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`A GOOD EDUCATION SETS UP A DIVINE DISCONTENT': THE CONTRIBUTION OF ST PETER'S SCHOOL TO BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Potchefstroom, 2000

Abstract

This thesis explores in empirical fashion the contribution made by St Peter's Secondary School to South African literary history. It takes as its starting point the phenomenon of the first black autobiographies having been published within a ten-year period from 1954 to 1963, with all but one of the male writers receiving at least part of their post-primary schooling at St Peter's School in Johannesburg. Among the texts, repositioned here within their educational context, are *Tell Freedom* by Peter Abrahams, *Down Second Avenue* by Es'kia Mphahlele, *Road to Ghana* by Alfred Hutchinson, and *Chocolates for My Wife* by Todd Matshikiza.

The thesis examines the educational milieu of the inter-war years in the Transvaal over and against education in the other provinces of the Union, the Anglo-Catholic ethos of the Community of the Resurrection who established and ran the school, the pedagogical environment of St Peter's School, and the autobiographical texts themselves, in order to plot the course which the autobiographers' subsequent lives took as they wrote back to the education which had both liberated and shackled them. It equipped them far in advance of the opportunities available to them under the colour bar, necessitating exile, even as it colonised their minds in a way perhaps spared those who never attended school, requiring a continual reassessment of their identity over time.

The thesis argues that their Western education was crucial in the development of their hybrid identity, what Es'kia Mphahlele has termed `the dialogue of two selves', which was in each case worked out through an autobiography. The typical, if simplified, trajectory is an enthusiastic espousal of the culture of the West encountered in their schooling at St Peter's, and then a rejection out of a sense of betrayal in favour of Africa, eventually leading to a synthesis of the two.

The thesis concludes that it was the emphasis on all-round education and character formation, in the British boarding school tradition, with its thrust of sacrifice and service, which helped to fashion the strong belief systems of

Abrahams and Mphahlele's later years, namely Christian socialism and African humanism, which inform their mature writings.

Keywords:

Urban Transvaal mission education
Community of the Resurrection
St Peter's Secondary School
Black South African autobiography
Subjectivity and identity formation

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

_____ day of _____ , 2000.

Dedication

To those men who had sung, with such beauty
that their songs had pierced the heart of a white woman,
a world away, and in another time.

Note

In the last stages of this thesis, Peter Abrahams notified me that his latest work, *The Coyaba Chronicles: Reflections on the Black Experience in the Twentieth Century* would be published jointly by Ian Randle in Kingston and David Philip in Cape Town towards the end of 2000. Although too late for serious consideration in this thesis, I obtained a copy of the uncorrected proofs from the publishers and read them before final editing in order to ascertain whether they contained any material which might either significantly strengthen my argument or subvert it in any way. On a single reading, it seems that Abrahams's reflections in no way undermine the line I have adopted, other than, rather surprisingly, give Marcus Garvey a larger role in his life than has hitherto been acknowledged. The book fills many gaps not chronicled in Abrahams's life to date, particularly his years in London and Paris onwards, but offers little more on his childhood in South Africa, other than to foreground his family which he obviously feels were not given the measure they deserved in *Tell Freedom*. *The Coyaba Chronicles*, while uneven in their quality and sometimes questionable in their interest, for perhaps the first time show us Abrahams the man – as opposed to the writer, journalist and respected spokesperson for the black experience – and, should they prove his last work, leave us in no doubt as to his stature and humanity.

Acknowledgements

This thesis grew out of my research into black South African autobiographical writing begun at the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown and continued alongside my teaching commitments at Potchefstroom University for CHE. I am grateful to the University for its grant towards completion of this project of a Committee of University Principals National Bursary and a Staff Bursary, and for allowing me generous leave in order to consult archival papers and conduct interviews in South Africa and the United Kingdom. The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development of the Human Sciences Research Council (now the National Research Foundation) is also gratefully acknowledged, for its grant of a part-time Doctoral bursary in the initial stages of this project. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at are entirely mine and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

Among those who have assisted throughout this research, I would like to thank in particular Michelle Pickover and Carol Archibald of the Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Andrew Martin of the National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, and Heidi Winterbach for generously sharing her research material with me. Thanks are also due in large measure to Fr George Guiver and the CR brethren at the House of the Resurrection, Mirfield for opening both their personal and College library to me and John Read and hosting us so hospitably during Holy Week 1996. It was a watershed experience. Most especially I would like to record my gratitude to the late Fr Benjamin Baynham and Archbishop Trevor Huddleston for the privilege of spending time with them in Mirfield and for some deeply moving - and often quite scurrilous - conversations. They sadly passed on during the writing of this thesis and I regret that Fr Baynham in particular never got to see it.

I am especially indebted to Br Edwin Ainscow CGA, last English master at St Peter's School, and to those former pupils of St Peter's who all enthusiastically shared their memories with me, and consistently helped me

to keep faith with this project: Rev. Canon Bertram Moloi, the Ven. Meshack Ntsangani, Fr Richard Kgoleng, Mr Arthur Maimane, and Mr Zakes Mokae. I value particularly the correspondence I had in the latter stages of this thesis with Mr Peter Abrahams, and record my deep gratitude to Professor Es'kia Mphahlele who, for over a decade, and particularly since our last meeting, has been a constant source of inspiration. It is my hope that this thesis does justice to how much the lives and work of these two men have meant to me over the years, indeed, how irrevocably their writing has changed the course of my life.

I appreciate very much the comments and advice offered by Professor Jonathan Hyslop on an earlier draft of chapters of this thesis. Most especially I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my thesis supervisors, Professor Tim Couzens and Professor Isabel Hofmeyr, who generously read through an entire draft of this manuscript and gave me invaluable assistance based on their own extensive and acknowledged research in related areas of our literary history. Their encouragement and ready discussion went way beyond the academic obligations of supervisors, and any shortcomings in this thesis are entirely my own.

Finally, I owe its completion to John Read, the keeper of my Coyaba, for loving, caring for and believing in me all the way through, and to the constant companionship of Daisy, playing her canine role to my Mrs Plum.

Contents

Title page i
Abstract ii
Declaration iv
Dedication v
Note vi
Acknowledgements vii

Introduction 1
The ripple effect of education 1
The double-edged sword of mission education 10
The significance of the educational matrix 23

Chapter One: The Educational Context 32
The educational background at the fin-de-siècle 32
The late Victorian age 32
The inter-war years 37
Educational debates during the 1920s and 1930s 47
Industrial training vs academic education 47
Sharing Western civilisation 53
Secondary schooling in the 1930s and 1940s 59
Proportion of pupils at high school 59
Black education at the crossroads 62
The Dalton Plan 67
The humanist approach to education 71
The mid-century JC and SC syllabus for English 76
The hegemony of English within the curriculum 76
Setworks for the Junior Certificate 83
Setworks for the Senior Certificate 98
The emphasis on reading across the curriculum 103

Chapter Two: The Community of the Resurrection **107**
The Anglo-Catholic ethos 107
Liberals in theology and radicals in politics 109
An incarnational theology 113
The Christian socialist foundation 124
The CR's involvement in African education 134
Inter-war writings of CR brethren 141
Post-war initiatives by CR brethren 152
The CR's negotiation of African culture 160
Noblesse oblige 160
Increasing reciprocity of engagement 163

Chapter Three: St Peter's Secondary School **183**
The ethos of St Peter's School 183
Background and buildings 183
Pupils at St Peter's 204
Teachers at St Peter's 221
St Peter's in the 1930s 240
The Imperial Milieu 240
Mr HW Shearsmith as Headmaster (1934-1939) 244
St Peter's in the 1940s 259
The Restive Decade 359
Mr DH Darling as Headmaster (1940-1954) 262
St Peter's in the 1950s 276
The Defiant Decade 276
Mr MA Stern as Headmaster (1955-1956) 279

Chapter Four: The Autobiographical Text **287**
The road to self-discovery 287
The straitjacket of South Africa 288
Teacher and writer in a strange land 294
African humanism 297
The gadfly which is education 301

Crossing boundaries 305
The decolonisation of the mind 310
The retrospective view from Coyaba 311
Autobiographical elements in the novel 315
Black Christianity 318
Education for liberation 321
The ultimately misleading lights of the West 325
The hybridity of the autobiographical subject 327
A counterhegemonic discourse 327
The historical dimensions of autobiography 332
Retrospective patterning 337
The testimony of the autobiographies 340
Abrahams and Mphahlele 340
Hutchinson and Matshikiza 370
Bloke Modisane 386

Conclusion **393**
Education as a crucible of identity formation 393
Education for modernisation 395
Competing claims of exile and service 398
Exile in search of fulfilment 403
Leavening the material with the spiritual 404
Threading the universal with the particular 411
Autobiography as the product of an incarnational matrix 419
The ideal of leadership as service 422
The witness to individuality and wholeness 427

Bibliography 431

INTRODUCTION

1 The ripple effect of education

"Education has a way of acting on the personality like a stone that is thrown into standing water," wrote Es'kia Mphahlele from exile in 1959.[1] This investigation into St Peter's Secondary School in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, run by the Anglican order, the Community of the Resurrection (CR), intends to reconstruct one matrix of the literary production of four of South Africa's most prominent black autobiographers who all published their work from exile in the 1950s and early 1960s.[2] It is founded on the premise that the high school education of these autobiographers created the conditions for their written life stories, which inevitably had to be written or at least completed outside of apartheid South Africa. A reconstruction of the schooling they received during their formative young adult years should enhance any subsequent reading of their work for, as Len Holdstock has noted, "the children in our classrooms are sensitive human beings, passing through the most critical stage of development in their lives".[3] What informs all genuine literary historical labour, of course, is the need to balance diachronic and synchronic elements; the cross-cut at any one moment in time is necessary for understanding literary development through time.

Mphahlele has argued persuasively for contextual criticism of a literary work, that external evidence as well as internal should be taken into account in the process of interpretation, among which is "the social milieu; the history of a people and their ideas; what in the author's life illuminates the work; political, moral economic values that dominate . . . those values that are being

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[1] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Dilemma of the African Elite', *The Twentieth Century* Apr. 1959, 320.
[2] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (London, 1959), Alfred Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (London, 1960), Todd Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife* (London, 1961).
[3] Len Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation* (Johannesburg, 1987), 104.

suppressed".[4] Some years earlier, when remarking on a poem being both a thing made according to rhetoric and a landmark of cultural history (which creates tensions in reading it), he pointed out that literature is a historical item, "a metaphor of historical reality",[5] which nicely provides us with the key to unlocking the door of the schoolroom. Schools have been termed "sites of struggle" and "key institutions of control" in that education is invariably a function of a particular society, or in the hands of a group with vested interests, and this revisionist reading, theorised by Peter Kallaway,[6] will within limits, inform the reconstruction. The investigation must also take into consideration in separate chapters the prevalent educational ideas and socio-political realities of South African society, the nature of the schooling received at St Peter's, and questions of literary and cultural identity in the autobiographical works themselves.

Literary and cultural identity represent an important and complex study object, according to Rien Segers, important because it leads literary studies back to the relationship between text and social context, and complex because its character is multifaceted and so requires a multidisciplinary approach:

> If one sticks to the idea that the study of the literary communication process is the primary target of literary studies, then research into literary identity has not just one face (the text), but it has as many faces as there are role-players in that communication process (authors, publishers, critics, teachers, pupils, general readers, etc). . . . Cultural and literary identity is

[4] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The African Critic Today: Towards a Definition', in Houston A Baker, Jnr (ed), *Reading Black: Essays in the Criticism of African, Caribbean, and Black American Literature* (Ithaca, 1976), 13-14.
[5] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Function of Literature at the Present Time: The Ethnic Imperative', *Transition* 9(2) 1974, 50.
[6] Peter Kallaway, *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg, 1984).

> an area where philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science and literary studies meet.[7]

In mapping the place of St Peter's School in our literary history, relevant strands from sundry disciplines have been interwoven in order to present a complex-textured picture of the school in its educational and religious milieu within urban twentieth-century South Africa. If this thesis is perhaps longer than it should be, I make no apology, for I have followed the advice of EM Forster, in good British empirical tradition, `only connect.' The evidence gleaned from contextual and textual sources was massive and compelling, and it became very difficult to dispense with much of it. Nevertheless, in the interests of a clearer argument, and only with much reluctance, evidence was omitted where this overlapped considerably with other evidence, or obscured the train of thought. This thesis, then, insists on the primary role played by one institution in the formation of literary and cultural identity, and draws on the educational, anthropological, theological and political thought of the time during which it was in existence. As Rien Segers has noted, the role and power of institutional agents in constructing or deconstructing a given cultural identity is an important research object which has not yet received nearly as much academic attention as identity within the text itself,[8] or even as the relationship between textual identity and social context.

Of course, given the prominence of postmodern criticism and Derrida's dictum that "there is nothing outside the text", we are at liberty, indeed enjoined, to consider literature and history as "a polysemic tissue" (the words are Leon de Kock's) of textual subjectivities and discursive constructedness. Literature makes an *artistic* claim to truth, while history participates in subjective discursive constructions, so disciplinary distinctions are really tautologous. Moreover, with the popularity since the late 1980s of New Historical criticism, which refuses unproblematised distinctions between `literature' and `history', and between `text' and `context', preferring the

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[7] Rien Segers, `Inventing a Future for Literary Studies: Research and Teaching on Cultural Identity', *Journal of Literary Studies* 13(3/4) Dec. 1997, 278.

synchronic text of a cultural system to the diachronic text of a literary history, focussing on St Peter's as a discourse itself which constructed other discourses and subjectivities may be validated.[9] As De Kock has noted of the nineteenth-century rural Lovedale, the protracted process of Anglicisation there "involved the attempted `re-creation' of generations of black South Africans by means of a discursive regime *of which the novel form was but one end-product* [my italics]".[10]

"[W]hen we sought to understand black colonial experience," writes De Kock, "we looked for novels, poems or plays - the formal *results* of colonisation - instead of the causes and processes".[11] This neglect, of course, opens the way for a focus on the educational matrix of literary production, although De Kock's methodology is not appropriate for an investigation into St Peter's for reasons which will later become clear. His work must nevertheless be acknowledged for its appropriating methods of historical enquiry for literary research, and importing into historical writing insights drawn from literary theory, so as to read the Lovedale record as discourse rather than fact and reveal how `English' was implicated in the making of a coercive and divisive colonial order. Relocating the focus of enquiry from the purely literary realm (necessitating the question "what did they write?") to the socio-historical realm ("how were they written into English?"),[12] raises the question of the discursive role of power and knowledge. "[H]ow does one analyse discursive processes of subjectification?" De Kock asks elsewhere.[13] "How is one to read the textual evidence of African response to such processes of subject-construction?" is the related question.[14] For the representations of missionaries and those of their subjects were not "descriptive detours" in the

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[8] Segers, `Inventing a Future for Literary Studies', 279.
[9] See Leon de Kock's pioneering work on Lovedale education and African textual response in *Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1996).
[10] Leon de Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', *Journal of Literary Studies* 8(1/2) 1992, 34.
[11] De Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', 34.
[12] Ibid, 33.
[13] Leon de Kock, `"History", "Literature", and "English": Reading the Lovedale Missionary Record within South Africa's Colonial History', *English Academy Review* 9 1992, 4.
[14] De Kock, `"History", "Literature", and "English"', 11.

diachronic march of history, but history itself, if history is acknowledged to encompass the making of the self (and other) through power relations in the colonial context.[15] While I appreciate the advances made by the New Historicists in reorienting the axis of intertextuality, I nevertheless reserve the right and need to honour the integrity of the individual author or work.

It must be stated at the outset that this is not a history of the CR's schools in the Transvaal; Heidi Winterbach's 1994 thesis, *The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement in African Schooling on the Witwatersrand, from 1903 to 1956*,[16] is an informative (if occasionally inaccurate) document which collates the relevant information held in the Archive of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand. This investigation uses the same archival sources and draws on her observations, but it goes beyond a descriptive account of schooling under the CR, which she acknowledges comprises the scope of her project. The scholarship is a little careless in parts: she tends to lump together indiscriminately the common views of colonial Anglicans of the time and the Christian socialist vision of the CR which, it will be demonstrated, was very much at odds with the prevailing mores. Neither is this an evaluation of the CR as a religious order; Alan Wilkinson's definitive tome, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History*, published to mark the CR's centenary in 1992,[17] assesses the order's hundred-year contribution to both English and South African society, mainly involvement with the working class of both countries, in order to empower those communities through the training of leaders drawn from within them. I am indebted to its scholarship, and will have frequent recourse to it in my far briefer depiction of the character of the Community.

Of more importance, however, is the recreation of the educational and socio-political climate of the time during which St Peter's School was in existence (1922-1956). This was obviously informed by prevailing political realities, among which were the colour bar, influx control and job reservation, which

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[15] Ibid, 4.
[16] MEd diss. University of the Witwatersrand, 1994.

drew distinct lines along class within the black community (so that school pupils were not required to carry a pass until 1952, yet could aspire to little beyond being clerks or teachers), and the anthropological and educational theories evolved to justify such social engineering, particularly those of the functionalist school which favoured the tribal and rural status quo. Of course, the most obvious political reality of all was that most black children of school-going age were not at school, giving rise to state concerns about juvenile delinquency, skilled labour provision and attempts to control leisure time. Crucially, the autobiographies are urban documents, created out of an urban educational matrix, and reject then current white South African opinion about what was best for black people, such as repopulation of the `reserves.' They also, interestingly, support David Attwell's thesis of counter-modernity (modernity being seen as a particular experience of temporality, rather than project or period), in that the writers produced by mission schools, while great modernisers, "had for obvious reasons turned their backs neither on the modern nightmare of the city nor on received canons, as had their metropolitan contemporaries".[18]

Also important for my argument is the representation of the CR at St Peter's Priory as a community of very disparate but highly talented and even idiosyncratic individuals, often products of their time, but increasingly visionaries in advance of their time, who, in their unique and separate ways, contributed towards the realisation of an egalitarian society in South Africa. Such distinct individuals were memorable characters whose eccentricities lived on for many years in the CR's oral history and, indeed, the written accounts of their ex-pupils. These were the people with whom the autobiographers interacted in their formative years, and encouraged them to work to create a political reality where not only would successful ex-pupils enjoy fulfilment, but where all children of school-going age would have access to education. **Chapter One** therefore sketches the educational background of the time, demonstrating its impact on St Peter's School, and

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[17] London: SCM Press, 1992.

how it was subverted by the urban mission school as the decades unfolded. **Chapter Two** focuses on individuals in the Community of the Resurrection, who came out from the west Yorkshire town of Mirfield to work primarily among Africans in the Transvaal, and the vision which inspired their educational and social endeavours.

The link between the teaching of English at high school and the output of black writing was explicitly drawn by the educationist Don Mtimkulu, himself a product of Lovedale, and interestingly enough, Todd Matshikiza's English teacher when he was there,[19] who lamented in 1958 that the "mere trickle" of black writers in English was "perhaps an indictment of our teaching of English in Bantu schools - that it has inspired so few with the itch to write".[20] For Mtimkulu, it is inspiration enough for the teacher of English "that he may be contributing his share in breaking the narrow confines in which the African lives by helping him take his place in that most democratic of all worlds - the world of creative art in a medium which millions can understand". At this very time, of course, St Peter's was contributing its share to the explosion of autobiographies. In his exploration of South African autobiographies of childhood experienced in the 1920s (these include the ones by Abrahams and Mphahlele), Keith Shear suggests that, if one wants to know what a particular period has made of people, or ascertain what they have become, autobiography presents itself as a fruitful area of study.[21]

Chapter Three, therefore, draws on archival sources in its exploration of St Peter's School, to demonstrate the educational matrix of the autobiographers' childhoods and hence of the literary production of the texts. The final chapter, **Chapter Four**, concentrates on the autobiographical works themselves, those by Peter Abrahams, Es'kia Mphahlele, and the minor

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[18] David Attwell, `Counter-Modernity in Black South African Mission Writing'. Unpublished paper, 1997, 5-6.
[19] Todd Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife* (Cape Town, 1982, orig. 1961), 73.
[20] Don Mtimkulu, `The Teaching of English in Bantu Schools', *South African Outlook* 1 Aug. 1958, 125.
[21] Keith Shear, `Depictions of Childhood in South African Autobiography, with Particular Reference to the 1920s', *English in Africa* 16(1) 1989, 39.

autobiographers Alfred Hutchinson and Todd Matshikiza, demonstrating how they were products of the particular environment elaborated above, but how they invariably took issue with it, always from a vantage point away from this environment. "Autobiography," wrote Wilhelm Dilthey, "is the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life confronts us. Here is the outward, phenomenal course of a life which forms the basis for understanding what has produced it within a certain environment".[22] My reading will be informed by elementary principles of autobiographical theory, that the writing self is not the experiencing self, yet a continuum exists between experience and narration. However, the experiencing self needed the distance of time and, more importantly, place, as a condition for the creation of the writing self or, indeed, the creation of the very self denied this in South Africa. It also assumes certain pressures foisted on educated Africans, like writers and teachers, bearing in mind the class and cultural changes wrought in their lives, by a society which did not recognise these.

It was these pressures, of course, which made exile the only safety valve, hence my argument of the inevitability of exile for the educated black person with a need for fulfilment. Even before legislated apartheid tightened the screws, the CR showed its awareness of the issues involved in a pamphlet dated 1947:

> The African - more especially the educated African - has an increasing distrust of the European, simply because in his own land there are barriers set up against him in every direction. He is able to see what Western civilization is like; he is caught up into its very life; he is made use of in its industrial development (indeed, the economic structure of the country is based entirely on his labour); but he is allowed to share in almost none of its

[22] Quoted as an epigraph by James Olney, *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature* (Princeton, NJ, 1973).

> blessings. He is, in fact, FRUSTRATED - and that at the very moment when he knows himself capable of FULFILMENT.[23]

Education, as Ken Hartshorne amongst many others has pointed out, is never neutral but directed towards the achievement of certain purposes. Behind any educational order "rest fundamental issues such as philosophies of life, views of man, religious beliefs, ideas about the state and society, in particular the place of the individual, political ideologies and the working of economic forces".[24] Instances of these will be explored in order to provide the context for frustration as opposed to fulfilment which the autobiographical texts delineate.

It should be remarked here that this investigation is consistently tackled from a Christian socialist perspective, the guiding belief behind the hundred-year work of the CR. It is therefore comfortable with revisionist readings of a Marxist persuasion, but sees these as necessarily reductive and incomplete because of their materialist nature. In his introduction to *Apartheid and Education*, Kallaway argues persuasively that a liberal reading of education makes unproblematised assumptions of the neutrality of educational policy, the egalitarian nature of schools, and the objectivity of school knowledge, while privileging the needs of the individual, and ignoring the role of schooling in maintaining the domination of the dominant class.[25] For all that St Peter's participated in the liberal discourse, by maintaining class divisions through preserving and augmenting the black elite, it also subverted that discourse, by offering an alternative - if idealistic - one of Christian socialism, whereby, to borrow terms from Marxist discourse (but with a view to reconciliation, not conflict), the bourgeoisie would join forces with the proletariat in the pursuit of a just society. Reductionist readings make no allowance for the concept of `service' (or perhaps better, `solidarity'), the possibility of human beings

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[23] *Shall They Be His People? (The CR Appeals for £25 000 for Its African Work)*. Pamphlet, 1947, 19.
[24] Ken Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town, 1992), 186.
[25] Peter Kallaway, `An Introduction to the Study of Education for Blacks in South Africa', *Apartheid and Education*, 1-44.

wanting to use their privileged positions for the benefit of others, indeed, the obligation, if they profess Christianity or a related belief system like African humanism, to do so.

Such readings also credit schools with less resilience and flexibility than they undoubtedly have. Louis Althusser's view that the school is the dominant ideological apparatus in capitalism, and that teachers who strive to break out of the mould do so largely in vain is valid, but seriously deficient. As Jonathan Hyslop has pointed out, this view of the school is so monolithic that "there seems little scope for internal conflicts or effective rebellion within it".[26] Althusser's focus on the school as sustaining capital's interest within society is crucial (as are Marxist critiques generally), but it fails to take into account empirical evidence that schools are, in fact "sites of struggle" - fails to credit, in fact, people as intelligent and responsible human beings, not only servants or victims of state apparatuses. More recent Marxist critics, as Hartshorne notes, while they are key to an understanding of our situation, are increasingly abandoning their earlier determinist position and, maintaining the basic class and ideology thrust, have also begun to allow for other determinants of human behaviour.[27]

2 The double-edged sword of mission education

[26] Jonathan Hyslop, `The Concepts of Reproduction and Resistance in the Sociology of Education: The Case of the Transition from "Missionary" to "Bantu" Education 1940-1955', *Perspectives in Education* 9(2) 1987, 7.

[27] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 18. The important contribution of the 1970s revisionist historians is their emphasis on class stratification, bringing back into prominence class differences which have crucially informed legislation and struggle in South African history, but have all too often been elided into the overpowering trope of colour. Kelwyn Sole, for example, offered a class-based framework analysis for black literary history, counterpointing creative artist against the masses (`Problems of Creative Writers in South Africa', *Work in Progress* Sept. 1977, 20), and emphasised the need to draw attention to the social and political position of black writers, and how they have interacted artistically with their social context (`Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature, 1948-1960', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg, 1979), 144).

It is very difficult in a highly secularised age, in which political correctness and scepticism is a given, to do justice to an earlier age in which Christianity was indeed the master narrative and coloured by its association with Western civilisation. No engagement with this area, however, can avoid acknowledging the genuinely altruistic motivation of the missionary enterprise, for all the individual failings. The liberal African historian, Roland Oliver, remarks that missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa were "thicker upon the ground" than colonial officials, which "was a remarkable manifestation of the religious faith and charitable giving of the ordinary church-going people of Europe and North America, and also of the organizational power of the great `societies' and `congregations' which recruited and trained missionaries and supported them while they were at work".[28] His discussion of the missionary period is eminently reasonable, noting that missionaries obviously sought to enter and indeed valued the security of the colonial state, yet many came from countries which had no involvement in colonial expansion, and frequently acted as the conscience of colonial governments, the scriptures being revolutionary and egalitarian influences in the colonial context. "The main lesson of African ecclestiastical history," he concludes, "is that the core message tended to run far ahead of its expatriate preachers".[29] And Norman Etherington holds that the missionaries "who aimed to replace African cultures with European `civilisation', and who frequently allied themselves with colonial governments, nevertheless transmitted a religion which Africans turned to suit their own purposes: spiritual, economic and political".[30] It is a useful balance, at least clearing the ground for productive explorations of specific missionary impact and African responses.

The double-edged sword which was the missionary initiative was sensitively explored in the 1996 three-part SABC television series, *God Bless Africa*, particularly the first episode, "Frontiers",[31] where prominent black leaders

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[28] Roland Oliver, *The African Experience* (London, 1991), 207.
[29] Oliver, *The African Experience*, 204.
[30] Norman Etherington, `Recent Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22(2) 1996, 209.
[31] *God Bless Africa*. SABC television series, 19 Dec. 1996.

gave their own impressions of missionary education, as different as they themselves are. Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, for example, had nothing but praise for their educational matrix. "The religious values which I learnt there remain a guiding light for me," claimed Mandela, "without them I would never have overcome the many trials of my life". Missionaries brought the Gospel, said Tutu, "which turned out to be one of the most revolutionary things available; we've used the Bible in our struggle against the injustice of oppression and apartheid". But Stanley Mogoba, also a product of mission education, sounds the discordant note, that the early missionaries - and we must hear this chronological qualification - belonged to the consortium known as "the three Ms - the missionary, the magistrate and the merchant". Or, as Mbulelo Mzamane unforgettably put it, the missionaries brought the Bible to soften the Africans' heart, the traders the bottle to soften their heads, and the army the barrel to deliver the *coup de grace*.[32]

God Bless Africa nevertheless identified four important benefits of the education brought by the missionaries, for all its limitations. Firstly, it empowered Africans to meet the new historical conditions brought by conquest. Secondly, it was a crucial factor in the creation of a new elite and leadership echelon. Thirdly, it offered an academic education of international standards, and finally, with time, the idea of the social gospel began to inform the endeavours particularly of urban missionaries, like the CR. Since the impact of colonialism, it is probably education which has been of paramount concern to black people in South Africa. It alone has the power to affect material conditions of life in a disrupted and industrialised society, and to effect changes in class and social status. "They have unlimited faith, almost too much, one thinks, in the white man's education," noted Alban Winter CR at the time of the founding of St Peter's. "They regard it as the secret of his power, and who shall say that they are altogether wrong? To obtain it for their children they will spare no expense, so far as their limited means

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[32] Mbulelo Mzamane, `Colonial and Imperial Themes in South African Literature 1820-1930', in GK Hunter and CJ Rawson (eds), *The Yearbook of English Studies* (Volume 13, 1983), 185.

allow".[33] Although this diagnosis is coloured by a 1920s perspective, and makes generalised claims for what was not by any means a homogeneous response on the part of African society, it is a considered perception of the importance of education to many Africans.

Writing in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1925, RV Selope Thema (then acknowledged as an orthodox spokesperson for the African elite) mentions the determination of black people to acquire education "at any cost", even if they have to go abroad for it. His piece, entitled "Transvaal Native Education", compares educational facilities in the province with those of the Cape and Natal at around the time the first St Peter's pupils sat for the Junior Certificate (JC) exam in 1927,[34] and finds the facilities hopelessly lacking, with not a single Transvaal pupil being enrolled at Fort Hare in 1925. He insists, as the African National Congress (ANC) would increasingly do, on government control and development of black education in the Transvaal, owing to "the impossibility of repressing Bantu desire for education",[35] and the need for higher education in the province to enable the Transvaal to send its students directly to Fort Hare, bypassing secondary schools in the Cape or Natal. The provision of high schools in the province is all the more crucial, he remarks, since Fort Hare is subsidised by the black community in the Transvaal. St Peter's was the first secondary school for this community, founded at this very time, and the only one for over a decade.

As Mphahlele and Abrahams were finishing school at St Peter's in December 1937, education was receiving the most prominence during discussions of the first meeting of the Native Representative Council in Pretoria,[36] the proceedings of which are recorded in the travel notes of the African American

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[33] Alban Winter, `Native Education in the Transvaal', *CR Quarterly* (79) Michaelmas 1922, 25.

[34] In order accurately to convey the ethos of the inter-war years, this thesis regularly uses the term *pupil* or *scholar* in preference to *student* (the term favoured by the black community, but which properly designates those who study at tertiary institutions) or the term currently in vogue, *learner* (which is anachronistic in a thesis of this nature).

[35] RV Selope Thema, `Transvaal Native Education', *Umteteli wa Bantu* 17 Oct. 1925, 1.

Ralph Bunche on his three-month visit to South Africa.[37] Three educational issues take up most of the proceedings: inadequate funding, central state control, and denominational church involvement, issues which would dog black education until the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which removed control from the missionaries and placed education under central government, within the ambit of the Department of Bantu Affairs. The lack of finance comprised the greatest threat to the development of black education, because the four provincial governments of the Union resented educating black people, fearing antagonism and competition, and were too apathetic to concern themselves with it anyway. Edgar Brookes felt that whites were too humane to prohibit black education, but too human to encourage it, while Osmund Victor CR eschewed neat aphorisms in his scathing attack on the "dead weight of European indifference" which thwarted missionary endeavours through fear lest education would lead to "uprising, disobedience, growing proletariat, class consciousness etc".[38] In 1939, for example, the average expenditure on education for each white child was £21.10, £5.5 for each Indian and coloured child, and only £2.70 for each African pupil, of whom only one third were then at school.[39] In 1951-52 the expenditure for each white child was £43.88, £18.84 for each Indian and coloured child, and only £7.58 for each African pupil, and only about 41% of African children of school age attended school in 1953, when St Peter's was about to close its doors in protest

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[36] This was a body set up after the Cape Africans had been disenfranchised in 1936 and thus lost direct Parliamentary representation, to advise Parliament on legislation to do with black affairs until 1951, when it was disbanded after years of failure to deliver.

[37] Robert R Edgar (ed), *An African American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche 28 September 1937 - 1 January 1938* (Athens, OH, 1992).

[38] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), Osmund Victor, `The New Skyline in South African Native Education', 14 Mar. 1937, AB 1385 Community of the Resurrection, Records 1929-1940. For a thorough overview of white South Africa's objections to developing black education, based on fear of socio-economic and cultural upheaval, see the findings of the 1936 Interdepartmental Committee's report in Brian Rose and Raymond Tunmer (eds), *Documents in South African Education* (Johannesburg, 1975), 231-234.

[39] AB Xuma, Report of a Deputation from the ANC to the Deputy Prime Minister and Others, 4 March 1942, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 195. This money was drawn from direct taxation of the poorest section, the Africans themselves, and Dr Xuma was adamant that a new formula for funding had to be found for education to become wholly state-controlled and financed from general revenue.

against Bantu Education.[40] It is obvious that the time was overripe for the movement toward mass schooling of the youth, a responsibility of the modern nation state, as Jonathan Hyslop has argued.[41]

Separate provincial administration was also detrimental to black education, as the provinces allocated different amounts, and the general consensus among black and white was that there should be central government control. But while black representatives and those whites with savvy insisted on control by the Department of Education, whites with segregationist ideals like CT Loram favoured the Department of Native Affairs. The various missions also came in for criticism, simply because they offered as fragmented an education as their denominations, and, being dependent on money from overseas for plant and running costs, and on provincial governments for teachers' salaries, were hamstrung in extending facilities for education to countless pupils unable to find a place at school. In his account of the transition from missionary education to Bantu Education during the 1950s, Hyslop reminds us of the need to be constantly aware of the pitfalls of negotiating the missionary minefield,[42] where liberal accounts tend to glorify and romanticise the mission system, stressing a radical discontinuity, and materialist ones tend to emphasise the continuities with the schooling beforehand, viewing both as perpetuating the capitalist status quo. Like Ken Hartshorne, I have sympathy with both the liberal and Marxist or revisionist views, finding them complementary, and their respective emphasis on `race' and `class' perhaps too reductive. Both perspectives are necessary to an understanding of the educational order in South Africa, Hartshorne declares,[43] but the difficulty is to find the right mix.

My investigation will therefore try to steer an objective if not neutral course through the Scylla and Charybdis dogging any studies of the missionary enterprise: the hagiographical account, usually coloured by a

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[40] Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 29.
[41] Hyslop, `The Concepts of Reproduction', 9.
[42] Ibid, 11.
[43] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 18.

contemporaneous perspective, in which the Westernising and `civilising' mission can do no wrong; and the highly critical account, the result of a reassessment from a class-based or postcolonial perspective, of the mission enterprise which often negated indigenous culture and tradition and led to the collapse of infrastructure. A useful recent consideration of both the `reverential' approach to missionaries (usually written by them or later church historians) and the revisionist reaction to it (generally by materialist critics who often emphasise African initiative), and subsequent developments in the critique of missionary historiography is given by Johannes du Bruyn and Nick Southey.[44] However, as Mandy Goedhals reminds us, if it is the function of historians to understand historical actors as they understood themselves (and hence accept that most missionaries were motivated by a desire to extend the Kingdom of God), they must not stop here but critique the missionary enterprise from the knowledge afforded subsequent generations (such as how it was shaped by the forces of imperialism, chauvinism and capitalism).[45] If, "in the stamp of Victorian self-assuredness", the missionaries made their contribution, they did so, says James Cochrane, "not because they were scheming, half-witted or malicious, but because they were of their time, of their place, and in an advantaged position in an expanding political economy increasingly characterised by a capitalist hegemony".[46]

Missionary studies are a minefield, fraught with the "ambiguities of dependence" which Shula Marks identified in missionary-educated Africans like John Dube,[47] or the "moral ambivalence" which Willem Saayman attributed to the missionaries' relationship with the colonial government and

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[44] Johannes du Bruyn and Nicholas Southey, `The Treatment of Christianity & Protestant Missionaries in South African Historiography', in Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg, 1995), 27-47.

[45] Mandy Goedhals, `From Paternalism to Partnership? The Church of the Province of Southern Africa and Mission 1848-1988', in Frank England and Torquil Paterson (eds), *Bounty in Bondage: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg, 1989), 105.

[46] James Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of English-Speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930* (Johannesburg, 1987), 37.

[47] Shula Marks, `The Ambiguities of Dependence: John L. Dube of Natal', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1(2) 1975, 173. In Dube's public statements authenticity of voice is difficult to pinpoint. Because he was equally deeply committed to Christianity and to his people, he was obliged, on occasion to speak "in two voices to his two different audiences" who, of course, heard their already existing notions confirmed.

its subjects.[48] "Simply writing them [missionaries, and also their protégés] off as stooges of the colonial authority will therefore be as mistaken as simply eulogising them as fearless fighters for the rights of oppressed colonialised peoples".[49] We have to deal with "a chequered picture".[50] Or, to change the metaphor and use Etherington's suggestive phrase which captures the sense of elusiveness, educated blacks like Dube occupied "a continuum between which individual Africans slid rather than jumped", which he notes caused nineteenth-century missionaries continual frustration in so far as they tended to draw "sharp mental boundaries" between believers and non-believers.[51] Later generations would do the same intricate dance. Mphahlele, for example, speaks of having had, for survival, to "comply, acquiesce, yield, learn the techniques of dodging, ducking, weaving, while at the same time asserting [his] ethnic values".[52]

Among standard views of colonies as domains of exploitation, places beyond the inhibitions of the bourgeois cultures of Europe, and locations of the Other in opposition to the `European', colonies have also been viewed as "laboratories of modernity", where missionaries, educators and doctors could carry out experiments in social engineering without confronting the resistance of bourgeois European society back home. But, as Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper point out in their recent reassessment of the colonial enterprise, these "laboratories of modernity" could never produce `controlled conditions', for the people in the `experiments' were capable of circumventing and undermining the principles and practices of exploitation, free licence and experimentation which have variously characterised the historical colony.[53] Historians since the 1960s have taken a leaf out of their book, for they have tried to establish the complexity of non-Western reactions to European

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[48] Willem Saayman, `Christian Missions in South Africa: Achievements, Failures and the Future', in Martin Prozesky (ed), *Christianity amidst Apartheid* (London, 1990), 34.
[49] Saayman, `Christian Missions', 34.
[50] Ibid, 35.
[51] Etherington, `Recent Trends', 206.
[52] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self - a Personal Essay', *The Teachers' Journal* 23(5) 1980, 3.

dominance and deconstruct the shifts and tensions within colonial projects or regimes, which were neither monolithic nor omnipotent, even if the dynamics of either side of the encounter have provided material for more contemporary historians.[54] Simplistic responses prior to this nuanced approach to the missionary enterprise, while important, have nevertheless done much harm.

Nosipho Majeke's *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, for example, broke new ground in 1952 with a corrective approach to the hitherto hagiographical accounts of the missionary enterprise, and has continued to influence critics inimical to it. She is not always right: her critique of mission education is myopic, being premised on a false conflation of hegemony of state and mission.[55] Worryingly, she refuses to allow the missionaries any agency of their own, viewing them as simply tools of the state, whereas Kelwyn Sole has rightly noted that black education was not during this period an ideological function of the state: "the black elite's views on politics, culture, economics, religion and racism were formed by a group not identified with the state".[56] Majeke insists that the mission school, by virtue of its legislated isolation from white education, "feeds the Black child on inferiority and starves him educationally",[57] avoiding mention of the vast (if hopelessly inadequate) sums poured from missionary coffers into black education. Because she equates state with mission, she is not able to point out that the state never took it on itself to make provision for a better education, either by virtue of its own schools or full subsidy for mission schools. When it did, with the Bantu Education Act of 1953, it of course insisted on inferiority as a policy. She frighteningly turns the achievement of mission education on its head, noting that "the mind of youth wants to expand: it has hopes, ambitions, dreams, no matter what conditions of poverty it has lived in. And

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[53] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, `Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in their *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 4-5.
[54] Stoler and Cooper, `Between Metropole and Colony', 6, 14-15.
[55] See Nosipho Majeke (Dora Taylor), *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (Cumberwood, c.1986; orig. 1952), 136-138.
[56] Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change', 150.
[57] Majeke, *The Role of the Missionaries*, 137.

this is a quality that must be controlled".[58] Yet her critique of the stranglehold liberals had over the educated black elite is indeed valid and will be discussed in the next chapter.

For all her reductive and unsophisticated reading of the situation, Majeke avoids the empty rhetoric of a plethora of later critics. David Chanaiwa's overview of the damage done by missionaries, for example, is of little scholarly worth precisely because of its lack of objectivity.[59] It trots out the standard view (the Charybdis of missiological studies) that the missionaries were cads, and lumps them all together without offering a sense of chronological development or nuances between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In its complete lack of attempt to credit authentic evangelism or altruistic motives to the missionaries, it fails to engage with the whole point of the missionary enterprise, however flawed, which can be summed up in the words of Keble Talbot CR, namely that "the task of the Church is to baptize into Christ the whole life of the Bantu races; and to secure for them, within the liberty with which Christ makes them free, the development of all their capacities".[60] Even if in unimaginable ways: Stoler and Cooper, for example, give recognisable instances of how people "who lived inside [colonial] categories" could turn them around, finding in the mission community something valuable and meaningful to them, or using their mission education to gain secular advantage, or insisting that their conversion entitled them to run religious organisations themselves.[61] Chanaiwa's article is mentioned here as an exemplary instance of the one-sided and essentialist view which dogs this area and which, as John Comaroff has remarked, still remains in the tendency in some quarters to treat the colonisation of Africa as "a linear,

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[58] Ibid, 137.

[59] David Chanaiwa, `The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa', in Agrippah Mugomba and Mougo Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom: The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1980), 227-241. The irony of his tenure at the State University of California, even as he deplores the effects of Western education and the brain drain from Africa, has escaped the Zimbabwean writer.

[60] Keble Talbot, `Appeal for South Africa', *CR Quarterly* (99) Michaelmas 1927, 10. To give it a more secular flavour one could use David Attwell's phrase, the "production of newness", which entails for the enterprise "the desperate work of bringing its charges into the present and thus securing their future" (`Counter-Modernity', 8).

[61] Stoler and Cooper, `Between Metropole and Colony', 7.

inexorable process in political economy, cultural imperialism" or whatever, instead of focussing on the contestation which went into its making.[62]

A less disreputable article, but one which also commits cardinal errors is the earlier "African Responses to Christian Mission Education" by Edward Berman. His thesis is uncontentious enough: the destruction caused to African life, culture and self-esteem through the education offered by various missionary bodies throughout Africa. But his methods and case histories are not representative of the whole spectrum (ie. Catholic and Protestant), neither do they take into account the fundamental difference between the middle Victorian, late Victorian and early twentieth-century enterprises. His interviewees, conveniently disdainful of the education they received, are drawn from Protestant bodies: the Evangelical United Brethren, the Methodists, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Dutch Reformed Church, with only two having been educated under Catholic religious orders: the Franciscan and Cistercian. Berman's delight in the reactions of his interviewees as being "strikingly uniform",[63] no matter in what institution they were educated, or what the different cultural heritages of the missionaries or the African interviewees themselves were, is cause for concern. It suggests that he set out with a pre-conceived agenda in mind and hoped that his findings would fit the thesis - which of course they did. Interestingly, there is not a single Anglican among them (and this given British rule in Africa): their absence from an uncomplimentary article might be deliberate. Significantly, the two most important influences on the late Victorian Anglo-Catholic CR were Romanticism and Tractarianism, which led to their hostility to industrial capitalism and eighteenth-century rationalism, and a sympathy for mediaevalism, art guilds, and organic rural society.[64] In this regard they were unlike most nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries,

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[62] John L Comaroff, `Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa' in Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, 192.

[63] Edward H Berman, `African Responses to Christian Mission Education', *African Studies Review* 17(3) 1974, 533.

[64] See Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 15. However, the CR did not desire to escape industrialism, but become involved with the urban poor through care and evangelisation.

heirs of the Enlightenment and advocates of social and technological progress. Again, Berman's is a wholly one-sided view of the missionary question, and unforgivably flawed from a scholarly perspective by a total lack of chronology (not even the dates of his interviews are provided).

My approach, then, will pay scrupulous attention to dates and epochs, and will be informed by a revisionist Christian perspective, which acknowledges the crucial work done by Marxist critics, but which complements such readings with a Christian understanding. Broadly defined, this attributes an all-consuming altruism to the missionary enterprise, and acknowledges the essential nobility of purpose and motivation, while it reserves the right (and obligation), from a late twentieth-century perspective, to criticise those methods which were informed by the prevailing values of the time. The missionary enterprise, while it undoubtedly benefitted from now discredited mercantile and military initiatives (and indeed contributed to their success), cannot be simply lumped together with them. However misguided we find them today, and tainted with their age's avowed superiority of Western `civilisation', they forsook much in order to bring what they considered were the treasures of the Christian gospel to Africa. A helpful summary is offered by Anthony Dachs who, with Martin Legassick in the 1970s, did pioneering work in the wake of critics like Majeke: "Thus the missionaries sought religious conversion and social change from a benevolent spirit; and they pursued an end which from their religious convictions they believed could be nothing but beneficial to the peoples they served".[65] Their purpose was praiseworthy; their methods often less so. While the military machine and mercantile mania were driven solely by self-aggrandisement and greed, the missionary enterprise could at least claim a noble motivation, and the hardships they endured (as well as inflicted) bear testimony to this.

Trevor Huddleston CR, very aware of the unsavoury aspects of the missionary enterprise, nevertheless observes how the log books of the early missionaries in East Africa indicate solidarity with the people "in terms of

suffering, in the acceptance of sickness and disease", and whose many graves after a few months in Africa show one thing supremely: identification.[66] The missionaries were not anthropologists, he notes, but evangelists; they were not great scholars, administrators or theologians, but ordinary country clergy, nurses and doctors who came to Africa to give what they could: "they brought what they had, and they brought it at great cost". Perhaps the point reached by Martin Tucker in his exploration of the portraits of missionaries in African literature is the only appropriate one. A survey of West and East African writing compels him to conclude that the response is highly ambivalent, veering towards a deep sense of anger and loss on the part of West Africans, but leavened among East African writers by their sense of humour and the ridiculous, and consequent use of satire. "Part of anyone's reaction to a missionary - even a hostile observer," he admits, "has to be grudging admiration".[67] If the missionary may be "a fool wreaking damage wherever his best intentions get a chance to display themselves", but is not "a self-seeking knave", then African writers have the raw material to depict him in both bitter and comical terms. Views of missionaries varied with time and place, and as my investigation into the autobiographical texts is predicated on fluidity, not stasis, on seepage, not hermetic sealing, it seems wise to acknowledge the crucial ambivalence of African response.

Recent engagement with the colonial enterprise in the last decade, however, is recognising a far more complex picture than has hitherto been acknowledged, namely that it was as much about the colonial experience shaping what it meant to be `metropolitan' and `European' as the other way around. In their deconstruction of the simplistic categories through which colonies have been presented (in archives, published accounts and oral traditions), and what scholars as much as architects of colonial rule had invested in those classifications, Stoler and Cooper show how the scholarship of the late 1980s has witnessed a major shift in orientation,

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[65] Quoted in Du Bruyn and Southey, `The Treatment of Christianity', 39.
[66] Trevor Huddleston, `The Church in Africa', *South African Outlook* Sept. 1969, 146.
[67] Martin Tucker, `Portraits of Missionaries in African Literature: A Sketch'. Unpublished paper, 1982, 9.

> from one that focused primarily on the colonized and assumed that what it meant to be European, Western, and capitalist was one and the same to one that questioned the very dualism that divided colonizer from colonized, that sought to identify the processes by which they were mutually shaped in intimate engagement, attraction and opposition.[68]

The tensions of their book's title explore the crucial issue of how imperial projects were made possible and vulnerable at the same time. The trope of tensions introduces an important strand into this thesis, which allows for a nuanced response to the education offered by the CR and, indeed, the very socio-cultural ethos of the CR itself, and to the way in which ex-pupils of St Peter's variously appropriated, resisted, or refashioned the social categories of colonial and later apartheid rule, and even the Western text itself.

3 The significance of the educational matrix

Olive Schreiner's epigraph to *The Story of an African Farm*, "The entire man is, so to speak, to be found in the cradle of the child", gives us cause to focus on the significance of education for writers. Because it invariably occurs during the formative impressionable years, the impact of education on writers is increasingly becoming the subject of scholarship. Nils Eskestad, for example, is exploring the Ulster poet Seamus Heaney's education at Queen's University in Belfast between 1957 and 1961, where he studied English.[69] Eskestad notes the narrow focus on an Anglocentric canon but comments that, while it added "an initial cultural timidity" it also offered "a sense of belonging within a wider, richly varied English-language tradition".[70] The Irish

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[68] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, Preface, in their *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), vii-viii.
[69] Nils Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon: Regionality and the Impact of Education in Seamus Heaney's Poetry', *ARIEL* 29(4) 1998, 7-20.
[70] Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon', 7.

Catholic Heaney's experience of cultural unease in the face of English hegemony is demonstrated by the question he posed in *Among Schoolchildren* (1984), "Was I two persons or one?", and further, "Was I extending myself or breaking myself apart?".[71] When he saw poets like Robert Burns anthologised in books he read at St Columb's College, the cultural estrangement was mitigated (in an experience uncannily like that of Peter Abrahams in the Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) twenty years before upon discovering the African American poets) and this helped him, as he put it, to "fill the gap between the parish and the academy".[72] With the exploration of his Northern Irish heritage, Heaney has "allowed himself to negotiate more confidently between his regionality and the English literary canon to which he was exposed from the beginning of his schooling".[73]

Such negotiation between the particular and the universal is evident among those educated at mission schools. "I'm the personification of the African paradox," Mphahlele said defiantly in 1959, "detribalized, Westernized, but still African".[74] And Rev. Bonganjalo Goba, educated at Adams College, revels in this very dialectic in the second episode of *God Bless Africa*, "Transformations":

> I think that's one of the most exciting things of being African in general, in that we live in two worlds, learn to be sympathetic - intentionally sympathetic - to two cultures; we learn to embrace the unknown easily. It brings a very interesting dimension of being courageous, because you explore the unknown, you're always struggling within yourself to find a holistic view of life, to hold these things in tension - creative tension.[75]

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[71] Quoted in Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon', 9.
[72] Ibid, 12.
[73] Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon', 19.
[74] Mphahlele, `The Dilemma of the African Elite', 325.
[75] *God Bless Africa*, 26 Dec. 1996.

This dialectic informs much postcolonial exploration of textual identity and subject construction, and my later discussion of the autobiographical texts, and the complicated subjectivities they construct, will reveal that the picture is a complex one. Paul Gilroy, among others, has addressed this dialectic in his recent work on what he terms `the Black Atlantic' or what constitutes `blackness' in the Diaspora, across the `middle passage' charted by the slave ships, "a webbed network, between the local and the global".[76] He has chosen to employ as a defining trope of this subject construction WEB Du Bois's `double consciousness' or `second sight' as enunciated in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), both gift and burden, what Gilroy terms "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering that I have heuristically called the black Atlantic world".[77] As Du Bois himself pointed out, there is a special stress, in Gilroy's articulation, attached to "the effort involved in trying to face (at least) two ways at once."

It was not without effort that Mphahlele could admit in 1964 to having "reconciled a good number of these disparate elements in me, the white and the black", so that he can "just switch on and off" regarding his dual identity, which he identifies broadly as the African need to be part of a community and the European sense of individualism.[78] We would do well to remember that the Community of the Resurrection itself participated in a dual identity, in that the order grew out of the Victorian idealisation of mediaevalism (in which a common monastic rural life was seen as an alternative to the claims of individualism rationalising the rise of industrial capitalism),[79] even as it consciously made allowances for the uniqueness of each member within it (which, predictably, led to some tension). In conversation with Kate Turkington Mphahlele expressed the ease with which "so many Africans all

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[76] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 29.
[77] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 3.
[78] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Conversation with Ezekiel Mphahlele', *Africa Report* July 1964, 8.
[79] See Raymond Williams's discussion of William Cobbett's popularisation of this idea (*Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 37).

over the continent walk from one stage to another: commuters, if I may call it that way; they commute between the white world and the black".[80] The thespian allusion is appropriate: it picks up on the `mask' of Dube, and the `veil' or `double consciousness' of Du Bois, as it seeks to describe the complex interplay between ontological and strategic identity, resisting both outdated simplistic binaries and trendy multivalent hybridities.

Textual evidence of African response to education at Lovedale, De Kock has shown, was riven with ambiguity, for the adoption of missionary language and values was partial and ambivalent and at times subversive, "although such subversion was always cloaked by ostensible conformity".[81] Keith Shear picks up on this ambiguity to note that "a dual personal history" could easily arise in an oppressive society, the first acting out the role assigned by the dominant social order, the second pursuing other objectives. He feels that autobiography uncovers this second history, for "it represents the consciousness and humanity behind the mask" (or, to borrow Du Bois's image, the veil), even as its writer remains aware of the limitations imposed by the first history.[82] My experience in reading the autobiographical texts (which may themselves, like schools, be considered `sites of struggle' or `sites of identity production' in that they both resist and produce cultural identities),[83] interviewing ex-pupils of St Peter's, and researching the CR, has yielded a world in which the interstices of Mirfield and Africa created a double vision in both the CR and the high school pupils, in which both eyes (and often both `I's) were needed for the full focus. Indeed, as Ross Posnock has noted of Du Bois, the two roles of `race man' and `intellectual' (his African-American and Western legacy, respectively) tended to "jostle against each

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[80] Tim Couzens, Norman Hodge and Kate Turkington, `Looking In: Interviews with Es'kia Mphahlele', *English Academy Review* 4 1987, 139. The interviews were conducted in 1979.
[81] Leon de Kock, `"Drinking at the English Fountains": Missionary Discourse and the Case of Lovedale', *Missionalia* 20(2) 1992, 134.
[82] Shear, `Depictions of Childhood', 42.
[83] Leigh Gilmore, cited in Patricia Geesey, `Why African Autobiography', *Research in African Literatures* 28(2) Summer 1997, 1. As Geesey observes, it is within the parameters of `production' and `resistance' that African autobiographies, and the subjectivities they construct, are now being studied.

other" and the effort to balance them became "a source of creative tension throughout his career".[84]

Mission-educated Africans like John Dube at the turn of the century would fight all their life for black unity and liberation through such strategies as education, democratic political organisation, working with sympathetic whites, and adopting Christian values.[85] All four strategies were also employed to varying degrees by prominent alumni of St Peter's a few decades later, but complicated by their increasing consciousness of their African experience. This complementarity was integral to their identity as a class, suggests Alan Cobley, and provided the basis for a growing African nationalism: "This cultural consciousness was inclusive of both `African' and `European' - `working class' and `bourgeois' - cultural experiences. In its most overt form it became a self-conscious quest to `remake' or `modernise' African culture".[86] David Attwell has posited a shift in the paradigm of `modernity', from church and school in the nineteenth century, to the city from the 1930s onwards, so that by the 1950s, "city styles and virtues will be the norm (glamourized by their association with America, the most glittering metropolis of all)",[87] and the particular power of the education at St Peter's was probably due to its representing both old and new paradigms, the full spectrum of church, school and city. It was the schooling environment of St Peter's which initially forced the experiencing self into the dialogue of two selves or the dramatisation of a dual personality (as Mphahlele termed it), so requiring of the writing self a resolution, or at least the holding in tension of "an African world view based on traditional values" and "a physical and human landscape created or determined by a European world view, which we were educated to deal with in the first place, *the reason we felt the impulse to write* [my italics]".[88]

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[84] Ross Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual', *Critical Inquiry* 23(2) 1997, 329.
[85] Marks, `The Ambiguities of Dependence', 180.
[86] Alan Cobley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 to 1950* (New York, 1990), 229.
[87] Attwell, `Counter-Modernity', 15.
[88] Mphahlele, `The African Critic Today', 15.

