

## CHAPTER FOUR: “A DANCE WITH THE EMPIRE: MOLEMA’S GLASGOW YEARS, 1913-1921”



### “The Great Course before Me” — the Low Road to Scotland:<sup>1</sup>

With a year to kill between matriculating and embarking for Glasgow, Modiri decided to acquire some worldly experience and a little money for his travels. But in 1913, it was harder than ever for an educated African to find work. The new Union Government was replacing Africans in the civil service with whites, an immobilising attack on this source of employment for the African middle classes. Even Isaiah M’belle, senior African court interpreter, was threatened. By April 1913, Modiri despaired of finding work in Cape Town as his “job” with Graham had fallen through and his dreams of studying abroad were fading.<sup>2</sup>

In these hard times, Plaatje strove to work miracles for his friend, partner, and patron Silas’ son.<sup>3</sup> As a stop-gap, he offered Modiri a year’s teaching at Kimberley’s struggling Lyndhurst Road Public School, until he left for Cape Town and thence Scotland. A tireless School Board member, Plaatje energetically defended secular education for Africans. Harriet Molema was already working there.<sup>4</sup> So were several other energetic people of Modiri’s age-group who would become innovators in the national arena. Musician and linguist, Griffiths Motsieloa, and Mina Soga, the National Council of African Women’s founder (1937), were teachers, while Mrs Plaatje’s relative, ZK Matthews, was a leading scholar. Matthews looked up to the new young teacher and, later inspired by Modiri’s work as an ethnographer and historian, also studied abroad and returned to play a major role at Lovedale, in the ANC, and as an ethnographer.<sup>5</sup> Thus, for a time Modiri left the country’s legislative capital for politically stimulating Kimberley. Many years later, when writing Plaatje’s biography, Modiri described Kimberley as a place of meeting for countless people, “*motse wa merafe-rafe*” [town of many nations]: “*Basweu Manglese le Majeremane le Majuta le Maburu. Go le Bantsho e le Batswana, le Mathosa mme gape go le Makhalate (Bammala) ebile gole MaIndia*”.<sup>6</sup> To an extent, it represented his vision of a united South African nation, one that would not be realised in his lifetime.

He loved singing and before he quit Cape Town, newspapers reported his choral concert in Green Point. Fellow singers were the Motshumis (future Lyndhurst Road contacts), Lucas Mashoko and B Katta, with the Misses ECV Skota, R no K Tyamzashe and F Xiniwe. In September, he returned to Cape Town with Plaatje, and Lyndhurst Road’s choir.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps he consulted the “very dynamic” Dr Abdullah

<sup>1</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 July 1913, SMM, Kmb, to STM.

<sup>2</sup> Skota (1930: 20): the “very popular” M’belle, Kimberley High Court interpreter, spoke Xhosa, Zulu, Serolong, Sesotho, English and Dutch, was the Wesleyan Methodist Church’s circuit steward, and wrote *The Xhosa Scholar*. He travelled Africa and visited England. Following dismissal from the Justice Department (1915) — part of the Cape Civil Service’s drive to employ whites only — he joined the insurance industry in Johannesburg. Plaatje foresaw this process in *TsalaBT*, 27 Apr 1912, “The Administration of Justice”. See *supra*, pp.154-55, 172 & fn.60, 181 & fn.110, & *infra*, p.350.

<sup>3</sup> The letters that mention Plaatje’s attempts to aid Modiri are MPP A979 Da27, 5 Feb 1913, STP, Kmb, to STM, Maf, in which he apologised for not acquiring information about Leeds Hospital or medical training in Britain and America; Da29, 17 April 1913, STP, Kmb, to STM, Maf, which refer to his offering Modiri a temporary teaching post in Kimberley; Da35, 16 Feb 1914, STP, Kmb, to SMM, Maf, informed Modiri about fees at Leeds University.

<sup>4</sup> MPP A979 Da29, 17 Apr 1913, STP, Kmb, to STM, Maf, said he had a job for Modiri at Lyndhurst Road. Ad1, 20 Apr 1913, SMM to STM. *TsalaBC*, 23 Dec 1911, “Lyndhurst Road Public School, Kimberley”, mentioned Harriet on the staff. *TsalaBT*, 26 Apr 1913, “Mofokonyana” (“Small News Items”) [trans]: “Mr [MM] has come to Kimberley on Wednesday from the Cape to assume a teaching post at Lyndhurst Road. The vulture now eats with its ancestors”. Cf. *infra*, p.226.

<sup>5</sup> Couzens, 1985: 68. *TsalaBC*, 28 Oct 1911, “Lyndhurst Road Public School, Kimberley” named Modiri’s fellow teachers: AJ Ayliff, Principal; NS Motshumi, Vice Principal; Misses Minnie AS Ntsiko, and Harriet Molema, Assistants.

<sup>6</sup> MPP A979 Ad 6.4, SM Molema, [1965?], *Solomon T Plaatje* [a Setswana Biography in Manuscript form, with corrections in Dr Molema’s handwriting in blue pen], p.14: “[w]hite people [included] Englishmen and Germans, and Jews and Boers [Afrikaners]. Also, of Black people, there were the Batswana, the Xhosa, and moreover, Coloureds and Indians”.

<sup>7</sup> *TsalaBT*, 3 May 1913, “I Konsati”. *TsalaBT*, 27 Sep 1913, “I Konsati...”. One ditty was “The Homeland of My Heart”.

Abdurahman about university plans in Cape Town.<sup>8</sup> But they may have met later that month: Abdurahman addressed the African Political Organisation's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Monday 29 September 1913 in the Kimberley City Hall with Mayor Ernest Oppenheimer chairing.<sup>9</sup>

Abdurahman advised Modiri to study medicine at his *alma mater*, Glasgow University, where his younger brother, Ismail, was now a medical student.<sup>10</sup> For thirty-five years, Cape leader Abdurahman (1872-1940) created a broad-based nonracial alliance between Africans, "Coloureds" and Indians against the white government. His lengthy medical training in Glasgow showed Modiri that becoming a doctor abroad was possible. In addition, the similarity of their family background, moral and political values resonated with Modiri. The Molemas and the Abdurahmans had undergone profound religious and educational transformation in the nineteenth-century. Abdurahman's grandparents, manumitted slaves, had purchased their freedom, "amassed a small fortune" and educated their son, Abdul Rachman, as a theologian in Cairo and Mecca. On returning, he established modernising education for Cape Muslims as well as educating his son Abdullah at Glasgow University (1888-1893).<sup>11</sup>

For Modiri, working in Kimberley, 250km south of "home" made personal family contact easier, and his letters dwindled accordingly. He went home more often and visited his maternal grandfather, Ratlou Chief Choele (Tshwele), at Kraaipan, Setlagodi Reserve.<sup>12</sup> His few letters home unveiled a maturing ironic literary style, later used in *The Bantu* and tested here on Silas, after travelling to Kraaipan with their Thaba 'Nchu-Kimberley relative, Mrs Nkhabele Fenyang.<sup>13</sup> She and Modiri had expected a family welcome and transport to their destinations, but none came:

[t]hings were bad enough but they would certainly have been worse for Mrs Fenyang and daughters if I was not present. When you come to imagine that, I a native of these parts – (that is ngoana oa gae) could scarcely see any people I knew; much less willing to give necessary assistance.<sup>14</sup>

"Ngoana wa gae" [a child of this place] showed his identification with his mother's people; he was not just a Mafikeng Molema, but also the child of the Setlagole Ratlou, doubly descended from Chief Tau the Great. He secured them a ride on a Kraaipan Jewish merchant's "rickety" wagon; Mrs F duly reached Kunana and sent hearty greetings to Silas ("O itumela thata"). She arranged "to stay here and leave on Friday next 11 Inst, so that they may travel with me, as that will ensure a safe journey for

<sup>8</sup> *Molema, Johns Interview, 1964. Koranta*, 21 Sep 1904, "First Coloured Councillor": Plaatje hailed Abdurahman, "a Mahomedan Africander of the city of Capetown on his triumphant return as a Councillor of the capital city of the premier Colony of South Africa. The white citizens have laid down a precedent for the rest of South Africa, they have given them an example of real British liberality, by returning a worthy representative on the rock-bed of his strong aversion to 'all sorts of wild cat schemes, and extravagances in Municipal administration' and not on the rotten and indefensible ground of colour".

<sup>9</sup> Plaatje (1916a & 1982: 152-64): reproduced Abdurahman's speech.

<sup>10</sup> *TsalaBT*, 27 Sep 1913 & 11 Oct 1913, "African Political Organisation", and 15 Nov 1913, Plaatje, "Women's Passes in the Free State". The Molema-Abdurahman connection needs more exploration. Gavin Lewis, 1987. *Between the Wire and the Wall: a History of South African "Coloured" Politics*. (Cape Town: David Philip), p.27: Abdurahman was President of the APO, 1905-1940. *TsalaBT*, 19 July 1913, "A Coloured Success": Ismail had obtained a First Class honours Certificate, and has won the medal for the year in midwifery. GUA, Glasgow University *Matriculation Albums*, 1914-1915, No.1736: Ismail Abdurahman (26) was in his final year of medical studies during Modiri's first.

<sup>11</sup> HJ Simons & Ray Simons, 1983. *Class & Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*. (London: IDAF) pp.116-17: Like Tiyo Soga, Abdurahman returned with "a Scottish bride", Nellie (d.1953). They named his elder daughter, also a doctor, Waradia (a rose); years later, Modiri and Lucretia Molema named their daughter very similarly, "Warada".

<sup>12</sup> *Cape Times*, 13 Sep 1927. Plaatje, "Late Chief Silas Molema". See Appendix A, p.VI. For Kraaipan, Setlagole, see *supra*, pp.44, 49-50, 57, 80, 121, 128, 133, 135, 166, 170, 171 & fn.52.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs Elizabeth Nkhabele Fenyang's (1847-1947) grandmother, Nkhabele, had wed, in turn, Chief Molema's brothers, Seetsela and Tlale, before marrying Moroka. Cf. *supra*, p.166. Molema (1951: 199) wrote "[s]he was the Chief Tshipinare's eldest and only daughter by the principle wife, and would thus have been the chief of the Seleka Barolong at Thaba Ncho in succession to Tshipinare, had she been a man". She married Chief WZ Fenyang, Plaatje's relative and *TsalaBC*'s co-owner, (*TsalaBT*, 28 Feb 1914) and was one of Molema's informants for *Moroka* (1951: 206). Plaatje (1916b: 8) carried a photograph, "Mr & Mrs Fenyang of [Lothakana] at their Thaba Ncho residence. Both Wesleyan class leaders".

<sup>14</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 4 July 1913, SMM, Kraaipan, to STM. Cf. *supra*, p.52 fn.69.

them”. Modiri’s visit was frustrating: those he wanted to see at Kunana were “out to the fields”. He met “the same fate at Kraaipan”, even missing his grandfather, “the old man”, Choele.<sup>15</sup>

Deeply anxious about his future, Modiri returned to teach the T3 and Matric classes at Lyndhurst Road. Legal affairs again weighed heavily on Silas, who could still not commit himself, although Modiri tried to goad him into definite plans. Mid-June took Silas, Chief Lekoko, Stephen Lefenya and Sebopiwa to Cape Town for the Supreme Court case of “Lekoko Montsioa versus the Union Government and the Mafeking Divisional Council”. Their three-week stay placed Silas in the legislative capital when, on 19 June, the Natives Land Act became law.<sup>16</sup>

As *The Bantu* illustrated, Modiri opposed the Act passionately.<sup>17</sup> But personal troubles concentrated his mind on his ability to succeed overseas should he delay longer, “...as I have left school, I shall turn more and more rusty as time goes on, and therefore less fit for the great course before me”. That “great course”, was not just the five-year university medical programme, but his dreamed-of career. He begged Silas not to delay beyond January 1914 “at the latest”.<sup>18</sup> This intense letter omitted his feelings of the past month: when the Natives Land Act [NLA] hurtled into law, he (like every African) had awoken on the morning of 20 June as a “pariah in the land of his [or her] birth” and African journalists’ outrage; Plaatje’s indictment of the government burned *Tsala ea Becoana*’s leader page:

[t]he die is cast and in the name of the King’s Gracious majesty the mandate has gone forth from the South African parliament that natives outside the Cape Province shall not buy land in the country of their birth pending the report of a future Commission — a Commission that the Boers will see to that it never reports, during the next ten years.<sup>19</sup>

Plaatje’s “*alea jacta est*” editorial recognised the Act as another step in the incremental reduction of all 4,000,000 Africans’ rights.<sup>20</sup> Plaatje rallied Kimberley residents against the Act. Modiri could hardly have missed a meeting that Plaatje and Motshumi, Lyndhurst Road’s headmaster, organised and addressed. Plaatje ignited the audience: “[w]hat the Republican forces failed to gain on the battlefield they were to-day gaining in Parliament”.<sup>21</sup> He also waged a media campaign to publicise the NLA’s evils.<sup>22</sup> His furious critique of post-Union politics certainly influenced Molema’s latter chapters.<sup>23</sup>

In Kimberley, Modiri had opportunity to discover the opinions of the NLA’s white parliamentary opponents, the “friends of the natives” who later featured prominently in *The Bantu*: Theo Schreiner, who spoke in Kimberley, and Senator WP Schreiner whose views *Tsala* reported extensively. Editor Plaatje, also a practised educator, sketched the Act’s historical antecedents, contrasting WP’s stalwart

<sup>15</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 4 July 1913, SMM, Kraaipan, to STM. Kunana [Khuwana] was the site of 1832’s battle against Mzilikazi. LR Olivier & JR Kriel, 1978. “A Job Well Done — A Short History of Dr James Moroka”, *South African Medical Journal*, 54, 19 Aug, 331-32: the Fenyangs’ daughter, Maggy, later became Dr James Moroka of Thaba ‘Nchu’s first wife. A979 Ad1, 4 July 1913, SMM, Kraaipan Siding, to STM.

<sup>16</sup> *TsalaBT*, [Nd] Dec 1913, “Lyndhurst Road Public School”. On the NLA, see *infra*, pp.337-38, 345-46.

<sup>17</sup> See *infra*, pp.243, 255, 284, 337, 345-48, 369 fn.79.

<sup>18</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 July 1913, SMM, Kmb, to STM.

<sup>19</sup> Plaatje, 1916a & 1982: 21. *TsalaBT*, 21 June 1913, “Leader”. For Plaatje’s evidence, see Beaumont, 1914: II, 93.

<sup>20</sup> *TsalaBT*, 21 June 1913, “Mr DW Drew, MA on the Lands Bill”: Plaatje particularly blamed “backvelders” of the former Republics: “...[t]he Free State idea as to what constitutes adequate reserves for natives was vividly shown up when we got to the consideration of the scheduled areas. There are 300,000 natives in the Free State and less than 75,000 morgen set apart for them: one-fourth of a morgen apiece — the smallest allotment in any of the Provinces. That of the Transvaal, another Voortrekker Province, shows the next smallest”. Cf. *infra*, p.347.

<sup>21</sup> *TsalaBT*, 28 June 1913, “The Native Land Bill”. MPP A979 Aa2.40, 14 Feb 1913, J Motshumi, Lyndhurst Road’s headmaster, was a busy man: in February, he invited Silas to contribute to the revised Sechuana Hymn Book.

<sup>22</sup> Keegan (1986: 189) called the 1913 NLA a “catharsis” for white farmers, “an affirmation from the highest authority of the legitimacy of their cause and the inevitability of their victory against their black competitors”. *TsalaBT*, 23 Aug 1913, “The War of Extermination”: initially, only the Free State, scene of white farmers’ onslaughts on competitive black sharecroppers and tenants, applied the law.

