before the massacre of sixty eight people -- involved in a peaceful protest against the system of "pass laws" -- outside the police station in Sharpeville, one of South Africa's oldest black townships, located south of Johannesburg. Given Head's documented support, and admiration, for Robert Sobukwe, leader of the Pan African Congress, who initiated the mass protest that gave rise to Sharpeville, it seems likely that her "Dear Gang" column on 20 March 1960 was not just, as Eilersen claims, "an informative article about the habits of ants" (1995:46). Head introduces the lazy Queen ant who is kept by the soldier ants and then poses the question:

What would happen if they just got tired of all this hard work and got tired of their wicked lazy Queen and said to themselves: "We just don't want to be soldier ants anymore?" (Home Post 20 March 1960: 5)

In what would appear as an attempt to get her readers to question authority, Head institutes a competition for answers to this question. It seems unlikely that the content of this article is only coincidentally related to the fact that the following day Head was present to witness the arrest of Sobukwe at Orlando police station. Using insect characters as a means of political satire to comment on South African politics had been established by Casey Motsisi's series about bugs

---

15 See Eilersen's chapter three, "Journalism in Cape Town and Johannesburg", especially 1995:46-49 for these details.
published in *Drum* magazine between 1957 and 1958. Here Head thus seems to use an established *Drum* form of encoded meaning, in order to get her comments across the day before the Sharpeville protest. Any reader, aware of Motsisi's column, would surely make the connection between insects and political critique.

The reason for Head's circumlocution is the extreme check the Nationalist Government kept on political reporting. This is demonstrated, as I have already indicated, by Sylvester Stein's resignation in 1957 over the question of the *Drum* cover with a photograph of Althea Gibson embracing her white opponent after her Wimbledon victory. The Pan African Congress protest, which resulted in the Sharpeville killings, proved to be a turning point in South Africa's political history. On the 30th of March, a week after the protests, the Nationalist Government declared a State of Emergency in almost half of the country's magisterial districts (Eilersen, 1995: 48). Under these emergency regulations the *Drum* office was raided and copies of the April 1960 edition of *Drum* were seized. The events of Sharpeville were thus never reported in *Drum* magazine at the time.

Head, however, managed to get her comment on this momentous historical event published. Head's "Hiya Teenagers" column the week of 27 March 1960 was, as Eilersen astutely points out, "obviously inspired by the

---


events of the preceding days" (1995:48). It was entitled "It takes Guts to be a Rebel". Head claims that at a recent panel discussion on teenage behaviour "a psychologist said that the teenager who rebels against his parents is normal and that case of the teenager who does not break emotionally with his parents -- is a tragedy" (Home Post 27 March, 1960: 6). Head makes her position on rebellion clear:

I want to quietly claim that I am definitely in favour of any rebel! And I have reasons to support it too. To my mind a rebel is no tame weakling filled with self pity, but a person with a lot of guts. Someone who is willing to fight and learns quickly the value of being independent and standing on his own two feet. In contrast those who do not rebel or make a stand for themselves are the kind who are willing to let others do their thinking for them, are constantly being pushed around and are full of the mopes and moans. (Home Post 27 March 1960: 6, emphasis in original)

Head talks about her friend "Buddy", a rebel, who is often considered selfish and wilful. Head defends him saying that "[h]e is not really selfish and wilful," "[h]e just wants to live his life without interference from anybody" (Home Post 27 March, 1960: 6). There can be little doubt that, published a week after Sharpeville, the reference to life without interference must be read as a political statement from Head. Yet she ends by stating that "we don't have to be the extreme kind of rebel that Buddy is." The alternative is intellectual vigilance and freedom: "We test everything before we accept it. We become explorers and adventurers in mind." In one of her last provocative questions to her teenage readers, Bessie asks: "Do you agree?" (Home Post 27 March, 1960: 6).

