

## Contextualisation: general

This section of contextualised material extends the concerns of chapter 7 in five specific ways: Johannesburg housing and health policies for blacks; the ANC Youth League; the 1950 May Day Strike; the Defiance Campaign; and township riots and police behaviour. Although none of the four novels to be discussed deals with the events of the Defiance Campaign itself, it (or the beginning of it in Altman's case) would have been prominent in the writers' minds at the time of composition, while, as already mentioned, *Transvaal episode* concerns the aftermath of the campaign. Much of the contextualisation offered in chapter 7 also remains relevant for this last chapter. Fortuitously, it is possible in this chapter to match the additional contextual material separately to each novel, and thus the structure of the chapter is determined by four complementary pairs of contextual and analytical material. The order of topics above corresponds to the order of the novels; parts 4 and 5, however, both apply to the final novel, *Transvaal episode*. The three texts listed below were consulted, in addition to several of those used for chapter 7. Once again an appropriate abbreviation is provided for each of these texts, and dates are omitted in references.

Brian Bunting (1975) *Moses Kotane: South African revolutionary* – [Bg]

Stephen Clingman (1986) *The novels of Nadine Gordimer* – [Cn]

Nelson Mandela (1995 [1994]) *Long walk to freedom* – [Mla].

### Part 1 Contextualisation and analysis for *Shadow over the Rand*

#### Johannesburg housing and health policies for blacks

With characteristic clarity and force Trevor Huddleston conveys the main features of the Johannesburg situation regarding housing for blacks in the late forties and early fifties:

There are in Johannesburg to-day some forty thousand African families with no home of their own. These are the labour force of the city; the people upon whose work it utterly depends. Five years ago there were slightly more; and houses were being built so slowly that they had no hope of owning one. So, in Sophiatown and Alexandra Township and on the peri-urban fringe, shacks were built in backyards of existing houses. It increased the density of population to danger-point. There was a risk from the public health angle. (32)

Huddleston goes on to describe his efforts to get the Johannesburg Municipality to take positive action on behalf of the shack-dwellers. The Medical Officer of Health, fully aware of the problem, responded as follows:

[There are] Hundreds of these tin shacks, most insanitary because there are not sufficient latrines for this surplus population. Danger is acute from the public health side, and I have to administer the law ... All these people have been warned not to allow shacks on their property. (34)

In response to Huddleston's question about where these people were to go, the Officer replied: '[T]hat's nothing to do with me. My job is to administer the law as it stands ... go and complain to the Manager of Non-European Affairs: housing is his concern' (34). Huddleston, accustomed to leaving no stone unturned, followed his advice, but the manager, referring to his long waiting-list for houses, believed the problem to be a national one which could not be tackled locally (34). A further attempt to arrange for an appointment with the mayor proved in vain (35).

One begins to realise at this stage how *Naught for your comfort* was, in a way, Huddleston's next step in trying to find a solution to this massive social evil. For him the painful underlying explanation was racial isolation:

European contact with Africans in the city is limited entirely to [the] master-servant relationship. Every judgment, every opinion as to the future of 'the native question', is in fact based upon it. The real life of the African – his home, his family, his interests – are as unknown to the European in Johannesburg as they are to the European in Paris. And so it is that the colossal problem of housing has been untouched for so many years. And with that problem all the other social problems, which are religious and ethical problems too, are inextricably mingled, and are unknown to white South Africa. (38)

Yet there were occasional signs of compassion and caring. Huddleston refers to the time, two or three years previously, when a tornado struck Albertynville:

A squatter's camp sited on a particularly bleak and barren piece of veldt ... on the night of the tornado it looked very much like a no-man's-land in Flanders in the 1914–1918 war. The force of the wind had simply ripped doors off and carried walls away as if they were made of paper ... For a week Albertynville and its inhabitants were the target for generosity in a big way ... 'Do our natives really live like that? Are those pictures true? Isn't it time something was done about



*A squatter camp*



*Fr Huddleston with a mother and child*

native housing? After all, it must be dangerous from the health point of view, and disease knows no colour bar ...' But it was only a faint and uneasy stirring. Within a month it was forgotten. (39–40)

The verdict of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, on this troubling state of affairs was – as could be expected – entirely consistent with the rigid framework of his overall political thinking: 'There is no room ... for [the native] in European society above the level of certain forms of labour' (Hn, 41) Huddleston makes the following scathing commentary on the inhuman expediency of this outlook:

The whole conception, therefore, of native housing in the cities must be governed by this most vital consideration. There must be no permanence about it. It must be possible, if not by a tornado then at least by an Act of parliament, to remove an African township as soon as it becomes at all probable that it is taking root ... All housing schemes, and all efforts to catch up on the appalling backlog in housing in Johannesburg, must have one fundamental quality: impermanence. (41)

And so, explains Huddleston, as he narrates the further consequences of this misguided and callous policy, the first of Johannesburg's shanty-towns came to be built:

... on municipal land, in protest against the seemingly endless delays to provide housing. It was called 'Sofasonke' – which, being interpreted, means 'we shall all die together.' That was eleven years ago. To-day, in the very centre of Orlando, there remains the evidence of that terrible time: it is called 'The Shelters'. It houses some thirty thousand Africans in lean-to, breeze-block sheds which were built as a temporary measure to house the squatters. The promise was that these shelters would be demolished within five years and their inhabitants housed decently elsewhere. But eleven years have passed. The population has grown by natural increase. Almost every shelter – in area roughly twelve feet by ten – has been the home of its original family through those long days. Stoeps have been added: doors fitted to the empty frames: windows built in. But the streets still stink with the effluence: there is no drainage: there is nothing which would encourage a man or a woman to live decently: indeed there is no possibility of decency in those dark and fearfully over-crowded cells for which the City Council charges rent. (43)

## *Shadow over the Rand*

(published in 1955; set in the early fifties probably)

The basis of this unusual novel is an imagined sudden outbreak of a mysterious disease. Alan Stern, a doctor from Britain who is trying to establish a new practice in South Africa, is visited by a colleague named Prinsloo who wants to investigate the dire possibility that the plague has started in Sophiatown. Prinsloo's wish to gain the services of a researcher coincides with the appointment, by a European religious group, of John Zulu as resident doctor offering free services in Sophiatown. Stern is fortunate to gain the friendship of a financial magnate, Sir William Kersch, whose deep interest in social welfare is early evidence of the author's keenness to defend the White liberal voice. Friendship with Sir William Kersch brings Stern the additional blessing of contact with Stella who becomes his wife. As Watson is nothing if not economical with his plot connections, it is through Stella that Stern meets Fr Middleton whom the author refers to in his preface as the only non-fictional character in the novel (ie Trevor Huddleston). This contact is crucial for the novel's purposes since Fr Middleton is able to give Stern an intimate idea of conditions by taking him on a thorough exploration of Johannesburg locations and squatter camps. For the reader the evidence is more compellingly presented than in *Amadodana Ami*, suggesting the author's firsthand experience. However, when Prinsloo presents evidence of the disease at a medical congress, the general belief in the profession that he is a crank militates against the persuasiveness of his findings. Furthermore Stern is led to understand that bias against Fr Middleton as an agitator will also be used to cast doubt on his reliability.

Where the novel is flawed is in its representation of blacks – mostly they lack any qualities of leadership (except for John Zulu, the resident Sophiatown doctor and researcher). Without the influence of the fictionalised Fr Huddleston, the township residents and squatters would have preferred to heed the advice of a witchdoctor, Mfusi, who is led to believe that Stern and Zulu are luring his patients away by magic (61). When conflict erupts in Orlando because John Zulu fails to cure patients of a strange new illness (not the plague, but one engineered by Mfusi, as it turns out), the majority begin to develop feelings of hostility towards Zulu and Stern (64). A man named Ndlovu, cured by Zulu when Mfusi's potions fail, comes to warn Zulu to leave the location. However, the attempt costs him his life (64); Zulu is battered unconscious; ransacking and looting take place; and Mfusi is killed. The police tell Stern that blacks are not human when they go 'on the warpath after drink' (68). Watson, however, offers no corrective to this very conventionally

racist information. Thus, although there is repeated acknowledgement of Middleton's humanitarian compassion, one is left with the impression of a vacuum in terms of enlightened black thinking and ability to give direction. At any rate it now becomes possible for Fr Middleton's counter-influence to *begin* to work (70).

The department at last becomes closely involved and Stern is invited to work at the Government Foundation virus laboratories. The whites' first tremor of fear occurs through their realisation of the possibility of contamination via their servants (8). Mostly, though, they watch the progress of the plague from a position of safety (80), regarding the disease as 'non-European' (81), as if a bacteriological colour bar operates (81). A parodic version of apartheid is then mooted in terms of a call for isolation of the affected areas (81), namely the whole of Sophiatown and much of Orlando. On Christmas Eve, however, the death toll rises dramatically (86), causing a minor rush to vacate the city. Then, temporarily, the whites become accustomed to 'plague enclaves' (91). At this stage, however, Sophiatown experiences a second outbreak of violence when certain unscrupulous shopkeepers raise prices. Altercations in the shops lead to rioting. Watson takes care to inform us that although 'not all the shopkeepers had profited, some had even gone out of their way to help people; few escaped that afternoon' (101). The imagined results are indeed horrific: 'Most of the traders were battered to death, their premises looted and burnt' (101). We do not need the police use of cultural stereotypes repeated in order to interpret Watson's double message at this point.

The novel can be regarded in some ways as a South African version of Dickens's *Bleak House*: disease (the plague) spreads from the townships, especially the squatter camps, to the city and thus the white suburbs. In other words disease knows no colour bar. The novel is thus in one way a sardonic caricature of apartheid through the paradoxical effects of the plague when it is already beyond control – since first the industrial heart of the city has to be shut down, and ultimately the *whole* of Johannesburg has to be insulated from the rest of the country! The army, we are told, had to 'cut off a quarter of the greatest metropolis in Africa' (29).

To reinforce this grim irony the person chosen to organise the encirclement and barricading of the city is Huizer, a pro-Nationalist doctor whose stubbornness initially led him relentlessly to oppose the attempts of those trying to investigate the problem (8,30,36–37). Stern actually recommends Huizer *because* of his pig-headed obstinacy (125–126). Huizer's plan for isolating the whole city (139) has to be brought into operation when the disease spreads beyond the western areas, causing panic and stampeding exodus (142–

143). Then the city is closed along a twenty-two mile frontier (144). At this stage Fr Middleton has been working an average of seventeen hours a day. His is indeed the crucial intervention when Stern finally succeeds in creating a vaccine, for the blacks are portrayed as most resistant to immunisation, and even display hostility until Fr Middleton persuades them.

The Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg and later Huizer both condemn the state of black housing and urge the municipality to embark on a more enlightened policy as soon as the period of large-scale quarantine is over. Huizer urges his listeners: 'Let us resolve here and now that we shall never again allow human beings to live like vermin'(166). The slums are Johannesburg's responsibility (167), he insists, and slum dwellings must be destroyed to prevent any recurrence of the plague (171). In fact 'after the first month of mass immunisation, plague returns began to drop rapidly' (169). The suggested programme of reform seems at first impressive until one realises that despite the parody of apartheid in the plot of the novel, there is actually no fundamental questioning of apartheid policy. In conjunction with the author's minimal awareness of potential black leadership, and the represented attitudes towards blacks in the two main episodes of violence, one can therefore only suppose that the author is politically fairly conservative. His novel is intended mainly as a warning about the provision of decent housing, not about the forced separation of people into classified 'racial' groups (cf Attwell's *Drifting to destruction*, considered in chapter 1).

## Part 2 Contextualisation

### *The law of The vultures; The lying days; Transvaal episode*

#### Contextualisation for Altman's *The law of the vultures* – The ANC Youth League

The two most important developments in African politics during the 1940s, according to Lodge, were the emergence of the Congress Youth League and the consolidation of its influence on the ANC leadership, together with the strengthening of the relationship between Congress and the Communist party (Lg:20). The Youth League was formally accepted as part of the ANC organisation at its Annual Congress of 1943, and it 'constituted a politically radical pressure group within the ANC, its members being mostly

young African teachers and students of medicine and law' (OC:186). Prominent among them were the later highly influential leaders Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and R M Sobukwe (Rx: 403). Roux notes that: 'If a particular event is to be sought for the beginnings of a conscious and organised pan-Africanism in the ranks of the A.N.C. it may be found in the formation of the Youth League' (403). As revealed in its manifesto, the Youth League's argument was that the ANC 'had developed a habit of yielding to oppression and was thus unable to advance the cause of African freedom' (Lg:20). The league's purpose then was to infuse into the national liberation movement 'the spirit of African nationalism', and to act as the ANC's 'brains trust' (20).

The Youth League's leader was a former school teacher and articled clerk, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, who preached what he called 'the ideology of African nationalism' (Rx:403). Unlike most members of the ANC establishment, Lembede 'was self-educated to a large degree and had never lived or worked abroad' (Lg:21). Although he died in 1947, only four years after the formation of the league, his ideas had a remarkably sustained influence (Rx:403).

Lembede and his co-founders of the Youth League were inspired by popular responses to black deprivation in wartime Johannesburg (Lg:21). In particular, the Youth Leaguers were the only political group that tried to become involved in Mpanza's squatters' movement (22). Here, comments Lodge, 'was the potential source of mass support which the Congress movement had so shamefully neglected to exploit' (21). From such struggles evolved the Youth Leaguers' strategy of mass action, 'centred on the use of the boycott weapon ... but also involving strikes, civil disobedience and non-cooperation' (22).

The Africanist emphasis on confrontation accorded well with the political climate of the decade (Lg:23). The Nationalists' victory of 1948 had revealed to the ANC the 'futility of [its] traditional lobbying tactics' (23). But by then, acknowledges Lodge:

... even the most conservative African politicians had little faith in the capacity of a white administration for conceding more than token reforms ... the brutal treatment of the mineworkers, the extension of urban influx controls to many centres in the Cape, the creation of segregated political institutions for coloureds and Indians and the demonstrable uselessness of the Native Representative Council had all served to undermine any residual faith in the

tactics of persuasion through deputation, memoranda and negotiation via sympathetic intermediaries. (23)

By 1947, when half its members were in the Transvaal, the ANC achieved its maximum (5 517) for the decade. However, in addition it had a much larger, though less committed, informal following in locations where its mass meetings were usually attended by thousands of people (25). Its potential strength and influence were thus considerable. The Youth League itself remained small and loosely structured; members' vested interests were in ideology rather than organisational matters. The ANC President, Dr Xuma, on the other hand, insisted on the importance of organisational preparation as a prelude to mass campaigning, and he thus opposed the Youth League's attempts to engage the ANC in boycotts of Advisory Board and Native Representative Council elections (25). Apart from Youth League pressure, the ANC national executive in 1949 also learnt from the Indian passive resistance campaign of 1946 to 1948 the need to adopt rather more forceful tactics, particularly in the light of the 1948 election.

At the December 1949 conference of the ANC, Youth Leaguers triumphed: they were able to dominate proceedings, not through numbers, but because they were a coherent group with a definite programme (Rx: 403). Since Lembede's death in 1947 a document prepared by them in the spirit of his ideas had been circulating at various levels of the Congress leadership. Through the Youth Leaguers' persuasion the ANC committed itself to implementing the final formulation of the Lembede document, the Programme of Action, which was the most militant statement of principles so far adopted by the ANC (Lg:26). According to Lodge the means agreed on to achieve the rights of national freedom, political independence, and self-determination, and the rejection of white leadership as well as all forms of segregation would include the following:

... the creation of a national fund and a national press; the appointment of a council of action which would organise a boycott of all differential political institutions [such as local and district councils and advisory boards], plan a 'national stoppage of work in protest against the reactionary policy of the government', and as well as boycotts and strikes employ the weapons of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. (26)

The adoption of the Programme of Action caused a change in leadership: Dr Xuma, who disapproved of mass-based political activism, was replaced by Dr James Moroka, who was 'sympathetically inclined' towards such action

(Lg:26). The new ANC national executive now included some of the young men who were to predominate in African nationalist politics in the 1950s and in subsequent years: Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu (27). However, this victory of the Youth League turned out to be short-lived: the Programme of Action was not carried out. In the early 1950s the league divided into two camps. One remained stoutly Africanist. The other moved towards promoting 'democratic, non-racialist, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist nationalism' (37). This second camp (including Mandela, Tambo, and Sisulu) was close to the decision-making levels of Congress (37). Indeed, Sisulu, 'from being one of the most fervent exponents of racially exclusivist nationalism, was one of the first former Youth Leaguers to advocate alliance with political groups drawn from other sections of the population' (27). After 1953 it was the alliance between the ANC and the South African Indian Congress that became well established, while Lembede's diehard followers lost their clout.