<sup>23</sup> Molema (1920: 279) acknowledged Plaatje’s *Native Life*.

humanism to the more expedient views of JW Sauer and JT Jabavu, *Imvo Zabantsundu*'s editor.<sup>24</sup> They supported the idea that segregation, if implemented equitably, could benefit Africans. *Imvo* might represent "popular native opinion", though lacked "that influence to-day among its people as it did".<sup>25</sup> He also slated the top three NAD officials, Acting Minister FS Malan, Secretary Edward Dower, and Under-Secretary Barrett, who had the power to influence the destinies of every African in the country.<sup>26</sup>

For months' before Modiri left for Britain, the public discourse of African Nationalism was hotter than ever before, stretching the language of courteous protest to breaking point. If he had read nothing else, *Tsala*'s letters to the Editor would have exposed Modiri to African politicians and churchmen's opinions of government and Empire. Jabavu's associate, Rev EJ Mqoboli presented the prevalent view (27 September 1913) that British law should exercise moral suasion over the "new" government. After welcoming the SANNC's decision to send a deputation to England to protest the Act, he wrote:

[t]he Act, in all its intents and purposes, deprives the Native subjects of His Most Gracious Majesty King George V, of their "liberty", which is against the law and British tradition as recorded in the English Code — the Magna Charta said to have been confirmed over thirty times in the English Parliament.<sup>27</sup>

AK Soga criticised the tameness of African reaction, making Mqoboli's letter and some Plaatje editorials look restrained:

[w]hat we need in this country of cringeing flunkeyism and money-worship is not less agitation but more agitation. No threats should dissuade intelligent natives from pushing their appeal against the iniquitous Lands Act and kindred measures, however futile it may appear to cross the ocean. It is probably the last appeal that they will have the opportunity of pursuing constitutionally and respectfully, and it is their duty in spite of the sneers of cynics, or the prophets who foretell failure, to prove to the world the righteousness of their case, after which let the heavens fall.<sup>28</sup>

Msane couched his heated sentiment in more cooling prose than Soga's. He tagged Dower's medium-term arrangements for the Act's application at Thaba Nchu "the device of a pernicious system, which aims at arresting the advancement of the Natives by reducing them to poverty, so that their services can be easily obtained at any mean rate of wages".<sup>29</sup>

Kimberley exposed Modiri to more radical politics than Lovedale's, the stamping ground of Henderson and Jabavu. He later incorporated the voices of this period into his own condemnation in 1917:

[i]t is clear, then, that in the Union of South Africa, to live, if life it is, the native must be forced into servitude; by closing all doors to freedom and independence, by refusing to sell or lease land to him, he must be forced into this bondage.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *TsalaBT*, 28 June 1913 & 25 Oct 1913, "Leader", "Hon WP Schreiner, KC on the Lands Bill": Schreiner had defended Zulu King, Dinizulu, on high treason and murder charges. *TsalaBT*, 23 Aug 1913, "Mr Theo L Schreiner, MLA": TL addressed "Coloured and Native" Kimberleyites at the Hall Street School. *TsalaBT*, 30 Aug 1913: Plaatje's "line" on Sauer, whose death followed the Act's passing, was exculpatory "we have long felt that Mr Sauer thought he would screen the Natives by standing with his broad and powerful shoulders between them and the fire...". Cf. *infra*, p.347.

<sup>25</sup> *TsalaBT*, 25 Oct 1913, "Gossip and Comment". *TsalaBT*, 6 Dec 1913, printed AM Jabavu's reply to Plaatje, (24 Nov 1913) as "Imvo's reply". JT Jabavu, who had not denounced the Act, and refused public debate with Plaatje, issued a nonchalant third-person statement that he had "not been reading and following [Plaatje's] writings...he cannot understand what you mean by it. In short, to let you know that he takes no interest in the matter". On JTJ, cf. *infra*, p.353.

<sup>26</sup> For Barrett and Malan's intervention in the Tshidi chiefship conflict, see *supra*, pp.146ff. *TsalaBT*, 9 Aug 1913, "The Government's View On The Natives Land Act", contained Dower's letter to all Magistrates and Native Commissioners about the Act's enforcement. Plaatje's extensive reporting helped to make Dower more prominent than any NAD official under the first two union governments (1910-12). E.g. MPP A979 Da1, 2 Apr 1911, Plaatje to STM observed, "we are friends with Mr Dower the Chief of Native Affairs".

<sup>27</sup> *TsalaBT*, 27 Sep 1913, "The Native Lands Act". Walshe (1970: 35-36): Mqoboli, a Wesleyan and member of Congress' older generation was its chaplain-in chief. Cf. Odendaal, 1984: 263.

<sup>28</sup> *TsalaBT*, 18 Oct 1913, "The war of degradation": AK Soga to the Editor. Cf. *infra*, pp.337-38.

<sup>29</sup> *TsalaBT*, 18 Oct 1913, Saul Msane, "The Natives Land Act". (Also *Tsala* 28 Feb 1914.) *TsalaBT*, 28 Feb 1914, "SA Native Congress", Msane headed the Transvaal Native Congress. Cf. *infra*, p.338 fn.300, for Msane's speech, 10 May 1913.

<sup>30</sup> Molema, 1920: 249.

As fury over the NLA blazed, he was preparing to cross the ocean to fulfill the goals that Silas and Sebopiwa had planned for the fourteen-year-old Modiri before 1905,

I am more than delighted to note the progress of my brother Molire [*sic*] and the way planned for him (Medical Course) is indeed fine, and hope none shall be in his way towards that end. The sons of Molema should be leaders among the Bechuana just as our grand-father was the instigator of civilization to the Barolong, so his grand-children should perfect those fundamental principles that he laid.<sup>31</sup>

Modiri's ambitions were formed within the context of family debates about their own and the community's needs; after all, they sent Sebopiwa to America to study law. Family friends helped Modiri choose his university: before Abdurahman's advice about Glasgow, Isaiah M'belle helped him gather information about "the British Schools of Medicine".<sup>32</sup> After ordering several university calendars, "searching and comparing them", they first chose Leeds as it had three annual student intakes (April, September and October) and no application-in-advance. Again, hurrying Silas along, Modiri presented him this choice as a *fait accompli*. Plaatje assisted in finding information about Leeds.<sup>33</sup>

Given that South African universities excluded black medical students, those who had managed to train overseas were hailed in the press and served as examples to future doctors.<sup>34</sup> In mid-1913, *Tsala* related the cautionary tale of the vicissitudes of a "young native doctor", whose medical studies had taken him nine long years. This may have prompted Modiri to research universities before leaving South Africa. Dr Mannasseh Robert Mahlangeni, 27, a Blythwood and Lovedale old-boy from Toleni, Transkei, had graduated in Toronto.<sup>35</sup> MB in hand, he entered Edinburgh University to obtain the prestigious Membership of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons, Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1913: "[h]e also attended the Coombe Hospital, Dublin and obtained the LM of Dublin". *Tsala* welcomed him home, wishing him well in his future Transkei practice.<sup>36</sup>

Mahlangeni's horrifying delays and expenses emphasised the importance of meticulous career planning. Whether they had personal contact is unknown, but Mahlangeni's studies in Scotland and Ireland replicated part of Modiri's own educational voyage: he would qualify in Glasgow, and attend the Coombe "Lying-In" Hospital, Dublin.<sup>37</sup>

At 1913's close, Lyndhurst Road bestowed prizes upon successful students, and thanked its hard-pressed teaching staff. Then it bade goodbye to "Mr Silas [Modiri] Molema". Both he and Miss M

<sup>31</sup> MPP A979 Ac1, 18 Oct 1905, SJM, Jacksonville, Florida to STM, Maf.

<sup>32</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 17 Dec 1913, SMM to STM. Also *TsalaBC*, 23 Dec 1911, "Lyndhurst Road Public School, Kimberley". Willan (1984: 195): M'belle was on the LRPS's board.

<sup>33</sup> MPP A979 Da35, 16 Feb 1914, STP, Kmb, to SMM, Maf, informed Modiri about fees at Leeds University.

<sup>34</sup> Shepherd (1942: 275-93): black students in all fields were excluded from universities, hence the need for a Fort Hare, the South African Native College.

<sup>35</sup> *TsalaBT*, 21 June 1913, "Return of a young Native Doctor": Mahlangeni first enrolled at an unnamed US "Coloured" University but realising it was not adequate, left for Toronto. Unsure where to study, he luckily met the almost allegorically-named Mrs Wright, who personally recommended him to the head of St Andrews College, where he matriculated. He then entered Toronto University where, aided by the Dean, he graduated in medicine in 1911.

<sup>36</sup> *TsalaBT*, 21 June 1913, "Return of a young Native Doctor" appeared 2 days after the NLA's passing. Modiri was in Kimberley (*Tsala*'s home) and may well have read the article. *TsalaBT*, 2? [illeg] May 1915, "Dr Wilson Mongoli Sebeta": "[n]ews has arrived from Glasgow, Scotland, that Mr...Sebeta has passed the Final Examination in Medicine and Surgery at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow". LP, LMIAR, Lovedale Roll of Classes, 1900: Sebopiwa's contemporary at Lovedale (1904), Rev CM Sebeta's son, studied at the "School of Medicine of the Royal Colleges, Edinburgh", to become the first Mosotho medical doctor. The RCOP lists Dr MR Mahlangeni (of Clermiston, Edinburgh) as No.4955, 18 Apr1913; Dr WTM Sebeta is RCOP, No.5109, 23 Apr 1915.

<sup>37</sup> Cobley (1990: 43 & 56 fn.107): "...the 1946 census revealed that only six of the dozen or so African medical doctors who had practiced in South Africa since 1900 were still working". Mahlangeni was not among them: JS Moroka (Thaba 'Nchu), AB Xuma (Johannesburg), Rosebery T Bokwe (Middledrift), Innes Ballantine Gumede (Durban) and Ignatius Motubabe Monare (Lady Selbourne, Pretoria). *TsalaBT*, 13 Dec 1913: mentioned USA graduate, Gabashane, who had practised medicine in Basutoland for some years and was going to study further at a Toronto University. The Transvaal Medical Society had refused him admission, ignoring his many Basutoland successes.

Mzimba sang “farewell solos” in formal valediction. He left to prepare for a new beginning, confidently expecting Silas to send him to Britain early in 1914.<sup>38</sup>

### **A Dance with the Empire, or The Ambiguities of Dependence Revisited:**

1919 found Modiri Molema — about to qualify as a medical doctor — as President of the African Races Association of Glasgow (ARA), a grouping of Glasgow’s black colonial students. His Presidential Address, two years earlier, had invited them to discuss black South Africans’ class position and “civilization”. In 1920, the paper became Chapter XXVII, “Intellectual Possibilities or Impossibilities” of his first book, *The Bantu Past and Present*. This transition from paper to publication and the links between the ARA and *The Bantu* are worth consideration. As the Association’s Constitution explained, its governing committee met regularly to establish a syllabus of topics on which its members would present lectures at their regular meetings.<sup>39</sup>

The ARA’s aims were sociable as well as social. On 12 April 1919, its festivities at the Royal Halls increased Sauchiehall Street’s usual hubbub. Its “First ‘At Home’ and ‘Social’” scheduled a punishing round of music, games and dancing. Convener Ribeiro welcomed guests to a “Conversazione” (at 7.30pm) of Pianoforte and Mandolin solos, Recitation and Song. Several dances followed — three waltzes, a quadrille, a “One Step” and “Military Two Step”, “Foxtrot”, and “Eightsome Reel” (they were north of the border) — might exorcise high spirits. Barn Dancing preceded an Interval to refuel for round two’s dances: the “King’s Waltz”, the “Maxina”, “Hallo Hawaii!”, “African Barn Dance” and “Highland Scottische”. Intellectual exchange aside, the ARA demanded a formidably fit membership.<sup>40</sup>

Eyewitness and newspaper accounts of the occasion prove elusive, but the programme Molema sent his family in Mafikeng, is thought-provoking. This *African* races event had stentorian colonial resonance. Programme-order and dance-names — except, possibly, the “African Barn Dance” and “Hallo Hawaii!”, which may have allowed “unBritish” vigour, submitted to European conventions. Invitations stipulating “formal dress” probably meant “European” formality. Ribeiro and friends plainly planned great fun on the night, in line with conventions of gentlemanly Empire etiquette and just a symbolic nods to a subdued “Africanness”: ARA members hailed from the African diaspora.

What did “African” mean to these young intellectuals at this moment in colonial history? The riddle of a dance becomes a potent metaphor for their movement. The colonised subject wove an intricate pattern, now approaching the imperial culture, now retreating into the steps of an indigenous culture in a gesture resistant to conquest. While expressing local and ethnic forms of identification, deploying imperial discourse and connections (in the Empire’s “Second City”) could splice one into early twentieth-century “global” culture. In Lefebvre’s words, “...space ‘is’ whole and broken, global and fractured, at one and the same time. Just as it is at once conceived, perceived, and directly lived”.<sup>41</sup> In Glasgow, Modiri could, in an evening’s dance, live out the seductive ambiguity of distance and proximity, intermingling local and imperial modes by simultaneously celebrating Africanness and imperial belonging in a set of the Lancers.<sup>42</sup> Less athletic forms of ambiguity towards African culture pervaded his first published work and the experiences from which it grew.

<sup>38</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 July 1913, SMM, Kmb, to STM. *TsalaBT*, 28 Feb 1914. “SANNC Congress”: Silas was busy, representing Mafikeng at the SANNC’s Kimberley Conference; he attended to Modiri’s needs only on returning.

<sup>39</sup> Molema, 1920: 322-35. See Appendix E — Constitution of African Races Association of Glasgow, VII (3).

<sup>40</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 12 Apr 1919, “The African Races of Glasgow for ‘At Home’ and ‘Social’”. African historian JH Soga, had 2 waltzes published in London: *Oceana Waltz*. (London: Chas Sheard, 19??) and *Waltz Netta*. [N.Pub], 19??.

<sup>41</sup> H Lefebvre, 1991. *The Production of Space*. (Oxford: Blackwell), p.356.

<sup>42</sup> Marks, 1986: vii-ix, 1,2,7. In “The Question of Cultural Identity”, (In S Hall et al, 1992 [eds], *Modernism and Its Futures*. [London: Polity/Blackwell], p.291), Stuart Hall observed that neither modernism nor globalisation, of which imperialism was an early phase, prevented popular attachment to “tradition and roots, to national myths and ‘imagined communities’”.

As Willan observed of similar events in late-1890s Kimberley, musical and social styles had “three influences: European, African and American. Music, perhaps more than anything, revealed the intermediate cultural position of this social group and highlighted the rich possibilities inherent in such a situation”.<sup>43</sup> The ARA was an “adult, Pan-African” version of the Lovedale Training Society, to which Modiri had belonged. His classmates had met weekly to discuss issues like “The Future of South Africa”, and “The Present State of Civilisation amongst the Natives”, topics that later resurfaced in *The Bantu*.<sup>44</sup> At the time of the ARA dance, Molema already had prospects of publishing his first historical work.<sup>45</sup> In late September 1917, W Green & Son conveyed a cautious offer to publish to the University Union, Glasgow.<sup>46</sup> Its polite phraseology, *lingua franca* of the Empire’s educated classes, closely resembled his own epistolary style:

Dear Sir,  
We have to thank you for your kind letter of the 24<sup>th</sup> and would be quite pleased to consider the publication of a book on the lines you suggest if you would kindly give us more particulars.<sup>47</sup>

Although preparing for examinations, Modiri composed some 400 pages on the history and ethnography of South Africa’s black people. Its subject, two contemporary reviewers stated, was hardly unusual. By 1920, when the book overcame postwar paper shortages and was published, several works on the subject existed, its bibliography demonstrated. However, proclaimed reviewers, *this* book uniqueness lay in its authorship. Thus, *The Scotsman* judged that this “learned and interesting volume[’s]...claim to attention” was its “Bantu author”:

[It] sets out in a well ordered narrative the past history, the manners, customs and religious beliefs of the Bantu races, and gives an intelligent conspectus of their present state of civilisation and their aspirations for a freer national life in the future.<sup>48</sup>

The more forthright *Glasgow Herald* reviewer found it “very remarkable”, tingeing “remarkable” with double-meaning, for despite the author’s “considerable erudition”, his race provoked controversy. Its “peculiar interest” was, again, its author “a Muntu (pl. Bantu)”:

So far as we know it is the only scientific work — and at that a work of very high standard — written by what is vulgarly called a native, and the Bantu have good reason to be proud of Mr Molema. That Mr Molema despite his frank criticism is equally proud of the Bantu will come as a shock to those who are ignorant of African history, and we cordially urge them to read — and if necessary re-read — and learn, for with all its science it is at once an indictment, a defence and an appeal....<sup>49</sup>

The positive reviews buoyed up Modiri’s hopes for South African sales. He told Silas that “the reviews and criticisms...have been very good here, and there is every prospect of the book finding a good sale. I hope it will sell in South Africa”.<sup>50</sup> But more on this below.