Yet in the weeks following Sharpeville, Head appears to moderate her support of rebellious behaviour and thus her political position. On the 17th of April, 1960, she published a letter from a teenager called Moses Nakasa. He claims to admire "people who show courage when things go against them" (Home Post 17 April 1960: 2). His letter continues in a most extraordinary fashion: "People who are easily afraid of this or that especially of death, think that they are the only people in the world. They want to protect themselves. One person's life is not so important" (Home Post 17 April, 1960: 2, italics in original). Head says that she "liked that very much" and is "astonished to find such a young person talking that way". On the latter point, however, Head claims to disagree with Moses:

*I could not agree with his statement that an individual's life is not important. I feel that it is. I think that the whole world is made up of individuals and not just masses of people. These individuals want to protect themselves and want to feel important and they try very hard in the best way they can to express themselves.* (Home Post 17 April 1960: 2, italics in original)

Head's shifting position, her assertion of individuality and its apparent moderation of her earlier position on rebellion, bears witness to political turbulence of the period: Head was attending the trial of Robert Sobukwe, leader of the Pan African Congress. While little is known about this period of Head's life, she was arrested and charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation, the Pan African Congress. Two weeks after this column was published, at the end of April, 1960, Head made an attempt to take her own life (Eilersen, 1995: 49). On the first of May, 1960, Sharon, resumed writing the columns and promptly reinstated the earlier form of the advice column.
In these last columns that she wrote Head attempted to inspire contemplation of political questions in the minds of her teenage readers. At the end of her statement about the importance of individuals, she tells her readers that she’d be happy to have letters on whether they agree with her or not. It is difficult, reading this, to agree with the claim that Head’s early South African writing was "personal" and "apolitical". While Head’s political position appears to fluctuate, merely to encourage teenage readers to debate the issue of individualism versus group solidarity or rebellion versus compliance, in the wake of Sharpeville, and shortly after the imposition of a State of Emergency in South Africa, was a bold political move and a significant gesture towards the new forms of modern identity she attempted to usher in through her writing in Home Post. "Dramatic journalism"? I certainly think so.
Conclusion

My study of the relocation of American and African-American material, from America to South Africa, enables an entirely new understanding of the ways in which popular forms were being utilised in the creation of black urban modernity in apartheid South Africa. In examining the use of popular cultural forms in Drum magazine in 1950s, this thesis has brought to light direct, and previously unknown, links between American and African-American popular culture and urban black culture in 1950s South Africa. Not only were writers for Drum publications making use of popular American forms and texts as frames for both fiction and journalism, Drum magazine reproduced comic strips taken directly from African-American newspapers. To the majority of Drum magazine's critics, the discovery of this direct connection between American popular genres and Drum magazine would not constitute a revolutionary breakthrough in terms of our understanding of black urban identity and culture in the 1950s: it would merely confirm their thesis about Drum's "ludicrously accurate imitations" of popular genres and the magazine's "talent for copying bad models well" (Lindfors, 1966: 56). Yet this theoretical position overlooks a crucial aspect: the critical, and selective, reception of popular American material and its political function in apartheid South Africa.

While this thesis has provided an analysis of the way in which Drum writers were constructing black urban modernity by appropriating and re-inscribing American forms, there are two particular examples that demonstrate the critical divergence in the meanings of popular texts in their relocation from America to South Africa. These are instances where we are able to observe the
very specific, and local, South African response to American material and these moments completely refute any theoretical arguments about "imitation". The first is the critical response of *Drum* readers to the African-American comic strips reproduced in *Drum*, when this material no longer matched local trends and desires. The second is Bessie Head's use of Althea Gibson's text, since Gibson's autobiography received an entirely different reception from African-American writers and readers in the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

In chapter three I argued that *Drum* reproduced the African-American comic strips, precisely because there was an ideological overlap of the African-American and black South African agendas at the time. The comic strips were being used by African-American writers to create an African-American identity firmly grounded in the modern and this coincided with the search for models of modern black identity in South Africa. These comic strips thus provided a position from which to resist the apartheid policy of separate development that was making use of the idea of "culture" and "ethnicity" to locate black identity as essentially rural; too primitive to adapt to urban city life. Comic strips in which black heroes, who represent modernity, fight against the forces of the primitive, or prehistoric, thus served a political purpose to black readers in South Africa, who viewed themselves and the vanguard of modernity, in opposition to the apartheid government's construction of black identity.

While the African-American popular genre suited *Drum*'s purposes, these comic strips were published -- continuously for five years in the case of Don Powers -- and vehemently defended by readers. Yet when the heroes of the African-American comic strips began to engage in the cold war, two things changed. Their overt political purpose began to clash with political
developments within black South Africa and they also began to fall in line with the apartheid Government's anti-Communist stance. This shift did not go unnoticed by Drum readers as a survey of the Drum letters page reveals.