At the end of his study of the life and work of HIE Dhlomo, the first black South African to consider himself a writer first and foremost, Couzens ascribes the style and language (the "available idiom") used by Dhlomo in his poems and plays of the 1930s and 1940s to the ethos in which he was raised at Adams College and the liberal white and black middle-class milieu in which he moved:

> Clearly the ideas and language of a hegemonic culture pressed in on the black middle class at many points - in the press, the civil service, the law courts, the church. Above all, the schools inculcated modes of behaviour, values, forms of speech, which had an immense effect. No adequate study of these schools exists - their curricula, the origins and nature of their staff, their changing patterns.[89]

This, when I read it years ago, sparked off my desire to explore one of these, St Peter's, which was the common matrix for all but one (that of Bloke Modisane) of the explosion of male autobiographies of the 1950s and early 1960s.[90] The school was also a main contributor of writers for *Drum* magazine of the 1950s, and Couzens shows that there was more continuity between the writing of the 1930s and 1940s (eg. Dhlomo) and that of the *Drum* school of the 1950s (which included most of the autobiographers) than there was between the writers of the 1950s and the *Staffrider* voices of the 1970s.[91] This is mainly attributed to the different educational systems which produced the writers: Dhlomo and Arthur Maimane for example, a generation apart, were both educated in the mission school system, which shaped their sensibility in a completely different way from Bantu Education's influence, say, on Mongane Serote. If the signs of a break with Dhlomo's "available

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[89] Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of HIE Dhlomo* (Johannesburg, 1985), 353.

[90] Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (London, 1963). Noni Jabavu's *Drawn in Colour* (London, 1960) and *The Ochre People* (New York, 1963) also appeared during this period but, while her sister Alexandra attended St Peter's for a year in 1940, she never did, and it is for this reason I have chosen to exclude her from my discussion.

[91] Couzens, *The New African*, 353.

idiom" can be seen in the *Drum* writers, says Couzens, it is due to "the maturing of a frustration" which had begun in the late 1930s, and which the career and writings of Dhlomo chronicle step-by-step. This frustration was caused by the very forces which had produced the aspirations (embodied in the "available idiom") failing to deliver on the expectations raised.

That the educational matrix is increasingly being acknowledged as a crucial influence on African literary production is apparent in Neville Choonoo's exploration of comparable autobiographies in the United States and South Africa, where he comparatively examines, though not exhaustively, the education received by black American and South African writers, as a crucial element in their respective self-formation.[92] As Michael Wade has noted of Abrahams's earliest literary products, written at the time of his schooling under the CR, "the religious roots of his Marxist and later liberal agnosticism go deep and begin early".[93] Their gesture in that direction, however, still needs to be followed. More recent scholarship includes the work of the Ngugi wa Thiong'o scholar, Carol Sicherman. In "Ngugi's Colonial Education" she considers the impact on Ngugi's artistic career of the premier Kenyan secondary school, Alliance High School, and the prestigious East African university, Makerere College in Uganda.[94] A crucial difference for our purposes, however, is that Alliance High was run by a missionary in the mould of RHW Shepherd of Lovedale, E Carey Francis, whom Ngugi later satirised as "Fraudsham", and the school participated directly in British colonial educational ideals governed by the policy of `indirect rule.' Alliance High, for example, unlike St Peter's where pupils wrote examinations set by the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB), was controlled by the colonial examination system, which contributed to "the kind of colonial academic

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[92] See Neville Choonoo, "Parallel Lives: Black Autobiography in South Africa and the United States" (PhD, Columbia University, 1982), 144-155, 180-203, 255-272. His coverage of Abrahams's education at Grace Dieu and St Peter's, however, only occupies two pages (194-195) and invites further exploration.

[93] Michael Wade, `The View from Pisgah? Peter Abrahams at Seventy', *Southern African Review of Books* June/July 1989, 9.

[94] Carol Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education: "The Subversion . . . of the African *Mind*"', *African Studies Review* 38(3) 1995, 11-41. We must remember that Ngugi was of a later

hothouse" where "intellects might be forced into something rather like a Western shape".[95] What the two schools did share, however, were similar extracurricular activities and "the muscular Christianity" of boarding institutions at which religion was central,[96] characteristics which will be fleshed out in later chapters.

Consideration of the effect of colonial education on Ngugi's mind, while equipping him with the tools needed to challenge the colonial mindset through intellect and creativity, led Sicherman on to the argument she develops in "The Leeds-Makerere Connection". Here she demonstrates that it took the East African writers' experience of Leeds University to expose the `hothouse' education they had received at Alliance High and Makerere, even while these institutions proved the necessary "ticket" to Leeds and the world.[97] It is no accident that the Community of the Resurrection was based in this northern English agglomeration, in the mill town of Mirfield, having moved there from the sybaritic south at the close of the nineteenth century in order better to live out their ideals of Christian socialism. In their education at Rosettenville, pupils at St Peter's encountered the grimy industrial and muscularly intellectual Leeds which encouraged them to find their literary voice. `Mirfield in Africa' introduced them to the same "humane socialism" which Ngugi met in Arnold Kettle and the "rich mix of extracurricular intellectual activity" in which Ngugi participated at Leeds.[98] Indeed, Leeds - metropolis and university - runs like a leitmotif through this thesis, undergirding Sicherman's elegantly phrased and heavily ironic conclusion, that the "Blakean spirit of revolution rooted in Leeds's `dark satanic mills' turned out to be a valuable part of the African colonial heritage".[99]

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generation than Abrahams and Mphahlele, hence tertiary education - local and overseas - had become the logical next step for an African writer.

[95] Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 12.

[96] Ibid, 14.

[97] Carol Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection and Ngugi's Intellectual Development', *UFAHAMU* 23(1) 1995, 3-20.

[98] Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 33.

[99] Ibid, 33.

It has been argued by Leon de Kock regarding the rural Lovedale that, however ambiguous or partial Africans' reception of the missionaries might have been, however much missionary discourse "was resisted and negotiated", missionaries "set the terms and prescribed the forms . . . in which ongoing dialogues about selfhood and identity would be conducted".[100] It is the contention of this thesis that the individuality mediated by their Western education at the urban St Peter's School solicited the first black South African autobiographers' use of the Western autobiographical form to interpret their experiences through a narrative structure. As "an account of the calculus of exile",[101] each autobiography achieves meaning for itself and the life it chronicles, sharing with the other black autobiographies of the 1950s and early 1960s the distinction of being the last products of the potent mix of missionisation, industrialisation and urbanisation in the crucible which characterised their childhoods.

[100] Leon de Kock, `The Land and Its Appropriation by "English"', in Nigel Bell and Meg Cowper-Lewis (eds), *Literature, Nature and the Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment* (Zululand, 1993), 208.
[101] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 280.

CHAPTER ONE: THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

1 The educational background at the fin-de-siècle

1.1 The late Victorian age (or, `Cape education')

Since the Community of the Resurrection was founded in 1892, and came out to South Africa just ten years later to do specifically educational work in what was then the Diocese of Pretoria, it is important, before examining the climate of the 1930s through to the 1950s when St Peter's School was in existence, briefly to give a sense of what the British `civilising mission' entailed. There is no point in rehearsing what has become an exceptionally well-documented period of South African educational history; Presbyterian Lovedale in the Eastern Cape stands pre-eminent here, but there have also been studies on other rural nineteenth-century English missions like Healdtown (Methodist) and St Matthews (Anglican) in the Eastern Cape.[1] All were generated by the three-pronged mid-Victorian colonial thrust of Stanley Mogoba's "missionary, magistrate, and merchant" or, as DM Schreuder phrases it, "the happy confusion of Christian values, civilisation and the work ethic".[2] Yet the CR, being Anglo-Catholic and drawn mainly from the upper middle classes, differed from the predominantly Protestant and middle-class missionaries who founded these rural stations, although crucially, by the time they began work in South Africa, the Community had begun to absorb men from the working classes whom they had trained as priests in England. So, while they participated in the `civilising mission', which itself changed over

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[1] See, for example, Leslie Hewson, “Healdtown: A Study of a Methodist Experiment in African Education” (PhD, Rhodes University, 1959); Priscilla Fihla, “The Development of Bantu Education at the St Matthew’s Mission Station, Keiskama Hoek, 1853-1959” (MEd, UNISA, 1963); RH Davis, “Nineteenth Century African Education in the Cape Colony: An Historical Analysis” (PhD, University of Wisconsin, 1969); David Burchell, “A History of the Lovedale Missionary Institution 1890-1930” (MA, University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), 1979); Timothy White, “Lovedale 1930-1955: The Study of a Missionary Institution in Its Social, Educational and Political Context” (MA, Rhodes University, 1988).

[2] DM Schreuder, `The Cultural Factor in Victorian Imperialism: A Case Study of the British “Civilising Mission”’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 4(3) 1976, 309.

time, they were often at odds with the bourgeois principles informing it, and this disjunction became increasingly obvious in the field of education.

DM Schreuder makes the point that British rule had traditionally adopted a `liberal' and humanitarian posture towards its colonised peoples in Africa, with the concomitant desire of gradually to `civilise', economically integrate and acculturate the indigenous inhabitants.[3] As Sir George Grey, notorious for his view that education of Africans would create a market for consumer goods and also instil the `moral' quality of work (to capital's advantage), wrote to the Colonial Office in late 1854, he intended "to attempt gradually to win them to civilisation and Christianity, and thus to change by degrees our at present unconquered and apparently unconquerable foes, into friends who may have common interest with ourselves".[4] Janet Hodgson notes that industrial education, with its inculcation of the work ethic, was one of the keystones of Grey's programme of cultural change,[5] and the missionaries were exhorted, as Nosipho Majeke put it, "to build up a whole system of new ideas, new needs and desires, new allegiances, new authorities, and a new morality, all leading to an *acceptance* of the new civilization by the Africans".[6]

In her Marxist critique of Grey's educational meddling, Majeke demonstrates that he was prepared to make provision for an elite middle class of Africans "to carry out the work of the missionaries among their own people", while encouraging and subsidising a labour-oriented education for the masses.[7] One result of the British `civilising mission' is the distinction between the black working class and the petty bourgeoisie (or, perhaps more accurately, since the owning of property was not always the criterion,[8] the educated middle

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[3] Schreuder, `The Cultural Factor', 289.
[4] Quoted in Schreuder, `The Cultural Factor', 290.
[5] Janet Hodgson, `The Writings of a Young African Elite in the mid-19th Century: The Letters and Essays of the Children of African Chiefs, at Zonnebloem College'. Unpublished paper, 1981, 2.
[6] Nosipho Majeke, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (Cumberwood, c.1986), 69.
[7] Majeke, *The Role*, 68-69.
[8] In Marxist terms, the bourgeoisie can be defined as the owners of the means of production within a capitalist system, but the growth of such a class depends as much on cultural distinctions and state power as on property and production, particularly in the South African

class or, as it has also been termed, the repressed elite), fostered throughout the nineteenth century by `Cape liberalism' which stressed the assimilability of Africans as `civilised' individuals. It made for an uneasy alliance between middle and working class in black politics throughout the twentieth century. The late Baruch Hirson believed that the men who emerged as leaders had a clearer perception of their class interest than they gave out, and were thus quite prepared, when successive governments inevitably defined discriminatory measures in racial terms, to frame their response in the same terms.[9] Yet Tom Lodge disputes the claim that petty bourgeois leaders were attempting to mask class distinctions within the ANC. Admittedly in the context of the radicalised politics of the 1950s, he mentions the "vast area of shared experience between middle-class political notables and their proletarian neighbours" (which the black autobiographical writing of the time reveals), and warns that an analysis of black history in this country "through class-based concepts" requires "great caution and delicacy".[10]

Grey's view of education, along with that of local colonial agents, was that instruction in `the three Rs' was necessary, but education should also stress skills and trades, thus setting the tone for the debate to preoccupy the next century, viz. the merits of an industrial education versus a `bookish' or academic one. It seems to have been the capitalist economy which dictated which of the two held sway at any given time, although Sue Krige warns against the unproblematic equation of capital and state.[11] Lovedale provides the most famous example of this debate, demonstrated in the different thinking of the first Principal, William Govan, who advocated the best of a

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context, with its historical limits set on black property and company ownership. When used in this thesis, it refers generally to the educated nature of this class.

[9] Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Sowetan Revolt: Roots of a Revolution?* (London: 1979), 318-319.

[10] Tom Lodge, `Political Mobilisation during the 1950s', in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, 1987), 313. The complexity of this is evident in Kelwyn Sole's analysis of our black literary history which demonstrates that the writers of the 1950s and early 1960s "did not present a monolithic position vis-à-vis the social formation as a whole; nuances of attitude and opinion very likely based on social position and affiliation are discernable between writers" (`Problems of Creative Writers in South Africa', *Work in Progress* Sept.1977, 18-19).

[11] Sue Krige, `"Trustees and Agents of the State?": Missions and Post-Union Policy Formation towards African Education 1910-1920'. Unpublished paper, 1993, 3.

classical education, and his successor, James Stewart, who favoured an industrial one.[12] Michael Ashley mentions that the most advanced black pupil at Lovedale was examined in 1864 by the Superintendent-General of Education, Langham Dale, in the Greek Testament, an Ode of Anacreon, the first book of the *Aeneid* and Euclidean geometry.[13] And Janet Hodgson records that at the Anglican school Zonnebloem College in Cape Town at this very time, the sons and daughters of chiefs on the Eastern frontier, "pulled out of their society and totally immersed in the new way of life",[14] would do Geography, English History and the elements of Euclid (in addition to Greek and Latin) as well as, in line with Grey's scheme of industrial education, spend half a day in trade-training like carpentry, tailoring and shoemaking.[15]

By May 1877, however, the "kid-glove era", "the age of sentimentalism", had given way after a costly lesson in time and money to the discipline of "the saw, plane, hammer and spade" (Langham Dale's phrases in a speech delivered at Zonnebloem).[16] The debate was all to do with the purpose of African education in a colonial political economy. Would blacks be encouraged to aspire to equality with whites by being given a competitive education, or should they be made to realise that a subordinate role in society meant a differentiated education? British paternalism which, as Anglican church historian Peter Hinchliff remarks, is the defining characteristic of the `English' churches, both in terms of superiority of culture (the `civilisation' of the metropolis) and moral superiority (the `conscience' of the colony),[17] blinded the turn-of-the-century missions to the frustrations consequent on education. "The Churches do not seem to have realised," suggests Hinchliff, "that to provide education without constant pressure to compel society to provide corresponding opportunities was to fail in their role as the conscience

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[12] See, among others, Leon de Kock, `"Drinking at the English Fountains": Missionary Discourse and the Case of Lovedale', *Missionalia* 20(2) Aug. 1992, 129-130.
[13] Michael Ashley, `The British Influence on Education in South Africa', in André de Villiers (ed), *English-Speaking South Africa Today* (Cape Town, 1976), 255.
[14] Hodgson, `The Writings', 7.
[15] Ibid, 11.
[16] Cited in Hodgson, `The Writings', 27-28.
[17] Peter Hinchliff, `The "English-Speaking" Churches and South Africa in the Nineteenth Century', in De Villiers, *English-Speaking South Africa Today*, 173.

of society".[18] Paternalism took on flesh as `trusteeship', which became linked to the idea of `indirect rule' as the twentieth century progressed, and it was against these that an incipient African nationalism reacted during the very years that St Peter's School was in existence.

The idea of `trusteeship' found its local flowering in the Transvaal after Union in 1910 in what has been termed `inter-war liberalism', in strong distinction to the earlier strand of Cape liberalism. This was a direct result of the industrialisation of the Rand since the 1880s, which called into question things like the role of the black middle class, the assimilability of the black individual, and the goal of African education given the labour needs of capital and the bias to preserve white hegemony in the face of a massive black proletariat in South Africa. As Shula Marks has shown, when John Dube returned from Oberlin College in America, it was to a very different world, where the Natal government, sensitive to the urban white proletariat, had set in place legislation preventing competition from black craftsmen and artisans, and withdrawing subsidy from industrial secondary schools, especially if their products were sold on the open market.[19]

In their introduction to *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa*, Marks and Rathbone make the point that by the time "the African petty bourgeoisie was so enthusiastically `improving' itself, Victorian faith in the prescriptive power of `civilisation' was waning".[20] The chief consequences of the industrialisation which marked the early years of the twentieth century were the declining agricultural capacity of the reserves, the dissolution of the tribal system, the growth of urban slums and working-class radicalism.[21] Moreover, the backbone of the South African economy, the Witwatersrand, was profoundly affected by the First World War, with the expansion of

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[18] Hinchliff, `The “English-Speaking” Churches', 178.
[19] Shula Marks, `The Ambiguities of Dependence: John L. Dube of Natal', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1(2) 1975, 169.
[20] Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1970-1930* (London, 1982), 29.
[21] Saul Dubow, `Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years', in Marks and Trapido, *The Politics of Race*, 79.

manufacturing and industry, hence the growth of a black urban proletariat, and rampant wartime inflation. Middle and working class alike lived in increasingly overcrowded and squalid housing in the locations, but one way out of this ghetto existence was the relative status that came with education, so that, as Marks and Rathbone put it, by "proving their acceptability to whites in terms of education, culture and class, they could hope also to escape the brutalities of the mining compound and underground labour as well as the indignity of the third-class railway compartment".[22] Of course, the way out for whites was segregation, however much JC Smuts in 1942 might view that process as akin to sweeping the ocean back with a broom.

1.2 The inter-war years (or, `Transvaal education')

The best documentation of the inter-war period in the Transvaal during which St Peter's School was established is Dubow's variously-published study of race segregation as the precursor of apartheid, theorised and advocated in response to industrialisation by white English-speaking politicians and educationists like Maurice Evans, Edgar Brookes, CT Loram, and JD Rheinallt Jones, until it became the Pact Government's policy around 1926, when the Hertzog Bills were first published. Ironically enough, this caused Brookes and Rheinallt Jones to change their views, as they found the passing of Hertzog's 1927 Native Administration Act too ominous; it would lead, of course, to the removal in 1936 of what small power the educated elite had left, namely the Cape African franchise. As James Cochrane has demonstrated, the dominant ideological patterns in the English churches in the 1920s were similar to those in mid-Victorian England when a successful middle class influenced by Protestant evangelicalism defined the virtues of the time (industriousness, self-reliance and self-help) and the values (piety, fidelity, and good faith), which were admirably suited to the interests of capital.[23] This functional approach enhanced the attraction for CT Loram of an industrial education for blacks. This was in stark contrast to the ontological

[22] Marks and Rathbone, *Industrialisation and Social Change*, 30.

vein of Anglo-Catholicism, to be explored in the next chapter, which stressed an education towards a full humanity.

CT Loram nevertheless visited St Peter's in May 1935, Esk'ia Mphahlele's first year there, because, one might suppose, of his prominence as an educationist.[24] It was his influential ideas, usually framed as slogans, such as `education for life', `utility', and `adaptation', against which St Peter's School stood for their want of rigorous critical thinking. Charles Lyons mentions that Loram and his ilk had their critics in Victor Murray, educationist at the influential Selly Oak College in Birmingham, whose *School in the Bush* (1929)[25] attacked 1920s educationists who tended to think in terms of slogans such as `manual training for character' or `education for doing', formulae which could be put to insidious use.[26] JD Rheinallt Jones was Chairman of St Peter's Council for many years, and deeply involved in the Pathfinders movement which was very popular in African schools during the inter-war years, and for which Peter Abrahams worked to pay his way through Grace Dieu near Pietersburg in 1936. Rheinallt Jones was also editor of the journal *Bantu Studies* started at Wits University in 1921, and attended RHW Shepherd's conference of African authors in 1936.[27] Edgar Brookes was principal of Adams College from 1933 to 1945, and so created the environment in which Mphahlele did his teacher training in the late 1930s. He visited St Peter's in August 1946.[28] A digression into the main characteristics

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[23] James Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of English-Speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930*, (Johannesburg, 1987), 158.
[24] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), St Peter's School Records 1932-1956, Log Book AB 2089 / B.
[25] Incidentally, it was this book which Sol Plaatje wanted in exchange for a copy of *Mhudi* (he would send out copies to invite books in return and try to build up his library in this way) but was sent another by a rather mingy Murray instead, who communicated Plaatje's peevishness to Rheinallt Jones in May 1931 (Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (Johannesburg, 1984), 364).
[26] Charles Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White: British Ideas about Black African Educability 1530-1960*, (New York, 1975), 160.
[27] An extremely influential man on the Witwatersrand, Rheinallt Jones emigrated to South Africa from Wales in 1905, imbued with his family's ideals of liberal reform and social service. He was the first secretary and director of the SAIRR and remained its guiding spirit throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, also representing African voters, along with Edgar Brookes, in the Senate from 1937 to 1942 (Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV: Political Profiles 1882-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 43).
[28] CPSA, St Peter's School Records 1932-1956, Log Book AB 2089 / B.

of segregation or `inter-war liberalism' in the Transvaal would therefore serve as a reconstruction of the environment in which St Peter's School took root.

Transvaal `liberalism' was initially influenced by the fin-de-siècle study of eugenics, based crudely on assumed `racial' differences. In 1928 the Wits University psychologist ID MacCrone published some early research in social psychology (which he later disclaimed),[29] examining the comparative scores for the Porteus Maze tests of pupils at St Peter's and St Agnes's School in Rosettenville, Johannesburg (before they were combined in 1931),[30] and those of London pupils collected by the educationist Cyril Burt. One of his conclusions was that there was an apparent peak in the average level of performance around eleven to twelve years for the African children and thirteen to fourteen years for the white, which appeared to demonstrate the phenomenon of African pupils' earlier `arrested development'.[31] According to Paul Rich, MacCrone's ideas had an immediate impact on JD Rheinallt Jones.[32] It is significant that Alban Winter CR, the great educationist in the Community and founder of St Peter's School, in his retrospective unpublished memoir, "Till Darkness Fell", took a swipe at the eugenicists who held such sway in the first part of the century, claiming through `scientific' testing (such as the notorious cranial measuring exercise) that blacks were not the intellectual equals of whites.[33] Like Edgar Brookes, he was "determined to put these African boys and girls through the same course of studies and the same examinations as the Europeans".[34] Africans insisted on this, of

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[29] With time, MacCrone came to believe that race differences were less important a study than the group psychology that underlay racial cleaveages of a perceptual kind, marking the shift away in psychology from intelligence-testing towards a study of inter-cultural relations.

[30] He calls this "a fair sample of the urban native school-going population", comprising 53 boys and 34 girls, their ages varying from 9 to 15 years and the highest standard being Std V (`Preliminary Results from the Porteus Maze Tests Applied to Native School Children', *South African Journal of Science* (XXV) Dec. 1928, 481).

[31] MacCrone, `Preliminary Results', 482.

[32] Paul Rich, *Hope and Despair: English-Speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics 1896-1976* (London & New York, 1993), 34.

[33] For a discussion of the `educability' of black people see Charles Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 140-144, where he contrasts two texts dating from the late 1930s by ML Fick and JA Jansen van Rensburg, whose controversial findings were disputed or not taking into account environmental factors in `culture-free' tests.

[34] Alban Winter, `Till Darkness Fell'. Unpublished typescript, 1962, 65.

course, as they have all along, and "would accept for their children nothing inferior either in subject matter or in severity test."

Early in the 1920s, however, some were beginning to question the hereditarian orthodoxies of the eugenicists, and one work which was especially important was that written by a former Rhodesian magistrate, Peter Nielsen, entitled *The Black Man's Place in South Africa*, and published in 1922, the year St Peter's was established. Nielsen's work dismissed the idea that there was a distinct `native mind' intrinsically different from that of whites, and rejected the Darwinian assumption that human ethics were subordinate to imperatives of natural selection, emphasising instead the importance of human intelligence in transcending the laws of biological struggle. Paul Rich feels that Nielsen's book represented a landmark within local South African debate over the nature and direction of supposed racial differences. "While many of its arguments were already becoming familiar at this time in liberal circles in Britain and the US," he notes, "it was a significant rejection within South Africa of many of the basic assumptions of `diversificationism' in most of the contemporary race thinking in the country".[35] It appealed to a number of the English-speaking liberals organised around the Joint Councils movement in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s, notably Edgar Brookes, who saw Nielsen's book as a major challenge to the idea that there was an African `mind' which could be explored through various forms of `scientific' intelligence-testing,[36] and also JD Rheinallt Jones, who rejected in a paper to the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in 1926 the ideas of a `primitive mentality' based on the theories of the French anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl.[37]

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[35] Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 28.

[36] Brookes considered Nielsen's book to be one of the best statements against the `tyranny of caste' and pleaded for an educational system that would provide equal facilities for whites and blacks (Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 75).

[37] Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 28. According to Levy-Bruhl's book, *How Natives Think* (1923), black cultures were driven by a `pre-logical mentality.' Winifred Hoernlé at the University of the Witwatersrand also rejected supposedly `scientific' determinants of racial difference in favour of a social model rooted in concepts of cultural change.

As Saul Dubow indicates, both the liberal `civilizing mission' and scientific racism shared the linear assumptions characteristic of evolutionist thought, yet these theories jarred with those who favoured a form of separate development without repression. The notion of `culture' offered a way out, and "came to serve as a credible linguistic peg upon which the segregationist compromise was hung".[38] By the 1930s the concept of culture had been freed from its heritage of evolutionary and racial assumptions, so that it could become the cornerstone of social scientific disciplines.[39] Official ideology in South Africa by this time tended to fall back on justifying present social order through the previous historical legacy of colonial conquest rather than resorting to an argument for permanent black racial inferiority. This related to its interest in gearing education to a changing economic pattern in which growing numbers of Africans were leaving the reserve economies and coming into contact with the urban economy. New theoretical approaches began to be developed from both psychology and social anthropology to reinforce the shift away from `race' towards a cultural analysis of South African political and economic divisions for political ends.[40] Segregationist ideology was also utilised for political ends, perpetrating the discourse of Africans as the `child races' lowest on the scale of `civilisation.' The usefulness of this prejudice, as Dubow notes, was its essential ambiguity: it could validate `trusteeship' through which Africans in time could attain to the maturity of Western civilisation, or it could sanction separate development on account of essential differences, by which Africans would remain `children' for ever.[41]

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[38] Saul Dubow, `The Elaboration of Segregationist Ideology', in William Beinart and Saul Dubow (eds), *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London, 1995), 159.

[39] Dubow, `The Elaboration of Segregationist Ideology', 159.

[40] Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 33. He shows how this shift parallels developments elsewhere in the world up to the Second World War, after which "the bogus claims of National Socialism in Germany made scientific racism increasingly unacceptable intellectually." The Australian documentary *Stolen Generation* demonstrated how half-caste aboriginal children were removed from their parents during the 1930s and 1940s for racial assimilation purposes (ie. to breed them out in the interests of a `whiter' society), but how by the 1950s and 1960s this was being done for acculturation purposes (ie. to teach them Western ways to maintain `white' hegemony).

[41] Dubow, `Race, Civilisation and Culture', 86. For a discussion of how this prejudice affected educationists at Lovedale, particularly James Stewart, see Leon de Kock, `"Drinking at the English Fountains"', 127-128.

Black intellectuals themselves were caught up in the prevailing discourse; witness SHV Mdhluli's belief in 1933 that "we are still beginning to crawl in this field of education".[42] Charles Lyons mentions that the West African Edward Wilmot Blyden believed in `pure' races, "each with its own distinct, inherent set of characteristics" but denied emphatically the concept of superiority.[43] It is a mistake to believe, wrote Blyden in *Africa and the Africans* (1903),

> that the Negro is a European in embryo - in the underdeveloped state - and when, bye and bye, he shall enjoy the advantages of civilization and culture, he will become like the European; in other words, that the Negro is on the same line of progress, in the same groove, with the European, but infinitely in the rear.[44]

Edgar Brookes was particularly sensitive to the then current popularity of cultural relativism; his success in creating an annual Heroes' Day on October 31 at Adams College, where pupils wore their national dress and paid tribute to noted African figures from a culture other than their own, is remarked on as an astute move by Edgar and Msumza,[45] and is typical of the liberal ideology of the time, which sought dialogue between and reconciliation of hostile ethnic groups, always overseen, of course, by their `trustees'.[46]

In his exploration of the 1920s childhoods of the autobiographers of the 1950s, Keith Shear identifies three characteristics of this period as "a rather

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[42] Cited in Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg, 1985), 30.
[43] Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 108.
[44] Quoted in Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 109. Edward Wilmot Blyden was born on St Thomas in 1832 and died in Sierra Leone in 1912.
[45] Robert R Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Athens, OH & Johannesburg, 1996), 7.
[46] This eclecticism went some way to unite a black campus which Mphahlele remembers as being notoriously ethnically aware to the detriment of non-Zulus (*Down Second Avenue* (London, 1989; orig.1959), 148). However, it would never wholly defuse the situation, for the refusal of a subsequent principal, Jack Grant, in 1950 to allow the Zulu Society to hold a dance to commemorate Shaka Day on the grounds that it would arouse inter-tribal conflict, led to a serious student insurrection (Shula Marks (ed), *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women* (Durban & Pietermaritzburg, 1987), 28).

queasy form of indirect rule" as envisaged by the 1927 Native Administration Act,[47] the prominence of anthropological thought which underpinned the idea of Africans developing `along their own lines', and intense debate among whites over the role of blacks in society and the economy (including the educational question).[48] The Native Administration Act which embraced a comprehensive strategy of `retribalisation' and enhanced the power of the Native Affairs Department (which, until then, had been a rather shadowy body with a "lingering idiom of benevolent paternalism"),[49] together with the effects of the colour bar, caused prominent liberals to reassess their views (with the notable exception of Loram, who was the only one, as it turned out, to seek a safe haven in the ivory tower at New Haven). Martin Legassick refers to this period as the first breach in thinking on the `native question' since Union, and claims that it represents "the birth of modern South African liberalism reconnecting with its antecedents in the Cape".[50] The liberals' reassessment was also prompted by the hysteria unleashed, as Marks and Trapido reveal, by the threat of Garveyist black nationalism and the revolutionary rhetoric of the communists, "sufficient to raise a terrifying spectre before whites in the late 1920s".[51]

"The spectre of black radicalism among educated Africans," notes Alan Cobley, "spreading into and mobilising the African masses was frankly alarming",[52] so the Joint Councils movement was begun countrywide in 1921 in an attempt by the black and white middle class through discussion and research to build interracial bridges, and also to influence government policy (but only if this did not entail conflict). It allowed white liberals throughout the country to focus on social welfare without the discomfort of politics. Loram's

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[47] Keith Shear, `Depictions of Childhood in South African Autobiography, with Particular Reference to the 1920s', *English in Africa* 16(1) May 1989, 42.
[48] Ibid, 59.
[49] Dubow, Saul, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa 1919-1936* (Basingstoke, 1991), 13.
[50] Cited in Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, 47.
[51] Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, `The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism', in their *The Politics of Race*, 43.
[52] Alan Cobley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 to 1950* (New York, 1990), 89.

express wish was that they would *not* be political,[53] and Rheinallt Jones insisted on the need for co-operation to reverse the trend of deteriorating race relations. Their members comprised white and black politicians, academics, churchmen and professionals, and with funding from the Phelps-Stokes Fund and the Carnegie Corporation they combined to form the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in 1929, with Loram as chair. The SAIRR, which administered the Bantu Welfare Trust under Rheinallt Jones from 1936 onwards, was to play a key role in monitoring developments in black education from the 1930s right up to the demise of Bantu Education in post-apartheid South Africa, and consultation of the SAIRR Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand proved crucial to this investigation. The Institute and "its allies in the English-speaking universities and African colleges like Fort Hare, Lovedale and Adams",[54] dominated the scene throughout the 1930s and the 1940s.

The liberals were so powerful that, to HIE Dhlomo in a particularly distressing period, they seemed agents of social control. Tim Couzens shows how Dhlomo's impression that the liberals held sway in every important institution and sphere of African life, controlling and blocking black aspirations, and even interfering in private lives, led to his acrimonious break with the mission network in late 1941.[55] Most reprehensible to Dhlomo was their economic sanction: the liberals' network of contacts enabled `good boys' to find employment, and could make it difficult for those `good boys' if they did not toe the line. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the CR's extensive Johannesburg network was often used by ex-pupils to find jobs, and it was, not surprisingly, invariably those of `good character' and `sound responsibility' who were favoured; I have not discovered any case, however, where things went as disastrously wrong as for Dhlomo. But, as Couzens mentions, his

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[53] Shula Marks suggests that Sibusisiwe Makhanya's community initiatives in Umbumbulu upon her return from Teachers' College at Columbia University made her a shining example for whites because of her emphasis on `welfare' rather than `politics' (*Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 37).

[54] Paul Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Johannesburg, 1984), 126.

[55] Couzens, *The New African*, 213.

vast correspondence in the SAIRR Archive reveals Rheinallt Jones to have been at the centre of this "open conspiracy",[56] and this St Peter's Council chairperson (only one among his myriad posts) has been portrayed in a particularly unfavourable light in critiques of inter-war liberalism, such as that of Paul Rich and, of course, of the Marxist Nosipho Majeke, who argues for "two layers of liberals", the missionaries and politicians, "operating in conjunction to maintain an intellectual stranglehold over the leadership of the non-Europeans as a whole, and in this way disarming the people".[57]

Perhaps having even more bearing on St Peter's, however, was the powerful mission network internationally, what Richard Elphick, in an important overview of the period, has termed "the benevolent empire".[58] The 1920s and 1930s were the heyday of twentieth-century mission; their impact peaked in this period due to the by now considerable black Christian communities and growing African elite, and local mission churches attracted vast amounts of money from their parent bodies in Britain and America. Baruch Hirson reminds us, though, that the Depression retarded the flow of funds from abroad and also dried up local philanthropic sources,[59] leading to a paradoxical situation where black education was in a more parlous state than it had been in the 1920s, necessitating a crucial commission of enquiry in 1936 by the Interdepartmental (Welsh) Committee. The CR's journal, *CR Quarterly*, throughout this period and beyond is full of appeals for funds to finance the ever-growing mission work in which the Community is involved. Raymond Raynes CR writes in 1947 in connection with the launch of the fund-raising booklet, *Shall They Be His People*?, that the CR "has always withstood the idea (only too prevalent) that a lower standard of buildings, and

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[56] Couzens, *The New African*, 214. On Rheinallt Jones's two-faced response to the issue of the Cape African franchise in late 1935, see Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of DDT Jabavu of South Africa* (Athens, OH, 1997), 116-117. While privately expressing support for "the right of qualified Natives to citizenship", he refused as secretary of the SAIRR to take a public stance against the Hertzog Bills, an ambivalence which called into question the reliability of the `friends of the natives.'

[57] Majeke, *The Role*, 138.

[58] Richard Elphick, `Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism', in Jeffrey Butler et al (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Middletown, CT, 1987), 69.

[59] Hirson, *Year of Fire,* 23.

a second-best in the way of fittings for worship or education will do for the missions".[60]

In addition to funding, missions also drew their staff increasingly from overseas during this period, as it coincided with a rise in mission fervour and social upliftment (possibly connected to the emergence of social anthropology and interest in `other' cultures, although this question would need further exploration). It is certainly connected to the emergence of the `social gospel' and a surge in socialism and links with the Labour Party in England, as documented by Cochrane.[61] By the 1920s "many Mission Christians had come to believe that the missions should also manifest a far greater concern for the education, health, and social welfare of African converts than had been the case in the nineteenth century".[62] The Marxist Edward Roux acknowledged that, of all the churches, it was the Anglican leaders who most consistently opposed colour prejudice (though they "had to drag along with them an unwilling mass of white followers"), and this because at that time a very high proportion of them were drawn from England where "their social and religious outlook had been fully formed".[63] The overlap of such missionaries with the core network of liberals running the Joint Councils (with their focus on social welfare) was therefore natural. Elphick contends that both networks were interlocked

> with a vast international movement in which the purposes of missions were being rethought against the backdrop of twentieth-century nationalism, Western secularism, racism, etc. Much of this discussion took place in books widely read in South Africa and at global conferences attended by many from South Africa.[64]

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[60] Raymond Raynes, `Superior's Notes', *CR Quarterly* (178) St John Baptist 1947, 19.
[61] Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 160-161.
[62] Elphick, `Mission Christianity', 67.
[63] Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Wisconsin, 1948), 30, 83, 129.
[64] Elphick, `Mission Christianity', 67.

This is of major relevance to a school like St Peter's, connected to the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, already very influential throughout England through conducting missions and rotating parochial work, and hence always with new funding wells to tap and eager teachers and social workers to attract to South Africa. "Often their families, their superiors, and their role models lived overseas; they participated in an intellectual discourse whose center of gravity lay in America, England, and Scotland," writes Elphick. "Their vision was not bounded by the horizons of South Africa; nor was their freedom of action entirely dependent on its goodwill".[65] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper have more recently drawn attention to "the multiple circuits of persons, ideas, and institutions" that were produced through imperial and missionary interconnections, and "those circuits of knowledge and communication that took other routes than those shaped by the metropole-colony axis alone", drawing in official debates and policies across colonial rule, as well as political and literary movements on the part of colonised elites.[66] Hence the necessity for a wide-angle lens when documenting the political economy of our colonial education.

2 Educational debates during the 1920s and 1930s

2.1 Industrial training vs academic education (or, `Natal education')

The post-Union period was a turbulent one, with many contradictory processes at work. It betokened the height of missionary influence in education, but also reflected growing resentment on the part of both blacks and segregationist whites at religious control of education. Imperial ideas of `trusteeship' held sway, but the trans-Atlantic connection strengthened among black and some white educationists. At the end of John Buchan's *Prester John* (published along with Union in 1910), the Scottish mining

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[65] Ibid, 70.

[66] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, `Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in their *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 28.

magnate Aitken founds an industrial college at Blaauwildebeestefontein in the northern Transvaal run along the lines of Booker T Washington "for the education and amelioration of the native races";[67] this reflected the popular idea then current among white educationists of creating a `responsible' African leadership that looked to the rural reserves rather than the urban areas for their aspirations. Loram's influential *The Education of the South African Native* (1917) drew on his immersion in some schools of African-American educational thought, and set out in detail a differential educational policy appropriate to segregation. Attacking both `repressionists' for viewing Africans as fit only for labour, and `equalists' who pleaded for equal treatment on the base of a common humanity, Loram made a detailed case for equipping Africans to develop along their own lines, which WWM Eiselen as the architect of Bantu Education was to take to its heinous conclusion thirty years later. Two premises underlay Loram's thinking: that whites would continue to rule and Africans maintain their subaltern status, and that Africans were a rural people and their future lay in the countryside.[68]

In this Loram was completely at odds with integrationist black intellectuals like RV Selope Thema, architect of the `New African' movement (modelled on the New Negro), who wrote in 1925 that black people should be given all opportunity "to develop along lines of Western civilisation",[69] because the destiny of white and black in South Africa is interwoven. "The fact that civilisation cannot flourish in the midst of an overwhelming barbarism," he argued, "and that the black man cannot be `kept in his place' in the midst of civilisation, has made thoughtful men realise the importance of educating the Bantu people." Loram conceded the validity of this, yet crucially understood black education not as an end in itself, as Selope Thema did, but as a means to maintaining a segregated society, geared to ensuring white domination and

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[67] John Buchan, *Prester John* (London, 1929), 243. Black `savagery', so threatening to white Africa throughout the romance – particularly since its main perpetrator was a man of the cloth – has been most successfully tamed, Buchan suggests, by industrial education, born of Protestant industry and the work ethic.

[68] For an extended discussion of Loram's tenets, see R Hunt Davis, `Charles T. Loram and the American Model for African Education in South Africa', in Peter Kallaway (ed), *Apartheid and Education The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg, 1984), 108-126.

a rural-oriented existence. For Loram, schools were key weapons in the "battle of race adjustment".[70] A lack of black schools would create discontent and threaten the status quo, but so would an education which raised expectations beyond a certain level. This prefigures Peter Kallaway's revisionist view of schools as "sites of struggle", and underlies the motivation for my investigation into the schooling of the four autobiographers.

Anticipating the engineering of Eiselen, Secretary for Native Affairs under Verwoerd, Loram was only prepared for a limited number of secondary schools to offer vocational training for positions like secretary to a chief or the civil service in the reserves, or prepare students for admission to the South African Native College at Fort Hare (if only to prevent their going overseas for tertiary education). Hunt Davis[71] and Sue Krige[72] draw our attention to the fact that, while Chief Inspector in Natal, he had already revised the syllabus, dropping the `bookish' subjects algebra and geometry, and adding the more `practical' ones like physiology, hygiene and nature study. In line with some African-American schooling, agriculture and manual work courses were emphasised. This was simply one strand in an ongoing debate about the merits and demerits of an academic education for Africans, and any insistence on an industrial training was at the expense of the educated elite, not the working class as some suggest, since the emphasis of this training was at the post-Standard II level.[73]

Segregationists like Loram were seduced by the ideas of Americans like Booker T Washington and Thomas Jesse Jones, who espoused rural-based enterprise and agrarian values. This approach has been termed by Ross Posnock "an ideology of authenticity",[74] which is wielded as a weapon of colonial control and propagates fantasies of regression embodied in

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[69] RV Selope Thema, `Transvaal Native Education', *Umteteli wa Bantu* 17 Oct. 1925, 1.
[70] Loram, letter to Stokes, 10 January 1929, cited in Hunt Davis, `Charles T. Loram', 121.
[71] Hunt Davis, `Charles T. Loram', 115.
[72] Krige, `"Trustees and Agents"', 17-18.
[73] Ibid, 19.
[74] Ross Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual', *Critical Inquiry* 23(2) 1997, 327.

stereotypes and nostalgia, "twin devices of imperialism." The Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa, for example, formed in 1923, derived much inspiration from the Phelps-Stokes Reports, and current anthropological ideas of keeping African societies isolated from disruptive modernising forces.[75] We should tread through this educational minefield with some caution, though, as there were many prominent Africans who, at times, held segregationist ideas like their African-American counterparts, and these cannot simply be dismissed. The ANC Youth League president, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, for instance, product of a rural home and educated at Adams College under Edgar Brookes, advocated in the 1930s (like his fellow Natalian John Dube) the value of teaching manual labour and modern agricultural techniques.[76] It was even resolved by the ANC's annual conference in May 1923, when, as usual, free and compulsory education under Union control was called for, that "that system of native education is desirable which would be better adapted to the peculiar and practical needs of the Bantu people *along the lines of the Natal system*" [my emphasis].[77]

In an exhaustive survey of the `reforms' discussed and implemented in African education during the decade after Union, all to do with the debate of an education `adapted' to perceived African needs, Sue Krige deals with all four provinces separately and insists on their different responses to educationists like Loram. Apart from the varied South African context, it should also be noted in connection with this debate that the 1920s and 1930s were the very years that government schools were being established in rural areas of British-dominated Africa, as an antidote to what was experienced as a more academic missionary education. The curriculum was patently industrial based (agriculture, animal husbandry and trades) and incorporation with the surrounding community was advocated. Elders served on the school

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[75] Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 123.
[76] Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 6. See his pieces in *Iso Lomuzi*, the annual chronicle of Amanzimtoti / Adams College, in 1934, when he was twenty.
[77] Resolutions of the Annual Conference of the ANC, Bloemfontein, 28-29 May 1923, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge, Volume I: Protest and Hope 1882-1934* (Stanford, CA, 1972), 296.

board, and old men were employed to teach custom and tradition; subject matter like history, geography and botany was Africanised. English was played down wherever possible, so that instruction was given in the mother-tongue.[78] This, of course, anticipated Bantu Education in South Africa by twenty years, the fundamentally important difference being that the latter was imposed by minority ideologues on the majority. Not that advocates of these government schools were without their critics: unsurprisingly, articulate educated Africans themselves.

Nevertheless, the more rural a school (whether mission- or government-run), the more suited it was to offering an education comprising crafts and industries, so St Augustine's at Penhalonga in Rhodesia, for instance, also run by the Community of the Resurrection, took two decades longer than St Peter's to introduce academic Junior Certificate (JC) and Matric courses. Harry Buck CR, writing in the *CR Quarterly* in December 1921, mentioned the seductive qualities of industrial education for Penhalonga:

> The reopening of the school in 1923 will give us an opportunity of trying to carry out some of the industrial education ideas that have been gaining ground so much in late years, and that have been answered so splendidly at Hampton and Tuskegee, at Tiger Kloof in S. Africa, and also in the Philippines.[79]

And Wilfred Shelley CR, visiting a crafts and industries show in Rhodesia in 1923, comments on "how completely missionaries have swung around from the old ideals of merely bookish education" and "how gladly and how successfully the natives are taking to the industrial line".[80] By March 1939, however, two months after the secondary school at St Augustine's started with six pupils (like St Peter's had seventeen years before), Harry Buck was implying that industrial education had lost its attractiveness, and belonged to an earlier age. Especially since the previous few years at St Peter's (1936-

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[78] Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 157.
[79] Harry Buck, letter dated 3 Dec. 1921, *CR Quarterly* (77) Lady Day 1922, 23.

1938), remarkable for their examination success which we shall have cause to explore in Chapter Three, had proven the validity of the academic approach. An academic education was the only answer to Africa's progress: "From these tiny beginnings will grow up the whole body of trained men and women who will supply our clergy and teachers and doctors and lawyers and writers and leaders in time to come".[81]

The CR clearly wrestled with this issue through the 1920s and 30s, made more difficult by the vast disparities in their mission work, being both urban and rural. Yet, as Bertram Barnes CR pointed out, if a pupil was going to be a bricklayer, education should not be confined "to such things as bear directly on the laying of bricks" as the "modern educational theorists" declare, but instead should have a bearing on black people's "leisure or their uses of leisure".[82] This emphasis on the whole person, which the sculptor Ernest Mancoba recalled informed the teaching of his art mentor, Sr Pauline CR, at Grace Dieu in the late 1920s,[83] motivated the CR initiative throughout their work in Africa, and led always to advocating an academic education, even when the education order was pushing in the direction of the `skilled craftsman'. The "paralysing strife of divergent aims" in black education would only end, Bertram Barnes makes clear, with the recognition that "segregation is now completely impossible, and that it is a grave mistake not to face this fact and accept the consequences".[84] As ZK Matthews remarked in 1946, after three decades of debate on the respective merits of academic and industrial education, Africans "have demanded for children an education which takes due account of the fact that they are living in the modern world, in an environment which includes both Western and African elements linked together indissolubly".[85] In support he stated the obvious, to which the

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[80] Wilfred Shelley, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (83) Michaelmas 1923, 20.
[81] Harry Buck, letter dated 12 March 1939, *CR Quarterly* (146) St John Baptist 1939, 11.
[82] Bertram Barnes, `The Educational Problem in Africa', *CR Quarterly* (110) St John Baptist 1930, 16.
[83] Elza Miles, *Lifeline out of Africa: The Art of Ernest Mancoba* (Cape Town, 1994), 11.
[84] Barnes, `The Educational Problem in Africa', 17.
[85] ZK Matthews, `Native Education in South Africa during the Last Twenty-Five Years', *South African Outlook* 2 Sept. 1946, 140. His son Joe Matthews matriculated at St Peter's School in 1947, which suggests that his choice of the school was due to its ensuring that black children

apartheid ideologues barely a few years later would close their eyes, and create a whole system to reinforce a chimera, namely that a purely African environment no longer existed in South Africa.

2.2 Sharing Western civilisation (or, `CR education')

Edgar Brookes's significant rejoinder to Loram, *Native Education in South Africa* (1930), though still a conservative document, has much in common with Govan's views about a classical education a century earlier and, indeed, with the Cape liberal tradition. He takes Loram's catchwords `education for life' (which entails adaptation to a rural existence) and the `utility' of black education (requiring an industrial focus), and imbues them with his own liberal humanist understanding, much as one might subvert the present government's problematic idea of `lifelong education' (multiple entry and exit points to ease access to higher education throughout a person's life) by laying a strong educational foundation. Brookes views as `useful' the "appreciation of the roll of the Virgilian hexameter or comprehension of mediaeval painting or Greek statuary or modern `jazz'", and is only prepared to admit of `education for life' if `life' is understood as "the whole gamut of man's interests, spiritual, purely intellectual or aesthetic, as well as practical, material and economic".[86] Some horse-trading, however, in good Transvaal liberal fashion allows him, when planning a curriculum for Africans, to drop Latin and Greek for English literature. He refuses to distinguish between white and black education, being unable to "accept for our Native Schools anything less, in breadth or depth, than is available from the very best educationists in the most favoured of other groups. The richness and variety of culture must be freely offered to them".[87] While this sounds noble, it assumes that whites have nothing to learn from black culture; blacks might drink freely at the fount of white wisdom, but there is no similar obligation for whites to do so.

"in accordance with their varying talents" could "be led into the common heritage of man in all fields of human knowledge and skill."

[86] Edgar Brookes, *Native Education in South Africa* (Pretoria, 1930), 44-45.

[87] Brookes, *Native Education*, 82.

This simple one-way traffic marks Brookes as a product of his time, as it does perhaps even a more astute and rigorous thinker, Alfred Hoernlé, a secular counterpart to the CR at this stage. In the latter's Phelps-Stokes Lectures of 1939 (published as *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*), he avers that liberalism "shows itself as a respect for social groups other than one's own, for cultures other than one's own, for sentiments and traditions other than one's own, though always coupled with a willingness to share one's own".[88] The sting in the tail stigmatises the liberalism of the 1930s as paternalistic and sharing in the then current British idea of `trusteeship', where whites would decide for blacks what was best for them. An example of this is Brookes's extreme reluctance to allow for the substitution of classical or modern European languages in white schools with the vernacular, for this "would weaken those cultural ties with the Old World which it is our chief task, in the interest of the Bantu themselves, to cherish and preserve".[89] And yet it is quite sufficient - in what is purported to be an equal education - for an African to read English literature without Latin or Greek, for "English literature may succeed in giving him some of that breadth and sweep of culture which the classical languages, French or German give to white people".[90]

Liberal humanist that Alfred Hoernlé was, he articulated in the SAIRR journal, *Race Relations*, a vision of society which attracted the young Peter Abrahams around the same time, namely one "in which every human being, and every group of human beings, has the opportunity to live a life worth living, according to the pattern and standards of culture within its reach".[91] It was to Western civilisation that African groups were gravitating:

> I believe that World-History will in the years to come continue, as it has done for more than three centuries past, to draw South

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[88] Quoted in Rich, *White Power*, 68.
[89] Brookes, *Native Education*, 90.
[90] Ibid, 65-66.
[91] Alfred Hoernlé, `On the Future of the Native Peoples in South Africa', *Race Relations* 4(3) Aug. 1937, 57.

> Africa, like the rest of Africa, inexorably into the orbit of Western civilisation. I believe, therefore, that it is the destiny of the Native people to make that civilisation their own.

That civilisation will be appropriated by Africans "from different angles and in different degrees", just as individual European groups have done, and they will probably "retain elements of their own traditional culture, and, combining these with what they adopt, create new nuances of Western civilisation".[92] Elsewhere he had subverted the segregationist tenet of Africans`developing along their own lines'' by suggesting that this process could be seen as something which they could actively "*make their own*, and indeed *must* make their own, if they are to survive at all under the conditions which European conquest and overlordship, economic and political, impose upon them.[93] Hoernlé, like the Cape liberals before him, predicts a gradual process of cultural accommodation by Africans to dominant western values: "What they will retain of their traditional past will colour what they acquire from Western Civilisation".[94] The goal of assimilation, however, is flawed, in that Western civilisation is still held up as the yardstick of the measurement of `progress' and there is no corresponding desire to adopt African values, notwithstanding his claim that liberalism "means faith in the supremacy of human values". Here the universal `human', in classic liberal fashion, subsumes the particular `African' under the hegemonic `European.'

This confidence in the validity of Western culture for Africa permeated the CR educational work during this inter-war period (and with good reason, for it proved the lever to loose the floodgates of English funds!), but made it characteristically one-sided. An undated fund-raising CR pamphlet (probably from 1938, because it mentions the school as existing for 15 years), is instructive as to their intention regarding education at the urban St Peter's

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[92] Hoernlé, `On the Future', 57.
[93] Alfred Hoernlé, `Can SA Natives Develop along Their Own Lines', *Journal of Secondary Education* Nov. 1935, 25.
[94] Hoernlé, `Can SA Natives Develop', 27.

School.[95] It claims that "new prospects are appearing for Natives to embrace careers that need a sound foundation of general education", then commonly up to the Junior Certificate (Standard VIII). The usual courses open were education and the ministry, but mentioned specifically was the need for clerks in mines and industries, people in the medical, nursing, sanitary, and health services in urban and rural areas, and agricultural and forestry demonstrators. Anticipating current educational thinking was the need for "an adequate grounding in natural science subjects", and the possibility of medical training for Africans, necessitating the provision and upgrading of laboratory equipment. The pamphlet ends with a call for funds so that St Peter's "may not only provide a model for other Native institutions in South Africa, but also fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the growing class of educated Africans, and take its full share in the task of Native development."

According to its historian, Alan Wilkinson, the CR believed "it was the duty of whites to give Africa the best of European culture",[96] and this is evident in a lecture which Raymond Raynes delivered at Leeds University in October 1955:

> European culture - civilization, call it what you will, is not ours to keep for ourselves. We ourselves received it. The Christian must be truly liberal; he must conserve the good he has received, not to keep it for himself, but to give it in the measure by which it can be received by all other people. At no point can he say, `So much and no more'.[97]

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[95] South African Institute of Race Relations Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (SAIRR), *St Peter's School: An Appeal for Funds for Development*, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 B 37.14.

[96] Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, 1992), 242.

[97] Raymond Raynes, `Christian Liberalism and the Racial Policy of South Africa', *CR Quarterly* (212) Christmas 1955, 31. He dedicated the lecture to Huddleston, possibly in an attempt to make amends for his recall in mid-1955; the position stated here was consistent with their African ministry over the past twenty years.

Black intellectuals, too, like Rev. Kgalemang Motsete understood the idea of a `handing on' of Western civilisation, in much the same way as the Christian faith:

> what is called European culture and civilisation is, strangely enough, not of European origination, but that the nations stand in a sort of apostolic succession as recipients and transmitters of this culture. . . . Now, just as the English or Germans, with all the influence of Greece and Rome, remained English and German, so it is quite possible that after all the contact with Western culture the African will remain African, developing culturally as an African.[98]

This, made at the New Education Fellowship Conference in 1934 (which EG Malherbe calls "the largest and most comprehensive conference on education ever held before or since in South Africa"),[99] is an assertion of the worth of Western culture, and a statement of faith in the power of educated Africans to receive, assess and either assimilate aspects they find helpful, or reject things which compromise their integrity as Africans. As Mphahlele was to write almost fifty years later, "we must be selective in deciding which influences to welcome. It is a primary function of education to help us in such a process".[100]

In contrast to African readiness to accommodate Western culture, Wilkinson notes that the Christian tradition of *noblesse oblige* out of which CR grew "was immensely self-sacrificial in its giving, but not in its receiving".[101] Yet Alban Winter acknowledged in 1934 in astoundingly modern terms, that what

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[98] Kgalemang Motsete, `The Cultural and Economic Importance of European Languages in Native Education' in E.G. Malherbe (ed), *Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society: Report of the New Education Fellowship Conference* (Cape Town, 1937), 480.

[99] EG Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment: Autobiography* (Cape Town, 1981), 182. Paul Rich notes that the papers delivered here underlined the shift away from hereditary towards cultural explanations for any intelligence differences between blacks and whites (*Hope and Despair*, 34).