<sup>43</sup> B Willan, “An African in Kimberley: Sol T Plaatje, 1894-1899”. In Marks & Rathbone, 1982: 248-51.

<sup>44</sup> RU, LMIAR, 1911, p.83. Cf. *supra*, p.190. Young black people exchanged ideas at such intellectual fora. Willan (1984: 39ff) mentioned the South African Improvement Society, a Kimberley parallel of the ARA, to which Plaatje (Modiri’s mentor while writing *The Bantu*) read two papers (1895-1898): “The History of the Bechuanas” and “Being a Bechuana”.

<sup>45</sup> MPP A979 Da61, 11 July 1920, Plaatje, London, to SMM, Glasgow, commented on *The Bantu*. Ad1, 30 Nov 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf: Modiri planned to meet Plaatje in Glasgow in January 1920. Plaatje, in London with the second SANNC Delegation to Britain, had already sent Modiri a parcel of clothes from the Molemas. Ad1, 18 June 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, reported that he and Plaatje visited Edinburgh together in May.

<sup>46</sup> Modiri had all his letters delivered to the John McIntyre Building, just north of the University Main Building, which was the Men’s Student Union until 1930. See Mike Hansell, Hugh Harris, Maggie Reilly & Graeme D Ruxton, 2005?. *Architectural Treasures of the University of Glasgow*. [N.Pub, ISBN: 0-904254-8208], p.18.

<sup>47</sup> MPP A979 Ad.4, 26 Sep 1917, CE Green, Edinburgh, to SMM, Glasgow.

<sup>48</sup> MPP A979 Ad4, [Nd], Typed Reviews (facsimiles) of *The Bantu* from *The Scotsman* (initially an Edinburgh paper) and the *Glasgow Herald*.

<sup>49</sup> MPP A979 Ad4, [Nd], *Glasgow Herald* review. Molema used “Muntu” (a black person), throughout *The Bantu*, eg. p.311. The reviewer called the book a modern achievement: “an indictment, a defence and an appeal” which avoided attacking or supporting either side in the colonial struggle, and “an eloquent testimony of foreign missions”.

<sup>50</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 June 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

Until *The Bantu*'s composition, Modiri kept it a secret, while writing eloquently to his family in Mafikeng about Glasgow life. Just six months before publication, he told his father, but highlighted the racial climate in which the book would be read:

I have no doubt you will be very much pleased to hear that I am writing a History of the Native People of South Africa...I expect it to be ready in a few weeks, and you may perhaps see it reviewed in the Mafeking Mail. Of course you will get the very first copy. Meantime I am sending you a specimen of one of the proof-sheets under separate cover.

Nobody in South Africa knows anything about it so far, but they will know soon enough, as I shall get my publishers to get it advertised in South African papers — Black and White — and even in Mafeking. Of course, as you know, there must be some bitter criticisms, but all authors have to meet that.<sup>51</sup>

He understood that writing and reading about Africa were, then as now, racial activities that constructed “the African” as the object of colonial knowledge. The second reviewer implied, intriguingly, that Molema’s feat was to speak *in* the voice of the “Other”, a change from the white settler view of Africa. This rather naïve view ignored his hybrid authorial position, as he adopted various narrative voices in *The Bantu*, even, at times, “othering” particular classes within the African community.<sup>52</sup>

Both reviewers’ opening remarks indicated that, in the Empire’s broad ambit, being African *and* intelligent could provoke debate in 1920! Their reactions showed how prescient Modiri’s “Preface” had been. He anticipated readers’ ill-veiled surprise at an African’s producing a scholarly work, invoking his racial identity to emphasise his critique of matters previously the almost exclusive preserve of white writers. He outspokenly claimed an authority derived from his race:

[f]inally, I may say that I am a member of the race whose life I have described in the following pages, kith and kin of the people whose story I am unfolding to the world. This has given me the advantage, as it were, of telling the story of my own life, relying much on my personal observation and experience, and more correctly interpreting the psychological touches which must be unfathomable to a foreigner.<sup>53</sup>

“Foreigner” may imply “observer from another country” or “white settler”. This typically glancing blow rendered his work tantalisingly ambiguous. While exposing segregation’s multiplying iniquities, he was uncritical of missionary initiatives and asserted loyalty to the British Empire.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, he guardedly admired African societies’ cohesiveness, but censured their traditionalism, arguing that it impeded progress. He also lambasted contemporaries in the urbanised and semi-urbanised classes, for indifference to learning and for not replacing a sense of tradition with any other culture. He believed that one’s level of “civilisation”, not one’s race should be the criterion of social differentiation.

This narrative ambiguity towards his subject represented the contradictions of his own experience. In May 1920, he expressed gratitude for his Dearest Father’s great sacrifices:

I can safely say that no son loves and honours his father more than I love and honour you, and I shall ever be deeply thankful to Providence for such a father, and to you for the excellent and rare education you have given me — education which makes me today one of the foremost men of my race and one of the best educated among black and white in South Africa.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 June 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. As *Koranta*’s co-publisher (1901-05), Silas would have taken professional interest in text and printing quality. (Cf. Willan, 1984:109.) MPP A979 Ad1, 18 June 1920, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf: Green sent review copies to Kimberley, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Bloemfontein newspapers. *The Times* (London), *Methodist Recorder* and *Methodist Times* all praised *The Bantu*.

<sup>52</sup> See *infra*, pp.352ff.

<sup>53</sup> Molema, 1920: viii. Several of Molema’s contemporary writers made race their focus: Plaatje, 1916a & 1982, JHSoga, 1930 & 1932, M Fuze, 1922 & 1979 and DDT Jabavu, 1920. Cf. *supra*, p.28.

<sup>54</sup> *Isaac Schapera Interview, 1991*: Schapera offered these personal insights into Molema’s world-view. He met Dr Molema and Chief Sebopiwa Molema in 1943 while preparing the genealogy “The Royal House of the Barolong”.

<sup>55</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 16 May 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. RU, LIAMR, MS 16 292, ROC, 1904, pp.16-17. On Silas’ role in educating his six children, see *supra*, p.191 fn.164.

Academically, these claims were correct. By 1920, Modiri could sign himself Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB, ChB), Glasgow University and Licentiate of Medicine, Dublin.<sup>56</sup> His education's contribution to his self-definition was vital. Though so distant from official segregation, "race", "black" and "white" constituted his letter's power and dominated his experience in South Africa and Glasgow. "Education" also marked his sense of distinctness from the African majority. *The Bantu* tackled the class stratification that education and "westernisation" brought African society, giving the educated black elite "moral" and intellectual superiority over uneducated and semi-educated workers.<sup>57</sup>

In this letter he seemed to try to distinguish his character and purpose in life from those of his father and paternal grandfather. He was narrating the ambiguity of his experience in a world significantly different from theirs, where his own abilities had won him a rare professional education, as yet unavailable in Africa.<sup>58</sup> His qualifications held powerful meaning for him, illustrating his personal talents, and disproving the many negative theories of African incapacity he had challenged in *The Bantu*. He was viewing himself in contexts that his father, and even more his grandfather, in their nineteenth-century Tswana world, could not comprehend. Yet, in returning to South Africa, he was returning to his rootedness in that world, and to the forms of obedience he owed his father and the community.

The letter beginning "no son loves and honours his father more than I love and honour you", symmetrically evoked the conjoint codes of Tswana and Methodist respect Modiri accorded Silas. When marriage was broached in 1920, Modiri lacked the freedom of choice Abdurahman and Soga had enjoyed. He proposed to a woman he had loved "for seven years", whereupon Silas, evidently outraged that Tswana custom could be scorned, ordered him home to wed the family's choice of bride.<sup>59</sup>

Modiri's proposal arose out of complex feelings. Early in 1919, he had heard the painful news that Anna Moshoele, the woman his whole family intended him to marry had, without approval, become engaged to volatile Mmadichukudu Lekoko! Modiri knew that Dichukudu had already "seduced one girl".<sup>60</sup> This virtual elopement scandalised the Stadt, offending Setswana custom — and many family members! Molalanyane, Silas and Anna's father, Rev Moshoele had all wished her to marry Modiri. He declared he had "always been against our national method of arranging marriages, whereby the parents do the whole business without consulting the tastes of their children", and had intended

[t]o ask Anna's hand in marriage because I believed that she was the best choice that our parents could have made, and I believed she would have suited my tastes and I would try my best to suit her tastes. Anna was, I believe, intelligent, and I might have been able to direct her education to bring it into line with mine, so that we might understand each other better. In fact, I meant to send her to this country next year.<sup>61</sup>

The past tense ("was intelligent") conveys Modiri's disappointment. His views on directing his future wife's educating were not uncommon among the elite.<sup>62</sup> This letter expressed Modiri's distress on several levels: his polite language concealed the extent to which Mmadichukudu's behaviour had

<sup>56</sup> Title page to Molema's 69pp booklet, *Life and Health: Being Health Lectures....* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1924) in University of Botswana Library, Gaborone, lists Molema's qualifications.

<sup>57</sup> *Rre Piriempa Thwane Interview, 1992*: Rre Piriempa discussed Molema's intellectual contribution to Tswana culture.

<sup>58</sup> "Ambiguity", here, is narrational and structural. Lejeune (1975: 166, trans.) distinguished complexity from ambiguity: "[c]omplexity is merely the condition of a system in which multifarious elements exist in multiple relations. This is the opposite of simplicity, but never excludes clarity.... Ambiguity is quite different: it is, at the level of expression, the indecisiveness of meaning, that is to say, all things considered, the uncertainty the reader encounters in the narrator's position in relation to that which he relates".

<sup>59</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 16 May 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: Modiri's only "clue" to her identity was that she was the "daughter of Skota", meaning that she might possibly have been Scottish or, perhaps more likely, TD Mweli Skota's sister, the Miss ECV Skota mentioned *supra*, p. 199. The "7 years" suggested that he had met her in 1913 while at Lyndhurst Road. His father wished him to marry Anna Sekeiletseng Moshoele, granddaughter of Ngwanakabo. For Abdurahman, see *supra* p. 200 fn. 10. Tiyo Soga had married the Scottish, Janet Burnside, who returned to the Cape with him. See Soga, 1983: 1-8.

<sup>60</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 19 May 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf, p. 1: Modiri told Harriet that he believed Mmadichukudu had married the "seduced" girl. See *supra*, pp. 193-94, for Mmadichukudu's behaviour at Healdtown.

<sup>61</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 19 May 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf, pp. 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> See *infra*, p. 209, for the example of DDT Jabavu and Florence Makiwane's marriage.

wounded him as a man. Having his “brother” and schoolmate abscond with his intended fiancée injured Modiri’s pride. The Molema and Moshoela honour was tarnished, as well as the Lekoko’s; Mmadichukudu’s mother, Mafikeng, was Silas’ sister! Thus, he and Modiri were related to Anna in the same way; in this way, Tshidi custom was also offended. Ancient practices clashed with what appeared to be the eloping couple’s modern heedlessness.

Modiri begged his sister Harriet not to intervene and declared he would not now ask Miss Moshoela’s hand in marriage, which was, he understood, a family matter. Given the elopement, he would not be “opposing my beloved mother’s will, nor my father’s, nor Seleje’s nor yours...”. Rueful, yet joking, he begged, “...I pray you, don’t arrange any more marriages for me, and allow no one to. I shall for the present be content to marry my profession and marry all my people”.<sup>63</sup>

After this great disappointment, Modiri’s 1920 decision to marry outside the family reflected hurt feelings and some rebellion against parental custom. He also perhaps opposed Silas, whose late payments had made life so miserable. Justifying marrying the woman he had loved before coming to Scotland, and to whom he written while away, he used his ARA leadership to prove both his responsibility, and passionate devotion to African nationalism. In Setswana, he voiced feelings he hoped would show respect for his African origins, yet declare his adult right to independence:

[n]ow here in Scotland I long ago called together black people from many different countries. I [became] their leader at these gatherings of black people. Some people came from South Africa, some from West Africa, some from Central Africa, etcetera. Some are from North America, some from South America, some from the West Indies. My work is to help one tribe of black people to love the other and I taught them to examine the customs of the past like those of the children of father Molema...like your own. I taught all of them that the true way of life is not to live for oneself, but that the real life is to live for the whole nation, for all the children of Africa. I taught them that if they love Africa they must not corrupt their blood with white blood.<sup>64</sup>

He earnestly reiterated that he was a Motswana, through and through, and that though he would prefer not to, he would marry his beloved without Silas’ blessing, if he had to. He added that she was hardly “the forward type”, and extremely “kindhearted”. She would be most unhappy to marry if it displeased Silas. So distressed was Modiri that he swore he could never marry anyone else.<sup>65</sup>

This was Modiri’s longest, most passionate letter. It unified his most intimate feelings, his social commitment to other black students in Glasgow, and his political commitment to Pan-African nationalism of the order that Du Bois was helping to spread internationally. He also expressed the desire to lead others within the African diaspora — like his fellow ARA members — towards an understanding of their African heritage.<sup>66</sup>

He hinted that a major part of his purpose in writing *The Bantu* was not only South African nationalist, but part of emergent, worldwide Pan-Africanism. However, having spoken out in that impassioned letter, he relied entirely on paternal funding, and had to bow to his father’s wishes. Silas’ behests to his son have not survived, but Modiri’s letters alluded to them. They indicated that although both men shared much (through education, culture, mutual love and duty), Modiri was more consciously modern, despite his orthodox Methodism. When it came to finding a wife, Modiri did not want his father and the family to choose for him, as in the “old” way. He wanted to make his own choice and, in mid-October 1920, berated his father’s obduracy: “I am deeply grieved and run out of words to reply to your letters

<sup>63</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 19 May 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf, p.3-4: the double underlining indicated his seriousness. “Marriage” to his profession and community was meant figuratively. Yet, his intention *not* to marry Anna was undercut by the last line, in which he suggested that Dichukudu attend to the girl he had seduced before Anna.

<sup>64</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 Oct 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Cf. *infra*, pp.218-19.

<sup>65</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 Oct 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>66</sup> Attached to MPP A979 Ad3, 8 Oct 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM: these aims included uniting people of African descent living in Britain (the then acceptable term “Negro” was used), fostering dialogue about African welfare, and presenting papers about conditions in members’ home countries/colonies.

as you said that you never want to hear such words again. Really Dad, I had hoped that you would grant me my request".<sup>67</sup>

For Silas, honour in marriage meant respecting Tswana custom, but for Modiri connoted "keeping one's word as a gentleman", those words of aristocratic and even upper-middle-class idiom often more respected in the letter than the observance. Such class values were assimilated into English-speaking Cape society, and drummed into boys at most missionary schools. However, this cosmopolitan identification put him in direct conflict with local Tswana custom. Painfully, he found the honour he owed his father contradicted the honour he owed the woman he wished to marry. In long letter home, he pointed out that Silas' demands (that he marry a cousin) did not meet his own needs, as an educated man, for intellectual companionship. He knew that, unlike his father, the African petty bourgeoisie generally did not educate their daughters to the same level as their sons:

[t]here are very few girls to think of in connection with marriage, who have either education or ambition enough. There are certainly none among our immediate people, and certainly none amongst our relations. This difficulty I think you recognise my dear father. If I must marry, I must have an educated and intelligent partner. Our people have not taken the trouble to educate their children, and they cannot rightly expect their uneducated daughters to have educated husbands....<sup>68</sup>

Modiri's outburst illuminated the ambiguity of the family's education. While chiefs might rely on educated men to inform and advise the community, and communicate with the colonists, in customary matters, education and its consequences (prosperity, religious conversion) caused cleavages among the Tshidi. The Molemas had educated their daughters, but others had not. Still, Silas considered marriage *outside* the community worse than an unhappy marriage *within* it. He followed traditional thinking on this. Possibly he feared that "marrying out" might alienate him (and Modiri) further from Tshidi traditionalists, who resented his lucrative participation the "new economy...at once material and moral, social and symbolic, stylistic and sensuous", in which exchanges between "Europeans and Africans" were fashioning on this frontier of Empire.<sup>69</sup>

Modiri's expectations of a prospective wife were not unusual among the African educated classes: in his generation, gender relations were equalizing. Four years earlier, his fellow Lovedale scholar, Florence Makiwane, had married DDT Jabavu, son of Silas' Healdtown classmate, JT Jabavu. DDT had a BA (London University) and Teaching Diploma (Birmingham University). Believing that he required a more educated wife, both the Jabavu and Makiwane families sent Florence to Kingsmead College, Birmingham, for a year's study, before their 1916 wedding. Indeed, before the wedding, there were rumours that DDT would also have liked to marry an Englishwoman in 1913.<sup>70</sup>

Modiri never forgot that Silas' wealth supported his education, and underpinned their membership of the African petty bourgeoisie, interposed between the white ruling class and the impoverished black majority. This structural ambiguity was the founding layer of several others. The considerable vacillation in Modiri's attitudes towards those who did not share his race, education, economic standing, culture, and religion found expression in *The Bantu*.