## The law of the vultures

(published in 1952; set in the late forties; early fifties)

Sally-Ann Murray has argued convincingly for the coherence of Altman's novel: '[B]y presenting the tales of several "Jims" she avoids lapsing into a single protagonist's story and endows her figures with a cumulative presence' (1988a:69). What is immediately clear is that Altman's enterprise is virtually at the other extreme from Gordimer's in terms of form. However, Murray accepts rather too easily for my liking Altman's case against liberalism: surely the scales here are severely weighted against it – because Dent and Walters turn out to be hypocritical, one cannot simply claim to have sufficient evidence of the 'redundancy of white liberals' (58). In any case neither of these men is an avowed political follower of liberalism. But the dice are too conspicuously loaded to motivate one to further debate.<sup>2</sup>

What interests me most of all in relation to this remarkable novel is Altman's apparent marginalising of the ANC. According to Murray's interview with Altman in 1988, the author was continuing at that stage – as an ANC official in London – 'to work, in an editorial capacity for Kliptown Books, a project of the International Defence and Aid Fund' (1988b:97). Yet the ANC is far from being a prominent feature of the action in the novel. I shall need to trace important strands in the plot, though, before I can initiate my critique.

As a young, very innocent 'Jim' in Johannesburg the Sotho, Thaele, is prompted chiefly by his father's advice, 'Don't listen to Africans who talk against the whites' (1952:12), as well as that of his employer, Mr Dent: 'Don't get mixed up in politics' (57). In combination these two injunctions succeed in keeping Thaele utterly tame and exploitable for seventeen years in Dent's firm. He had been exposed to the contempt for whites of Nchana, a fellow clerical worker, but Nchana's arrest for making an inflammatory speech in public ('Show the Africans what the Europeans do to us' (60)) and loss of his job are naturally grave discouragements. However, when Thaele is wrongly accused of theft, and Mr Dent does not intervene, the influence of his father's and Mr Dent's advice is sundered. Thaele's subsequent experience as a prisoner fills him with such shame, humiliation and bitterness that he 'almost lost his reason'. By the time he is released, Nchana's voice has become the dominant one in his mind: he now refuses to work for whites (106), and vows to remember one thing all his life: 'what his white brothers have done to him' (107). (That he should still paradoxically think in terms of 'brothers' even at this stage makes his condemnation all the more forceful and poignant.) When he discovers that his imprisonment has by no means made him an object of scorn, he is ready to translate his bitterness into some kind of action which he assures his first listeners will end the apparently inevitable prospect of 'gaol and gaol' for blacks (113).

Nkosi, the World War II veteran, finds himself agonisingly torn between two rival forces: that of Thaele, representing a sort of latter-day Garveyism (Africa for Africans only) or extreme pan-Africanism; and Dhlamini, the earnest trade union organiser and educator. Thaele bitterly rejects anything which whites have promoted or become involved in. Dhlamini, on the other hand, is concerned to promote worker solidarity among both blacks and whites. Nkosi's ill-treatment after the war (the refusal by the Native Commissioner's Office to give him the compensation he was promised, and the even more devastating failure of Lieutenant Walters to demonstrate his promised gratitude) naturally makes him vulnerable to Thaele's vengeful influence. But he is also close to conversion to the trade union movement. Much of the scope of the third and last section of the novel (chapters 4 to 8) is devoted to the prolonged struggle by Thaele and Dhlamini to gain unswerving commitment from Nkosi.

Murray draws strong parallels between Thaele's Africanist perspective and the formation in April 1944 of the ANC Youth League, which led to a deliberate, organised Africanist direction in the ranks of the ANC: 'Under the guidance of Anton Lembede, Leaguers rejected the elitist, moderate resistance

strategies of the ANC Old Guard in favour of an assertive race pride' (1988a:58). Furthermore, she concludes: '[F]or such demagoguery [as Thaele's] there were certainly precedents in the Youth League' (58). Closer inspection, however, suggests that her analogy is by no means so valid. In Altman's interview with Murray, the author, having previously stated that 'Thaele certainly appears to espouse an embryonic Pan Africanism' (1998b: 102), and having just referred to the 'naive leadership offered by Thaele', points out: 'When I wrote the novel I was impressed with the African National Congress whose Youth League offered positive policies' (102). This suggests a clear distinction in Altman's mind between Africanist demagoguery or fanaticism, and the Youth League. Indeed, as the contextual section shows, the only resemblance between Thaele's politics and that of the Youth League lies in their adherence to African nationalism. The differences, on the other hand, are considerable: the Youth League became actively involved in popular movements; they not only had the ability and influential power to act as the 'brains trust' of the ANC, but were able to produce a substantial and well-motivated programme of action.

Altman explains in her interview: 'My subsequent career would indicate that I identify most closely with Dhlamini, the trade unionist' (1988b:103). Her treatment of Dhlamini as the patient, unruffled, passionately committed trade union leader clearly confirms this degree of support. The tension built up by Nkosi's alternate exposure to the opposing perspectives of Thaele and Dhlamini makes for engrossing reading. Although Dhlamini's pleas for black-white worker solidarity are presented with the utmost persuasiveness, Altman, as Murray observes, 'never dismisses the personal import of Thaele's experience at the hands of a racist society' (1998a:63); her 'didacticism' ... is never schematic or one dimensional' (63). Indeed, as Murray reminds her readers, Altman points out in the interview that: 'I was trying, through Thaele, to express my own outrage at the system' (1998b:102).

When Dhlamini explains the trade union system to Nkosi, Thaele is furious to hear about it, claiming that 'Dhlamini likes the things of the whites' (1952:145). In response to Nkosi's bewilderment, Dhlamini asks him to understand that Thaele's 'heart is sick' (152), an assessment that fits in well with what the narrator has already indicated about Thaele's post-imprisonment state. What is intriguing about Altman's representation of these two mentors at this stage is that they make the same contrast between whites' and blacks' behaviour towards their fellows. Dhlamini invites Nkosi to contrast 'black brotherhood with whites' selfishness' (154) while Thaele, though more forcefully and dramatically, prompts Nkosi towards the same conclusion. In the alternating battle of

persuasions from Dhlamini and Thaele, the trade unionist seems to have the last word, however: Dhlamini tells Nkosi that although Thaele is deeply aware of his people's plight, he does not know how to help them (160). The outcome of the novel would seem to confirm this signal.

What perplexes me, nevertheless, is that a polarity is set up between Africanist and Socialist points of view, thus apparently marginalising the approach of the ANC, including (on Altman's own testimony) that of the Youth League. The only explicit mention of the ANC, in fact, is when the speaker named Ralebelo at Thaele's meeting urges the audience to join Congress, rather than set up an alternative movement. In any case, as Murray points out, the novel moves beyond Thaele's or Dhlamini's appeals to Nkosi: what 'succeeds immediately in spurring David Nkosi's process of conscientization' (1988a:61) is the traumatised experience of young Letsie from Nkosi's kraal in Lesotho.

Eventually the members of Thaele's People of Africa Society become impatient for him to formulate his much-delayed plan of action, and he is forced to yield to their wishes. Whether the abortive attempt to stir up a massacre of whites is the plan he has been dwelling on, we are not told – perhaps Thaele himself would not have been fully conscious of the murderous thoughts he was harbouring. The attempt is in any case the appropriate climax of the novel, and the unsurprising culmination of his long-nurtured anger. Altman's previous suggestions of Thaele's almost having lost his mind through being consumed with bitterness induce our sympathy but also infer irresponsibility. Yet that is precisely where Altman's neglected attention to the ANC becomes a seriously worrying factor. It is almost as if, despite her sensitive evocation of blacks' misery and suffering, she is also impelled by a vision of frightening, impending violence which subtly undermines her project (similar to the way in which Paton in *Cry, the beloved country* is disturbed by the implications of John Kumalo as urban leader). Thaele's plan is of course mercilessly suppressed by the police, and results in his death. Furthermore Nkosi is almost destroyed through unintended participation in this fruitless event. Will he choose Dhlamini when he gets out of jail eventually, or will he take the place of the dead Thaele? The end of the novel leaves us in suspense. But since the options have been so narrowed down, to the exclusion of the ANC, the dramatic tension set up by the final prison scene strikes me as somewhat artificial.

## Contextualisation for Gordimer's *The lying days* – The May Day Strike

In March 1950 the 'Defend Free Speech Convention' organised by the Transvaal ANC, the Transvaal Indian Congress, the African People's Organization and the District Committee of the Communist Party drew ten thousand people to Johannesburg's Market Square. In *Long walk to freedom* Mandela reveals that: 'Dr Moroka, the new ANC President, without consulting the Executive, agreed to preside over the convention. The convention was a success, yet I remained wary, as the prime mover behind it was the party [that is the Communist Party]' (132–133).

Mandela's recollections continue as follows:

At the instigation of the Communist Party and the Indian congress, the convention passed a resolution for a one-day general strike, known as Freedom Day, on 1 May, calling for the abolition of the pass laws and all discriminatory legislation. Although I supported these objectives, I believed that the communists were trying to steal the thunder from the ANC's National Day of Protest. I opposed the May Day Strike on the grounds that the ANC had not originated the campaign, believing that we should concentrate on our own campaign. (133)

Mandela was not alone in his opposition. From Lodge's account it appears that the May Day protest was not unanimously supported by the ANC, despite Moroka's presence at the convention:

A *Bantu World* columnist accurately summed up the feelings of many youth Leaguers – including Mandela and Tambo – when he commented that the 'People's Holiday' was 'deliberately intended to divert people from the Bloemfontein Programme [i.e. the Programme of Action]'. It certainly looked as if the Africanists had been upstaged as there had been up to that point no evident attempt to implement the Programme's call for 'a national stoppage of work for one day as a mark of protest against the reactionary policy of the government'. (33)<sup>3</sup>

On 26 April the Minister of Justice, C R Swart, told parliament that strong measures would be taken to counter 'Freedom Day' demonstrations which non-Europeans were planning to hold the following week (Rx:379). Nearly

2 000 police were put on duty in anticipation of the event (Lg:34). Mandela gives the following account of the day as far as it affected him:

The Freedom Day strike went ahead without official ANC support. In anticipation, the government banned all meetings and gatherings on 1 May. More than two-thirds of African workers stayed at home during the one-day strike. That night, Walter [Sisulu] and I were in Orlando West on the fringes of a Freedom Day crowd that had gathered despite the government's restriction. The moon was bright, and as we watched the orderly march of protesters, we could see a group of policemen camped across a stream about five hundred yards away. They must have seen us as well, because all of a sudden they started firing in our direction. We dived to the ground, and remained there as mounted police galloped into the crowd, smashing people with batons. We took refuge in a nearby nurses' dormitory, where we heard bullets smashing in to the wall of the building. Eighteen Africans died and many others were wounded in this indiscriminate and unprovoked attack. (133-134)

Roux reports what amounts almost to a chasm between the actuality of the events and the parliamentary response:

The press reported 13 Africans killed and more than 24 wounded in May Day rioting on the Rand when the ban on meetings was defied at Benoni, Sophiatown and Orlando. Three days later Margaret Ballinger moved in Parliament for a debate on the Rand riots as a 'definite matter of urgent public importance'. The motion was defeated. The United Party refused its support and only the three Natives' representatives and the six Labour members supported the motion. (Rx:379)

In the two years between the May Day Strike with its follow-up, the 'Day of Protest' on 26 June 1950, and the first acts of civil disobedience in 1952, there was little organised political activity outside the Western Cape. For the African National Congress, nevertheless, this was a 'crucial phase', comments Lodge:

The adoption of the Programme of Action and the movement's involvement in political strikes did not signify a thorough-going transformation from an elitist to a popular movement. The period which followed the Day of Protest was characterised by conflicts concerning both strategic and ideological questions. The two main

issues were the position of marxists (sic) within Congress and the question of collaboration with non-African organisations. (36)

The Marxist issue was an especially vexing one because, when the Communist party was dissolved on 20 June 1950, its activities became absorbed into those of Congress: '[T]he class struggle had merged with the struggle for national liberation', the Simonses remark (609). Yet this was precisely what Youth Leaguers had feared because they saw Africans as oppressed 'by virtue of their colour as a race' (Lg:37) rather than through their position as a class. Some Youth Leaguers therefore joined older conservatives within the Transvaal Congress to oppose the successful election of (Marxist) J B Marks as president of the provincial organisation in November 1950 (37).

### **Gordimer's *The lying days***

**(published 1953; set in the early fifties)**

As with *Cry, the beloved country* one feels that there is little to add to the extensive criticism already devoted to Gordimer's first novel. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider Gordimer's representation of sociopolitical agitation and dissidence in the perspective afforded by this project as a whole. Like an early reviewer, I found re-reading the novel a 'memorable experience' (Dimitriu 2000:116). Although the novel can 'in no sense be described as radical' (Clingman 1986:36), and although Gordimer's first attempt stays almost entirely in the world of the whites (Wade 1978:4), what is significant is Gordimer's intensely sustained representation of the consciousness of a young white woman: the first-person narrator, Helen Shaw. Susan M Greenstein suggests that 'In her first four novels ... [Gordimer] produces a chronicle of the quest of white liberals for connection with their black countrymen and for involvement in their struggle' (1988:229). This positive assessment of her initial achievements is one which I would wish to endorse as against Clingman's emphasis on the 'degree to which, as a young writer, she could be held within the dominant patterns of white ideology' (1986:26). It is true, as Greenstein points out, that Gordimer rejected 'liberal politics in the wake of the Black consciousness movement' (1985:228). *The lying days* is part of that by no means easy shift. When a critic like Dorothy Driver looks back over the oeuvre and discerns (rather tendentiously, in my view) Gordimer's 'shift from a position of uneasy liberalism to a recognition of the marginality of liberalism and of its inherent hypocrisy, and finally to a revolutionary attitude' (1983:30), there is almost a kind of begrudging of the earlier stance, as if Gordimer should, or

could, have become a revolutionary much sooner. My purpose is, rather, to register the profound journey of consciousness that Gordimer has already made by the time of writing this first novel.

Dimitriu points out that Helen Shaw is 'shaped crucially by the special circumstances of the South Africa in which she lives' (2000:116). Gordimer's formidable achievement, I would argue, is to have succeeded in conveying impressions of Helen's world so comprehensively and minutely. What is especially important for my purposes, within this record, is the way 'the ambiguous, self-divided figure of the white girl or woman is the site of the hesitant, fraught rapprochement of white and black' (Visel 1988:35).

The liberal group in which Helen participates via her friendship with John and Jenny is shown to be seriously flawed. Nevertheless it provides the opportunity for her to meet Paul, who becomes her lover and whose work in the Native Affairs Department of the Johannesburg Municipality is initially a source of excitement for her (239–240). Driver comments that: 'Even as early as *The lying days* [Gordimer] refuses to explore experience only through sexuality' (1983:35). Indeed Paul and Helen's previous sexual and political compatibility is seriously affected by the Nationalist Party victory of May 1948. The policy of Dr Malan's new government creates excessive contradictions for Paul, which he is unable to resolve satisfactorily. Wade is probably right to assume that Gordimer is revealing, via Paul, the 'well-known bourgeois liberal syndrome of wanting things both ways at the same time' (1978:27). Clingman's diagnosis is that Paul seeks to uphold trusteeship when the contradictions latent in this ideology are unmasked by apartheid (38). My own view is that both Wade and Clingman, anxious to support Gordimer's treatment of Paul, neglect the possibility of collusion between author and protagonist. In Paul's portrayal Gordimer's hands are too inclined to interfere with the scalepans: Paul must be proved unsatisfactory as his purpose is to represent a stage in Helen's development. Whereas Gordimer creates the impression that it was impossible to reconcile the demands of Paul's job with apartheid in practice, there were officials who did succeed in manageable compromises (just as in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy). In any event Gordimer is intent on producing a situation in which there is irreparable damage to their relationship. To this end we are offered many indications of Paul's seemingly paralysed condition and Helen's acute anxieties about him, especially her sense that his job 'cancels out the future' (278–279).

There is a good deal of critical disagreement in relation to Gordimer's treatment of the friendship between Helen and her fellow black student, Mary Seswayo. Wade virtually pre-empts the whole point of the novel in

asserting that 'Helen doesn't understand (nor does Gordimer) that the Whites cannot be understood from the inside ... unless the Blacks are' (1978:39). In particular he finds that 'Mary is not fully realised and disappears too casually' (38-39). Clingman, following a similar point of view, complains that 'Blacks hardly appear in their own right in *The lying days* at all, except as objects who create moral or human problems for whites' (1986:31). Furthermore, he finds that the focus of this novel is 'almost entirely on a white world and white consciousness' while 'Blacks enter [it] only in so far as they impinge on the latter' (43). Both these critics seem to have lost sight of Gordimer's deliberate choice of a middle-class white narrator and protagonist for the novel, thus enabling her to represent and focus on a bourgeois white consciousness in all its most intricate aspects. Blacks do not feature prominently because they would not have done so in the actual experience of someone like Helen Shaw. Mary Seswayo's apparently casual disappearance from the novel is, I feel sure, also a deliberate strategy on Gordimer's part, in order to emphasise the difficulty for a white, or a black, of sustaining friendship in such a context. Whether Wade's rather doctrinal condition for a fictional understanding of characters from the inside is valid remains a moot point; where Gordimer's representations coincide with Wade's assumption, however, is in Helen's difficulties in understanding herself from the inside, and the way in which this process becomes more and more bound up with a new consciousness about the reality of blacks' lives.