[100] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Education: Towards a Humanistic Ideology', in *Report on the Conference on Educational Priorities in a Developing State* (Pretoria, 1980), 8.

he terms `Christian civilisation' is incomplete without Africa's contribution: "St Peter's is already making its contribution, however small, to the building up of the African people into a nation capable not only of assimilating our Christian civilisation, but, what is of even greater importance, of bringing into it their own peculiar gifts which they have inherited from their past".[102] Ernest Mancoba, himself educated under the CR at Grace Dieu, around this time wished that the cultural experiences of the West and Africa "could become richer by the exchange, and bring human beings together for a fellow understanding and a fellow living together, which would be progressive for our country".[103] "We dreamed," he recalled, including Gerard Sekoto in his memory, "of coming to Europe and especially to Paris in order to give our contribution of the experience of humanity in Africa".[104] Sekoto, too, in Eastwood location in 1945, "continued to dream about Europe",[105] about becoming, in Du Bois's words, which define the vocation of the intellectual, a "co-worker in the kingdom of culture."

This key idea of Africa's enriching Europe's legacy is elaborated on in 1939 by one LW Tshiki BSc in *The African Teacher*, who insists that `Western civilisation' is a misnomer, for "civilisation is the heritage of mankind". In an argument strikingly anticipating the `Black Athena' revision of classical civilisation of the 1980s, he reminds his readers that "a good number of things found in the so-called Western civilisation came from Africa . . . . May she be so kind to return to Africa the products of their work and it may be Africa will yet improve on what Europe called perfect".[106] Even Abrahams offered his variation on this theme, imploring whites not to drop the torch they had carried long and honourably in the process of human history: "The Egyptians, the Indians, the Chinese, the Greeks, the Romans, and the ancient black kingdom to which Omar Khayyam came to get some of his

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[101] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 251.
[102] Alban Winter, report dated 13 Feb. 1934, *CR Quarterly* (126) St John Baptist 1934, 24.
[103] Mancoba in conversation in May 1993, quoted in Miles, *Lifeline Out of Africa*, 15.
[104] Quoted in Miles, *Lifeline Out of Africa*, 18.
[105] Gerard Sekoto, `Autobiography', *Presence Africaine* 69 1st quarter 1969, 190.
[106] Quoted in Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 84.

ideas for our modern calendar – all these had a hand in the making of what you call `European civilisation'".[107]

Writing admittedly after the self-consciousness induced by Sharpeville and the Bantu Education Act, although, as we have seen, he had earlier demonstrated his receptivity to Africa's contribution, Alban Winter suggests that whites have much to learn from Africans. "We do not believe," he writes in his memoir, "that an education based on separation can ever be of real service to white and black. Culture cannot rightly be kept in water-tight compartments. The African needs to share fully in ours and we in his".[108] The fluid ideas regarding the education of black South Africans during the early years of this century have been explored above in some detail in order to distinguish between the views and policies which tended to characterise the different provinces' approach to black education, and to highlight the issues preoccupying education in the Transvaal during the inter-war period, the very years that St Peter's School existed.

3 Secondary schooling in the 1930s and 1940s

3.1 Proportion of pupils at high school

It may seem tautologous to point this out, but it is important to register that successful completion of secondary schooling fifty years and more ago is comparable, especially within the black community, to graduation from a tertiary institution today, and probably more prestigious in the climate of the times. Mphahlele told Chabani Manganyi that, of all the *Drum* writers of the 1950s (who constituted a "literary renaissance" of blacks writing about their own lives and replaying their own experience to their people), only himself and Can Themba had university degrees.[109] All the others had Matric at

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[107] Peter Abrahams, `The Long View', *African World* June 1952, 12.
[108] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 112.
[109] Es'kia Mphahlele, in Chabani Manganyi, "Looking In: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele', in his *Looking through the Keyhole* (Johannesburg, 1981), 24.

most, "[a]nd yet they had a command of English", which Nick Visser identified as "a truly African English", an indigenous language which risked "triviality, stridency, bathos, bombast", and succeeded as often as it failed, in marked contrast with the "formal, stilted, even at time pompously dignified register" of earlier writers educated at Lovedale and Adams.[110] Capping Manganyi's comment on their flair for English ("That says something about education"), Mphahlele refers to the reading culture of the time, acknowledging that "the education we had still allowed for freedom of mobility - intellectual mobility." He made the same point to Couzens,[111] and called the *Drum* explosion "the *arrival* of a people at a certain stage of articulation." The finding of their voice was "a signal of what education *was* before Bantu Education." It might be argued that the urban environment of St Peter's and Sophiatown influenced what Mphahlele identifies as the quality of "urban sophistication" and the urgency of the black urban experience in *Drum* writing.

In connection with *Drum*'s very popular short story competition, of which Can Themba was the legendary first winner in 1953, Bernth Lindfors offers the instructive statistic that, in its peak year, 1957 (under Mphahlele's editorship), the short story competition drew manuscripts from 1 638 contestants (most of whom, it might be conjectured, would have passed through mission schooling, at least up to Standard VI), whereas in 1962 (after ten years of Bantu Education), an attempt to revive the *Drum* competition attracted fewer than two hundred entries.[112] Lindfors attributes this to the editorial policy of a new *Drum* editor, Tom Hopkinson, intent on making *Drum* a picture magazine,[113] but it also seems likely that it was due to the decline of literary and linguistic skills in the decade following Bantu Education.[114] Graeme Addison cites complementary research to the effect that the early 1960s demonstrate a decline in the content of *Drum*. He notes the virtual absence

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[110] Nick Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 11.1 (Aug. 1976), 48.
[111] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 124.
[112] Bernth Lindfors, `Post-War Literature in English by African Writers from South Africa: A Study of the Effects of Environment upon Literature', *Phylon* 27(1) 1966, 52.
[113] Lindfors, `Post-War Literature', 53.
[114] Ibid, 62.

of irony, potentially the most damaging technique of criticising society, whereas it was effectively employed by the writers of the 1950s, all educated under missionaries on the Rand or in Natal.[115]

Success at the secondary level of black schooling has long been viewed as the gateway to upward mobility, as Ken Hartshorne notes, and a good academic secondary education has always promised social and employment benefits[116] (although it can be regarded as a fraudulent commodity in a colour bar society). The Marxist Baruch Hirson records that a secondary education over fifty years ago placed black pupils among the top two percent of the community.[117] Hartshorne corroborates this with the following figures (these do not include failures):[118]

Year	Number of secondary pupils	Percentage of total at school
1925	837	0.5
1930	1 154	0.4
1935	1 955	0.5
1940	5 808	1.25
1945	12 925	2.2
1950	24 033	3.1

It is salutory to remember, too, that throughout the 1920s and 1930s the total number of black pupils countrywide in any given year enrolled for the Senior Certificate was around fifty, usually less during the 1930s. This obviously increased, along with the overall secondary enrolment, in the 1940s and 1950s. Hirson underlines the starkness of these statistics by remarking that the number of African youth at school was always low (18.1 % in 1936, 27.4

[115] Graeme Addison, `Drum Beat: An Examination of Drum', *Speak* July/Aug. 1978, 8.
[116] Ken Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town, 1992), 60-61.
[117] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, 28.
[118] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 62.

% in 1946 and 30 % in 1951), and always disproportionately represented at the lower levels (the first four years of schooling).[119] Out of 450 000 pupils at school in 1939, notes Edward Roux, 310 000 were below Standard II.[120]

For the Transvaal, the picture is even bleaker, if graphical records in the SAIRR Archive are true (often statistics are only estimated).[121] Mphahlele and Abrahams, for example, would have been among only 600 pupils in secondary school, as opposed to 37 000 at sub-A level. The total number at school was 120 000, while the estimate for those outside of school was 310 000. These statistics nearly doubled in the War years, so that Alfred Hutchinson was one of 1 600 secondary school pupils, as opposed to 62 500 sub-A pupils. Those at school numbered 175 000, those not attending were estimated at 285 000. Enrolment did not mean completion. Many secondary pupils finished one or two years, then left school for financial or other reasons. A significant 8-page report by Alban Winter, "A Survey of Secondary Education as Exemplified by St Peter's Secondary School",[122] investigates two major dropout periods: between Forms I and III (Abrahams fell into this category) and the more natural one between Forms III and V (Mphahlele had to choose this route). It must be emphasised that this was the rule rather than the exception; very few pupils indeed completed five years of secondary education in one sitting, usually due to financial and home circumstances. Winter gives figures for this "annual loss": in the three years Mphahlele was at St Peter's (1935-1937), for example, the dropout rate after each year was 56 %, 57 % and 58 % respectively (of course, as more pupils enrolled each year, so more would drop out).

3.2 Black education at the crossroads

The crisis in education during the 1930s, as more Africans sought admission to schools with fewer resources, while those at primary school seldom

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[119] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, 23.
[120] Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, 343.
[121] SAIRR, graphs for 1936 and 1941, Education (Finance), AD 843 B 12.5.
[122] SAIRR, report dated August 1940, St Peter's School 1935-40, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 25.3.

progressed beyond the first three or four years, necessitated the appointment in 1935-1936 of the Interdepartmental (Welsh) Committee consisting of the four Provincial Chief Inspectors of Native Education and the Director of the Bureau for Educational and Social Research, EG Malherbe, like Loram, a prominent educationist of the time and trained at Columbia University. The next major commission would be Eiselen's calamitous one of 1949-1951, which, in contrast to the guiding spirit of inevitable `acculturation' in the Welsh Committee's Report, insisted on the `Bantu' being schooled solely in order to revitalise rural life and preserve their institutions. The Welsh Committee's Report was generally welcomed by educationists; the overview by Osmund Victor CR in the missionary journal *The East & West Review*, termed it "a ray of light at the end of a dark tunnel", and felt, ironically in the light of the Eiselen Commission to come, that it "gives promise of a new era" and "a working programme for twenty years ahead."[123] A far more impartial survey is given by the non-Christian Alfred Hoernlé in the anthropology journal *Africa*, of the intractable crisis in black education in 1938.[124] Commending the Committee for revealing "its perplexity of mind with commendable sincerity" (and contrasting it with the segregationist Native Affairs Commission of 1936 whose Report "shows a mind less perplexed than it ought to be"), Hoernlé nevertheless exposes its limitations as a document on black education, in its failure to recommend compulsory schooling for blacks and interrogate the religious and denominational quality of black schooling.[125]

The Welsh Committee concentrated on primary education, since that was perceived to be the crisis area, but one of its recommendations (among others which included central control of black education under the Department of Education, continuing co-operation between state and missionary bodies, and per caput financing of pupils on the same basis as

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[123] Osmund Victor, `Native Education in South Africa', *The East & West Review: An Anglican Missionary Quarterly Magazine* 3(3) July 1937, 278.

[124] Alfred Hoernlé, `Native Education at the Cross-roads in South Africa', *Africa* 11.4 (Oct. 1938), 389-411.

[125] Most of his ire, however, is reserved for the frighteningly inconsistent, myopic and simplistic recommendations of Heaton Nicholls's Native Affairs Commission, which in essential points prefigured Eiselen's Commission of 1951.

white education) had a direct bearing on the intake of pupils by St Peter's. The fluency in English at the school is legendary, at least partly attributable, it would seem, to a very thorough preparation in no less than six preceding years of primary school. Until as late as 1975, it must be remembered, primary school went up to Standard VI, a year further than white schools.[126] The language situation in schools throughout the Union at this time comprised the following: one vernacular language was a compulsory subject throughout primary school and in teacher training colleges, and a voluntary (though popular) one at secondary level.[127] In Natal mother-tongue instruction was used for the first six years, in the Cape and Orange Free State for the first four, and most interestingly, in the Transvaal (possibly because of the multi-lingual context of the Reef) for only the first two (the sub-standards). Thereafter an official language (almost always English) was used as medium.[128] The Welsh Committee, however, recommended that mother-tongue instruction be made mandatory for the first four years in the Transvaal. Pupils like Mphahlele and Abrahams, therefore, entering St Peter's in 1935 and 1937 respectively, would have been exposed to English as a medium of instruction from far earlier on than their counterparts, say, in Natal, which was noted among the provinces for its preference for and pride in the local vernacular isiZulu.[129]

The greater multilingualism of the Rand, however, ensured the primacy of English as lingua franca at St Peter's School, where at least seven different vernaculars were represented, proving a persuasive reason for Winter insisting on its primacy at the school. This, even though my interviewees all mention that `tsotsitaal' Afrikaans held sway in the townships at home (and Abrahams, of course, spoke Afrikaans until his thirteenth year). The 1944

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[126] Both Hirson (97-99) and Hartshorne (73-75) argue that the lower pass rate required in 1974 for Standard VI pupils entering secondary school as a prelude to the scrapping of the old Standard VI which occurred in 1975, led to a phenomenal bulge in numbers in Form I in 1976, so stretching pupil discontent in Soweto to breaking point.

[127] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 193.

[128] Alban Winter corroborates this in `Growing Pains', *CR Quarterly* (118) St John Baptist 1932, 20, indicating "I have boys from Basutoland and the Orange Free State where the vernacular is the medium to at least St. III and they are invariably a year behind Transvaal or Cape boys."

Constitution and Rules of St Peter's laid down that pupils speak only English on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and English and/or Afrikaans on Thursdays and Fridays, while any language could be spoken over weekends and holidays. Mphahlele's courtship with his wife Rebecca, like that of ZK and Frieda Matthews, was conducted, to the chagrin of her Setswana-speaking mother, in English, common to those who had trained as teachers, through what he called “force of habit”.[130] Of all the academic subjects at Grace Dieu on offer during the first year of the teachers' diploma when Abrahams attended in 1936, for example, English was allotted nearly double the periods of Arithmetic, more than three times those of Afrikaans and the Vernacular, and more than four times those of other subjects like History and Geography.[131] Moreover, the College Log Book around that time records that the reading of the first years "often showed rare understanding, the oral composition was decidedly good, all spoke freely and many had facility of expression".[132] The policy of spoken English had the support of intellectuals like DDT Jabavu, who appealed to the New Education Fellowship Conference in 1934 that black children, who come to school "with an initial capacity for languages above that of the White child", be spared the "unreasonable" insistence by white educators that the medium of the mother-tongue be continued for more than a year after starting school, particularly in the case of urban black children, who are "often at home in six languages".[133]

The 1930s saw the notable Education Conference, "Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society", take place in July 1934 in Cape Town and Johannesburg under the auspices of the international New Education Fellowship. Of this progressive educational organisation, formed in 1915, EG Malherbe tellingly notes, "there was actually nothing *new* about it, for the idea

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[129] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 193.
[130] Interview with Es'kia Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August 1999.
[131] Alfred Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience of the Anglican Church, 1906-1958" (MEd, University of the North, 1988), 82. Among the 14 subjects on the first year curriculum of the T3 or Primary Lower Certificate, English had 405 minutes per week, Arithmetic 225, Afrikaans and Vernacular 120, and History and Geography 90.
[132] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 84. The College Log Book entry is dated 5 May 1933.

behind it was as old as Christianity itself".[134] The aim of education, they believed, along with the Anglo-Catholic CR, was to bring into being integrated and fulfilled human beings, to restore the balance, in Malherbe's words,[135] of the child's personality and hence foster the creative rather than the receptive nature of the child. Their ideas crossed gender and racial boundaries in pursuit of their goal which, according to Malherbe, "was to unite those who believed that the problems threatening our civilization were basically *problems of human relationship* which demanded a new type of education more responsive to the requirements of the changing world".[136] In his introduction to the proceedings, collected over three years, Malherbe underlined that the papers all dealt in some way with one of three issues: education's aim (why we educate), methods (how we achieve that goal), and curriculum (what we teach). This framework could profitably be used for the following exploration of the kind of education offered at St Peter's.

Malherbe drew a crucial distinction between education which "seeks to reproduce the type" (to transmit the culture of the group into which the child is born) and that which provides "for growth beyond the type" (by actively fostering individuality and initiative) and advocates finding the difficult balance between them.[137] Society's tendency to err on the side of the former (which would find its apogee in Bantu Education) leads to retardation and impoverishment in a global world order of mass communication and transport, and fosters prejudice, a very real danger in the decade of the rise of nationalism and fascism. The child then "becomes undeservedly the victim of a process of mechanised routine which turns out a standardised product and stifles real growth".[138] Like a plant, a child must have roots in the past, but she also has to adapt to her environment. Unlike a plant, though, she

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[133] DDT Jabavu, `The Child as He Comes to School', in Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, 434.
[134] Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 183.
[135] Ibid, 18.
[136] Ibid, 183.
[137] Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, v. William Morris, who contributed to the socialist discourse shaping the ethos of the early CR, interestingly considered himself in *How I Became a Socialist* as a personality and not as a mere type (quoted in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 154).

must also learn to take charge of circumstances or `control' the environment, a property which Malherbe notes, empowers her "to grow beyond the type and thus to achieve progress".[139] Since the innate conservatism and inertia of society prefers to reproduce the type, more effort must be expended to foster growth beyond the type.

3.3 The Dalton Plan

Much will be said in Chapter Three about inspiring and dedicated teachers at St Peter's, who were concerned, in the words of Raymont, with "how to fill the short and precious years of school life so that they may, on the whole, form the most effective preparation for the varied activities of adult life".[140] They believed that education should have as its aim not the type of society which we wish to create (in contrast to schemes and programmes of social engineering, like Bantu Education), but ultimately life itself.[141] With this aim in mind, Alban Winter, we are aware, tried at least one innovation, with some success, before it was abandoned because of pupil dissatisfaction. This was the Dalton Plan, conceived by Helen Parkhurst, Head of the Dalton High School in Cambridge, MA, very much in vogue among progressive educationists in the late 1920s and 1930s (and variations on it are advocated now among lecturers at some British universities, not least because it frees up time for more research), which in essence transferred authority from teacher to child and allowed pupils to work at their own time and pace, simply completing the required amount of assignments by the end of every month. As the report on Parkhurst's address to the New Education Fellowship Conference indicates, her intention was "to reorganise the conditions of the school so that the one who has to do the work (whether child or teacher) may do it under the most fair and fruitful conditions".[142] These might include sunny and colourful classrooms, and even a "silent room" for children to

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[138] Ibid, v.
[139] Ibid, vi.
[140] Cited in MH Trümpelmann, *The Joint Matriculation Board. Seventy Five Years; Achievement in Perspective* (c. 1990), 57.
[141] Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, vii.
[142] Helen Parkhurst, `The Dalton Plan', in Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, 132.

collect themselves. Music and art in particular are focussed on. The Dalton Plan is ambitious in its ideals and comprises three principles really only acquired in the post-secondary context: freedom of choice, budgeting of time, and interaction of group life. The result of this experimental approach, as the report comments, is that all the classrooms are actually laboratories.[143]

About creative teaching methods at St Peter's in the mid-1920s, then still a primary school in the main, Winter writes:

> we have carpentry, card-board and paper modelling, clay modelling, gardening, and sewing, and every attempt is made to give concrete and practical expression to whatever is learnt. For instance, the children have recently made a relief map of the Transvaal in the garden, covering some 25 by 30 ft, and they are at present engaged in making a sand-tray relief of the Congo Basin . . . . The difficulty for us, however, is that this kind of teaching is much more expensive in the way of equipment than the other, and the Government simply starve us. Like Pharoah of old they ask us to make bricks without straw, and strafe us if we don't succeed.[144]

In 1928, the whole of St Peter's School, Stephen Carter CR, Superintendent of Schools, noted was "under the most modern methods of teaching summed up in the words `Dalton System', with organised games in a six-acre field, and all kinds of handicraft thrown in".[145] That same year extracts from a piece of complacent journalism by one PAB of *The Star* were published in the *CR Quarterly*,[146] which nonetheless indicate the content of the intermediate classes conducted by Winter (Standards IV to VI):

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143 Parkhurst, `The Dalton Plan', 133.
144 Alban Winter, letter dated 7 June 1923, *CR Quarterly* (83) Michaelmas 1923, 24-25.
145 Stephen Carter, `Our Work at Rosettenville', *CR Quarterly* (102) St John Baptist 1928, 28.
146 `Mission Work at Rosettenville', *CR Quarterly* (104) Christmas 1928, 20.

> use is being made of home-manufactured chronological charts to teach the correlation of significant events in the great countries of the world; while pictorial education matter and relief maps, displayed on the walls, convey, more quickly and accurately than words, the habits and customs of other nations and the geographical features of countries beyond the seas. Everywhere you find what may be called objective teaching going on, an absence of unsympathetic rigidity, and, consequently, a spirit of voluntary concentration amongst the pupils that promises well for the awakening of those latent individual powers which it is the object of the true educationist to stimulate and draw out, so that they may be directed to the best advantage.

The journalist draws attention to the skill of teachers in inviting pupils to engage with their work, noting in particular Miss Broughton's applied art classes:

> Variety, whether consciously or unconsciously introduced by these clever teachers into their treatment of every subject, takes the place of the deadening monotony usually attendant on the large class system: and, as a result, individual results are obtained, which while original, attain an almost uniformly high standard of merit.[147]

His beneficent opprobrium throughout is cloying but, if disregarded as typical of his age, his short account of his impressions of the school indicates industrious and meaningful employment, hampered, as always, for this "band of far-sighted enthusiasts" by the lack of funds.

Highly attractive as the principles are, though, the Dalton Plan is really too ambitious, as AJ Lynch responded at the Education Conference. The

demands of the external educational authorities, who insist on examinations being met, comprise the most obvious obstacle. Lynch argued for the envisaging of the Dalton Plan not as an alternative system but rather as an "atmosphere", a condition in which work is made more effective and natural and therefore with more far-reaching results.[148] It was probably this idea which sold it to Alban Winter, who tried to reproduce this at St Peter's. But its *laissez faire* pedagogy was too advanced for black (and even white) education of the time in South Africa, indeed for secondary education, let alone primary, as a whole.

In his obituary of Winter, Leo Rakale CR, who had been a pupil under this regimen in the early 1930s, mentioned the Dalton Plan as Winter's most innovative introduction at St Peter's, a scheme "for adapting class teaching to the varying requirements of scholars", but not his most successful.[149] The idea was to provide variety for the pupil in choosing a subject and spending time on it, and to make allowances for reluctance to work on a particular assignment at any given time by offering the pupil a choice of others before it need be tackled again. "Presumably he would find a better interest in it than he had previously," comments Rakale tartly, "An overwhelming majority of us never found it so." Rakale, whose strengths were not academic, Mphahlele remembers, did not understand the Dalton Plan and, along with other pupils (who would call the end of every month when assignments were due "Judgement Day"), disliked it intensely. He claimed the Plan proper, to Winter's disappointment, never went beyond two years, yet it was only when Winter left for Penhalonga, just before Mphahlele entered in 1935, that it was dropped. What motivated Winter in his choice of this method was his belief in the need for pupils to develop through secondary education: "We need a much more highly educated class of native leaders than we have at present, and it is my hope that our school here will do a little to provide it".[150] Two

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147 `Mission Work at Rosettenville', 20.
148 AJ Lynch, `Applications of the Dalton Plan', in Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, 134.
149 Leo Rakale, obituary, *CR Quarterly* Michaelmas 1971, 14.
150 Winter, letter dated 7 June 1923, 25.

principles guided him: the importance of a non-racial secondary curriculum, and the application of `book-learning' to daily life.

3.4 The humanist approach to education

Undergirding the teaching approach at St Peter's was the idea, common during the inter-war period, and even beyond, that it was not `subjects' as such which were being taught, but rather `perfection' or `wisdom.' Wisdom "through the medium of history" or "through the medium of art", as Edgar Brookes put it. Malherbe, too, indicated, art is taught "not so much with a view to turning all children into artists, but with a view to developing personality".[151] This can be traced back to Matthew Arnold's influential pedagogy: education should base itself on "the best that has been thought and written in the world", and by communicating this record of the "best self" of humanity,[152] will create an adequate general knowledge and a standard of effective thinking. Adding to itself "beauty" and a "religious and devout energy", education Arnold believed, would be able to "work on a broader scale for perfection, and with greater masses of men".[153] This essentially humanist approach, which anticipated FR Leavis's influential works, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930) and *The Great Tradition* (1948), characterised teaching at St Peter's, though it spoke particularly to the white, male and middle-class, actually to the `minority' upon whom "depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of the age".[154] Yet the hegemonic would be leavened by the teachers' explicit belief in their charges' destiny as future leaders of the country, in an interesting evolution of Arnold's idea of the distinctive `remnant' in each class of society in whom the "best self" is active. Their credo would be that of Brookes, in the tradition of *noblesse oblige*:

> Education must aim at leading all its children across the rich diversity of human life and experience, on and on to the frontier

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[151] Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, vii.
[152] Arnold, quoted in Williams, *Culture and Society*, 130.
[153] Ibid, 130.
[154] Leavis, quoted in Williams, *Culture and Society*, 247.

> where man stands `tendentem ad ulteriorem ripam.' It must be lavish in its gifts, generous in its spirit. No educational system which deliberately and permanently excludes from any race or group any discovery, any feeling, any experience of human beings, can justify itself.[155]

Yet the methods, according to both Winter and Brookes, should differ, for "the teacher must necessarily take into account the history, tradition, experience, and environment of the children".[156] But the caveat is sounded: thus far and no further: "Education must take account of differences, but must not create them." The humanism undergirding this statement was present in the *noblesse oblige* tradition, which advocated the sharing of Western culture through education, and wholly absent from the segregationist approach, originally advocated by Brookes, where education became a means of safeguarding echelons in society. Again, the polarity is between education as an end in itself (a preparation for life), or education designed to fit people into a socio-political system (social engineering).

If the emphasis is on the individual, as opposed to the representative of a class or race (type), teaching methods will foster self-development (as in the Dalton Plan) or self-fulfilment (as in the Christian focus on the whole person).[157] Or, indeed, in African humanism, as Mphahlele said in a seminal address to the Teachers' Association, one which we shall later have occasion to explore:

> As long as education means merely the study of subjects which have to be passed in an examination, we are going nowhere towards the discovery of self. Even while we try to master modern technology in order to `catch up', self-fulfilment as the

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[155] Brookes, *Native Education*, 45.
[156] Ibid, 25-26.
[157] "We National Socialists and you Christians have only one thing in common," was the ominous verdict of the judge in the trials following the July plot against Hitler in 1944, "we both claim the whole man."

> ultimate object should never escape us. It is this self-fulfilment that our children lack at all levels of schooling.[158]

This preoccupation with the individual motivated the CR's running of St Peter's, and their ongoing battle with the education authorities for, as Brookes wrote:

> the object of education is not to produce skilled labourers or able professional men or good research workers or even good citizens, but quite simply good men, human beings rich with the infinite joys and infinite sorrows of true wisdom, rapt in adoration of that holy trinity whose names are beauty, truth and goodness.[159]

It is worth underlining yet again that this Romantic vision of "good men" leading a Christian continent and ministering to a Christian people was the motivating force behind the CR's educational programme. In this they were at odds with the prevailing view, noted in the Report of the Welsh Committee (1936), that the "education of the White child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of the Black child for a subordinate society. There are for the White child no limits, in or out of school. For the Black child there *are* limits which affect him chiefly out of school".[160]

The Welsh Report, though, had a dim view of the influence of schools when it posed the question, "Should education lead or follow the social order?" It suggested that the school was only one of the agencies which affected Africans, others being the economic system (ie. class) and statutory legislation (ie. race). The CR would take issue with such an ineffectual reading, arguing that, in contrast to the finding that "a full liberal philosophy is

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[158] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self - a Personal Essay', *The Teachers' Journal* 23(5) 1980, 3.
[159] Brookes, *Native Education*, 13-14.
[160] Quoted in Brian Rose and Raymond Tunmer (eds), *Documents in South African Education* (Johannesburg, 1975), 233.

not at present applicable to Native education", not only was it applicable, but mandatory as well, if society itself was to be revolutionarised in the interests of every citizen, and based on social justice and equity. The Welsh Report, though, in characteristic Transvaal liberal fashion, hedged its bets. In words reminiscent of Loram's policy regarding the advisability of a little education for Africans, but not too much, it recommended in typical rapprochement inter-war fashion that, by "being just a little ahead of the present day needs and possibilities", black education may contribute to progress, "without breeding discontent and raising false hopes".[161]

The Welsh Report was pragmatic in that it faced squarely the reality and limits of the colour bar in South African society, and urged educators to take cognisance. But the question it then posed is of fundamental importance to the CR's aims:

> Should we, as educators, recommend an education for the Natives on the assumption that these barriers will have disappeared when they grow up, and simply take no account of them, or should we accept these circumstances as facts and frame our educational aims accordingly, so as at least to enable them to fit into the existing social order where barriers constitute an integral part - quite apart from considerations whether these barriers are morally justifiable or not.[162]

The CR was not prepared to countenance the second possibility. It violated their conviction of the intrinsic worth of every individual (the doctrine of the Incarnation was central to their social involvement), and they refused to compromise with social structures which obstructed that. So they pursued the first possibility, on the basis that, not only would the barriers have "disappeared", but that their ex-pupils would have been responsible for their demise, that an education of the whole person would create the disaffection

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[161] Quoted in Rose and Tunmer, *Documents*, 234.
[162] Ibid, 233.

needed for the transformation of social structures. They gambled on the aspirations of their pupils, for, as Mphahlele would come to phrase it years later, "Waiting for the `system' to be changed or thrown out is to wait forever".[163] Significantly, Mphahlele's term as Secretary General of the Transvaal African Teachers Association is remembered for being informed by the question as to whether teachers should "teach in order to maintain an imposed status quo, or must we agitate for change through our teaching", Mphahlele advocating even then that "teachers should ponder their role in terms of the economic and political needs of the African community".[164]

Malherbe (ironically a key figure in the Welsh Committee which advocated gradual change) wrote that, in a rapidly changing society, teachers should in fact be prophets, "able to foresee what situations children will be faced with in twenty or thirty years' time when they are grown up".[165] Imagination should be cultivated. The teachers at St Peter's, as we shall see in Chapter Three, envisaged a just and equitable society and geared their teaching to that end, without falling prey to the idea that people should be educated for a particular and defined society (such as Bantu Education or, worryingly, as we seem to be doing today in post-apartheid South Africa, where our education is determined by the supposed needs of a technological society). St Peter's, as an Anglican school, was increasingly guided by the idea informing the repudiation of the Bantu Education Act by the Synod of Bishops in 1954: "The aim of education is to train the mind and character of the scholar or student so that he is equipped to understand the world and the time in which he lives, and to take his place in it as a happily adjusted individual",[166] not that this is easy to implement, of course, as life teaches! "African children, up from the cities and towns," the Bishops averred, "need an education which will enable them to share in the cultural life of that multi-racial society in which they have to live."

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[163] Mphahlele, `Opening Address', 3.
[164] National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown (NELM), Nathan Molope, letter to Ursula Barnett, 6 May 1974, MS doc. no 9636, acc. no 85.2.6.
[165] Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, viii.
[166] CPSA, Provincial Missionary Conference Minutes 1931-59, AB 785 volume 4.

Yet, as Mphahlele quite rightly pointed out to the Teachers' Association, `that multi-racial society' was one constructed by white people, education for black and white alike had been designed by white people. Whereas "we South African writers who emerged in the fifties expressed a sense of euphoria about the considerable degree in which we as blacks had assimilated western ways in an industrial context", it was only in later years that "it occurred to me how we had assimilated the west on its own terms, as a conquered people, not on our own terms".[167] His concerns with education since then have been to encourage black South Africans on the road toward self-discovery and empowerment, the odyssey of the black intellectual continuing beyond Léopold Senghor's

> And, once out of the searing darkness of the Middle Passage,
> We were to follow the neon lights that would never let us be

to realise, as Abrahams was also to grasp, that "the lure of neon lights in white man's territory", lights which symbolised all that the oppressed associated with power, were "ultimately misleading".[168]

4 The mid-century JC and SC syllabus for English

4.1 The hegemony of English within the curriculum

St Peter's flourished in the late inter-war years, the curriculum privileging literary and mathematical subjects. Although Latin gave way to Afrikaans B just before the Second World War, all other subjects offered for the JC and Matriculation virtually remained constant, and English and Arithmetic mandatory. So a St Peter's pupil would have chosen six from a narrow list which included the core subjects of English A, Afrikaans B, Xhosa / Zulu /

[167] Mphahlele, `Opening Address', 2.
[168] Ibid, 2.

South Sotho A, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Geography, History, Physical Science or Domestic Science. These basic subjects of course, were among those set by the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB), and determined by the teachers employed at St Peter's and what the Headmaster believed was in the best interests of the pupils. By 1948, though, in a new world order, the JMB no longer offered Domestic Science at Matric level, insisting girls take Mathematics or Physical Science instead; JC level was as far as the subject went.[169] The St Peter's Advisory Council objected to this in September, deciding in chauvinist fashion that the subject "was important for African girls' careers", but the JMB stood firm.[170]

English was probably the most important subject of the six; it was not, as Don Mtimkulu wrote, "just another school subject about which we may argue dispassionately whether it is well taught or otherwise; but it is for us the most important tool for acquiring some mastery over our new social and economic environment".[171] Like most educated Africans, he saw English as the `Latin' of the present day, "the key to the wider world beyond Africa; it offers him membership of an international society of ideas which encompasses the whole world, and enables him to extend his horizons to the utmost limits of his capability." The words of another African graduate, an unnamed, possibly fictional teacher, who left the profession in protest against the Bantu Education Act (which targeted English in particular) are cited by Hannah Stanton in her memoir, *Go Well, Stay Well*:

> English is for us a world language, the language of commerce, trade, politics, law, literature, music, poetry, medicine, and much

[169] CPSA, St Peter's Advisory Council Minutes 1932-1956 AB 2089 / D 1.
[170] The fact that, today, with the order changing yet again, a greater range of less academic, more professional-oriented courses is increasingly favoured and offered, reveals a fundamental shift in society's view of education, and what interests it should serve, but that is another question.
[171] Don Mtimkulu, `The Teaching of English in Bantu Schools', *South African Outlook* 1 Aug. 1958, 123.

> else that we find so compelling in the world of the `Sixties.' This is the road that we must tread, come rain, come hail.[172]

To reduce English both as subject and medium of instruction of all subjects, and to replace "teachers of the old type" with "a new crop of Bantu Education teachers specially created by Verwoerd," laments the teacher, "is to cut us off from the mainstream of human civilisation and to put us in the refrigerator of dead tribal institutions against our consent".[173] Kelwyn Sole reads this policy as the state's attempt to break the thrust of a possible alliance between white (English) liberals, radicals and a black petty-bourgeoisie which the Afrikaner Nationalists considered so challenging to their authority,[174] but, as Jonathan Hyslop has shown, by the late 1940s the powerful mission hegemony which had for a century exerted a formative influence over the African elite, was anyway for the first time under pressure regarding its claims to authority and knowledge.[175]

Writing in 1981 after his return from exile, Mphahlele drily noted that something called "English as a second language" had appeared in his absence, and replaced "the love and attention and sense of adventure we

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[172] Quoted in Hannah Stanton, *Go Well, Stay Well: South Africa August 1956 to May 1960* (London, 1961), 135.

[173] Contemporary responses to the Act, while obviously condemnatory, were far from uniform, however: they varied from those who advocated the ANC boycott of schools called for April 1955 and supported alternative cultural clubs sponsored by the African Education Movement (in which CR brethren were prime movers) to others who advised making the best of the education that was available and working for African interests within the system, with ZK Matthews, for pragmatic reasons, somewhere in-between. For a useful discussion see Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 33-35, as well as Matthews's Presidential Address to the Cape ANC, 18-19 June 1955, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 174-176, and the Report of the National Executive Committee for the ANC Annual Conference, 17-18 December 1955, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 232-234.

[174] Kelwyn Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature, 1948-1960', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg, 1979), 157.

[175] Jonathan Hyslop, `"A Destruction Coming In": Bantu Education As Response to Social Crisis', in Philip Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, 1993), 394. Hyslop even suggests it was the breakdown of missionary hegemony within the ranks of the black elite which Bantu education sought to address (400).

had been wont to bring to [the mastery of English]".[176] The "master race had to gather together men and women of inferior calibre from its ranks to teach in it and administer it". He posits that black people themselves will have to salvage English from its second-language wilderness, just as, generations earlier, they had inspired each other towards mastery of the language. "We have got to wrench the tools of power from the white man's hand," he wrote in *The African Image* apropos of Verwoerd's legislation regarding `Bantu culture': "one of these is literacy and the sophistication that goes with it. We have got to speak the language that all can understand - English".[177] The changing face of this subject in particular, then, must be recorded and analysed if any sense is to be made of the matrix of the autobiographies to be discussed in Chapter Four.

English has traditionally held the position of *primus inter pares* among academic subjects in the British curriculum, certainly since Classics gave way to it at the Oxbridge universities in the 1920s. This is probably because of the subject's association, in the `Great Tradition' trumpeted by FR Leavis, with life itself, and a familiarity with the great books has always been held in esteem, as indicating the life properly understood and well lived. Handbooks of the Transvaal Education Department in the 1940s perpetuate this mystique; all carry the following rubric for teachers of Standard VI to VIII (JC):

> The Department stresses the advisability of having specialist teachers, technically well-equipped and imbued with enthusiasm for their subject. This is admittedly important in all subjects at this stage, but particularly so for English, which is much more concerned with the spirit of things, and in which, above all, there should be no possibility of the teacher's regarding the sub-divisions of the subject as separate entities.

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[176] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Black Teacher Today: Old and New Challenges', *Mentor* 63(5) 1981, 187.
[177] Es'kia Mphahlele, *The African Image* (New York, 1962), 193.

Bertram Barnes voices his age's belief in English as a subject which, while "it is valued by students as a money-getter" (!) is also:

> of course, the key to all the stores of the world's learning as no other language has been since Latin fell. It must be taught and it must be taught well and thoroughly so that school boys may be learn to love and use it in after life for what it brings to them of the stored riches of the world's literature.[178]

The teachers of English at Adams at this time, Couzens records, passed on to students like Dhlomo "the idea that a nation's civilisation was its achievements in literature".[179] As late as 1953, Michael Sadler was validating the teacher of English as being uniquely equipped "to instil into the African mind, which is still receptive to new ideas, the ethical and aesthetic standards of Western culture".[180] And, a year later, Alan Warner, in his inaugural address as first Professor of English at Makerere, *Shakespeare in the Tropics*, was rationalising African students' studying English literature in order to "become citizens of the world", "the stimulus of English ideas and forms" being essential to the development of an African strain in literature.[181] He was among the last in a venerable line of educators who understood English literature as, Leon de Kock drily remarks, "but one form of the greater ideality in which morality, philosophy, Christianity and aesthetics were definitively universalised in the image of a little island north of Africa".[182]

Yet the pupils themselves had little or none of the scepticism which would come with a subsequent age (later bought into most obviously by Mphahlele).

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[178] Barnes, `The Educational Problem in Africa', 20.
[179] Couzens, *The New African*, 51. For further studies of education at Adams see Ambrose Cato George, "A Mission and Five Commissions: A Study of Some Aspects of the Educational Work of the American Zulu Mission 1835-1910" (DPhil, Rhodes University, 1989); Susan Michelle Du Rand, "From Mission School to Bantu Education: A History of Adams College" (MA, University of Natal (Durban), 1990).
[180] MJ Sadler, `On Teaching English to Africans', *The Forum* June 1953, 30.
[181] Cited in Carol Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education: "The Subversion . . . of the African *Mind*"', *African Studies Review* 38(3) 1995, 16.
[182] Leon de Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', *Journal of Literary Studies* 8(1/2) 1992, 41-42.

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney has articulated a sentiment commonly felt by ex-pupils of St Peter's, when he describes in his 1995 lecture at Queen's University, "Further Language", his encounter with the English canon there in 1957:

> We may have had the experience of being marginal but we had not been initiated into its meaning. We still took it for granted that the canon was probably good for us and got dug in, or at least resigned ourselves to dodging through. We certainly had not learnt to consider ourselves ill done by because we were being offered hallowed names of English literature for study.[183]

In a different age, of course, postmodernism would challenge the pre-eminent claim of literature as life, questioning its status as master narrative, and postcolonialism would interrogate the `Great Tradition' as being relevant to all people at all times. St Peter's existed during the interregnum between the hegemony of Classics (which ended, along with the old world, with the First World War) and the subversive texts to come (in the new democratic world order after the Second World War). Indeed, the texts which will be examined in Chapter Four are among the first documents of this new dispensation. The 1930s through to the 1950s comprised the height of the liberal humanist pedagogy (as articulated by Leavis) in Britain and the Dominions, and the texts prescribed at school level exemplified the metropolitan, middle-class, white, patriarchal tradition. With few exceptions, they bore the imprimatur of imperialism.[184] It is my contention that it was these very works, along with the school context which supported their validity, which led to them being

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[183] Quoted in Nils Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon: Regionality and the Impact of Education in Seamus Heaney's Poetry', *ARIEL* 29(4) Oct. 1998, 15.

[184] Yet Africans' response to such imperialistic texts was ambivalent as Heaney's. Speaking of his exposure to *Tamburlaine* as a first year student, he says in his 1995 Oxford Lectures, *The Redress of Poetry*, that "even though I have learned to place this poetry's expansionist drive in the context of nascent British imperialism, I am still grateful for the enlargement it offered." And in his 1984 lecture *Among Schoolchildren*, he acknowledges his encounter with the imperialistic canon as "a fundamentally pleasurable experience that need not be reneged on for the sake of any subsequent political correctness" (quoted in Eskestad `Negotiating the Canon', 14).

critiqued in the works which supplanted them. The empire, in truth, wrote back.

This argument, incidentally, is developed by Carol Sicherman in her recent explorations of the intellectual development of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other East African graduates of Makerere at Leeds University in the 1960s, and hence the influence of Leeds on East African literary studies. At this northern English university they encountered a different way of reading imperial texts under the Marxist critic Arnold Kettle, and others like Arthur Ravenscroft. A close reading approach was followed, like that advocated at Makerere, but complemented by socio-historical analysis using Marx, Engels, Lenin and - crucially - Fanon.[185] Leavis's *The Great Tradition* was a canonical critical work at Makerere and one against which the East African graduates reacted after their Leeds experience. After Ngugi's return, the English curriculum at University College, Nairobi, then constructed along the lines of that at Oxford and Cambridge, was changed. The "ogres of Oxford and Cambridge" had been "so well meaning, so convinced of the greatness of the British literary tradition and its usefulness for the development of African literature," Sicherman wryly notes, that "it is difficult to overstate the intellectual bravery required to contest their hegemony".[186]

Mphahlele did, though. His article on the dispiriting extra-mural classes he gave in English literature at University College, Ibadan, Nigeria to adults who had missed out on secondary schooling, in a context where one university had to serve 40 million people and intended these classes primarily for their cultural value reveals this tyranny. As he says, "the British system of conducting such studies for their cultural value - quite valid in an industrialized and differentiated society which has a high literacy percentage -

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[185] Carol Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection and Ngugi's Intellectual Development', *UFAHAMU* 23(1) 1995, 6.

[186] Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection', 12. The ogres' hegemony was not confined to Africa: Eskestad mentions that when Seamus Heaney enrolled at Queen's University in 1957, the Department of English had no Irish or Northern Irish lecturers among its staff, all of whom, in addition, had an educational background from Oxbridge or Scotland (`Negotiating the Canon', 8).

is too much with us, and Nigerians want to study to increase their learning power". [187] Yet his courageous initiative found a way to make the syllabus more relevant to his students and slow the usual attrition of classes; they only read Keats once other poems he had chosen had whetted their appetite for poetry. When he himself was lecturer in English at University College, Nairobi, during 1965 and 1966, he wrote and spoke much at conferences on the necessity for Africanising the literature syllabus to bring it closer to the undergraduate's and lecturer's experience.

4.2 Setworks for the Junior Certificate (TED and JMB)

Throughout St Peter's existence (1922-1956), the setworks were the same as those set at white schools by the University of South Africa (UNISA) for Junior Certificate, and the Joint Matriculation Board for the Senior Certificate Exam (originally known as the Cape Senior Certificate). There was a period when the Transvaal Education Department began pressurising St Peter's to implement their syllabus; MH Trümpelmann in his history of the JMB provides a useful discussion of the protracted struggle between provincial education authorities and the JMB from the crucial 1920s onwards on the respective merits of their school-leaving examinations (the JMB had approved of the Transvaal Matriculation in 1921, and the Cape two years later).[188] My research has revealed a similarity in the kind of books prescribed by both the TED and JMB, indeed, they very often overlapped. Moreover, TED syllabuses, question papers and marking of scripts were subject to annual approval by the JMB.[189] Certainly, these are the kind of books which would have stocked the school library at St Peter's, and black households (those, of course, which did possess books).

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[187] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Travels of an Extra-Mural Donkey', *Transition* 3(11) 1963, 47. This conflict is precisely the one higher education in post-apartheid South Africa faces: lecturers who believe in the transformative power of literature are often at odds with those students who simply want a language qualification. It is a debate which ultimately, of course, leads back to the conception and role of the university in general, and one in a transitional society in particular.

[188] Trümpelmann, *The Joint Matriculation Board*, 80-86.

When PAW Cook of the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research conducted his 1935 survey of the Standard VI pupil (this was the last standard of the primary school as black pupils did an extra year) in order to assess the material at the close of eight years' schooling, he discovered that, although English Language was consistently the favourite subject (along with Arithmetic) among all pupils throughout South Africa,[190] English Literature (comprising composition and reading) always took bottom place. It ranked only marginally higher than the Vernacular (which was unpopular because the pupils felt they knew their own languages and wasted their time with them at school, and there was a "lack of interesting and suitable books").[191] He observed that English Language was popular because of the social value attached to it, since most schools were English mission institutions, and it was the language of the mines and industry. Mastery was the key to job opportunities. Mphahlele noted then (and it is no different today) how "[t]he function of literature became tied up with the motivation to master English at the grassroots level of practical usage":

> English, which was not our mother tongue, gave us power, power to master the external world which came to us through it: the movies, household furniture and other domestic equipment, styles of dress and cuisine advertising, printed forms that regulate some of the mechanics of living and dying and so on.[192]

Another consideration for the popularity of English Language was "the cheapness and plentifulness of English papers and books".[193] Mphahlele recalls how, during his primary school days at this very time, he "had rooted

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[189] Ibid, 81.
[190] PAW Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil: A Socio-educational Survey of Std. VI Pupils in Native Schools in the Union of SA, 1935* (Pretoria, 1939), 18, 23.
[191] Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil*, 24.
[192] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Exile, the Tyranny of Place and the Literary Compromise', *UNISA English Studies* 17(1) 1979, 39.
[193] Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil*, 24.

everywhere for newsprint to read. Any old scrap of paper".[194] He would also ransack the "dilapidated books and journals" palmed off on to the Marabastad municipal reading room ("anything from cookery book through boys' and girls' adventure to dream interpretations and astrology"). But he dug out *Don Quixote*, after going through the whole lot "indiscriminately like a termite, just elated with the sense of discovery, of recognition of the printed word".[195]

The reason for the huge disparity in the popularity of English Language and English Literature is to be found in the answer to Question 14 in Cook's questionnaire, which required pupils to write down the names of books, newspapers and periodicals read in their parents' homes. The results show a preponderance of English books and periodicals over those of other languages in all provinces, although isiXhosa was more read in the Cape than the corresponding vernacular in other provinces. It is obvious that the English books listed are religious hand-me-downs or old textbooks which, once bought, were kept in the house; and therefore that books were probably the scarcest commodity in black families, received or bought only for functional use. Cook states that 2 109 English books were mentioned by name (out of 12 000 questionnaires administered!). These include the Bible (recorded 1 880 times) and *Pilgrim's Progress* (37 times). Others listed were "George Washington, Harp of God, Cookery Book, Nelson, Health Books, Robinson Crusoe, Arabian Nights and Jock of the Bushveld".[196] The latter is interesting as it was the first non-metropolitan text to be prescribed by the TED in 1948 and the JMB in 1950. Somehow it had found its way into black homes a decade earlier.

Question 18 asks pupils to list the books in any language they have read outside of the classroom. Cook is shaken by the fact that half the pupils (3 148 out of 6 237) made no answer, indicating the lack of a culture of reading. Those that did gave the names of 220 books, again drawn from textbook

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[194] Mphahlele, `Exile, the Tyranny of Place', 37.
[195] Ibid, 38.

stock except for the penultimate in the list of "Robinson Crusoe, King Solomon's Mines, Robin Hood, Founders and Builders, Alice in Wonderland, Black Beauty, Pilgrim's Progress, Fairy Stories, Harp of God, Up from Slavery and Jock of the Bushveld".[197] Cook records the large number of religious books and historical romances listed and comments without offering what would have been telling alternatives, that the books read "do not seem to be those best calculated to enlarge their knowledge and appreciation of the modern world. A literary diet of historical romances, fairy tales and religious works seems a little unbalanced".[198]

This survey corroborates my argument that the books with which African youth were familiar were those of empire, encountered solely as textbooks at school or time-honoured texts of an earlier generation at home. Deborah Gaitskell lists some of the books, all with an imperial flavour no matter the discipline, taught at Lovedale and other Eastern Cape schools immediately post-First World War, at the end of an era she calls "Imperial Domination to African Disillusion".[199] For English the syllabus included Gray's *Odes and Elegies*, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, *Julius Caesar* and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*; for History Green's *Short History of the English People* and Smith's *Greece*; and for Geography Meiklejohn's *British Empire*. Such books were still being set in the Transvaal right up to the introduction of Verwoerd Education. Mphahlele said recently that those of his generation brought up at school were "taught subjects that originated from the Western world, reading books of the Western world. Much of our thinking was shaped by this kind of educational system".[200]

What is apparent from my own survey of books set by the TED and JMB is that the kind of prescribed texts and the requirements of the course changed

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[196] Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil*, 81.
[197] Ibid, 82.
[198] Ibid, 83.
[199] Deborah Gaitskell, `Race, Gender and Imperialism: A Century of Black Girls' Education in South Africa.' Unpublished paper, 7.
[200] Richard Samin, `Interview: Richard Samin with Es'kia Mphahlele', *Research in African Literatures* 28(4) 1997, 187.

only slightly from the 1930s to the 1950s. While the former was not the syllabus followed by St Peter's, it was followed by other secondary schools in the Transvaal, black and white alike, until Bantu Education took over after 1953, and does indicate the type of books read at the time. There is also overlap with the JMB syllabus, and an overview of both syllabuses will give a sense of the prevailing literary values of the time. As Cobley notes, all available textbooks during this period "emphasised belief systems which were European, racist and imperialistic",[201] (though not necessarily understood by pupils as such at the time), and this was reinforced in schools through subject teaching, religious instruction, and the general ethos of the classroom.

The JMB (Higher Grade) exam only prescribes one Shakespeare play from the late 1930s through to the 1950s. It is interesting to note that Mphahlele and Ambrose Phahle (who would become a fine Physics lecturer at Manchester University and is remembered as an outstanding pupil by his contemporaries) both wrote the last JC exam before Shakespeare was prescribed regularly from 1938.[202] So any acquaintance with Shakespeare would have been through Mphahlele's informal reading or self-study towards the Matric examination.) The plays set for JC are *Macbeth* (1938, 1948, 1952), *Twelfth Night* (1939, 1947), *The Tempest* (1940, 1945), *As You Like It* (1941, 1946), *Coriolanus* (1942), *Julius Caesar* (1943, 1951, 1954), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1944), *Romeo and Juliet* (1949, 1955), *The Merchant of Venice* (1950, 1953) and *Henry V* (1956).[203] That these plays often resonated with the pupils' own life experience is evident from an anecdote given by Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR in his memoir, *African Pulse*, probably referring to the year *Romeo and Juliet* was last taught at JC level (1955):

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[201] Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 63.

[202] Other books which Mphahlele and Phahle read for their JC exam in 1937 were Q's *Poison Island* and Mason's *The Four Feathers*.

[203] All drawn from the annual syllabuses in *JC Examination Handbook* (Cape Town, 1938-1956). By comparison, in the TED syllabus the amount of Shakespeare set for Matric (Higher Grade) declines, along with other literary texts, as the years pass. In 1931, for example, three plays (two of which must be Shakespeare) are to be read (*Secondary School Certificate Handbook* (Pretoria, 1931), 20), while by 1938, only two plays are required (one by Shakespeare) (*Secondary School Certificate Handbook* (Pretoria, 1938), 32).

> A schoolmaster at our St Peter's Secondary school once confiscated a note that was being passed from a 17-year-old African schoolboy to one of the schoolgirls. It was a long letter, and the language was rapturous, hectic and uninhibited; but it began with the words:

and Jarret-Kerr quotes from Romeo's first words to Juliet in I:v:92-95 about the two blushing pilgrims which stand ready to end his sonnet with a tender kiss.[204]

TED manuals for the earlier period (the 1930s) stipulate extra home reading for Standards VII (4 books) and VIII (6 books), apart from the prescribed prose narrative, non-fictional text and poetry book. The regular rubric for teachers is that they "should make every endeavour to develop a taste for good prose and poetry in their pupils";[205] this, of course, was in keeping with the aesthetic spirit of the time. Another rubric is that in "any scheme for the teaching of English the importance of the school library cannot be overstressed"; the emphasis was on "carefully chosen and graded" books for home reading and memorisation of meaningful passages.[206] The power of memorisation of poetry and prose passages should never be underestimated for learners of a second language, even if it might have comical repercussions, such as Abrahams's recollection of the mangled Lord's Prayer or Matshikiza's description of the Bullhoek Israelites' incomprehensible Passover hymn.[207] Matshikiza ascribes his learning English to memorisation of poems and nursery rhymes, however unfamiliar the concepts, such as the English noun `fair', his first acquaintance with which in England sets off this hotch-potch recollection:

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[204] Martin Jarret-Kerr, *African Pulse: Scenes from an African Hospital Window* (London, 1960), 101.
[205] *Regulations and Syllabuses for the Transvaal Junior Certificate Exam* (Pretoria, 1934), 20.
[206] *Suggested Code for English (Home Language) Grades-Standard VIII* (Pretoria, 1940), 21.
[207] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), 114; Todd Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife* (Cape Town, 1990, orig. 1961), 27.

> "Oh dear, what can the matter be, Johnny's so long at the fair."
>
> We sang about it in Africa. We didn't have to know what it was. We learnt English that way.
>
> "Oh, Young Lochinvar is come out of the West."
>
> We never asked who was young, Lochin or Var. "The Oak and the Ash." "Cherry Ripe." "The Lincolnshire Poacher." "Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled."[208]

Given the Presbyterian background of Lovedale, where he was at school, of course, we should not be surprised at the provenance of these folksongs! On a more serious note, however, this indicates just how strong the Scottish influence was in secondary education between the wars, Walter Scott, John Buchan and Robert Louis Stevenson being the great triumvirate generally in favour of the British imperialistic mission, but not uncritically so.

By the late 1940s, memorisation of "a reasonable amount of suitable prose and verse" was still advocated by the TED, and the "average pupil should be encouraged to read from twenty to thirty books a year"![209] The focus by this time, however, had moved from periods of literature to individual texts. In 1949, for example, the TED Matric syllabus required six books to be read, but no period of literature to be studied.[210] What does change is the provenance of textbooks for the lower standards. Metropolitan staples of the late 1930s prescribed for the TED Junior Certificate, like RL Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*, AA Milne's *Sketches*, Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* and Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* are replaced in the post-War era (1948) by *Jock of the Bushveld* and *Bushveld Tales*.

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[208] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 26.

[209] *Suggested Syllabuses for Grades-Standard VIII* (Pretoria, 1948), 29. The emphasis placed on memory and learning of hundreds of lines of poetry and prose in the 1930s disappears totally two decades later, as does the encouragement of the compilation of personal anthologies gleaned from the pupils' reading, obviously intended to cultivate an appreciation of wide reading.

[210] *Secondary School Certificate Handbook* (Pretoria, 1949), 31.