Reading *The Bantu* as a depiction of these structural complexities places this account, historiographically, in the country of Shula Marks. In the 1980s, her work on consciousness and representation led South African historical writing beyond 1970s "political economy", which portrayed

<sup>67</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 16 May 1920: Modiri stressed the difficulty of finding a suitably educated wife. MPP A979 Ad1, 15 July 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf; apologised guardedly for this request. See also 10 Oct 1920, SMM to STM.

<sup>68</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 10 Oct 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>69</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 221.

<sup>70</sup> Higgs (1997: 54-55): Florence (1895-1950) returned to Kingsmead College after having her two elder children, to study music and was an accomplished musician. She became a Lovedale mistress and nonordained missionary.

individuals as products of class forces greater than themselves.<sup>71</sup> Her central text, *The Ambiguities of Dependence* (1986), proposed new understandings of the shaping powers of class and race and their surface expressions in texts, public orations and occasions. Conserving earlier writers' interests in socio-economic structure and the state's ideological and material domination, she analysed their intricate representation in politics and culture.<sup>72</sup> These poststructuralist concerns for the signifying practices of text, tableau and discourse, gave South African historiography new direction, which many subsequent writers have followed and developed.

For Marks, ambiguity charges and textures the lives of individuals, class structures, institutions like the missions and the South African state. The term itself is ambiguous:

...this phrase could cover so much of human behaviour, especially the behaviour of politicians, and [I] feared it may have outgrown its utility. Nevertheless, once I began writing I found that the term *ambiguity* did cover — with some ambiguity and poetic licence — the terrain I wish to explore in relation to the nature of the state, nationalism, class, and class consciousness in early twentieth-century Natal.<sup>73</sup>

Marks's term indicates both "ambiguity of meaning and structural ambiguity", two interrelated senses: "[a]mbiguity in meaning...arises not infrequently from structural contradiction or structural ambiguity". She examined some of the term's antecedents and analogues, in that it has "some of the same utility for historians as for literary critics". Examining events' surface manifestations forces writers into "teasing out the meanings of the text". As in poetry so in history, ambiguity serves to alert the reader to the relationship between things.<sup>74</sup>

But pleasures of the historical text frustrate. As Marks argued, "our medium distorts our intentions by its linear imperatives", producing single, flat interpretations of its subjects. Envyng musicians' ability to convey multiplicity and simultaneity, she wrote, "[h]istorians should be able to write in chords". Yet, historical texts are serial, spatially and temporally restricted to representing events that may be contemporaneous and contradictory, which she attempts to offset by focusing on "texture", "fabric" and "complexity". In combining signification and structure, Marks' "ambiguity" is a powerful instrument, enabling her to detect in an individual life's episodes a variety and consistency representative of broader historical tendencies: "[a]mbiguity enables us to operate at several levels simultaneously".<sup>75</sup>

Metaphor and narrative, integrally constitutive textual elements are essential to historical analysis and representation. *The Ambiguities* uses the "mask" as extended metaphor to represent both sides of the "colonial misunderstanding".<sup>76</sup> In so doing, Marks subtly placed postcolonial studies on the South African historiographical agenda and situated *The Ambiguities* within the often hostile relationships and silences among colonisation's key antagonists: dominant white polity, subaltern African working classes and the African bourgeoisie. The intricacies of white hegemony and survivals of precolonial power structures created relationships of subjugation and symbiosis, which she terms "dependency":

[t]he working of the "colonial misunderstanding" means that the words and actions of individuals are both deliberately and accidentally ambiguous, as the colonized don the mask of deference before their conquerors, and conquerors assume the garb of authority before the subjugated.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Marks's work on the African elite extended Poulantzian and Laclauian notions that P Bonner applied to the African bourgeoisie in the landmark, "The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920". In Marks & Rathbone, 1982: 270-313.

<sup>72</sup> Of the political economists, Marks (1986: p.7 fn.14), mentioned Robert Davies, 1979. *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa, 1900-1960*. (Brighton: Harvester). Of the trend towards individualised materialist history, she selected B Willan, "Sol Plaatje, De Beers and an Old Tram Shed: Class Relations and Social Control in a South African town, 1918-1919", *JSAS*, 4, 2, (1978), pp.195-97.

<sup>73</sup> Marks, 1987: vi.

<sup>74</sup> Marks, 1987: vi, acknowledged William Empson's use of ambiguity (*Seven Types of Ambiguity*. [London, 1930]).

<sup>75</sup> Marks, 1987: viii & vii.

<sup>76</sup> Marks, 1987: 1.

<sup>77</sup> Marks, 1987: 1.

The “mask” communicated the performative element of colonial relations. Both “sides” had their entrances, exits, costumes, scripts and *ad libbing*. As *The Ambiguities*’ three-character, five-chapter structure unfolded, the “mask” metaphor tracked and exposed the roles of supremacy and subordination each side assumed. Simultaneously, the mask hinted at these relationships’ complexity: domination and acquiescence appeared to be public behaviours but concealed the psychological transformation that colonisation wrought upon those enmeshed in it. Marks’s polysemic historical narrative stripped bare (in order to reexamine) the past, and notions about the past, in new, creative ways.

King Solomon of the Zulu represented for Marks some of the ambiguities of race; John Dube, first SANNC president, the ambiguities of nationalism; and AWG Champion, sometime worker leader, the ambiguities of class. As landowners, all three men shared an interest in maintaining workers’ productivity on the land. Marks showed the degree to which Dube and Champion, and two further actors, the South African state and wealthier Natal white farmers, all sought to play the king clandestinely for their own interests. These contradictory relations contributed to the state’s emerging segregation policies in the 1920s and 1930s.

Her study of these centripetal figures in twentieth-century Zululand illustrated her expansive conception of “history”. South African historiography has almost exclusively made temporal change its dominant hermeneutic. In juxtaposing these figures within the culture and political economy of this space, she reconceived the spatial dimension, modifying the “temporal master-narrative” of historical discourse. In *The Ambiguities*, “Zulu-land” became a space in which competing political and cultural agendas unfolded simultaneously.<sup>78</sup>

Her work also revived a mature genre of the Self, biography — long consecrated to liberal and conservative historians — and granted social history new ways of comprehending the human subject.<sup>79</sup> Previously, radical historians had avoided biography, to an extent conceiving the human subject, and culture itself, as an insufficiently complex representation of the deeper-level or “base” structures of class and race. Likewise, “nationalist” writers like Walshe and Odendaal, made human subjects embody the teleology of an anterior or pre-existing “nation”.<sup>80</sup> Constructions of the imagined interrelations between the “I” and ideology, remained in all cases, underproblematised.

In Marks’ country, biography retained the insights of Marxist Structuralism, plus a focus on individual regimes of self-explication, interpreted through the ways in which subjects textualise their lives. *The Ambiguities* has been one of the primary inspirations of historians’ growing reliance on autobiographical testimony, often obtained via interviewing, and interdisciplinary work, particularly anthropology, human geography and cultural studies.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Lone Motswana in Glasgow:**

From April 1914 to January 1921, Glasgow, or rather the region around Glasgow University, became the space in which Modiri imagined Africa, past and present. His education in Glasgow made him unusual among most black South Africans of his age. The ranks of the black petty bourgeoisie were small in the 1910s and 1920s. Even in Johannesburg, Bonner set their numbers at a “highly marginalized” 1,001; how much smaller then in tiny Mafikeng.<sup>82</sup> Though not the first black South

<sup>78</sup> E Soja, “History: geography: modernity”. In S During (ed), 1993. *Cultural Studies Reader*. (London, Routledge), pp.136-37.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, Lewsen’s (1982) monumental biography by John X. Merriman and Couzen’s *Dhomo*, (1985).

<sup>80</sup> Walshe, 1970. A Odendaal, 1984.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Isabel Hofmeyr, “Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902-1924”. In Marks & Trapido, 1987; pp.95-123; P Bonner & L Segal, 1998. *Soweto: a History*. (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman), and Riva Krut, “The Making of a South African Jewish community in Johannesburg”. In Belinda Bozzoli, 1987. *Class, Community & Conflict: South African Perspectives*. (JHB: Ravan), pp.135-59.

<sup>82</sup> Bonner, 1982: 287.

African to study in Scotland, he was the lone Motswana in Glasgow between 1914 and 1921. JS Moroka's presence nearby in Edinburgh was some consolation. The two men felt a special bond, "James Moroka of Thaba 'Nchu is [also] still on holiday...[and] we hear our language Tswana when we meet as we are the only two Batswana here in Scotland", Modiri told Silas.<sup>83</sup> Being black in Scotland isolated both young men and indicated the significance of racial separation, even in Glasgow.<sup>84</sup> At least four white South Africans registered at Glasgow University in these years, including one from Fort Beaufort, but Modiri apparently had no contact with them.<sup>85</sup> Moroka recalled years later that, as he was being capped at Edinburgh University, he heard vociferous stamping and cheering in the auditorium. Looking down, he beheld his friend, Modiri, "shouting himself hoarse ....When we afterwards met outside we had never been so happy to see each other". Knowing how depressing such family-less occasions abroad were, Molema had secretly come to applaud Moroka.<sup>86</sup>

Modiri's loneliness as a foreign student had spatial dimensions incorporating his absence from Mafikeng and presence in Glasgow. The war kept him in Glasgow, accentuating his sense of difference there and depleting the scant finances Silas sent. Silas was one of Mafikeng's wealthier citizens, but drought and three legal cases about Tshidi affairs had taken "all the money and assets" of the Tshidi, as did the younger Molemas' education. These constraints left him dependent on the kindness of once-genteel Glasgow landladies, and late with his university fees.<sup>87</sup> To his constant mortification, he had frequently to write forthright letters as Silas procrastinated.

In spite of these frustrations, his reasons for writing an "Ethnographical and Historical" work were, arguably, as interesting as the book itself.<sup>88</sup> This work represented the structural and philosophical ambiguities in which he found his life cast. Ambiguous notions of class, education, race, leadership, and colonisation characterised many aspects of his personal and intellectual life. While "exiled" from home and country, first by war and then by the impossibility of obtaining a return passage, his letters verified his struggle to preserve the Tswana and, more broadly African, composition of his identity. That struggle seems largely to have been internal, though his ARA paper indicated that he shared his intellectual concerns with other black students. *The Bantu* was a more extended, formal attempt to explain himself and African societies to the world of strangers in which he was living.

His very personal introduction suggested that he was deploying a hybrid genre for which the term "autoethnography" has since been coined. This chapter examines the circumstances that led Modiri to write *The Bantu*, the publication of which forms the climactic point of this biographical study. Until his departure for Britain, his family history, his education and experiences of early twentieth-century South Africa had prepared him, to an extent, to analyse the country's problematic past. Chapter Four examines the ways in which his years in Glasgow enabled him to write.

<sup>83</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Aug 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. *TsalaBT*, 22 Nov 1913, "Mr James Moroka": "...sailed for England a couple of years back after studying some years in Lovedale. He passed the Matriculation Examination in October and...entered the Medical College in Edinburgh as a medical student. It would have taken him five years to matriculate in this country, which shows that there is something wrong with native education out here".

<sup>84</sup> A979 Ad3 15 Apr 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf: after Moroka's departure, he told Harriet, "I am lonely in this place, especially since my friend Dr Moroka left for home. I have no opportunity of hearing or talking Secoana now."

<sup>85</sup> GUA, R8/5/35/6, No. 1704, Malan, Gabriel Hercules, MA (Cape) (27) of Worcester, Cape, read Philosophy in Molema's first year (1914-15). R8/5/38/2, No.408, Humphrey John Hollis (22), Ft Beaufort and R8/5/38/3, No.232, Adolph Samuel van Coller, Cape Town (23) did 5<sup>th</sup> Year Medicine (1917-18), while Modiri did 4<sup>th</sup> Year. R8/5/39/3, No.223 George Jackson Muller of Lady Grey, Aliwal North, (22) did 2nd Year. All lived in the same area as Molema did, around the university.

<sup>86</sup> Olivier & Kriel (1978: 331-32): Dr James Sebebujiwasegokgobontharile Moroka (b.1893, Thaba 'Nchu) was Seleka Chief Moroka II's great-grandson. A Methodist, he joined Edinburgh University (1913) on a church scholarship, graduating in 1918. See *Edinburgh University Calendar, 1919-1920*. (Edinburgh: James Thin).

<sup>87</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: Modiri begged Silas to let him return and assist with these legal cases (Cf. *supra*, pp.150ff, on the cases). *Standard Bank Archives*, Inspection Reports, Maf, 24 Nov 1903: at the South African War's close, Silas was one of Mafikeng's wealthier citizens. His major business was cattle farming; he and Plaatje owned *Koranta*, (1901-c.1908). On the younger Molemas' education, see copious entries in Lovedale's surviving records RU, LIAMR, MS 16 292, ROC, 1900-1904. MPP A979 Ab2, Joshua Molema Accounts, 27 March 1896: Receipt 13/229, Fees Dept, Lovedale, showed the brothers shared their children's education costs See *infra*, p.215, for part of the costs.

<sup>88</sup> Molema, 1920: vii-viii.

The chapter argues that as literary and cultural “events”, *The Bantu* and the ARA dance may, like King Solomon’s funeral in *The Ambiguities*, be understood as performances of underlying structural ambiguities.<sup>89</sup> To analyse both events’ genesis, this chapter explores the ambiguities of Molema’s Glasgow years. He seemed to begin writing in order to explore aspects of his Tshidi and Methodist history, against the trajectory of British colonial imperatives, which stressed the values of diligence, property and education.<sup>90</sup> Willan stated, “...for most Africans educated in the Cape Colony in the second half of the nineteenth century, the concepts of ‘civilisation’ and British imperial supremacy were inseparable”. Colonisers and colonised made the colonial concept of “civilisation”, rather than “race” or “colour”, the instrument for incorporating Africans into Cape society. Although he critiqued the concept in *The Bantu*, he buried any doubts about the merits of “civilisation” or about the Empire, because of a greater threat to all Africans: the new South African state’s constitution. It excluded all Africans on grounds of race, even jeopardising the privileges of “civilised” Cape Africans. To him and many of his class, “loyalty to the Empire was vital, particularly at times when local colonial interests were pressing for more repressive ‘native policies’”.<sup>91</sup>

While imperial ideology gave a framework to Cape society, home, school and church had been the most intimate influences on Modiri’s thinking, prior to his arrival in Glasgow. The Molema home, and their Mafikeng milieu were both deeply religious and highly politicised. School and university also provided opportunities to debate current affairs. However, the articulation of his own views began at Lovedale, continued briefly in Kimberley, and found mature expression in Glasgow.

Importantly, Lovedale had strict rules about adopting British, middle-class behaviour patterns; these entailed almost completely marginalising one’s African heritage.<sup>92</sup> The Free Church of Scotland school had introduced him to a metaphoric Scotland long before he registered for classes at Glasgow University and the Western Infirmary.<sup>93</sup>

**Modiri in the Empire’s Second City — “*Ere u fitlhêla pína e binoá u e bîne*”  
“When you find people dancing a waltz, dance it”:<sup>94</sup>**

A long-held desire to become a medical doctor generated enough energy to propel this heir to six Tshidi chiefly generations and to Methodist and Scottish missionary teachings, from the empire’s outskirts to its “Second City” in 1914. His father’s financial and emotional support set the process in motion, but did not always sustain it.<sup>95</sup>

He began his epic journey in early March 1914, wiring Silas first from Kimberley to thank him for the then princely £40, and five days later from Cape Town to say he was boarding the Armadale Castle: “The ship is departing at 5pm today. I greet you, Father”.<sup>96</sup> He did not report his Kimberley meeting with one of South Africa’s most eminent modern leaders: Pixley ka Isaka Seme, key player in the SANNC’s formation. Isaiah M’belle, his Kimberley host, informed Silas of this meeting once he had seen Modiri safely on “Thursday’s” Cape Town train. Both Seme and M’belle advised Modiri to “decide on the University after consulting Don Jabavu and Mr S[e]beta [who] was studying medicine at

<sup>89</sup> Marks, 1920: 44-45.