What is crucial about Helen's relationship with her fellow student, Mary Seswayo, apart from Gordimer's registering of the immediate difficulties of tangibly demonstrating friendship (as shown so vividly in Helen's rift with her parents over Mary's using a room in their home for study purposes), is that it creates, accidentally, an opportunity for Helen's first visit to a township. This is an episode of telling, almost overwhelming, illumination for her. Visel argues that 'in Nadine Gordimer, the discovery of the other, the venture into blackness, is fertilising, liberating and self-actualising' (1988:36). Although Helen's initial township contact does not seem, in any immediate sense, to match Visel's conclusion, the experience *is*, in the long run, 'fertilising'; it helps to take Helen much further towards a grasp of South African actuality than her childhood rebel escapade did; her disturbing and startling new awareness of the Others and *their world* is a momentous step in her process of self-actualisation.

When Helen observed a mine strike as a child, the whites were fully in control; the blacks showed no signs of wishing to attempt violence. Although Clingman is right in observing that Gordimer ignores the 1946 black coalmi-

ners' strike, 'the largest single stoppage in South African history up to that time' (1986:29), her own admission is what is significant for the novel. At the time of writing, she says, she was unaware of the strike – and so too would have been thousands of young white women in circumstances similar to those of Helen Shaw. That sort of ignorance through isolation is the point of the novel, however. Even the May Day strike would have gone largely unnoticed by Helen had chance not thrown her into the midst of it.

Having gone with Paul's friend, Laurie, to find him at the Richmond Community Centre where he is working with another (ANC) friend on the day of the strike (319 ff), Helen becomes accidentally caught up in a township riot. She, who has been completely separated from this world apart from the Mary Seswayo episode, is suddenly and fearfully trapped in it. Clingman points out that she is 'pre-eminently a spectator' (1986:38), and Wade somewhat unsympathetically notes that she is 'safely behind the steel frame and armour-plated glass of Laurie's expensive English car' (1978:32). Nevertheless, she does – as she explains much later to Joel – feel fear and horror. (In any case, I do not imagine that *any* sort of car, no matter how expensive, would be safe for long from a riotous crowd.) Next to the horror, Wade invites us to contemplate the 'feebleness' of her condition. He is right of course, yet this kind of critical stance seems rather self-righteously to miss the point of the episode: Helen's full consciousness of how foreign this world is to her. Greenstein, in her article on *Burger's daughter* and *July's people*, traces the remaining influences of the quest plot of imperialist fiction in Gordimer's novels. It seems to me that this motif is handled ironically even from the beginning of Gordimer's work: here, in the riot episode, Helen has in a way succeeded in the quest that began with her Saturday childhood 'escape', and her sense of horror has superficial links with the experiences of, for example, Quartermain and his companions when confronted by Gagool's devilish lust for cruelty. Despite the menacing situation in the township, however, the blacks are *not* seen as brutes or savages. The Buchan-Attwell type of scenario is overturned. Something like the discovery of a common humanity via 'the horror, the horror' occurs here as in *Heart of darkness*.

Helen's realisation of the seething, but distinctly human, anger of the township residents causes her to feel even more intensely that liberals like Paul are out of touch and evading the present reality. Paul, she feels, has made up his mind to do the impossible (293); her continuing anxieties about him and his job cause her to lapse into a period of emotional stasis or paralysis in which she quits her job and sleeps or sits passively all day. Alienation from Paul thus seems to leave her only one present option – to leave for Europe, at

least temporarily. While Clingman refers to what he regards as 'the novel's attempt to transcend history altogether' (1986:33), Helen's response is, in fact, historically speaking, appropriate and realistic – this is just what hundreds of young white liberally minded people were doing. That Gordimer did *not* choose this course for herself makes it all the more clear that she is not offering Helen's decision with special approval, but rather with a penetrating grasp of potentialities *in context*. Wade feels that the most 'glaring sign of Helen's ... enfeeblement is her failure to understand the nature of Joel's relationship with her' (1978:34). For Visel what seems to matter finally is that Helen 'fails in her quest to resolve her psychic apartheid ... the buried black part of herself' (1988:34). If one takes these two verdicts together, or as complementaries, one is closer to what I take to be Gordimer's final suggestion: the capacity for love and the knowledge of the Other, both intrinsically and extrinsically, are closely, perhaps inextricably, bound together. (Although this point may have a superficial resemblance to what I have considered Wade's unwarranted condition for fictional writing, it will be seen that my formulation does not attempt to set up a fixed, causal relationship.)

## Contextualisation (1) for Bloom's *Transvaal episode* – The Defiance Campaign

The ANC's Programme of Action called for direct and universal representation in South Africa, and proposed as methods towards achieving this end the use of boycotts, civil disobedience and national stoppages of work (Cn:37). In the light of this call, the new Joint Planning Council, consisting of two ANC men (Walter Sisulu and J B Marks) and two members of the South African Indian Congress (Yusuf Dadoo and Yusuf Cachalia), presented recommendations concerning a course of action which was to become known as the Defiance Campaign (RD:383). Chief of these recommendations was that an 'ultimatum' calling for the scrapping of 'unjust laws' by February 1952 be delivered to the government.<sup>4</sup> Failure to comply would result in a 'Defiance Campaign' which would start on 6 April – the date set aside by the government for countrywide celebrations to mark the tercentenary of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape in 1652 (RD:383).

The campaign, as outlined by Lodge:

... was to involve the courting of arrests by trained volunteer corps through contravening selected laws and regulations. In the first stage, it was envisaged that the campaign would be limited to the major urban centres, in the second the number of corps and centres

would increase, and finally the struggle would 'assume a general character' in both the town and the countryside. (40-41)

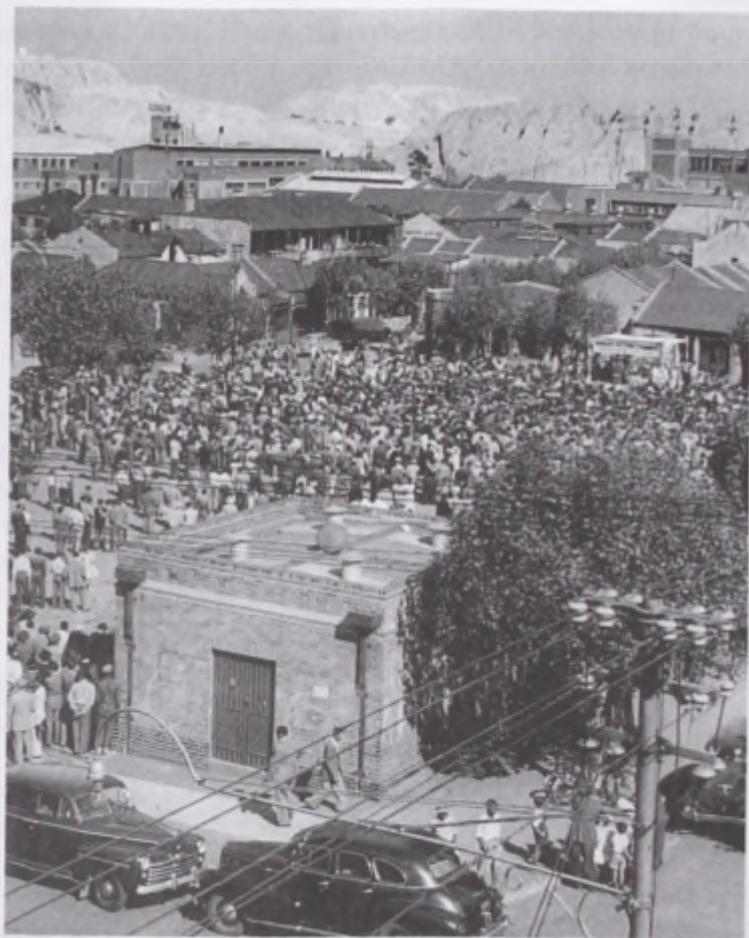
Strike action was not to be a major initial strategy because:

The authors of the report were concerned to ensure that the campaign attracted as wide a range of participation as possible. Limiting it to various forms of industrial action would, they believed, deny the opportunity of involving, for example, the large number of people affected by the Separate Registration of Voters Act who were not industrial workers. (41)

The letter, or 'ultimatum', signed by Moroka and Sisulu, reached Prime Minister Malan in January 1952. Its crucial point was that the blacks were 'fully resolved' to achieve 'democracy, liberty and harmony' in their lifetime' but it also made clear that what was being opposed was a system, and not a 'race' (RD:383). However, it would surely not have been a great surprise to the campaign organisers that in his response Malan 'reiterated the Nationalist ideology



*Proposal for the civil disobedience campaign*



*Launch of the Defiance Campaign*

that “Bantu differ in many ways from the Europeans” and that the “government had no intention of repealing ... the laws” (383).

As white South Africans prepared for a massive climax to the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary celebrations on 6 April, the ANC and SAIC appealed to blacks to observe the day as a ‘National Day of Pledge and Prayer’. Mass rallies were held in all the main centres (RD:383), and thousands pledged themselves to answer the call and defy the unjust laws (Bg:184). On 31 May, encouraged by the success of these huge rallies, the executives of the participating organisations decided to go ahead and launch the full-scale Defiance Campaign on 26 June (Lg:43). When, at a Durban meeting, Chief Albert Luthuli and Dr G M

Naicker volunteered to defy, the national volunteer-in-chief, Mandela, said to loud applause: 'We can now say unity between the Non-European peoples in this country has become a living reality' (Bg:187). The campaign was to be the most sustained and – in terms of numbers of participants – the most successful organised resistance the ANC was ever to initiate (Lg:43).

On the appointed day, 26 June 1952, demonstrations were held throughout the Witwatersrand, Eastern Cape and Natal, culminating in acts of systematic defiance:

Watched by cheering, chanting crowds, groups of protesters in all the major centres deliberately broke 'unjust laws'. They walked through 'forbidden' areas without Passes, they broke curfews, they walked through 'Europeans only' entrances and stood at 'Europeans only' counters and waiting rooms. As the campaign took hold among the people, a mood of almost religious fervour gripped the resistance. Days of prayer, fasting, hymn-singing and church services took place throughout the country. (RD:385)



*Defiers arrested*

While Youth League leaders tended to employ Africanist idiom (as for example, '[T]o you who are young and whose blood is hot, we say catch the bull by its horns, Africa') (Lg:44), the campaign promoters in general exhorted their followers in terms of 'sacrifice, martyrdom, the triumph of justice and truth' (Lg:44).



*Women campaigners emerging from jail*

The government of course took immediate steps to try to crush the campaign. The homes of ANC and SAIC members were raided, and leaders were arrested and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act (OC:26).

Brian Bunting, in his biography of Moses Kotane, makes the point that the government, 'by launching what it must have hoped would be a pre-emptive attack, far from cowering or hamstringing the people's organisations, had on the contrary helped them immensely with their task of mobilisation' (186). In September at the climax of the campaign 2 500 resisters were arrested in 24 centres. However, there was another 'fresh impetus at the beginning of October when India successfully moved that South Africa should be debated at the UN General Assembly' (Lg:44). And as police began arresting protesters by the hundreds,

... white South Africans were forced to sit up and take notice ... Legislation was rushed through parliament imposing dire penalties on those taking part in the campaign ... by October 1952 nearly 6 000 people had been arrested. But during the same period, paid-up membership of the ANC increased from 7 000 to more than 100 000 – almost 17 new members for each arrest. (RD:385)

By December the number of arrests had reached some 8 400, of whom almost 8 000 were convicted (385). Then, between 18 October and 9 November, the campaign lost its momentum, with fewer than 300 arrests after that time. One reason was that 'the movement was paralysed by events surrounding the outbreak of rioting – on 18 October in Port Elizabeth and on 9 November in East London' (see next section) (Lg:45). After 1952 civil disobedience became much more difficult since the Criminal Law Amendment Act set up harsh punishments for politically motivated law breaking.

## **Contextualisation (2) for Bloom's *Transvaal episode* – township riots and police behaviour**

Lodge reports that: 'On the Rand, the period 1948–1949 was marked by a sudden tightening of the pass and liquor laws ... It was not merely that controls on mobility had tightened; they were also implemented in an increasingly brutal fashion' (34). At this time the police evolved a new blanket technique of police raiding, the effect of which 'appears to be, not to trace and trap known criminal gangs, but to conduct what resembles a punitive expedition against the entire location population' (34). At about the same time, however, blacks had developed a township-based stay-at-home tactic because it was fairly easy to mobilise or immobilise the inhabitants in this way; and legal prohibitions on African industrial strikes could not be so effective.

tively invoked in relation to a location. However, since police action against a township as opposed to a factory-based strike was considerably simpler (as the events of the 1950s were to demonstrate), the new tactic turned out on occasion to be seriously counter-productive (Lg:36).

The first major setback to the Defiance Campaign occurred on 18 October 1952 when a racial riot broke out in Port Elizabeth. Previously violence had been avoided by campaigners (though inflicted by the authorities). Lodge gives the following account:

[A] railway policeman attempted to arrest two men disembarking at New Brighton [location] because he had been informed that they had stolen a tin of paint. The men resisted arrest and gained the sympathy of other passengers on the platform. In the course of the ensuing scuffle, the policeman fired his gun into the crowd, killing one man and wounding two others. Rumours of what was happening circulated swiftly; in a few minutes a large crowd gathered outside the police station and police reinforcements, arriving on the scene, were stoned. The police then fired on the crowd, killing several people. The crowd turned away from the station and entered the location. A white lorry driver who was unfortunate enough to be in its path was killed and his lorry destroyed. Thereafter, three other whites were killed in a series of attacks on white-owned property. (59–60)

Other interesting details supplied by Roux are that amongst the whites killed was the proprietor of the local cinema; that one of the wrecked buildings was the post office; that many Africans were wounded by the police; also that the ANC, together with the Indian Congress, issued a joint statement 'denying the accusation of the Minister of Justice that the disturbance was a direct result of the defiance campaign' (Rx:379).

All public meetings in East London were banned in reaction to the Port Elizabeth events. Local ANC officials, however, managed to obtain permission to hold a Sunday prayer meeting on 9 November. Unfortunately the police arrived, maintaining that the meeting was indistinguishable from a political gathering and that those attending refused to obey their orders to disperse. Their claim was later rejected by the organisers, who asserted that the police arrived while a hymn was being sung (Lg:59). In any case the police charged the crowd with bayonets before they had a chance to leave. 'What seems indisputable,' points out Lodge, 'is that the police – who had acceded to the initial request for permission to hold a meeting – were extraordinarily

well-prepared for a fight' (59). The meeting was thus broken up, and those attending it 'were driven at gunpoint into the location'. During the retreat:

... two whites, including a Dominican nun, were brutally killed. The police surrounded the location with a tight cordon and the sound of gunfire from the location was to trouble nearby white suburbs until midnight. At least eight people died as a result of police action. Municipal buildings, a dairy depot, the Roman Catholic mission school and church were set alight and gutted. (59-60)

According to Roux, the white town councillors of East London 'blamed the Government for what had occurred, saying that the town had been peaceful until the ban on meetings was imposed' (391). Seeking to be dispassionate about the riots, Roux agrees that their 'immediate cause' could not be attributed to the Defiance Campaign. Nevertheless, he argued that it had 'somehow helped to create an atmosphere of excitement and resentment against authority which was liable to blaze up when provocation was offered' (392). He also felt troubled by the revelation that 'Africans could be quite indiscriminate in their attacks on whites'. The implication for him is that 'while the Congresses were able to discipline their own members in the practice of passive resistance and non-violence, they had little control or authority over the masses of non-Europeans, especially the *tsotsi* or delinquent youth element in the locations' (392). More simply, and with less sense of adverse judgement on black rioters, Lodge's explanation is that: '[The riots] arose essentially out of the increasingly tense relationship between blacks and police which the campaign had generated' (45). Just as troubling is Omer-Cooper's point that '[T]he riots provided the government with an ideal opportunity to smear the movement' (207):

Though the ANC called for an enquiry which the government refused, many whites held the ANC at least indirectly responsible for the outburst. In this atmosphere the government issued a proclamation under which anyone (including whites) who influenced Africans to break any laws could be heavily fined or imprisoned for three years. Many Africans were horrified at the violence of the riots and lost enthusiasm for further participation in the defiance campaign. It continued to the end of the year but gradually fizzled out as support dwindled. It had failed to achieve any concession from the government. (207)

## Bloom's *Transvaal episode*

(published 1956; set in late 1952/1953)

Harry Bloom's novel, *Transvaal episode*, was originally published in 1955 under the title *Episode in the Transvaal*, and under a second title, *Episode*, was the British Author Club Award for best first novel of 1956. It was banned in 1961 under its third and final title on the grounds that it might disturb race relations and endanger the safety of the state. Only in 1982, a year after the author's death, did David Philip succeed in having the novel unbanned after two appeals. My knowledge of the novel was preceded by its critical treatment in articles by Michael Wade (1983) and David Maughan-Brown (1984, 1987).