Cook's cavil regarding the preponderance of historical romances above is supported by the choices offered under various categories in Standards VI to VIII of the TED syllabus. In 1940 Standard VI favoured male-protagonist "Tales of Action, Adventure, Wonder" (such as *King Solomon's Mines*, *Oliver Twist*, *Coral Island*, *Treasure Island*, *Silas Marner*, *Arabian Nights*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Water Babies*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Emil and the Detectives*, *Jeremy Quince* and (the exception) *Little Women*).[211] Under "Myth and Legend" appeared the obvious choices *The Heroes*, *Tanglewood Tales* and Lang's *Fairy Books*. "Nature Books" offered a selection dominated by Kipling, *Just So Stories*, *The Jungle Book*, *Black Beauty*, *Dr Doolittle's Books*, *The Children's Life of the Bee*. "Records of Real Achievement" comprised classic tales of masculine endurance, *Scott's Last Expedition*, The *Man Eaters of Tsavo*, *The Handicraft Book*, *Escapes and Hurried Journeys*.

Under "Travel, Exploration, Natural History" for Standard VII appeared more choices from the male public domain (Fabre's *Books*, Johnson's *Birds and Animals*, *Old St Paul's*, *The Far Distant Oxus* (intelligently dropped soon), *He Went with Marco Polo*, *He Went with Vasco da Gama*). More "Tales of Action, Adventure and Wonder" pandered to what can only be construed as male fantasy, given the landlocked Transvaal: *Ivanhoe*, *Prester John*, *Rodney Stone*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Captains Courageous*, *Westward Ho*, *Midshipman Easy*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Two Years before the Mast*, *Sea Hawk*, *The Story of the Amulet*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Mr Sheridan's Umbrella* (this last would be dropped before long).[212] These books were obviously read beyond the TED syllabus, for both Hutchinson and Matshikiza mention Sherlock Holmes in their autobiographies: "Once again," Hutchinson tells us upon presentation of an omnibus when he was lying low in Blantyre, Malawi, "I encountered the fabulous Sherlock Holmes and the faithful Watson

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[211] *Suggested Code for English*, 20. Categories without prescribed choices were "Stories of Two or Three Tales of Shakespeare", "One-Act Plays" and "Simple Narrative and Lyric Verse."

[212] *Suggested Code for English*, 20-21. A further category offered "The Stories of Some of the Better-Known Operas."

– forgotten friends of my schooldays".[213] And Matshikiza describes his impressions of the Baker Street underground station in his famous style, `Matshikize':

> I went down the escalator in the fairyland of Baker Street where I had read Sherlock Holmes watsoning away at the baskervilles. My elder brother Temba read me to bed on that hound way back in South Africa. There was not a footprint I would not have outwatsoned brother Temba upon that night. There was not a book in a brown cover and written in the English language and covered in Harley streets that I could not that evening have uncovered for my brother Temba . . . . So when this Englishman said to me this is Baker Street Station my brother Temba came to me and said, `Elementary, dear Watson'.[214]

Hutchinson seems not to have suffered any ill effects from the omnibus in Blantyre (to say nothing of his schooldays), for he was soon discussing Yeats and Joyce with an Irishman, a fellow `treason specialist', in Dar-es-Salaam.[215]

Both the TED and JMB Junior Certificate are interesting, not least because they prescribe texts which, tellingly, became staple undergraduate university fare decades later. To take the TED (Standard VIII) first: in 1940, for example, Dickens features for the first time since *Oliver Twist* in Standard VI, but in some strange company under "Novels and Romances" (*Lorna Doone*, *Three Musketeers*, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Day's Work*, *Kipling's Short Stories* (anthology), *Stalky and Co.*, *Typhoon*, *Mill on the Floss*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *Pickwick Papers*, *First Men in the Moon*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Alan Quartermain*. "History, Biography, Travel" presented some similarly strange bedfellows (*Travels with a Donkey*, *Book of a Naturalist*, *The Home of Mankind*, *The Bible in Spain* (later dropped; the travelogue should never

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[213] Alfred Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (London, 1960), 105.
[214] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 49-50.
[215] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 180.

have made the list), *Robinson Crusoe*, *In the Morning of Time*).[216] Obviously the virtues of individual books cannot be constrained by artificial categories, though the bureaucrats are trying hard. One of Shakespeare's simpler plays like *Julius Caesar* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was also offered under the category "Plays." These categories would hold good with few alterations for years to come, the syllabuses of the 1940s and 1950s showing only those variations pointed out above.

The overlap with the JMB is noticeable, most particularly in the 1950s.[217] The standard five setbooks prescribed for the JMB comprise a mix of poetry, prose and plays, with essays and sketches being a staple in the pre-War years. Dickens is popular: *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935, 1947, 1950), *Great Expectations* (1938, 1944), *David Copperfield* (1953), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1955). Stevenson is too: *Kidnapped* (1933), *St Ives* (1938), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1945), *Travels with a Donkey* (1956). And Walter Scott of course: *Quentin Durward* (1939, 1956 and also a great favourite in SC), *Ivanhoe* (1939, 1945), *Kenilworth* (1947, 1949). Hardy also features with *The Trumpet-Major* (1939) and *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1949). While Mphahlele, incidentally, found Scott particularly tough going and quite painful, Dickens was always a great favourite and, in fact, he said in 1972 that the realism and humour of the Victorian novelist, together with later works he read by Richard Wright and short stories by other African Americans, avowedly influenced his writing.[218] The pathos of Dickens (unlike Scott) was crucially relevant to his life circumstances:

> Our little location of Marabastad, Pretoria, was a world of deformities that corresponded so much to Dickens'; bow-legged men, one-eyed men, menacing, bullying and cruel adults,

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[216] *Suggested Code for English*, 21.
[217] The following books are drawn from the annual syllabuses in *JC Examination Handbook* 1933-1956.
[218] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Interview with Ezekiel Mphahlele', in Bernth Lindfors et al (eds), *Palaver: Interviews with Five African Writers in Texas* (Austin, TX, 1972), 42.

> youngsters thrown into an adult world to earn a living; broken-hearted women, misers, decrepit, cantankerous old people.[219]

The technique of irony, which characterises Dickens's work and, in fact, is a defining thread running through Western literature, has been identified by Nadine Gordimer as typifying the writing of the 1950s, both the short stories of the *Drum* school and the autobiographies.[220] Intriguingly, the two stylistic concepts always emphasised by Mphahlele to describe himself are irony and paradox,[221] irony being for him the point of contact between acceptance and rejection, the zone between assimilation of culture and protest against it. "Facile rejection and facile acceptance cannot stand `ironic contemplation'", he wrote in *The African Image*.[222] Like Gordimer, he considers irony a guiding trope of the sophisticated, frustrated *Drum* school, and lists specifically Maimane, Hutchinson and Matshikiza among writers who occupy the "meeting point of acceptance and rejection", and who are framed by the protest writer Richard Rive and the romanticist Can Themba.[223] Gordimer observes, moreover, that irony as a weapon is completely missing from the work of the 1970s poets: "heroics, the epic mood and mode is the one that they use".[224] André Brink attributes this perhaps to a lack of acquaintance with the work of the 1950s, but to Gordimer and Mphahlele, the pressures and desperation under apartheid render the subtlety of irony unsuitable as a means of expression. I would agree, but still trace a familiarity with and appreciation of the idiom back to the `Great Tradition' taught at mission schools; we have noted its absence from *Drum* in the 1960s, when all the writers educated under that system had gone into exile.[225]

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[219] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Magic of Dickens, Gogol and Euripides', *The Star* 27 Aug. 1980, 3.
[220] Nadine Gordimer, in André de Villiers, `South African Writers Talking: Nadine Gordimer, Es'kia Mphahlele, André Brink', *English in Africa* 6(2) 1979, 14.
[221] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Comments: African Culture and Negritude', in American Society of African Culture (ed), *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered* (Berkeley, CA, 1962), 347.
[222] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 203.
[223] Ibid, 188. Mphahlele later attributed to Matshikiza "that kind of deep-seated irony which is very sophisticated" (in Mike Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse* (London, 1991), 86).
[224] Gordimer, in De Villiers, `South African Writers Talking', 14.

Other books of white male adventure set by the JMB are *The Red Cockade*, *The Blue Pavilion* and *Poison Island* (`Q' was often prescribed), *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *The Four Feathers* (a frequent visitor), *Kim*, *Jock of the Bushveld*, *Lorna Doone*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Berry and Co.*, *The Schoolboy in Fiction*, and *King Solomon's Mines*. Only once are female needs addressed: Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* is set for 1954. And Africa only begins to feature, as in the TED syllabus, in the post-War years, starting with poetry: the anthology *Thudding Drums* (1944, 1946, 1948), and FC Slater's *New Centenary Book of South African Verse* (1947).[226] The point of this detailed listing is to show the political economy of colonial education, how the school curricula were formulated to perpetuate the hegemony of Empire in South Africa during the 1920s to the 1940s, foisted on black and white subjects alike, although, as we have seen, pupils might not have taken issue with it at the time. The hegemony was, moreover, complicated somewhat by the prevalence of the Scottish texts, and the climate of questioning within the school could mitigate this overriding narrative to some extent. Teachers, of course, had no control over the books or syllabuses which were prescribed, even if, as Mphahlele recalled, "the curriculum left so much ground open for interpretation and intervention by the teacher".[227]

The point must be made that the books listed are those set for English A,[228] which every pupil at St Peter's wrote without exception, just as they all wrote Afrikaans B once Latin was dropped in 1939. English B, never taken, prescribed only three books to the five of English A and, from 1941 onwards,

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[225] It is perhaps relevant to note here that black pupils and students brought up under Bantu Education have little sense of irony as a literary technique and often tend to take ironic statements at face value.

[226] Drawn from the annual syllabuses in *JC Examination Handbook* 1933-1956.

[227] Es'kia Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', *Tribute* Aug. 1994, 117.

[228] It is worth noting in this regard that the 3-hour literature paper for JMB English A entailed "questions of a general nature dealing with five prescribed books", requiring candidates "to show that they have read the prescribed books with appreciation of the incidents narrated and of the matter generally" (rubric in every *JC Examination Handbook*). The 3-hour language paper comprised an essay on one of six given subjects, two letters, sentence correction and composition, and dictation. Incredibly, precisely the same requirements were true of Afrikaans B, although each paper here was two hours long (and only one letter was asked for).

the book choice was different from that of English A, though still favouring tales of action and adventure. Afrikaans B, always taken after 1938, also set three books, usually farm or wilderness stories, which meant that each St Peter's pupil would have read *at least* eight books during the Standard VIII year, and probably more, given the general encouragement of reading books from the library. Add to this the two books set in each of the vernaculars from 1939 onwards (three from 1942 onwards),[229] one vernacular of which every St Peter's pupil took, and the successful JC candidate would have been highly literate. Mphahlele himself recommended in 1978 that Matric second-language pupils, then being examined on only two works, should read at least *six* books, four of which should be examinable, the choice allowing for black and white pupils being able to handle fiction with which they are culturally at ease,[230] and Standard VIII pupils *four* books, two to be examined orally, two by written tests. "It is not too soon to begin," he advises, "in the third year of Junior High School, developing in the pupil's mind reading habits that will stand him in good stead in his mental and emotional growth, in Matric and undergraduate literary studies".[231] Reading is the cardinal activity which Don Mtimkulu believed should be inspired by a teacher of English, and encouraged through the building up of a school library ("mainly fiction"), over and above issues like the teaching of grammar, which he felt is particularly important to a second-language learner, and the practitioning of the spoken language through debates and dramatics.[232]

This wide reading came in useful, according to Zakes Mokae, one of the last pupils at St Peter's, in debates (and in tussles with prefects). Apparently it was the norm among pupils to stuff the prepared speech with as many relevant quotes as possible in order to impress their peers. The matrix was already there, he told me, when he arrived in the early 1950s: "When you

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[229] Mphahlele read Mofolo's *Chaka* and *Pitseng* for the JC exam (`Looking In', 122).
[230] These might include two works of fiction by black writers, one prose play (*not* Shakespeare), one book of poetry (with South African and British poems), and two other novels.
[231] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Current Trends in the English-Speaking World', *Eltic Reporter* 3(3) 1978, 12.
[232] Mtimkulu, `The Teaching of English', 125.

come in, in your first year, and you hear everybody quoting this stuff, so you think, ah, you've got to learn something to quote yourself, so you fall into the pattern".[233] And when a prefect took liberties with Mokae's classmate for a minor indiscretion, "he was hitting him, and the guy kept on resisting him - we had just learnt a poem that morning, you know - `death levels all' - he said, `I don't care man, death levels all!'" A case of poetic justice, if nothing else! The pupils of the 1950s were following in the footsteps of Mphahlele's generation:

> We had a compulsion to memorize in my school days, and it was a joy to recite and listen to the grandeur of Shakespeare on campus and during school debates. These debates were more an exercise in rhetoric than in the method of argument. The spoken word or phrase or line was the thing, damn the dialectic.[234]

Whereas a journalist like Can Themba was well read and used literary quotes very naturally, even in a popular magazine like *Drum*, young black writers today, says Gordimer, "are struggling to use a language that they know very poorly" and, moreover, do not understand the quotations in Themba's work.[235] Quoting from the greats of literature was a status symbol in other mission schools, too. Dan Twala, in conversation with Couzens in 1979,[236] recorded the same tactic at Lovedale in 1924 of invariably ending a speech with a quotation: "`You became the hero of the school then. You just broke through with a quotation.'" They also used to quote snippets from Shakespeare at every opportunity, such as "Et tu, Brute" and "How now, Malvolio?" for, said Twala, "Everybody thought he was great when he could quote a word or two from Shakespeare."

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[233] Interview with Zakes Mokae, Johannesburg, 18 May 1995.
[234] Es'kia Mphahlele, `My Experience as a Writer', in MJ Daymond et al (eds), *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing* (Pietermaritzburg, 1984), 76.
[235] Gordimer, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 157.
[236] Cited in Couzens, *The New African*, 51.

The unnamed ex-teacher mentioned by Hannah Stanton above, closed his passionate attack on Bantu Education, in classic debate style, with three lines which I have traced to Wordsworth's 1803 sonnet, "It is not to be thought of that the Flood / Of British freedom":

> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held.

That sonnet, of course, is one of a number at the turn of the nineteenth century exhorting England to discover anew her former greatness and integrity, instead of allowing herself, "this most famous Stream", to perish "in bogs and sands", or to be "a fen / Of stagnant waters" (from Wordsworth's 1802 sonnet "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour"). In using lines from it to end his argument convincingly, the teacher conveys both the idea that South Africa has entered, in his words, "a veritable Dark Age",[237] and the responsibility on those who are aware of it to rekindle the means to "manners, virtue, freedom, power". He also, conveniently for our purposes, demonstrates that the Romantic poets were staple fare within the diet of British imperialist texts.

Whatever the pupils thought of this fare, one wonders about the feelings of the teachers themselves, dragooned into teaching unrelentingly metropolitan and imperialistic texts. Sr Elsa CSMV, who taught English at St Peter's from 1952 until the school closed, was informed in a letter from the Headmaster, David Darling, as to what she would teach for the JC exam.[238] In 1952 the following were prescribed: *Macbeth*, *Narrative and Lyrical Poems* (ed. Godfrey Bobbins), *The Wind in the Willows*, *Lawrence* (Edward Robinson) and *The Four Feathers* (Mason). The 1953 exam set these: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Poems of Action* (Collins), *Berry and Co.* (Dornford Yates), *The*

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[237] Cited in Stanton, *Go Well, Stay Well*, 135.

Schoolboy in Fiction (FT Wood) and *David Copperfield*. One glance at these demonstrates yet again the male-oriented, middle-class, heroic values informing the choice. What the girls in Standard VIII made of the 1953 syllabus, in particular, would also be of interest to know, for the female experience is utterly ignored, and this raises the interesting question of to what extent the strong discourse of `masculinity' in the autobiographies of the 1950s and 1960s was shaped by the texts read at school.

4.3 Setworks for the Senior Certificate (TED and JMB)

The same letter also indicates the books Sr Elsa will be teaching for the SC syllabus in 1952 (the exam, incidentally, which Casey Motsisi passed in the third class at Bantu High School): *Henry IV Part II*, *Eight Poets*, *Thirty Poems by Robert Browning, The Shoemaker's Holiday* (Dekker), *Introducing Shakespeare* (G.B. Harrison), *The Small House at Allington* (Trollope), *The Linden Tree* (Priestley), *The Cricket Match* (Hugh de Selincourt) or *South African Stories* (Seary), *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Odyssey*. Perhaps what is most disconcerting to the modern eye is the volume and level of literature, particularly if the last two are done together! The choice, of course, favours the male and metropolitan, although the setting of the local alternative to the cricket match is to be applauded, for all its probable content of action and adventure!

For the 1953 SC exam the following were set, in addition to the Trollope, Dekker and Priestley: *Hamlet*, *The Poet's Company*, *Great Expectations*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Homilies and Recreations* (John Buchan), *The Nonnes Preestes Tale*, and (at long last) *The Little Karoo*. Perhaps Cook's respondents had good reason to assess English Literature as least enjoyable, given the foreign world these setworks present to Africans, let alone females. But the point must be made, too, that pupils would have encountered Chauntecleer and Pertelote, and Odysseus and Circe and

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[238] CPSA, letter dated 17 Sept. 1951, St Peter's School Records 1932-56 AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 3.

Penelope, and Miss Haversham and Pip; in other words, they would have been familiarised with characters and periods in the Western literary tradition which would enable them to hold their own in any company throughout the Empire, and the West at large, at that time.[239] It was for this reason, and for at least a century, that the educated black elite who emerged from the missionary enterprise would hear of no less than this sort of literary education for their people, if it was also being taught to whites.

Although Mphahlele studied for Matric on his own, not at St Peter's, we should register what the course entailed. English (Higher Grade) for the JMB Senior Certificate changed its requirements through the 1930s to the 1950s. For years six books were set (again, a mix of poetry, prose and plays, including one Shakespeare), but a change was made post-War in 1945, after intensive reassessment of the Matriculation curriculum during 1940-1942.[240] The new curriculum set three distinct sections, A, B and C: one Shakespeare, one (poetry) anthology, and nine miscellaneous books, questions on three of which had to be answered. It seems that Lily Moya, who read for the JMB Matric exam at Adams College in 1950 (Standard IX), but never wrote it as she left abruptly in June 1951, found this exam more excessive and daunting than the Cape SC, which she had already written twice, as she told the septuagenarian Dr Mabel Palmer, organiser of the Non-European Section of Natal University, that she had eleven English set books which included *Edwin Drood* and *Twelfth Night* as the Shakespeare.[241] Incidentally, Shula Marks's edition of the letters of Lily Moya, Mabel Palmer and Sibusisiwe Makhanya, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, is a crucial record in the documentation of

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[239] Literature, of course, could also be used as a personal shield against social deprivation; the writers of historical adventure and expanded horizons, Dumas, Kingsley and Captain Marryat, were Lewis Nkosi's childhood companions (Sole, `Problems of Creative Writers',16).

[240] Trümpelmann, *The Joint Matriculation Board*, 84. A further significant change to the JMB Matric would be implemented in the year after St Peter's closed (1957), when the range of nine books introduced after the War was reduced to four; it was the end of an era.

[241] Letter dated 4 Oct. 1949, in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 114. The correspondence conducted in 1949-51 between the bright sixteen-year old Transkei schoolgirl at Amanzimtoti (Adams College), the crusty septuagenarian Natal University academic, and the middle-aged community leader in Umlazi, herself educated in the United States, indicates that it was their passion for education which brought them together across the chasms of race, class, and age, but reflects how they were so compromised by their own backgrounds that tragedy resulted.

black South African education, which will be referred to frequently, since the letters dovetail with St Peter's existence and thus offer some useful comparisons with the urban Transvaal school.

The Shakespeare plays set included *Macbeth* (1933, 1942, 1949, 1955), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1934, 1943), *Romeo and Juliet* (1935, 1948), *Henry IV Part I* (1936, 1944), *Richard II* (1937, 1946, 1956), *As You Like It* (1938, 1947, 1954), *King John* OR *Henry V* (1939), *Julius Caesar* (1940), *Hamlet* (1941, 1953), *Twelfth Night* (1945, 1951), *The Merchant of Venice* (1948), and *King Lear* (1950).[242] Roland Langdon-Davies CR mentions that *Henry IV Part I* was done and scenes performed at Penhalonga in 1940, just a year after the JC course was instituted.[243] "I now really am convinced that Shakespeare is a great writer," he notes. "The fact that these boys and girls could understand and appreciate the characters of Falstaff, Prince Hal, Hotspur, and so on, proves it beyond a shadow of a doubt. This play could be put `into African dress' to-morrow." But perhaps its appreciation might be attributed to the teaching of Br Roger Castle CR, Warden of St Peter's Hostel when Abrahams and Mphahlele were there. It seems he taught blacks to understand Shakespeare better than most whites in South Africa and Rhodesia,[244] where, significantly, from 1940 on, he taught at Penhalonga, and might have been the hand behind *Henry IV Part I*.

As Tim Couzens pointed out in connection with writers of HIE Dhlomo's vintage, Shakespeare and the Romantics were very much to the taste of white educators of the time (whether teaching white or black pupils),[245] and if writers like Abrahams and Mphahlele years afterwards expressed an affinity with the Romantics, and employed quotes from Romantic poetry for illustrative effect, it can be traced back to this particular palate. The poems

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[242] All drawn from the annual syllabus of the *Matric Examination Handbook* (Cape Town, 1933-1956).
[243] Roland Langdon-Davies, `The Work at Penhalonga', *CR Quarterly* (154) St John Baptist 1941, 12.
[244] NELM, Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR, letter to Guy Butler, 30 Apr. 1959 MS doc. no 3063, acc. No 94.2.3.144.

set for 1939 alone (which Mphahlele would have written if he had stayed at St Peter's, and Ambrose Phahle indeed wrote to earn a first-class matriculation) make those taught nowadays at university seem child's play! Most of the eighty-odd poems are Renaissance to late nineteenth-century; some of the more daunting in an astonishing list by today's standards are: Milton's "Lycidas", Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", Byron's "Isles of Greece", Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", Fitzgerald's "Stanzas from Omar Khayyám", and Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel".[246] No self-respecting undergraduate English student today would read in a single year or two eighty poems spanning three centuries!

Some of the English (Higher Grade) setworks were decidedly taxing, however, and even Mphahlele admitted to Cosmo Pieterse "the agony of trying to project one's mind" into culturally alien works like *Northanger Abbey* and *Paradise Lost* with which students found they could not identify themselves.[247] "I came to dislike Milton and his stodgy Christianity that felt like balls of steel chained to my ankles," he confessed further of his Matric syllabus.[248] But, we must ask, was this his authentic cavil as a youth? Shula Marks reminds us that Lily Moya in 1949 identified fully with the Western culture she was being offered in the form of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, *King Lear* and *Jane Eyre*,[249] and it was only a later generation which questioned the validity of the vision. Demanding works set for Matric included Chaucer (*The Nun's Priest's Tale*, *The Pardoner's Tale* and the *Prologue*), plays by Shaw (*Arms and the Man*, *Saint Joan* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*), the more daunting novels by Thackeray (*Vanity Fair* and *Henry Esmond*) and Dickens (*Bleak House*, *Barnaby Rudge* and *Edwin Drood*), Milton's *Paradise Lost* Books I and II (admittedly offered as a choice!), famous lives like

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[245] Tim Couzens, `The Continuity of Black Writing in English in South Africa before 1950', in De Villiers, *English-Speaking South Africa Today*, 368.
[246] *Matric Examination Handbook*, 1939, 168-169.
[247] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele interviewed by Cosmo Pieterse', *Cultural Events in Africa* 45 1968, (supplement) 4.
[248] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Prometheus in Chains: The Fate of English in South Africa', *English Academy Review* 1984, 101. Heaney says in *Among Schoolchildren* that he experienced difficulties as an Irish student "learning to find my way among the ironies and niceties of Jane Austen's vicarages" (cited in Eskestad, `Negotiating the Canon', 9).

Clemence Dane's *Will Shakespeare*, Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Edward Wilson of the Antarctic*, Bernard Darwin's *Dickens* or Strachey's *Queen Victoria*,[250] or travel writing like Boswell's *Journal of a Tour in the Hebrides* or Burchell's *Travels in Southern Africa*.

It seems that Mphahlele's first acquaintance with the autobiographical form came from his reading of the memoirs and travel narratives so frequently set for the JC and Matric exams,[251] and no doubt stocking the shelves of St Peter's library. Autobiography itself, of course, was never prescribed, and not much has changed today, although the genre does find its way, particularly in postcolonial courses, into undergraduate syllabuses. What guided the selection of books for the SC was the same principle underlying English studies of the time: the sense that literature makes an educated *man* (used advisedly). Hence the choice each year of a wide range of lives of famous people and interesting places (very few of which were drawn from outside the British isles in the nineteenth century!). In fact, it would not be simplistic to say that books for the UNISA JC were more heterogeneous that their SC counterparts, if only because they dealt romantically with the far-flung reaches of empire rather than the metropole itself. The SC perpetuated the metropolitan myth, except for the odd real-life adventure like Patterson's *The Man Eaters of Tsavo*, or Sassoon's *The Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. Dissident novels began to appear after 1950 (Forster's *A Passage to India* and Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*), but again, the nod is given to only two books of female interest: Eve Curie's *Madame Curie* and Lady Anne Barnard's *Letters and Journals*.[252]

It must be remembered, though, that very few pupils actually sat the SC examination, and of these virtually no girls;[253] the JC is for our purposes more

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[249] Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 18.
[250] This last, read by Lily Moya for the 1949 Cape SC, was set by the JMB as late as 1951!
[251] Mphahlele, correspondence 28 August 2000.
[252] Drawn from the annual syllabuses in *Matric Examination Handbook* 1933-1956.
[253] Shula Marks notes that in the whole of South Africa in 1949 only 201 African girls went beyond the JC and only 0.2% of the whole African schoolgoing population passed Matric (*Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 9).

important because of the greater number and representativity of candidates. David Darling remarks in his letter above that the average class for JC to Matric numbered about 25 (although sometimes the JC class was over 30), which is a most favourable ratio from an educational point of view, but disconcerting if one remembers the numbers of pupils not accommodated at this level. As Alban Winter had posed it baldly a decade earlier, the difficult question dogging black education in the Transvaal in particular, because of a lack of funds, was whether to go for quality or quantity, and various policies were evolved to favour one or the other. The ideal would be to achieve education for an increasing proportion of black pupils without sacrificing the quality of that education; in Cook's words, the "demand for qualitative improvement must be balanced with the need for quantitative expansion".[254] For over a century the missionaries catered to the former (effectively working themselves out of a job) but always aware of their failure to do more because they were hamstrung by a dearth of funds, while the state, entering black education only this century, preferred the latter because it educated the masses for literate servitude.

4.4 The emphasis on reading across the curriculum

More space could be spent on a similar in-depth examination of the syllabuses for other subjects taken at St Peter's, like Arithmetic (mandatory), Afrikaans B,[255] Latin (until 1938), the main vernaculars, Mathematics, History, Geography, and Physical Science. The evidence is available in the various JMB manuals over the years. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis, which aims to assess the influence of St Peter's on our writers in English, hence the importance attached to the English syllabus, while acknowledging that stimulating teaching in the other subjects would also have

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[254] PAW Cook, *The Transvaal Native Teacher: A Socio-educational Survey* (Pretoria, 1939), 12.

[255] For the JMB Matric exam, Afrikaans (Gewone Graad) prescribed four of the six books for examination until 1938, when an alternative list of some 20 books was provided to acquaint second-language speakers with written Afrikaans and provide them with subject matter for their oral exam, but literature would not be officially tested (*Matric Examination Handbook* 1937, 52).

played a role in sharpening pupils' minds and exposing them to Western concepts. Even the vernacular, it must be noted, required *three books* to be read which, if properly taught (and there is no reason to believe they were not, the marks comparing well with those for other subjects), would have honed literary skills in the enthusiastic pupil and encouraged critical thought.

It must not be overlooked that the JC (UNISA) and SC (JMB) examinations were drawn up and administered overwhelmingly by white males: a photograph of the last Board taken in 1988 has one token female and two black men among over forty venerable white male professors. Trümpelmann acknowledges that the fact that "the Board was constituted of white members only, affirmed that the Board was obliged to function within a specific ideological reality",[256] which, it should be pointed out to him, also happened to exclude the female experience. The fact that girls and pupils of colour took the exams simply meant that they were subsumed under the master narrative of white, male and middle class, and learnt what the august professors believed was suitable for university entrance. Throughout the JMB examination's history, indicating the examination's bias towards higher education, competing and often vehement claims were made for what constituted the "best" package for university entrance.[257] These tended to revolve around the question of a third language (usually Latin) and Mathematics, foundation subjects for university study in the Arts and Sciences respectively, or so at least the JMB (and particularly the classicist Professor TJ Haarhoff) contended until the reassessment of 1940-1942, when these were dropped as compulsory subjects, only to be reinstated in 1948 after pressure. Haarhoff in particular, according to Trümpelmann, "exercised a strong influence on the subject packages and the curriculum rationale that prevailed during the thirties and forties",[258] the era, significantly, during which St Peter's flourished.

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[256] Trümpelmann, *The Joint Matriculation Board*, 136.
[257] See Trümpelmann's discussion, *The Joint Matriculation Board*, 57-65.
[258] Trümpelmann, *The Joint Matriculation Board*, 136.

Whatever the failings of the JMB, its principles were nevertheless espoused by the first universities in Africa other than Fort Hare, all established in the wake of the Second World War, such as Legon in the Gold Coast (Ghana), Ibadan in Nigeria and Makerere in Uganda. These institutions, and the new secondary schools created to feed them, were at odds with the Africanised government schools of the preceding three decades, which had offered a basically indigenous and industrial education, ironically anticipating Bantu Education to come in South Africa in the very years that schools were changing elsewhere.[259] The new schools continued in the vein of the academic missionary schools so that, as Charles Lyons put it: "[n]o longer harnessed by the constraints of indirect rule, African education became unabashedly literary as tens of thousands eagerly sought instruction in English".[260] It was the key to government service and industry in what would soon be independent states. As Sicherman notes, during the 1950s Makerere became even more European, operating as the University College of East Africa, with London University having oversight over both curriculum and examinations.[261]

At this very time, however, black South Africans were forced to be educated in a tribal `Africanised' milieu, which forced them out of kilter with the rest of Africa, effectively creating a time warp. Whereas until 1951 84.5 % of all African schools and training colleges were mission-run and controlled,[262] offering an academic education in English (a situation which post-War African countries were pursuing and which would have kept South Africa in step), this was thrown away by the Nationalist government in pursuit of a system to allow `the Bantu' to develop, in a good 1920s slogan, `along his own lines', translated by Mphahlele as "the most brutal brainwashing machine the South African white man could ever devise". The tragedy is apparent in Ngugi's

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[259] It is worth noting that the De Villiers Commission set up by the United Party in 1948 linked education and industry directly, and urged educational expansion to meet increased labour needs, concluding that "for their present stage of development [Africans] profit much more from practical subjects than from academic subjects" (quoted in Hyslop, `"A Destruction Coming In"', 398).

[260] Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 162.

[261] Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 15.

anecdote about literally trembling when he saw Peter Abrahams's *Tell Freedom* in the hands of a teacher at Alliance High in the late 1950s.[263] The 1954 autobiography would have just been published; publication of Mphahlele's 1959 chronicle was imminent. The sense of inspirational continuity which South African pupils at St Peter's would have experienced, had the school (and educational system) endured into the 1960s and beyond, was denied them, and offered another generation of East Africans instead.[264] On the threshold of a writing revolution with the *Drum* renaissance, and a reading explosion at the peak of mission education, the doors of learning and culture were closed to the very generation who could have capitalised on the gains made by their artist forbears. Instead, it was left to their counterparts educated elsewhere on the continent, whose postcolonial struggle and diasporic identification would filter through to writing in South Africa in a generically different, and more militant vein, twenty years on.

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[262] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, 20.
[263] Cited in Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 14.
[264] Es'kia Mphahlele, `A Black Emigre Looks Back at the Union', *Contact* 18 Oct. 1958, 10.

CHAPTER TWO: THE COMMUNITY OF THE RESURRECTION

1 The Anglo-Catholic ethos

A useful insight into the ethos of the Community of the Resurrection is afforded by a short typescript, "Lest We Forget", undated, nameless, written by a CR Father who spent four months in South Africa after the massacres of Sharpeville and Langa.[1] The piece is vociferous in its condemnation of the indignity of influx control and poverty, and the injury of Bantu Education. It blames white capital for complicity in statutory discrimination and white labour for not linking up with black. It celebrates the courage of black leaders as well as the masses and admits, like Raymond Raynes CR and Trevor Huddleston CR would come to do, of the difficulty of leaving South Africa. The ending affords us a glimpse into the soul of Mirfield in Africa:

> the deepest impression of all which I shall carry away with me is of the warmth and responsiveness of African hearts. It is incredible that in spite of all that has happened so many Africans should still be so friendly and welcoming, but so it is, at least to those who wear a cassock with a C.R. cross. I have made so many friends among them whom I cannot distinguish from my English friends. I think of them in exactly the same way, talk to them and laugh with them in the same way, share the same jokes and interest with them. They have been so generous that I seem to have known some of them for a lifetime and it becomes irrelevant to remember that it is less than four months since we met. I am finishing this article on my first day in England where the lilacs are out and the woods are full of bluebells and men are free. It is an England I love with all my heart and in many ways I rejoice to be in it again. But my heart

[1] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), undated typescript, AB 703. A pencilled `?May 1961' appears on the first page.

> lingers on in the Africa I have just left where autumn prepares for winter and where spring will only come on the other side of it; where millions, among whom are some to whom I am so closely bound, must watch the forces of oppression temporarily tighten their grip again; where freedom can only be won through much more suffering and, in all probability, bloodshed. But before I left Africa the passion of Africa was met and interpreted by the passion of Christ in Holy Week. I spent Easter in Sophiatown and I shall never forget the Easter Liturgy in the church of Christ the King. The crowded church was dark when the vigil service began at 4.30 a.m. until, after the blessing of the new fire, followed by the lighting of the Paschal candle and subsequently of all the candles of the congregation, little flames appeared all over the church until the whole church was aglow with light. Then with the dawn we were swept up into the High Mass of Easter. So we lived again the mysterious truth which it is so difficult to understand or to believe, but just occasionally impossible to doubt, that in the end the dark forces of evil prove to be helplessly ineffective before the goodness and light over which their victory had seemed complete, and that out of death comes an undying life.

What Africa did for Mirfield was interpret their faith. It gave a meaning to all the CR stood for, to their incarnational belief that Christ was born into the world to bring abundant life to humanity, and through his death salvation to the world. Trevor Huddleston, while Bishop of the east London suburb of Stepney, wrote to the CR Superior in November 1974 that it was his "passionate belief in the Incarnation - which has been for me the force behind *all* my thinking and doing in social concern".[2] The CR focussed on the individual person, which validated every endeavour, as the means to bring about a new dispensation founded on social justice and compassion. Theirs

[2] Quoted in Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, 1992), 341.

was a sacramental faith, ontological rather than functional, in which they understood God at work through human beings, the divine in the ordinary.

The Protestant focus on the salvation of souls was not the priority of the CR: a new social order brought about through the conversion of the individual was the vision which inspired their every action and prayer. As Huddleston put it in 1977, a view consonant with the earliest focus of the Community, "the authentic portrait of Jesus shows Him as concerned not with saving souls – however you define the word souls – but with reaching out to the whole person".[3] He notes, too, that Jesus is concerned always with people where they are: "He touches them . . . from within the context of their own social environment, and His words and actions are directed to them there, not to some purely personal individual soul-saving exercise which would assume their isolation from the world".[4] Alan Wilkinson writes in his history of the Community that what gave reality and potency to its work in Africa was that, from 1934 onwards, brethren were living in Sophiatown at the Priory of Christ the King in Meyer Street, and experiencing first hand the needs of the people, in a way that they never quite managed to do in England,[5] to say nothing, of course, of their involvement from 1916 onwards in Rhodesia at St Augustine's Mission, Penhalonga.[6]

1.1 Liberals in theology and radicals in politics

Wilkinson's first chapter in his history of the Order is an invaluable account of the steps leading up to its founding by Charles Gore in 1892, and the consequent late Victorian influences on it. He lists what he calls the four imperatives behind its inception: a group of men living a disciplined life of devotion and mission, Liberal Catholicism (exemplified in Gore's provocative publication *Lux Mundi*), a fleshing out of the Gospel in social concern and

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[3] Trevor Huddleston, outreach lecture given in 1977, in Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (London, 1999), 240.
[4] Huddleston, outreach lecture given in 1977, 240.
[5] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 185.
[6] Ibid, 241. The mission functioned essentially as "an isolated and self-contained unit".

action (in the spirit of the Christian Social Union), and "a pledge of support to the world-wide church with the catholic richness of its different cultures and races".[7] The Community initially took on much of Charles Gore's personal outlook. He was constantly drawn into ordinary society, although he personally found such involvement difficult, and was not tempted away from it back into the Oxbridge ethos from which he came. He questioned received exegetical practices and other holy cows (particularly in the publication *Lux Mundi*) in the same way as Bishop Colenso had done in South Africa thirty years before, provoking a similar backlash among the establishment. Wilkinson remarks that "*Lux Mundi* represented as well as encouraged a general theological mutation" from the doctrine of the atonement which had generated Evangelicalism to that of the incarnation and Christ as teacher, and from hell fire to universalism. "With eternal destiny now assured, attention shifted from preparation for another world to the betterment of this".[8]

The vast changes that occurred in all spheres of life between 1892 and 1942 (probably only rivalled by those of the next fifty years), not least a different theology as faith sought to engage with scientific and historical processes, are enumerated in an important overview of the first fifty years of the CR written by the then Superior, Keble Talbot CR, in 1942.[9] Talbot, typically highly intellectual, urbane and articulate, offers a penetrating analysis of the CR ethos during these years, probably the most informative article on the CR to date. Gore for him exemplifies the ethos:

> His fear of autocracy, heightened probably by a certain capacity for it in himself; his distaste for minute regulations to implement broad principles; his reverence for individual conscience; his insistence on free discussion; his suspicion of appearance outpacing reality; all these were reflected in the Rule and ethos of the Community at its start.[10]

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[7] Ibid, 19-20.
[8] Ibid, 29.
[9] Keble Talbot, `The Community 1892-1942', *CR Quarterly* (158) St John Baptist 1942, 7-8.
[10] Talbot, `The Community', 8.

And so was the tension between individual conscience and the good of the Community. "Not without difficulty," writes Talbot, "was the principle of the liberty of conscience, so dearly prized by Bishop Gore, or the `democratic' principle, by which the Community had been inoculated in the great liberal period of its beginnings, accommodated to the cohesion, stability and obedience required by life in Religion".[11] This prerogative of individual conscience would lead many brethren to declare themselves socialists "at a time when that title was one of opprobrium in the minds of many Church people".[12] The early years of the CR's existence were years of great social upheaval, as, of course, their years in South Africa would later prove to be. And, in words terribly true of the CR's challenge to apartheid fifty years later, Talbot records that "the social ferment of the times challenged many in the Community to a fresh apprehension of the Faith in its bearings upon the life of human society. Heads began to wag at teaching which appeared to be dangerously revolutionary".[13]

The late 1880s had seen much debate around the question of the Church's involvement in society, and the socialist vision which had come to underpin this. Socialism was discussed at the 1888 Lambeth Conference (recently established to allow Anglican Bishops to meet every ten years), at which it was concluded that if socialism meant the union of labour with land and capital, and a general concern for the material and moral welfare of the poor, then there was no contradiction between it and Christianity.[14] Socialism steered clear of state intervention and nationalisation, but supported co-operatives and sharing of resources between labour and capital, so that all production was for use and not for profit. It also encouraged initiatives from government to protect workers from unchecked competition, and from clergy to demonstrate "how much of what is good and true in Socialism is to be

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[11] Ibid, 9.
[12] Ibid, 12.
[13] Ibid, 12.
[14] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 22.

found in the precepts of Christ".[15] The year of *Lux Mundi* (which inaugurated `Liberal Catholicism'), 1889, also saw the launching of the Christian Social Union (CSU), of which Charles Gore became President in 1901. Gore wrote a chapter on the CSU, Wilkinson notes, in which the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, the Pauline doctrine of the church as a social organism promoting brotherhood, and the doctrine of redemption through sacrifice and the Catholic sacraments supplied the motives for social action.[16] The CSU had grown out of the Christian Socialist movement of 1848-1854, led by Charles Kingsley and FD Maurice who "rejected naked economic individualism in favour of co-operation for the common good".[17] The influence of these two men on subsequent generations, including the CR throughout its existence, was immense.[18]

FD Maurice offered an alternative theology to the traditional orthodoxy of sinful humanity, that human beings are innately holy, "already in Christ." This understanding of humanity is calls into question the motivation behind the Calvinist-inspired discipline of fundamental pedagogics, which views children as sinful and needing constant adult supervision, from both parent and teacher,[19] to inhibit their innate tendency to go astray. As a late Victorian phenomenon, Anglo-Catholicism drew inspiration from the Romantic movement, particularly the poetry of William Wordsworth which expresses a hidden glory in the material world, children and ordinary people, "a belief which was conducive to the development of incarnationalism and sacramentalism".[20] "The Catholic type of Christianity," GK Chesterton once said, "is not merely an element, it is a *climate*." It understands the natural world as a place where God incarnationally works out his purpose, and which is governed by a tension between individual liberty and corporate authority.

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[15] Ibid, 22.
[16] Ibid, 24.
[17] Ibid, 20.
[18] A study of four English theological colleges in the 1960s revealed that Mirfield raised the political consciousness of ordinands far more than that of students at other colleges; Wilkinson notes that this meant a move leftwards (*A Centenary History*, 293).
[19] The legal idea of *in loco parentis* has been used by Christian Nationalist educationists to justify and indeed encourage the use of corporal punishment.
[20] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 15.

And, as Talbot so rightly says, "tension is the condition of any unity worth having".[21]

The Anglican tradition of the *via media* or middle way, which seeks to hold the Catholic tradition of the Church and the Protestant authority of the Scriptures in tension, in an inclusive not exclusive theology (so that it is really better understood as a *bridge* than a path), nevertheless goes back to the Elizabethan settlement and has characterised the English Church ever since.[22] In South Africa the Church of the Province of Southern Africa has been most profoundly influenced by Anglo-Catholicism, particularly the 1830s Oxford Movement of Keble and Newman and the 1880s *Lux Mundi* tradition of Gore. The doctrine of the Incarnation, as Frank England has noted, has dominated Anglicanism to a remarkable degree (though it has not always been fully realised or implemented); it influenced the identification with the poor and hence social action consequent on the Tractarian movement, as well as the formation of many religious communities from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, which have had an especially abiding influence in South Africa. "Behind all the visible and audible protests of the Oxford Apostles stood the primary sacrament, namely the church, and silhouetted behind its `concreteness' was the God-man and the doctrine of his incarnation".[23] At its best, Anglicanism has stubbornly pursued a commitment to the social gospel, in the slums and exploited communities of Britain and, of course, among the marginalised and oppressed in South Africa.

1.2 An incarnational theology

Socialism has perhaps sat easier historically with the Catholic than with the Protestant faith, perhaps, too, with those whose upper-class birth and position can afford to advocate it. John Comaroff is unremitting in seeing

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[21] Talbot, `The Community', 12.
[22] Frank England, `Tracing Southern African Anglicanism', in Frank England and Torquil Paterson (eds), *Bounty in Bondage: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg, 1989), 16.
[23] England, `Tracing Southern African Anglicanism', 19.

Nonconformist missionaries, "from the ideological core yet the social margins of bourgeois Britain" owing to their indeterminate class affiliation as they climbed unsteadily upwards from the rural peasantry, as "the very embodiment of the spirit of capitalism, a living testimonial to its ethical and material workings".[24] And Es'kia Mphahlele's claim that the Protestant ethic "favours and promotes" capitalism,[25] has been taken up more recently by Leon de Kock, when, in discussing Nonconformist missionary education, he expressly links that faith with a triumvirate of "individualist, capitalist, and ultimately racist values".[26] De Kock has contended elsewhere that "the coercion of colonization was transformed, by the Protestant teachers, into the cultivation of civilization".[27]

Whereas Protestant missions initially saw education as the handmaid to the dissemination and reading of Scripture (the Principal of Lovedale, James Stewart, insisted in 1906 that "the Bible means readers, and readers mean schools, and schools mean teachers . . . if the Bible must be read, people must be taught to read it"),[28] the CR's reason for their involvement in education, as Anglo-Catholics, in both Mirfield and Johannesburg, was the training of men to be priests in order to transform their society. As the Roman Catholic Visitor to missions in British Africa, Arthur Hinsley, told missionaries in 1927, in terms unacceptable to Protestants: "Collaborate in education with all your power; and where it is impossible for you to carry on both the immediate task of evangelization and your educational work, neglect your churches in order to perfect your schools".[29] He adds a chilling coda,

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[24] John L Comaroff, ` Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa', in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 168-9.
[25] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Towards a Humanistic Philosophy of Education: An African's View', *The Capricorn Papers* (Johannesburg, 1982), 39.
[26] Leon de Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', *Journal of Literary Studies* 8(1/2) June 1992, 38.
[27] Leon de Kock, `The Land and Its Appropriation by "English"', in Nigel Bell and Meg Cowper-Lewis (eds), *Literature, Nature and the Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment* (1993), 210.
[28] Quoted in Daniel Kunene, `Deculturation - The African Writer's Response', *Africa Today* 15(4) Aug./Sept. 1968, 20.
[29] Quoted in Willem Saayman, `"Who Owns the Schools Will Own Africa": Christian Mission, Education and Culture in Africa', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 4(2) 1991, 30.

perhaps less ominous if divested of its 1920s apparel: "Who owns the schools will own Africa."

The Preface to the CR Rule describes the community's works as "pastoral, evangelistic, literary, educational", and it is the latter which is of most significance for South Africa.[30] The Theological College at Mirfield was begun in 1903, contemporaneously with ordination training for black clergy at the first CR premises in Sherwell St, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, and the CR soon realised that, in Africa at least, suitable candidates were lacking because of the paucity of schools on the Rand. This was the motivation for the establishment of St Peter's Secondary School by Alban Winter CR in 1922. Prior to the school's founding, though, the brethren were not untainted by the prevailing ideas of the day, such as the perceived relevance of and need for industrial education, particularly for girls (and their male ethos would have made them particularly unsympathetic to the idea that women could have a life outside of *kinder, küchen, kirche*). The environment of St Agnes' Industrial School (brought from Doornfontein to Rosettenville in 1909) in the first three decades has been ably depicted in the second chapter of Heidi Winterbach's thesis;[31] it is a credit to the CR that they soon realised the limiting potential and humiliating nature of an involuntary industrial training, and in 1931 amalgamated the girls' school with the boys' school to strengthen St Peter's Secondary School. However, their views on the inability of women to do pure science (fostered by at least one lay Headmaster of the school) and the need to keep Domestic `Science' on the curriculum for them over the years, reveals the CR yet again as the product of their patriarchal time.[32]

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[30] See Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 277.

[31] Heidi Winterbach, "The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement in African Schooling on the Witwatersrand, from 1903 to 1956", (MEd, University of the Witwatersrand, 1994), 13-28.

[32] Domestic Science remained a standard subject taken by girls for the Junior Certificate (JC) at St Peter's School, whereas it never figured among the academic options at Ohlange or Adams (also Joint Matriculation Board) or Lovedale (Cape Education Department), although significantly all other subjects were comparable (South African Institute of Race Relations Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (SAIRR), undated memorandum `Subjects taken in high schools', Education Memoranda 1928-41 AD 843 / B 80.4).

Peter Hinchliff has premised his discussion of English churches in the colonies in the nineteenth century on a very real paternalism in the Church, a sense of superiority which often "spilled over into an insensitive and probably unconscious arrogance", seen in the way the English then viewed the Irish, for example. He recommends a class-based approach to interpreting this this paternalism, complementary to the usual `colour' one governing the `civilising mission' (although I think he is too dismissive of the reality `race' played): "It was not so much, originally, that Europe felt itself called to govern the rest of the world as that the upper classes of Europe felt themselves called to govern".[33] As the eighteenth century belonged to the aristocracy, and the nineteenth to the middle class, so the twentieth has been revealed as the century of global democratisation. Jan Smuts pointed out in his opening address to the New Education Conference in 1937 that the challenges facing education in South Africa, like the rest of the world, were due to the democratisation of education, and the exigencies of science and technology:

> we are marching on from one system of society to another, from a middle-class democracy to a pure democracy. . . . from a bourgeois into a proletarian world and, when you consider that European civilisation was largely of a middle-class character, and that the culture of the Continent of Europe was dominated by middle-class points of view, and that we are now passing into a state of society that is altogether democratic, you can understand the magnitude of the change.[34]

Of course, his view of democracy, like his view on Holism, left a lot to be desired (and left a lot of people out). But his essential point regarding the challenges of the new century is a sound one, and one which the CR was forced to negotiate in its involvement in African education.

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[33] Hinchliff, `The "English-Speaking" Churches and South Africa in the Nineteenth Century', in André de Villiers (ed), *English-Speaking South Africa Today* (Cape Town, 1976), 173.
[34] Jan Smuts, `Education for Freedom and Initiative', in E.G. Malherbe (ed), *Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society* (Cape Town, 1937), 3-4.

It would not be too simplistic to say that what motivated the CR was to raise all people to a life free from want or, in Peter Abrahams's famous declaration in *Return to Goli*, to the third level of freedom, "the level of the whole man, freed, ultimately, from his fear",[35] where human beings, free from the basic struggle for life, or political oppression of groups, are able to realise their full humanity. This was a common idea in the intellectual discourse of the late Victorian age, perhaps most clearly stated regarding the working person by William Morris in *How I Became a Socialist*: "It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him, a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread".[36] Wilkinson's dry comment on the CR, that "there is not much of the desert in the CR tradition",[37] is fleshed out by Arthur Maimane, a pupil at St Peter's in the late 1940s, who mentioned how, as Head Server, he used to wangle things so that he was on duty as often as possible for the six o'clock morning Mass on a Sunday, which had its compensation for the early rising in a full English breakfast of bacon and eggs in the Priory with the Fathers afterwards![38]

My week spent at Mirfield in 1996 showed me a community who lived simple and ordered lives, yet who did not stint on things they considered "food for the soul": a spacious library conducive to study, ample portions of most palatable food eaten by brethren and college students alike, aesthetically pleasing buildings in beautiful grounds; it is no wonder the unnamed CR Father above was glad to be back in England, `now that spring is here'! Yet individual brethren took seriously their socialist ideals. When Walter Frere CR became Bishop of Truro in Cornwall for ten years from 1923, he created an austere atmosphere at his house, Lis Escop, which was sparsely furnished; the bishop himself cleaned his own boots, carried guests' luggage up to their rooms and even served and cleaned at meals.[39] This behaviour

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[35] Peter Abrahams, *Return to Goli* (London, 1953), 27.
[36] Quoted in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 155.
[37] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 35.
[38] Interview with Arthur Maimane, Johannesburg, 18 March 1997.
[39] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 165.

tallies with the far more spartan lifestyle of the older Society of St John the Evangelist (SSJE, otherwise known as the Cowley Fathers) in Westminster, established in 1866, who actively lived out their working-class sympathies.

Wilkinson records a perennial but probably mythical anecdote about a CR brother's visit to Cowley, which indicates the need of the CR to define itself "with expressions of world-affirmation" over against the SSJE, whose founder RM Benson taught deadness to the world:

> Walking through part of the building which had frosted glass, a CR brother remarked "What a pity you can't see into the garden, Father." The Cowley Father retorted "We haven't come here, Father, just to look at the garden".[40]

The Cowley Fathers, the Community of the Resurrection and the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) were all predominantly clerical orders, formed in the second half of the nineteenth century, who set up branch houses throughout the Empire, including South Africa. They were invited by various Dioceses in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, the SSJE working in Cape Town and the Transkei,[41] the CR in the dioceses of Pretoria and Johannesburg, and the SSM in the Orange Free State in the Diocese of Bloemfontein. The factors which led to the revival of these religious communities in the Church of England at this time included

> romantic mediaevalism; the revival of interest in Little Gidding [the community founded in 1625]; the needs of urban parishes; the quasi-Benedictine character of Anglican institutions; an awareness of the crucial role that Religious Orders were playing in the burgeoning of English Roman Catholicism; the need for

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[40] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 35.

[41] They ran St Cuthbert's Mission where Lily Moya grew up and were particularly concerned in late Victorian fashion with the question of purity among African girls; Shula Marks suggests that frequent sermonising on these lines probably affected her (see *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women* (Durban & Pietermaritzburg, 1987), 23.

> the Church of England to develop a more sharply defined identity over against an increasingly pluralist society; a new quest for holiness which largely resorted to clerical and monastic models.[42]

While all these influences on the CR would have been experienced by those with whom they came into contact at St Peter's, the most important, for the purposes of this thesis, were the appeal of romantic mediaevalism and the needs of the urban poor: it was the CR's historical antagonism to industrial capitalism which led them increasingly into conflict with largely capitalist twentieth-century British and South African society. The milieu which engendered orders like the CR was that of the late Victorian upper middle class, whose humanitarians often had a feeling of paternal or `aristocratic' responsibility to the working classes, extended to Africans as a sort of `external proletariat.' Charles Lyons in his discussion of the period's tendency to equate the lowest rung of English society with the bottom of the world culture ladder, employs Alan Cairns's suggestion that "mission-minded late Victorians quite often oscillated between service in the London slums and service in the depths of Africa".[43] David Livingstone, for example, once remarked that had he not gone to Africa, he would have laboured among the English poor. Yet Livingstone, as Comaroff reminds us,[44] belonged to that indeterminate class structure of the Scottish Nonconformists, emerging from the intersection of country and city, and driven by the quest for improvement through education, industry, thrift and good works, setting the pattern for Africans to emulate in order to `better' themselves.

Raymond Williams has demonstrated apropos of the Victorian Church that `service' is the concept of intervention arising out of the middle class, and `solidarity' that out of a working-class base; the idea of service, he feels, is no substitute for the idea of "active mutual responsibility, which is the other

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[42] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 19.
[43] Charles Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White: British Ideas about Black African Educability 1530-1960* (New York, 1975), 103.
[44] Comaroff, `Images of Empire', 177-178.

version of community".[45] Service functions on the idea of `raising upwards' those who were regarded as culturally, socially or economically `below' the standards understood as `Christian' at that time (to provide, as it were, a ladder of individual opportunity, which inevitably has to be climbed alone), whereas solidarity begins with the reversal of the master-servant power relationship (as Jesus Christ demonstrated in his washing the feet of his twelve disciples) towards the common good. While *full* participation in the community might be impossible, effective participation certainly is, Williams, suggests, "by genuine mutual responsibility and adjustment".[46]

In his history of the SSM, founded about the same time as the CR, Alistair Mason quotes something written by CFG Masterman in 1904 (who apparently praised the CR for trying to break the class character of the ministry),[47] to underline the upper and middle-class energies motivating the late Victorian mission enterprise:

> We come from outside with our gospel, aliens with alien ideas. The Anglican church represents the idea of the upper classes, of the universities, of a vigorous life in which bodily strength, an appearance of knowledge, a sense of humour, occupy prominent places. The large Nonconformist bodies represent the ideas of the middle classes, the strenuous self-help and energy which have stamped their ideas upon the whole of imperial Britain . . . . Each totally fails to apprehend a vision of life as reared in a mean street, and now confronting existence on a hazardous weekly wage, from a block dwelling . . . . Our movements and inexplicable energies are received with a mixture of tolerance and perplexity.[48]

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[45] Williams, *Culture and Society*, 315, 317. See also James Cochrane's discussion of his distinction with relevance to South Africa (*Servants of Power: The Role of English-Speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930* (Johannesburg, 1987), 184).
[46] Ibid, 319-20.
[47] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 109.
[48] Alistair Mason, *History of the Society of the Sacred Mission* (Norwich, 1993), 11. No reference citation.