<sup>90</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: 218-73.

<sup>91</sup> Willan, 1982: 241-42.

<sup>92</sup> SGE 2/119, 17-28 Aug & 14-22 Sep 1903; SGE 2/248, 16 Aug-4 Sep 1909. *TsalaBC*, 23 Dec 1911: “Secoana”.

<sup>93</sup> An agent of both Scottish and medical influence at Lovedale had been Dr Neil Macvicar of Lovedale’s Victoria Hospital. See *supra*, pp.180, 187, 190-94.

<sup>94</sup> Plaatje (1916b: 32, Proverb 120): in modern orthography, the personal pronoun “u” is “o” and “binoá” is “bínwa”.

<sup>95</sup> MPP A979 Ac1, 18 Oct 1905, SJM, Jacksonville, Florida, to STM, Maf.

<sup>96</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 2 March 1914, SMM, Kmb, to STM, Maf, and 7 March 1914, SMM, Cape Town, to STM, Maf, both are cables. The first, dated 2 March, 3:10pm, read, “*Sekepe se tsamaea gompieno ka 5pm. Dumelang thata. Rra*”.

Edinburgh”.<sup>97</sup> Worldly-wise M’belle also took out a Southern Life policy to insure Modiri against while overseas. “World War” was probably not the first liability they considered when signing up for the policy. The annual premium was £8, M’belle reminded Silas.<sup>98</sup>

The Molemas visited Cape Town frequently from 1911 to 1914: Modiri on school- and choir-tours, and Silas on vital political matters. Each time, they stayed in Ndabeni, Cape Town’s oldest “location”, with James Molebaloa, a Morolong, longing for home, as his letters to Silas revealed. After Modiri’s brief stay in March, before sailing to England, Molebaloa gained a new curiosity about the past. He proposed a written History of the Barolong, setting out 14 thematic points. His angle was interesting: “[t]he word History, which the writer got from the enlightened chiefs of a clan, sometimes becomes your secret and the chiefs’, I did not tell anyone that it is taken from those chiefs”.<sup>99</sup> He proposed subtopics in Rolong history that Modiri would cover briefly in *The Bantu*, returning to them more comprehensively in his extended “History of the Barolong”, later incorporated into his biography, *Montshiwa*, just before his death.<sup>100</sup> Here, he delved into the secret chiefly histories of the Rolong, using Molebaloa’s term, *sephiri* (secret), to unveil some covert stories about the birth of the chiefly line — the stories of *seantlho*.

The long journey made Modiri imagine the links between Glasgow and Mafikeng. Glasgow was an alien space, yet his long-term vision united it purposefully to the future transformation of Mafikeng’s health care needs, and Molema ancestral imperatives.<sup>101</sup> He landed at Southampton, took the train to London, and found lodgings nearby, at 48 York Road, Waterloo Station.<sup>102</sup>

Almost at once, he began looking up the church contacts he had been given, such as old Mafikeng connection, Rev. Owen Watkins, former Chairman of Methodist Transvaal District, who had helped to consolidate Mafikeng’s Methodist community and its leadership after Chief Molema’s decease:

[He] welcomed me most cordially. He told me of the old times at Mafeking, how the Boers used to trouble the Barologs, and how he wrote the dispatches to the Imperial government, which brought General Warren and 1000 soldiers to Mafeking....He says he may have forgotten Mafeking, but he has not forgotten you — his friends “I love the Molemas” he says.<sup>103</sup>

Such reminders accentuated his loneliness. To overcome it, he often wrote home in Setswana.<sup>104</sup> However, he pursued the Molema plan and in two months rented a room at one of many boarding houses around Glasgow University. 8 Alexandra Street, Partick stands a block behind the main Byres

<sup>97</sup> Molema, *Johns Interview, 1964*: in his interview with Johns, Dr Molema later remembered Seme as “...in 1911, ’12 was just back from Oxford, he was bristling with ideas...”. Don Jabavu was DDT, son of JT Jabavu. See *supra*, p.209 for his London studies. On Sebeta, see *supra*, pp.203 fn.36, & *infra*, pp.217-18 fns.113 & 117.

<sup>98</sup> MPP A979 Aa2.51, 8 March 1914, I M’belle, Kmb, to STM, Maf. Cf. *supra*, p.199 fn.2 & *infra*, p.223. Walshe (1970 & 1987): Seme drew on his own academic experience abroad, having studied at Columbia University, New York, and Oxford.

<sup>99</sup> JM Molebaloa, Cape Town, to STM, Maf. “*Polelo ena History e mo Koadi o e bonyeng mo Magosing a tlhalefileng a morafe, eale enne sephiri sagaoe le Magosi ao...*”.

<sup>100</sup> See Molema, “Barolong”, and Molema, 1966.

<sup>101</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 March 1914, copy of typed letter from STM to SMS on board the Armadale Castle (Union Castle Co, Ludgate Circus, London), bore a draft of money to the Bank of England for Modiri. MPP A979 Ac1, 18 Oct 1905, SJM, Jacksonville, Florida to STM, Maf.

<sup>102</sup> Obviously, the last ninety years have greatly transformed York Road. One major building, the George III Foundling Hospital, remains from 1914. Molema may have seen the site of the dominant County Hall, begun 1911, but held up by World War I, and completed 1933. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County\\_Hall,\\_London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_Hall,_London). The building of Waterloo International Station (for the Eurostar) and the London Eye have driven recent transformations. One or two buildings bear date-marks, like “1906” (on Leake St, linking York Rd to Waterloo Station), indicating that they would have been there during Molema’s visit. Some of this observation was made during my 2003 and 2005 visits to London (Jane Starfield).

<sup>103</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 March 1914, SMM, London to STM, Maf. Potter (Nd: 52): Watkins assumed his post in Pretoria after the 1<sup>st</sup> Anglo-Boer War. Realising that the Pretoria Convention (1881) had undermined the Tshidi, he wished to help them. On his first visit (1882), Watkins called late Chief Molema’s evangelisation of the Molopo an inspiration. A missionary imperialist, Watkins wished to bring the Tshidi into the British Empire to protect them from the Boer aggressors on their eastern border. Cf. Watkins’ visit to Mafikeng, *supra*, pp.106, 121.

<sup>104</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, contrasting letters 1908-1914, Eastern Cape to Mafikeng to 1914-1921, Glasgow, to Mafikeng; the former are largely in English, while half of the latter are in Tswana.

Road, giving him a 10-15 minute walk uphill to Campus. Here, far more than at Lovedale, every penny for lodgings, courses and books was counted. Unlike most students, away on summer break, Modiri at once joined the small 1914 summer intake, for first year Botany and Physics.<sup>105</sup>

In 1914, Glasgow was a city such as Modiri had never seen. His Lovedale mentors could hardly have prepared him for its distinctive buildings, tumult, and lowering grey skies. Around the High Street, serried chimney pots topped unending rows of grey working-class houses, three stories high, housing levels of poverty Modiri had not known existed. In the Saltmarket and the Trongate's many tenements and wynds, washing hung over open water-supplies and soil pipes. On the broader main streets (George, Argyle and the Gallowgate), trams, carriages and open carts battled human crowds for space. Shops great and small advertised their wares; smart drapers, modest bakers, scrap-metal merchants and rag shops. "Good value all round," trumpeted a bold sign in the working-class Gorbals. Early April, technically northern "spring", still chilled the young Mafikeng man. Mothers swathed children in thick woollen shawls for warmth; boys and men donned cloth caps in all seasons. Around Gilmore Hill and the University's nobler neo-Gothic architecture was a cityscape of lace curtains, screening genteel boarding houses and family homes. Square-fronted Georgian buildings had higher elevations, broad Regency sweeps and fine-wrought iron railings: the air could be less-polluted, and parks actually boasted green grass.<sup>106</sup>

From the early 1870s, the magnificent university added weight to western Glasgow, being deliberately built in the Gothic Revival and Scottish baronial styles to echo the old campus in the city centre. The large spire of Gilmorehill's oldest structure, the Main Building (1866-86) is visible for miles around. Modiri would have walked towards its western aspect from Partick, and up a steep rise towards its eastern aspect from Prince's Street. Behind this immense building's south aspect are two quadrangles, separated by cloisters or vaulted undercrofts, which give the building a medieval, historic character.<sup>107</sup>

Not for nothing was Glasgow tagged the "Second City of Empire". Eighteenth-century engineers had dredged, embanked and deepened the Clyde, creating a mercantile waterway. The Port of Glasgow then welcomed ships from the colonies, importing the products of free and unfree labour. Glasgow merchants reaped the profits of American tobacco, rum, and raw cotton, sold in Europe's expanding markets. Glasgow-preserved food fed Italy, Spain, Russia, and France, and the "auld enemy", England. Back to the colonies went processed linen and cotton, gloves, shoes and hats.<sup>108</sup>

In Glasgow, less noble practices made capitalism flourish: merchants thrived on slave labour abroad, and the cheap labour of women, children and impoverished Highland and Irish migrants, at home. The West Highland Handloom Weavers Commission on the effects of industrialisation and deskilling recorded: "I did not believe until I visited the wynds of Glasgow that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery and disease existed in one spot in any civilised country".<sup>109</sup>

The city Modiri's missionary forebears had known had expanded massively in the late 1800s, as Scotland's economic base transmuted from agrarian to industrial. Glasgow's growing proletariat, mainly refugees from the Highland Clearances and Ireland, entered the burgeoning textile, engineering,

<sup>105</sup> *GUA Matriculation Albums*, R8/5/39/6, Extra vol. No.23: "23" referred to Modiri's place in the registration process, showing he began early. The slimness of this volume of records confirms the small summer intake. His address was 8 Alexandra St, now 8 Elie St; I measured the time it might take to reach campus on 11 Aug 2005.

<sup>106</sup> Frank Worsdall, 1989. *The Glasgow Tenement: A Way of Life*. (Edinburgh: Chambers). Cf. *infra*, pp.304-05.

<sup>107</sup> Hansell et al, (2005: 24-27): the architects were GG Scott and his son, John Oldrid Scott (the tower). The Prince and Princess of Wales (Edward and Alexandra) laid the foundation stone in 1868.

<sup>108</sup> Worsdall (1989: 3): the Clyde was deepened threefold, from 2ft (0.75m) to 6ft 10in (1.75) in 1774. Worsdall added, "[t]hose strutting grandees, the Glasgow Tobacco Lords, in their scarlet cloaks, powdered wigs and tricorne hats, were symptomatic of the radical changes of thought and fashion which were sweeping the city."

<sup>109</sup> Worsdall, 1989: 4-5. Smout, 1986. *A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950*. (London: Fontana), p.40, cited the Handloom Commission, from Ian Adams, 1978. *The Making of Urban Scotland*. (London), p.155.

and shipping industries, and crowded into the rundown city centre.<sup>110</sup> Cholera and other fevers swept up the Clyde (an “open sewer”), through squalid city closes and tenements, dubbed “Acts of God” by medical authorities.<sup>111</sup> Even in 1920, Modiri’s final year, a smallpox epidemic raged for three months. Nineteenth-century social engineering transformed Glasgow poor’s living conditions. Numerous Royal Commissions induced the city fathers to abolish outdated laws, improve sanitation, cleanse the Clyde, seek new water sources, and divert public funds into maintaining buildings. For those still ill, voluntary hospitals (part of the university system) had a high reputation for controlling infectious disease.<sup>112</sup>

Many South African students, black and white, entered Scottish universities, then renowned havens for foreigners. Black students were one of several foreign student groupings forbidden from study in their own countries, but welcome at Scottish Universities. When Moroka graduated from Edinburgh (1918), 14 of 65 (23%) co-graduates were South African, with 23 Irish students (35%), outnumbering them. Moroka was one of few black graduates in 1918, and the only Motswana.<sup>113</sup>

Dow maintained that “Scottish medical schools have for more than two centuries played a role in global health care out of all proportion to the size of our country or its population”.<sup>114</sup> From the eighteenth century, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities had an international reputation, which peaked at World War II’s outbreak. Nineteenth-century Scottish medicine’s growth and international popularity both signified the city’s industrial expansion and facilitated it. Glasgow’s renown reflected worldwide industrialisation and urbanisation, which strained “traditional” curative techniques, public health care resources and medical expertise. Thus, Scotland produced more doctors in the nineteenth century and its medical practice became highly professional. Many foreign doctors sought the stamp of the Faculties of Physicians and Surgeons, whose standards were known worldwide, on their degrees.<sup>115</sup>

Scottish universities held other attractions: they required no Latin, nor membership of established church, middle class or dominant race. At the Western Infirmary beside the University, Modiri obtained the practical experience Macvicar had begun.<sup>116</sup> Advantageously, Glasgow was a “relatively cheap, non-residential university”. As well as university medical degrees, the Medical Faculties offered

<sup>110</sup> G Gordon (ed), 1985. *Perspectives of the Scottish City*. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP), pp.V, 3-8: from 1901 to 1951, 38-41% of the population inhabited Scotland’s major cities (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee). O Checkland & M Lamb, 1982. *Health Care as Social History: The Glasgow Case*. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP), pp.3-13.

<sup>111</sup> Checkland & Lamb, 1982: 4-5. AK Chalmers, 1930. *The Health of Glasgow, 1818-1925: An Outline*. (Glasgow: The Corporation), *passim*: cited housing shortages, overbuilding on sites, inadequate, polluted water supplies, poor sewage disposal, and badly-constructed streets as causes of urban decay. See Worsdall (1989: 10, 98-99, 119-21) on class-differentiation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Glasgow tenement housing. Cf. *infra*, p.310.

<sup>112</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 June 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, on the smallpox. See Molema’s classmate at Glasgow University, AJ Cronin’s *Shannon’s Way*. (London: Gollancz, 1948), pp.172-77, for descriptions of Central Glasgow’s appalling medical care. For Cronin, see *infra*, fn.116 & pp.217, 221, 224-25, 304, 310.

<sup>113</sup> Shapiro, 1987: 236. *Edinburgh University Calendar*, 1919: foreign students came mostly from India (5; 7.6%), England (4; 6.1%), Australia (3; 4.6%), Trinidad (2; 3%) & New Zealand (2; 3%). UNISA, Karis & Carter Microfilm, 2:M130:91/2: SM Molema, 1952. “Masterpieces in Bronze, Dr James Moroka: President of Congress”. In *Drum Magazine*, (April), p.7: MT Sebata of Basutoland was one of Moroka’s Edinburgh class. Cf. *supra*, pp.203 fn.36 & *infra*, fn.117.

<sup>114</sup> Dow (1988: xii): noted Livingstone and Macvicar’s impact on local and foreign students.

<sup>115</sup> K Collins, 1988. *Go and Learn: the International Story of Jews and Medicine in Scotland*. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP), p.15: enlightened Edinburgh University accepted Catholics, Quakers and other dissenters. Also TC Smout, 1969. *History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*. (London, Fontana/Collins), p.215. Chalmers (1930: Table XXIV): “Glasgow Population, Births and Deaths”, the 1912 population was 785,600. (Also Chalmers, 1930: 354 and Gordon, 1985: 4). By 1901, Glasgow had 92% more doctors than in 1801: 41 to 558 (1901). Yet, as the population had expanded almost tenfold, from 77,000 (1801) to 740,000 (1901) (31.5%), 1901’s doctor-patient ratio was lower than in 1801: one doctor per 1,300 patients (1801) compared to 1 to 1,900 (1901). Margaret Lamb, “The Medical Profession”. In Checkland & Lamb (1982: 18): by 1901: just 20% of Glasgow’s doctors belonged to the Faculty, a selection intended to increase the quality of the profession. The Faculties (later Royal Colleges) also channelled doctors into different levels of practice and specialisation.