Wade and Maughan-Brown are not, of course, the only critics to have written on *Transvaal episode*, though Maughan-Brown's earlier article remains the only sustained account. *The Torch* review (11(12):6)<sup>5</sup> is mostly commendatory, while David Hendricks's review-length piece, 'Riot and reality', in *The Purple Renoster*, No 2 (1957) is almost entirely unfavourable. Although he acquits Bloom, somewhat grudgingly, of racism, the novel in his view lacks convincing realism. Gordimer, taking the opposite line, credits Bloom with the 'determined realism of a Zola' (1961:43). However, as she can devote little more than a page of space to *Episode* in her overview of the way South African novelists narrate the concept of nation, there is no opportunity for close analysis. In any case, she does not hint at any problematic aspects in Bloom's handling of his theme – except, perhaps, by way of implicit reference to readers' possible objections: '[N]o one has suggested a second's suspension of disbelief in the book' over the riot's commencing 'with the loss, by a washerwoman, of a white man's shirt collar' (43). Writing a few years after Gordimer, Martin Tucker makes only scattered references to the novel in the South African literature section of his *Africa in modern literature: a survey of contemporary writing in English*; he seems satisfied to categorise Bloom as a 'novelist on the left' (1967:208), and *Episode* as a 'novel of violence' (184 and 215). For Kenneth Parker, Bloom is amongst the first to recognise that 'what is of overriding importance [in the South African context] is the power relationship' (1978:21). Unfortunately, no detached criticism is offered, let alone consideration of the narrative technique. What Parker endorses is for Rowland Smith, in his turn, a novelistic trespass: Bloom is heavy-handed in his 'overtly didactic aim' (1983:174). Isabel Hofmeyr, reviewing the Africasouth paperback series as a whole when it appeared in 1985, feels that Maughan-Brown 'possibly overstates his case' (1985:90). Her survey form does not allow for more than two pages on Bloom's novel, but her insistence on contextualising the work as 'a sensitive

reaction to the '50s' (90) offers a useful implicit corrective to Maughan-Brown's approach. What he tends to lose sight of, in her view, is the dominant mood of the fifties: one of a tremendously strong commitment to non-violent action and social democratic principles on the part of most state opponents.

My choice of Bloom's novel as the culmination of this study is deliberate, that is to say, the chronological cut-off point was determined by the concerns of *Transvaal episode*. The novel has not been well understood, but I hope that the special status I have accorded it will lead to a change in its reception. In my view Bloom achieves several unique breakthroughs in fiction by South African whites and deserves at least belated credit. Most significantly, here, for the first time in South African white fiction, the ANC finds a voice ready to credit the kind of leadership it was and is capable of providing.

*Transvaal episode* is set in 1953 in the fictional Transvaal town of Nelstroom. This was the year when the Defiance Campaign came to an end, when the Bantu Education Act was passed, and when the ANC declared the need for a national convention, the prompting that was to result in the Freedom Charter of June 1955. The date inevitably leads one to conjecture that there are connections between the focal township riot in the novel and the well-documented disturbances in Sophiatown (the May Day strike in 1950), or the Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth and East London, October and November 1952 respectively). My impression, however, is that Bloom had more specific knowledge of police suppression of riots in the Transvaal, and of the kind of 'punitive expedition' referred to by Lodge (34). The provocation for the depicted riot in the novel (ie the attempt to issue passes to women) does not fit in with any of the cited events, yet references to numerous sources, including the *Race Relations Surveys* for the years 1951 to 1953,<sup>6</sup> and the accounts of the Defiance Campaign (mid 1952 to early 1953) and its aftermath by a range of writers, including Tom Lodge (1983), Albert Luthuli (1962), Bloke Modisane (1986 [1963]), and Eddie Roux (1964 [1948]), fail to produce parallel circumstances. One can, of course, dismiss such research as pointless because the material is fictional, yet the specificity of detail in Bloom's account is too compelling in my view to permit so easy a retreat. For the time being, however, his source material remains as shadowy as himself.

Both Wade and Maughan-Brown are disappointed that Bloom's alleged Marxism seems to be corrupted or betrayed by unconscious liberalism. However, I have found no evidence to support the notion that Bloom *was* in fact a Marxist, and I have therefore approached the novel with different expectations. The black protagonist, Walter Mabaso, is specifically mentioned as an ANC leader who had been fully involved in the Defiance Campaign, but there

is no hint of his belonging also to the SACP (though one could argue that Bloom may have thought it wiser for the sake of publication not to give him this additional allegiance). It seemed to me sufficient to regard Bloom, therefore, as an extremely well-informed white who was very sympathetic to the ANC cause. I do not wish, then, to re-enter the debate about Bloom's political allegiances except at those points where Wade's and Maughan-Brown's assumptions about his Marxism appear to blind them to the actual nature of his analysis.

Already in the Author's note one is faced with the challenge of how to read the novel. Having introduced Nelstroom and insisted on the fictionality of the people in the white town and in the location, he goes on to remark:

There have been many race riots in South Africa – they form part of the scene, like floods or droughts. Some of them occurred after I finished writing the book, and one of these bears a striking similarity to the events of this story.

Maughan-Brown, taking this at face value, is scandalised:

'Race riots' are seen as natural phenomena, having nothing to do with either a people's history or with an economic base, they are recurrent and inevitable. (1984:47)

However, if one detects here a tone of sardonic irony in Bloom's remark – and I would argue that retrospectively such a response is invited – a very different kind of reading becomes possible. Maughan-Brown's reductive approach seems totally at odds with the immensely specific wealth of detail which Bloom has drawn into the novel. Seldom indeed has an entire novel been so exclusively focused upon one particular episode. Riots have indeed 'form[ed] part of the scene' in South Africa, but if Bloom were brushing aside explanations fatalistically by relegating them to the level of natural phenomena, his enterprise would be in continuous contradiction with itself.

Intrinsic to the method and purpose of this novel is the attention which Bloom gives to individual consciousness. Primarily the novel is about the meaning of the location as the 'exposed nerve of the apartheid system' (1956:14). As the new superintendent of the location, Du Toit is central to the disclosure of this meaning. From being a willing, even eager, employee of the state who, for a moment at the beginning of the novel, glimpses 'another meaning to the location' (95), he has finally to reach the decision, as a result of the riot and its aftermath, that the job of superintendent is 'filthy' (307). This perception comes to him via the insight that Swanepoel, the lieu-

tenant in command of the Nelstroom police force, 'did not represent law and order; he represented crime and violence' (307). Furthermore, Du Toit realises that his job made allies of himself and the police, made him in fact a 'daily accomplice' (307) of theirs. Since this insight is the crux of the novel, it is not surprising that Bloom engages us as often as possible with the consciousness of Du Toit and, to a lesser degree, with that of Swanepoel. We need to understand the inner workings of their minds as fully and convincingly as possible to appreciate what lies behind Swanepoel's responses to the riot, as well as the magnitude of Du Toit's conversion. We also need to be in a position of sympathetic access to their minds so that we care about their responses and decisions. A sense of *their* humanity is indeed essential for Bloom's purpose, which is to demonstrate the full horror of the *inhuman* treatment inevitably entailed by the conception and administration of townships.

So we are taken through all Du Toit's initial experiences in his resolute attempt to keep the location under impartial and effective control (97 ff). We share his fury over the initial police raid in response to the washerwoman's defiance (128–129), and his tense anxiety before the meeting which he calls to explain his introduction of a pass law for women (150–154).<sup>7</sup> After the riot, our awareness of his growing agitation under police questioning (186), and his misery and revulsion when he has witnessed at first hand the brutal callousness of which the police are capable (265, 302), enables us to appreciate why his mind should ultimately be in the tormented chaos that precedes his conversion (295–296).

The revelation of Swanepoel's consciousness shortly before the raid (177 ff) provides, in the form of a convincing mini-narrative, immediate and unsatirical contact with a mind fired by rabid racism. Thus, when Du Toit sees himself as an accomplice of the police, we do not register this in terms of an abstract concept, but as a liaison between particular individuals whose humanity has been established with the utmost care. Bloom also gives attention to the consciousness of Mabaso, the black activist whose Defiance Campaign achievements make him so desirable as ANC promoter in the location. While balance requires that at least one black character also be afforded the kind of treatment given to Du Toit – and it is not to my purpose to evaluate Bloom's success as a white in rendering a black consciousness – I regard the intimacy that we develop with Du Toit and Swanepoel as more crucial for Bloom's overall purpose. I do not share Maughan-Brown's sense that because 'more space is devoted to Du Toit's consciousness than to Mabaso's and the fear and confusion with which the former responds to the riot are given much more weight than Mabaso's moral and theoretical disapproval', the balance of

sympathies is 'loaded in favour of Du Toit and against the blacks' (1984:49). To speak of a 'balance of sympathies' in this context, however, is to miss the point: if Du Toit does *not* undergo a crisis and ultimately a change of heart, there is no novel.

Not only does Maughan-Brown detect liberalism unconsciously (and thus, for him, treacherously) present in Bloom's work, but he ventures to offer us a 'glimpse of some of the creatures which lurk in the cellars over which the liberal edifice is constructed' (1984:42). Particular evidence of these creatures is afforded, he claims, by the way in which Bloom's pattern of imagery 'exhibits a drive towards animalizing the black people' (1984:47). However, closer inspection of Bloom's imagery in relation to his use of verbal echoes and a saving awareness of the possibility – already pointed to – of sardonic irony should enable us to acquit Bloom altogether of this charge. What is immediately clear is that he is unusually fond of animal, bird, or insect analogies. Steadily he prepares for the question that Du Toit later asks himself as he sits waiting tensely at home the day after the riot and the police reprisals to sign Swanepoel's police statement: '[W]hat was there about the location that made it like a vicious poisoned animal and turn on everyone, friend and enemy alike?' (302). But the answer offered by the novel, I would argue, is the reverse of the one given by Maughan-Brown.

Let us turn to some examples. In the code of Mabaso and his ally, Nkomo, a 'big rabbit hunt means a police raid' (22). On the other hand, Ackerman, the senior sergeant, thinking of a date with girls from Johannesburg, and anxious not to miss it on account of location troubles, reflects: '[T]he hunting in this town was pretty damn poor enough as it was, and to pass up an opportunity like that [would be silly]' (88). When one of the girls eventually comes to the charge office later he twice calls her 'rabbit' (89). Lukhele, husband of the washerwoman whose defiance sparked off the initial raid, runs 'like a startled guinea fowl' (90) when he realises he has been cornered by the police; and they kill him the moment after spotting him. Much later, when the police – having dealt with a stock-theft complaint – are re-approaching Nelstroom just before hearing radio news about the raid, they notice a flock of guinea fowl which 'now took fright at their stopping and darted frantically across the road' (174). The delayed echo enables us to register (in retrospect) just how much Lukhele had been dehumanised or animalised by the police. While the gangs of tsotsi youths 'marched back and forth like caged animals' (78), Du Toit later tells the location people as a whole, '[T]he government is a lion ... When it roars it must be obeyed' (175); he himself, however, is described by one of the people as 'a leopard that cannot bite' (226).

Sometimes the echoing has a parodic effect. Gwebu, Du Toit's highly intelligent and articulate assistant,<sup>8</sup> is described by the superintendent as an 'ugly little baboon' (156) when he dares to criticise the new regulations for women, a crude way of trying to undermine the force of Gwebu's objection. Later when Swanepoel questions Du Toit after the riot, and Gwebu tries to explain that the people were actually shouting 'You want to kill us' (196), not '[W]e want to kill you', Swanepoel asks the superintendent, 'How can you work with this crazy baboon?' (197). Here too, Swanepoel's derisive question acts as a device to evade dispassionate consideration of the distinction Gwebu is making. The lack of any meaningful basis for Swanepoel's labels is conveyed through yet another simian reference: after a mentally defective location child has accidentally shot Constable Roberts, the third-person narrator, rendering Swanepoel's perception of the event, describes the boy as having a 'hideous monkey face' (267). There is clearly a good deal more to Bloom's image patterns than Maughan-Brown has accounted for; indeed Bloom's interest in imagery of this kind is almost a sub-theme of the novel.

The crucial word in Bloom's sardonic manipulation of racist vocabulary is 'savage'. When he conveys Swanepoel's earlier background history, we are told how he and his racist friend felt themselves part of the 'pure white race in a sea of black savagery' (180). Part of the narrator's account of the response to Lukhele's death is as follows:

The *tsotsi* gangs formed up again. And in the yards the sounds of dancing started, drums and whistles and stamping feet, sounds that used to mean enjoyment but that now filled the night with a harsh, throbbing beat, the echo of ancient wars. There were strange old chants in praise of legendary warriors and great tribal deeds. (116)

Such a mythopoetic evocation of the conventional idea of savage ritual might almost have come out of the pages of a novel like *Prester John*.<sup>9</sup> A similar but intensified fantasy is what seems to be enacted before the eyes of Du Toit as he watches his car burning in the midst of the frenzied mob:

The abandoned dancing and high, almost musical shrieking seemed to create a scene of trees and swamp and rotting foliage, and he was a thousand miles from civilisation, a concealed spectator to a frenzied jungle ceremony. (169)

But here surely, in these abrupt shifts of register, are pointers to that characteristic lurking sardonic irony of the author, ready at a moment's notice to appear to affirm the images with which white consciousness is riddled.<sup>10</sup>

The source of the true savagery is carefully placed in the formulation of Gwebu's warning to Du Toit before the fateful meeting: 'I think it's a pretty savage thing to make women take jobs in town or else get out of the location' (155). It needs to be emphasised that the word 'savage' is used by Gwebu *before* the meeting. Thus it enters the explanatory discourse of the novel before the police and white community violence is unleashed upon the location. If Du Toit's regulation is to be regarded as savage in itself, the placing of this verdict surely acts as a devastating signal of the degree of savagery which Bloom intends us to attribute to the later events.<sup>11</sup>

To gain a clearer sense of the impression that Bloom intended, a depiction (as I see it) of the most ferocious and unmitigated savagery possible on the part of whites, I need to go into some detail about Bloom's selection of material. Even before the meeting and the riot, Sergeant Ackerman arrests the Rev Shongwe and Dladla (two members of the ANC cell) *because* they have brought Lukhele's body to hand over to the police, a prelude of what is to come in its complete overturning of basic justice. Then, at the beginning of the major raid that culminates in the massacre, made possible by fabricated evidence elicited from terrified and incompetent black constables, Mabaso's home is arbitrarily and totally vandalised by the police (246). Sarah Manana, the shebeen queen who is falsely named as a participant in the meeting, is brutally assaulted and murdered in her home because she insists on her non-involvement and thus dares to resist arrest. At the home of Ndimandi, one of the prominent businessmen in the location, a large group of families have gathered for a funeral. The police invade the house, terrorise the assembled group, including the children, make arrests on sheer pretext, hurl the terrified Ndimandi into the police van so violently that he is killed, and swiftly murder his wife also when she attacks a policeman in protest (having vainly given warning of her husband's frail physical condition). Bloom seems to have chosen people such as Manana and Ndimandi to represent the location because they are not specially worthy of either esteem or reprobation: they are, one might say, no better or worse than the ordinary, run-of-the-mill white inhabitants of Nelstroom. There is no special reason then that we should previously have had sympathy for them, but their deaths are manifestations of an almost unbelievable barbarism.

Du Toit's later summing up of the massacre is apt:

[T]he raid] was merely an excuse to let loose an orgy of murder and cruelty against the location. All the evil that flooded the location

that night poured out of Swanepoel himself. *Swanepoel did not represent law and order: he represented crime and violence.* (307)<sup>12</sup>

The naturalistic, deadpan detail Bloom uses to describe the sustained and prolonged 'point-blank firing throughout the location' (270), when the police are joined by eager white civilian volunteers from the town, is presented as if from the point of view of one of the perpetrators. To themselves, they are the instruments of righteous, unquestioning retribution. When the 'pandemonium of blaring sirens, incessant gunfire, shrieks, shouts, roaring engines, shattering glass, and tearing metal' (270) is at last silenced (yet only by the obstacle of an overturned bus), Bloom reveals the 'uncontrollable fury' (272) of the location survivors. At this point Bloom abandons naturalism for a quasi-mythopoeic explanation of the events:

Nobody knew, or ever would know, all that happened in the next hour. It was too vast, too violent to be absorbed and recounted by witnesses. There were strange wild passions that had lain asleep in the seeds from immemorial times, that had survived from an ancient secret world, and these sprang alive into the air and beckoned on. Later, when the location returned to its senses, and tried to recall what it had done, it could remember that black hour only with the vague and distant blur of a dream. (272)

This too is the manner in which the *tsotsis* are described:

One could tell they were *tsotsis* by their fancy clothes, by the way they took command, and by their weird mystical unison of minds and limbs. They led the mobs. They took control of the location, and exerted a spell that drew hundreds of normally calm and sober people after them – hard-working artisans, mothers of large families, serious boys with good school records. The *tsotsis* were the incarnation of the black sinister forces that had come on this night out of the dark past. They had a kind of mystic significance, and from this came their power over the location. (273)

That Bloom should adopt an explanatory mode at a stage when the location has suffered a full-scale siege should in itself arouse our attention. Suddenly the reader is plunged into a Haggardian type of colonial romance discourse in which the actions of blacks are apparently interpretable only in terms of 'strange wild passions', surviving from an 'ancient secret world'. However, this mode merely offers a more sophisticated version of racist consciousness than the impressions of righteous retribution previously conveyed. In the

second passage quoted above, Bloom's representation of the tsotsis as displaying a 'weird mystical unison of minds and limbs' and as becoming 'the incarnation of [the] black sinister forces' is such a deliberate sidestepping of the causes of the revolt, already amply manifested in the text, as to suggest that what involves on the surface a distinctly racist ploy is a deliberate strategy, a further use of sardonic irony to accentuate the gap between sociopolitical reality and white consciousness. Perhaps Bloom was asking too much of his readers in such shifts. However, I would argue that his purpose was to heighten our awareness of just how bizarre and absurd is the notion of primitiveness or savagery at work in the location people after the experience of unrelenting provocation and arbitrary violence.