It was precisely this sense, by the end of the century, of failing in its own mission which allowed for the Church's willingness to try new approaches, and opinion in the Anglican church turned towards social rather than individual problems.[49] The age of the Christian socialist revival influenced the CR's strong social conscience and led to their practical outward-looking ideas about solidarity and identification with the poor. The Community was drawn to left-wing politics, a preference for working in the industrial north of England (the CR moved to Mirfield in the Leeds-Wakefield-Huddersfield nexus in 1898) and the Witwatersrand (a House was established in Doornfontein at the request of the Bishop of Pretoria in 1903), and the opening of colleges for male working-class ordinands in Mirfield and Johannesburg. Wilkinson makes the point that if CR had moved to Cambridge or Westminster or back to Oxford whence its founders came, its history and ethos would have been quite different. The CR brethren took on the character of the millstone grit with which the northern houses were built. "Mirfield with its smoking mill chimneys and Pennine weather, and the sturdiness of northern Anglicanism (influenced both by the northern temperament and the moral uprightness of Nonconformity) provided a totally different matrix than somewhere in the South where Anglo-Catholicism tended to become effete".[50]

The same grimy quality is considered by Carol Sicherman as crucial in the intellectual development of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other East African graduate students of Makerere University who studied at Leeds University in the 1960s. In her discussion of the role Leeds played in Ngugi's artistic career, Sicherman quotes Ngugi as mentioning the "absolutely depressing" reality of "all those houses crouching like old men and women hidden in the mist" in the industrial north, and his fellow student Peter Nazareth as finding the buildings "like giant cockroach shells", with air so filthy that "you woke up to the sound of birds coughing",[51] or, as the Bishop of Wakefield complained,

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[49] Mason, *History of the Society*, 10.
[50] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 59-60.
[51] Carol Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection and Ngugi's Intellectual Development', *UFAHAMU* 23(1) 1995, 3.

there was not a garden in his diocese where he could pick a flower without blackening his fingers.[52] This was the necessary antidote to the Oxford and Cambridge ethos (and curriculum) which had prevailed at Makerere: the university had on its staff "iconoclasts with radical ideas",[53] and students breathed a revolutionary atmosphere. Sicherman comments: "With nothing Oxbridgean to seduce the mind or eye, Leeds afforded a far better milieu than did the older universities to shed the illusions of empire, for it was not hamstrung by ancient traditions".[54]

While all the orders drew on Oxbridge graduates, the CR was distinguished from the others by being "intellectually powerful, an order, in Mason's words, which "did not have to fight off pious noodles".[55] Among the noodles would have been privileged men from the right class, the right schools, "gentlemen" earmarked for the colonial or mission service, father figures in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society, charged with the care of the best interests of the classes or races under them.[56] In his review of Wilkinson's history of the CR, Nicholas Southey mentions specifically the academic and critical ethos of the CR which "attracted an abundance of talented, highly educated and frequently well-connected men", so that, throughout the century of the CR's existence "tensions between individual aspirations and communal objectives were an integral component of CR's evolution".[57]

The CR's powerful academic aura is alluded to by Helen Joseph in *Side By Side*, where she tells of spending many days in 1965 "writing in the lovely peaceful garden of the Community of the Resurrection, or in their quiet library. There I could work with a feeling of security".[58] Some years later, when she was banned from university premises, the Priory library was

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[52] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 59.
[53] Nazareth, quoted in Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection', 4.
[54] Sicherman, `The Leeds-Makerere Connection', 4.
[55] Mason, *History of the Society*, 9.
[56] Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White*, 104.
[57] Nicholas Southey, rev. of *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History*, *South African Historical Journal* (27) Nov. 1992, 307.
[58] Helen Joseph, *Side By Side* (London, 1986), 138.

approved by London University as a centre for her to sit her exam, subject to the usual regulations of the time:

> On a bitterly cold morning [in Johannesburg] I wrote the examination, wrapped in a heavy black monk's cloak, also kindly supplied by the Priory. Brother Norwood Coaker, a QC, but long since retired from legal practice, invigilated for me. We had to complete archaic forms relating to the circumstances in which I was writing the examination. One question read; "If the candidate is a female and the invigilator is of the opposite sex, was a third person present?" I found this concern for my virtue very amusing, especially since Brother Norwood was eighty and I was sixty-four.[59]

Helen Joseph writes elsewhere in her autobiography of her unwillingness to make friends with Christians because they tended to abstain from politics, but how her contact with the CR showed them "to be the true essence of what I believed the Christian church ought to be",[60] and she began to think about returning to the faith. Her confidant in the process was Canon Leo Rakale CR, who had been the dreaded Warden at the boys' hostel at St Peter's School in its last few years because of his strict discipline, but who was an attentive listener and handled her "gently and with great understanding":

> He knew that I must not be pushed into this important step, nor even persuaded into it. I must come back at my own pace, in my own time . . . . The friendship of the Community enriched my life. I was cut off from many friends of former days. They were now in gaol, banned or gone from South Africa. But here was a group of men living under vows of poverty and obedience, having all things in common, inspired and

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[59] Joseph, *Side By Side*, 145. It should be noted that Norwood Coaker was one of the defence counsel in the 1956 Treason Trial, before he was professed as a CR brother (Alfred Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (London, 1960), 13.
[60] Ibid, 228.

> strengthened by their faith. I became aware of the rhythm of their life. Sometimes when I was working in the library I could hear their voices in the little chapel singing the cadences of their midday office. Theirs was a life dedicated to God and also to the world. They did not shut themselves away; all people were important to them as individuals.[61]

The CR's consistent focus on the individual recalls Smuts's warning in 1934 that the democratisation of education and the demands of science can lead to a mass mentality, "both tending to the suppression of the individual personality and to the creation of a sort of standardised human being of a uniform type." Smuts identified the task of education as preventing this, "to see that justice is done to the human individual and human personality. Education is not merely the imparting of knowledge: it is the imparting of life, character, and personality".[62] This became the guiding principle of the CR's involvement in education, in both Yorkshire and South Africa.

2 The Christian socialist foundation

Williams has remarked that one of the most important facts about English social thinking in the nineteenth century was the development of an "organic conception, stressing interrelation and interdependence" in opposition to the growing *laissez-faire* society,[63] a conception developed in writing from Carlyle and Ruskin through to Morris which looked back to mediaevalism and forward to socialism. The intellectual CR was not to be left out of this discourse. Central to the Mirfield ethos were sermons and pamphlets (falling under two key areas in the Preface to the Rule, namely education and literature). The Mirfield Quarry Service, held in the stone quarry on the spacious Mirfield grounds, was begun under the influence of the Christian Social Union CSU), and attracted congregations of thousands, continuing, significantly, until

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[61] Ibid, 229.
[62] Smuts, `Education for Freedom', 4.

1958. Two socialist conferences were also held in the quarry, the first on 5 May 1906, after the good Labour showing in the January election, at which Keir Hardie spoke, appealing in this context to Christ as the justification for socialism. Gore's successor, Walter Frere, later to become Bishop of Truro, addressed the 400 delegates on the alliance between worker and clergy: the CR was "communistic" he said, its basis was "from each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs".[64] Paul Bull CR, with Frere one of the convenors, proposed a resolution asking for more collaboration between Church and Labour to spread "the principles of collectivism" through "more aggressive propaganda"; he felt that the competitive system of capitalism was "utterly contrary to Christianity".[65]

Out of this first conference was born the Christian Socialist League (CSL) in June 1906, founded in Morecambe by sixty Anglican priests and a few laypeople disaffected with the growing elitist and milder southern ethos of the CSU (which declined rapidly after 1908). Like Hardie's Independent Labour Party, its northern origins were important; the CR had strong links with it.[66] FL Donaldson summed up its outlook as "Christianity is the religion of which Socialism is the practice", and Wilkinson notes that it was committed to establishing "a democratic commonwealth in which the community shall own the land and capital collectively".[67] A second conference which attracted 300 delegates was held on 27 April 1907; the resolutions covered more ground than those of the previous year and there was a strong women's suffrage delegation led by Emmeline Pankhurst and Annie Kenney. The third resolution proposed by Paul Bull called for votes for women which was remarkable, as Wilkinson points out, for Anglo-Catholicism was known more for its misogyny than for its feminism.[68]

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[63] Williams, *Culture and Society*, 146.
[64] Quoted in Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 120.
[65] Ibid, 120.
[66] One of the original CR Fathers at Penhalonga, Alfred Drury, proposed in 1916 that the litany of the Church Socialist League should be used in chapel (Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 240).
[67] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 121.

No more conferences were forthcoming, though, probably because the CR had attracted enough controversy for the time being (as Wilkinson demonstrates throughout his history, the publicity of their socialist ideas alienated many funders and caused dissention in the wider Church). A number of brethren also left the Community to pursue a more active Christian socialist calling when they felt their individual vocation clashed with the community's less militant practice;[69] Talbot acknowledged that the Community's early impetus towards identification with political socialism was gradually tempered over time until (with the notable and therefore contrastive exception of Trevor Huddleston), the CR realised that its role was not to endorse a programme of secular politics, but "to proclaim a doctrine of society, informed by an authentically Christian understanding of man's nature and call, and controlled by Catholic theology".[70] This did not, of course, ever preclude a policy of `critical co-operation' with secular groups or other faiths working towards a common vision of a just and equitable society.

The CR's educational ventures grew out of their social involvement and their conviction that the working class, both in England and South Africa, must take responsibility for their own leadership. As Gore told the 1906 Church Congress, the Church had failed to leaven society spiritually in that Anglican clergy worked among the poor from above, not alongside, and were most at home with the gentry and professional people. More ordinands should be drawn from the working class and be helped to retain the outlook of those with whom they had grown up.[71] To this end the CR provided free education for five years to ordinands from poor homes at the College and later at the Hostel they set up at Leeds University, which naturally took on the hardnosed character of the university experienced by Ngugi and co. Similarly, the motivation for their work in African education, starting with the College, was to raise up ordinands to minister to the black community and, after 1922 when

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[68] Ibid, 122.
[69] Samuel Healy who left in January 1910 to work as Organising Secretary of the CSL and be an activist curate in four parishes, was a case in point (Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 125-126).
[70] Talbot, `The Community', 15-16.
[71] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 91.

St Peter's was founded to provide a secondary school grounding for pupils drawn from the Reef and elsewhere in the Transvaal, for the professions of law, teaching and medicine, so that practitioners would then serve the black community.[72]

Yet this enterprise might be considered flawed from the start for two reasons. Firstly, many brethren, like Gore himself, were constantly troubled by their inability to transcend the background in which they were reared, finding it difficult to live among the working class, so they unwillingly perpetuated the very problem they criticised in the Church itself. Secondly, the ordinands after their training at Leeds University, (and also the successful school pupils at St Peter's) were effectively *re-classed* through their having been "subjected to being moulded by the whole apparatus and ethos of the Church of England".[73] On an extended visit to England in the summer of 1959, Mphahlele articulated the problem thus: "the middle-class English seem to have tacitly agreed on levelling the working class *up* instead of themselves *down*: levelling the others up `by means of hygiene, fruit-juice, birth-control, poetry, etc.' as Orwell would put it".[74]

Often African clergy, like their English counterparts, and other professionals originally from the working class but trained under the CR, were understandably reluctant to return to the areas which had bred them, both urban and rural, often preferring a sinecure to the rough and tumble of disadvantaged community life. On his return from years of exile in Botswana, for example, Fr Richard Kgoleng found living in Ikageng township near Potchefstroom quite intolerable, and insisted for his own and his family's sake, on being given care of the white middle-class parish of Stilfontein. Fr Stephen Montjane, according to Kgoleng, took over the white parish of Carletonville, having been educated, in the natural sequence, at Leeds University and even testing his vocation in Mirfield.[75] Their cases can be

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[72] Alban Winter, `Native Leadership', *CR Quarterly* (92) Christmas 1925, 25.
[73] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 91.
[74] Es'kia Mphahlele, *The African Image* (New York, 1962), 209.
[75] Interview with Richard Kgoleng, Potchefstroom, 30 January 1996.

multiplied many times over. Alexander Kerr, Principal of Fort Hare, pointed out in 1937 that education opens up a gap with the masses in terms of ideas about culture and economic status, and that the transformation begins at school since "most of the boys here are individualists and are looking forward to government jobs . . . a few have group and social consciousness".[76] PAW Cook's contemporaneous survey of the black Standard VI pupil, based on the results of a questionnaire administered in 1935 to schools throughout South Africa, demonstrates that the motivation for education given by pupils varies (in Cook's analysis) between "material and individual", "the religious or spiritual", and "the social or patriotic", with the material and individual, in a significant validation of the paradigm of `modernity', tending to predominate.[77]

At least part of the attraction for some CR brethren of working in townships like Sophiatown and Orlando was precisely their involvement in the black community could be seen as exemplary of a life fulfilled through service to them or, in Cook's terms, a demonstration of the "spiritual" and "social" aspects of education in preference to the "material". Years of living in Sophiatown engendered Raymond Raynes's ability, according to his first curate, "to *feel* what it was like to be an African" and he became known "for his love, not only of justice, but of the people".[78] Speaking of the effect upon Africans of Raynes's living out his faith among them, his successor as Provincial, Trevor Huddleston, notes:

> The Christian education of Africans has become a vital factor in the evolution of the country. Many of the leaders and teachers of the new generation were taught in the schools of Sophiatown and Orlando. Many of them have not remained practising Christians, but for years they grew up with people who looked after them and tried to give them freedom.[79]

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[76] Quoted in Robert Edgar (ed), *An African American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche 28 September 1937 - 1 January 1938* (Athens & Johannesburg, 1992), 126.
[77] PAW Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil: A Socio-educational Survey of Std. VI Pupils in Native Schools in the Union of SA, 1935* (Pretoria, 1939), 107.
[78] Nicholas Mosley, *The Life of Raymond Raynes* (London, 1961), 88.
[79] Quoted in Mosley, *The Life of Raymond Raynes*, 123.

The patronising tone aside (which would always be part of the CR's make-up, as is to be expected from highly talented and privileged men of their epoch), the vision motivating the work of the CR from earliest times was independent black leadership, just as control had to be given to the working class in communities in Britain, hence their actively recruiting men from the working class as ordinands. The CR's elected celibacy, of course (an obvious benefit in the mandatory celibate Roman Catholic priesthood), aided them in this, because it detaches clergy from the pressure to be bourgeois which nuclear family life often exerts.[80] Furthermore, religious often form a bond with sceptics and political dissenters because, by their idiosyncratic calling, they also stand against the norms of both church and society. Wilkinson notes that the religious does not have a family to protect or institution to uphold on which his livelihood depends, so he (or she) is capable of offering a more unconditional and more risky ministry.[81] As Raynes put it in the *CR Quarterly* on the occasion of the CR's handing over most of its primary schools to be run by the Johannesburg Diocese in 1947, "the duty and the privilege of the Community is to use its resources to establish work and institutions which otherwise - humanly speaking - would not be established".[82]

In South Africa, the early years of the century for the CR were marked by a peculiar mixture of racism typical of the period, and a consciousness of human rights. This ambivalence is summed up in the words of Henry Alston CR, newly arrived in Johannesburg in October 1904, on the CR's enforced division between black and white work. "Of course, it is quite obvious that the natives just emerging from savagery cannot be treated in the same way as whites," he insists, "there must be restrictions, there must be in many ways separations. But when they have become Christians it does seem to me that the Altar is one place where they certainly can meet, but it is not so".[83]

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[80] To take this further, John Comaroff has suggested that sanctification of the nuclear family and the distinction between public and private domains designates a rising capitalist order (`Images of Empire', 171).
[81] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 317.
[82] Raymond Raynes, `Superior's Notes', *CR Quarterly* (179) Michaelmas 1947, 25.
[83] Henry Alston, letter dated 1 Dec. 1904, *CR Quarterly* (9) Lady Day 1905, 10-11.

Revisionist historians would correctly decode `Christians' as `civilised', but the sacramentalism of Anglo-Catholicism here must also be acknowledged. The Diocese of Pretoria which had invited the CR functioned, like its sister dioceses, on the following principle (racist in that it protected whites from having to negotiate black culture, yet pragmatic in that it acknowledged difference): different languages and customs and preferences in worship must be acknowledged, even affirmed, hence the need for separate services (though segregation was not enforced), and separate ecclesiastical administration ie. a code of partial segregation.[84] The avowed unity of the Anglican Church, yet social and linguistic differences which required recognition, would prove contentious throughout the twentieth century.

A 1904 "Pronouncement" by the CPSA Provincial Synod on the Church's mission in South Africa sets out the contradictory context for the CR's early work. On the one hand (and with this the CR was in full accord), "The duty to evangelise the Native Races is absolute and knows no limits":

> The Church must not only preach: she must also teach and educate; and her education must be on the WHOLE man. The object of education is always the same, to enable the individual to realise Christ, and to show forth Christ to the world as fully as possible.[85]

On the other hand, the Pronouncement advocates industrial education for Africans, "synonymous with manual labour", in order to instil the *de rigeur* qualities of industry and productivity. With consummate sleight it insists that "[a]cceptance of Christianity need not lead to equality or mingling of different races or the franchise." These separatist ideas intent on making black people `good and useful' were fleshed out in a 1915 pamphlet put out by the

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[84] CPSA, `System of Church Mission', document of Diocese of Pretoria dated 1910, CR Records and Scrapbook 1910-1978, AB 1236.
[85] CPSA, pronouncement by Provincial Synod `upon Church's duty to Native Races in South Africa', CR Records and Scrapbook 1910-1978, AB 1236.

Diocese of Pretoria, "A Little Catechism of the Native Problem".[86] "The acceptance of Christianity has never involved, of necessity, social equality between all individuals in any race," it intoned. "Nor does it necessarily involve social equality between one race and another" or "the right to a franchise because the mere fact that he is a Christian does not itself imply that he is fit to share in the governance of the country." Double standards indeed, and an indictment on the Anglican Church of the time, which compromised faith for expediency.

Nevertheless, and problematically, the insistence on separate services and administration very often came from Africans themselves, born of a desire for self-affirmation, and was capitalised on through the many indigenous churches which sprung up around the turn of the century (the Anglican Order of Ethiopia created by James Mata Dwane in 1900 is a case in point).[87] One of the first students trained by the CR in 1904-1905 was Fr Andreas Rakale, whom Alban Winter praises as "of sterling worth",[88] particularly strong in pastoral ministry, showing considerable acumen and wisdom, and widely considered the best person to advise the Bishop on black church affairs. He became senior African priest and Canon of the Diocese of Johannesburg in 1934,[89] and two of his sons (including Leo Rakale, one of only two black members of the CR) passed through the Theological College. However, black African clergy never advanced beyond such `trusted advisors' during the inter-war years, necessitating Frs Hazael Maimane and James Calata's aggressive 1940s campaign for a separate `African Branch of the Catholic Church'. At that stage they were the only two black priests on the Provincial Board of Missions, and Calata had been nominated for the Transkei bishopric but white clergy prevented his election.[90] Separatism, of course, has become

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[86] CPSA, pamphlet of Diocese of Pretoria, CR Records and Scrapbook 1910-1978, AB 1236.
[87] For an unbiased account of its founding, see Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Wisconsin, 1948, repr. 1964), 83-84. It became independent upon its centenary and is now known as the Ethiopian Episcopal Church.
[88] Alban Winter, `Till Darkness Fell'. Unpublished typescript, 1962, 71.
[89] Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 186.
[90] For discussion of this significant campaign see Mandy Goedhals, `From Paternalism to Partnership? The Church of the Province of Southern Africa and Mission 1848-1988', in

a clarion call among black people and women since the civil rights movement and radical feminism, and is the solution (perhaps too extreme to be reached) advocated by Abrahams in his last novel, *The View from Coyaba* (1985).

It is my contention, though, that the CR's provision of theological training at St Peter's College distinguished their outlook as a whole from many Protestant missionaries in the inter-war years, and contributed to the easy maturity of relationships within the Priory grounds. An early undated pamphlet (probably 1921), *St Peter's College (for the training of native ordinands and catechists)*, canvasses for ordinands on the basis of happy relations "between teachers and taught" in an atmosphere "of mutual friendship and respect".[91] While such a spin is to be expected from a recruitment document, the fact it was said invites recognition of the attempt at non-racialism, limited as it was by the milieu of the inter-war years. The campus in Rosettenville was not the Anglican church at large, however, as the pamphlet notes: "little sympathy is shown with tendencies outside to form sectional bodies on a colour line basis, and frank discussion and friendly intercourse do much to secure stability and the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ".[92] This was also the climate which prevailed at St Peter's School throughout its existence, and one which Cyril Bickersteth CR in a "Retrospect" of July 1905 identified as a key facet of the CR, following on from its founder Gore's being "a liberal in theology and a radical in politics", and celebrating its tradition of liberty of opinion and freedom of discussion.[93]

There is evidence, however, of members of the CR swallowing whole the then current idea of the African as `child', not to be taken seriously and deficient by Western standards. One Father, James Nash CR (one of the first three to pioneer work in South Africa and later to become Headmaster of

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Frank England and Torquil Paterson (eds), *Bounty in Bondage: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg, 1989), 116-118 as well as Alan Cobley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 to 1950* (New York, 1990), 113-117.

[91] *St Peter's College (for the training of native ordinands and catechists)*, (CR, c.1921), 2.

[92] *St Peter's College*, 4.

[93] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 103.

St John's), refused to try to pronounce surnames of five African catechists, calling them by their `Christian' first names only: "I can only say they generally seem to begin with `M"'.[94] Another, Francis Hill CR (who would devote 35 years to ministry in Africa), in 1911 called a young black man with experience of England by the usual parlance of the period `boy'.[95] But after the legislation following Union and especially the Natives Land Act of 1913, brethren began to raise their voices in protest against such racism. The early 1920s, with increasing post-War industrialisation and growing urban influx, were years of particular hardship for the black working class as we have noted, and this gave rise to an unusually muscular socialist thrust on the part of some sections of the English churches in South Africa, according to James Cochrane,[96] although he is a little too dismissive of the phenomenon, calling it "a fad",[97] whereas it was probably the tail end of the Christian socialism prevailing in Britain at the turn of the century. Still, this risky venture did not last beyond the 1920s except on the part of religious communities like the CR or SSM, and it was characterised by an ideal of service to, rather than solidarity with, the dominated class.[98] Cochrane quotes Peter Hinchliff on the then current ideal of a priest ("that of the Christian socialist, struggling to bring to Faith the poor and underprivileged, fighting their battles in matters of housing, of political and civil rights, striving for social justice, for fair wages and no sweated labour") but insists that a lack of identification with the working class (the Church was, after all, a part of the dominant class) meant the failure of this ideal. The Church yet again during this `socialist' decade failed to put its considerable weight behind the poor and effect material changes, even while it claimed to champion them.

Archbishop William Carter, for instance, in his Charge to the Diocese of Cape Town in 1919, argued that the post-War economy should change from one based on competition to one based on co-operation, a transformation more

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[94] James Nash, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (4) Christmas 1903.
[95] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 207.
[96] Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 126.
[97] Ibid, 160.
[98] Ibid, 133.

compatible with Christian conscience.[99] But the sentiment remained woolly, and it was left to individuals within the CR to choose solidarity with, over service to, the oppressed. By 1924 even Francis Hill was attending court trials with other brethren when Africans they knew were arraigned because of the widespread injustice in the system,[100] and he was one of only very few brethren, a constant indictment on the CR, who came to speak the vernacular fluently. Wilkinson mentions that when Hill relinquished his role as Archdeacon of Native Missions in 1938, African clergy paid tribute to his ongoing work for those made homeless by the Natives Land Act.[101] A retired teacher, Margaret Mazambozi (who may have been the Mrs Majombozi on the staff and Advisory Council at St Peter's during the mid-1930s; the CR was not known for accuracy and integrity of pronunciation),[102] immediately after Hill's death in 1942 wrote how grateful she was for his annual resolution at Synod against the Land Act, however futile this gesture proved to be. "It was a brave act of faith," she records in the *CR Quarterly*, "to keep on hammering at the thick strong armour of colour prejudice in which the S.A. European public has encased itself".[103]

3 The CR's involvement in African education

The CR's constantly playing the gadfly to the intransigent educational authorities is another instance of their taking the African cause to heart. For over fifty years their running of the township primary schools on the Witwatersrand necessitated a corresponding begging for and demanding financial assistance from the provincial government which, as we have noted, was reluctant to spend much on black education, if not openly hostile to it. And this during a period (the 1930s and 1940s) which saw the Transvaal challenge Cape dominance of education as the demand for education

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[99] Ibid, 157.
[100] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 207.
[101] Ibid, 208.
[102] SAIRR, minutes dated 14 Nov. 1934 to 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[103] Margaret Mazambozi, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (158) St John Baptist 1942, 29.

expanded exponentially. Fully one third of all African pupils were in the Transvaal (but the province still had only 25 % of the schools), while the Cape had 43 % of the schools but just over a third of African pupils.[104] According to a report by Alban Winter in the *CR Quarterly*, the ratio set by the state was 1:55, with the TED paying for teachers' salaries and a grant of 3/- per head for equipment. By the end of 1943 the CR was running six schools in Sophiatown with 70 teachers and well over 3 000 pupils. On the West Rand they supervised 22 schools with 67 teachers and over 3 000 pupils, on the East Rand 21 schools with 103 teachers and nearly 5 000 pupils.[105] The Community's work in the townships, Wilkinson argues, showed that it was possible to develop a working-class, community-rooted Anglo-Catholicism which had been fervently desired in industrialised England but never achieved.[106]

The CR built three churches, seven schools and three nursery schools in Sophiatown within six years, and in Orlando over the next twenty years four churches, five schools and four nursery schools. The two biggest primary schools in South Africa, St Cyprian's and St Mary Magdalen's in Sophiatown proved feeders to St Peter's School and were often staffed by ex-St Peter's pupils.[107] The CR were helped by Dorothy Maud, daughter of the progressive Bishop of Kensington, who had opened her centre for social and religious work in 1929 in Sophiatown, Ekutuleni (House of Peace-Making), where she and other English women lived and worked. In their focus on the children of the township, these women had a particularly creative partnership with the CR. The Ekutuleni Mission contributed to the financing of bursaries for St Peter's School (generally in the amount of £12 per annum), as did other bodies in the mission network like SPG and SPCK, the Johannesburg Diocesan Finance Board, the Old Johannian Association and, of course,

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[104] Deborah Gaitskell, `Race, Gender and Imperialism: A Century of Black Girls' Education in South Africa'. Unpublished paper, 2.
[105] Alban Winter, `The School of the Rand Mission', *CR Quarterly* (164) Christmas 1943, 7.
[106] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 229.
[107] They are sometimes wrongly and misleadingly confused with St Peter's: witness Ulf Hannerz, `Sophiatown: The View from Afar', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20(2) June 1994, 187.

wealthy individuals. One of Huddleston's Jewish friends, a tobacco businessman and treasurer of the African Children's Feeding Scheme, was a master fundraiser and solicited substantial contributions from his wholesalers for the Scheme, which was close to his heart.[108] Three other businessmen "who had profited much from the use of African labour and wished to make some adequate return", were inveigled by Raymond Raynes into covering the cost of building the schools in Sophiatown and Orlando.[109]

In his article on inter-war liberalism, Richard Elphick makes the point that, for all its pallidness and timidity, its failing in the areas for which it castigated white South Africa, it was neither impotent nor disreputable.[110] "It inspired men and women of admirable character and dedication and left a record of sheer decency amidst sorrow which future generations may honour more wholeheartedly than we are able to do".[111] Among the beneficiaries was Peter Abrahams; in *Return to Goli*, he acknowledges both the dedication of such missionaries, who were responsible for "such vestiges of European culture as exist in the Union largely among the Black elite", and their country of origin:

> Men like Brother Roger Castle, who was for many years Principal of St Peter's Secondary School [sic];[112] like Mr. Darling, his successor; like Archdeacon S.P. Woodfield, who was Principal of the Diocesan Training College; and a host of others, transmitted the spirit of all that was finest and best in Western European culture to many generations of black boys and girls. And each year the missionary societies in England

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[108] Trevor Huddleston, quoted in Pippa Stein and Ruth Jacobson (eds), *Sophiatown Speaks* (Johannesburg, 1986), 76.
[109] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 54.
[110] Richard Elphick, `Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism', in Jeffrey Butler et al (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Middletown, CT, 1987), 79.
[111] Elphick, `Mission Christianity', 80.
[112] Roger Castle was the Warden, not Principal, of the school; this slip perhaps indicates the effect Br Roger had on him.

> sent, and go on sending, a new flow of dedicated men and women to carry on the transmitting of this spirit.[113]

Paul Rich has often remarked that if liberalism in South Africa has failed *politically*, its impact socially and ideologically has been very wide indeed. The preserve of "white educationalists, philanthropists, missionaries and social workers concerned to alleviate the harsh economic and social consequences of industrialisation in a racially divided society",[114] it was, of course, as we have seen, increasingly defined by the concept of white capitalist segregationism. But there would always be a core who would withstand the general trend.

Ken Hartshorne, for example, was invited by the Methodist Missionary Society to teach at Kilnerton Training Institute outside Pretoria on a contract for three years, beginning in January 1938, but ended up as Principal and stayed for fifteen! His comments on the institution, to be referred to in Chapter Three, are valuable because it was the arch-rival of St Peter's throughout the two schools' existence, both urban, higher education institutions, as opposed to rural Transvaal missions such as Grace Dieu (Anglican), Botshabelo (Moravian) and Lemana (Swiss).[115] From a working-class background in the collieries of Durham and the shipyards of Jarrow, and a line of Methodist local preachers, he had naturally Christian socialist sympathies, which were fuelled by the politics very much in vogue in London during the 1930s. Hartshorne became involved in one of the classic debates which fuelled the `social gospel', that between Christianity and communism. He struggled to find a synthesis, citing in this regard part of John

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[113] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 160.

[114] Paul Rich, *White Power*, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Johannesburg, 1984), 123.

[115] For studies of these, see Alfred Mokwele, “The Grace Dieu Experience of the Anglican Church 1906-1958” (MEd, University of the North, 1988); Solomon Mminele, “The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise at Botshabelo 1865-1955” (MEd, University of the North, 1984); Charlie Nwandula, “The Swiss Mission in South Africa: A Critical Review of Its Educational Practices among the Tsonga People of the North Eastern Transvaal 1899-1954 (MEd, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987).

MacMurray's 1935 work, *Creative Society - A Study of the Relation of Christianity and Communism*:

> Throughout the history of Christianity the conception of the Communist society in which property is held in common for the needs of all, and in which brotherhood, equality and freedom are the governing principles of social organisation, has emerged time and again. There is nothing surprising in this, if our account of Christianity is at all near the truth.[116]

Hartshorne claims MacMurray saw this as *the* dialectic of the time and the resultant putative synthesis "as the return of Christianity to the realities of the world, and the acceptance by Communist practice of the moral and inter-personal values that it negated in the interests of a theory based upon purely economic interests".[117]

This is precisely the dialectic which preoccupied Peter Abrahams and the artist Ernest Mancoba, both crucially educated at Grace Dieu during this very period. According to Govan Mbeki, Mancoba, after making the acquaintance of Edward Roux and IB Tabata while at Fort Hare, perfectly reconciled his convictions as a Christian with his sympathy for communism, on Sundays serving in the Anglican church and during the week acting as comrade in the Student Council.[118] At the age of 90, Mancoba still regarded spirituality as "one of the keystones of human existence", neglect of which can only impoverish humanity.[119] Though he plumped for Communism during the late 1930s and 1940s, Peter Abrahams was never satisfied with its reductionism and prescriptiveness, as he relates in *Tell Freedom*.[120] At the age of 76 (the same age at which Hartshorne indicated he was still engaged in the search),

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[116] Quoted in Ken Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town, 1992), 6.
[117] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 7.
[118] Cited in Elza Miles, *Lifeline Out of Africa: The Art of Ernest Mancoba* (Cape Town, 1994), 12.
[119] Miles, *Lifeline Out of Africa*, 12.
[120] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), 251.

he admitted that Christian socialism was the best synthesis between the two, for its ability to "make the self-discovery national in scope",[121] satisfying, in Hartshorne's words, "both moral standpoints and economic justice, together with individual freedom in a democratic society".[122]

What motivated the CR's efforts in the inter-war years was a stark (and avant-garde) choice between "exploitation or Christian civilisation" as the 1930s pamphlet, *South Africa Today - What of Tomorrow?* put it.[123] Divorcing capitalist `civilisation' from Christianity, it indicates the CR's conviction that segregation is a self-defeating policy for it sows the seeds of bitterness and hostility which lead to war, thus eroding the very civilisation it seeks to maintain. "The only alternative to exploitation," it insists, "is the inclusion of both white and coloured peoples within a common Christian civilisation securing free development for all according to their capabilities".[124] In the late 1940s, however, the `benevolent empire' would crumble under the pressure of Afrikaner nationalism and the forces of secularisation, and the personal dedication of missionaries would prove too feeble against legislated white supremacy. The CR, however, withstood this pressure, and actually turned it to their use, giving individual flamboyant personalities like Trevor Huddleston, last Superintendent of CR schools in Sophiatown and Orlando, the leeway they needed initially to mount a challenge to the state.

Huddleston's predecessor was Stephen Carter CR, Superintendent for over 25 years before the CR relinquished control of their East and West Rand schools to the Diocese of Johannesburg in 1947.[125] Carter was on the all-white Transvaal Native Education Advisory Board, together with English-speaking liberals of the period like Edgar Brookes, Rheinallt Jones and Alfred

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[121] Peter Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba* (London, 1985), 437. The synthesis comes "[f]irst, out of people's need to worship in freedom and in their own way, and secondly, out of the need to create structures to make that possible."
[122] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 7.
[123] *South Africa Today - What of Tomorrow?*, 3.
[124] Ibid, 5.
[125] Winter describes the chief care of the CR Superintendents as seeing to religious and moral training of the children and helping and supporting the teachers in their demanding work.

Hoernlé. What minutes of the various meetings of the Board reveal is that the TED was becoming more hardline in its approach to African education, influenced by people like GP Lestrade, whose motion in May 1932 that the mother tongue be the medium of instruction in all black schools was rejected by Carter.[126] The intransigence of the TED, especially the notorious Chief Inspector WWM Eiselen, during the 1930s is also revealed in letters of Stephen Carter to Rheinallt Jones, correspondence which proves that the efforts made by the CR in urban African education must be seen in the context of limited finance and government opposition, and later open sabotage. As Winterbach notes, although they were pioneers in in this field, "the reality of South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century, that is, a general resistance to African education, must be the backdrop against which to view the Community's efforts".[127] In September 1937, for instance, Carter expressed his belief that the TED wanted to break the control of English missionaries on the Reef by the amalgamation of English schools and establishment of two other centres for teacher training to prevent sole Anglican control over teacher training, presently only offered at Grace Dieu. However, the Advisory Board itself was also not without fault, for Carter's progressive motions, that there be black representation on the Board, and that allowances be paid to teachers on sick leave, had to be withdrawn after discussion.[128]

Carter was typical of the CR in being ahead of the Anglican Church in South Africa at the time, as is evident from what he wrote of the Advisory Board two and a half years earlier, in February 1935. "No Africans are to sit on the Board. How are the makers of the shoe to know where the shoe pinches, unless the wearer of that shoe is there?"[129] He pointed out how the Anglican Church had always granted advisory and executive power to black representatives at Synod and Elective Assembly; but later generations would

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[126] SAIRR, minutes dated May 1932, Transvaal Advisory Board 1931-39, AD 843 / B 37.15.
[127] Winterbach, "The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement", 69.
[128] SAIRR, minutes dated 16 Sept. 1937, Advisory Boards on Native Education 1929-45, AD 843 / B 80.3.5.
[129] SAIRR, document dated Feb. 1935, Transvaal Advisory Board 1931-39, AD 843 / B 37.15.1.

condemn the English churches for having elected no black bishops by that time. Significantly, the Advisory Council of St Peter's School always comprised at least two black representatives from 1934 onwards, Mrs Majombozi and Mr Madibane being the first.[130] The 1930s witnessed the greatest amount of missionary aid flooding in from Britain for the education of urban Africans; it also saw the hardening of white South African attitudes in deference to capital and the complicity of the English churches as part of the dominant class. There were caustic voices, most often from the CR, so it is tempting to see significant strands of self-critical consciousness and social action existing within the Anglican Church during the first half of this century, but it is probably more accurate to say, with Cochrane, that "a tradition grew up alongside the established perspective containing hints, clues, and challenges, a tradition accorded honorable mention in the occasional battle but never incorporated into the grand strategies of war".[131]

3.1 Inter-war writings of CR brethren

The 1920s and 1930s were crucial years for white thinking on black education, because of the speed of industrialisation, urban influx (of both black and poor white), worker unrest and agitation, and the disintegration of traditional life. They were also, not coincidentally, the heyday of Transvaal liberals, whose objective was to break the hold the mining companies had over the labour supply and to co-opt bourgeois Africans *on their terms* to their cause. Mphahlele elaborates on this period in *The African Image*, when educated Africans "loved the patronage of white liberals who of course were regarded by government authorities as `experts on natives' and were applied to for `confidential' reports about Africans who wanted jobs, mainly in the teaching and clerical fields".[132] Two of the CR brethren in particular, Aidan Cotton and Alban Winter, added their different voices to the educational

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[130] Herman Madibane, student at the Diocesan Training College (Grace Dieu) in 1922, gave his name to Western Native High School in Johannesburg of which he was Head. The first two black members of the Governing Body of Grace Dieu, however, were appointed as early as 1931.

[131] Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 161.

[132] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 163.

debate during this interwar period. Cotton was heavily involved at the rural St Augustine's Mission in Penhalonga, and Alban Winter, of course, founded St Peter's in Rosettenville, before moving on to Penhalonga. Their writings reveal traces of current educational thinking, but also offer some proposals which drew on ideas in advance of their time.

3.1.1 Aidan Cotton (1879-1960)

Neither Winter nor Cotton was afraid of nailing his colours to the mast, however misguided, which is very refreshing when read in a later age constrained by political correctness. Aidan Cotton in particular was very outspoken with some peculiar views, and Wilkinson feels there was clearly "a dotty side to Cotton".[133] Unusually for the CR, he was born and ordained in Canada, but served in Africa immediately after his profession in 1911 for 34 years. His views were not necessarily those of the Community; individuals within the community frequently wrote idiosyncratic pamphlets, one of the four areas of work, we recall, according to the Preface to the Rule. But his opinions, and frequently pertinent questions, are important in view of his decades-long involvement in black education. His 1929 pamphlet, *Missions: Governments: and Christian Education*, acknowledges missionary involvement in education aimed at spreading reading of the Scriptures, and training enough African catechists, lay ministers and priests for every community.[134] But, unlike Winter, who was always cognisant primarily of black leadership, he feels that "the effort must be to raise the native people as a whole rather than to produce an *intelligentsia* disconnected from the fortunes of the main body and so incapacitated from serving its interests".[135] This aim is consonant with the claims of democratisation in education (Cotton even insists on free education for Africans), but not viable without increased funding which, as Cotton points out, cannot come from the overtaxed black community, but must be subsidised by the well-to-do. In South Africa, of

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[133] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 249.
[134] Aidan Cotton, *Missions: Governments: and Christian Education* (London, 1929), 13-14.
[135] Cotton, *Missions: Governments*, 12.

course, this was white capital which consistently refused any costly involvement in black education.

More sinister to modern ears, however, is Cotton's pamphlet, dating from 1929, *Peasantry or Proletariat?* It deals with the main crisis of the time: education along what lines? Is the African to be educated for an agrarian or industrialised existence? And how will this impact on the other working class, the poor white? Here Cotton has swallowed the `reserves' policy of Smuts whole, as well as the romanticism of the cultural anthropologists, like so many of his contemporaries, when he indicates his hope that it is as peasantry that Africans will develop. His nostalgia for an agrarian existence, however, might also be attributable to the strong vein of idealism regarding organic rural society which was the inheritance of the CR's late Victorian intellectual tradition. It is tempting to speculate whether a stint at St Peter's School, significantly absent from his long experience in Africa, might have caused some reassessment of his views, and perhaps undermined his putative sympathy with the then very topical question of poor whites' chances of employment in the towns "if the influx of natives from the country can be somewhat retarded".[136] He takes issue with the 1913 Natives Land Act, only because it deprived Africans of continuing their agrarian existence and encouraged them to seek work in the towns.[137] There is evidence of integrity, however, in this document, a deep-seated desire to really come to grips with what the white missionary presence has done to Africa. "*Can* the white man," he asks keenly, "penetrating thus into Africa in large numbers, be other than an oppressor and an enemy to the moral welfare of the native Africans?"[138] This scruple is partly resolved under the useful ideas, frequently resorted to in the inter-war years, of "imperial trusteeship" or "world-federation".[139]

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[136] Aidan Cotton, *Peasantry or Proletariat? (Missions, Governments and Native Welfare from a South African Point of View)* (London, 1929), 17.
[137] Cotton, *Peasantry or Proletariat?*, 14.
[138] Ibid, 22.
[139] Ibid, 23.

Yet this crushing sense of responsibility (known elsewhere and less charitably as the `white man's burden') for the future of South Africa proved the motivation for work in the Jane Furse hospital in Sekhukhuneland, the Grace Dieu training college near Pietersburg, the Church of Christ the King in Sophiatown, and countless schools in Johannesburg, including for a spell, St John's College. In an honest and extended discussion of the CR's involvement at St John's between 1906 and 1934, Wilkinson shows how the CR's work in South Africa was divided on racial lines during the inter-war years. It is significant that virtually all the CR brethren who taught (and lived) at St John's, and who gave their names to the four school Houses,[140] had never lived in Sophiatown or taught at St Peter's School, even while they encouraged St John's to `adopt' Sophiatown as its mission and raise money for it and visit it. They were a different and rather objectionable breed altogether, all being public school products without a real inclination to change, and endorsing racial and class segregation at St John's (separate and unequal amenities and activities for pupils and servants), to say nothing of their supposed gender superiority. Only Carl Runge CR, the last CR Headmaster, sent out to replace Eustace Hill in 1931, was worried about the privileged nature of the school;[141] the rest were typical products of their patriarchal and patriotic time. "The character of CR's contribution to St John's," remarks Wilkinson, "is a reminder that despite its radical reputation, the Community has also included a strain of Christian Toryism summed up in Nash . . . devoted to King and Country, institutional tradition and *noblesse oblige*".[142]

3.1.2 Alban Winter (1885-1971)

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[140] These were named after James Nash, Henry Alston, Clement Thomson, and Eustace Hill. The Bishop of Pretoria had asked Nash in 1905 to make St John's financially viable, which he did through his upper-class English connections, and major investment by the CR itself. The CR withdrew in 1934, only after much debate about the order's leavening influence in one matrix of future white leadership of South Africa. It would seem that the CR brethren who were sent out to St John's allowed the ethos of upper-class white Johannesburg to change or, perhaps more accurately, not to change them!

[141] He served with RFA Hoernlé in the 1930s and 1940s on the editorial board of *Common Sense*, the forthright journal of the Society of Jews and Christians (Phyllis Lewsen (ed), *Voices of Protest: From Segregation to Apartheid, 1938-1948* (Johannesburg, 1988), 23).

[142] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 224.

Unusually for the CR and, like Benjamin Baynham after him, Alban Winter came from a poor family. The son of an impoverished priest, he left school early and was one of the first to be ordained in 1910 through the beneficent Mirfield system, and professed early in 1920, hence his personal motivation for promoting African education, which he did for 39 years. "His drive was inseparable from an irascible temper," writes Wilkinson, and he would bully education officials into getting his own way.[143] His educational standards were consistently very high, and of his own making, according to Canon Bertram Moloi, who studied Church History under him at St Peter's College in the late 1940s, and he was respected by CR staff and student alike.[144] He required total application and hard work from his students, anticipating in this regard Leo Rakale, the first African to be professed in 1946, neither of whom had been born with silver spoons in their mouths. In fact, Winter was so demanding a teacher, and so unyielding in his principles, Moloi remembers, that he earned the nickname `Makaza' (something like `cold') in an ironic play on his surname!

Alban Winter travelled to America in 1933 at the invitation of the Phelps-Stokes Fund to investigate black schooling there. The keen American influence in black education in South Africa during this period is variously evident in the funding made available by the Carnegie Corporation and Phelps-Stokes Fund, in the trans-Atlantic connection between African Americans who favoured an industrial and `self-help' education like Booker T Washington and South African exponents like John Dube, and in the views of white South African educationists like CT Loram on the attractiveness of an `adaptationist' and rural-oriented education for blacks, developed though their common training at Teachers' College at Columbia University and lengthy sojourns in America. Winter, however, while influenced by the discourse of segregation and social Darwinism, was clearly never seduced by its tenets.

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[143] Ibid, 215.
[144] Interview with Bertram Moloi, Johannesburg, 22 January 1997.

Reporting on his visit in the *CR Quarterly*, where he saw the beneficial influence of integration, Winter spelt out his conviction that Africans needed "the spur of white example and forceful personality" to reach their full potential, their "easy going way of life" requiring interpenetration with "the dynamic of the west" to prevent stagnation, which would occur, in his opinion, if they were to be segregated in reserves.[145] While this belief is in keeping with the `trusteeship' spirit of the age, and certainly resonates with the CR's ethos of *noblesse oblige*, Winter's article on the whole gives a balanced view of black education in the United States at that time. He visited all the major African-American institutions and, after consultation with educationists there, came to a very different conclusion from his white South African counterparts like Loram. He mentions that while Hampton and Tuskegee had prided themselves on offering a purely industrial education, they had undergone a major change of heart and introduced a course leading to an academic degree. Such pupils now outnumbered industrial pupils by 3:1, and those African Americans he consulted approved of the change. Winter repeatedly makes the point, though, that a `bookish' education divorced from its application to life is to be avoided, and that industrial schools, where one third of the time is spent learning trades and the balance in class work, comprise an attractive option (both these principles would guide him in his endeavours at St Peter's and Penhalonga). Yet he questions the relevance of industrial schools in South Africa, where the colour bar prevented skilled black artisans from plying their trade, and this, ironically enough, when whites were enthusiastically advocating an industrial education for blacks![146]

Alban Winter gave his life to African education, and wrote prolifically on the subject.[147] His views were regularly at loggerheads with those of the 1930s segregationists whose time would come under WWM Eiselen as Secretary for Native Affairs under Verwoerd twenty years later. It is instructive,

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[145] Alban Winter, `The Grand Tour', *CR Quarterly* (121) Lady Day 1933, 17.
[146] Winter, `The Grand Tour', 16.
[147] See, for example, his two monographs, *African Education: Suggested Principles and Methods for African Students* (London, 1939) and *The African Primary School: Matter and Method in the Three Rs* (London, 1943). Because they deal exclusively with pre-secondary education, however, they have not been considered here for discussion.

therefore, to compare briefly two roughly contemporaneous memoranda on African education during the interwar period, one by Alban Winter and the other by Rev G Eiselen (related to the Transvaal Chief Inspector).[148] It is clear that Winter, like Edgar Brookes, envisaged education for black South Africans as little different from that for whites, and then only in so far as subject matter should be more relevant to their life experience. In Eiselen's view, Africans were to receive an education tailored only to what his ilk of white men deemed fitting for them, the seeds of Verwoerd's offensively-worded ban of "grazing in greener pastures." However, Winter was also a product of his time, and his memorandum must be examined from that perspective, not only our own late twentieth-century view.

In a memorandum presented to the AGM of the Transvaal Missionary Association (TMA) meeting in Johannesburg in August 1927,[149] five years after St Peter's was established and when candidates first sat for the Junior Certificate (JC) exam, Winter deals mainly with primary school education, but offers his opinions on black education generally. Civics "of the European type", for example, are of little use for black pupils "so long as they are to be deprived of the vote." Eiselen, on the other hand, in his memorandum given in German at Botshabelo (the Moravian mission station) in November 1932,[150] categorically states that black pupils "are to be brought up to be useful members of State and Society" without even a mention of how they could do this without a vote. He goes on to advocate special training in manual skills like gardening, agriculture, arts and crafts, and even "cattle-culture" which, it must be admitted had found favour in rural mission schools like Botshabelo and Lovedale, and in industrial education enterprises in urban

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[148] Paul Rich gives the name of Eiselen's father as "Ernst Ludwig Gustav Eiselen, a missionary in the Berlin Missionary Society", and mentions that Eiselen himself was one of the foremost exponents of the discipline of `Volkekunde' (the ethnological study of African cultures inspired by the work of German missionaries) at Stellenbosch University. Rich cites Gustav Warneck, author of *Evangelische Missionslehre* (1902), that people should be studied in terms of ethnic units (*Hope and Despair: English-Speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics 1896-1976* (London, 1993), 49).

[149] SAIRR, memorandum on Native Education, Mission Education 1927-49, AD 843 / B 37.10.

[150] SAIRR, memorandum dated 12 Nov. 1932, Education Memoranda 1928-41, AD 843 / B 80.4. RFA Hoernlé was the translator.

areas like St Agnes. It is a long debate, as we saw in Chapter One, the respective merits of a manual and academic education for Africans in South Africa, and indeed in the United States.

By contrast, Winter emphasises the requirements of academic subjects, and the lack of suitable textbooks available. He considers that there are no History books he could "place in the hands of Native children" since the only ones available were "written for Europeans and from the European point of view." Similarly, English readers he considers unsuitable; and feels that a series of readers specifically dealing with South Africa "and Native customs" should be written for black schools. He does not detail what he means by "Native customs" but it is clear that, by this phrase, he intends relevance to black experience, although he may well have been influenced by the cultural anthropologists whose ideas, of course, were very much in vogue in the late 1920s. He is also insistent that "the Native living in Towns and European areas" should comprise a major part of Civics. Predictably, there is nothing of the urban African in Eiselen's memorandum.

Then comes the big bugbear: language as medium of instruction. Eiselen sounds the frightening refrain that was all too common in schools run by the Dutch and German mission societies, and would form the bedrock of Bantu Education: "The mother tongue must be the medium of instruction, preferably from beginning to end of school life." This principle was in stark contrast to the policy adopted by the English missions for no nobler reason, it must be admitted, than that they saw their language as a gift which should be enthusiastically embraced by all. Later critics have regarded it, in Giyatri Spivak's phrase, as "epistemic violence." Leon de Kock has suggested that `English' should be regarded as a discursive process of subject-construction (which must be unpacked to reveal the full history of literary colonisation), by which Africans were defined and placed in relations of dominance and subjection.[151] It was at its height during Victorian imperialism:

> The vehicle of this world mission was an English which bore terrible certainties and was intolerant of alterity. It was a language of closure and myopia, yet it represented an empire which could cause seismic disturbance for those who would not respect its insistence on orthodoxy.[152]

Some fifty years down the line, and in a world where English had conquered its way "by blood" to outright hegemony, Winter is categorical in condemning "the modern tendency to substitute [the vernacular] for English either as the medium of instruction or the subject of study." It would not work on the Reef with its multilingual character, nor ought it to hold sway in unilingual rural areas, he believes, for "English or Afrikaans is the only avenue to education for the S.A. Native, and the sooner the children can become accustomed to it, the better."

Winter also advocates the study of the vernacular only commencing in the higher standards, as his experience with pupils at St Peter's has demonstrated that they learn the formal grammar of a language better after having spoken it first, and then "take it in their stride." Eiselen, on the other hand, takes as his point of departure the principle that black pupils "are to be strengthened in being Bantu in nature and culture" and a "mere sham-culture through imitation of the ways of Europeans is to be prevented." The Dutch and German missionaries' view, unlike that of their English counterparts, was stuck in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is accepted that missionaries considered education a vital component of `christianising' and `civilising' the indigenous inhabitants of the country, since they had to learn to read the Bible and relate to the coloniser on the coloniser's own terms. However, well into the twentieth century, with the growing influence of liberalism in England, English missionary schools like St Peter's realised that they had a responsibility to contribute to the creation of a world citizen, even if through the Christian faith which was the glass through which all teaching

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[151] De Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', 38.
[152] Ibid, 39.

was still filtered. Eiselen shows how little his understanding of the role of missionary education elsewhere had developed when he underlines the principle behind Protestant missionary education: "They are to be taught to become Christians through communicating to them the Bible; and through training them to be members of the congregation and church."

Stephen Carter, writing a year earlier in December 1931 regarding the low pass rate in Standard VI, underlined the Anglo-Catholic principle guiding the CR in black education: "I want to press home the point, that passing the standards is not everything; Our Lord increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. That is the ideal growth".[153] Not surprisingly, he quotes the Headmaster of Eton (St Peter's, of course, was known as `the black Eton') in support of character building upon the model set by Christ himself. Eiselen stresses the evangelical (fundamentalist) conversion experience through education; Carter the more liberal (`universalist') growth of a human being. This distinction is crucial if we are to appreciate what the CR was doing at St Peter's: Richard Kgoleng indicated that once a pupil had shown aptitude or a particular enthusiasm for something, the brethren would actively encourage it, whether in the sports line, or creative writing or musical fields. They were especially on the lookout for aspiring priests; a 1944 CR pamphlet *Mirfield in Africa* noted approvingly that no less than nine ex-St Peter's boys had offered themselves for ordination to the priesthood since the first boarders were admitted in 1922.[154]

The same pamphlet advances Carter's argument that "the ability to pass examinations is not the only test. There is the question of stability of character and general moral stamina to be considered." It admits that the twenty years of St Peter's existence have had their share of failures ("and so have our European schools"), but "the number of successful - using the word in the best sense - old pupils is out of all proportion to the failures. They are taking the lead in every walk of life and have more than justified the

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[153] SAIRR, report dated 22 Dec. 1931, Education Memoranda 1928-41, AD 843 / B 80.4.
[154] *Mirfield in Africa (Another Twenty Years Onward and Upward)* (CR, 1944), 18.

experiment we began in 1922".[155] As Winter had put it in his memorandum to the Transvaal Missionary Association regarding secondary education, then virtually non-existent in the Transvaal:

> Experience shows the Natives have every capacity for this kind of education, and bearing in mind the need of better educated teachers and ministers, not to speak of Native doctors and professional men, Transvaal Missionaries should devote all their energies to its provision.

Sue Krige has found that the Transvaal Missionary Association, unlike its Cape counterpart, was concerned more with the control than the content of black education,[156] and individual churches represented on the body, like the Anglican church in the Transvaal (to all intents and purposes the CR), were "wedded to denominational education".[157] The TMA therefore tended to insist more on education's religious base than on implementing `industrial' or `utilitarian' subjects.