As discussed in chapter three, the initially positive response to the African-American comics in the Drum letters' page, gave way to criticism of a very particular nature. During 1953, for example, there was some debate in the letters' page about whether comics should be included in Drum or not. Several readers vehemently defended the inclusion of the African-American comic strips published in Drum.¹

Yet in 1955, after Don Powers had finally defeated the "ape-man" Karg, his new opponent was a Communist character called "Chong". In June 1955 Drum published a critical letter from Faith Madola about the new turn this popular comic strip narrative had taken. The critique was not, as previous letters had been, about the value of comics but about the new "Red" version of "Karg". Asking how Drum could publish this "new" Don Powers story, "showing the Chinese and Russians as such wicked people", Madola questions whether this isn't "more American Propaganda" (Drum magazine, June 1955: 9). It is particularly interesting to note that at the end of the "Chong" narrative, Don Powers was abruptly discontinued. Significantly, all the African-American comic strips disappeared from Drum after their heroes entered the Cold War on behalf of the United States of America. This response in the letters page

¹ In February 1953, in a letter titled "Comics are fun" A. D. Dube claims to be "a voracious reader of comics" because "they're full of jokes and educative" and "as amusing as the bioscope" (Drum magazine, February 1953: 36). In a similar letter M. G. Pillay also defends the inclusion of comics in Drum, in a letter titled: "Hands off the comics!" (Drum magazine, April 1953: 46).
completely refutes the idea that readers were uncritically accepting American meanings.

A further indication of Drum's critical response to the African-American comic model is clear from the fact that the locally drawn comic strip, Goombi, that replaced the African-American material, continued certain aspects of the African-American strips, while completely discarding others. A demonstration of the distance between Goombi and his African-American anti-Communist counterparts was visible in January 1958, when Drum published the "real' story of the sputnik" (Drum January 1958: 33). A series of illustrations showed Goombi going to the moon on board the Russian Sputnik suggesting allegiance with the Communist Russians that placed Goombi at the very opposite end of the political spectrum from Don Powers (Drum January 1958: 33). Drum magazine was using American frames, but filling them with local content.

Another illustration of the divergence in the reception of popular African-American material in South Africa is Bessie Head's use of Althea Gibson's autobiography to forge a version of black modern identity for her teenage readers. While Head celebrated the book in her two-week review, the reception by African-American readers was quite different. Gibson's autobiography received only a dismissive mention, in a column of less than forty lines, published in a "Church supplement" to The Courier (Courier Church Supplement, 15 November 1958: 10). The Courier's dismissal of Gibson's book is particularly significant when contrasted with the constant support she received in the Courier during the preceding year, 1957. In July an article celebrating her Wimbledon title informed readers just how difficult Gibson's victory had been as she had been "jeered by [the] British" audience at Wimbledon (Pittsburgh
Between September and October in 1957 the *Courier* published "The Story of Althea Gibson" in six full-page instalments. Yet in the brief coverage of her autobiography, the *Courier* questioned whether "Althea missed a 'golden' opportunity in her new book", "to help the advancement of her race" (*Courier Church Supplement*, 15 November 1958: 10). Quoting only three sentences from the book in which Gibson states that she has never regarded herself as a "crusader" and does not consciously beat the drum for any special cause, the *Courier* clearly condemns her lack of overt support for the "Negro cause" (*Courier Church Supplement*, 15 November 1958: 10). In the final issue of 1958, The *Courier* published a retrospective of how "1958 was a mirror of the Negro's fight to 'Recognized". In an article that listed the achievements of African-Americans in all spheres, Gibson's name was visibly absent. The divergence in reception between the African-American audience and Bessie Head's South African review of the same text is unmistakable. From her location in apartheid South Africa Head found, in Gibson, a role-model of a successful, modern black woman, which she used to assert the possibilities of new feminine, even feminist, modern black identities in South Africa.