Bloom's challenge to the sensibilities of his white readers is, nevertheless, not yet complete. The culminating action of the rioters is the murder of the Bertrams, a white couple much liked by the location people. Before death, the woman is raped no fewer than eighteen times (275). Separated from the context of the massacre, this episode is likely to elicit just the sort of white response that Bloom detects in Du Toit: 'Friend or enemy, they murder you just the same. As they did to Mr. and Mrs. Bertram. As they tried to do to me' (301). Only by inexplicable neglect of the details of chapter 15 (involving the raid and massacre) could one suppose that Bloom has *unconsciously* lapsed here into a racist type of consciousness (see Maughan-Brown 1984:62-63).

The culminating paragraph of chapter 15 is closely related – in a startlingly low-key way – to the use of sardonic irony, especially in the fairly laconic, 'Yet there was a pattern ...' (276). In this way Bloom persistently and emphatically overturns what may have seemed to be an invitation to detect a crazed mentality at work in the destructiveness of the location dwellers:

Yet there was a pattern to all the destruction and brutality. Everything that was destroyed had a connection with the white man and his rule. The pickup van was the property of the police. The Welfare Centre was the sly, insincere smile on the face of the municipality – a hated symbol. The murdered location constable and Ngubeni were part of the machinery by which the location was ruled. The cinema was an instrument for their exploitation by the whites. The buses were the link between the location and the white town. The administration building was Du Toit. (276)

Here the systematic logic of the repeated sentence structure and its gradual narrowing down to the final blunt transposition suggests the very opposite of craziness. Instead we are faced with an inevitable and inescapable sequence

of responses by human beings whose humanity has been systematically thwarted and abused. How startlingly different is the mode adopted here from that used only a few pages previously in terms of a mythicised 'dark past'. Had we mistaken Bloom's meaning at that point, the explanation now offered surely induces some urgent retrospective reconsideration. Moreover, any lurking doubts should be removed by the beginning of the next chapter, the most extended italicised passage in the novel, in the course of which Bloom draws explicit attention to the stereotyped white explanation: '*If anything went wrong, it must have been due to some dark evil existing only in the location*' (278).

The one remaining aspect of the novel I should like to give some attention to is the behaviour of the location people in prison. When Rev Shongwe (from the first batch of prisoners) recognises Mabaso amongst the huge new crowd brought into the jail after the massacre, their mutual salute, 'Mayibuye' (281), leads to the whole jail striking up one of the Defiance Campaign songs: 'And a great, clear, passionate melody swelled up out of the gaol and soared into the sky and carried over the whole town' (281). In response it is the guards, not the author, who lapse virulently into the use of animal imagery as they yell: 'Shut up, you black swine' (281) to no avail. Later, during the interrogations and torturing, Shongwe initiates the song once more. Now, in a throwing off of restraint that is the very reverse of savagery, the prisoners sing 'with a crashing, tumultuous, ringing defiance' (290). The white townspeople (described by Bloom as 'the mob on the street outside'), together with the farmers' commando and the police officers, give further voluble testimony to the primitivising prejudice that seems to govern their consciousness: 'Shut up. Keep quiet, you black pigs. SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP! But no one inside heard' (290). After this ironic reversal of the deafening noise that accompanied the massacre, and which the location dwellers listened to in stricken silence, Bloom offers the following, extraordinary passage – there could hardly be a more challenging and exhilarated evocation of the fully *human* power and insight of this black community:

... after a while the police and even the mob outside stopped shouting and gesticulating, and a queer kind of discomfort came over them, such as comes to a man who mistakes a shadow for a burglar, and they just stood around with their hands on their hips, not looking at one another. They wanted to go away then but something held them listening. Buried deep in the impassioned song was a strange secret, a power to reach into the hearts even of their torturers. The police stood listening until it was finished, and,

without a word to the prisoners, turned round and marched back to the police station. And among the mob in the street there were many who suddenly found that they had better things to do than hang around watching a lot of Kaffir prisoners in a cage, and they sauntered away, leaving only the most violent and clamorous of them standing at the fence.

It was a small triumph, so insignificant that none of the white people saw it as such. But there are times when the power of small, commonplace things can be miraculous. A few degrees of warmth can save a man's life. A tiny light on the shore can guide a ship through the storm. This was such a case. This small victory reminded the prisoners that they were alive. It gave them back the right to breathe, to feel the sun's rays, to widen their shoulders and to feel in their veins that surge that was carrying them through the long night into the future. (290-291)

Once again Bloom uses rhetorical effects; not, however, as in the semi-mythopoeic passages, where the latent suggestions endorse the impression of re-awakened savagery, but in order to affirm as powerfully as possible the reawakened *humanity* of the location dwellers.

Mabaso's final reflections as he lies in prison seem to me to convey just how subtle an understanding Bloom has of authentic leadership, free from any neat antithesis of individual and community:

It was right that he had spoken up to Du Toit. He had not caused the attack on Du Toit but it was right that if people were going to be arrested for it, he should be among them ...

Sometimes an experience befalls a people that affects them all for the future. Even though it befalls only a small number of the people, even though it might destroy that number, its impact spreads out and it lives on for ever among all the people. It makes the next experience a little different, and becomes a part of the next experience, and so on, and thus it survives to help shape the day that finally brings an end to all the grief and strife ...

Well, that's another way of saying the same thing, Mabaso thought. If this belongs to me, then I'm part of the experience and cannot hope to escape from it. A part, but not in the sense of something tossed helplessly about by the events. In the dynamic,

organic sense. In the sense that the events and I respond to each other and help to make each other. (292)

Maughan-Brown takes this as support for Wade's suggestion that Bloom at this stage wishes us to regard Mabaso's consciousness as finally 'free of bourgeois illusions about the value of a single human consciousness as opposed to the experience of the masses' (1984: 45). However, Maughan-Brown goes on to say, '[T]his is in sharp contradiction with another strand of Mabaso's consciousness, clearly also retained right to the end, in which the "single human consciousness", or the "leader", is set up *in opposition* to the "experience of the masses", or "the crowd" (45). What happens here, as I see it, is that Mabaso accepts that his leadership has been a form of responsibility for the community, inseparable from solidarity with it. His shift is not from a perception coloured by individual consciousness to one coloured by communal consciousness. Instead Mabaso comes at this stage to a recognition of the almost paradoxical nature of leadership: he had to be there and to act at that moment, not to impose his will on the people of the location, but to enable them to be what they most deeply wanted, to be their voice.

*The Torch* reviewer regarded this as one of the misconceived scenes that results from Bloom's error of seeing the 'struggle in South African as one of White against Black and of Black against White, as a colour, not as a social struggle' (1956:6).<sup>13</sup> If one were to take the novel as a comprehensive analysis of the struggle in South Africa, the reviewer would of course be right to accuse Bloom of error. But the novel is deliberately focused on one major episode in a particular town where the nature of the white community makes it highly likely that the struggle will emerge as one of white against black. In other words, Bloom offers an extreme version of the South African reality as a warning of the viciously dangerous polarisation that was latent throughout the fifties. The fate of the Bertrams (a couple who *cannot* be fitted into the mould of whites vs blacks, any more than the Dominican nun killed in the actual East London riot) highlights Bloom's warning by suggesting that the forces of polarisation are likely to be so powerful as to engulf even those who have different views.

## Conclusions

For Altman the possibility of liberal effectiveness seems to be a myth. Gordimer, having revealed disabling myths such as those sustained by Helen Shaw's parents, seems more dispassionately concerned to distinguish between quasi-liberal

and true liberals. Watson subscribes to the idea that blacks are not far removed from savagery: the police inform Dr Stern that blacks are not human when they drink in an enraged state. They also prove in this novel to be unenlightened and resistant regarding the new vaccine. Bloom is almost diametrically opposite in his repeated sardonic subversion of white myths about blacks as animals and savages, showing how white consciousness tends to be riddled with images which construct blacks in this way. However, he overturns these myths by revealing whites' capacity for unmitigatedly savage brutality.

Altman does not endorse or excuse black violence. Thaele's final killing spree is presented as a completely illegitimate method, the reflection of his gravely disturbed mind. Her purpose, though, is to suggest the calamity that *could* be building up as a result of white ignorance, indifference, or sheer neglect of the plight of blacks. Gordimer also does not advocate violence but the May Day riots are not the product of a twisted mind like Thaele's, rather a response to police interference with a legitimate right of protest. Moreover she is at pains to indicate the difference between the small-scale, peaceful and contained strike Helen observed as a child, and the terrifying repercussions of systematic repression by the time of the May Day strike of 1950. Bloom goes much further in revealing how the police, instead of representing law and order, come to represent 'crime and violence'. However the 'savage' laws and extreme brutality of the police induce him to condone black counter-violence.

In *Transvaal episode* Du Toit is a marginal dissident, trying at first to handle the location impartially. Confirmation of his standpoint is revealed through his fury over the initial police raid. By the end of the novel Du Toit has moved to a totally different apprehension of the situation, though how he will act in future is not spelt out. To go from Bloom's novel to Watson's is a bizarre experience since the latter actually relies on the police estimation of blacks. While Watson reveals Fr Middleton (ie Huddleston) as chief white dissident, regarded by many whites as an agitator, the doctors, Stern and Prinsloo, become caught up with him in dissidence, but only in relation to the medical profession. The writer's own dissidence, one discovers, does not proceed much further than the need for slum removal together with better housing and sanitary conditions for blacks. Altman's Thaele and Dhlamini, articulate and aware blacks (unthinkable in Watson's case), seek to express their opposition to the system in South Africa. Both choose very different methods, and have in fact very different attitudes to the possibilities for white and black solidarity. No Thaeles are likely to enter Helen Shaw's world in *The lying days* although she is shifted forward gradually and through a very troubled pro-

cess, to a position where she can at least begin to hear and appreciate the thinking of a Dhlamini, or indeed of an ANC leader.

A problematic aspect of Altman's novel is the restricted set of options that she makes available to Nkosi. Problematic too, in my view, is the impression created that even the best of the whites have only lukewarm liberal attitudes which, like Mr Dent's, simply dissipate when courageous defence or commitment is demanded. Watson's most imaginative stroke in his novel is to make the arch-reactionary doctor, the nationalist Dr Huizer, a vital part of the solution for plague-ridden Johannesburg. Given the lack of more profound questioning in the novel as a whole, however, this manoeuvre is finally of limited suggestive purchase. More genuinely challenging is Bloom's evocation of the conversion of the township superintendent, Du Toit, from his dedication to establishment practice, to horrified awareness of the inhumanity to which he has lent support. In Gordimer's novel Paul Clark does not need to undergo conversion; his problem (made an unbearable contradiction by the writer) is how to straddle his government post and his liberal insight. Finally he is not much more effectual than Altman's Mr Dent. Paul's inability to exercise meaningful agency in his job, however, seems to me contrived by Gordimer to create a delusory stage in Helen's search for an authentic role for herself.

It is significant that Helen gets caught up in the township riot involuntarily (just as her very first township encounter through the lift given to Mary Seswayo is accidental). Gordimer seems to indicate that something arising out of the immediacy of blacks' lives needs to grip the individual's imagination and emotions before a truly radical conversion is possible. Once Helen is caught up in the riot she by no means seeks to delegitimise the event; on the contrary, she has a strong sense of the rioters' humanity, of their actually exercising agency. In *Shadow over the Rand* Watson foregrounds the legitimacy of Stern's and Prinsloo's case; stressing too how they carry out their research and attempted warnings with the utmost integrity. Fr Middleton in this novel is, of course, the paragon of wise, compassionate and tireless agency. However, while it is clear that the doctors' exercise of agency in relation to blacks is mediated only by Fr Middleton, this factor does not seem to cause Watson any Gordimer-ish unease. In *The law of the vultures* the priest, Father le Main, tries to convince Thaele, newly released from prison, that he is allowing bitterness to dominate him. When Thaele forbids him to visit again, however, the priest has no further opportunity for influence. No other whites get anywhere near as close to Thaele as the priest, limited though even his access to black life is shown to be. As clerk, Thaele is portrayed as having very sadly reduced agency (especially in relation to his ambitions). His later, almost demented

stage of suppressed rage and bitterness deprives him of even more. His cause is legitimate but his method – when he finally opts for one – is both deluded and futile. Nkosi, too, gradually loses agency through his deeply troubled oscillation between Thaele and Dhlamini. The trade union leader, on the contrary, is almost a role model for effective, patient and persevering agency. However, Mabaso in *Transvaal episode* seems to me the most convincing portrayal of sustained black agency in any of these novels. In his handling of his own committee, his family, Du Toit, and the community generally, his wisdom and courageous sense of responsibility are presented without sentimentality or idealisation. Swanepoel, the police lieutenant, *appears* to have agency, but the section on his background suggests that Bloom regards him as largely trapped in, and manipulated by, a racist mindset. He does *not* know what he is doing as ‘part of the pure white sea in a sea of black savagery’.

Bloom’s sense of deliverance from the insidious replication of Swanepoel-type conditioning is presented via the black prisoners’ final song in which they stirringly affirm their humanity. Though literally imprisoned, they stun into silence their white captors who are mental prisoners of vicious hate and fear. Watson’s vision is more or less circumscribed by the benefits of an enlightened housing policy. Gordimer and Altman resist a strongly affirmative note in their endings. The most that Helen Shaw in *The lying days* can affirm is her resolution to return eventually to South Africa. What her overseas trip is likely to accomplish for her beyond temporary refuge from the trauma of participation in South African society is left vague – perhaps distance will help to clarify her overall perspective. Through Altman’s ending we are left in suspense as to what course Nkosi will follow when out of jail: Thaele’s or Dhlamini’s. Even the thought of Thaele’s extreme African nationalism as a remaining option for him is disturbingly sombre.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions offered in each individual chapter have involved much comparison of the analysed novels. In these final conclusions, however, an attempt to enter into multiple comparisons ranging over all eight chapters would have been too laborious, not to say confusing. Nor did I think it fruitful to produce some kind of statistical overview. Those who are concerned only with certain events or periods will probably not wish or need to proceed beyond the relevant earlier conclusions in a particular chapter. For those who are interested in the material as a whole, however, some juxtapositions and decompartmentalised suggestions may be a stimulus to further thinking. Therefore I have opted to highlight only what seemed to me the most interesting, striking or puzzling of the findings garnered from all the chapters in relation to the categories employed throughout the study.

The reader will hardly be surprised by my affirming to begin with that the most pervasive myth subscribed to by the majority of writers whose work I have analysed – at least until after World War II – is that whites are superior to members of other races and must accordingly remain dominant. To this end the writers discussed in chapters 1 to 4, as well as 6, are largely intent on securing and maintaining English-Afrikaner unity. In terms of plot, marriage provides an appropriate symbol for this goal. Obstacles prevent the marriage from actually coming about in Mills Young's *The shadow of the past* and Bancroft's *An armed protest*, but these serve rather to reinforce a sense of the need, and of the difficulties still to be surmounted. Although Tom MacDonald's aims are broader than English-Afrikaner reconciliation, the marriage idea is still a significant facet of his 1946 novel, and there is a lingering concern with this motif in Rooke's *Ratoons* (1953) in terms of Helen Angus's relationship with Chris van der Westhuizen.

The consequences of the readiness to believe in black inferiority emerge in two conceptions of political policy that differ only superficially. The first and most prominent in the writers whose work I have examined is that of white trusteeship over blacks. Bolstering up this idea is the convenient assumption that blacks are spontaneous, non-rational beings, unsuited to city

life. What therefore appeals greatly to trusteeship proponents is the related idea of separate development which, in effect, means that blacks should be based primarily in reserves. Trusteeship adherents convince, or try to convince, themselves that separation is for the sake of the blacks. Ethelreda Lewis is the devotee par excellence of this form of implicitly racist control. (She too, incidentally, is the exception to the desire for English-Afrikaner unity since for her the Afrikaners are too much a pastoral people, unable to adapt to modern urban sophistication.) Paton tussles long and hard with this prospect but, in my view, finally realises how remote it is from the urgent needs of his society. The other harsher, but perhaps more honest, mode is the forerunner of apartheid: blacks must be kept strictly separate except of course for purposes of labour, but in this case primarily for the benefit of whites, and to prevent further cross-racial sexual liaison. Attwell's 1927 novel *Drifting to destruction* is propaganda for this purpose; Smit in *Sudden south-easter* (1944) writes as if separation had already triumphed, for not a single black flits across even one page of her novel. Millin's *The coming of the lord* (1928) deals ironically with the situation since, when a group of blacks segregate *themselves*, they are regarded as a menace.

The chief and most consistent subverters of the myths referred to above are Blackburn (*Love muti*) whose sardonic eye strips away most colonial subterfuges and pretensions; Sowden (*The crooked bluegum*) who gives his non-revolutionary white protagonist, David Lotter, the kind of role that would previously have been thought possible only for a Marxist or extreme radical; finally Gibbs (*Stronger than armies*), Bloom (*Transvaal episode*), and Rooke (*Ratoons*) who all, in a variety of ways, question the bogey of black violence and savagery, inviting the reader to contemplate the disturbing alternatives.