In his memorandum, therefore, Winter identifies the building up of the school library as being "of the greatest importance." He ascribes deficiency in the practitioning of English and Afrikaans "to the little reading our Native children do" and moots the idea of all Transvaal educational institutions having a library, however small, and the Superintendent being responsible for book exchanges between them. Given that well-stocked public libraries and other white cultural institutions in the Transvaal remained closed to black youth,[158] this proposal, if implemented, would have had far-reaching consequences in cultivating a reading public. Canon SP Woodfield began the college library at Grace Dieu in 1923 using spare books from staff members housed initially in

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[155] *Mirfield in Africa*, 19.
[156] Sue Krige, `"Trustees and Agents of the State?": Missions and Post-Union Policy Formation towards African Education 1910-1920'. Unpublished paper, 1993, 16.
[157] Krige, `"Trustees and Agents of the State?"', 23.
[158] Lily Moya managed to pick up a copy of *Jane Eyre* from the Native Public Library in Umtata, but that setbook, not surprisingly, was the only one she found: "Had it (Library) not

the College Office where Abrahams worked in 1936;[159] he must have read some of them, for the library itself was only built a year later. The College subscribed to the latest newspapers and magazines, and books could be borrowed, including those supplied during term by the Carnegie Non-European Library at Germiston,[160] which, by 1938, thanks to its Librarian-Organiser HIE Dhlomo's dedication, had no less than seventy-eight branches in the Transvaal.[161]

3.2 Post-war initiatives by CR brethren

A new period was ushered in at the end of the Second World War, when the black population of Johannesburg increased from 244 000 in 1939 to 400 000 in 1945.[162] Now no thought of removing Africans back to an agrarian existence could be entertained (except by the apartheid ideologues for whom it became an obsession), but there was instead increasing pressure on education to provide semi-skilled labour for fast-growing industry. Margaret Hodgson Ballinger, then a Native Representative in the House of Assembly, argued in 1942 against confining black people to the lowest rungs of the ladder and for the opening of new avenues for employment as a logical corollary to the provision of education. "Education without opportunity," she noted, "is no service to any state. It merely paves the way to spasmodic insurrection".[163] She insisted first on the repeal of the colour bar in industry, and "further obstacles along that road [to economic and social development] must then be removed lest all that we do would be to create a new and strange sense of frustration". Keenly alert to this danger is the CR's 1947 fund-raising pamphlet, *Shall They Be His People?*:

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been so narrow I would look for the rest of the books I need and read them". Letter dated 20 May 1949 in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 73.

[159] Abrahams was commended by Woodfield as "a most useful boy in the college office" in his 1936 college report (SAIRR, Diocesan Training College 1931-41, AD 843 / B 37.7.4).

[160] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 115.

[161] Alan Cobley, `Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness: The Provision of Library Services for Blacks in South Africa in the Pre-Apartheid Era', *Libraries and Culture* 32(1) Winter 1997, 65.

[162] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 297.

[163] Margaret Ballinger, `A New Native Policy', *Common Sense* 4(3) October 1942, in Lewsen, *Voices of Protest*, 105.

> South Africa stands at the parting of the ways - the one way leading to frustration, physical, mental and spiritual; the other leading to fulfilment and to the realisation that the African has something great and splendid to contribute to the world. There never was a time more pregnant with possibilities of hope and of disaster for a whole people than the present moment in the history of South Africa.[164]

Hindsight has revealed many flaws in the missionary enterprise, not least its paternalism, but few could gainsay that the Church in the first half of the century was the leavening and modernising influence in South Africa society, contributing to class and colour stratification, but also offering a vision of the way forward in the modern world. This vision of the future depended on education, for school and colleges "are `the nurseries' of Africa's future leaders",[165] and there is "nothing more vital to the well-being of the Church than its control over them".[166] Africa and the Church are thus conflated into a vision of a Christian continent, perhaps calling Europe back to the faith;[167] Raymond Raynes left Africa in 1943 "with this thought in my mind, that one day the great African Church will bring back the European people of this country to the Christianity that so many of them have either forsaken or have never really believed".[168]

By the late 1940s there was no doubt that racism, "that many headed monster" as the pamphlet, *Shall They Be His People?*, describes it, was the chief cause of division in the church and society. It was predicated on fear "which lies at the root of all the cruelty and injustice", "the source of all the

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[164] *Shall They Be His People? (The CR Appeals for £25 000 for Its African Work)* (CR, 1947), 3-4.
[165] *Shall They Be His People?*, 1.
[166] Ibid, 20.
[167] Mphahlele has, however, criticised this approach, arguing that the idea of Africa's "mission to save Western civilization" reveals adoption of "certain European transcendental attitudes" (`The African Critic Today: Toward a Definition', in Houston A. Baker, Jnr (ed), *Reading Black: Essays in the Criticism of African, Caribbean, and Black American Literature* (Ithaca, 1976), 15-16).

understanding and bitterness between man and man, nation and nation",[169] and the apprehension of crossing boundaries and opening up to the other. Racism would henceforth be the target of the CR's attack, in as much as it destroyed the unity of the Body of Christ. The 1948 Lambeth Conference (like the one sixty years before regarding socialism) set the tone of the new democratic postcolonial age by insisting that racism was inconsistent with the principles of Christianity. It urged, as the CR had done for some time, that "in every land men of every race should be encouraged to develop in accordance with their abilities", which included equal opportunity "in education at all stages".[170] It was only with an understanding of the way groups function in society, though, that headway against racism could be made. This was particularly true after the War, with the implementation of segregationist policies "that made groups, not individuals, the bedrock of social analysis".[171]

The incarnational faith of the CR came into play here, and led to Trevor Huddleston's intimate involvement with the writing and adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955, an obviously socialist document which made nationalisation the key to transformation of society. Huddleston considered the two most important sections to be `The people (shall) share in the country's wealth' and `The land shall be shared among those who work it'.[172] Wilkinson suggests that Huddleston was Charles Gore's direct successor in the *Lux Mundi* tradition of being a radical in both politics and theology.[173] But whereas Gore "was always political, he was never politicized", Huddleston's experiences in Sophiatown impelled him into critical co-operation with other faiths, even communism, to achieve the end of apartheid. "I got far more support from the Jews than from the Christians," he says of the women who ran the

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[168] Quoted in Mosley, *The Life of Raymond Raynes*, 125.
[169] *Shall They Be His People?*, 1.
[170] Quoted in Lesley Cawood, *The Churches and Race Relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1964), 61.
[171] Elphick, `Mission Christianity', 78.
[172] Bob Clarke, `Confronting the Crisis: Church-State Relations', in England and Paterson, *Bounty in Bondage*, 154.

African Children's Feeding Scheme in Sophiatown,[174] a solidarity which has characterised the leadership of the Anglican church in South Africa ever since. In the wake of the Congress of the People in 1955, the Priory at Rosettenville - along with the offices of the communist paper, *New Age*, for which Alfred Hutchinson wrote, and the Central Indian High School, where he was a teacher - was searched for `subversive' literature by the Special Branch, because of Trevor Huddleston's high profile involvement with the Freedom Charter.[175]

Wilkinson makes the crucial point that the CR has been most true to itself when it has taken risks and freed itself to live on the margins, on the frontiers (fulfilling the Cistercian monk Thomas Merton's criteria of a religious as a "marginal person").[176] The CR's character, Wilkinson notes, has been described as "permanently experimental",[177] and the South African experience contributed to this. Raymond Raynes's living in Sophiatown during the 1930s led him to the key insight of his Ramsden Sermon, given at Cambridge in 1952, that "it is only possible to seek for security for oneself at the cost of others",[178] that there can be no individual advancement without that of the whole community. Or, as Huddleston put it in his impassioned sermon in St Mary's Cathedral in 1946, on the occasion of Johannesburg's Diamond Jubilee: "The well-being of the African is our own well-being: the concerns of the African are our own concerns".[179] Anthony Sampson argues that Huddleston's involvement in politics was the logical outworking of his creed, encapsulated in a sermon at Christ the King in Sophiatown, that "at the heart of our religion there lies a principle in absolute contradiction to the principles by which the world speaks and thinks and acts".[180]

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[173] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 311.
[174] Quoted in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 76.
[175] Anthony Sampson, *The Treason Cage: The Opposition on Trial in South Africa* (London, 1958), 111.
[176] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 350.
[177] Ibid, 347.
[178] Ibid, 214.
[179] Trevor Huddleston, `The Valley of Decision', *CR Quarterly* (176) Christmas 1946, 17.
[180] Anthony Sampson, *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa* (London, 1956), 168.

In 1955 Huddleston was risking an unorthodox approach to ministry; he wrote in a CR memorandum that South Africa offered the opportunity for the Community to be "a bit venturesome, a bit strong in initiative, a bit of a nuisance, maybe, to established ideas of conventional Christianity", and he was convinced that "it is better to risk a bit of worldliness - for the world's sake - than to become a community of men `living the life', or trying to, in a vacuum".[181] At this time, Sampson records, his political agitation was beginning to attract unwelcome attention from the state, yet his focus was humanity, not causes:

> "People say I'm a politician," he said to me one afternoon, sitting in a classroom at St Peter's, writing out passes for his schoolboys to go into town, so that they should not be arrested. "But all I'm interested in, really, is people: particularly these people," waving at the queue of schoolboys.[182]

And Sampson comments on the school which was Huddleston's great pride and in every side of which he was interested, whether it was the jazz band, a boxing demonstration, an inter-school debate or the printing press: "St Peter's added an English liberal education to the tough schooling of a townee African, to produce a kind of cultured cockney".[183]

In Nadine Gordimer's short story, "Not for Publication",[184] Huddleston features as Father Audry, whose "restless, black-cassocked figure, stammering eloquence, and jagged handsome face" contributes to his "unconscious bearing of a natural prince among men that makes a celebrated actor, a political leader, a successful lover".[185] Though he is very easy with black people, visiting them in their rooms and homes, Fr Audry is shown to exemplify most of the CR's upper middle-class values, being "careless of one

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[181] Quoted in Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 311.
[182] Sampson, *Drum*, 170.
[183] Ibid, 170.
[184] Nadine Gordimer, `Not for Publication', in her *Not for Publication* (London, 1965), 7-21.
[185] Gordimer, `Not for Publication', 13.

cruelty for which other people will never forgive him - the distinction, the luck with which he was born".[186] St Peter's is fictionalised as a school "where at least, along with the pious pap, a black child could get an education as good as a white child's".[187] Yet the ultimate test of that education is what the pupil himself chooses to make of it. The story deals with a young black boy, Praise Basetse, who shows unusual initiative and high intelligence as an urban waif, and later at a primary school in a Protectorate. Father Audry's school in Johannesburg is then chosen by his white mentor, Adelaide Graham-Grigg, as the only one where classmates would provide the necessary stimulation in a post-primary environment. Gordimer highlights the vast liberal network of the 1940s and 1950s in Johannesburg (of all shades of the spectrum), which helped to account for St Peter's success in introducing pupils to prominent figures, and placing boys who had passed the external examinations in employment in the city. "All those white people who do not accept the Colour Bar in Southern Africa seem to know each other, however different the bases of their rejection".[188]

Praise Basetse is destined for great things; he is taught chess and the flute, and prepared through personal coaching for matriculation by the age of sixteen. Early on he enjoys the quick cigarette in the toilets and less savoury escapades with his fellows, but as the dreaded examination approaches, he removes himself from them and avoids outdoor games. He suffers a breakdown, and Gordimer describes a painful incident where Fr Audry realises that, to Praise in his hysterical state, he represents no more than countless missionaries have done to black people, the hunter over the hunted. In calling him "Sir" for the first time, Praise "spoke for others, out of another time".[189] The story makes the point that, for all the encouragement and support and stimulation which Praise was given at the school, "they knew nothing about the boy, nothing at all".[190] The school authorities (and Miss

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[186] Ibid, 13.
[187] Ibid, 10.
[188] Ibid, 13.
[189] Ibid, 19.
[190] Ibid, 21.

Graham-Grigg for that matter) never knew he had longed to be at initiation school, a yearning which dogged him throughout his school career. They had a vision for him, as a leader, not in the tribal mould, but the product of an open scholarship overseas, perhaps the first black Rhodes Scholar, so vindicating the school and their educational work: "what a triumph that would be, for the boy, for the school, for all the African boys".[191]

The story is a highly accurate picture of what the CR in Rosettenville stood for, the lengths to which they were prepared to go for their pupils, the quality of the education they offered, and the powerful network of which they were part. But it depicts their ignorance of tribal mores, their dismissal of traditional life which, in this story (and perhaps in other real-life ones), led to the subversion of their attempts when the star pupil absconded. Gordimer touches on many relevant things in a story far denser than its size: the role of the missionaries in rural Africa (as opposed to urban missions), the respective values of the tribe and Western democracy, the relevance or otherwise of Western education for Africans, the inability of white and black people to truly make contact. Silence, evasion, misunderstanding, slippage always thwart the best of intentions. In the end, Praise Basetse makes good - but on his own terms, in his own time, in his own way. He becomes the Protectorate's Prime Minister, but he had to do it on his own, like Peter Abrahams, perhaps, who left St Peter's before taking his JC examination, or Gerard Sekoto who managed less than three months at St Peter's Priory. But it is safe to say, and Gordimer admits it, that a gifted lad's acquaintance with the school must lead him on to his destiny, one of his own making.

This sense of destiny evoked by St Peter's is evident in a poem quoted by a pupil, James Mdatyulwa, in the last issue of the *St Peter's School Magazine*:

> But to every man there openeth
> A High Way and a Low,
> And every man decideth

[191] Ibid, 17.

> The Way his Soul shall go.[192]

This is his rationale for courageously deciding to lay himself open to criticism of what he has observed of the running of St Peter's in only his first four months at the school during 1934, while Alban Winter was still Principal. Advocating the establishment of an elected SRC (in addition to the Prefect system) in order to facilitate in particular the collecting and presentation of grievances, the piece suggests that St Peter's will not fulfil its role in producing leaders unless it teaches pupils just how to deal with grievances. However, Mdatyulwa notes that pupils' opinion, even in matters affecting them directly, is never sought:

> We, as students, are the leaders of tomorrow, and the world looks to us as such; the failure of our people will be measured by our failure; their success also depends upon our success. To be able to lead, we must have clearer minds than those we are to lead. . . . We are looking forward to a time when St Peter's School will play a more prominent part, than at present, in the shaping of our future in this land; so it is time that we see signs to that effect. Let there be harmony and good relations established now between the authorities and those in their care; then, and only then, will the school attain to the ideals for which it is supposed to stand.[193]

This brave plea fell on deaf ears, for there is no record of a proactive response in the formation of an elected SRC. This typifies the climate of the 1930s, with the CR authorities convinced that they knew best.[194] Perhaps more interestingly, there is no record of what happened to Mdatyulwa as there are no JC results for him at St Peter's, although he was on the national

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[192] James Mdatyulwa, letter to the editor, *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(5) 1934, 24.
[193] Mdatyulwa, letter to the editor, 23-24.
[194] An editorial disclaimer, placed as epigraph to Mdatyulwa's letter, exemplifies this: "The Editor is not responsible for the views expressed in the following article. The Editor thinks that such a Students' Representative Body, as suggested by the writer, does exist at St. Peter's School, but in a different form, namely the body of Prefects."

executive of the All-African Convention when it met with that of the ANC in Bloemfontein in April 1949.[195] The St Peter's Executive Committee minutes of October 1945 record a similar initiative (obviously motivated by the countrywide disaffection of pupils at mission schools) for an SRC with access to the governing body, but this was rejected in favour of the prefect system which had access to the Warden (as member of the Executive Committee).[196] The prefects at Alliance High in Kenya, appointed on grounds of character, were likewise responsible only to the Headmaster, not any pupil constituency in what Carol Sicherman calls, with nice irony, "a Lugardian system of indirect rule".[197] It was this attitude of *noblesse oblige* which often hampered the CR's attempts to engage with African demands.

4 The CR's negotiation of African culture

4.1 Noblesse oblige

The missionary enterprise was notoriously paternalistic, and the CR, because of its mainly upper-class members, did not escape the taint of one-way traffic, at least before the Second World War. Wilkinson remarks of Arnold Toynbee, the Oxford economist desirous of spending his life improving the social conditions of the working class, that his "attitude was extraordinarily (if innocently) *de haut en bas*; he and his fellows believed they had everything to give, but it never crossed their minds that they might have something to receive".[198] This limitation has always dogged the CR enterprise, with only

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[195] Joint Meeting of the National Executive Committees of the ANC and the AAC, 17-18 April 1949, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge, Volume II: Hope and Challenge 1935-1952* (Stanford, CA, 1973), 378. Before this Mdatyulwa was secretary of the Potchefstroom Branch of the ANC and a member of the Potchefstroom Advisory Board (Robert R Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Athens, OH & Johannesburg, 1996), 188), and adjudicated a marathon debate at the BMSC on the topic that Communism was better than Democracy (see AP Mda's article in *Um-Afrika* 14 September 1946 (in Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 140-141).

[196] CPSA, St Peter's School Executive Committee Minutes dated Oct. 1945, AB 2089 / D 2.1.

[197] Carol Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education: "The Subversion . . . of the African *Mind*"', *African Studies Review* 38(3) 1995, 13.

[198] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 21.

those who lived in the mainly African communities of Sophiatown and Orlando realising it. Matthew Trelawny-Ross CR, one of the original three, with Raymond Raines and David Downton CR, to set up the Sophiatown Mission in 1934, acknowledged the great debt he owed to Africans when he was moved from Sophiatown to Rosettenville after twenty years. "All my time here I seem to have been almost too richly blessed," he wrote to his Superior in 1954, "I only count it a wonderful blessing from God that I have been allowed to stay at Sophiatown for so long".[199] Their work among Africans in the Sophiatown Mission and the Rosettenville Priory became, in Mosley's opinion, "almost the chief contribution of Mirfield to the Church and an immeasurable one amongst Africans".[200] Yet their one foray into rural African culture in South Africa, in Sekhukhuneland from 1938 to 1961, was to prove terribly harrowing, and perhaps a salutary lesson in what the predominantly rural missions of other churches had to undergo.

In Sekhukhuneland the young convert Manche Masemola had been beaten to death by her parents for espousing Christianity as late as 1928, which gives some indication of the hostility shown towards the `three Cs' in this region during this century. Br Roger Castle CR, visiting the Jane Furse Hospital in 1935, found a St Peter's boy, son of the hospital's chaplain, giving night classes there to eager children who, if their mothers knew they were attending, would resort to heinous means to prevent them, like polluting their food or even encouraging rape and assault.[201] Whereas in Johannesburg "blacks were eager for education and responsive to evangelism; here tribal and racial solidarity resisted penetration", is Wilkinson's rather unfortunate description.[202] The metaphor is given to him, though, by Gregory Evans CR, writing in the *CR Quarterly* as late as August 1939. He contrasts the progress (which would have included the beginning of secondary education) at Penhalonga with the resistance in Sekhukhuneland where "we seem to have one dense solid mass of dark black heathenism, wholly indifferent if not

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[199] Matthew Trelawny-Ross, letter to Raynes, *CR Quarterly* (206) St John Baptist 1954, 22.
[200] Mosley, *The Life of Raymond Raynes*, 38.
[201] Roger Castle, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (130) St John Baptist 1935, 17.
[202] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 231.

actually hostile".[203] Some months later in 1940 he writes, "it is so difficult for us to penetrate into these mysterious depths".[204] Yet fifteen brethren are buried at the Jane Furse mission, testifying to their love for this harsh, arid, intractable area, too remote and demanding for their resources to really make a difference other than offer a persistent presence.

They were not helped by their reluctance to learn or promote the vernacular, permissible perhaps in polyglot Johannesburg but unforgiveable in a rural area. In this they have a worse record than other Christian missions. When Derek Williams CR arrived in 1957 there was still no Sepedi dictionary or grammar.[205] Reflecting on this in the self-conscious post-Sharpeville age, he wrote in the *CR Quarterly* that the missionary ought constantly desire to listen and to learn, and "learning one of the many languages of the Africans is an excellent method of humiliating one's self before them, of offering one's self to be taught".[206] Benjamin Baynham CR, Principal at Penhalonga for seventeen years, was very concerned that new brethren learn Shona as none spoke it at all well. This was confirmed by a Form IV boy who complained that brethren, when challenged, admitted to ignorance of some of the things they were saying in the Shona liturgy, and that mispronunciation was frequent so that the priest "instead of saying `archangels' . . . begins to talk about kidneys".[207] Wilkinson rightly comments that such amateurishness represents a devastating failure to take African identity and culture seriously. This linguistic and cultural arrogance is the main failing of the CR and, of course, a peculiarly upper middle-class English one. Even the otherwise well-disposed Canon Moloi pointed out that the CR's one weakness was the general reluctance to learn the vernacular, beyond reading and saying the Mass. In this they were beaten hollow by Roman Catholic priests, who would invariably learn the indigenous languages. This reluctance on the part of the English CR, who otherwise totally identified with the community they lived

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[203] Gregory Evans, letter dated 28 Aug. 1939, *CR Quarterly* (148) Christmas 1939, 17.
[204] Gregory Evans, letter dated 18 Jan. 1940, *CR Quarterly* (149) Lady Day 1940, 8.
[205] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 231.
[206] Ibid, 231.
[207] Ibid, 232.

with, is an inconsistency probably attributable to the standard arrogance of the English-speaker, particularly at the height of Empire.

The CR generally preferred to use English; even of the original three brethren who came out in 1903, only one, Latimer Fuller CR, later Bishop of Lebombo, became conversant in Sesotho, and he did it within a few months of his arrival, according to his reports in the *CR Quarterly* during 1903 of various services he took.[208] He even insisted on one issue of the *CR Quarterly* being published in Sesotho in January 1904, and this after its English counterpart was only four issues old! Years later, in 1939, two Fathers in particular showed persistence in trying to learn the vernacular. Gregory Evans, then in Sekhukhuneland, wrote in the *CR Quarterly* that he was "plugging away at SePedi and making valiant efforts to get a working knowledge of it".[209] Claude Lunniss CR, in Sophiatown, related in the same issue that he was "trying to go regularly to the Secoana lesson of one of the sub-standards of S. Mary Magdalene's school" and was asked to read a sentence, with mixed success, much to the amusement of the children![210] Six years later, in 1945, he is still trying: "Trevor [Huddleston] is letting me go for two months so I can really get down to learning Sesuto. I am now having a lesson a week from one of the S. Cyprian school teachers".[211] This persistence is at least an indication of an increasing willingness within the Community, at some cost, to answer to African demands. Huddleston himself, however, never learned any vernacular, compensated for, perhaps, in his case by his powerful personality and dedicated commitment.

4.2 Increasing reciprocity of engagement

4.2.1 Br Roger Castle (1894-1971)

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[208] See, for instance, his undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (3) Michaelmas 1903, 52-54.
[209] Gregory Evans, letter dated 28 Aug. 1939, *CR Quarterly* (148) Christmas 1939, 17.
[210] Claude Lunniss, letter dated 25 Aug. 1939, *CR Quarterly* (148) Christmas 1939, 17.
[211] Claude Lunniss, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (171) Michaelmas 1945, 26.

Like Huddleston twenty years after him, it was probably Br Roger Castle's influence which lived on most in his erstwhile charges. He was unusual in that he was the first lay brother to be professed (after Sydenham Hoare who had died in 1926 before his profession, delayed by the CR's dithering, reluctant as they were to live with a lay brother as an equal). As Wilkinson says, in common with so much of their early attitudes to the working class and black people, "it did not occur to them that they had much to receive from laity".[212] Br Roger showed the folly of this prejudice. No ill word has been written or spoken of him, on the contrary, he was the most fun of all the brethren, and the one always asked to be remembered to in correspondence by past pupils. Granted, he was the Warden from his arrival in Rosettenville in October 1932, so would have had most to do with the boys, and got to know them all by name. As the 1934 *St Peter's School Magazine* fondly relates under the rubric "Familiar Combinations in Decimals", the rule which governs such complicated computation is the same rule "that allows Br. Roger to confiscate fifty boys' hats in the evening and return them to their owners in the morning without making a mistake".[213]

Br Roger came of a part-Jewish family, was educated by governesses so never went to school, yet his knowledge of European literature and art was prodigious. Unlike most Englishmen of the time, and certainly in contrast with the CR then, he spoke French, German and Dutch, and not always of the most savoury kind![214] Wilkinson abstracts from his obituary his early adventures:

> After running away from home he sold lemonade on a Rhine steamer, then moved to bohemian Paris where Modigliani, the painter, lived in the flat above. For a time Castle made a living as part of a music hall act. After the war (in which he won the

[212] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 101.
[213] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(5) 1934, 26.
[214] Two anecdotes in his obituary illustrate his familiarity with the seedier side of Paris: a French Capuchin friar doubled up with laughter at one of his stories, saying, `Brother I think you learned your French in the gutter', and he corrected an expert on the work of Jean Genet concerning the finer points of indecent French slang (*CR Quarterly* Michaelmas 1971, 19).

> MC) he taught at Leominster Grammar School, living in a gypsy caravan in the station yard, which, drawn by a horse called Virgin, took him round Wales in the holidays.[215]

His obituarist, William Wheeldon CR, calls this "the pre-1914 equivalent of hippiedom", and mentions how he "loved the young people of today, with their striking and imaginative clothes and their willingness to explore the world in new ways".[216] Br Roger taught in Jersey and South Africa, where he met the CR through Gregory Evans, and spent three years at Mirfield from 1929. But he flatly refused to be pressurised into being ordained as a priest. "In this clerical society," notes Wilkinson, "he had the stamina and character to stand up to his own distinct vocation".[217] His obituarist says: "By the grace of God he was able to convince the Community that this was not his line at all, and the way was opened for the special compassionate ministry that he was to exercise".[218]

It was a ministry dedicated to the whole of life, a sacramental approach where the mundane was holy and to be rejoiced in, whether it was the comfortable old mums making loud and homely conversation, or the new baby in the house down the road. "The number and range and depth of his friendships was astonishing," writes Wheeldon. He was a superb raconteur, constantly surprising even those who knew him best with his stories and the people he knew.[219] Revealingly, he was well acquainted with Roy and Mary Campbell, and even helped with the editing of *Voorslag* in the mid-1920s.[220] Roy and Roger obviously shared a scurrilous wit and sense of humour, even if their political sympathies diverged with time. Br Roger's sympathies were always with the poor and oppressed, and this motivated his decision to stop over in Spain on a return journey to Mirfield to help refugees from Franco.

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[215] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 217.
[216] William Wheeldon, obituary of Roger Castle, *CR Quarterly* Michaelmas 1971, 19, 22.
[217] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 217.
[218] Wheeldon, obituary of Castle, 20.
[219] Ibid, 19.
[220] National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown (NELM), Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR, letter to Guy Butler, 30 Apr. 1959 MS doc. no. 3063, acc. no. 94.2.3.144.

Hence his fondness for the 1930s poets WH Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender which he communicated to Peter Abrahams in early 1937, and again in 1938.[221]

"He looked only to the real good of those who were drawn to him," writes his obituarist,[222] and it is a testament to his incisive and indelible effect on people that Abrahams only knew him for a few seminal months between January and May 1937, and until June 1938. In mid-1937 Br Roger went back to Mirfield on the six months' furlough due to him after his five years' stint (and it was possibly then that Abrahams turned to his Marxist friends Harold and Cath, as he did for a living when he left St Peter's).[223] Br Roger was back again by January 1938, having electrified Mirfield, if not the United Kingdom, if a comment in the *CR Quarterly* is anything to go by: "Many will doubtless have been thrilled during the autumn by lightning visits from Brother Roger, whose comings and goings have occasionally disturbed our serenity at the House, too".[224] It is significant that Wheeldon mentions discipline and detachment as the keynotes of his spiritual life, which meant that he rarely held on to the multitude of friends and people to whom he ministered: "They would come into his life and then disappear, except from his prayers. . . He would give what he could and then let them get on with their own lives".[225] Clearly, his influence on people was tremendous.

Alban Winter attributes to Br Roger the phenomenal success of St Peter's pupils' forays into fine art, in that he "discovered a real talent for this art and did everything in his power to encourage its expression by arranging classes and securing the assistance of some of his artistic friends to give regular lessons to the children".[226] Yet he was only channelling an artistic flair which DDT Jabavu had identified as characteristic of Sotho and Tswana youth in

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[221] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 249. Auden's shifts in his ideological position would chart Abrahams's own; Abrahams acknowledges this, perhaps, in using a quotation from Auden's poem, `Look Stranger', as the title of his pessimistic novel, *This Island, Now* (1966).
[222] Wheeldon, obituary of Castle, 22.
[223] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 250, 252.
[224] *CR Quarterly* (140) Christmas 1937, 27.
[225] Wheeldon, obituary of Castle, 22.

particular, with their skill in clay modelling and wood-carving: "The African child thus comes to school armed with a strong bias for handwork, ready to be guided into artistic work".[227] St Peter's Church was regularly adorned with pupils' work, and it occasionally served as an art gallery, too.[228] Br Roger also mounted the first collective exhibition of black artists' work, including paintings by fourteen St Peter's boys, a ten-day "Exhibition of African Schoolboys", in May 1939 at the Gainsborough Galleries in Johannesburg. The exhibition was a spectacular and financial success (Br Roger had wanted to raise funds to build an art studio for his pupils). Among items on display, revealing a strong religious bias but also encouragement of black self-expression and identification with the subject, were a crucifixion with a black Christ, and a portrait of a black St Peter.[229]

In this exhibition, incidentally, five of Gerard Sekoto's paintings were also included, one of which, "Nude", has been subsequently lost.[230] "This genre of work," Lesley Spiro observes, "suggests the artist's familiarity with Western art traditions", and perhaps reveals the broad exposure to such art which Br Roger encouraged, and a corresponding broad-mindedness, characteristics of the CR, and Br Roger in particular. Spiro herself hazards that Sekoto's awareness of the conventions of Western art "may partly have come from books in Brother Roger's library".[231] The informal aspect to education at St Peter's must never be underestimated. Br Roger seldom turned down the chance for a chat, especially where the arts were concerned. He conducted after-hours classes for pupils interested in art in his room at St Peter's, and both Mancoba and Sekoto benefitted from informal discussions with him, and his help in marketing their work,[232] receptive as Br Roger was to what Sekoto termed Africa's `song', unlike many other whites who refused to participate in

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[226] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 61.
[227] DDT Jabavu, `The Child as He Comes to School', in Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, 435.
[228] Elizabeth Rankin and Elza Miles, `The Role of the Missions in Art Education in South Africa', *Africa Insight* 22(1) 1992, 37.
[229] Roger Castle, letter dated 14 June 1939, *CR Quarterly* (147) Michaelmas 1939, 11.
[230] Lesley Spiro, *Sekoto: Unsevered Ties* (Johannesburg, 1989), 66 footnote 107.
[231] Spiro, *Sekoto*, 67 footnote 157.
[232] Rankin and Miles, `The Role of the Missions', 37.

his singing: "it was my wish to extend my song to them but there was no way to communicate".[233]

Br Roger's network of artists and literary people also proved useful. He introduced Sekoto to Alexis Preller, through whom he acquired his first tubes of oil paint, and at St Peter's Sekoto met Judith Gluckman, who helped him in applying oil on canvas and, according to Spiro, thereby influenced the way he painted.[234] In this she played a similar role to the Jewish couple, Harold and Cath, whom Abrahams met at St Peter's, and converted him to Marxism; or even the Wits student, Philip Stein, who worked at the Trotskyite bookshop, Vanguard Booksellers, and gave Bloke Modisane his "first transcolour friendship",[235] introducing him to the Russian and French masters whose "sharp criticism against the social condition of man" he vowed to emulate in his writing.[236] Br Roger offered Sekoto free board and lodging at St Peter's, but Sekoto could not stay longer than three months "as I felt that I was back in a school routine again", which had always militated against his creative career. Also, the white suburb of Rosettenville dried up his source of inspiration, which had flowed freely in Sophiatown, "where life was colourful, cruel and full of rhythm",[237] what Can Themba famously called "the little Paris of the Transvaal".[238]

After Br Roger left for Penhalonga in 1940, the art enterprise collapsed. A letter in April 1949 indicates an attempt to resuscitate art and painting at St Peter's;[239] it set out specifically to encourage art for boys in Standard VI, following on from what it termed the "arts and crafts experiment" which Br Roger had launched a decade ago (financed, rumour had it, by a friend's

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[233] Gerard Sekoto, `Autobiography', *Presence Africaine* 69 (1st quarter 1969), 189.
[234] Spiro, *Sekoto*, 21.
[235] Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (Harmondsworth, 1990), 85.
[236] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 86.
[237] Sekoto, `Autobiography', 190.
[238] Mphahlele noted the same of suburban Lagos, in comparison with which "the Greensides, Parktowns, and Killarneys look like large funeral parlours, frigid, polite, correct, detached and anaemic" (`An African Abroad', *Fighting Talk* (Dec. 1957-Jan. 1958), 10).
[239] SAIRR, letter dated 27 Apr. 1949, Native Education, AD 843 / B 81.1.

nightclub takings),[240] by providing the pupils with paper and colours and leaving them to get on with it. This sort of experiment, along the lines of the Dalton Plan, so enamoured of Alban Winter, had been very much in vogue among educationists of the 1930s; the proceedings of the New Education Fellowship Conference in 1934 give successful instances of this form of creativity among white pupils in Canada.

Br Roger is remembered by Bertram Moloi, a dignified and conservative Canon, as "a very eccentric Englishman, and he behaved womanish, too - you know the type of person, the walk and so on, he was very eccentric, but he hated girls." Mphahlele, too, recalls him moving about "with a long light and graceful stride, one hand holding up his cassock and the other hanging mid-air like an actor sweeping on to the stage"; he calls him a "strict but open-minded man".[241] In keeping with his views, and the mores of the 1930s, he laid down the law about boys visiting the girls' hostel, only with permission, and there was obviously no opportunity for the `airmail' (letters thrown in at the girls' windows) so much practised by the youths a generation later (pupils in the 1950s remember the practice with glee). Yet he spared nothing in his mutually enriching relations with the pupils until his leaving for Penhalonga. Various headmasters were required to call upon Br Roger's detailed memory of boys they never knew, who applied for testimonials or positions as teachers at St Peter's. Mr Darling, for instance, who had taken over as Headmaster in the year he left, wrote to him in Penhalonga in December 1945 about one ex-pupil John Sifora who had applied from Adams College to return to teach at St Peter's. Br Roger's reply affirms his teaching of Afrikaans in particular for which he managed to rouse unusual enthusiasm (his pupils were "still streets ahead of those left to the tender mercies of Sister"), and Mr Sifora was indeed engaged.

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[240] Neither was Martin Jarrett-Kerr above using nightclubs to further his purpose. On a trip to New York, he spoke about South Africa at 1.40 am from a nightclub in Brooklyn on a Jewish presenter's popular midnight to 2 am interviewing programme! (NELM, Jarrett-Kerr, letter to Guy Butler, 5 Apr. 1957 MS doc. no. 3063, acc. no. 94.2.3.144).

[241] Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (London, 1989; orig. 1959), 125.

Br Roger's infectious wit was legendary, too. Br Edwin Ainscow remembers his scurrilousness as being just the sort of antidote to solemn churchiness the CR needed. Wilkinson provides a characteristic vignette of his witty retort to a serious-minded brother, Hubert Northcott, who had cast himself in the role of austere guardian of CR spirituality but for whom Br Roger had much affection, which shows him to be the leavening influence in the Community: "Roger Castle, the vivacious lay-brother, by mistake put cake on the table when it was a fast day. Northcott came in and looked at it scornfully. `There is no need to ice the cake with your look,' responded Roger".[242] Mphahlele also offers us a glimpse into his scurrilous cant, often misogynistic:

> `I suppose you think you're marvellous,' he was fond of saying to a boy. Or `I'll smack your bottom . . . How's the old cow getting on?' (meaning my mother) . . . Hullo you crooked old thing! (to annoy the ageing Latin mistress who walked with her head tilted one side) . . . Why can't you stop making that horrid noise, you old geezer? (to the stout lady of St Agnes' girls' hostel, who coughed so violently in church that she always went into one of the chapels during a service) . . . It's just frightful the way you boys behave when girls enter the hall'.[243]

His easy-going nature differentiated him from other brethren. "You wouldn't normally think of going to have a chat with any of the Priory people," Mphahlele remembers, "except for Brother Roger".[244] He reflects that, except for the pervasive presence of the brethren, the worlds of the pupils and the brothers seldom collided: "they weren't aloof, but just too busy." Significantly, though, Br Roger's obituarist views his ministry as "the discernment and the encouraging and cherishing of all the good in the lives of those with whom he came in contact, enabling them to take heart, to enlarge their horizons and their hopes".[245]

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[242] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 188.
[243] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 125.
[244] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 218.
[245] Wheeldon, obituary of Castle, 21.

According to Wilkinson, he "achieved an extraordinary hold over the boys with his artistic personality, un-English spontaneity, authentic spirituality and total unconventionality".[246] But Mphahlele objected to his punishing the whole hostel for one boy's misdemeanor, making them fast and say the Stations of the Cross on an empty stomach. Such observances were taken very seriously by some, as Br Roger wrote in the *CR Quarterly* in 1934:

> There are very few white boys that I know of, who would get out of a warm bed on a freezing morning and go and kneel on his bare knees on a concrete floor for 20 minutes as the minimum in a church whose temperature strongly resembles that of the Union Cold Storage . . . . But there is a boy who has done that, with very few breaks, for a whole year. There is another small one . . . who, because his name is Stephen, knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament on the eve of his birthday, in the position he imagined St. Stephen was in when he was stoned. And this in a dark church, after compline, quite alone.[247]

In an uncannily similar fashion, Peter Abrahams prayed before a statue of St Peter in the chapel at Grace Dieu, asking for a miracle to affirm him,[248] as did Oliver Tambo when, expelled two months before his final exams for his teaching diploma in 1942 for refusing to compromise his principles as Secretary of the SRC, he went into the Fort Hare chapel to seek solace: " It was completely dark: completely empty: absolutely silent. But at the far end, near the Blessed Sacrament, there was a glow of light from the lamp which always burned there. I took that as a sign. That somewhere, however dark, there is a light".[249]

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[246] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 216.
[247] Roger Castle, letter dated Winter Term 1934, *CR Quarterly* (127) Michaelmas 1934, 17-18.
[248] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 245.
[249] Quoted in Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (London, 1956), 142.

Br Roger was particularly susceptible to boys with a strong spiritual or ascetic streak (being a monk first, rather than a priest, himself), and did all he could to foster their spiritual life. A letter from an ex-St Peter's pupil, Jasper Mduna, mentions that the service book which Br Roger gave him before he left St Peter's is used twice a day in his rigorously timetabled life at work on a farm in Natal.[250] Mduna became a Companion of the CR tertiary order, the Fraternity of the Resurrection (FR), in 1939 while still at St Peter's, wrote a piece called "Prayer at Odd Moments" for the *CR Quarterly* while there,[251] and in 1950 would offer himself for the novitiate, although he was never professed.[252] Of another ex-pupil, a 17-year-old Companion FR who left for home in the Zeerust district, a community still beset with witchcraft whose evils he hoped to combat, Br Roger writes with characteristic wit: "He left here armed with Patterson Smythe's Life of Christ, Father Gerard's Manual of Intercession and a bottle of peroxide. He took the last named as he thought a medical mission might help things".[253] The CR later sent him a really useful parcel of medical stores.

Br Roger reveals his intimate involvement with the pupils' daily round in his account of a typical winter morning in 1934, a year before Mphahlele's arrival:

> I am the first up and go to church to lay out the vestments and get the altar ready for the school Mass; then I go to the kitchen and give out stores. At 6-15 I call the boy who is going to serve the priest, and with him some 8 or 9 others get up who are going to do a bit of training for boxing. At 6-30 I go round all the dormitories [there were 8] ringing a bell and, strange to say, everyone gets straight up. (Please notice this to refute those who say that our black children are undisciplined and lazy.) The school Mass at 6-45 is quite voluntary, but we get anything from 6 to 25 boys. A certain few go every day. . . . After Mass, at 7-

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[250] Jasper Mduna, letter dated 26 Aug. 1941, *CR Quarterly* (157) Lady Day 1942, 33.
[251] Jasper Nduna [sic], `Prayer at Odd Moments', *CR Quarterly* (147) Michaelmas 1939, 7-8.
[252] *CR Quarterly* (191) Michaelmas 1950, 26.
[253] Roger Castle, letter dated 22 May 1935, *CR Quarterly* (131) Michaelmas 1935, 22.

> 15, on two mornings a week, I take them off for a sharp walk and on two mornings a week they do `jerks' with the native house-master. Then breakfast.[254]

At the Anglo-Catholic St Peter's it would have been inconceivable to start the day without celebrating Mass, and undergirding everything were the seasons and festivals of the Christian calendar. As Baynham put it of St Augustine's, Penhalonga: "Here they get what few can hope to expect after they leave, the experience of the round of the worship of the Church throughout the year, rendered to the glory of God as solemnly and as beautifully as we can".[255] The unflinching discipline of the CR brethren, quite apart from the profound religious atmosphere we have noted, had a major impact on the discipline of the pupils. In fact, Br Roger writes in the *CR Quarterly* of one occasion when the boys were unavoidably left without a Warden over a long weekend in May 1935 (which happened to be Mphahlele's first year) but the boys kept "such marvellous discipline among themselves", more so than in a white school he suspects, that everything went on as if he had been there, and he is gracious enough to admit that it was "probably with less clatter"![256]

Like the other CR brethren, he had very definite ideas about what was good for his charges, and it is not easy to analyse often contradictory actions. For example, he was sensitive enough to realise that the boys' identification with Christ was paramount, so had a statue of the Boy Jesus repainted "so that now He looks like a coloured boy",[257] yet his stubborn insistence on correct uniform "nearly caused a revolution" when he forbade pupils to wear tweed caps with school blazers.[258] "I can't help feeling," he apologises, "that decent manners, orderly clothes and a well-kept body all help to produce orderly souls and minds." The daily regimen, too, he ensured was observed as strictly as the brethren did their own Rule, which was based on prayer, work

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[254] Castle, letter dated Winter Term 1934, 17-18.
[255] Benjamin Baynham, newsletter dated Christmas 1953, *CR Quarterly* (205) Lady Day 1954, 18.
[256] Castle, letter dated 22 May 1935, 22.
[257] Castle, letter dated Winter Term 1934, 18.
[258] Ibid, 19.

and study. Chores such as cleaning, washing up and gardening (supervised by prefects) were mandatory between breakfast and the first lesson at nine o'clock; lunch was at one; classes resumed in the afternoon, after which were games, Pathfinders, choir practice or private studies until dinner at six; compline (evening devotions) ended the day at nine o'clock. Jasper Mduna's timetable for Tuesdays, strictly adhered to since leaving St Peter's for the Natal farm, shows just what an influence Br Roger, and the CR generally, had on his use of time, and it is given in full to show his having been saturated at St Peter's in the rigours of the religious life:

> Spiritual communion 5.30 - 6.20
> Office work 6.25 - 7.30
> `Manager's 1st job' 7.35 - 8.45 (compound and plantations)
> Breakfast 9.05 - 9.20
> Office work 9.30 - 10.30
> Meditation 10.40 - 11.20
> Free period 11.40 - 12.55
> Angelus and intercession 1.00 - 1.20
> Lunch 1.30 - 1.45
> Office work 2.00 - 3.30
> `Light reading' 3.35 - 4.10 (newspapers, magazines, etc)
> Tea time 4.15 - 4.25
> Theology 4.30 - 6.30 (`deep reading' or writing articles)
> Visiting 6.35 - 7.30 (men at the compound)
> Dinner 7.40 - 7.55
> Quiet time 8.00 - 8.15 (`resting in the Lord')
> `Jottings' 8.20 - 8.30 (jotting down announcements for the next morning - "just like Mr Darling before School Prayers")
> Evensong 8.40 - 9.20
>
> "Then at 9.30 I lie down and take my rest!!"[259]

Mduna's letter reveals a sophisticated understanding of the practice of the Christian faith, and great courage in keeping to it alone against all odds in a rural community, so that it bears out his later vocation to the priesthood. Detractors would delight in indicating just how much he had been `indoctrinated' by his experience at the school, but it is equally true to say that he was uniquely receptive to it, and it answered his particular needs.

4.2.2 Matthew Trelawny-Ross (1894-1979)

Matthew Trelawny-Ross was really the first CR Father to suggest (in 1929) that African culture be taken seriously, by implementing a genuinely African liturgy rather than liturgical settings by Byrd or plainsong chant for the Mass.[260] Yet his letters written from Penhalonga, printed in the *CR Quarterly*, before his important and life-changing stint in Sophiatown from 1935-1954, reveal little desire to encourage African traditions outside of the liturgy. It could even be said that he envisaged changes to the liturgy only pragmatically to keep Africans' attention during the plainsong chants and prayers. Entertainments at the end of term are all Western in origin: a scene from "Alice in Wonderland",[261] and a dialogue from "Hansel and Gretel" and a sketch from Aesop.[262] Obviously indigenous singing was always encouraged, and formed a major part of such variety concerts, but Trelawny-Ross, at that stage (and he would have been terribly ashamed of his views after his Sophiatown decades), was a purist when it came to singing the Hallelujah Chorus: "I managed in the course of a few practices to eliminate some of the worst features, eg. arm waving, stern wagging, etc., and it really became quite presentable, and therefore *good* considering all things".[263] He was also intent on prescribing just what sort of music the youths could sing: "native songs (of the good type) are encouraged, not discouraged. What we want to

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[259] Mduna, letter dated 26 Aug. 1941, 33-34.
[260] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 242.
[261] Matthew Trelawny-Ross, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (103) Michaelmas 1928, 25.
[262] Matthew Trelawny-Ross, letter dated 16 Dec. 1929, *CR Quarterly* (109) Lady Day 1930, 22.
[263] Trelawny-Ross, undated letter, 26.

stop is the intrusion of `Methody Music' and `Jazz'".[264] To do this he proposes nothing less than old English Country and Morris dancing!

At Penhalonga, too, pupils under the triumphant hand of Peter Hewitt CR put on a performance of some scenes from *The Mikado* in August 1936, and Alban Winter, recently arrived there from St Peter's, comments that "there came from these African boys and girls such a harmony of choral music, such a rhythm of hands and feet, such a sway and poise of body as to swamp all adverse criticism in a continued round of applause and heartfelt appreciation".[265] An impromptu performance sans scenery or dress was put on most successfully for a visit of the Governor, and then the last full performance was given to mark the Agricultural Show. The CR's fondness for Gilbert & Sullivan (being "English to the core")[266] is evident throughout the 1930s. According to Mosley, Raymond Raynes took school parties from the CR primary schools in Sophiatown to St John's College to see performances, and even reproduced them in the classroom at St Cyprian's. They must have been accompanied by pupils from St Peter's as well, for the 1934 *St Peter's School Magazine* mentions the boarders and staff being invited by St John's in October 1934 to see a rehearsal of *HMS Pinafore*.[267]

Significantly enough, though, jazz always flourished at St Peter's; as early as 1931 pupils came together under the direction of a teacher, Arthur Mole, in a band known as "Decimal 16" which, according to the 1934 *School Magazine*, changed its name a year later into the inimitable "Darktown Syncopators".[268] By the time Mphahlele arrived in 1935, this band, under a senior pupil's direction, was performing at every school function, and would have stimulated his love for jazz over the years, so that even the style of his autobiography *Afrika My Music* (1985) imitates its syncopated rhythms. St Peter's also

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[264] Trelawny-Ross, letter dated 16 Dec. 1929, 22.
[265] Alban Winter, letter dated 10 Aug. 1936, *CR Quarterly* (135) Michaelmas 1936, 16-17.
[266] Winter, letter dated 10 Aug. 1936, 16. Not coincidentally, the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a major revival in the popularity of Gilbert & Sullivan in England under the legendary Sir Malcolm Sargent.
[267] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(5) 1934, 2-3.
[268] Ibid, 6.

honed Mphahlele's passion for dramatics, through the acting of Form Room plays and playwriting of his own,[269] activities which later found an outlet at Orlando High School, where he taught in the late 1940s, and in the Syndicate of African Artists under whose aegis he produced Shakespeare and his own popular adapted plays from Dickens, to bring "serious music and the arts to the doorstep of our people, who were not allowed to go to white theatres or concert halls".[270] The Syndicate's classical music concerts during the 1940s and 1950s would regularly feature Mphahlele's close friend, the tenor Khabi Mngoma, accompanied by the CR brethren Matthew Trelawny-Ross on piano and Martin Jarrett-Kerr on clarinet.

4.2.3 Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR (1912-1991)

Friend and literary sparring partner of Es'kia Mphahlele, Martin Jarrett-Kerr was also chair of the Arts Federation, which tried to get visiting artists, before the cultural boycott, to perform for black audiences, often incurring the wrath of the Nationalist government.[271] Not surprisingly, Mirfield's association with Leeds University, which pioneered the new field of Commonwealth literary studies in the 1960s,[272] made Martin Jarrett-Kerr's writing articles and reviews for the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* a natural development, as well as his interest in and patronage of African literature from the 1960s onwards.[273] Mphahlele mentions him along with Gordimer and Plomer as a friend whom he valued immensely, and one, moreover, who consistently monitored his writings from the time he first began to write: "Martin, before his return to England, had been one of the few European patrons who came regularly to our theatre and music performances in Johannesburg".[274] Once he returned

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[269] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 129.
[270] Ibid, 182.
[271] NELM, Jarrett-Kerr, letter to Guy Butler, 5 Apr. 1957 MS doc. no. 3063, acc. no. 94.2.3.144.
[272] The Leeds Department of English established both the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) and the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.
[273] In this he uncannily resembled Hugh Dinwiddy who, after his return to England from Makerere, wrote widely on East African education, literature and religion (Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 36 footnote 32).
[274] Es'kia Mphahlele, `My Experience as a Writer', in MJ Daymond, et al (eds), *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing* (Pietermaritzburg, 1984), 78.

to England in 1959, moreover, he kept up an irregular correspondence with Mphahlele, and hosted him on at least one occasion when Mphahlele was at a loss in London, perhaps during the mid-1960s.[275]

Significantly, given the Hollywood actor's own penchant for humour, Zakes Mokae recalls that, for all his testing involvement in politics, Martin Jarrett-Kerr liked to have a good belly laugh. This African trait (which Huddleston shared to the delight of Desmond Tutu, who testified he was "so un-English in many ways . . . . He did not laugh like many white people, only with their teeth, he laughed with his whole body")[276] must have endeared Jarrett-Kerr to Mphahlele. Most Englishmen were too straitlaced, "helpless as a man in a barber's chair because you are tied down to your private implicit norms," as he wrote in a review of a book about British attitudes to colour; "you should try to laugh at yourselves if now and again you find you have to step out into the street with a scewy haircut".[277] Unusually receptive to African ways of doing things (and seldom giving Africans occasion, as Mphahlele put it, to make the disappointing discovery "that we have exceeded the limit to which the Englishman intended to accept us"),[278] Jarrett-Kerr exemplifies the CR's active engagement with urban African culture in the post-War years, seen especially through his work as Chaplain to the Non-European Hospital (now Chris Hani Baragwanath) in the 1950s. Whenever an African habit perturbs white missionaries, he writes in his memoir, *African Pulse*, such as the regular visit to the "witch-doctor" (*sangoma*) even among the urbanised, Jarrett-Kerr suggests that, rather than launching into the "thunders of pulpit (or confessional) denunciation", there must be "sympathy, comprehension and above all humanity in our approach".[279] The regular practice of *lobola* (*bogadi*), too, does not disconcert him, and he refuses to deny the validity of

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[275] NELM, Martin Jarrett-Kerr, letter to Ursula Barnett, 6 Feb. 1974 MS doc. No. 9634, acc. No. 85.2.4.

[276] Desmond Tutu, `An Appreciation of the Rt. Revd Trevor Huddleston, CR', in D Duncan Honoré (ed), *Trevor Huddleston: Essays on His Life and Work* (Oxford, 1988), 2. This is perhaps evidence on the part of some later CR brethren of their receptivity to African ways.

[277] Es'kia Mphahlele, rev. of *White and Coloured*, by Michael Banton, *The Twentieth Century* Apr. 1960, 373.

[278] Mphahlele, rev. of *White and Coloured*, 373.

the extravagant weddings and flamboyant antenuptial celebrations of Africans in the city, provided they do not cripple the couple financially.[280]

For Jarrett-Kerr the "marriage of African rhythms and harmonies with Western experience will, when it happens, be exciting and fecund".[281] And not only for the African nurses whom he took to classical concerts featuring composers from Bach to Honegger, but also for him attending African drama performed by the Syndicate of African Artists. "Martin always came, he never failed to come to the Bantu Men's Social Centre, and to the Orlando [performances]," Mphahlele told me, "so we became friends and I began to know him as a great man, mentally *alive* and always eager to take an eager interest in what things we were doing".[282] The true assimilation of one culture to another, Martin Jarrett-Kerr believed, was engendered by "the processes of association, of social and personal contact, of friendship",[283] one of the reasons why Bantu Education came in for a virulent attack in 1956, when he targeted its provisions for "ethnic grouping, and the vernacular medium, in order to lessen the possible dangers of contact with a wider world".[284] Alfred Hoernlé, too, felt that culture was assimilable and communicable, "imparted or acquired simply through human contacts and relationships", whatever socio-political barriers might regulate them.[285]

Inter-cultural contact is not made easier, of course, by the British insular mentality and penchant for insulation, which Mphahlele found both frightening and amusing: "Britons have a very ordered system of living and they don't want foreigners (even indigenous ones!) to come in and upset this order - so

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[279] Martin Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse: Scenes from an African Hospital Window* (London, 1960), 46.
[280] Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse*, 86.
[281] Ibid, 116.
[282] Interview with Es'kia Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August 1999.
[283] Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse*, 104.
[284] Martin Jarrett-Kerr, piece in *African Education Movement News* 1(4) Nov. 1956, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge, Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 87.
[285] Alfred Hoernlé, `Can SA Natives Develop along Their Own Lines', *Journal of Secondary Education* Nov. 1935, 25.

much like old bachelors and spinsters".[286] But the Community was finding that faith could cut across culture. It is no accident, Jarrett-Kerr observes in *African Pulse*, that "in those areas where the Christianity preached has been a sacramental one" (where the focus is on the altar, not the pulpit), "it is difficult even for the most fervent `Africanist' to maintain that the holy sacrament of the altar is either `European' or `non-European'".[287] And perhaps this is the key to the Anglican mission enterprise as undertaken by the CR: it was sacramental, in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, not evangelical. Like the Romantics, of whom they were particularly fond, they stressed the divine in the human, the transcendent in the ordinary, not the depravity of the human condition. Mphahlele in conversation with me glossed it simply as Jarrett-Kerr's belief in humanity.[288]

Underlying all Jarrett-Kerr's engagement with Africans was his sense of the essential unity of humanity. This classic liberal tenet can be very dangerous, in that minority or marginalised differences are often elided under a hegemony of white, male and middle class, a phenomenon of which we are particularly aware at this point in time.[289] "[W]hat we share as humans is not a human essence outside history," warns Rowan Williams, "but a common involvement in the limits and relativities of history". The absolute, and the essential, have come in for particular attack in literary studies, where so much of what has traditionally been seen as `universal' is now exposed as often applicable only to the historically advantaged sector of society. However, their focus on the common divinity in humanity, their understanding of *incarnation*, rendered the CR particularly aware of the unity across colour lines, if perhaps less sensitive to the definite space that difference demands be acknowledged. The brethren at one time considered calling themselves

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[286] Mphahlele, rev. of *White and Coloured*, 372.
[287] Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse*, 118.
[288] Interview with Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August 1999.
[289] For an excellent overview of this, see Rowan Williams, `Nobody Knows Who I Am Till the Judgement Morning', in Duncan Honoré, *Trevor Huddleston*, 142. His key point is that when stress is laid upon our oneness `under the skin', there is always the risk of rendering the norm as where we stand, which reinforces the dominant group's assumption of the right to define.

the Community of the *Incarnation* and this "mystery of identification", as Huddleston terms it, became the hallmark of their vocation:

> I have knelt in the sanctuary of our lovely church at Rosettenville and washed the feet of African students, stooping to kiss them. In this also I have known the meaning of identification. The difficulty is to carry the truth out into Johannesburg, into South Africa, into the world.[290]

"In trivial conversations and trivial comedies," writes Jarrett-Kerr, "there lies deep the essence of the human condition".[291] He does not come to this conclusion lightly, only after having lived among Africans for seven years and experiencing the diversity of culture at first hand. Yet his overriding impression "is the simple commonplace of the astonishing unity of the human race",[292] and this is echoed by Mphahlele some two years later in *The African Image*: "Deep under these layers of emotive interpretation and colour distinctions you will realize that human beings are basically the same".[293]

This unity is given sanction by the Christian Gospel, as Raynes points out in an address to Leeds University in 1955. It was delivered at the height of the Marxist influence at Leeds, where the influential literary critic, Arnold Kettle, taught from 1947 to 1967, and numbered Ngugi and co. among his students. Raynes's address, entitled "Christian Liberalism and the Racial Policy of South Africa", was published in *CR Quarterly* and, not surprisingly, dedicated to Trevor Huddleston, who by then had achieved world renown for his fierce stand against apartheid. Contrary to its bland and insipid-sounding title, it is a searching and impassioned document, interrogating racial segregation, apartheid legislation, `liberalism' and what it means to be a Christian. For the Christian, Raynes insists, `liberalism' is not a choice, but an obligation, "an

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[290] Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 75.
[291] Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse*, 120.
[292] Ibid, 119.
[293] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 108-9.

inherent and inescapable part of his profession and his faith." The reason is couched in theological terms:

> The New Testament concept of the new humanity is a very profound one. It does not mean simply that all those in the Church are now one in Christ and must live as such. The new man is the whole human race as Christ has claimed it for himself and given every member of it a new and equal worth by dying for all without discrimination. That does not, of course, mean that people are no longer black and white, male and female, or that they are now equal in endowment of ability. But it does mean that any division or discrimination simply on the grounds of race, sex, class, is not merely a bad thing (a matter of Christian ethics), but impossible for Christians without denying the very Gospel itself.[294]

It has been argued, to be explored further in Chapter Four, that this "concept of the new humanity" comprised a counterhegemonic discourse in the first black South African autobiographies, which "constitute a collective assault on the country's most virulent expression of what may be a universal, persistent tendency to assert difference and inferiority".[295] What Lynda Gilfillan has called "a new hybrid humanism",[296] in which class and colour differences could be bridged through human contact, an imperative of an incarnational faith, would inform the education offered at St Peter's School.