<sup>116</sup> Collins (1988: 18, 23, 28): English Universities imposed such restrictions. Also MPP A979 Ad1, 9 Jan 1912, SMM, Lovedale, to STM, Maf. AJ Cronin’s autobiography, *Adventures in Two Worlds*. (Leicester: Ulverscroft, 1952), p.9: the Western Infirmary stands to the University’s south. It has since been mostly rebuilt; its rear aspect resembles its World War I appearance, according to the University Archivist. See *Alistair Tough Interview, 1991*.

diplomas to practice medicine: the Double or Triple Qualification(s).<sup>117</sup> David Livingstone, Molema's hero, was thus qualified, as a "Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons".<sup>118</sup>

While researchers like Allen Thomson, Professor of Anatomy, had pioneered the use of the microscope in human tissue and cell development, the Western Infirmary Professor of Surgery, Joseph Lister's work (1860-1869) on antiseptics raised surgery's survival rate and reputation massively. Lister's successor, William Macewen (1848-1924), a noted purist, taught Modiri and future novelist, AJ Cronin; like Lister, Macewen developed Glasgow's training hospitals.<sup>119</sup>

Enhanced success rates in operations gave surgeons like Lister and Macewen godlike eminence, and made students like Modiri and Cronin worship and emulate them. In the late nineteenth century, the Crown recognised the profession's rise from humble associations: Macewen was knighted, and Baron Lister became "the first medical peer".<sup>120</sup> Macewen's eminence as "the finest brain surgeon in Europe" was justly deserved; though students might quake at the knees or laugh at his "great man" air, he pioneered modern surgical experimentation and continued Lister's antiseptic methods.<sup>121</sup> He and his followers began lowering the alarming mortality rate and showed the public that they could survive surgery.<sup>122</sup> That Macewen, a lower-class lad of humble family, won surgical and social distinction through his own talents was a tribute to Glasgow society's fluidity. This city also gave opportunities to young people from colonies in which they were wretched and despised, among these, Tiyo Soga, the Abdurahmans and Modiri Molema and his friends in the ARA.

The expansion of medical tuition and treatment mirrored the city's own growth. In 1874, the Western Infirmary, where Macewen taught, had followed Glasgow University and middle-class citizens from the city's teeming working-class centre to Gilmore Hill.<sup>123</sup> By the time Modiri rented his second lodging at 311 West Prince's Street, class segregation was dividing Glasgow. This street's terraces were larger and more affluent than Partick's Alexandra Street's, but were still nowhere as grand as nearby Park Terrace's.<sup>124</sup> In West Prince's Street and Partick, war widows facing hard times ran most lodgings.<sup>125</sup> He first stayed at 8 Alexandra Street with a "good Christian family". Through Silas' Mafikeng contact, Rev. Applebee, Modiri met the local Wesleyan Minister and assured his worried mother that "the

<sup>117</sup> Collins, 1988: 20. See Lamb (1982: 17-18, 33-36) on Medical Colleges and Faculties and Rona Gaffney, "Women as Doctors and Nurses". Checkland & Lamb, 1982: 135. Dr Sebeta's qualifications indicate that he had obtained either the Double or Triple Qualification of Edinburgh's School of Medicine of the Royal Colleges.

<sup>118</sup> David Livingstone, 1859. *Travels and Researches in South Africa*. (Philadelphia: JW Bradley), p.16. (American edition of *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. (London, 1857).

<sup>119</sup> Hansell & al (2005: 15, 21): eminent Glasgow scientists include William Thomson, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907), Natural Philosophy Professor (1846-99) and pioneer of the Kelvin Scale of temperature and the second law of thermodynamics. Brothers William (1718-83) and John Hunter (1728-93), anatomists and surgeons, donated specimen collections to the university; these are now in the Hunterian Museum, built after Molema's time. Checkland & Lamb (1982: 74-80): surgical cases outstripped medical by 1900. Glasgow's figures for 1800 were 314 to 489, respectively. In 1860, surgical cases took the lead: 2,472 to 1,959. By 1900, surgical cases led medical 2 to 1, suggesting improvements in surgical technology.

<sup>120</sup> David Hamilton & Margaret Lamb, "Surgeons and Surgery". In Checkland & Lamb, 1982: 74.

<sup>121</sup> Lamb (1982: 40): Glasgow University graduated (1869), Macewen became Glasgow University's Regius Professor of Surgery (1892); he photographed many surgical procedures meticulously. For his extensive collection see [www.historymedicalphotography.co.uk](http://www.historymedicalphotography.co.uk). Cronin (1952: 13-14) described one operation, which Molema possibly witnessed.

<sup>122</sup> Gaffney (1982: 144) cited the *Glasgow Herald*, 2 Jan 1891: Macewen revolutionised the training of nurses, believing them responsible for theatre assistance and post-operative survival.

<sup>123</sup> Lamb, 1982: 35. Chalmers (1935: 44): the 1911 Housing Report selected city centre districts, the Gorbals, Broomielaw and Cowcaddens, where the death rate exceeded the city's average, for demolition and reconstruction. Hansell et al, (2005: 15): Anatomy professor, Allen Thomson strongly backed the university's move to Gilmorehill.

<sup>124</sup> *Glasgow University Calendar*, 1914-1915, p.35. Worsdall, 1982: 32. See *supra*, pp.215-16, Map of Glasgow.

<sup>125</sup> Gordon, 1985: 260. Also *Alistair Tough Interview*, 1991. Worsdall (1989: 121): although "the Victorian age staged a last show of effrontery and exuberance" in west Partick, the University's environs were shabbier than in their nineteenth-century heyday. On the Clyde's north bank, Partick was mostly indigent, as depicted by labour leader, Keir Hardie's autobiographer, John Cockburn (*The Hungry heart: a romantic biography of James Keir Hardie*. [London: Jarrolds, 1956], pp.23-240).

Wesleyan Church is my home”.<sup>126</sup> Yet, his exposure to Presbyterianism, and tendency to vary Sunday attendance, may have led him to any of several denominations in Gilmore Hill and environs.<sup>127</sup>

Black students must have been particularly conspicuous in predominantly white Glasgow. Even in jest, each Final Year Dinner’s organising committee could not avoid mentioning black students’ race. In the Final Year Medical Dinner programme, the epigraph beside Modiri’s name read:<sup>128</sup>

I will take some savage woman,  
She shall rear my dusky race.

The notion of Modiri marrying a “savage” eloquently communicated the prejudice of the Dinner’s organisers, but completely misunderstood the Molemas’ Christian heritage. No other student’s epigraph — from Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall” — was as pointedly racial in 1919 when, class photographs suggest, Modiri was the sole black student.<sup>129</sup> This inscription, if well meant, marked his difference from his peers. His ARA friends, Drs Isaac Ladipo Oluwole and James Churchill Vaughan, from Lagos, had earned similar racial epithets on graduating in 1918. Oluwole was tagged “Darkness visible” (Milton), while Vaughan’s blackness was to be “inferred” from Robert Burns’s adapted words: “His hair, his nose, his mouth, his lugs/ Showed he was nane of Scotland’s dugs”. Perhaps Professor Stockman, who organised the 1918 Final Year Dinner did not realise that Milton was describing the “infernal serpent”, whose fall from grace landed him in this “darkness”.<sup>130</sup> Thus, Oluwole’s skin colour was likened to hell. Organisers used Burns’s “The Twa Dogs” for Vaughan, likening him to a foreign-born dog, “whalpit some place far abroad”. Their comrade Dr Francisco Ribeiro from Accra merited the Burns line usually directed at the Haggis, “Great chieftain of the puddin’ race”! Here, “chieftain” and “race” made ironic digs at his origins in “tribal” society.<sup>131</sup> Jews were also treated to racial jests: J Lipschitz (1918) and Louis Sive (1920) earned pointed references. Interestingly, white Afrikaner, SH Meiring (1918) was merely given a romantic tag, with no allusion to his race.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>126</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 24 Apr 1914, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. In A979 Ad1, 9 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to Mrs Molalanyane Molema [MM], Maf: his “English priest, Rev. Holdsworthy”, asked him each Sunday whether he had written to his mother. “When I dilly-dally he says ‘Go and write right now, otherwise I will do the writing’ speaking in jest”. Potter (Nd: 66): Applebee went to Mafikeng in October 1884, became Resident Missionary and attended meetings of the Land Commissions with Montshiwa, to try to settle the Tshidi-Boer land conflict.

<sup>127</sup> *Leloba Molema Interview, 1992*: asked which of these churches her uncle might have attended, Prof Molema responded: “[p]robably all of them”. A block from 10 Alexandra Street is Trinity Church (Church of Scotland). A block from 311 West Prince’s Street is the Episcopalian St Silas’ Church, a name that might have attracted him. Looking up from Prince’s St corner one can see the “Lansdowne Church of Scotland” on Great Western Road. Partick Trinity Church, Lawrence St, on the corner of Elie St, was erected in 1899, <http://www.particktrinity.org.uk/>. St Silas, Woodland Rd was founded in 1864. <http://www.episcopalglasgow.org.uk/woodlands/index.html>. The imposing Gothic revival Lansdowne Church dates from 1863-64. <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/story.php?id=TGSDf>.

<sup>128</sup> GUA, DC225/6, FYMDA, 1914-1919, “Modiri S. Molema”: Prof. Stockman was the Chair, and the dinners excluded women students. In 1914, there were 109 women medical students and 712 men; yet, there were 2,916 woman students registered at the university and ±700 fewer men, revealing medical studies’ gender profile.

<sup>129</sup> GUA, DC225/6, FYMDA, 1914-1919. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Locksley Hall”, l.168. In Lionel Trilling & Harold Bloom (eds), 1973. *Victorian Poetry*. (Oxford OUP), pp.427-32. The poem about disappointed love, ends with the speaker’s fantasy of escape to a colonial clime “yonder shining Orient” (ll.154ff) where these children are raised in a state of nature.

<sup>130</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I. Ed. Alistair Fowler. (London: Longman, 1979), pp.44-47, ll.34 & 63ff.

<sup>131</sup> Dinner organisers misquoted Burns twice. “Nose” should have read “size”, and “dugs” should have read “dogs”, given the poems theme. By using “dugs”, a woman’s breasts, they suggested his nationality: not born of Scotland. Further, in Scots dialect, “lugs” are ears, “nane” means none, or “not of”. <http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/>; Ribeiro’s tag was from line 2 of Burns’s “Ode to the Haggis” (c.1786), customarily addressed to the haggis on Burns Night, 25 January.

<sup>132</sup> GUA DC225/2, FYMDA 1910-1915, Chair: Prof. John Glaister: for Ribeiro; GUA DC225/5, FYMDA, 1918, Chair, Prof. Stockman: for Oluwole, Vaughan, Lipschitz and Meiring, and FYMDA, GUA DC225/7, Chair, Principal Sir Donald Macalister, KCB, for Sive. Lipschitz earned Shylock’s reproachful speech to Antonio, “For surffance is the badge of all our tribe” (William Shakespeare, 1914. *The Merchant of Venice*. [c.1599]. Ed. WJ Craig. [Oxford, Clarendon Press], p.224, Act I, iii, l.92). Sive merited Gilbert and Sullivan’s *HMS Pinafore*: “He might have been a Rooshian”, from “He Is an Englishman”, in *A Treasury of Gilbert & Sullivan*. Ed. Deems Taylor (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1941), p.41. Thankful that the candidate is not foreign, the Chorus sing “For he is an Englishman”; Sive, however, was from Russia.

Glasgow had another way of designating foreigners. Its ancient practices divided the student body into “nations”, three of which were Scottish (*Natio Transforthania*, *Natio Rothseiana* and *Natio Glottiana*), while *Natio Loudoniana* incorporated Scotland’s southern counties, England, Ireland and “foreigners”. Modiri and ARA members had “*Loudoniana*” marked on their registration forms.<sup>133</sup> It is hard to tell now how this division would have affected “coloured” students from the Empire. Four panels depicting the “four nations” in the Men’s Students Union would have reminded them daily of their difference.<sup>134</sup>

Racial difference was uppermost in Modiri’s mind: in his first letter home, he wrote that he was one of just seven “coloured” students in the whole University. He had mostly moved in African circles at home, although many Lovedale schoolmasters and mistresses were white. Not that he accused the white students and staff at Glasgow University of prejudice, he added. But he seemed uncomfortably aware of his difference. Gradually, he found friends sympathetic to his position. These students, similarly “exiled” from their families and homes like him, organised around the sensitive issue of their blackness. Feelings of singularity, loneliness, and their peers’ subtle antipathy, made them form an alliance.<sup>135</sup>

The date he joined the ARA and the date of its formation are not yet known. However, by December 1917, he was its President.<sup>136</sup> As Modiri told Silas, ARA members had their origins throughout the British colonies and many were formidably well-qualified in the medical field. That their regular discussions ranged over the history of the African diaspora, suggests that they recognised that medicine needed to understand the racial context of medicine and the societies in which they would practice it. There were three South African members — Molema, JE Williams and J Cedras, with Moroka an associate member. Four members and associates were British Guianan — JH Murrell, ST Whitford, Dr S Nurse and Dr GTG Boyce. F Ribeiro, JCS Vaughan, IL Oluwole, and E Awoonor were “British West African”, and J Miller, JA Rolston, JH Boyce, J Bruce, E Baptiste, B Harris, D Hatt and Dr GHTN Clarke were British West Indian. GWSE Cruickshank hailed from Dutch Guiana. Molema had his first opportunity to exchange views with non-South African Africans.<sup>137</sup>

On the face of it, what these young men shared was their experience of being black in the overwhelmingly white city of Glasgow. As far as can be established, all were well-educated and their father’s occupations suggest that they belonged to the emergent indigenous petty bourgeoisie in the colonies. The diverse qualifications that this group obtained affirmed why scholars from around the world chose Scottish Universities. Of the seven doctors whose records have been made available, four earned degrees from either Glasgow or Edinburgh Universities. Those who regularly registered at Glasgow University each year alongside Modiri were Oluwole and Vaughan from Lagos, Ribeiro from Accra and, from 1917, Murrell from British Guiana, who completed the Triple Qualification in 1923.<sup>138</sup> Moroka was the other degreed doctor. At least three obtained the Triple Qualification, becoming Licentiates of the three medical faculties in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Boyce and Clarke had acquired

<sup>133</sup> Michael Moss, Moira Rankin & Lesley Richmond, 2001. *The University of Glasgow: Who, Where & When: The History and Constitution of the University of Glasgow*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow), pp.9, 10: the “nations” derived from the divisions of Arts students after the university’s founding (1451). The Latin names were added in 1727. In World War I’s early years, registration forms were colour coded pink, yellow, purple and light blue, respectively.

<sup>134</sup> Hansell et al, 2005: 18.

<sup>135</sup> Cronin (1948: 14-15) indicated the cultural isolation students faced in caricaturing the Indian medical student, Dr Lal Chatterjee’s verbose English and “stupidity”. Also MPP A979 Ad1, 24 Apr 1914, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>136</sup> Molema, 1920: 322-35. The ARA’s Constitution, p.2, (attached to MPP A979 Ad3, 8 Oct 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM), stated that the Presidency was an honorary office of 6 months, but was like all other officials eligible for re-election. The President had considerable powers. See Appendix E, “Constitution of the ARA”.

<sup>137</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 8 Oct 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM.

<sup>138</sup> GUA Matriculation Albums, R8/5/35/6, No.9, 1914/5, M-Q, Isaac Ladipo Oluwole, 22, whose father was a Church of England Bishop, and R8/5/35/8, No.466, 1914/5, T-Y, James Churchill Vaughan, 21, whose father was a Lagos merchant, were both in second year medicine, while Modiri was in first. Both re-registered each year until 1917, though Vaughan’s 1916 record was not available. R8/5/36/4, No.579, 1915/6, M-R, Francisco Ribeiro, 29, son of a supervisor in His Majesty’s Customs, Accra, was in sixth year medicine in 1915. R8/5/38/2, No.724, 1917/8, H-M, James Henry Murrell, 37, son of a wheelwright, began first year medicine in 1917, later taking the LRCP, Edin, and LRCS, Edin, 1923, LRFPS, Glas, 1923 (University & St Mungo’s College, Glasgow). He gave no address in British Guiana [now Guyana] but resided at 51 Holmhead St, Townhead, Glasgow. (See *The Medical Register* [1925: 1443] and [1926: 893].)