My hope to find much evidence of imaginative sympathy transcending the barriers of racial prejudice proved rather too optimistic. Nevertheless, it was gratifying to find how capable several of the Bambatha Rebellion writers were, temporarily suspending their racist assumptions, in giving persuasive utterance to black grievances through rebel leaders' speeches. Mills Young's handling of Honor Krige's bitter hatred in *The shadow of the past*, and more surprisingly, MacDonald's extensive, vicarious, but non-conniving, participation in Ossewabrandwag thinking and planning, were amongst my occasional satisfactions. Millin's final handling of Charlie Jordan in *The Jordans* reveals how even an author who too easily slips into cynicism can become caught up sympathetically with a character's most desperate feelings. In relation to the complete set of fictional works I have explored, Altman's sustained empathy with Thaele's enraged perceptions seems to me a major feat of authorial imagination.

Where the writer supports the dissidents' cause, sympathy is naturally readily available. However, English-speaking white writers mostly do not support the Bambatha or Boer rebellions, while Edge and Bancroft, who support unions, do so only to promote the interests of white labour. The novelists who respond to Afrikaner Nationalism (chapter 4), whether approvingly or critically, seem hardly more aware of black concerns than the Uniondorp citizens of Stephen Black's *The dorp*. Coming in the wake of Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe*, Van der Post's *In a province* and Millin's *The coming of the lord* reveal much more forceful efforts to give weight to the black cause. Nazi dissidence, mainly in the form of the Ossewabrandwag, wins no English fictional admirers, just as one would expect. Millin in *The Herr Witchdoctor*, on the other hand, gives an unusual degree of attention to black characterisation and tribal politics. Together with other fictional works which do not fit into my project, these unusual cases may be thought of as paving the way to the impressive change that occurs in fiction as one moves to the period just before and just after the Nationalist Party victory of 1948 (chapters 7 and 8 material in this study). Although the new liberal atmosphere did not transform the *political* scene as expected, its influence did penetrate strongly into fiction. Paton, Sowden, Gibbs, Altman, Gordimer and Bloom created a new and vigorous entry into awareness of the blacks' predicament, acknowledging with some force the justification of their protests. Thus it became at that stage a virtual norm for white writers to *support* black dissidents, though in Paton's case there is lingering ambivalence, and in Altman's case she seems to go to an extreme in her representation of ineffectual or even treacherous white liberalism.

A favourite strategy of writers in this survey is to make use of a protagonist who has to be brought into, or out of, sympathy with a dissident group, the direction required being of course in accordance with the writer's perception of that group. The simple, underlying expectation is that sympathy with a character will make it more compelling for the reader to opt for the direction or change of direction that the character makes. Usually the translation is constructed as a function of the protagonist's circumstances, for example, Sara de Buis in Giles's *Rebels in the sun* in relation to the Boer rebels; or Du Toit, the township superintendent in Bloom's *Transvaal episode* in relation to the police and the South African system of justice generally. Sometimes maturity is an additional factor as with Mills Young's Dam Manners's eventual response to Socialist activism in *The great unrest*. Her other 1915 novel, *Valley of a Thousand Hills*, curiously traces an almost opposite shift in the views of Heckraft regarding the Indian plantation strikers. Disaster and death are the crucial circumstances which impel MacDonald's Carl Joubert away from involvement

with the Ossewabrandwag in *Gate Of gold*, and Millin's John Nsingasi is similarly led to abandon his new Nazi allegiance in *The Herr Witchdoctor*. Conversely, such circumstances prompt James Jarvis in *Cry, the beloved country* to become at least partially involved in his son's liberal activities, and Philip Anderson in *Stronger than armies* to become imbued with his deceased wife's passion for justice.

Black characters who dissociate themselves from protests by fellow blacks occur in some novels. So too do white characters who choose not to participate in protests by whites. Amongst the rare non-dissident blacks, generally accorded a kind of nobility by their authors, are Baker's self-sacrificing Papalata (in *The snake garden*), and – at least in relation to virulent African nationalism – Altman's trade unionist, Dhlamini (in *Law of the vultures*). However, the group that intrigued me most of all are what I have referred to as Mitford's 'saviour' figures. These cannot simply be regarded as versions of that stock colonial stereotype, the decent, loyal Kafir, especially not Fumanisani in *Seaford's snake*, who succeeds in curing a white woman of racism. Amongst the whites in this non-dissident category, Thompson's lone non-rebel, Oom Thuys, in *The lion and the adder*, is singled out for lavish sympathy by the author. Giles's and Bancroft's handling of the Boer Rebellion, however, suggest a less uneven division of opinion amongst Afrikaners. Westrup's Hugh Elliot in *The toll* and Brett Young's Hayman in *Pilgrim's Rest* are regarded as heroic in their stand against union leaders and strikes. Somewhat less bathed in authorial glorification are the opponents of Nazism or the Ossewabrandwag in Millin's and Smit's novels (*The Herr Witchdoctor* and *Sudden south-easter* respectively) because these authors seek more realism in character portrayal, rather than because their opposition is at all halfhearted.

It is understandable that violence directed at what writers disfavour has a much higher degree of acceptability for them than otherwise. Spectacular evidence is provided by novels such as Westrup's *A sentimental cynic* (regarding the Bambatha Rebellion) and Brett Young's *Pilgrim's Rest* (regarding the 1914 strike). Mills Young's *The great unrest* (also regarding the 1914 strike) reveals a contradictory attitude, however, since her relish of the strike leaders' deportation is in conflict with her evident approval of Mrs Drew's dictum that 'Right is might'. Nevertheless, the general trend, as one moves through the fiction I have gathered, is for writers to regard violence as more and more problematic. Principled opposition to all violence (as is the case of Morewood's *Nomquba: A Zulu maid* and Bancroft's *An armed protest*) does not recur, though MacDonald, for example, is much troubled by local (Ossewabrandwag) and international violence (World War II); while Rooke makes one aware of an insidiously vio-

lent society in which even her compassionate non-racist heroine is responsible for an act of shameful violence.

Of major importance is the shift in fictional representation towards more and more acknowledgement of white, rather than black, instigatory violence. Of course the monstrous inhumanity of the Anglo-Boer War was there in the background, yet the kind of white assumptions prevalent in the Bambatha Rebellion returned only too easily to hold sway. The violence of which whites are capable is glaringly present, however, in relation to the Boer Rebellion (on both sides); the mine strikes (miners and government); the government's handling of the black Bulhoek sect; white farmers' attacks on Cape farmworkers' rallies; the thuggery at white political meetings; and the Ossewabrandwag's terrorist acts. Nevertheless, only in the fifties do the implications of this propensity for violence in relation to blacks at last become manifest, especially in Gibbs's *Stronger than armies* and Bloom's *Transvaal episode*: namely that there was far more justification for black fear of white violence than the reverse; and that hysteria or panic about black risings was a convenient smokescreen behind which to mount savage reprisals for any attempt by blacks at large-scale protest.

The issue of agency in relation to legitimacy is amongst the most fascinating raised by this enquiry. (Because discussion at this point could be very elaborate, I have tried to use different examples in relation to particular questions or key points. These could, of course, all be more generally applied.) The issue is also, however, one of the most difficult about which to reach general conclusions. It is tempting, for example, to suggest neatly that as one takes into account the whole range of novels I have discussed the degrees of agency and legitimacy accorded white protagonists on the one hand and black protagonists on the other tend to have an inverse relation to each other. This would be true if we compared, say, Buchan's *Prester John* and Bloom's *Transvaal episode*, but there are few equivalent cases where the writers' attitudes towards whites and blacks have been virtually interchanged. One decided shift in the portrayal of major black protagonists is from the Laputa (*Prester John*) or Nelson (*Bayete! Hail to the king*) type to a character such as John Nsingasi (*The Herr Witchdoctor*) who has much less scope and effectiveness. Whereas Nelson is meant to inspire fear and awe, John is invested with the sort of pathos that invites a trustee-type response. Another tendency, as seen in Paton and Altman, is to create a kind of split in black potentialities so that one has a Stephen Kumalo (or Msimangu) ranged against a John Kumalo (*Cry, the beloved country*); or a Thaele ranged against a Dhlamini (*Law of the vultures*). Nevertheless there *is*, in terms of the portrayal of black protagonists, a significant contrast between the first and last sets of novels in this survey; I

refer to the way in which Dhlamini and Mabaso (in *Transvaal episode*) receive the authors' wholehearted approval. To some extent, also, there is a shift, in relation to white male protagonists, that allows for a focus on types who have considerable legitimacy but little opportunity for exercising genuine agency (eg Van Bredepoel in *In a province* or Barry Lindsell in *The Herr Witchdoctor*).

Any sense of legitimacy which Mitford's black chiefs possess becomes cancelled as soon as they opt for rebellion. How true might this be more generally? Nicholls's Nelson is not granted much legitimacy to begin with, but that little is stripped away through his entry into rebellion. From the outset, however, Buchan's Laputa and Attwell's Inzeema are granted no more legitimacy than Westrup's anonymous black rebels. There is always a certain tension about Blackburn's Letty Bandusa, but she seems to secure more legitimacy as the novel progresses.

The way in which the use of violence affects our estimation of a protagonist depends on the writer's readiness to defend violence in the first place. What is surprising, perhaps, is that by and large the protagonists in the novels discussed do not engage much in private violence (as distinct from engagement in military-type action as, for example, in Westrup's Egerton in *A sentimental cynic*). Amongst the Afrikaner protagonists violence is as unusual as amongst the English. Giles's Gey van Rynhardt and Cameron's Andreas van Reenen never stoop to violence; indeed one of Andreas's chief virtues is his concern to quell violence. Gottfried Freylinck's shooting of Gey is the closest anyone in this Afrikaner community comes to violence, but the Boer War veteran is in any case deranged. Joubert's Paul du Plessis is, on the other hand, shown only once to use violence – when curbing the protests of black farmworkers – but is fully in favour with his authoress for this prompt and resolute form of action. OB violence in MacDonald's *Gate of gold* and Nazi or tribal violence in Millin's *The Herr Witchdoctor* are horrifying signs of extremely distorted or warped thinking. Justified as the black struggle is seen to be in the later novels (chapters 7 and 8), black use of violence is not encouraged by the novelists; at most it is condoned as with the location people in *Transvaal episode*.

A number of white male protagonists gain agency through the influence of women: I think particularly of Cameron's Andreas van Reenen; Mills Young's Guy Matheson and Joubert's Paul du Plessis. Certain other similar cases also involve death at the moment of their most consummate use of agency: Millin's Saul Nathan in *The coming of the lord*, and Sowden's David Lotter. In the case of Gibbs's Philip Anderson, it is the death of his wife that somehow empowers him with greater agency. In *The lying days* Paul Clark's relationship with Helen Shaw is not enough to overcome the debilitating

effects of his quasi-schizophrenic existence (though it must be said that he has been set up to help shape a greater potential for agency in Helen; the reverse does not seem to have been part of Gordimer's project). In several instances women protagonists are dependent on men for the achievement of agency, and in some cases legitimacy also; this is true of Bancroft's Everal Addison in *Money's worth*; Edge's Naomi Hestling in *Through the cloudy porch*; and Alethea Dale in Cameron's *Reverse the shield* (although Andreas is equally dependent on her to achieve his new channelling of agency and political legitimacy in the author's eyes). One particularly unusual case comes to mind, however: Giles's Sara de Buis in *Rebels in the sun*. Sara, who initially is very much a self-motivated, self-fulfilled woman, has to learn to become a more conventional wife, heeding the wisdom of her husband and constraining her exercise of agency in accordance with his insight.

A fairly common element in the plots of the novels discussed is that the dénouement depends on a serious threat to the protagonist's agency. In terms of white protagonists this is true of Mitford's and Mills Young's heroes, as well as of Hugh Elliott and Hayman in the mine strike novels. Mills Young's Heckraft and Matheson, and Van der Post's Van Bredepoel, come close to death in this process, while Millin's Saul Nathan actually suffers death at the point of experiencing an unforeseen access to agency. Thompson's Sackvill has perhaps the most sensational verge-of-death threat to cope with.

A crucial element in a number of plots is a development in legitimacy or agency. *Loss* of legitimacy or agency, on the other hand, is much less common but almost a hallmark of the most complex and challenging novels. No development at all in relation to these factors occurs in the novels by Attwell, Westrup (both of his), Brett Young, Edge, Watson, Lewis, Smit and even Bloom (at least in relation to Mabaso, who is *always* practical, resourceful, brave, and community-oriented). Bancrofts' two heroines, on the other hand, enter more and more into positive, adult modes of existence. Mills Young's 1915 male protagonists (Manners and Heckraft) have to shift markedly from their previous outlooks (albeit in opposite directions); so too do Paton's James Jarvis and – though much more radically – Bloom's Du Toit. Cameron's Andreas and Joubert's Paul are granted legitimacy in the first place, but both have to learn new ways of expressing their agency. Two other remarkable cases deserve special attention. Monare in *Blanket boy's moon*, engaged in the ritual murder of his friend, Koso, in Lesotho, lacks both agency and legitimacy in the joint authors' eyes. In Durban, on the other hand, when Monare deliberately separates himself from his fellow Sotho dock workers in order to protect an Indian family from brutal attack,

he possesses both agency and legitimacy. Indeed the diminished agency of his fellows, who have become part of a seething mob, only serves to heighten our impression of Monare's integrity. Helen Angus, at least within the time frame of *Ratoons*, moves in the opposite direction. Her benevolence towards Amoya in encouraging her to take up training as a nurse implies that she is in possession of both agency and legitimacy; however, when a destructive use of agency leads her later to arrange for Chanjaldi's death, the possibility of legitimacy has been sacrificed, at least until we get a hint of a redeemed Helen at the very end, and in the implications of novel's opening.

The representation of agitator figures also undergoes a most illuminating development. In the Bambatha Rebellion novels there is Baker's itinerant Socialist who stirs up the Transvaal tribe, which leads in turn to the chief's making common cause with Bambatha. There are hints that, without such prompting, the local chief would have been too weak and self-indulgent to move his people to any form of resistance. In such a case the author denies agency in order to demonstrate or reinforce a sense of the illegitimacy of protest. Mitford's use of agitators seems to me rather more complex, however. Although his use of Ethiopian preachers very probably includes the aim I have just expressed, it also helps to emphasise his belief that the ordinary tribesperson was not at all desirous of conflict with whites; and thereby enables us to retain a fair amount of sympathy for blacks generally. Similarly, Mills Young and Thompson employ a German and German-coloured respectively to lessen the responsibility of the Boer rebels, and thus, presumably, not to undermine the prospect of English-Afrikaner union too seriously. MacDonald's portrayal of Nel (Leibbrandt) in *Gate of gold* gives one a vivid impression of ruthless and fanatical aggression, determination and dedication. All the more effective then is his arousing of pity for the deluded young Carl Joubert. Sowden and Bloom, however, ring the changes on the previous conception of agitator figures, and thus overcome Paton's stumbling-block in being unable finally to grant John Kumalo anything more than conventional agitator status. David Lotter in *The crooked bluegum* and Walter Mabaso in *Transvaal episode* have their respective author's full approval even as they are regarded by the white community as dangerous agitators.

Furthest from my utopian vision for South Africa are novels such as Attwell's *Drifting to destruction*; Thompson's *The lion and the adder*; Edge's *Through the cloudy porch* and Lewis's *Wild deer*. Some elements of that vision are present in, for example, Mitford's handling of the relationship between his white protagonists and particular blacks such as Manamandhla in *The white band and the black*, in Van Bredepoel's concern for Kenon in *In a province*, or in Charles

Roux's passionate concern to bring an end to Afrikaner hatred in *Sudden south-easter*. Closest of all to the vision are Blackburn's still challenging *Love muti*, Sowden's *The crooked bluegum* and Rooke's *Ratoons*, in all of which the writer's own dissident interrogativeness and refusal to accept stereotypes induce me to suspend ever re-encroaching disbelief in the possibility of radical social change.

Of course the first South African democratic election that took place in April 1994 was, in a sense, the fulfilment of my utopian vision. But sociopolitical agitation and dissidence are inevitable in the process of a society's development, and only a fantastical, unrealistic kind of hope would expect them to disappear. What *is* crucial, however, is the handling of conflict and controversy. This would offer clues as to whether a liberal spirit of tolerance, concern to understand rival views or claims, and compassion is at work, or whether opposition is regarded as a menace that must be stifled or ruthlessly stamped out. As I write these final paragraphs the situation of our neighbour, Zimbabwe, offers appalling evidence of the latter policy. Even in South Africa there are disturbing signs of polarisation along racial lines; amongst which perhaps the most alarming are the attacks by prominent politicians on unpopular court verdicts. I can only hope that my enterprise, by highlighting dispassionate representations of riot, resistance and rebellion, will nourish greater liberal understanding, and, in particular, prompt new writers to engage with profound imaginative subtlety and sympathy in the task of illuminating social tensions.