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[294] Raymond Raynes, `Christian Liberalism and the Racial Policy of South Africa', *CR Quarterly* (212) Christmas 1955, 28.

[295] Lynda Ann Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic: A Critical Study of Black South African Autobiography from 1954 - 1963" (DLitt et Phil, University of South Africa, 1995), 244-245.

[296] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 92.

CHAPTER THREE: ST PETER'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

1 The ethos of St Peter's School

1.1 Background and buildings

Taking its cue from the Order who ran it, St Peter's School was founded very much in the upper-class public school tradition of England, like St John's College, which was also run by the Community of the Resurrection until 1934. Although the CR Fathers professed Christian socialism, envisioning a world of social justice and compassion, they believed that leaders were needed in order to bring in this new dispensation. Their original conception was of an ordained leadership, hence the founding of St Peter's College in 1904 for the training of priests,[1] and of St Peter's School in 1922 to educate boys "in a Christian atmosphere, so that from among them candidates for future clergy might be drawn".[2] A prayer leaflet in the *CR Quarterly* for Lady Day 1922 requests prayer (in terms consonant with the spirit of the age) for the Colleges at Rosettenville and Penhalonga, Rhodesia, that "native boys and men may be called of God to do the work of the Priesthood on a wider scale and with a closer touch with their people than the few English clergy can do" and that "the new ideas that come with the white men's learning and civilization may serve to make them better South Africans, better able to help their own people."

It soon became apparent, however, that there was an even greater need for leaders in fields other than the ordained ministry. Keble Talbot CR alludes in 1927 to "our dream" whereby boys "not destined for special ministerial function" will nevertheless become, "by reason of the training they receive, shining lights in the native Church and nation".[3] Alban Winter's longer

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[1] 17 of 36 deacons had been priested by 1922, and fifty years on the CR had trained virtually all the black Anglican clergy in South Africa.
[2] *CR Diamond Jubilee Book (1892-1952)* (CR, 1952), 21.
[3] Keble Talbot, `Appeal for South Africa', *CR Quarterly* (99) Michaelmas 1927, 11.

disquisition on "Native Leadership" argues the need for an education to groom leaders both within and outside of the Church.[4] "There is leadership required in other directions," says Winter, "and it is our duty as missionaries to do everything we can to prepare men for it." He continues perceptively:

> the native is not a docile person, content to rest under the leadership and control of the white missionary. At least we in Johannesburg do not find him so, whatever may be the experience of missionaries in other parts. Nor ought we to regret this. We may feel uncomfortable as we seek to adjust ourselves to the necessary changes, but none the less welcome this seeking after independence in increased control in Church affairs as an earnest of coming maturity on the part of a growing section of the native Church . . . . The European missionary can only initiate. Like the Baptist he must prepare the way. Afterwards, he has to accept the principle underlying the Baptist's magnificent saying "He must increase but I must decrease."

"At best," says Winter, "we can never be more than friendly foreigners whose clumsy mistakes, especially in the matter of languages, they in their goodness of heart so readily forgive." He closes his piece with the rationale for St Peter's School: "To the Church is committed this great task of training men to be leaders among their people. For this a better and higher type of education in our Missions is urgently needed".[5] This was spelt out seven years later as an education "to enable them to face their problems with trained and well-balanced minds, and stability of character".[6]

So St Peter's School was founded in 1922, with the admission of six boys (one in Standard IV, and the others in Standard III) as temporary boarders in two rooms of the Theological College for the first time, and some 40 day

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[4] Alban Winter, `Native Leadership', *CR Quarterly* (92) Christmas 1925, 22-23.
[5] Winter, `Native Leadership', 26.

scholars.[7] St Peter's had been functioning solely as a primary school until 1922 but, as the elementary section ceased to be the main feeder for the secondary school, it was removed to Orlando years later in 1940. St Peter's, notes a CR pamphlet, *`After Twenty Years'*, in terms indicative of the educational issues of the age,

> represents an experiment in more ways than one. In the first place, it is the first time we have had a brother [Winter] engaged in the actual work of teaching native children. Further, it represents an effort to gain actual experience of teaching such children from the bottom upwards. The result should enable us to gauge more accurately the native capacity for education, and throw much light on the training most suitable for him at his present state of development.[8]

Necessary for this `experimentation' was a boarding-school system with, as Winter phrased it, "the abundant opportunities for all-round character development and intellectual training which such a school gives",[9] so that "we may best hope to train and develop our native people for leadership based on ripened character and intellect".[10]

How important a boarding-school system was in grooming future leaders can be gauged in a letter dated 31 January 1939 from the Headmaster to Alexander Kerr, Principal of Fort Hare, in support of the application of St Peter's brightest ever alumnus, Joseph Mokoena, remembered by his contemporaries as "a genius in Mathematics":

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[6] Alban Winter, `Growing Pains', *CR Quarterly* (118) St John Baptist 1932, 19.
[7] Makerere University was founded in this same year, as a technical high school, before being granted tertiary status in 1938. Alliance High in Kenya was founded in 1926. The first African graduate of a South African tertiary institution, ZK Matthews, graduated from Fort Hare in 1923.
[8] *`After Twenty Years': 1922 Report of the Missionary Work of the Community of the Resurrection in the Southern Transvaal* (CR, 1922), 20.
[9] Winter, `Native Leadership', 24.
[10] Winter, `Growing Pains', 24.

> Joseph has always had an excellent character, very popular with both staff and students and of a very friendly disposition. He has been a keen member of the Pathfinder Scout Troop, Secretary of the School Literary and Debating Society, a very talented member of our School Choir and a keen footballer. It is a great pleasure to me to recommend him to Fort Hare, and I look forward to him taking a really good degree and becoming a first Class leader of his people.[11]

The Anglican high school in Umtata, St John's College, which Lily Moya attended, did not take girl students as boarders, and she recognised acutely the retardation of progress due to the lack of a scholastic undergirding to the formal classes: "I believe being a boarding student in college is more encouraging and beneficial to a student in studies and all," she wrote to Mabel Palmer,[12] and in another letter attributed her failure to pass the Senior Certificate (under difficult domestic circumstances and at the age of fifteen!) to "no chance at all to do my school work - homework, and I believe that boarders have sufficient time to do their work".[13] To Africans the boarding system was desirable in that it fostered achievement, while white educators favoured it because it allowed them to inculcate their values. The necessary Hostel at St Peter's was initially intended only to house those boys "with possible vocations to the Priesthood", according to Osmund Victor CR,[14] but the brethren reckoned without the intense pressure for education on the part of Africans themselves.

When, in 1924, St Peter's Hostel accommodation for 40 boarders was completed, together with dining room, kitchen, common room and Warden's

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[11] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1935-45, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 1. AB Xuma singled him out in the late 1940s as an outstanding example of the rising generation (Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV: Political Profiles 1882-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), xxi).

[12] Letter dated 4 Jan. 1949 in Shula Marks (ed), *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women* (Durban & Pietermaritzburg, 1987), 55.

[13] Letter dated 26 Jan. 1949 in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 58.

[14] Osmund Victor, letter dated New Year's Eve, *CR Quarterly* (77) Lady Day 1922, 20.

quarters, St Peter's School proper had begun. The Hostel was blessed by the Bishop on a fine June day, with a long procession in full regalia, copes and cassocks resplendent, and the typical sense one always has in Africa of sacred chaos was wickedly captured by Alban Winter:

> After a psalm with antiphon we processed through the various rooms, in each of which a station was made . . . . Finally, we emerged once more on the stoep, though the tail of the procession had not yet got into the first room . . . .[15]

The first two pupils were entered for the UNISA Junior Certificate (Standard VIII) in 1927 and passed, the first time this had been done in the Transvaal. Alban Winter writes retrospectively that the whole school was uplifted by this result,[16] and girls were soon admitted to the academic course, boarding at St Agnes' Hostel but joining the boys for class. St Peter's became a state-aided institution in 1929, when outside pupils who had passed Standard VI were admitted for the first time and, two years later, a single school with the incorporation of St Agnes. By that stage, too, the Hostel, with the conversion of the old dining-hall into a dormitory, could accommodate 80 boys, although Winter made the point (possibly because of the difficulty even then of accommodating all applicants) that secondary education did not actually require boarding.[17]

The school's first matriculant, Abraham Habedi, passed the Cape Senior Certificate (Standard X) in the second class in December 1933, some fifty years after the first two Africans, Simon Peter Silhali and John Tengo Jabavu, had passed the exam;[18] he was given a scholarship of £30 per annum for three years at Fort Hare, where he took his BA and teaching diploma, before

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[15] Alban Winter, `Opening of St. Peter's Hostel', *CR Quarterly* (88) Christmas 1924, 21. A similar atmosphere is captured towards the end of EM Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924).
[16] Alban Winter, `Till Darkness Fell'. Unpublished typescript, 1962, 59.
[17] Alban Winter, `St. Peter's School, Rosettenville', *CR Quarterly* (112) Christmas 1930, 16, 18.
[18] DE Burchell, `African Higher Education and the Establishment of the South African Native College, Fort Hare', *South African Historical Journal* (8) Nov. 1976, 65.

returning to teach on the staff of St Peter's for some years. He would be elected to the committee of the African National Congress Youth League in 1944, and go on to become Principal of Wilberforce Institution in 1954. Is it too fanciful to conjecture that the sonnet "Floreat St Peter's" by one "Fabius Maximus" in the 1932 *St Peter's School Magazine*, which declaims the aspirations of those early pupils, comes from his pen?

> There is a school, far from the noise of town
> Where Latin, Maths and other subjects grim
> Are pumped into the Bantu youth: to him
> The stepping-stones to fame and high renown.
> At length, the youth aforesaid, draped in gown
> Of academic cut, at once with vim
> To all declaims what "Peter's" did for him,
> And bids the race that follows put it down
> In annals of the school. And so we say
> The name *St Peter's* never shall decay,
> Or sink into the waste of things that are
> Forgotten. And all the youths from near and far
> Shall sound his praises. Bantu shall with pride
> Cuff the thick heads of all that would deride.[19]

A revisionist historian would condemn this as evidence of brainwashing into bourgeois culture and Western values, and there is some truth in this. At best, as Tim Couzens points out in connection with SVH Mdhluli's contemporaneous book, *The Development of the African* (1933),[20] the poem's style is indicative of its provenance and carries an ideology of evolutionary, not revolutionary, change. But the poem clearly exemplifies what St Peter's meant to pupils particularly from the Transvaal, like Habedi, who went on to become leader of a prominent African Methodist Episcopal

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[19] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(2) 1932, 8. There were only five issues of the school magazine, which appeared between June 1932 and December 1934.
[20] Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of HIE Dhlomo* (Johannesburg, 1985), 31.

institution which, as Alan Cobley indicates, had come to stand out in the years up to 1950 "as a distinctive social forum for South Africa's emerging black petty bourgeoisie".[21]

For Alban Winter, the raising of the school within 12 years from Standard III to Matriculation meant that "the stigma of being the most backward of the Provinces in the sphere of native education was removed from the Transvaal".[22] For his erstwhile pupil, Leo Rakale CR,[23] the growth during the decade which saw St Peter's pupil numbers reach 200 boarders and 100 day scholars, with an average starting age of 12 (as opposed to 21 all those years ago), was astonishing.[24] By 1937, the only other school in the Transvaal which offered the JC, Khaiso School near Pietersburg, also run by the Anglican Church but not, significantly, the CR, was rivalling St Peter's in their English results, thanks to their English teacher, Ernest Mancoba,[25] and it was from this stable some years later that Can Themba would emerge.[26] The first girl to matriculate at St Peter's did so in the third class in 1941;[27] her name is given as Laura Madlala in the 1943 Joint Matriculation Board Handbook.

In a heroic diagram in his book, *The Salient of South Africa*, Osmund Victor, CR Provincial in the 1930s, explained what was being attempted.[28] Pupils would proceed upwards from farm or location schools to mission schools to teacher training colleges or on to Fort Hare. Beyond the hill on which Fort Hare stood, stretched the peaks of "the mount of Knowledge" behind which the sun rose. Wilkinson comments that this progressivist diagram echoes those on British trade union banners, but it was also in keeping with the

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[21] Alan Cobley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 to 1950* (New York, 1990), 76-77.
[22] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 60.
[23] Latimer (Leo) Thlokotsi Rakale passed the JC second class at St Peter's in 1936.
[24] Leo Rakale, obituary of Alban Winter, *CR Quarterly* Michaelmas 1971, 16.
[25] Elza Miles, *Lifeline out of Africa: The Art of Ernest Mancoba* (Cape Town, 1994), 15.
[26] Alfred Hutchinson's younger brother, George, also went to Khaiso Secondary (Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (London, 1960), 58).
[27] CPSA, Minutes of Advisory Council dated April 1942, St Peter's School Advisory Council Minutes 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1.
[28] Osmund Victor, *The Salient of South Africa* (London, 1948).

colonial trusteeship spirit of the age.[29] An earlier unpublished essay dated 14 March 1937, probably also by Osmund Victor, is similarly entitled "The New Skyline in South African Native Education".[30] It has been suggested by Richard Priebe that, in African literature, "the classroom stands metonymically for the whole colonial enterprise, including its built-in safeguards to insure that understanding on the part of the colonial subject is constantly deferred" (this last an interesting gloss on Victor's ever-receding mount of knowledge!).[31] For Priebe, the essential classroom pattern, displayed in works by Mphahlele and Ngugi, follows "hopeful beginning, brutally painful process, and deferred reward." It is probably preferable to argue, however, that any pain of process and deferral of success among South African writers came rather from racial discrimination putting a cap on their education than from the clash of cultures experienced by writers from the rest of Africa, which inevitably began with their education.

Upper middle-class English values, with which the CR originally were most comfortable, also influenced both the conception and building of the Priory and School Complex in Rosettenville. A glance at the plans in the Pretoria State Archives of the development of some twenty stands which made up the complex reveals the architect to have been FLH Fleming, well-known in Johannesburg circles at the turn of the century and partner of Sir Herbert Baker, who together designed St John's College, the Union Buildings in Pretoria and also Grace Dieu in 1914. Both architects were influenced by Morris and Ruskin's Arts and Crafts Movement of the late Victorian period. An architect of the Art Workers' Guild, AH Skipworth, had been invited in 1905 to submit designs for a chapel and refectory at Mirfield, but these were rejected, and Wilkinson conjectures that, though original, they would have

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[29] Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, 1992), 216.

[30] CPSA, `The New Skyline in South African Native Education', CR Records 1929-40, AB 1385. It justifies missionary involvement in education and lays down the global context for black education, pointing to the fact that South Africa was beginning to join the other world powers in world affairs. However, it observes that, after a century of mission education, only a small number of children of school-going age were provided for, and this had to be increased.

quickly dated because of their nostalgic mediaeval character.[32] The Guild, Wilkinson reminds us, was rooted in Victorian socialism and influenced some CR brethren, notably and not at all surprisingly, Br Roger Castle. William Morris, arch-socialist and advocate of the rural crafts movement against `modernisation',[33] is nevertheless reputed to have found difficulty in preaching Arts and Crafts socialism to the working class in Stepney, a parallel to the suspicion with which the CR was viewed in the early years by the Yorkshire working class, when the ideal of service was yet to be translated into solidarity, most notably in Sophiatown.

FLH Fleming took over Baker's practice when he left South Africa,[34] and for his design of the CR headquarters in South Africa drew on the architectural skills of Osmund Victor, described as "a short fiery priest with boundless energy".[35] Fleming was responsible for additions to St George's Church in Parktown in 1910 (Baker having designed the original building), and was the sole designer of the Cathedral Church of St Mary the Virgin in Johannesburg from 1920 onwards. He also designed St Alban's Church for the coloured community of Ferreirastown in 1927. Fleming worked on the St Peter's complex for some twenty-five years from 1908, so that the Priory was very much in keeping with spirit of the age, bound to England because of its Anglican heritage, but also connected across class and colour lines to similar Anglican churches in Johannesburg. The first buildings to be occupied were the Theological College and the Priory in March 1911; the classrooms of St Agnes' School and St Peter's Primary School had been in use since May 1908.[36] The 15-acre campus, with its single-story dark brick buildings and dark pink corrugated iron roofs arranged in a series of quadrangles, was enhanced by lawns, gardens, trees and twelve acres of playing fields.

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[31] RK Priebe, `The Canonization of Texts: The Childhood and Allegories of Salvage and Change', in Raoul Granqvist (ed), *Canonization and Teaching of African Literatures* (Amsterdam, 1990), 17.
[32] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 95.
[33] See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 158-161.
[34] Doreen Greig, *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1971), 141.
[35] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 213.

Yet not all were enamoured with its siting. Osmund Victor wrote facetiously in the *CR Quarterly*, revealing his idiosyncratic character:

> No one in his senses would wish to run a Mission Station in South Africa within the confines of its greatest town and in the middle of a white artisan area. We are `up against it' all the time and have none of the peace which comes from aloofness from the racial and industrial world or of the glamour which is born of the open veld. Rosettenville is as hideous as its name . . . . hopelessly and irredeemably suburban. We come back on the tram with the evening paper like so many bank clerks. But being suburban it is at least central . . . . Rosettenville as the strategic centre of Mission work in South Africa sounds like a bad joke but perhaps it is bad enough to be true.[37]

Later plans of the complex show, among other things, St Peter's Church (dedicated in November 1925), recreation grounds, and staff quarters for black and white teachers. Building went on sporadically throughout the 1920s and 1930s, always dependent on available funds; when a windfall was received, new classrooms or a dining hall or a library went up. There were, additionally, some twenty-five undeveloped stands simply used for recreational purposes or occupied by trees, and procured with a view to possible extension. Even given the small size of Rosettenville properties, together they made a sizeable and self-contained complex (an "oasis" or "another world" in Bertram Moloi's words)[38] and one can understand what ex-pupils mean when they refer to the realities of South African life "beyond the walls of St Peter's."

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[36] National Archives, Pretoria (SABE), `Application by Native students, scholars and Native teaching staff of St Peter's College and St Peter's Native Secondary School, Rosettenville', SAB ARG 120/L98.
[37] Osmund Victor, letter dated Nov. 1922, *CR Quarterly* (80) Christmas 1922, 17-18.
[38] Interview with Bertram Moloi, Johannesburg, 22 January 1997.

The realities, of course, entailed segregated facilities, so tersely summed up in the travelling Ralph Bunche's observation of Naauwpoort Junction in the Free State in November 1937, where seats and toilets were marked in words horribly familiar to Peter Abrahams, "for Europeans only", and where the Post Office had the mandatory two entrances.[39] Later in his journal, Bunche records ZK Matthews telling him that the Alice Post Office had tried to enforce segregated entrances, but that the Lovedale pupils had protested successfully and the idea was abolished "since these were `educated, respectable natives'".[40] The similarly `educated, respectable natives' at St Peter's School were constantly subjected to criticism from white residents, and particularly from white children. Alban Winter mentions how they would mock and chase African day scholars on their way to St Peter's without rebuke from their parents: "On one occasion I traced the assailants home but when I called and saw the father I got nothing but abuse from him".[41] Another time,

> when crossing the veld to our Priory during the terrible strike of 1922 I got into conversation with a group of white mine workers. They assured me that all the trouble came from educating the native as we were doing `at that damned place for niggers up on the hill.'

Some years later, in March 1935, when the authorities, driven by the unceasing complaints of residents, were investigating the undesirability of `Native' occupation of the property, the Memorandum of the Johannesburg Diocesan Trustees shrewdly pointed out that the empty undeveloped stands "also separate the mission from surrounding European neighbours".[42]

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[39] In Robert R Edgar (ed), *An African American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J Bunche 28 September 1937 - 1 January 1938* (Athens, OH, 1992), 122.
[40] In Edgar, *An African American*, 135.
[41] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 48.
[42] SABE, `Application by Native students', SAB ARG 120/L98.

This inquest occupied some years from 1935 onwards. In fact, the insecurity about the continued existence of the school gives some rationale to Mphahlele's gruff treatment by the Headmaster, Henry Shearsmith ("the stocky Yorkshire headmaster"), then very much on edge, when Mphahlele had impetuously sworn at the young white hooligans who had endangered his life.[43] Laborious and detailed submissions of the part of the CR (particularly Francis Hill CR) and Diocese of Johannesburg alike had to be given to the Feetham Commission to get the area declared exempted for blacks.[44] Some ten years later, the Feetham Commission eventually recommended special relief in respect of the complex, on condition that it was used "exclusively for religious and educational purposes, including the recreational and residential requirements of students", according to a letter dated 24 July 1946 to the Witwatersrand Land Titles Commission.[45] In view of the changes to come less than a decade ahead, the whole drawn-out process seems horribly ironical; St Peter's was always living on borrowed time. It was at this time, too, that the school began to get overcrowded (until the primary school was removed in 1940). According to a Government Inspection Report in October 1938,[46] the ten classrooms newly fitted with windows since the last report in February 1936 were poorly ventilated and the science laboratory still inadequate, while seven dormitories and two bathrooms were shared by 101 boy boarders (39 square feet of personal space). The girls, predictably, were even worse off than their male counterparts: 66 boarders shared only four bedrooms and one bathroom (35 square feet each).

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[43] Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (London, 1989; orig. 1959), 127. Mphahlele had retaliated when two white motorcyclists had almost run him down, and Shearsmith feared lest the bigoted community use the incident to close the school.

[44] South African Institute of Race Relations Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (SAIRR), Advisory Council Minutes dated 30 March 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14. For an account of the contemporaneous Young Commission set up to inquire into the question of residence of `Natives in Urban Areas', see André Proctor, `Class Struggle, Segregation and the City: A History of Sophiatown, 1905-1940', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg, 1979), 66-67. In this case, the Commission was unsympathetic to submissions from urban authorities as it felt they would alienate "that vital controlling force, the African petty bourgeoisie" during a time of abnormal industrial development and increasing poverty.

[45] SABE, `Application by Native students', SAB ARG 120/L98.

[46] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2.

Br Roger corroborates this in a piece in the *CR Quarterly* which is given for its useful description of the Hostel, where so much time was spent during term:

> I try to aim at having enough room to put an imaginary chair between each bed, but it isn't always possible and I have beds going down the middle of the two larger rooms. The more beds there are in a room the more a Bantu boy loves it this cold weather. I sometimes have to go round several times in the dead of night to reopen windows that had been well open before lights out. The decoration of the dormitories is so difficult. They have no furniture except beds and all boys' clothes are kept in suitcases under their beds. There is a crucifix and a holy picture in a blue frame in every room and usually a G.W.R. [Great Western Railway] poster, but what can English railway posters mean to an African schoolboy![47]

Yet Mphahlele remembers neatness above the cramped space. "There was order in the dorms at St Peter's," he told Chabani Manganyi.[48] "There were standards of cleanliness, standards of hygiene . . . . we had dorm and clothes-box inspections and boys and girls were proud of themselves and their personal hygiene." The dormitories and grounds and were inspected each Monday to see whether the pupils had done the washing and ironing properly, and Mphahlele contrasts this with Adams College in Natal, where "those of us who had come out of St Peter's immediately realised that it was going to be impossible to uphold our former standard of cleanliness".[49] A massive appeal for funds for the improvement of residential facilities was launched in 1938 with such success that, as Winterbach comments, by 1956 when the school closed, the structure and appearance of St Peter's resembled those of "wealthier private secondary schools".[50] Government

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[47] Roger Castle, letter dated Winter Term 1934, *CR Quarterly* (127) Michaelmas 1934, 17.
[48] Mphahlele, in Chabani Manganyi, `Looking In: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele', in his *Looking through the Keyhole* (Johannesburg, 1981), 16.
[49] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 145.
[50] Heidi Winterbach, "The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement in African Schooling on the Witwatersrand, from 1903 to 1956", (MEd, University of the Witwatersrand, 1994), 34.

Quarterly Returns for 1954 and 1955, for example, list ten classrooms, a carpentry shop, a geography room, a domestic science room and a science laboratory, all in good repair.[51]

Since Mphahlele went on from St Peter's to Adams College, and found the latter less to his liking for it was almost double the size of St Peter's, less ordered and more spartan, it would not be amiss to view the Amanzimtoti campus through Ralph Bunche's eyes in December 1937, a month before Mphahlele became a student there, if only to set St Peter's in opposition:

> There are about 400 pupils of whom 70 are girls. Girls and boys eat together in a common dining hall. The teaching staff is about 3 to 2 Bantu to white. There are separate and superior living accommodations for the white staff. Some of the latter live in very posh bungalows. The students pay £11 per year only for tuition, board and room. No smoking is allowed on the campus, which covers a large area, and is thickly vegetated. Much of the surrounding land belongs to the school which derives revenue from raising sugar cane.[52]

Even Jack Grant, principal when Lily Moya was there, remarked in his centenary history of Adams College that the initial view of the campus may be disappointing to those used to more imposing architecture: "instead of seeing an orderly arrangement of buildings, one will see little more than a wooded hilly expanse of some 600 acres".[53] St Peter's, by contrast, was half the size, with about equal numbers of black and white teachers, never exceeding thirteen. Zakes Mokae, who matriculated a generation later in 1956, made the crucial point that some teachers ate with the pupils, this intimacy due to the small size of the school relative to other mission institutions, which of course, meant better food as well.

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[51] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Quarterly Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.1.
[52] In Edgar, *An African American*, 304.

He mentioned with delight how pupils from Kilnerton, the Methodist Training Institution near Pretoria, enjoyed away matches against St Peter's as they would be assured of a good meal![54] Bertram Moloi (a pupil in the 1930s) and Richard Kgoleng (in the 1950s) independently mentioned that the pupils at St Peter's had very good meals, with meat every day;[55] this was undoubtedly a factor in ensuring that St Peter's escaped the notorious food uprisings of the 1940s.[56] The October 1938 Government Inspection Report detailed the three daily meals provided in the separate boys' and girls' hostels, and noted that the boys had the better deal, receiving meat for lunch every day while the girls had maize and beans three days a week instead. The boys also had maize and beans every dinner, while the girls had to make do with porridge.[57] Although Mokae mentioned that in the 1950s they had meat even on Fridays (if his memory is correct, this indicates a notable concession to black diet by the Anglo-Catholic CR), the 1938 Report noted the provision of ground nuts on that day of the week. While smoking was prohibited at Adams, it being a Nonconformist institution, the CR enjoyed the luxury of smoking (many were inveterate pipe-smokers and, in England, some grew and cured their own tobacco!) and were prepared to let the pupils smoke too, provided they adhered to certain times and places.

There was an attractive mix of sacred and secular at St Peter's, very much part of a sacramental (Catholic) approach to life: the pupils did their own washing and ironing every Saturday except one which was their day out; Sundays yielded "much dancing to the wireless, a very dignified solemn Evensong and a High Mass" as Br Roger Castle put it.[58] The day was still the

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[53] Grant, quoted in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 21.
[54] Interview with Zakes Mokae, Johannesburg, 18 May 1995.
[55] Interview with Richard Kgoleng, Potchefstroom, 30 January 1996.
[56] See Jonathan Hyslop, `The Concepts of Reproduction and Resistance in the Sociology of Education: The Case of the Transition from "Missionary" to "Bantu" Education 1940-1955', *Perspectives in Education* 9(2) 1987, 18. Significantly, Grace Dieu, founded by the CR in 1906, also escaped the food strikes, except for one in 1949, over food and the prefect system, all of whom had been appointed by the principal; after this they were elected from nominations by the principal (see Alfred Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience of the Anglican Church, 1906-1958" (MEd, University of the North, 1988), 137).
[57] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2. The Report considered the boys' menu "good" and recommended it to other mission institutions.
[58] Roger Castle, letter dated Winter Term, 19.

same a generation later: Richard Kgoleng remembers Evensong taking only 30 minutes, "then the girls would come over, and then we'd have a jazz session, or bioscopes." In comparison with St Peter's, though, Mphahlele remembers Adams as a "human jungle of about 400 men and women, double the population of St Peter's",[59] where he tended to keep to himself and not socialise with his peers. In an ironic variation on the metaphor, Lily Moya wrote scathingly about the daily hour-long "`campus care' manual labour" regimen from 5.15 am to 6.15 am, summer and winter, which levelled all classes, Form I along with Form V (in a nice *double entendre* she observes "there is no class distinction"), and entailed "raking or cutting long grass which is usually wet. I'm usually in cutting grass with sickles".[60] Such manual labour was absent at St Peter's, if only because of its urban setting. Mphahlele told Chabani Manganyi a number of things which we should hear, if only because they point up what St Peter's was. There was no contact between students and vice-principal or principal (then Edgar Brookes, who headed Adams for eleven years until 1945); the dormitories gave the impression of "a market-place" where facilities were rudimentary; some teachers were "quite inspiring", others were "absolutely dumb", and the academic achievements were very ordinary.[61] "There was no [scholarly] atmosphere like at St Peter's," noted Mphahlele of the unremarkable Matric results. "There were no heroes." He used the same phrase in conversation with Tim Couzens: "The students spotted their heroes, and there were classroom heroes and academic heroes, and you don't have that today".[62]

Adding an interesting dimension to the comparison between the two, Shula Marks suggests that one of the problems the staunch Anglican schoolgirl Lily Moya had with Adams in 1950 was its more open and interdenominational tradition, which for her (and, we must ask, for Mphahlele who, when he went there after St Peter's, had not yet renounced the Christian faith he practised

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[59] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 145.
[60] Letter dated 4 April 1951 in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 146.
[61] Mphahlele, in Manganyi, `Looking In', 16-17.
[62] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Looking in: Interviews with Es'kia Mphahlele', *English Academy Review* (4) 1987, 121.

as an Anglican), "clearly transgressed highly significant boundaries".[63] Moreover, Marks ventures, the "high academic standards" of the four Anglican schools she had attended, and their "sense of order and decorum" (significant points also cited by Mphahlele) may also have lain behind her bitter disappointment with Adams. Finally, neither Mphahlele nor Lily Moya were Zulu, the group that formed the majority of students there, and they were made to feel it, whereas at St Peter's no one group dominated.[64]

St Peter's, of course, was a secondary school, and Amanzimtoti primarily a training college, so the comparison is perhaps a little unfair. But the rural environment (and possibly Nonconformist ethos) dictated the extent of manual labour in an attempt to instil a work ethic and combat the supposed indolence of the African. Leon de Kock notes that, at Lovedale, admittedly over half a century earlier in 1873, in the afternoon, "all pupils not engaged in trades met for two hours for work in the fields or in the grounds about the institution";[65] photographs captioned `muster for afternoon work' show pupils in military formation. At the rural St Augustine's, Penhalonga, CR brethren, sisters and ordinands worked alongside pupils in the garden in the afternoons,[66] a slightly different proposition from the pre-breakfast `campus care' Lily Moya performed and the `afternoon muster' Lovedale pupils underwent. Manual work formed an essential part of Benedictine monasticism, which increasingly came to influence the CR (the Benedictine motto being `ora e(s)t labore'), and therefore the ethos of all CR institutions.[67] According to Wilkinson, manual and even domestic work was demanded from (but not always well received by) theological students at the CR College

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[63] Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 26.

[64] For Lily Moya's reasons why her "soul cann't [sic] get happiness and peace" at Adams (she listed, among others, lack of discipline, indulgence of male foibles, poor scholastic results, sexual harassment and authoritarian leadership), see letter dated 3 June 1951 in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 157-159.

[65] Leon de Kock, `"Drinking at the English Fountains": Missionary Discourse and the Case of Lovedale', *Missionalia* 20(2) Aug. 1992, 118-119.

[66] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 247.

[67] Hugh Bishop, for example, Novice guardian 1949-52 and Superior 1966-74 "interpreted the CR Rule in as Benedictine a spirit as possible" (Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 259), and under the influence of his Benedictinism the brethren were required to do domestic work as well: "Chores were to be seen not as interruptions, but as an essential part of the life" (265).

in Mirfield from its earliest inception,[68] and the eventual completion of the church at Mirfield in 1938, with its connotation of stability, "pushed CR, at any rate at Mirfield, towards the Benedictine end of the monastic spectrum".[69]

St Peter's was linked with the Priory and Theological College, and so took on the colouring of the place as a whole. Br Edwin Ainscow CGA, who taught English during the last years of the school's existence, remarked to me that the open plan layout of the complex fostered free intercourse between pupils and staff, including the brethren.[70] The description in *CR Quarterly* of the complex by Fr King CR, on a two-week visit to Johannesburg in June 1929, gives a sense of the ethos which would have been felt by the pupils as well:

> As you pass through the gateway you pass into the College Quad where the theological students have their classrooms and their quarters. Adjoining this is the second quad which is the Community quarters, and the Chapel which is convenient to both College and Community. Two sides of the quad are taken up by the Refectory, Library and Common-room, and the rest by the brethren's rooms, kitchens, &c. On the side opposite to the College is the Hostel where Alban's boarders live, quite self-contained with its own quad . . . . Beyond this again lies the school, a series of open-air classrooms round a good-sized playground, the whole making a square with the big native Church forming the boundary on the western side. Again beyond the classrooms and the church is the Girls Hostel in charge of Miss Broughton, and the other S.P.G. ladies. This whole range of buildings runs practically north and south with a good deal of land in the way of gardens and plantations on the western side, and a fine new piece of land on the east side which is used as a sports ground.[71]

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[68] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 281-282.
[69] Ibid, 199.
[70] Interview with Edwin Ainscow, London, 15 & 17 April 1996.
[71] King, letter dated 13 June 1929, *CR Quarterly* (105) Lady Day 1929, 21.

Daily church attendance before school (the brethren had a daily Mass at which boys were rostered to serve, but assembly for the school as a whole took place in the chapel as a short service of morning prayer), and the presence of brethren and ordinands, as Wilkinson notes, created a powerful religious atmosphere.[72] Meshack Ntsangani, even as a day pupil, remembers that at twelve o'clock each day Fathers, sisters, pupils, ordinands would stop what they were doing, stand and say the Angelus.[73] "Behind and inwoven with all our activities, whether of body or mind, is our religion," admits Winter. "We try to make this the basis and interpenetrating life of all".[74] Recently Mphahlele wrote that it was

> at boarding school where one got the distinctive smell and atmosphere of the church that owned the institution: its insistence on attending scripture periods on the time-table and church service by all, its form of worship, its holy days, something of its theology, ie. the theories it preached about God, religion and revelation . . . . We were a captive constituency in boarding mission school.[75]

In his retrospective typescript, Winter recalled that the regular High Masses and the presence of the brethren and theological students "helped to create a right and helpful atmosphere".[76] The respectability of the complex would have encouraged the positive response by the Department of Native Affairs to an application in May 1932 by the Acting Principal, Arthur Mole, for the use of a form of pass to give departing scholars "the greatest freedom possible", because "our boys are of a fairly respectable type of boy" and "easily traceable by the Pass Office by reference to us".[77]

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[72] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 216.
[73] Interview with Meshack Ntsangani, Potchefstroom, 18 May 1995.
[74] Winter, `Growing Pains', 23.
[75] Es'kia Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', *Tribute* Aug. 1994, 117.
[76] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 61.
[77] Transvaal Archive, Pretoria (TABE), letter dated 27 May 1932, TAB GNLB 384 13/87.

The pass was modelled on the one used at the Diocesan Training College near Pietersburg, Grace Dieu, also run by the CR, and a concession to middle-class privileges, similar to that used by the educated African elite, the `Exemption Certificate' (or, as Bloke Modisane facetiously put it, "a Pass which exempted them from carrying a Pass", and which he called "a symbol of snobocracy").[78] The uniform itself set the pupils in a certain class and acted as a type of pass: khaki shorts and shirts (but grey flannel trousers if the boy was over 18), and the school blazer, school tie and school hat-band for a boater in public. Girls wore a dark blue gym tunic and white blouse, and, rather incongruously, a hangover from the days when St Agnes was an industrial school, a white *doek* on week days.[79] According to Bertram Moloi, some friendly shopkeepers in Rosettenville accepted the pupils in uniform; "but away from those shopping centres, in the city of Johannesburg, you were a native, you were a kaffir." Uniform and pass, drawing their authority from a `decent', middle-class environment, typified a world which provoked strong reactions in ex-pupils.

Some found it difficult to cut the umbilical cord, like Oliver Tambo and Congress Mbata who both returned to teach,[80] and Duma Nokwe who took Mathematics and Science while he was doing his legal articles,[81] whereas three months was as much as others could stomach (as in the case of Gerard Sekoto, educated at Grace Dieu, who came to St Peter's as substitute teacher in early 1939, or even Mphahlele himself who taught English briefly in

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[78] Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (Harmondsworth, 1990), 87. After the Natives (Abolition of Passes) Act was passed in 1952, all African men over 16 were required to carry the same `reference book', which led to Alfred Hutchinson's run-in with the Crown for refusing to register, and to some fun and games among the last St Peter's pupils like Zakes Mokae, who, when they went to register, successfully bucked the system by indicating that they expected to be at school until 1998 or 2000 in order legally to exempt them from having to obtain work permit signatures until the expiry date!

[79] *Prospectus of S. Peter's and S. Agnes' Schools, Rosettenville* (CR, c.1932), 3.

[80] The attendance sheet for an ANC Youth League meeting on 24 February 1944 lists the address of Tambo and Mbata as `Priory Rosettenville' (in Robert Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Athens, OH & Johannesburg, 1996), 136).

[81] Nokwe had passed his JC in the first class in 1944, with a C for Mathematics and Science, and Matric two years later in the first class, with a B for Mathematics, and a C for Science.

1955 before his stint at *Drum*).[82] Mentioning how "exclusive" St Peter's was, and "the only home" for the emerging elite, Richard Kgoleng insisted that Fort Hare graduates were glad to help out by teaching: "You'd be too pleased to come back to St Peter's, and be associated with developing those who'd come after you." Trevor Huddleston records that Tambo, after gaining his BSc at Fort Hare, "found himself at home again in the school he loved best",[83] where he taught Mathematics and Science during the post-War years from January 1943 to the end of 1947.[84] His letter of resignation to the Headmaster, David Darling, in September 1947 states that he was fortunate to have worked at St Peter's and would describe the conditions of service as ideal.[85]

Arthur Maimane, like my other interviewees, suggested that the academic atmosphere ("academic snobbery" in his words) was generated by the fact that the school existed as a secondary institution in its own right, as distinct from teacher training institutions on the Reef, such as Kilnerton or Wilberforce, and was in the heart of Johannesburg, unlike Grace Dieu. "It was expected that from St Peter's you would go to university".[86] What he calls the "snooty" ethos of St Peter's, led to ex-pupils, particularly those who lived in England, keeping in touch for special occasions. When challenged by Hugh Masekela at one of these reunions in the UK some years ago that there was none from St Peter's in the new government, his retort was: "we're too bright to be in politics!"

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[82] It is tempting, if futile, to speculate whether, had the writing not been on the wall for St Peter's, Mphahlele might have continued in his capacity as Afrikaans and English teacher.
[83] Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 142.
[84] CPSA, St Peter's School, Correspondence: Staff (African) AB 2089 / I 9.2 file 1.
[85] CPSA, letter dated 24 Sept. 1947, St Peter's School, Correspondence: Staff (African) AB 2089 / I 9.2 file 1. This "quiet and thoughtful" man had just been accepted as a candidate for ordination by Ambrose Reeves, when his arrest in December 1956 and subsequent election as deputy president of the ANC closed that route forever (Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV: Political Profiles 1882-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 152). Duma Nokwe took over as secretary–general of the ANC from Tambo, who became deputy president, at the ANC conference in December 1958, the office he held until April 1969. The All-African People's Conference had just ended in Accra (Congress being represented by Mphahlele and Hutchinson), so St Peter's, through its four alumni, had a prominent finger in both pies!
[86] Interview with Arthur Maimane, Johannesburg, 18 March 1997.

For all the levity of this remark (and bearing in mind Couzens's observation of a growing split over the decades since Sol Plaatje's time between political position and literary occupation, so that by the 1950s writers, if anything, were only junior members of the ANC),[87] it is worth exploring as a serious statement on the kind of matriculants St Peter's did produce. It seems to have sent out artists, scientists, doctors, journalists and intellectuals, operating in a critical solidarity with activists and politicians, reserving the right to criticise those who held the reins of power when necessary.[88] Todd Matshikiza's wife Esmé mentioned that he never joined any political organisation; though sympathetic to the ANC, he was not uncritical of the party or individuals.[89] Kelwyn Sole notes that the social origins of those writers who were activists (Alfred Hutchinson, Dennis Brutus and Alex la Guma) were different from the majority of black intellectuals of the time.[90] Significantly, however, as HIE Dhlomo wrote in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1930, "The men who rule and dominate the word, who revolutionise thought and space, who sway whole masses and lead, are the humble, quiet writers, musicians and scientists who have very few monuments, save their great, noble works, to their glorious memory!"[91]

1.2 Pupils at St Peter's

The socio-political impact of missions peaked in the 1920s and 1930s due in large part to the mass conversion of Africans, which had begun in the 1890s and by this time had produced considerable communities of Christianised people, and to a black Christian elite which had formed throughout the

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[87] Tim Couzens, `Black South African Literature in English, 1900-1950', in Hena Maes-Jelinek (ed), *Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World* (Liege, 1975), 91. He notes of the *Drum* writers in particular that they tended to eschew political affiliation even while they delighted to be on the frontline in the struggles and campaigns of the time.

[88] For a list of those who made good, and the mainly scientific and medical careers they chose, see Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 214.

[89] Cited in Mike Nicol, *A Good-Looking Corpse* (London, 1991), 83.

[90] Kelwyn Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature, 1948-1960', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 158. Alfred Hutchinson was an ANC activist, as were his fellow 1940s matriculants Duma Nokwe, Henry Makgothi and Joe Matthews. Hutchinson was even elected to the ANC's national executive in the mid-1950s (as had Joe Mokoena been in 1949); however, as both writer and activist, he was the exception to the rule.

[91] Dhlomo, quoted in Couzens, *The New African*, 74.

country. "The social power of Christianity," Richard Elphick has argued, "had seemingly been demonstrated".[92] By the 1920s there was an extensive network of established middle-class families, who had all received their education in the Cape mission schools and intermarried in a form of social closure. Among these were the Jabavu, Soga, Mbelle, Plaatje, Dhlomo, Xuma and Matthews families, and as the locus of bourgeois power moved northwards with mining and industrialisation, so some of these dynasties sent their children to St Peter's. The Admission Register for the years of the school's existence shows both sons and daughters of the great professional families, who met with mixed success.[93] Erngaarth Dhlomo, daughter of RRR Dhlomo, and Alexandra Jabavu, daughter of DDT Jabavu, were both admitted in January 1940 but left in December that year.[94] Joe Matthews, son of ZK Matthews, was admitted in January 1943 from Lovedale and passed Matric in the second class in 1947.[95] Elizabeth Xuma, daughter of AB Xuma, was admitted in February 1949 from Lovedale, but no further record of her exists.[96] These were obviously privileged enough to attend secondary school, if not always able to capitalise on it, if only perhaps, as in the case of Lily Moya, owing to the wider social demands made on their gender. It is a significant indication of the patriarchal age and culture that, of these, only Joe Matthews went on to matriculate.

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[92] Richard Elphick, `Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism', in Jeffrey Butler et al (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Middletown, CT, 1987), 70.

[93] CPSA, St Peter's School Admission Registers 1928-54, AB 2089 / F.

[94] Born in 1926, Alexandra (Lexie) went on to study nursing in London in 1948, before returning to South Africa (unlike her sister Noni) by way of Uganda (see Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of DDT Jabavu of South Africa* (Athens, OH, 1997), 147, 155, 205 footnote 48). What might account for Lexie's sudden departure is Jabavu's troubled political career around December 1940. President of the All African Convention (AAC) since 1935, he was encountering opposition from his executive committee for his ambivalent response to the political crises of the late 1930s (see Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 121-130).

[95] Although ZK Matthews and his wife Frieda had gone to Lovedale, and at the time of Joe's secondary schooling in the 1940s, ZK was lecturing at Fort Hare, the educationist chose to send his son to St Peter's which, without evidence to the contrary, must indicate that he felt St Peter's at that time could offer his son more than Lovedale.

[96] Elizabeth's father, Alfred Bitini Xuma, after qualifying at Northwestern University, had set up his practice as a doctor in Johannesburg in 1928. He left the AAC in 1940 to become President of the ANC until 1949 (Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 229 footnote 199). By this time his political fortunes (along with those of Jabavu, who resigned from his leadership of the AAC in December 1948) had declined with the increasing challenge by the ANC Youth League, and the Nationalist Party victory in May 1948.

The Register, however, reflects the wide social spectrum from which the pupils were drawn, particularly with the rapid increase of urbanisation. The urban African population throughout the country increased from about 587 200 in 1921 to 1 146 600 in 1936, and during the War swelled by an additional 650 000.[97] Over the fifteen years after 1936 the number of Africans resident in urban areas increased to over 2.3 million, and, by the early 1950s, two-thirds of Africans working in urban areas were permanently urbanised, and were sharply aware of the barrier to economic advancement represented by lower-class Afrikaners.[98] The middle class grew slowly, while the mass of urban Africans were unskilled or semiskilled labourers whose movement out of the reserves was due to overcrowding, pressure of taxation and attractions of economic opportunity. With the impoverishment of the Transkei in the 1930s, it was becoming more difficult to meet subsistence needs, especially under the system of primogeniture in relation to property; in the early 1930s, for example, Lily Moya's father was forced to leave the Tsolo district to seek work on the Reef mines for the first time, and remained there for some years, while her mother left to find work in Johannesburg in 1948.[99] Alan Cobley credits Johannesburg with the largest black urban population between 1921 and 1951.[100] In 1935, when Abrahams and Mphahlele were attending school, 79 000 out of the estimated 200 000 black urban dwellers in Johannesburg were living under family conditions, including about 46 000 children under 21 years of age. By the end of the 1930s, what Cobley calls "a stable and self-perpetuating core" of the African middle class had been formed, which found service-sector employment as teachers, clerks and nurses, although a numerically stronger and more varied group was engaged in trade and commerce.[101]

The majority of pupils, then, were sons and daughters of the petty bourgeoisie, like shopkeepers, nurses, policemen, catechists, teachers,

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[97] Edgar, *An African American*, 27.
[98] Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II: Hope and Challenge 1935-1952* (Stanford, CA, 1973), 79.
[99] Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 16-17.
[100] Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 18.
[101] Ibid, 227.

ministers, clerks, interpreters, carpenters and shoemakers,[102] not a few of whom were stand owners in Sophiatown, and of the proletariat and peasantry, like labourers and farmers. In fact, farmers account for a large proportion, which shows the rural background of many pupils and the contribution they made to the influx to the urban areas of this period. To take just a sample of significant names from the Admission Register: Bertram Moloi, Alfred Hutchinson and Todd Matshikiza indicated that they were the sons of a farmer, Zeph Mothopeng and Es'kia Mphahlele of a messenger, Oliver Tambo of a caretaker, Zakes Mokae of a policeman, Jonas Gwangwa of a carpenter, Meshack Ntsangani of an induna on the mines, and Lucas Mangope of a chief. There were, of course, offspring of more distinguished chiefs from the Protectorates, like Leapeetswe Khama, son of Tshekedi. Peter Abrahams indicated he was the son of a housewife and Fikile Bam of a nurse, demonstrating a proportion of households headed by women.

Some came from aspirant bourgeois, even intellectual, households: Hugh Masekela was the son of an East Rand health inspector and friend of Ernest Mancoba whose home was Benoni. In the mid-1930s Mancoba introduced Thomas Masekela to Aldous Huxley and the Trotskyite journal, *The Spark*, and encouraged him to do his own sculpting; his first carvings were done around the time of Hugh's birth.[103] Any influence St Peter's had on Hugh, therefore, must have taken ready root in already fertile soil, just as in the case of Arthur Maimane, whose father, Fr Hazael Maimane (together with Fr James Calata, secretary general of the ANC from 1936-1949 and tireless agitator for black leadership in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa), was deeply interested in African literature. According to Couzens, he offered apologies for the conference of African authors which RHW Shepherd organised in Florida, Transvaal, in October 1936; others who tendered theirs were Jolobe, Mqhayi, Mofolo and RRR Dhlomo.[104] Hazael Maimane obviously passed on to his son a strong sense of his worth as an African, if we consider his argument, in an undated memorandum, that the CPSA

[102] Duma Nokwe was the son of a shoemaker (Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 33).
[103] Miles, *Lifeline out of Africa*, 14.

should create opportunities for a separate African leadership" to enhance and to use to the full African spiritual gifts and powers as well as African ability and intelligence".[105] By the 1940s, then, a new generation of black students was beginning to accumulate the qualifications and expertise which stamped them as an intelligentsia, and which comprised the prerequisites for the formation of significant post-War black groupings.[106]

The common urban milieu, as Karis and Carter note, provided opportunities for intercultural contacts in work, schools, trade unions, churches and sports clubs, which resulted in Africans developing widely varying outlooks and interests in the changing conditions of urban life.[107] David Coplan remarks on how ethnic or `tribal' identification seems to have been less important than economic class and educational standard as a basis for interpersonal association: an index of urbanisation was the establishment of closer ties between fellow workers and members of local churches and associations.[108] Due recognition, therefore, must be given to the influence of the urban background of these pupils while at school, which sets a secondary school like St Peter's apart from its rural counterparts. The environment itself was influential. Commonplaces of urban life like signage on shops, `bioscopes', advertising hoardings, public notices, bookstores and newspaper stands, all these contributed to a ready acquaintance with Western culture and, of course, a facility in the English language. As PAW Cook noted in his 1935 survey of the Standard VI pupil, those from the Orange Free State (he indicates that the overwhelming majority of Free State pupils are urban) and Transvaal (with their mining conglomerations) beat their counterparts from the Cape and Natal hollow in a vocabulary test of 50 words "chosen at

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[104] Couzens, *The New African*, 105.
[105] Cited in Mandy Goedhals, `From Paternalism to Partnership? The Church of the Province of Southern Africa and Mission 1848-1988', in Frank England and Torquil Paterson (eds), *Bounty in Bondage: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg, 1989), 117.
[106] Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 227.
[107] Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 79.
[108] David Coplan, `The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry: The Struggle for African Culture on the Witwatersrand', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 184.

random" and "standardised on the performance of European pupils" administered to them.[109]

Also, a most telling statistic is the attendance at `bioscopes', with the Transvaal showing a phenomenally higher percentage than the other provinces. Of all Standard VI pupils countrywide, 36.57 % had never been to a cinema, whereas of urban Transvaal pupils only 14.20 % had never attended one (compared to the 22.08 % of the Cape). At the other end of the scale, the national average of pupils who had been to the `bioscope' "a considerable number of times" was 17.96 %, whereas the urban Transvaal average for `bioscope junkies' was a whopping 55.66 % (compared with 32.14 % in the Cape).[110] In view of Mphahlele's self-confessed addiction to the cinema, and his rapidly growing vocabulary being imputed to reading the subtitles of the movies, these statistics are significant.

Apart from anything else, the world portrayed in the American movies was far removed from the ghetto existence of the youth and would have stimulated the imagination of writers-to-be; Mphahlele remembers how "the heroes of American cowboy folklore" and "far-away lands" would help his friends in Marabastad to cope with their sordid everyday setting and, importantly, in his case, captivate him "by the age-old technique of story-telling".[111] Abrahams tells of how people in the Vrededorp cinema "wept bitterly at screen tragedies; more bitterly than at their own, real-life tragedies"; the illusions of the screen became reality, "and drab Vrededorp became the illusion".[112] Elsewhere Mphahlele recalls the humour and pathos of Charlie Chaplin's movies which showed him a world of humour and pathos to which he could relate, yet was, crucially, outside his own.[113] "Every cinema ticket I bought," said Bloke Modisane, "was a few hours away from South Africa, and the

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[109] PAW Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil: A Socio-educational Survey of Std. VI Pupils in Native Schools in the Union of SA, 1935* (Pretoria, 1939), 42.
[110] Cook, *The Native Standard VI Pupil*, 77, 79.
[111] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Exile, the Tyranny of Place and the Literary Compromise', *UNISA English Studies* 17(1) 1979, 38.
[112] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), 112.
[113] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Magic of Dickens, Gogol and Euripides', *The Star* 27 Aug. 1980, 3.

urgency for this peace was so great that I was literally raised inside the cinema".[114] And Don Mattera has attributed his picking up of English in the 1940s to the Odin cinema in Sophiatown, emulating narrative cadences from films in his composition essays and repeating poetic phrases in his head.[115]

But whatever the facility in spoken English, results of the Junior Certificate and Matriculation exams at St Peter's were very poor generally, due in the early 1930s to inadequate preparation in the feeder primary schools (and possibly teething troubles associated with the new secondary school). In the 1950s, the debilitating effects of the school's imminent demise was a major factor in simply appalling results. Winterbach provides graphic proof of the low pass rates for the JC examination;[116] what is important for our purposes is that the middle years of the school (roughly 1936-1942) reflect the greatest success (ratio of candidates entering to those passing, and number of passes in the first division). It is no coincidence that these overlap with the years that Mphahlele, Matshikiza, Abrahams and Hutchinson were at school. Br Roger celebrated in the *CR Quarterly* the spectacular JC achievement of 1936 in which Lancelot Gama, Aaron Lebona and Peter Raboroko passed in the second division and Joseph Mokoena and Oliver Tambo in the first division:

> 2 boys passed in the 1st class in the 1st division, which means that they got over 80 %. Only one other boy in the Transvaal managed to equal that - and he was white. These marks have never before been got by an African.[117]

Certainly if his claim is correct, this was quite an accolade for St Peter's. Flanking these landmark years are the early 1930s, in which the JC pass rate is roughly half, and the 1950s, when the number of candidates doubled but the success rate was less than half.

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[114] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 168.
[115] Mattera, in Pippa Stein and Ruth Jacobson (eds), *Sophiatown Speaks* (Johannesburg, 1986), 10.
[116] Winterbach, "The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement", 42.
[117] Roger Castle, `Examination Results at Rosettenville', *CR Quarterly* (138) St John Baptist 1937, 16. Lebona actually passed in the first division, along with Mokoena and Tambo.