These brief examples serve as a summary of the inadequacy of theories of "imitation" and "escapism" to conceptualise the reception of popular texts and genres in *Drum* magazine and the new critical frameworks suggested in this thesis, within which the reception of popular material in *Drum* magazine might be theorised. This thesis extends and modifies Paul Gilroy's formulation of *The Black Atlantic* by introducing a formal study of the way in which popular

2 "The Story of Althea Gibson" by Ted Poston was published in the *Courier* Magazine Section in six full-page articles, between 21 September and 26 October 1957.
African-American culture was inextricably woven into the new identities emerging in urbanised black communities in South Africa during the 1950s. The incorporation of African-American ideas into the black South African construction of modern identity represented a constant theme of 20th-century South Africa: "the desire of Africans in South Africa for the intellectual achievements and cultural expressive forms of African Americans" (Masilela, 1999: 91). Yet, remarkably, as pointed out in my introduction, there has been no documentation of the exchange of popular texts between African-Americans and black South Africans. This thesis not only begins to document that process, it reveals that the study of the exchange of forms of modernity between black South Africans and African-Americans should be extended to popular culture.

This represents an intervention into cultural studies by extending the study of the reception of American material to black South Africa, as an importing community. It reveals the reconfiguration of popular material within the specific racial, and political, history of 1950s apartheid South Africa. In doing so this thesis presents a previously unwritten chapter of South African cultural history. South African cultural studies has been emerging through publications like Rob Nixon's Hollywood, Harlem and Homelands (1994) and the recent collection, Senses of Culture (2000), edited by Cheryl-Ann Michaels and Sarah Nuttall. Yet despite these publications, the field of cultural studies has not extended to a reconsideration of Drum magazine's role within South African history, or the use of popular culture in the founding of black modern identity in South Africa. In 2000 the African National Congress submitted its report on racism in the media to the Human Rights Commission in South Africa. In its

3 Courier Magazine 27 December 1958: 1.
critique of the role of the black media in the propagation of the "white stereotype of the African" Drum magazine is listed among the culprits responsible for inaugurating a tradition in the media that perpetuates the "white stereotype of the black savage" (Matshikiza, 2000: 205). Each chapter in this thesis has specifically shown how it was that very "white stereotype of the black savage" that Drum was interrogating, undermining and deconstructing in its assertion of a black urban subjectivity.
Bibliography

Archival Material

I: Drum magazine

Fiction:

Cullen, Countee, "Heritage" African Drum 1951: 5.


Journalism with cited author:


**Journalism without cited author:**


"DRUM parliament: Should Women have Equal rights with Men? DRUM readers vote NO!" *Drum* July 1954: 16.


"Is A Woman's Place In The Home?" *Drum* Sept. 1952: 11.


**Comic strips:**


"Goombi Chapter I" *Drum* Aug. 1957: 42.
"Goombi Chapter S" *Drum* Dec. 1957: 47.

II Golden City Post

III The Pittsburgh Courier

Journalism with cited author:

Dunbar, Rudolph. "They didn't want Althea to Win!" The Pittsburgh Courier 13 July 1957: 3

Pitts. George. E. "1958 was a Mirror of the Hegro's Fight to be 'Recognized.'" Courier Magazine 27 December 1958: 1


Journalism without cited author:

Comic strips:


"Neil Knight." Courier Magazine 13 August 1955: 13

IV Zonk!

Fiction:


Journalism with cited author:


Journalism without cited author:


"Editorial" Zonk! Sept.1950: 3


"ZONK! Is One Year Old ...Discussion and work at the ZONK Office." Zonk! August 1950: 26-27.
V Home Post supplement to Golden City Post

Book Reviews by Bessie Emery Head:


---. "This was Althea's Hour." Home Post 16 Aug. 1959: 1.

"Dear Gang" columns:


"Hiya Teenagers" columns:


---. "Hiya Teenagers." Home Post 16 August 1959: 3
"True Romance" Stories:
Bibliography

I: Drum Magazine


II: South Africa: historical, political and cultural contexts:


III: Critical contexts:


**IV: Bessie Head: Primary and Secondary sources:**


V: Filmography:

*African Jim [Jim Comes to Jo'burg]*. 1949. Directed by Donald Swanson.


*Cry, the Beloved Country*. 1951. Directed by Zoltan Korda. (Screenplay: Alan Paton)


*De Voortrekkers*. 1916. Directed by Harold Shaw.


Song of Africa. 1951. Directed by Emil Nofal.


The Magic Garden. 1951. Directed by Donald Swanson.