## NOTES

### Introduction

- 1 S Dimitriu 2000. *Art of conscience: re-reading Nadine Gordimer*: 13.
- 2 I refer particularly to Simkins's 1985 lectures delivered in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Cape Town and published in 1986 under the title *Reconstructing South African liberalism* by the South African Institute of Race Relations. His use of Bishop Colenso's 1879 sermon after the Battle of Isandlwana to exemplify what liberals mean by critical independence of mind has been a major inspiration to me. Another landmark text from the eighties in terms of an affirmative reevaluation of liberalism is *Democratic liberalism in South Africa: its history and prospects* (ed) Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick and David Welsh. More recently (1998) R W Johnson and David Welsh have presented a collection of nineteen essays on liberalism in South Africa by prominent writers here and abroad. Welsh's Introduction deals in an admirably uncontentious way with the persistent disparagement of liberalism from opposite ends of the political spectrum. I find especially clarifying and persuasive his statement of the core values of liberalism on pp 1-2.
- 3 See, for example, Stephen Knight in *Geoffrey Chaucer*: 66-67.
- 4 Michael Marais 1997. Review of J M Coetzee's *Boyhood: scenes from provincial life*. *English Academy Review* 14:224.
- 5 See Chennells's discussion in his Introduction: xvii ff.
- 6 Chennells 1982: x.
- 7 I recall Isabel Hofmeyr's wish, through her MA dissertation, 'Mining, social change and literature. An analysis of South African literature with particular reference to the mining novel 1870-1920' (submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand in 1980), to contribute to an 'alternative history of South African literature' (9).

### Chapter 1

- 1 Two potentially relevant novels were excluded from extended consideration in this study: W A Kingon's *A trader's daughter: a tale of Kaffirland* (1910/1906?), and A Darter's *For the love of Gyp* (1913). Kingon's novel involves a threatened rising of blacks in the Transkei. No connection is made with the Bambatha Rebellion, nor is any explicit political context offered. If the date of publication as given by Snyman (1951:64) is 1906, as

distinct from the date of 1910 given by *ABS/ALÉ*, it is possible that Kingon did not know of the Bambatha Rebellion when he wrote the novel. Darter's novel involves a pre-Union rising of a black tribe in the Northern Transvaal (Zoutpansberg district). No link with the Bambatha Rebellion is mentioned or even hinted at, though the immediate sign of trouble is the refusal by the local chief to pay hut-tax (124). A Boer commando puts down the rising which is considered particularly treacherous as the burghers or their forebears 'had fought for these very natives against the Matabele and delivered them from that scourge'(147). The agitation is blamed largely on missionaries who, 'ignorant of native custom' (216), allow the 'natives' to get out of hand. The novel is one of the most nauseatingly racist that I have read in the course of my exploration.

- 2 In deciding where to place Nicholls's *Bayete! Hail to the king* in my sequence, I have used the date 1913, rather than the publication date, because the writer's Foreword, which has the earlier date, explains that the novel was considerably delayed. See also the Biographical appendix.
- 3 Apart from those included here, the only other novel on the Bambatha Rebellion that I know of is Jack Cope's *The fair house* (1955).
- 4 The accepted spelling is now 'Bambatha'. In quotations, however, I have preserved the original spelling.
- 5 See Biographical appendix.
- 6 This chimes in with the 'official Natal view that the campaigns were conducted with the utmost humanity' (Marks:243). Marks goes on to explain in detail why this view 'does not bear much scrutiny'. Her comments on the quality of the officers selected for the militia reserves are also pertinent in relation to this novel:

... in many cases [these] were not particularly suitable through their military knowledge or experience, but simply happened to be the most popular or the wealthiest man in their district. [Such a mode of choice] could also lead to unfortunate results for the African population, because the most popular candidate among the white farmers might well be the one with extremist views on the 'native question'. (184)
- 7 See Biographical appendix.
- 8 See Biographical appendix.
- 9 For further consideration of this movement see the relevant sections of Marks, Roux and Welsh. Welsh draws attention to Marks's finding that the Black Christians (Amakolwa) of Natal 'took up no single stand on the 1906 disturbances: they were as divided as their fellow tribesmen' (1971:311). See also Isabel Hofmeyr's comments on the portrayal of the Ethiopian movement by Mitford, Gouldsbury, Nicholls and Buchan in their novels (1980:163 ff).
- 10 An allusion to the occasion when Christ set a child in the midst of the Apostles (Mark ix:36).
- 11 See Biographical appendix.
- 12 See Stuart 1906:162; and Marks 1970:203 and 205.
- 13 I refer here to Marks's and Stuart's accounts.
- 14 See Biographical appendix.
- 15 *Zulu crusade* by J Allister Smith provides an illuminating history of the Salvation Army's mission among the Zulus. Unfortunately it does not mention Morewood or her novel, although Smith wrote a Preface for it.
- 16 See Biographical appendix.

- 17 See Bosman 1907:1–2.
- 18 See Biographical appendix.
- 19 Welsh gives a useful and extensive account of Shepstone's policy in the first half of his book (1971).
- 20 See Marks:147–153 in particular, and numerous other references. Her most significant observations are the following:zzz
- In general, the magistrates shared fully in the settlers' stereotypes of Africans and in their views on most subjects, especially their preoccupation with the questions of land, labour, and stock theft. (148)
- ... as the Natal Native Affairs commission remarked, Africans regarded the magistrates, 'not as their friends and protectors, but simply as the punishers of wrongdoers and the collectors of taxes'. *Ilanga lase Natal* went much further, and called them bluntly 'the oppressors of the natives'. (149)
- 21 See especially Marks, chapter XI (on Dinizulu's trial).
- 22 For accounts of this attack see Marks (206), as well as Bosman (22–24), and Stuart (170–174).
- 23 Stuart gives the details and indicates the purpose of the mutilation (175–176). Marks, strangely, ignores this aspect of the incident.
- 24 Here again Stuart gives the fullest account (377–378) and is at some pains to emphasise that Veal was not tortured. Lugg, in a briefer, more informal report (1970:96–87) confirms Stuart's main details. Marks does include this case of mutilation, but fails to mention that Veal had been warned not to enter Chief Meseni's area.
- 25 Bosman devotes the whole of chapters XVI and XVII to an account of the Battle of Mome Gorge; it is Stuart's topic in chapter XIV; for Marks it is the climax of her material in chapter VIII ('Phase II: with Bambatha in Nkandla').
- 26 (a) See Biographical appendix concerning Nicholls's life.
- (b) A regular column writer for *The Forum*, using the pseudonym 'John Layman', ventured to compare Arthur Keppel-Jones's *When Smuts goes* with Nicholls's novel (11(11):27). One of his observations is that both writers portray only tribal chiefs as black leaders, as if unaware of their own contemporary situation. This is all the more serious in the case of the later writer, Keppel-Jones. Dora Taylor, who devoted the third in her series of *Trek* articles, 'They speak of Africa', to Nicholls's novel, does not share my sense of his ambivalence towards blacks. Although she admits that he knew a great deal about them, about 'their history, their customs, their language, their grievances, their mode of thought', this knowledge is not the product of a 'humanistic impulse'. Rather his perspective is to offer a sombre warning: 'Know thine enemy. To belittle his power is to expose yourself to immeasurable danger' (6(26):9).
- 27 See Stephen Gray's book, *Douglas Blackburn* (1984). Gray's reading seems to me to oversimplify Blackburn's treatment of Letty Bandusa in creating too steadily affirmative an impression of her. See also Isabel Hofmeyr's tantalisingly brief comments on the novel in her MA dissertation where her focus is the way 'Blackburn attempts to delve into the sexual fantasies of colonial psychology' (1980:158). My conclusion, based on her comment that 'Blackburn part parodies and part falls victim to [these fantasies] himself' (158), is that she reads the novel less ironically than I do.

## Chapter 2

- 1 I did not set out to deal with novels written much later than the event; and in any case did not come across any that date from later than Giles's *Rebels in the sun*. This novel is the only one of the five discussed in chapter 2 for which I could find a contemporary review. Bernard Lewis in *Ons eie boek* (1(4):136–137) feels that Giles's grasp of character and atmosphere is so inadequate that the novel may just as well have been entitled *Rebels in the moon!* My analysis will indicate, I hope, that the novel is flawed, but does not deserve such facile dismissal.  
The only potential works excluded from this section, A G Bee's *A man should rejoice* (1938) and *Keeper of the highway* (1942), turned out not to be novels at all, although listed as such in *ABS/ALE*. A further factor that would otherwise have counted against their inclusion is their being far from contemporary in relation to the events to which Bee gives attention: the 1913 strike, the 1914 Boer Rebellion, and the 1922 strike. *A man should rejoice* is the biography of one John Bradfield, in which the writer never for a moment rises above his subject's general white complacency and racism. *Keeper of the highway* narrates the life of a South African policeman (Samuel Cowley). Here too, however, Bee, who is capable of narrating particular incidents with a certain vividness of detail, reveals himself to be a proponent of fairly crass white middle-class sentiments and values.
- 2 For the rebel Afrikaners a republic would have been distinct from the concept of a South African nation in being independent from the British Empire, and in having the possibility of restoring the kind of government and defence commando system of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.
- 3 This unpublished paper was presented to the colloquium entitled 'Masculinity and the 1914 Boer Rebellion' at the University of Natal in Durban (2–4 July 1997).
- 4 See Biographical appendix.
- 5 Thompson's prefatory author's note prepares the reader for this feature: 'As far as the deeds and words of the historical characters in this book are concerned, what has been set down is in accord with authentic accounts which have been previously published in the Press, and which, as the Author believes, may be accepted as fair records of events within the public knowledge' (1918:vii).
- 6 Michael Chapman similarly describes Black's plays as 'comedies of manners that caricatured snobberies and pretensions in the new Union of South Africa' (1996:176).
- 7 I refer in particular to the formation by Hertzog and Smuts of the United South African National Party, and Malan's breaking away to form the 'purified' National Party.
- 8 One of the unusual features of Black's play, *Love and the hyphen*, on which Stephen Gray comments, is that it 'involves scenes in the "non-white" servants' quarters' (1979:60).
- 9 Michael Chapman makes an even more critical observation on the plays. Having referred to Gray's finding that Black, 'like several other South African English writers of the 1920s began to find himself increasingly at odds with the government in national matters of miscegenation, the poor white question, and the "native problem"', Chapman adds: 'Black's understanding of these matters is not very penetrating or consistent in its concern. Having introduced the serious idea for consideration, he tends to avoid unravelling the thought in favour of iconoclastic insult and derision' (1997:177).

- 10 Catherine Corder, in her MA dissertation on Frances Bancroft's fiction, notes her significant limitation: '[T]ypical among white middle-class feminists, Bancroft's dissenting politics did not embrace all races' (1995:27). Accordingly she concludes that 'entering, and furthering, the interests of white, middle-class South African women in a reformed and sympathetic patriarchy is ultimately what Frances Bancroft's project is about' (28).
- 11 Gray makes the same kind of claim about the plays: 'Black's theme is a Shavian one: what happens when economic necessity meets moral pretension?' (1979:60).
- 12 See Sheridan Johns's *Red flag* (1995:37 ff) concerning the War on War League. Bancroft gives no hint of such a league within South Africa.

## Chapter 3

- 1 Two novels have been excluded from this chapter: Arthur S Cripps's *Bay-tree country* (1913) and Stephen Graham's *African tragedy* (1937). (Allan G Bee's two books both include attention to the 1913 strike, while the later one, *Keeper of the highway*, also refers to the 1914 and the 1922 strikes. My reasons for excluding these works are given in chapter 2, note 1.)

The main reason for excluding A S Cripps's *Bay-tree country* is that it concerns Rhodesian labour problems unconnected with any form of mining. Though more of a sketch for a novel, and too imbued with liberal moralising fervour, his novel involves an extraordinary and (as far as I know) unique plot element in relation to South African literature generally. A white protagonist, Lyndhurst, disguises himself as a black farm worker in order to try to expose a large-scale exploitative system whereby white farmers co-operate to deceive the government in obtaining cheap black labour. Through a 'black peril' twist in the plot Lyndhurst is tragically killed while visiting his fiancée in his disguise. S Graham's novel, picaresque of the trans-continental variety, brings the protagonist, Tom Anderson, to Johannesburg in time for the 1922 strike, the episode to which chapter 10 is devoted. Although Graham offers some interesting glimpses (for example of Tom marching with his commando to do battle with the police who had shot two white miners dead at Boksburg), the chapter is more like a separate story. This is indeed true of all the chapters; and, in any case, Graham's 1937 date of publication would violate my general policy for the project.

K Edge and F Brett Young are referred to in the Biographical appendix. Bancroft, Mills Young and Westrup have already been referred to in chapter 2.

- 2 Isabel Hofmeyr's article, 'The mining novel in South African literature 1870–1920' (*English in Africa* 5(2):1–16) is a prelude to her MA dissertation where revised portions of the article are used for the Introduction, together with sections I and II. Although her research findings are fascinating and amply justify her wish to contribute to 'an alternative history of South African literature', they do not deal with the novels concerning the mine strikes of 1913 and 1914. Her concern is primarily with novels written about the early diggings. Thus, too, in her section on S G Millin she comments on *The dark river* (1919), *Adam's rest* (1922) and *The sons of Mrs Aab* (1931), but not on *The Jordans* (1923).
- 3 Walker and Weinbren report the following interesting incident:

One afternoon Mary Fitzgerald, by this time known as 'Pickhandle Mary', led a women's demonstration during which scabs were pulled off the few trams which had succeeded in leaving the depot. It was widely held in strike circles that upon this occasion Mary made effective use of her hatpin on the posterior of a police sergeant who was more active in carrying out his duties than Mary considered justifiable. (1961:30)

- 4 A G Bee claims that there were also commandos from the Transvaal and Orange Free State present (1938:189).
- 5 The full list of deportees is given by W H Harrison (1947:44).
- 6 Sheridan Johns points out that '[T]he harsh actions of the Botha-Smuts government brought further unity and determination to the various segments of the white labor movement' (1995:34).
- 7 The total number of Indians working in Natal by the beginning of 1913 was approximately 22 000 (Walker & Weinbren 1961:45). The total population of Indians in Natal was 140 000 (J R Simons 1983:161).
- 8 During the course of the strike 153 were killed, and more than 500 wounded. The breakdown given by *South Africa's Yesterdays* (ed P Joyce) is as follows:

*Killed:* 72 State forces; 39 strikers; 42 civilians – Total 153; *Wounded:* 219 State forces; 118 strikers; 197 civilians – Total 534. The strike cost 214 lives (76 of whom were strikers). Troops and police arrested 4 748 strikers, of whom 46 were charged with murder. Of these, 18 were sentenced to death but only four were ultimately hanged. All the prisoners were released in May 1924. (1981:273)

- 9 See Sheridan Johns's confirmation that the strike was not a 'red revolt' in *Red Flag*: 140–141.
- 10 An early reviewer seems to have missed this aspect of the novel:

The book is clever and well written; but, alas! it is a book without a ray of sunshine or hope in it. Selfishness in plenty; idealism, altruism, Christianity, never a vestige. (*The South African Outlook* 53:286)

## Chapter 4

- 1 The two potentially relevant fictional works which turned out to be unsuitable for my purposes in this chapter are Archibald Lamont's *South Africa in Mars* (1923), and Wilfred Saint-Mandé's *Halcyon days in Africa* (1934). [Saint-Mandé used the pseudonym J H P Lamont.] *South Africa in Mars* involves a satire on South African politics from the perspective of the planet Mars – deemed a sphere of reliable truth – where a 'Globe-trotter' (the first-person narrator, clearly synonymous with the author) takes up temporary residence. Globe-trotter engages in a series of discussions with a variety of historical personages (including South Africans such as Paul Kruger and Bishop Colenso, but also ranging further back in time, even to Shakespeare and Samuel Johnson). The outcome of these conversations, focusing most intensely on the 'native problem', is to send a special expeditionary force back to South Africa, armed with 'instruments for injecting

ideas, cerebral slate-lifters, battering rams for razing to the ground walls of ignorance and prejudice' (223). However, the author is not concerned to represent any form of actual riot, resistance or rebellion in South Africa. Saint-Mandé's work is a thinly disguised autobiography; like his protagonist (Alfred de Lisle) Saint-Mandé came out from England to lecture in French at the University of the Witwatersrand. Although the author reveals an enlightened attitude towards blacks, his main concern is the virulent hatred of the English that he found amongst Afrikaners. Indeed the climax of the book is the vicious assault upon the protagonist by Afrikaner students. The author may well have suffered in this way, but the experience is too individual for this novel to warrant inclusion in my project.

- 2 Isabel Hofmeyr refers to the several disaffected groups that were drawn into the National Party (1987:107).
- 3 An excerpt from the final paragraph of the *Voorslag* review of Smuts's book by Max Drennan will sufficiently indicate his enthusiasm:

No one can deny that [Smuts] has followed Socrates and William James in bringing philosophy back into the haunts of men. No one ought to deny that General Smuts is a poet. He has unified the conceptions of Science into a new poetic synthesis of the Whole, and for that one reader is profoundly grateful. (1(6):44)

- 4 The seven-point basis of the 'Fusion' government is given by Davenport (1977:215).
- 5 A C Partridge made a similar point in an article entitled 'Who's Who in South African English literature':

[T]he edge is taken off Mrs. Lewis's writing by her mannerisms of style, her habit of buttonholing the reader with confidential soliloquies . . . (*Outspan* 25(625):85)

- 6 A *Trek* article, 'Primitivism in literature' (10(20):16-17) traces the presence of this theme in *Wild deer* but evades any clear indication of the (unnamed) writer's viewpoint.