Canadian medical degrees before coming to Scotland to take the Triple Qualification. Of their activities after qualification, only two have been traced as yet: Boyce became Assistant Government Medical Officer, Georgetown and Clarke served as District Medical Officer, Adelphi, Tobago, after being an Assistant Surgeon in Port of Spain, Trinidad.<sup>139</sup>

At ARA meetings, these men from the black diaspora gathered to discuss their shared African heritage. Molema's remarks to Silas, and presentation of his paper suggests that meetings provided a space in which people subject to discrimination and prejudice, whether obvious, subtle or humorous, might discuss race culturally and politically. His association with these men (many probably slave-descendants) allowed Modiri to broaden his understanding of race. Questions arise, though no proof exists, as to whether this forum inspired him to read Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* and later use it as the basis of his critique of race in *The Bantu*.<sup>140</sup>

Black nationalism as a form of resistance to colonialism was emerging throughout the black diaspora. African American politician and sociologist, Du Bois (1868-1963), leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), acted as organisational and theoretical fulcrum for nascent nationalist movements worldwide through the series of Pan-African Congresses between 1900 and 1945.<sup>141</sup> The SANNC, of which Modiri and Silas Molema were staunch members and office-bearers, was part of this nationalist emergence.<sup>142</sup>

His ARA address showed that exile gave him an interlude of defamiliarisation in which to reconsider black history, white historiography, and the implications of imperial power. Away from home and school, he both favoured loyalty to the empire and, in what was now his adult space (ironically on British soil), questioned this creed. The ARA's contribution to his thinking is not precisely known, but it provided a Pan Africanist forum in which race-based distinction and colonialism were contested. Living in Glasgow, debating nationalist issues with black men he regarded as his fellows, Modiri realised how much of his identity was tied to his history. He wrote *The Bantu* to break through this sense of strangeness in Glasgow, and to explain the several cultures in which he lived to a public readership: his friends in the ARA, and then British and South African readers.<sup>143</sup>

While *The Bantu* testified formally to his experience, letters home conveyed his ambiguous relationship with his father. Seething beneath his letters was an incremental anger, as Silas delayed eighteen months in sending money for rent, food and study. Both men were upset over these circumstances and apologised constantly: Silas for not sending and Modiri for asking *again*.<sup>144</sup> Glasgow prices outstripped

<sup>139</sup> *The Medical Register* (1925: 1662) and (1926: 121): George Thomas Boyce, of Georgetown, Guyana, an MB of Queen's University, Canada, Licentiate of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons (LRCP and LRCS), Edinburgh (1918), and of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, (LRFPS), Glasgow (1918), first registered as a doctor on 23 Oct 1918. *The Medical Register* (1925: 1674): George Hilton Theo Napoleon Clarke, from Belmont, Trinidad, studied in Scotland between taking 2 degrees at Queen's University: the MB (1915) and the DD (1919). *The Medical Register* (1925: 1662, 1674) and (1926: 121).

<sup>140</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 Oct 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Cf. *supra*, p.209-10. See *infra*, pp.260, 264, 266, 312-13, 316, 331, 340, 342, 344-45.

<sup>141</sup> JD Fage, 1988. *History of Africa*. (London: Hutchison), p.475. ML Conniff & TJ Davis, 1994. *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora*. (New York: St. Martin's Press), pp.240, 294-96. Odendaal, 1984: 86-89. Willan, 1984: 229-30.

<sup>142</sup> Molema (1920: 334) cited Du Bois, 1905: 262. For discussion of this quotation, see *infra*, p.264. Odendaal, 1984: 275-76. Walshe (1970: 399-400) mentioned Modiri's donation of £250 to support the Defiance Campaign. See *supra*, pp.13 for further discussion. Willan (1996: 264): Du Bois invited Plaatje, to the second Pan-African Congress in Paris. Plaatje lacked the funds to attend, and Du Bois read his address on his behalf.

<sup>143</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 June 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. See *supra*, p.26 for discussion of Felman & Laub's theories of bearing personal testimony.

<sup>144</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 June 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf; Ad1, 23 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf; Ad1, [Nd] 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf; Ad1, 9 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, [trans]: "I also know that my stay here means great sacrifice to father and you [his mother] in these difficult times."

those in Mafikeng, whence came his funding, and rose as the war dragged on.<sup>145</sup> Possibly, the rhetorical anger of *The Bantu*'s final section on "The Present" owed much to his hardship. Often stony-broke, Modiri was almost excluded from university, infirmary, and (when his landlady lost patience) lodgings:

It's been long since I wrote to you in the first month of this year informing you that my money is finished and further asking you to send me more quickly. Here when one does not have money one feels lost....One cannot even attend school when one has not paid for it. Even the examinations are just the same when a person sits the exam one must pay first....<sup>146</sup>

All his relationships suffered; mortifyingly, even his honesty was doubted, as the promised money never arrived. Besides, Silas' delays would destroy the family's ambition that he become a doctor. Characteristically, he added "I will not be able to do my studies with the zeal required".<sup>147</sup> Initially, his courses were another source of alienation, being far more intensive than his previous studies. He could not discuss them with his parents, whose unfamiliarity with such scientific subjects accentuated the gulf between them. Silas seemed, at least in Modiri's view, to understand these courses only as balance sheet entries, even when his son enthused in 1916 that no subject could be as interesting as medicine. Realising this, Modiri responded in kind, spelling out costs exceedingly clearly.<sup>148</sup>

I	Botany	Lectures	£4.4	Professor Bower
	{	Botany Practical	3.3	
II	{	Physics Lectures	3.3	Lecturer Gray
	{	Physics Practical	2.2	
III		Zoology Lectures	4.4	Professor G Kerr
	{	Zoology Practical	3.3	
IV	{	Chemistry Lectures	4.4	Professor Ferguson
	{	Chemistry Practical	5.5	
		Examination Fee	<u>6.6</u>	
			<u>£35.14</u>	

**Table 6: Dr Molema's Glasgow University Fees, 1915**

On rare occasions, cables were the last resort. Upon the money's arrival, huge elation set in and Modiri reassured his parents that "I will also with this help do my bit here now and in the end to make you proud because of the great work you have done".<sup>149</sup> Modiri's integrity shines through this undertaking; knowing Silas' struggle to fund his studies, he promised to complete them successfully.

Now relaxed, he took time to explain the war to his parents. His class was emptying out: so many young men had (like Cronin) enlisted; many did not return.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>145</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 10 July 1917, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Cronin (1952: 2, 4) described how, after paying fees and lodging, he had little to satisfy "the minor consideration of keeping body and soul together". He supplemented his landlady's meals with rare "tea-room snack[s]" and "bizarre bargains from the market". Tea could cost 2d.

<sup>146</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 Apr 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: his earlier letter (14 Jan 1915) had asked Silas to send the Royal Bank of Scotland another Bank Draft, as he had spent the money brought from home.

<sup>147</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 20 Apr 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, [trans]. Ad1, 22 June 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, reckoned that from March 1914 to May 1918, Silas sent him £405 and that "everything is nearly twice as dear as it was before the war". Modiri's estimated his living costs (after rent and fees) were £1 per week, thus £52-55 *per annum*.

<sup>148</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 14 Jan 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>149</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 17 March 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, cabled desperately for some money. Ad1, 9 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, [trans]. Ad1, 1 Sep 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf.

<sup>150</sup> *GUA Matriculation Albums, 1914-1915*: no.246: Doctor-novelist Cronin (1896-1981) and Molema began studying in 1914. *GUA, DC225/6, Final Year Medical Dinner Programme [FYMDA], 1914-1919*: 23: Cronin graduated with Molema in 1919. Cronin and Molema's photographs share the same page. John Logie Baird (26), future inventor of television, began Engineering studies in 1914. On Cronin, see *supra*, p.216 fn.110 & *infra*, p.304 fns.77 & 78.

[a]s you know, now six nations are at war namely the French, English, Russians, Belgians, Serbians, Italians are all fighting the Germans, Austrians and Turks. The men are all gone to war, only a few are remaining with women. The women are the ones driving the trains and they now issue tickets for trains. They operate the machines which make bayonets. Here in Glasgow there are many refugees who have fled the wrath of the Germans who have destroyed their cities. It is said there are ten thousand here.<sup>151</sup>

Some months later, he reassured Silas that he would not enlist: “[t]hose who are not British born, or have come here solely for purposes of study are of course exempt from conscription”.<sup>152</sup> At least 110,000, (10%) of all Scottish men between 16 and 50, were killed in the war, probably 15% of all Britain’s total war-dead, “...higher in proportion than any other country in the Empire”.<sup>153</sup> Scotland’s losses were, proportionally, the greatest in the Empire. Despite Modiri’s own relief from fighting, the war came closer as zeppelins rained on Leith’s vital dockyards, in Edinburgh:

[w]e have had the first zeppelin raid in Scotland lately. It occurred in Edinburgh and Leith, and caused quite a lot of damage. The bombs set the Leith ship yards on fire, which burnt for two days. The newspapers are forbidden to publish anything about it lest the Germans should know their lucky hit and repeat it on the same lines and places.<sup>154</sup>

His description for his family in Mafikeng added new technological terms to the Setswana language: “*dikepe tsa difofang*”, literally means “flying ships”. Meantime, zeppelins approaching the Clyde shipbuilding yards near Modiri’s home had been repulsed.<sup>155</sup> Wartime censorship banned Scottish papers from mentioning the raids, and this letter is probably one of few civilian records, more rare for being partly in Tswana.

Modiri was conscious of his isolation from Mafikeng, and complained of the continuing sparseness of home news. Nor did they write often enough, he complained: “I think I have the pleasure of seeing [your] writing once in six months, and you know that is not enough. Will you write oftener now Papa?”<sup>156</sup> Only “Sis Harriet”, his younger sister, sent him weekly Mafikeng news. Her chance remarks alerted him months *post facto* to Lekoko’s death; Silas had only mentioned the Regent’s illness.<sup>157</sup> Trying to bridge the distance between himself and those he missed desperately, Modiri related that he was nearly halfway through his degree, a considerable achievement:

I am glad to inform you that I have passed [my second year examination on] Anatomy and Physiology. I started my Third Year medical studies already, in March. In September this year I shall be halfway into my studies here....I hope you will see the fruit of educating me in the remaining time.<sup>158</sup>

Modiri’s sense of mission in Glasgow sustained him. Improving the health care of black South Africans, especially in the Mafikeng Stadt concerned him most. Casting his studies in religious allegory was an intimate vernacular between father and son, showing how intrinsically religion upheld their

<sup>151</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 9 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, [trans]: in Mafikeng, Silas would have been able to follow the war in *TsalaBT* and *MM*. On 12 Sep 1914, *Tsala* carried at least 3 long Setswana articles on the war, one by Silas himself! Modiri called Germans “Ma-Toistera”; *Tsala* used “*Maduistere*” (from “Duits”, Afrikaans for German). The article “*Ntoa ea Europa*” (“the War in Europe”) used “*Majeremane*”, and “*Manyelesemane*” for the English. The article reiterated “*Modimo Boloka Kgosi*” (“God Save the King”) several times.

<sup>152</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 14 Apr 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf [trans, half the sentence was in English].

<sup>153</sup> Smout (1986: 267) working-class NCOs and privates contributed 13 out of 14 (85.7%) of the dead, affecting areas like Partick most heavily.

<sup>154</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 14 Apr 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>155</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 21 Apr 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>156</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 6 Nov 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>157</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 23 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Ad1, 27 Aug 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Cf. *supra*, p.154 & fn.345, for Lekoko’s passing.

<sup>158</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 17 July 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf [trans].

lives: “[a]s for my countrymen, it is with the Lord’s help that will enable me to help them physically, materially and spiritually. My obligation here, I am prepared to do fully, the Lord being my helper”.<sup>159</sup>

Yet he sometimes wavered. In mid-1917, while he struggled with taxing subjects and shaped *The Bantu*, disaster struck. No money arrived from Mafikeng. His landlady of “over two years” (Mrs Reid) lost patience, which Modiri understood: “I don’t think there are any other people in the British Isles who could have shown me half the kindness these people have done me, and I am anxious to deal fairly by them to show them that I appreciate their kindness”.<sup>160</sup> Silas’ tardiness distressed him: “[i]t is necessary to do something and pay them soon for they are only human beings to whom I am a perfect stranger...”. Matters worsened. Seven months later, his still owed £60 for board and lodging: “I have not been able to pay them fully since 1916”. Prices soared higher: “...now food is more expensive. Where one used to pay £1, now one pays £1.10”. Glasgow University also demanded its fees.<sup>161</sup>

Silas had reason to delay: failing crops and herds, and relentless legal fees for the cases that neither the Tshidi nor the NAD could resolve.<sup>162</sup> Even in 1914, these burdens prevented Silas from meeting financial commitments. Isaiah M’belle reproached him for not paying the first premium on Modiri’s Southern Life policy, adding “please do not delay this matter as you will be inconveniencing both yourself and Modiri by delaying prompt payment [on a] first premium”.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps only M’belle had sufficient gumption and status to address Silas thus!<sup>164</sup> Silas had local debts, great and small that year: Early & Woolf, Mafikeng millers menaced him with a final account for £14-2-3 — in their view greatly overdue, but really not a fortnight old! As debts mounted, Silas’ white clientele helped him keep his cattle-ranching business going. Yet, in August, Albertus Stephanus van Jaarsveld of Vryhof (near Mafikeng) had Silas arraigned in the Griqualand West Supreme Court for the large sum of £256-15-6 for work on his dam at Madibi! Silas eventually settled, ceding various goods and livestock, and paying off £50 monthly over six months. It was a cruel burden while educating Modiri in Glasgow! Both Silas and Joshua received summons in April 1915, for defaulting on settlement of a promissory note of £88-19-6 (plus interest) to Sundel Gordon of Mafikeng.<sup>165</sup> How all occasions were informing against Silas!<sup>166</sup>

In mid-financial crisis, Modiri’s mother, Molalanyane, died suddenly. The news, delivered by cable, immediately expanded the distance between them impossibly and making Modiri believe his absence had caused her death. To historians, though clearly not to her family, Mrs Molema’s presence is shadowy; few documents in her hand or about her survive. A year before her death, her second son, Morara wrote home to her from Johannesburg, begging for more clothes because his existing ones were so old (“*dionetse thata*”).<sup>167</sup> She clearly cared for their physical welfare. Plaatje had portrayed her and

<sup>159</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 23 July 1915, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf [trans]. Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: “I have several plans which I [wish] to discuss with you...beginning: 1. a Nursing Home or Hospital[;] 2. Improving the sanitation of the Stadt[;] 3. Giving lectures on Nursing and First Aid to intelligent girls”.

<sup>160</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 10 July 1917, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>161</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 10 July 1917, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Compared to Cronin’s violent confrontations over rent with his landlady (1952: 6-7), Modiri was fortunate.

<sup>162</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: father and son understood these expenses tacitly. Only in 1920 did Modiri name the Tshidi-Rapulana as one of Silas’ financial burdens: [trans.] “I heard how the land case between the Bora-Tshidi and the Bora-Pulana [went]...and how it took all the Bora-Tshidi’s money and assets. And what can we say, father, as the highest courts of the land have decided that way?”

<sup>163</sup> MPP A979 Aa2.30, 19 [illeg, May] 1914, I Bud M’belle, Kmb, to STM, Maf. See *supra*, p.214.

<sup>164</sup> See MPP A979 Aa1-Aa4: other correspondents habitually made respectful greetings in their first sentences; M’belle dispensed with such niceties.

<sup>165</sup> MPP A979 Aa3, 1 May 1914, Early & Woolf (Millers, Dealers in Live Stock), Maf, to STM, who incurred the account on 18 Apr. Positively, 22 Apr 1914, J Wilson, Maf, to STM, begged him to find “as many cattle as you can”. Aa3, 24 July 1914, Supreme Court of South Africa (Griqualand West Local Division), and 26 Oct 1914, “Notice of Seizure”, Albertus Stephanus van Jaarsveld v Silas Tawana [*sic*] Molema. Silas incurred legal fees with De Kock & De Kock for his defence (Aa3, 27 Aug 1914). Aa3, 23 Apr 1915, Spencer Minchin, Maf, Attny for Gordon, to JMM and STM, Maf. The note had fallen due on 1 Aug 1914. In Aa3, 1 May 1914, Silas acknowledged the note, but had still not paid by 15 Nov 1916!