## Chapter 5

- 1 Four novels failed to fulfil my criteria for inclusion in this chapter: W Scully's *Daniel Vananda: the life story of a human being* (1923), Colin Fraser's *Saartje* (1928), W Westrup's *Shadows in the water* (1929), and J C Williams and H J May's *I am black* (1936). Scully's novel, a significant bridge work between Blackburn's *Leaven* and Van der Post's *In a province*, describes the persistent and harrowing misfortunes of a young Transkei black, culminating in his death from miner's phthisis. The wretched, but very compressed, saga is written in a spirit of compassion and has moments of great poignancy, but Scully does not include attention to historically recorded protests or strikes. I had expected Fraser's novel to be particularly relevant to my project because of J P L Snyman's implicit reference to the ICU in his brief comment: '[Fraser] describes how [the 'Natives'] organisation, which attracted some attention during the late Nineteen-twenties, was formed to protect their rights' (1952:155). Fraser in fact refers *explicitly* to the ICU, but his concern with it pertains to no more than a couple of paragraphs on page 57

as part of a contrast with the religious leader, Shembe, and his followers, a brief deviation from the novel's focus on diamond diggings. It is not easy to locate the exact period in which Westrup's *Shadows in the water* is set. Although the novel was written in 1929, my impression – based on very scant evidence – is that it relates to the early twenties. Westrup seems to have carefully avoided reference to any historical events except for one passing mention of the Bambatha Rebellion (231). In any case the rebellion plotted by a scurrilous black leader called Jonas is against a black chief, and organisations such as the ICU or the ANC do not enter the consciousness of any of Westrup's characters (or, one assumes, his own). *I am black* almost gained inclusion. As Dora Taylor reveals in 'They speak of Africa. V', this novel 'comes nearer than any book so far published [ie by 1942] to giving a plain and sympathetic picture of the experience of a young Zulu, Shabala, who leaves his tribe to work with the white man' (*Trek* 7(2):13). Chapter 21 includes a reference to the Bulhoek massacre by Dimba, the black miner who acts as a kind of counsellor to fellow-blacks engaged in different kinds of work in Johannesburg. Although the authors linger over Dimba's speeches in which he inspires his friends to take up the struggle for black rights through peaceful solidarity, the speeches do not venture to represent any incidents which relate directly to historical events.

- 2 Oliver Walker offers a reminder of how Roy Campbell 'hailed' the appearance of Smuts's *Holism and evolution* with the 'apt quatrain':

The love of Nature burning in his heart  
 Our new Saint Francis offers us his book –  
 The saint who fed the birds at Bondelswaart,  
 And fattened up the vultures at Bull Hoek [sic]. (1948:143)

- 3 C W Mostert, in his 1955 MA dissertation, shows little grasp of the novel; in fact he is almost as prejudiced as the Gibeonites. The quotation from p121 to illustrate his racism has already been used in the Introduction. Dora Taylor finds much promise in the novel:

There for the first and only time [Millin] sought a synthesis of races in South Africa and brought together a White South African, a Jew, a German, an African doctor and an Indian storekeeper and placed them against a background fraught with racial emotions, the Bulhoek incident . . . (*Trek* 7(24):12)

However, Taylor is finally disappointed: '[Millin] does not begin to enter the heart of this overwhelming hope and faith of an oppressed people, for her eye is on the peppercorns of the prophet's head' (12). Although I share some of Taylor's disappointment, the final suggestion seems to me particularly gratuitous.

- 4 J P L Snyman makes the interesting observation: 'It is a strange thing, this craving of Mrs Millin's women characters for spiritual excitement' (1952:103).
- 5 J P L Snyman refers usefully to Millin's comments in *The night is long* on the theme of *The coming of the lord*:

My theme arose from the Jews . . . the Jewish Problem, I decided, was a minority problem . . . the minority peoples I considered in *the coming of the lord* were – the Jews apart – the Indians, the Germans, suspect after the Great War; the natives. Their problem formed my theme. (1952:101)

Dora Taylor reserves her major praise for Millin's portrayal of Nathan: 'nowhere

[else] does she create a character quite as this one, with profound care and insight into the spiritual sufferings of a sensitive spirit' (*Trek* 7(24):12).

- 6 I disagree with J P L Snyman's impression that the representatives of the various minority groups in the novel are handled as puppets: 'the feeling is left that these representatives were put into the book merely to speak their speeches' (1952:104).
- 7 Dora Taylor makes a similar general observation about Millin's treatment of Africans in her novels: '[Millin] did not ponder over what she saw, the degradation of the Africans, the supuration of their hovels, and search out their significance' (*Trek* 7(23):14).
- 8 Robert A Hill and Gregory A Pirio make the point that 'when the ICU penetrated rural Natal in 1927, Gilbert Coka recalled how "Many country people thought that the ICU leaders were American Negroes who had come to deliver them from slavery"' (1987:215). Indeed ICU leaders were often looked upon as ambassadors of Marcus Garvey, and Kadalie himself had written to S Bennett Ncwana, co-founder of the ICU, that he wished to become the 'great African Marcus Garvey' (215).
- 9 The Simonses give 120 000 as the figure (1983:356).
- 10 Edward Roux provides further information about this lively and enterprising pair (1970:71-73 and 86-88). If Magda Joubert had one or other of them in mind in the depiction of the black farm agitator in *Karooos*, she had certainly allowed her mythic imagination to run riot.
- 11 Van der Post may also have been responding to the Durban clash which occurred on 17 June 1929. On this day Durban dockworkers boycotted the beerhalls, and certain blacks also attacked two beerhalls (one of which was near the ICU headquarters). An angry white mob then surrounded the ICU headquarters and wrecked union property. Eight people were killed and 108 injured. (These figures are taken from the Simonses' account (1983:416). Different writers give different figures.)
- 12 See Hirson 1989:41-48. See also two brief mentions in J and R Simons (1983:511 and 533).
- 13 Ward states confidently that S P Bunting, a CPSA leader who stood for Tembuland in the 1929 parliamentary election, is the basis of Burgess in the novel; and that 'Bunting's campaign in Tembuland (disguised as Paulstad), provides much of the material for the central episode in *In a province* (1989:40). The most plausible aspect of Ward's claim, as against Rich's, is the link between Ward's Burgess prototype and violent circumstances which mirror in several ways the climactic event of the novel. However, as Bunting (as far as I know) was not the secretary of a black trade union, it is surely safer to suppose that Burgess is based on several influential young Communist figures of the time, and may thus involve aspects of Gordon, Bunting, and perhaps others.
- 14 David Ward, who discusses both *Turbott Wolfe* and *In a province* in chapters 4 and 5 respectively of his *Chronicles of darkness*, points out Van Der Post's disingenuousness in making such a claim since, as journalist, he must have known 'well enough the way in which Government and Press had exploited the "Bolshevik menace"' (1989:34) ever since the South African Communist Party had been founded in July 1921.
- 15 Carpenter 1969:41 and 43 respectively. It is interesting to note that two of the initial reviews of Van der Post's novel (*Cape Times* and *Argus*, March 1934) make no reference whatever to its dominant concern with Communism, though much attention is drawn to the predicament/tragedy of Kenon, and the novel is in both cases favourably received.

Dora Taylor, however, reviewing the novel in *Trek*, considers it 'an experiment that failed' (6(7):15). Although she does not explicitly support Burgess's standpoint, she has little sympathy for Van Bredepoel.

The most damnable thing about him is his pity for the oppressed African, and his vile sentimental solution of the problem of a rotten society – changing the individual heart instead of the system. He is the epitome of the liberal attitude, with some unexplained depth of individual melancholy thrown in. (15)

- 16 For the convenience of readers I offer the following translation of the epigraph:

For the first time in ten thousand years, totally and without a trace of knowledge left, man is a problem to himself. For he no longer knows what he is and at the same time he knows that he does not know.

- 17 Similarly I offer the following translation of the epigraph to book III:

I hate all violent change, for in the process as much good is destroyed as is won. I hate both those who carry it out as well as those who are the cause of it. (Goethe)

- 18 Though Ward does not consider the implications of Van Bredepoel's death, he makes the same basic contrast between the protagonists of the two novels: 'Turbott Wolfe runs away from his conflicts to die in England, but Van Bredepoel recovers from his sickness to attempt to face up to the problem' (1989:44). (Ward's final comment on *In a province* indicates, strangely, that he reads the closing appeal of the novel as if the words are Van Bredepoel's rather than the narrator's.)
- 19 Ward points out, similarly, that Van Bredepoel's 'affection is as condescending as it is tender' and that 'the career of Kenon is one which fits in very well indeed with paternalistic white assumptions about blacks' (1989:42).

## Chapter 6

- 1 No novels were excluded from attention in this chapter. See the Biographical appendix for information regarding L. Smit and T. Macdonald.
- 2 A rather patronising early review of *Sudden south-easter* (*The Forum* 7(41):27) is unwilling to give the novel any credit. The parliamentary debate is also dismissed as if merely modelled on a stereotyped heroes and villains script.
- 3 An early review of *Gate of Gold* (*The Forum* 9(32):17) seems predisposed to dismiss the novel, or at least to damn it with the faintest of praise. The writer does not seem, incidentally, to have recognised the Nel-Leibbrandt link.

## Chapter 7

- 1 Three works were excluded from this section: Howard Buxton's *One way home* (1946), Vincent Reid's *Steel blanket* (1946), and Wulf Sachs's *Black anger* (originally *Black Hamlet*) (1947). Elizabeth Brownley, reviewing Buxton's novel for *Trek* in 1946, is favourably impressed: 'It is one of the very few novels which has courageously and with a commendable unsentimentality faced the problem of race' (11(11):16). Although, as Brownley remarks, the novel is concerned with the way 'the problem of colour intrudes into every aspect of our national life' (16), Buxton does not set out to represent any recorded South African sociopolitical events – indeed most of the novel is set in Nyasaland. Reid's *Steel blanket* was a major disappointment. The blurb description, 'experiences of an English left-wing immigrant', could hardly be more misleading. Although the protagonist's left-wing activities wreck his marriage in England, his emigration to South Africa after World War II and a period of psychiatric rehabilitation, produce only a romance interest shorn of any sociopolitical involvement. (There is no suggestion, though, that Reid is attempting to portray a conversion from socialism as Mills Young does in *The great unrest*.) As the *Trek* reviewer commented:

The South African section of the novel was doubtless intended to reveal the racialism that, like a spiritual erosion, is eating away all that is nourishing in the life of the country ... but Mr Reid just couldn't manage the job. His novel is tasteless, like bread without salt. (11(2):17)

Although the subject-matter of Sachs's book is of great interest – an extended collaboration between Sachs and a man called John Chavafambira in relation to 'their mutual fascination with medicine and psychology' (1996:1) – it is not a novel, and should not appear classified as such in *ABSALE*. The narrative, based on Sachs's documented psychoanalytical sessions with Chavafambira, and the revelation of Chavafambira's frustrations as a black man, does not in any case attempt to deal with recorded occurrences of social dissension or agitation.

Reference to the following writers (listed according to their order of appearance in the chapter) will be found in the Biographical appendix: Lewis Sowden, Peter Lanham and A S Mopeli-Paulus, Umfazi, Rooke, Gibbs.

- 2 In compiling this material I have assumed, for convenience' sake, that the editors themselves were responsible for the leader columns of *The Forum* and *Trek*. As both designated editors were male, I have used the masculine pronoun throughout.
- 3 In Armando Pajalich's discussion of the novel he makes illuminating use of the concept of 'polyphonicity' to suggest that, at its best, the novel involves a drama of multiple voices in conflict, in order to express tensions and complexities without proposing final solutions. It fails 'when certain facile solutions are proposed in a paternalistic and Christian manner' (my translation) (1991:228).
- 4 It seems to me very likely that Gordimer used her novel, *A world of strangers*, to tackle the material of *Wanton city* more seriously and effectively.
- 5 Compare Oliver Walker's scathing comments on the treatment of Indians by English-speaking Natalians (1948:209).

In Brian Bunting's biography of Moses Kotane he reveals the efforts of Indian and black leaders, such as Kotane, to find ways of bringing the race conflict to an end (1975:209).

- 6 I refer to the articles by Chris Dunton (*Research in African Literatures* 21(4):105-120); and Hannah Jones (*Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(4):601-612).
- 7 The only other corroborating evidence is the *Drum* story by Jordan Ngubane entitled 'Man of Africa' in which the Zulu hero saves a number of Indian women and children who are in extreme peril (*The Drum Decade*:126-31).
- 8 'Ratoons takes its name from the new growth springing out of the sugar-cane roots after cutting or burning: the symbol of renewal' (Rooke 1990:5).
- 9 Helen Angus is sixteen years old in 1899, and Nicky is under-age when he enlists in World War II. The dénouement therefore cannot occur later than the late twenties or early thirties since Nicky at that stage is still only a young married man.
- 10 Between 1860 and 1911 a total of 152 184 indentured migrants came to Natal from India. Some returned when their contracts ended; others went into farming; a good many became market gardeners. Leela and her family are already the third generation when they arrive at Westongate farm in 1899.

## Chapter 8

- 1 The only potentially relevant novel that required exclusion from this chapter is F E De Villiers's *The newcomers* (1956) which is little more than a propagandistic effort to seduce would-be immigrants to South Africa into accepting stock white myths. De Villiers uses two methods in a narrative encompassing a voyage to South Africa: a tedious reportage of highly selective history lectures about the country given on board ship to prospective immigrants; and a melodramatic plot in which a young English Communist's prompting of two gullible black communists into an act of murder on board is meant to endorse the message of the lectures, namely the need to accept the wisdom of the white ruling class in order to be a contented and acceptable citizen.
- 2 An early reviewer, C K Johnman, noted similarly: '[T]here is hardly a flicker of effective decency in the best of the European characters' (*Ons Eje Boek* 19(3):140).
- 3 Stephen Clingman does not take account of this serious conflict over the decision to hold a Freedom Day strike. He states without any qualification: 'In accordance with its 1949 Programme of Action, one of the stay-at-homes organised by the ANC was called on May Day 1950, in protest at the Suppression of Communism Act' (1986:39).
- 4 Lodge lists these laws as follows: the Pass Laws; Stock Limitation Laws; the Bantu Authorities Act; the Group Areas Act; the Voters' Representation Act; and the Suppression of Communism Act (1983:42-43).
- 5 *The Torch* (1946-1963), edited by Benny Kies, and published in Cape Town, was the newspaper of NEUM (the Non-European Unity Movement formed in 1943). The reviewer is not named but, as a presumed adherent of the Trotskyite beliefs which inspired the movement, can be relied on to have known whether Bloom was a Marxist or not.

- 6 The *Surveys* which I consulted are the following consecutive issues: 1950–1951; 1951–1952; 1952–1953 and 1953–1954. Published by the Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg, the official title of these publications is *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa*. All except the first of those listed were compiled by Muriel Horrell.
- 7 *A Survey of Race Relations 1953–1954* reports as follows:

Section 10 of the [Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidated Act] deals with influx control. Before 1952 it applied to men only; but in terms of an amendment then made its provisions were extended to all Africans. Sub-section (2) now reads that the officer designated for the purpose by an urban local authority 'shall issue to any native who has been permitted to remain in any such area a permit indicating the purposes for which and the period during which such native may remain in that area.

Several local authorities, including Cape Town and Durban, have during the past year been instructed to apply influx control regulations to African women.' (44–45)

- 8 David Hendricks claims that 'Bloom fails to bring a single location inhabitant to life' (1957:36). Gwebu seems to me amongst several who, in fact, emerge very vividly from the narration. Others are Sarah Manana, the shebeen queen, and Chief Charles Ngubeni, chairman of the location advisory board.
- 9 Chapter 11, in which Buchan evokes the ritual by which Laputa becomes priest and king is studded with such passages.
- 10 Isabel Hofmeyr's response to Maughan-Brown's use of such quotations, 'One issue is the extent to which the quotes given by Maughan-Brown are authorially sanctioned' (1985:95. Note 18), may be seen as a herald of my analysis.
- 11 In David Hendricks's view 'the effect of Du Toit's laws is never worked out in terms of the dramatic action of the book' (1957:35). The claim could hardly be more misguided. For a start the novel hinges on only one particular law of Du Toit, while its effect constitutes the entire dramatic action of the novel from the moment of Gwebu's immediate opposition.
- 12 Bloom's italics are rather idiosyncratic. They are used mostly for Afrikaans or Zulu words (as on pp 158, 163 or 213), or to indicate the title of a text (as on p 230). In the given quotation from p 307, italics seem to be used to indicate a heightened moment of free indirect discourse, here in rendering Du Toit's consciousness (the device is used previously on p 176 to indicate the degree of Swanepoel's contempt for Ackerman). However, the most prominent and extended use of italics in the novel occurs on pp 277–278 where the narrator seizes the opportunity to highlight the self-reinforcing and self-protecting rationalising judgements of white South Africans: '*if anything went wrong, it must have been due to some dark evil existing only in the location*' (278). [This passage is given specific attention later in the chapter.]
- 13 As a further consequence of what is termed Bloom's 'sociological colour-blindness', the *Torch* reviewer observes that the tsotsis are handled 'in a mystical way', and decides that Bloom 'fails to show them as the nether side of the *Herrenvolk*, as an anti-social and what is more, an anti-African element' (6). There may be some truth in this critique but the reference to a mystical handling suggests that the reviewer, like Maughan-Brown, has misunderstood the irony in Bloom's imagery.