<sup>166</sup> This is a reference Hamlet’s sense of doom in the soliloquy in William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, iv, 31-66.

<sup>167</sup> MPP A979 Ae2, 31 Dec 1917, Morara Molema to Mrs Molema. The page has faded, but he comments on the war.

her small children fleetingly on that sweltering December 1899 day in besieged Mafikeng: “Mrs Molema had to clear to the hut for the night with children, as the house was becoming an oven”.<sup>168</sup> Did Modiri recall that night when his mother protected his eight-year-old self, Seleye and Harriet from the stifling heat during that long siege, while mourning her in chilly Glasgow? He wrote home:

I shall never believe she died happy. She could not possibly die happy without seeing me whom she so much loved. And to think that it was four years and two months since my mother and I saw each other, and then parted, as we thought; for only 5 or 6 years, but alas, it was for ever!....Often I have thought I would raise myself to fame and let her loving heart admire and rejoice....<sup>169</sup>

Her death brought Modiri closer to collapse than at any time in his years away.<sup>170</sup> Far from home, bereft of his beloved mother, whom he most desired to please, he now felt outcast by his irascible, yet loving father. He told Harriet “[g]rief must hang on every thing and in every place that mother had been in life....But we can still love and cherish the memory of our beloved mother”. He planned to flout current Setswana custom by visiting her grave on his return to “keep us longer in the memory of her”.<sup>171</sup> Modiri was assuming the strong brotherly and parental role he would take with his siblings all his life.<sup>172</sup>

His sorrow and frustration were harder to bear because their joint goal was within his grasp. £40 sent him amid their grief, barely helped. By June, the landlady threatened to sue if the full £80 owed were not settled by December. If ever anyone felt besieged, Modiri did. But just as Silas had eventually helped deliver Mafikeng in 1900, he sent relief on 05 August 1918.<sup>173</sup>

Eight months later, after an Obstetrics internship in Manchester, he qualified as a doctor. Yet his graduation, which should have been the happiest day of his life, was marred by the family’s absence — especially his mother’s. Even Moroka had not remained in Scotland to applaud him.<sup>174</sup>

[t]hese are the thoughts that came to my mind on the graduation day, when I saw mothers come to rejoice with their sons, when I saw and heard the mothers clap their hands when their sons’ names were called and the sons were capped, and admitted as doctors....My name too was called, I too was capped and admitted as a doctor. My friends and school mates of course clapped, but I could not but feel what a contrast I was to everybody there, for there was no mother and never would be....<sup>175</sup>

Again, he associated his sense of loss and confused identity with ambivalence towards his place of temporary exile, where his strangeness met him at every turn. Nor could graduation mean a swift return home.<sup>176</sup> Silas still controlled the time and space that trapped him.

Glasgow University’s records testify to his prowess. Modiri Molema graduated from Glasgow University’s Medical school on 4 April 1919. He had qualified in just over four years, and distinguished himself academically. Over 14 different subjects, he had obtained below 60% in only two: Botany and Chemistry, in his first year. His average mark was 63%; however, he excelled at *Materia Medica* and

<sup>168</sup> Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 71, 20 Dec 1899.

<sup>169</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 12 May 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>170</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 6 Oct 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, expressed great sorrow over his mother’s passing, and difficulty in confronting his father’s deep sadness.

<sup>171</sup> MPP A979 Ad3, 15 July 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf. He added that their mother’s duties should now pass to Harriet. “It rests with you in the mean time, my dear girl, to inculcate that same lesson on our brothers and little sister who are young and can’t yet think for themselves”.

<sup>172</sup> *Rre Phiriapa Thwane Interview, 1991.*

<sup>173</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 22 June 1917, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, Ad1, 10 July 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, and Ad1, 5 Aug 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>174</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 11 Apr 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf, Ad1, 16 Aug 1918, SMM, St Mary’s Hospitals, Manchester, to STM, Maf. Ad3, 8 Oct 1918, SMM, Glasgow, to HTM, Maf: “Mr Moroka has just finished his course in Medicine and is going home to Thaba Nchu this week”.

<sup>175</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 18 Apr 1919, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. A money order for £40, in Silas’ writing, is attached.

<sup>176</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 11 Apr 1919, SMM, Manchester, to STM, Maf.

Therapeutics (70%) and Pathology (69%), with 66% each in Zoology, Anatomy, and Surgery. He defied his contemporary, Archibald Cronin, who claimed that one could not do equally well in Surgery and Clinical Medicine at a Scottish University: Modiri scored 66% in the former and 68% in the latter, and this with some hard task-masters as lecturers.<sup>177</sup>

While in Dublin, studying for his Licentiate of Medicine, Dublin<sup>178</sup>, Modiri's concern for his grandfather Chief Choele persisted, particularly after his mother's passing. He worried that the Chief would not live until his own return:

[p]lease let me know how my dear grandfather Choele is. Harriet and Sefetogi wrote to say he was in poor health. I do hope my dear old man is better. I feel very uneasy about him and have been especially so since my dear mother died and again now when I hear he is not keeping well. You my dear father, have been very good. I am only beginning to properly realise, and be truly thankful to you for several things which you have done in the past, and which seemed to my young eyes to have no meaning. Today I am thinking how you very often sent us every holiday time to Motlhokaditse and to Kraaipan to see our maternal grandparents. It is now, when I cannot see them that I begin to realise the lesson. It is now, when I am trembling with fear that I may not see my dear grandfather, that I wonder I did not appreciate your practice of sending us to see him years ago. Will you therefore write soon to me.<sup>179</sup>

This passage conveyed Modiri's deeply emotional attachment to family (usually tightly reined); having so recently lost his mother, he dreaded losing her father too. In thinking about his grandfather, he may have realised that Silas' care in encouraging them to meet often was his way of acquainting Modiri with family bonds, a broader sense of filial obedience, and the traditions of his mother's home. Most of all, his letter showed too how, during his years abroad, he not only analysed family, home and culture with mature insight, but reviewed his own history, through the lives of the men who were his own ancestors. *The Bantu* emerged in this context.

Back in the practical world, Silas ordained that he acquire "higher degrees".<sup>180</sup> So, with wartime travel restrictions partly rescinded, Modiri undertook a medical residency at the Hume Street Hospital, Dublin — where he had to lodge as well!<sup>181</sup> He accepted Silas' direction that he study further, partly out of duty and partly because it accorded with his own plans:

[t]he idea is a very good one and falls in with my ambition, namely to have the best medical education and medical degrees in this country, and though this means my being kept away from my dear home with all that home means to me, if it is your wish that I continue my studies higher for a longer time, then I am pleased to obey. I have already started to read for the highest surgical qualification in the land. Once I get it, I think my ambition will be satisfied.<sup>182</sup>

Acceding to Silas' behest also gave him (briefly) the upper hand in their financial battle. He stated candidly that if he took on a paying position, he would not be able to achieve their joint goal.<sup>183</sup> The uneasy dance of love and frustration between father and son over the latter's future continued.

<sup>177</sup> Though Cronin (1952: 13-20) excelled at Medicine, godlike Surgery Professor, William Macewen, shattered his youthful dreams with the words "You will never be a surgeon". GUA32166, 4 Apr 1919, Dr Modiri Molema's MB and ChB Degrees, University of Glasgow. See Appendix G for the degrees.

<sup>178</sup> The title page to Molema's 69pp booklet, *Life and Health: Being Health Lectures Delivered to Bechuanaland Bantu Societies*. (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1924, University of Botswana Library, Gaborone), gives Molema's degrees.

<sup>179</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 30 Nov 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf. Family deaths made him feel more estranged than ever: his mother, Chief Lekoko and Chief Joshua's wife. (See Ad1, 21 Apr 1916, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf. Ad1, 1 Sep 1919, 30 Nov 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf). Breutz (1955: p.144, para.406): Motlhokaditse falls under the Rolong boo Ratlou boo Sethshiro chieftainship of the Tshweles and is near Kraaipan.

<sup>180</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 1 Sep 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf.

<sup>181</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 1 Sep 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf. While I have not yet located much information on his stay in Dublin, Molema (1920: 194) quoted the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Whately's *Political Economy*, when discussing how the Bantu might acquire more "civilisation": "[w]e have no reason to believe that any community ever did or ever can emerge, unassisted by external help, from a state of utter barbarism unto anything that can be called civilisation". Whately (1787-1863) was earlier Oxford Professor of Political Economy. See *infra*, p.319.

<sup>182</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 1 Sep 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf.

<sup>183</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: acknowledged the arrival of some money.

Settling his bills partly relieved the crisis, but the anger and estrangement had left its mark. From Dublin he first told Silas of his extra-medical intellectual pursuits.<sup>184</sup> His succour during that distressing period had been imagining a new identity as interpreter of African culture, from which his enforced exile had removed him. Now over the worst, and with publication imminent, he announced in a newly-energetic tone his “History of the Native People of South Africa”, promising Silas the first copy.

**Back to the Present South Africa — “*Manong a ja ka ditshika*”  
“The vulture now eats with its ancestors”:<sup>185</sup>**

When *Tsala ea Batho* welcomed Modiri to Kimberley in 1913, the writer (probably Plaatje) referred proverbially to his connection with the region. Modiri had travelled much further and achieved far more since then and the powerful bird deserved his proverb even more. In early 1921, he returned to the South Africa characterised in *The Bantu*.<sup>186</sup> Although returning to the place of his ancestors, he was moving forward into a life of medical, social, historical and political commitment.

His wartime exile yielded two results: he left Scotland a graduate of one of its two most prestigious medical schools. Silas’ money and his own intelligence had gained him his medical degree, his own initiative had made him an historian. Both formed part of an intense desire to contribute materially and culturally to his community.<sup>187</sup>

*The Bantu* was an achievement of his fine intellect and his troubled sense of identity while abroad. Partly a repossession of the precolonial past and colonial present, it initiated dialogue around race, power, land possession and education — issues in which the Tshidi and most African communities were fiercely embroiled. He strove, like Plaatje in *Native Life in South Africa* (1916), to revise British public opinion of black South Africans. Plaatje averred that he had not written:

on behalf of the naked hordes of cannibals who are represented in fantastic pictures displayed in the shop-windows in Europe, most of them imaginary; but it is on behalf of five million loyal British subjects who shoulder “the black man’s burden” every day...without looking forward to any decoration or thanks.<sup>188</sup>

While Plaatje concentrated on the 1913 Natives Land Act, Molema’s subject was broader, covering over 2000 years’ migration, settlement and colonisation. Still more than *Native Life*, *The Bantu* was a veiled narrative of the self, an expression of the traumas and insights of his exile. With that energetic April 1919 evening, it encapsulated the ambiguities of his personal experience in Glasgow, where, apart from becoming a doctor, he built an identity as cultural interpreter.

Plaatje reached Glasgow on the day of *The Bantu*’s publication, read the book rapidly, praised it, and commended Molema’s “patience” in getting it printed.<sup>189</sup> Molema’s exposé of South African colonisation and racial inequality, echoed Plaatje’s eloquent articulation of fundamental human equality, which, he stipulated, should translate into their equal legal and social treatment.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>184</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 30 Nov 1919, SMM, Dublin, to STM, Maf: Modiri hoped to return to Glasgow on 24 Dec 1919.

<sup>185</sup> Plaatje (1916b: 57, Proverb 57): the above is Plaatje’s literal Setswana translation; his European equivalent is “Birds of a feather flock together”. This subheading was suggested by Plaatje’s formal welcome of Modiri to Kimberley: *TsalaBT*, 26 Apr 1913, “Mofokonyana” (“Small News Items”): “*Mr Modiri Molema o tsile mo Kimberley ka Laboraro go coa Kapa a filha a tsena mo matichering a Lyndhurst Road. Manong a ja ka ditshika*”. (“[MM] has come to Kimberley on Wednesday from the Cape to teach at Lyndhurst Road. The vultures now eat with their ancestors”).

<sup>186</sup> The allegorical structure of *The Bantu* is set out *infra*, pp.253ff.

<sup>187</sup> MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf.

<sup>188</sup> Plaatje, 1916a & 1982: 19.

<sup>189</sup> Willan, 1984: 253.

<sup>190</sup> Jane Starfield, 1996. “The Lore and the Proverbs: Sol Plaatje — Saving Literature and Saving the Land, 1910-1920”. Association of University English Teachers of South Africa Conference, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, p.20: Plaatje asserted the moral, cultural and literary parity of indigenous and settler cultures in *all* four works begun in the years following the 1913 Natives Land Act’s passing.

Deeper structural ambiguity underpinned his studies abroad. While away, he depended entirely on his father's wealth. As a member of the African petty bourgeoisie, Silas struggled financially to maintain that class position and his status as an African chief, against the effects of advancing segregation. The 1910 constitution had excluded Africans from the common political process and fortified the country's constitutive ex-colonies into a citadel of white, middle-class hegemony.

During Modiri's exile, the South African state began elaborating a Native Affairs framework based on colonial indirect rule. Existing chiefly structures were co-opted to effect the NAD's control over African communities and implement the state's intent. All Africans were to be denied direct political representation. Chiefs, who seemed problematic, like Silas, through "progressive" politics in Mafikeng and SANNC associations, were considered dangerous. Hence, NAD's attempt to diminish his influence by replacing his unstable son-in-law with Lotlamoreng, representative, they hoped, of more pliable Tshidi interests.<sup>191</sup>

Two major Acts framed this period. The 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1920 Native Affairs Act, two of segregation's milestones, aimed to consummate the political process begun in 1910 by excluding all except Cape Africans legally and physically from the body politic. The NLA commenced their restriction to 7.3% of the country's land area.<sup>192</sup> In De Kiewiet's words, the 1920 Act "contained the hint of a separate political compartment" for Africans.<sup>193</sup> In creating a permanent Native Affairs Commission to oversee African administration, it further occluded the possibilities of direct parliamentary representation.<sup>194</sup> For Walshe, the Act offered a compromise, "an alternative mode of African political expression while leaving the Cape franchise entrenched and the details of Native policy to be worked out at some future date".<sup>195</sup> It was another attempt to extrude chiefs and petty bourgeoisie from direct rule, and reduce their involvement in community affairs from active to consultative. The long process of establishing segregation pincer Silas and his family directly. His established role as chiefly adviser was attacked and his economic and social base in the colonial era dangerously undermined, largely by the legal struggle to maintain his status among the Tshidi.

In Glasgow, Modiri felt the pain of his father's reverses. This distress drove him (like many African opponents of the South African government) into the arms of Empire. He found people dancing a waltz, and he danced it. In *The Bantu's* ambiguous final chapters, he led, by pronouncing Botha's Government the immediate cause of Africa's present distress and blamed Britain for betraying loyal black supporters. Pulling back, he praised Britain too for its past treatment of blacks; swaying forward, he condemned that country for abandoning them to state persecution. Perhaps puzzlingly, his solution was for Britain to resume responsibility for the African cause.<sup>196</sup> For Marks, this dance would imply the ambiguous "dependency" manifesting itself throughout the country at this time. He danced towards and away from Empire, an ambiguity growing out of the multiple facets of his social position: as an educated African, as a member of the African petty bourgeoisie, and as the heir to six generations of Tshidi chiefs.



<sup>191</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp.150-51ff.

<sup>192</sup> Walshe, 1970: 44; Keegan, 1986: 196-207. The Native Affairs Act affected Dr Molema directly. On returning to South Africa, he participated in a number of conferences organised under the auspices of the Act to debate the effects of public policy and many other issues he had debated in *The Bantu* on African people.

<sup>193</sup> CW de Kiewiet, 1941. *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic*. (Oxford: OUP), pp.235-36: the "hint" became menacing when the Native Administration Act (1927) "escorted" Africans "outside the rule of law, thrusting them back into a region where the Government had wide discretionary powers".

<sup>194</sup> Willan (1984: 296): while some SANNC leaders, like Thema, felt positive about the Native Affairs Act's consultative channels, Plaatje was less sanguine, expressing his doubts in three articles for the *DFA*, 19, 22 & 23 Jan 1924, "Native Affairs: After four years". In Willan, 1996: 313-20.

<sup>195</sup> Walshe, 1970: 100-02.

<sup>196</sup> See Molema, 1920: 356-60.