The Matriculation exam results are even worse, but show the same pattern (best results from 1937 through the early 1940s, the only years, not surprisingly, where examination results are recorded in the St Peter's Log Book). The mid-1950s, during which the school was under threat of closure, are frankly embarrassing, the pass rate declining to less than a third, down from the late 1930s of nearly a full house. It bears repeating that St Peter's offered an environment in which responsive pupils would thrive, but those handicapped in any way, or who showed little initiative, would not. Bertram Moloi, for instance, because of his rural background, received 1 out of 100 for an English composition in Standard VI, his first year at St Peter's; but by dint of motivation (Fort Hare beckoned in his mind) he had made up that ground by the time he left to do teacher training at Grace Dieu. The accusation of partiality shown towards motivated pupils has, in fact, been levelled particularly at Penhalonga in Rhodesia which did not close due to Bantu Education, and whose results in 1971 were quite outstanding (all 59 `O' level candidates were placed in the first division, the first time this had happened in Rhodesia). Wilkinson states that the academic side of the school flourished to the detriment of those who showed little aptitude so that "its needs took over the mission and that the less able pupils suffered".[118]

It was pupils from humbler backgrounds who, in a boarding environment which placed them on an equal footing with their bourgeois counterparts, tended to achieve the most academically. As Alan Cobley points out, in the fluid class position of the 1920s and 30s, for "every individual positioned securely within the petty black bourgeoisie there were scores aspiring to that state in the upper reaches of the `under classes'".[119] First class matriculants Joseph Mokoena (three As, 1938, from Vereeniging), Oliver Tambo (one A, 1938, from the Transkei), Henry Makgothi (one A, 1947), Joel Mamabolo (one A, 1947, from Pietersburg), Edward Makhene (one A, 1947, from

[118] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 247.
[119] Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 16 footnote 6.

Potchefstroom) and others invariably had all to play for and nothing to lose.[120] These were the new pretenders, who had no social origins or exclusive social networks to fall back on, like the Cape families, who capitalised on the cultural ties of intermarriage, ethnic loyalties and church affiliations.[121] Now they would set up school networks and social clubs, mainly at the Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) in Doornfontein, which had been founded by the American Board missionary Ray Philips in 1924, to say nothing of the ANC Youth League, in an attempt to evolve a unique identity in the struggle against increasing state repression.

The Youth League's main turf for debating and discussion activities and general social functions was the Bantu Men's Social Centre, the educated African's haunt for twenty years before the founding of the Youth League in 1944. Drawing on the Centre's Annual Report, Alan Cobley finds that at least four student and ex-student associations were among the groups meeting at the BMSC by the end of the 1930s, the Tigerkloof Old Scholars Association, the Wilberforce Alumnis Association, the Old Pietersburgians Association (founded in 1932 at Grace Dieu) and the Rand African Students League.[122] Like the Transvaal Student Association (TSA), forerunner of the ANC Youth League and whose members included old St Peterians Congress Mbata, William Nkomo and Peter Raboroko,[123] these groups were more social than political but encouraged the spirit of political debate to the extent that Clive Glaser believes the political ideas of Anton Lembede, AP Mda and their colleagues were formulated here. He quotes Mbata as saying "products of the students organisations became the nucleus for organisations like the Youth League".[124]

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[120] This information is a composite from the St Peter's School Admission Register 1928-54 (CPSA, AB 2089 / F) and the JMB Matric results (*Matric Examination Handbook* (Cape Town, 1933-1956).
[121] Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, 81.
[122] Ibid, 77.
[123] Clive Glaser, `Students, *Tsotsis* and the Congress Youth League: Youth Organisation on the Rand in the 1940s and 1950s', *Perspectives in Education* 10(2) 1988/9, 2.
[124] Mbata, interview with GM Carter in Feb. 1964, quoted in Glaser, `Students, *Tsotsis*', 2.

In his October 1934 Report to Synod, the Headmaster of St Peter's, Mr HW Shearsmith, noted that an Association of Old Boys was being formed; he mooted that reunions would be held and a bulletin published, of which, however, no sign remains. The "periodic meetings and social functions" of the Old Scholars' Association were minuted in 1935,[125] although no other evidence of such an organisation exists, and it may have petered out, for minutes a decade later record that an "Old Students' Society" had been formed.[126] These initiatives may have developed simply into an informal network for, owing to the school's metropolitan location, there was a vibrant network on the Reef, which included the Youth League, and ex-pupils were always welcome to return to the Priory.

In an indication of the shift in the locus of power from Cape to Transvaal, and perhaps in the kind of careers opening up to Africans, Karis and Carter feel that the founders of the Youth League in April 1944 were comparable in middle-class status to the professional men who founded the ANC in 1912 (although there were no clergy among them), "an extraordinarily able group in their mid-twenties or early thirties", mainly teachers or students of medicine or law. Serious political discussion had begun during school days at Lovedale, Healdtown and Adams, while those who had graduated from St Peter's "had especially close ties with each other and constituted a kind of old boys' association".[127] Baruch Hirson also notes that the "central core was mainly drawn from graduates of St Peter's",[128] together with some graduates of and students expelled from Fort Hare, and Walter Sisulu.[129] Among the founding members were the old boys William Nkomo (matriculated 1934 at Healdtown, who was the provisional chair from April to September 1944) and Congress Mbata (matriculated 1936, who became acting secretary) who were then at

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[125] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 28 Feb. 1935, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[126] CPSA, St Peter's School Executive Committee Minutes dated Aug. 1948, AB 2089 / D 2.1.
[127] Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 98.
[128] Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash. The Sowetan Revolt: Roots of a Revolution?* (London, 1979), 34.
[129] See the excellent account of its founding by Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 13-20, and their footnote for more related material (39).

Wits Medical School.[130] Joseph Mokoena, who had matriculated first class in 1938 and graduated from Fort Hare with distinction in Mathematics and Science, and his fellow matriculant Oliver Tambo were elected to the executive committee in September 1944. Lancelot Gama and Peter Raboroko, both second-class matriculants in the celebrated `class of 1938' and Fort Hare graduates, joined them later.[131]

Groupings like the Youth League would take the older educated elite's reliance in the inter-war years on an idealised heritage of "African culture", and transform it into the radical "Africanist" ideology, with pronounced socialist features, of the 1940s. This is arguably the real contribution of St Peter's School: the formation of a young, intelligent, aggressive corps, who would aspire to the privileges of the older elite as the universal inheritance of "Western civilisation", without sacrificing their newly-acknowledged responsibilities to the African community. They rejected the stereotypes on which a racially segregated order depends (the ideology of authenticity), and instead set out to foster hybridity and encourage action, as they aimed for the universal threaded with the particular. It is a highly idealistic vision (Youth League founder Anton Lembede failed to set out a plan of action before his early death in 1947,[132] and a criticism often levelled at Abrahams as a novelist is the idealism displayed by his characters), but one which St Peter's School conscientiously cultivated.

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[130] Only Nkomo qualified as a doctor, while Mbata became head of a school in Vereeniging and then, after Sharpeville, left to teach in universities in the USA. Nkomo was permanently expelled from the ANC when he criticised it in Switzerland in mid-1953. He became the first African president of the SAIRR in 1971, and a founder of the Black People's Convention launched after his death in 1972 (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV*, 120).

[131] Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 15, 136. Raboroko claimed to have convened and presided over the meeting in Johannesburg in October 1943 at which the idea of the ANC Youth League was born. He helped to publish the Transvaal Youth League journal, *African Lodestar* (1950-56), and later identified himself with the Africanist wing of the ANC. He was the author of the PAC Manifesto in 1958, was elected to the Education portfolio of the national executive of the PAC in April 1959 and, after Sharpeville, became PAC representative in Ghana (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV*, 130).

[132] The practical way forward had to wait till after Lembede's death for the Youth League's Programme of Action in 1949, a direct response to the Nationalist Party's election victory, which proposed strikes, boycotts, work stoppages and civil disobedience, all mass weapons of working-class struggle.

Although he never went to Fort Hare after St Peter's, Mphahlele would write in "African Mission" that the humanistic atmosphere there crucially gave students a sense of self, and "those who had it in them to see a profession not as an end in itself but against the background of service to a community came out of Fort Hare with the mental equipment to launch them".[133] In a landmark address in October 1949, Robert Sobukwe on behalf of the graduating class at Fort Hare urged them to make solidarity with the African people their motivation in a life of service:

> Education to us means service to Africa. In whatever branch of learning you are, you are there for Africa. You have a mission; we all have a mission. A nation to build we have, a God to glorify, a contribution clear to make towards the blessing of mankind.[134]

When Sobukwe says he breathes, dreams, lives Africa "because Africa and humanity are inseparable",[135] he is echoing Du Bois, whose similar address to Fisk University graduates fifty years earlier in 1898 had enunciated three `universal laws' - of work, sacrifice and service - which had to be "threaded with racial particularity" if they were to have effect. "A productive life [for self and society] will depend on negotiating the universal through the particular and vice versa".[136]

The CR acted on the conviction that, as Ross Posnock put it, "one's relation to culture and one's capacity for aesthetic experience are indifferent to the claims of an ideology of the authentic, with its fixation on origin, race and ownership".[137] Hannah Stanton, the sister of one of the CR brethren, Timothy Stanton, likewise insisted on the universality of cultural experience.

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[133] Mphahlele, `African Mission', *Leadership* 7(4) 1988, 132.
[134] Robert Sobukwe, Address on behalf of the Graduating Class at Fort Hare, 21 October 1949, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume II*, 333.
[135] Sobukwe, Address on behalf of the Graduating Class at Fort Hare, 335.
[136] Ross Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual', *Critical Inquiry* 23(2) Winter 1997, 333.
[137] Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem', 342.

During the late 1950s, she lived, as Dorothy Maud had done twenty years earlier in Sophiatown, in an Anglican mission, Tumelong, in Lady Selborne township outside Pretoria. If she perhaps celebrates a little too obviously the Western cultural ethos of St Peter's, she insists on this ethos being made available to all who would `drink of the Pierian spring.' Here is her tale of a nameless (therefore perhaps fictional) boy, a "friend" from the township, whose time at St Peter's earmarked him for higher things than apartheid South Africa would allow:

> Here he was pitchforked into the full wealth of western culture: Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth, Milton, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare. He described this experience as a near intoxication with the wealth of beauty and adventure that he found in these and other poets. He later read Dante and Goethe. He studied the social, economic and political history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and America. The staff had been stimulating and exacting. St Peter's had been an exciting and inspiring centre. Oliver Tambo had been on the staff; Joe Matthews and Duma Nokwe were fellow students. From St Peter's my friend went on to Fort Hare University College to specialise in literature and history, and took his degree, and a post-graduate diploma in education, consolidating and widening his knowledge, and equipping himself to teach. He undertook teaching in a High School in Pretoria in 1952, and resigned his position when Bantu Education was brought in, in 1954.[138]

Such idealism about Western culture, coupled without contradiction with a romanticised view of their African heritage, characterised members of the newer black elite. Rev. Kgalemang Motsete, the Principal of Tati Training

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[138] Hannah Stanton, *Go Well, Stay Well: South Africa August 1956 to May 1960* (London, 1961), 124. She was detained in Pretoria gaol under the State of Emergency declared after Sharpeville, along with Rev. Mark Nye, who appears in the first pages of Hutchinson's *Road to Ghana*, and deported in May 1960.

Institution, which he himself founded at Nyewele in Bechuanaland in 1932, averred as much in his address to the New Education Conference in 1934. "There must be room for some idealism in his education," he asserts, "if the Native schools are to send out workers as well as leaders to their own people. No leader can lead without `the vision beautiful' challenging his best effort".[139] For this very reason, Motsete fiercely advocated the teaching of Latin and Greek in black schools.

Kgalemang Motsete was a commoner from Serowe, at a time when education tended to be reserved for the sons of chiefs in Bechuanaland and South Africa, in order to mesh the educated elite into the traditional aristocracy.[140] His father's contacts with missionaries led Motsete to be educated at the London Missionary Society institution, Tigerkloof, where he took up a teaching post in 1931, but his popularity and outspokenness in a Nonconformist institution led to conflict with Rev. Governor Smith, who disapproved of the political anecdotes Motsete included in his lectures. Motsete's subsequent resignation brought new opportunities to found Tati Training Institution. Such disapproval would not have occurred at St Peter's during the same period, and sets the urban Anglo-Catholic school apart from rural Protestant institutions like Tigerkloof (Richard Kgoleng actually drew a brief comparison between the two, acknowledging that "the liberal CR element" made the difference). Mphahlele told Wilkinson that at St Peter's there was "a laissez-faire attitude towards students discussing politics",[141] and Bertram Moloi mentioned to me that one of the provocative topics for debate at the Anglo-Catholic St Peter's in the 1930s was "where Jesus would sit on a Johannesburg park bench" ie. "was he non-European or European?" In the years of new apartheid legislation, according to Meshack Ntsangani, these debates often became very heated, with some pupils standing up and

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[139] KT Motsete, `The Cultural and Economic Importance of European Languages in Native Education', in EG Malherbe (ed), *Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society: Report of the New Education Fellowship Conference* (Cape Town, 1937), 480.
[140] Jack Bermingham, `Perspectives on Colonial Education in Botswana', in Agrippah Mugomba and Mougo Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom: The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1980), 176.
[141] Quoted in Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 218.

vowing, We're going to fight!, only to be ragged by others for the seeming futility of the impetus. Political debates were frequent at St Peter's, and their frequency increased in proportion to the passing of racist legislation.

Questioning was encouraged at St Peter's both within the classroom and without, in debates and political involvement. "We were free to say anything," Kgoleng insisted, "we were not muzzled by anyone." His contemporary, Arthur Maimane, son of the prominent priest, Hazael Maimane, identified this broad-mindedness and catholicity as the reason why those ex-St Peterians who were not religiously inclined, differed from those who had been to other missionary schools and who usually "came out anti-missionary", glad to have an education, but at the cost of patronisation which rendered them indignant and often angry. In conversation with me, Maimane acknowledged the religious impulse behind the education but also the lack of dogmatism:

> OK, they believe there's only one God, and so forth, but they didn't force it down anyone's throat. They would debate and argue religious points with us, you know, without saying, I know best . . . . The atmosphere at St Peter's was a liberal, a liberal arts education. Nothing dogmatic.

Of his own accord Maimane partly ascribed the rage of Bloke Modisane, who had attended a Dutch Reformed primary school in Sophiatown where he was taught "to seek for peace and comfort in bondage",[142] before matriculating in the third class at Bantu High School in 1949, to not having been at St Peter's, suggesting in a throw-away remark that attendance there might have ameliorated his sense of frustration: "And Bloke - well, he's not St Peter's! He was an angry young man." Modisane's autobiography, *Blame Me on History*, has been acknowledged as the most bitter of the crop, but what made the difference in the texture of the other autobiographies, in Maimane's opinion, was St Peter's. "So we came away," he admits, in a way Modisane

[142] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 183.

could not, "even if not devout Christians, we came away with a respect for Christianity and, more important, without any resentment for missionaries."

For all the shortcomings of the school as a product of its time, the overriding impression of St Peter's is of an environment which instilled self-confidence into its pupils. In the second episode of *God Bless Africa*, "Transformations", Arthur Maimane, interviewed in the grounds of St Martin's School (the old St Peter's), mentioned this very quality: how the pupils were encouraged by both lay teachers and brethren to believe in themselves so that, he says, "we learnt to have an easy relationship with white people." As Anthony Sampson noted of him as a *Drum* reporter, "He said what he thought, or more, in his determination not to be servile to white men".[143] What Sampson wanted on *Drum* was an entirely African staff, for which there were few precedents, and one without the subservience that whites required from blacks at that time.[144] It is therefore significant, given these two requirements, that many of its reporters were drawn from St Peter's. To me Maimane said, "the English staff, and the missionaries that I grew up with made me feel that white people were not so different from me." Or in Richard Kgoleng's words, "There were no inhibitions at St Peter's." This self-confidence can be attributed to the advantages given pupils through their education and the social ease among all echelons of society it engendered.

Mphahlele suggested speculatively to me that the main influence of St Peter's on him was *socialisation*, being introduced for the first time to a kind of order which he had never experienced in Marabastad, where there had been no sense of order other than domestic chores. He became conditioned to the orderly boarding school routine, and thrived under it, teasing other boys who found it difficult, and feels that this sense of being conditioned into hostel life and the school round, "grasping the order in which things were done", has a lot to do with being a member of society, not just a family member.[145] Significantly, however, he interprets this socialisation in religious terms,

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[143] Anthony Sampson, *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa* (London, 1956), 31.
[144] Sampson, *Drum*, 56.

realising "how deeply religious social development is, at root, it is a religious concept". Meaningful social relationships are the result of the social dimension "enthused with a religious connection"; it is arguable that the autobiographers' education within the boarding school environment proved fertile ground in the formative years for later incubation of guiding ideologies.

Note should be taken of the significant fact that black pupils were generally two to three years older on average than their white counterparts at any particular level; the Eiselen Report of 1949-1951 cited two-thirds of Standard VIII pupils as being 18 or older, and three-quarters of Matric pupils as 19 or older.[146] This is borne out by a table in the Government Annual Return for St Peter's in 1954, which indicates that 11 of the 24 boys in Form III were 18 and four of the ten in Matric were 19 or over, while 7 of the 17 girls in Form III were 19 or over and the only female matriculant was 19.[147] In her paper on the Lovedale unrest in August 1946, Cynthia Kros mentions that the leaders of the resistance in Forms III and IV were in their early twenties, and the average age in the lower forms of the high school was about eighteen.[148] Secondary schooling within the black community, therefore, encompasses a critical period of development. Such pupils would have been more worldly-wise and mature, more intolerant of political and missionary humbug, and far more receptive to the need for a corps of leaders in the political struggle than their white counterparts (who might only reach the corresponding political maturity at tertiary education level).

Mphahlele wrote recently that, because the curriculum was not demeaning or restrictive, allowing for personal development in impressionable years, "by the third year you had developed the aptitude to think independently, had

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[145] Interview with Es'kia Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August, 1999.
[146] Cited in Ken Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town, 1992), 65.
[147] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Annual Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.2. Somewhat confusingly, the Quarterly Return in 1955 lists the average age of Standard VIII pupils as 16/18 and Matric as 18/19; girls were a full year younger at every level (CPSA, St Peter's School Government Quarterly Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.1).

come to a spiritual and mental awareness that our blackness was an embarrassment to several missionaries and a constant reminder to the State that we were coming . . . . [his ellipses]".[149] Br Roger had written years earlier that "St Peter's is trying to produce an educated, self-disciplined, Christian youth, capable of becoming the leaders of New Africa",[150] and, with the legislation of apartheid during the early 1950s, the CR knew they were grooming the future leaders of the struggle. What Anthony Sampson calls with some justification "the vital component of political agitation, a frustrated intelligentsia",[151] was being created within the walls of St Peter's. Meshack Ntsangani actually told me in terms redolent of liberation theology, that the climate of hope grew within the complex of St Peter's in proportion to the racist apartheid legislation being tabled outside it. According to Ntsangani, the History teacher (who, though he did not mention him by name, could only have been Norman Mitchell) would give his lessons on a grand scale. "You may not have the army," he would say, "you may not have this, you may not have that, but God is there - your weapon, education." And if God would not personally intervene, the outside world would, with its new-found celebration of human rights encapsulated in the Atlantic Charter and its successor, the United Nations.[152]

1.3 Teachers at St Peter's

The Report of the 1936 Interdepartmental Committee stressed the pivotal role of the teacher in pupils' achievement: "The best school organisation and syllabuses are so many dead bones unless they are quickened by the life-

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[148] Cynthia Kros, `They Wanted Dancing and Not Merely the Lambeth Walk: A Reassessment of the 1940s School Disturbances with Particular Reference to Lovedale'. Unpublished paper, 1992, 18.
[149] Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', 117.
[150] Castle, `Examination Results at Rosettenville', 16.
[151] Anthony Sampson, *The Treason Cage: The Opposition on Trial in South Africa* (London, 1958), 65.
[152] Issued by FD Roosevelt and Winston Churchill on 14 Aug. 1941, the Atlantic Charter outlined principles of democratic world order after the Nazi defeat. Drawing on Roosevelt's `State of the Union' message on 6 Jan. 1941, in which "Freedom of speech and expression, freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, freedom from want and freedom from fear" were envisaged, the Charter promised improved post-War labour standards, social security measures, and the right of all peoples to choose their form of government.

giving breath of the inspiring teacher".[153] Ken Hartshorne corroborates this by calling the teacher "the key person", with success or failure ultimately depending, not so much on improvements to infrastructure, as on the pupil's relationship with the teacher in the tasks of learning.[154] Philosophers like Locke, Rousseau and Pestalozzi argued for the development of the potential of the human being as a whole, notes Len Holdstock, and they considered "the relationship between the teacher and the student as the most important means of bringing about an education of this nature".[155] Holdstock stresses two qualities which go a long way towards facilitating pupils' emotional as well as cognitive development, namely "the *realness* or genuineness of the facilitator of learning" and "*Prizing* the students first of all as persons who are infinitely complex at all times, as vastly more than cognitive information processing entities".[156] Even Mphahlele, weighing up for Pat Schwartz the respective merits of "platform politician" and "classroom man" in playing the more important role in the life of the African, found in favour of the latter, in that a good teacher provided him with the means "to comprehend and control his external world - education is the best way to do that".[157]

Judging from the St Peter's correspondence files in the CPSA archive, both black and white teachers were generally well qualified, all certificated, most matriculated with some possessing a degree and diploma. The Government Inspection Report for October 1938 noted that, of the staff of 13 teachers, "[a]ll are well qualified, competent and loyal to the institution and the cause of native education".[158] Mphahlele told Couzens that his teachers had been challenging and inspirational (in stark contrast to present day teachers, he notes), and enthusiasm and morale in the classroom were very high.[159] He recently recalled that a factor which helped him to survive the "grim code of

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[153] Quoted in Brian Rose and Raymond Tunmer, *Documents in South African Education* (Johannesburg, 1975), 236.
[154] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 218.
[155] Len Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation* (Johannesburg, 1987), 28.
[156] Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation*, 104.
[157] Es'kia Mphahlele, `"Nobody Can Chain the Mind Forever"', interview with Pat Schwartz, *Rand Daily Mail* 14 Mar. 1979, 13.
[158] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2.
[159] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 121.

conduct" of the CR in the 1930s was "the mutually-inspiring relationship between teacher and student." "A good teacher's name became legend on campus," he observed, "but we never trashed the poor one".[160] Bertram Moloi insisted that black teachers in the late 1930s were "very good, in fact they were first class", and lamented, "there is nothing to compare with them today." His "very gifted" Mathematics teacher, Stephen Mashupye taught for eight years until early 1941 (and was replaced by an old pupil, now with a BA, Mrs Vera Manata) and Moloi commented on him particularly, because he taught classes right through to Matric without a degree: "he was excellent!" said Moloi, "he was respected by the Principal, he was respected by the staff, he was respected by the students, Mr Mashupye." And Mphahlele knew "as much as he was generally acclaimed, that he was an excellent teacher, if rather impetuous".[161]

The black teachers in the main were old pupils of St Peter's, although some were drawn from the mission network of Adams College, the Lovedale/Fort Hare nexus, and from elsewhere in the Transvaal, like the Lemana Institution or Grace Dieu. By 1939 there were eight teacher training institutions in the Transvaal, all under the control of different denominations, but St Peter's correspondence in the CPSA Archive revealed no applications from teachers trained at these institutions, which included Kilnerton, Botshabelo and Wilberforce. The average pay for these qualified teachers during the War was a deplorable £4.10.0 - £5.10.0 per month (compared with £30 - £40 per month for general dealers and herbalists in Sophiatown, and £12 - £15 for successful carpenters and coffee stall owners),[162] and the posts were not pensionable.[163] In a trenchant speech before the Cape congress of the ANC in 1955, ZK Matthews celebrated "[t]hese men and women who by their

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[160] Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', 118.
[161] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 125-6.
[162] Proctor, `Class Struggle, Segregation and the City', 75. Jonathan Hyslop notes that the wage freezes of the Depression years and wartime inflation had led to the emergence of a militant wages campaign among Transvaal teachers in the early 1940s (`"A Destruction Coming In": Bantu Education As Response to Social Crisis', in Philip Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, 1993), 399).
[163] AB Xuma, Report of a Deputation from the ANC to the Deputy Prime Minister and Others, 4 March 1942, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 194.

devotion to duty and self-sacrificing service are largely responsible for the progress which has to date been made in African education".[164] According to the Government Quarterly Returns for 1954 and 1955, none of the black female teachers at St Peter's had matriculated, whereas most of their male counterparts had.[165] Few girls, relatively speaking, tended to reach JC, let alone Matric, and therefore taught rather in primary schools, having acquired the Native Teachers' Primary Lower Certificate (Standard VI plus three years training). This course, as Ann Mager notes, was restricted in 1945 to women, though the trend of replacing male with cheaper female teachers in the primary school had begun in the 1930s.[166] Gerard Sekoto, though, received his NPLC at Grace Dieu in 1934, and taught in the primary school at Khaiso in Pietersburg (also Anglican) until the end of 1938.[167]

The old pupils who tended to return held strong religious convictions, and perhaps were among those favoured by an appointment bias in all missions, which the Transvaal African Teachers' Association journal, *The Good Shepherd*, deplored for laying "more stress on the candidate's membership of the relevant church than on his professional qualifications or competence as a teacher".[168] This organisation, of course, for whose journal Mphahlele would write in the 1940s, was generally anti-mission and in favour of centralised state control of education. A teacher like Vincent Malebo, who taught Arithmetic, Mathematics and Sesotho from 1940 right through to the school's closure in 1956, and who was Acting Principal before Michael Stern arrived in 1955, had been Head Prefect in the mid-1930s and was a devout member of the Anglican Church, according to his testimonial.[169] Another loyal and long-serving teacher was Isaac Time, who taught isiXhosa to

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[164] ZK Matthews, Presidential Address to the Cape ANC, 18-19 June 1955, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 177.
[165] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Quarterly Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.1.
[166] Anne Mager, `Girls' Wars, Mission Institutions and the Reproduction of the Educated Elite in the Eastern Cape, 1945-1959', *Perspectives in Education* 14(1) 1992/3, 8.
[167] The Native Teachers' Primary Higher Certificate required Standard VIII (JC) and three years training but was never as popular because of the few students who passed their JC. To teach to Matric level, a two-year post-Matric course had to be done at Fort Hare.
[168] Cited in Alfred Hoernlé, `Native Education at the Cross-roads in South Africa', *Africa* 11(4) Oct. 1938, 403.

Matriculation and Arithmetic, Afrikaans and Geography to the lower forms from 1936 until the end of 1954. This was exemplary at a time when, as PAW Cook pointed out, the average tenure of a teacher in the Transvaal was 1.7 years (male principals lasted 2.8 years), and a quarter of Transvaal teachers lasted no longer than 0.7 years.[170] Admittedly, this statistic is based primarily on primary school teachers; in 1936 and 1937 when the survey was conducted, there were only 6 and 9 black teachers in secondary schools in the Transvaal, respectively, and only 1 and 6 in training institutions, respectively.[171] Corresponding figures for white teachers are given as 15 and 14 (in secondary schools, respectively) and 41 and 44 (in training institutions). Most of these teachers must have been at St Peter's, for the 1938 CR pamphlet, *An Appeal for Funds for Development*, cites 9 white teachers (5 men and 4 women) and 4 black teachers (all men).

Testimonials in the CPSA archive reveal that most black teachers remained from two to three years, and many went on to a medical or legal career, thus using teaching as a stepping stone to a more prestigious career, which was a common move but much deplored by educationists like Cook for having "wasted" teacher training funds![172] A case in point was Raymond Mfeka who obtained his Matriculation in 1949. He went on to Fort Hare, whence Mr DH Darling, then Headmaster of St Peter's, recruited him to teach Geography to Matriculation and isiZulu from 1954 to May 1956; he was also Warden. In his acceptance letter he wrote, "I am sure I will be happier in a place that has contributed to my education and working with people I already know".[173] But his mind was obviously set on becoming a doctor. In 1957 he went to medical school in Durban, but left for an unknown reason, and the correspondence indicates that he applied for a teaching post in February

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[169] CPSA, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1944-67, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.
[170] PAW Cook, *The Transvaal Native Teacher: A Socio-educational Survey* (Pretoria, 1939), 73.
[171] Cook, *The Transvaal Native Teacher*, 21.
[172] Hyslop mentions that, owing to the lack of opportunities for the wave of young professionals ejected by Fort Hare during the 1940s, there were nearly 14 000 African teachers in 1946 but less than half that number of other professional blacks (`"A Destruction Coming In"', 399).

1959 in Ndwedwe, then as a language assistant in isiZulu at UNISA in October 1959. In each case he applied to Mr MA Stern, then Headmaster, for a testimonial, and Mr Stern rather exasperatedly wrote down variations on the theme of the applicant believing he can "now best serve his people by teaching / by obtaining further qualifications as a doctor".[174] This case illustrates a tendency among ex-St Peterians: strapped for funding, but with an eye on becoming a lawyer or doctor, they tended to cast about wildly and pull as many strings as possible in pursuit of that goal. Often, however, it eluded them for a variety of reasons. In Mfeka's case, it was possibly the burden of having to support his family while on a medical bursary.

The white teachers, a good mix of male and female, were almost all from England throughout St Peter's existence, with the exception of the Afrikaans teachers, and as time went on, St Peter's received many more applications from overseas than they could accommodate. One Brian Walker is typical of these applicants. Twenty-three years of age, with a BMus from - significantly - Leeds University (plus third-year English and a diploma), he writes to Mirfield in September 1952 from Buckinghamshire that he is interested in teaching in an African mission school ("what little I know of African peoples interest me very much and I would like to help them").[175] The letter is forwarded to St Peter's, and the 1953 Headmaster's Report shows that Brian Walker replaced Norman Mitchell for Geography after he left in December 1952;[176] he also taught Arithmetic and Mathematics, and some English, until replaced by Edwin Ainscow in March 1955.[177] These changes took place in defiance of the Education Department after the influential Eiselen Commission's Report of 1951 made it difficult to replace white teachers with

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[173] CPSA, letter dated 21 Oct. 1953, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff (African), AB 2089 / I 9.2 file 3.
[174] CPSA, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1944-67, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.
[175] CPSA, letter dated 22 Sept. 1952, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff (European) 1933-55, AB 2089 / I 9.3.
[176] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's School: Reports 1953-56, AB 2089 / C.
[177] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod dated 10 Aug. 1955, College of the Resurrection Scrapbook 1950-64, AB 632.

white: "Bantu personnel should be used to the maximum to make the schools as Bantu in spirit as possible as well as to provide employment".[178]

Yet this was ironically the very period which heralded the arrival of young American students to study at Makerere under the Teachers for East Africa scheme which was meant to staff secondary schools until sufficient numbers of Africans had been trained, in direct contrast to the intention of the roughly contemporaneous Bantu Education legislation.[179] It also saw enthusiastic young graduates from Britain and the United States seeking work in African tertiary institutions, all of them zealous and dedicated to African political independence, but typically patronising and only dimly aware of their students' social and cultural context. They might have been missionaries in an earlier generation! "Whatever the racist tinge of their kindly remoteness," remarks Sicherman, though, "and whatever its deleterious later effects, they succeeded in creating a sanctuary gratefully recalled by many [Makerere] students of the period," in Ngugi's phrase "an island isolated from the tides and waves around".[180] The island in an increasingly hostile sea, of course, evokes similar images of St Peter's School in the autobiographies, and in the 1950s the sea down South was threatening to engulf it. As the tidal wave hovered, one JM Pocock wrote from the Gold Coast in November 1955 that he would like to give help to St Peter's during his one month's leave in early 1956.[181] He was engaged in a voluntary capacity for the first few classes of the last year of the school's existence, the last of an enthusiastic line. This infusion of young overseas blood is precisely what Bantu Education intended

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[178] Cited in Tunmer and Rose, *Documents*, 250. Ironically, DDT Jabavu himself had made a celebrated submission to the 1936 Interdepartmental (Welsh) Committee, which influenced the later one of Eiselen, that Africans should run black schools in order to provide much-needed career opportunities for educated Africans (Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 48-49).

[179] Carol Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education: "The Subversion . . . of the African *Mind*"', *African Studies Review* 38(3) 1995, 21.

[180] Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 24.

[181] CPSA, letter dated 10 Nov. 1955, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff (European) 1933-55, AB 2089 / I 9.3.

to staunch, by making sure that only black people, trained under Afrikaner ideologues, would teach black pupils.[182]

1.3.1 The British Triumvirate

The three white teachers who would have the longest association with the school, and contribute indelibly to its ethos of an English public school were David Darling, Norman Mitchell and Dora Lindsay. They were mentioned to me by Arthur Maimane as a threesome, possibly because of their striking British nationality which obviously rubbed off on the pupils. Around Dora Lindsay, a legendary character, there has always existed a veil of secrecy, probably of her own making: there was indeed a Mr Lindsay, to whom in Yeoville she went home every day, but not even the staff, let alone the pupils, knew more than this. And the fact that she, like the other two, was from the British Isles and members of the established Church. Maimane recalled her to me as "a marvellous little old lady beetling around the school" and perpetuated the mystery surrounding her by mentioning how the pupils would romantically link a popular English actress of the time, Margaret Lindsay, with her as her daughter!

My investigations have revealed no more, yet everyone asked about her cannot forget her sprightly, bird-like enthusiasm for her subject English, which she taught to Matric level. She also taught Domestic Science. The sole bit of evidence, her undated letter of application for the post of assistant mistress in St Agnes' School reveals her to have been mature even then, with fifteen years' experience and a qualification from Whitehall's Education Board obtained in 1907.[183] Which puts her at around fifty at the time of her appointment in 1935, and closer to seventy when she left! She is one of two continuous threads (David Darling is the other) which links the generation of

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[182] Bishop Stanley Mogoba, in the third episode of *God Bless Africa* ("Divisions") quotes an Afrikaner come to take over as Principal of Kilnerton post-1953, as saying "I have come to stop this English tradition we have in the school."

[183] CPSA, St Peter's School: Correspondence: Staff (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 1. A pencilled `appointed Jul 1935' appears under the address.

Mphahlele with that of Maimane.[184] Mphahlele and his classmates "had a great deal of affection" for her,[185] and Maimane in *God Bless Africa* called her his "very sweet lovely English teacher." She seems to have encouraged her pupils in two main areas of the language: elegant, simple writing in creative essays, and wide, regular reading. Richard Kgoleng ventured that there was no need for extra tuition or help as the class always understood her, although Meshack Ntsangani, a pupil who struggled, recalled an essay in which he had got four out of ten, and considered it not so bad by her standards!

A new appointment in 1935, she was obviously full of enthusiasm and inspiration (the cardinal demands Don Mtimkulu makes on an English teacher), qualities which would have rubbed off on her pupils. They obviously acted out plays with gusto under Mrs Lindsay's guidance, for Mphahlele mentions how much he and the other pupils "loved to act Form Room plays".[186] Interestingly, *Form-Room Plays (Intermediate)*, prescribed for the JC in 1937, offered a mixed bag of European folk stories like "The Goose-Girl", "The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweeper", "Alice and the Caterpillar", "The Kitchen Knight", "The Marchioness" and "The Escape from Lochleven", and it piques one to know what the pupils made of them! Years of teaching black children, however, did not seem to bring her to a deeper understanding of their life experience, if Arthur Maimane is to be believed. In the second episode of *God Bless Africa*, Maimane related a tale (and a version was offered to me, too) of how, when asked to write an essay on his holiday activities, he cribbed from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (he was an avid reader and renowned among his peers for his ability in English), claiming his holidays were spent in fishing and horseriding! Mrs Lindsay apparently was taken in, and held it up to the class as a model essay.

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[184] In this she could perhaps be compared with another legendary figure of longevity and influence, Margaret Macpherson, who taught in the English Department at Makerere for 35 years, from 1946 to 1981 (Sicherman, `Ngugi's Colonial Education', 27, 30).
[185] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 129.
[186] Ibid, 129.

Also, as Maimane acknowledged to me, she was no different from any other whites of the time (and even today of course) who had never set foot in a township, or even knew where these were geographically. "She was not a missionary," he said matter-of-factly, "she was just a teacher of English literature. Or English altogether. And she lived in her own little English world." His other essays were frequently read out to the upper classes, which earned him some understandable unpopularity among his peers. "Now this is what I call good writing!" Mrs Lindsay would enthuse, as he recalled to me. She would also pounce on a perennial failure of bright African users of English, the tendency to employ Latinate words:

> She had a marvellous turn of saying, No jawbreakers! I can remember one essay I did, which she read to the matric classes and to my own class, and just for one word - I used the word `whim' - and she said, Here is a nice simple word, W-H-I-M, and it tells much more than any jawbreaker ever could!

Maimane attributes his famous versatility of style in his *Drum* pieces to voracious and catholic reading, and laughed at Mrs Lindsay's horror when he and his peer group went through a phase of just reading *Bulldog Drummond* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* ("dear Mrs Lindsay said, This must stop!"). Although it would always rankle with Mphahlele that only whites of English stock were ever allowed to teach English in the mission schools (a similar situation, he discovered to his chagrin, obtained in tertiary institutions in British colonial Africa), he attributes his proficiency in the language to the foundation laid by such teaching:

> Those of us who learned English before the new order set in were taught by dedicated teachers in missionary institutions. That dedication and the open learning environment we enjoyed served to inspire us to read widely and expose ourselves to the ring of words good literature brought to our sensibilities. Yes, we ploughed through some very dull eighteenth-century stuff

> and the tangled thickets of Victorian diction. It was nevertheless an exciting adventure.[187]

In "Why I teach My Discipline" he had mentioned how, "After chewing on everything we were given, the mind would some time later sift and select and distil," and adds the crucial point that "self-education begins with this sifting process".[188] Although he eventually ceased to care which paradise was lost and which regained, he kept going so that, once on to higher studies, as he wrote in "Prometheus in Chains", "we appreciated the options before us and could dump the authors who failed to interest us".[189] What has been lost since 1953, Mphahlele feels, is a distinctive sense of adventure, and the sense of pride which comes from having survived "a historical accident of a momentous nature",[190] the rupture of colonisation.

The failure of young black writers schooled under Bantu Education often to communicate effectively has been ascribed by Mphahlele to the huge gap that exists in their schooling, whereby pupils in Standards VIII to X cannot recognise various literary genres or distinguish between narrative styles, and further, to the lack of "mental and moral equipment" (which also comes from wide reading) which would assist these pupils in the crucial process of self-education.[191] Self-education, for Mphahlele, which includes an inquiring mind, deep feeling and a sense of community, "sums up the life of a writer." A foundation for his own self-education as a writer was laid by Dora Lindsay, as she had assisted in Maimane's development before her eventual retirement in 1951, but this would be only the kick start for, as Mphahlele remarks, "[e]ven the most highly developed systems of education can do no more than launch you, rocket-like, into a world where you must survive on your own steam."

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[187] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Prometheus in Chains: The Fate of English in South Africa', *English Academy Review* (1984), 101.
[188] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Why I Teach My Discipline', *Denver Quarterly* 8(1) 1973, 37.
[189] Mphahlele, `Prometheus in Chains', 101.
[190] Mphahlele, `Why I Teach My Discipline', 37.
[191] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Writes and Wrongs', *Tribute* Oct. 1988, 144.

Just prior to Dora Lindsay's appointment, Alban Winter used his British network and wrote to a Professor Cock in February 1933, indicating he wanted one of his protégés. "Everything now depends on my getting a first rate man for science and maths, and one who is a keen Christian and ready for missionary work".[192] When the professor recommended David Darling, Winter wrote to him a month later in Shropshire, "I must have one reliable European on this side of the school," and to John Murray CR that Darling "is a promising young man, keen on missions, and able to take complete charge of the Science Department for which I shall be most thankful." David Darling would do more; by early 1940 he would succeed Mr Shearsmith as Principal, after some seven years as Science master, while still teaching Science up to Matric and Mathematics to JC.

Mr Darling would never marry, and so offered wholehearted service for 14 years, which extended to paying the fees of needy pupils.[193] "I loved him, really personally was attached to Mr Darling," admitted Bertram Moloi in conversation. He related an anecdote about the Science master, which shows that he, like Br Roger ("very eccentric, very strict, a loving man"), was as influenced by the pupils as they were by them. The pupils had nicknames for staff; Mr Darling went one better, according to Bertram Moloi:

> I had a friend called David Pooe, he also came from Sophiatown, and Kendry Zuma came from Sophiatown[194] - they were stand owners you see - and I was living with my aunt, poorest of the three of us. And then he [Mr Darling] used to call David Pooe `the Lord Mayor of Sophiatown'! And we were mixing gunpowder, and Pooe overdid it, and when he ignited it,

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[192] CPSA, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 1.

[193] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.

[194] Zuma passed the JC in the second class along with Moloi in 1938, while Pooe, who became a businessman like his father, struggled to pass in the third class the following year. The turbulence in Sophiatown at this time might have influenced his results. After the proclamation of Johannesburg in June 1933 under the Urban Areas Act, there was a massive influx of Africans into Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, the only areas not subject to the

> it went bang! in the laboratory, and the Lord Mayor of Sophiatown was in trouble!

In his understanding of the cultural significance of nicknames and humour, in his affirmation of these African markers, he seems to have possessed all three of the qualities that Len Holdstock deems crucial for holistic education:

> We need teachers who rate high in *empathic ability*, in the ability to *understand the inner world* of their pupils, teachers who *respect* their pupils as persons with feelings and emotions, teachers who are able to be *real human beings* themselves in the classroom.[195]

Mr Darling had the common touch absent from Mr Shearsmith, who resigned as Headmaster in the interests of his family, after five sterling years at St Peter's, including, of course, the highpoint of the late 1930s. In this he anticipated the slow exodus of all but the most dedicated white teachers from mission schools during the 1940s because of the turbulence of that decade and better employment conditions in white schools, as documented by Jonathan Hyslop.[196] Carl Runge CR wrote in the *CR Quarterly* that Mr Shearsmith, "as a married man, could not but look to the future, and unfortunately the prospects for Europeans engaged in Native education are much less advantageous that for those in the European service".[197] So he took a post as senior Science master at a new East Rand school, while Mr Darling, "not only a very capable teacher but also a devoted friend of the African people," according to Runge, assumed his responsibilities, continuing to live with the CR at the Priory.

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proclamation; in 1934 the population was about 26 000 (see Proctor, `Class Struggle, Segregation and the City', 65, 69).

[195] Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation*, 105.

[196] Hyslop, `The Concepts of Reproduction', 19.

[197] Carl Runge, `News from South Africa', *CR Quarterly* (150) St John Baptist 1940, 13.

David Darling's close friend was the Welshman, Norman Mitchell, who also never married, and so, to some extent, extended the bachelor ethos of the CR into the lay teaching corps, reinforcing the atmosphere of committed individuals living on the margins, and eschewing society's ideal of the nuclear family. Always attracted to the CR ethos, Mitchell passed away while on a visit to Mirfield to which, his friend Benjamin Baynham CR not altogether fancifully believed,[198] he had come purposely to die. Norman Mitchell arrived at St Peter's when Mr Darling became Headmaster in 1940, just as another `institution', Br Roger, left, and taught both History and Geography up to Matric level, reaping the best marks in his two subjects.[199] Alfred Hutchinson scored two of his many Bs in History and Geography for his Matric exam in 1945, as did Arthur Maimane in 1951.[200] All interviewees remember his animated Geography lessons, the tales of faraway lands and their peoples and produce, how they seldom needed to use a textbook because he had implanted all the information in their heads through his lively antics. Even an average pupil like Meshack Ntsangani was enthralled by his classes: "Excellent! You'd just have a vivid picture of everything." And Richard Kgoleng agreed, "we used to look forward to going to that class." But, like his fellow teachers, and taking his cue from Alban Winter, Mr Mitchell would brook no carelessness, insisting on the pupils' bringing an atlas every lesson, failing which they would be ejected from the class.

A Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Mr Mitchell was also a legend outside of the classroom because of his keenness in inviting speakers with a political agenda for extra-mural discussions. Anton Lembede, President of

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198 Interview with Benjamin Baynham, Mirfield, 8 & 9 April 1996.

199 Joel Mamabolo and Edward Makhene, for example, received distinctions in Geography for the JC in 1945 and Matric in 1947, while Colben Cokile and George Chaana received theirs in History for Matric in 1950. Makhene's first class pass in the 1947 Matric examination was particularly outstanding, with four Bs besides his distinction in Geography. Registered for the MBChB at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1951, having scored a distinction in Zoology, he wrote in gratitude to the Headmaster, David Darling, to tell of his success, "St Peter's School being in no small measure responsible for my present academic status; a privilege for which I cannot omit to express my thanks" (CPSA, letter dated 29 Jan. 1951, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1944-1967, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4).

200 Incidentally, Maimane insisted quite vehemently to me that he had received distinctions in the three Matric subjects which are officially recorded as Bs, a `memory lapse' which unfortunately tends to leave an interviewer sceptical about his other recollections.

the Youth League, visited on at least one occasion, related by Edgar and Msumza, as it was told to them by Joe Matthews in August 1992:[201]

> Lembede and [AP] Mda were invited to address the debating society in the geography room at St Peter's School where Youth Leaguers Oliver Tambo and Victor Sifora were teaching.
>
> > So Lembede got up and he was dressed . . . in a black tie, black evening dress, which in itself was quite something. And he started off, "As Karl Marx said, `a pair of boots is better than all the plays of Shakespeare.'"
>
> This provocative statement roused his predominantly student audience, but it also prompted a sharp retort from the school's geography teacher, Norman Mitchell, a devotee of the British Empire, who angrily shouted back, "That's not true."

Mr Mitchell, who was the one who had invited Lembede in the first place, took up the invitational gauntlet in true African fashion, it seems, with a spontaneous verbal response! Anthony Sampson, who records the same incident, notes further that Mr Mitchell, “the popular English geography master, a benign imperialist”, replied to Lembede's argument by saying that Africans must fit themselves for power with education.[202]

Though disabled with a physical deformity (a slight hump-back, according to Baynham), he was devoted to teaching, as his results attest. Owing to his invaluable contribution to St Peter's, Mr Mitchell was offered the post of Principal at St Augustine's, Penhalonga from January 1953, and he was extremely keen to take up the challenge, should a replacement be found. Baynham had led the way there two years before, and David Darling would

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[201] Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 20.
[202] Sampson, *The Treason Cage*, 131.

follow him two years later, once the closure of St Peter's was announced by the Bishop of Johannesburg in November 1954. Mitchell's departure necessitated Trevor Huddleston's supplication of the Education Department in October 1952 for its permission to replace a white teacher with another from England (Superintendent at the time, he must have received the letter from Brian Walker). "This is a school which has always had some European teachers, greatly to its and their benefit, and it would be greatly appreciated if this arrangement could be allowed to continue".[203]

1.3.2 Other staff members

It is clear, however, from the detailing of teachers and their subjects on a Departmental Form completed by Mr Darling in August 1950 that white teachers occupied a higher grade of post than the black teachers, and were responsible for the higher standards.[204] Only four of the eight black teachers were responsible for Matric teaching: Solomon Ngakane, who had taken his BSc at Fort Hare and taught Mathematics from 1950 to 1953, AM Ramakatane (Vernacular), Isaac Time (Vernacular) and Vincent Malebo (Vernacular); Raymond Mfeka replaced Norman Mitchell when he left and taught Geography to Matric from 1954 to 1956. They obviously also took subjects up to JC level. The other four, including two unmatriculated women, took the lower forms in a variety of subjects. This break-down replicated exactly the prevailing stratification in black education at the time: white teachers, being better qualified, took the higher forms, while black teachers did the support teaching (including subjects like Gardening), and black women teachers the lowest forms and subjects such as Domestic Science and Needlework. Interestingly enough, though, the Executive Committee minutes of April 1948 importantly record that a Miss Masenya BSc had replaced Oliver Tambo, and a Mrs Mzaidumo BA had taken over from Victor Sifora.[205] Edwin Ainscow also recalled to me the familiar syndrome where

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[203] CPSA, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 3.
[204] CPSA, Departmental form dated 15 Aug. 1950, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 3.
[205] CPSA, St Peter's School Executive Committee Minutes, AB 2089 / D 2.1.

the black staff tended to keep separate from the other lay staff and had their own tea room by preference; most were very friendly, but always deferential, and the few who treated him as an equal were most unusual. In this St Peter's could not rise above the racist and sexist reality of South Africa, where the marginalised status of blacks and women was perpetuated.

We must not lose sight of the fact that St Peter's was in Rosettenville, a white area, and could therefore envisage drawing its teachers from the white pool. Interestingly, though, white teachers in black schools could not belong to a pension fund, according to a November 1941 advertisement inviting applications for Afrikaans and English posts irrespective of race or gender.[206] Close scrutiny of the advertisement is interesting, as the requirements for these posts were presumably similar to those of other posts, and therefore give a good idea of what St Peter's looked for in its teachers. Professional qualifications were required, preferably a degree, and, in the case of the Afrikaans post, the ability to teach Geography and/or Mathematics was also required. (As it happened, Mr JP Benade, the eventual appointment, was able to teach Mathematics.) The English post was filled by Benjamin Baynham throughout the 1940s. Neither post was residential, although the advertisement indicates that Rosettenville offered cheap accommodation (£7-£9 per month). The salary for a white teacher was the same as that of a post in a white school, though non-pensionable. Some altruism and a sense of vocation would therefore have had to motivate white teachers to apply for such posts. Ken Hartshorne believes that teachers at mission institutions such as Kilnerton were exceptionally dedicated and hard-working; when Standard IX and X classes were started in 1939, for instance, without an additional teaching grant, teachers taught these extra courses throughout the day in addition to their other duties.[207] He also notes that, while Kilnerton had two-thirds white teachers and one third black, teaching across the board was

[206] SAIRR, Native Education: General, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 14.11 file 3.
[207] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 62 footnote 6.

"of a good standard", owing possibly even more to their commitment than to their qualifications.[208]

It is clear, however, that the Afrikaans-speaking teachers never quite fitted into St Peter's. While the new arrival in early 1935, Mrs Fick, late of Benoni Intermediate School, was "proving very satisfactory" and had helped Mr Shearsmith to choose Afrikaans books for the library worth £50 with a donation received from the government,[209] she did not endear herself to Mphahlele. Mis-calling her "Mrs Finck", he pictures her in his autobiography as "a tall, wasted woman with long hair on her face"; his friend Thomas Bennett "used to say she reminded him of the pillar of salt in the Bible".[210] On a more serious note, he and his classmates were hurt by her obvious dislike of the pupils, so that "we asked one another continually why Mrs Finck didn't rather teach white children",[211] and she left after only eighteen months.

Her replacement, Mr FA Mijnhardt, had two stints at the school, one from 1937 to 1944, after which he left to take up a post as Superintendent of schools in Nylstroom, and then again from 1951 to August 1954, when teachers started to leave with the prospect of the imminent closure of St Peter's. Correspondence leaves one in no doubt that he enjoyed teaching at the school, and when the vacancy arose in 1950, he jumped at the chance of bringing his family back to Rosettenville: "Well, the die is cast, I am once more a `St Peter's man' and proud of it".[212] The Government Inspection Report recorded in October 1938 that Mr Mijnhardt was "doing outstanding work. He knows his subject and makes his subject matter very interesting".[213] He also did a better job at mixing with the staff and pupils than Mr JP Benade, who tended to keep to himself during the lunch hour, reading *Die Transvaler*, and who struggled to teach Mathematics in English at

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[208] Ibid, 230.
[209] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 28 Feb. 1935, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[210] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 19.
[211] Ibid, 130.
[212] CPSA, FA Mijnhardt, letter dated 20 Nov. 1950, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 3.

JC level. Yet he was admired for his grasp of the subject and ability to communicate it even through broken English; Richard Kgoleng acknowledged he got good results and "had a lot to offer." Mr Benade taught for close on ten years, from 1944 to July 1954, according to Mr Stern's Report to Synod in 1954,[214] yet never felt comfortable with the ethos of St Peter's and always presented a gruff exterior as a defence mechanism. The pupils were initially unsure whether to humour him or take offence; Kgoleng called him "a very, very tough Afrikaner", while Maimane said he was "very stiff" and Ntsangani "so rude", a teacher who invariably fell back on the old punishment of making a pupil write an incorrect sentence or misspelt word a hundred times over.

Both Afrikaans teachers were also skilled artisans, teaching woodwork and metal work to the lower forms. Like the black staff, Mr Benade preferred not to use the staffroom ("he didn't mix freely with the other teachers" according to Kgoleng) and chose to keep to the carpentry room. Maimane's impression of the two is that "they probably felt they were teaching in the wrong school" but, perhaps by keeping to themselves in varying degrees, they created the conditions necessary for their survival. It is remarkable that two such respected teachers remained for so long, because Afrikaners were normally loth to teach at black schools. When Mr Darling was Headmaster, he wrote to Alexander Kerr (Principal of Fort Hare) in April 1945, trying to recruit an African replacement for Mr Mijnhardt, for "the number of Afrikaans-speaking Europeans willing to teach in African institutions is very small indeed".[215]

Since much of the subsequent picture of St Peter's School across three decades is drawn from minutes of the School Executive Committee and Advisory Council, it should be noted here that the Executive Committee consisted of the CR Provincial (as Chair), the Superintendent of CR schools (as Convenor), the Principal (once St Agnes had joined St Peter's), the Wardens of the two hostels, and three CR brethren elected by the

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[213] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2.
[214] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's School: Reports 1953-56, AB 2089 / C.
[215] CPSA, letter dated 19 April 1945, St Peter's School: Correspondence: Staff advertisements 1945-54, AB 2089 / I 9.4.

Rosettenville and Sophiatown Chapters.[216] The Advisory Council comprised all the above as ex-officio, plus six other members, two of them Africans, nominated by the Bishop of Johannesburg for three years.[217] One of these was Pixley ka Seme who, moreover, would be the guest speaker at Speech Day in December 1944,[218] having set the exhortatory tone forty years earlier for the regeneration of Africa in the twentieth century as being "thoroughly spiritual and humanistic – indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!".[219] The Advisory Council elected its own Chair, and JD Rheinallt Jones was in the hot seat throughout the 1930s and 1940s, when he was one of four Native Representatives in the Senate from 1937 to 1943, once the Cape African franchise had been abolished. His high profile proved extremely useful in liaising with increasingly hardnosed government officials of the Transvaal Education Department (TED).

2 St Peter's School in the 1930s

2.1 The Imperial Milieu

Before a sketch is given of the school under its first lay Headmaster, a sense of its ethos might be afforded by two vignettes in the early years of St Peter's existence. Alban Winter reported in the *CR Quarterly* on an Ascension Day picnic in 1923, when the boys and girls, a party 100-strong, forayed to a kloof near Rosettenville. The St Peter's girls beat the St Agnes' girls in a hockey game there, and then both teams joined forces - with Winter in their side - to beat the St Peter's boys at football, "much to the discomfiture of the latter"! Winter underlines the initiative and enterprise of black pupils, compared with their English counterparts: "A day of this kind with native children is not nearly

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[216] CPSA, St Peter's School Constitution, AB 2089 / A.
[217] CPSA, Committee Minutes dated 9 Sept. 1931, CR Records 1929-40, AB 1385.
[218] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Oct. 1944, Native Education: General, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 14.15.
[219] Pixley ka Seme, `The Regeneration of Africa', publ. in *The African Abroad* 5 April 1906, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge, Volume I: Protest and Hope 1882-1934* (Stanford, CA, 1972), 71.

so great a strain to those responsible as at home, for they manage to amuse themselves and carry on their games with very little help from the grown ups".[220] An excursion in September 1925, this time a group of 76 "vigorous and energetic" St Peter's Pathfinders on a camp near Heidelberg, caused Gregory Evans CR (who would pioneer the setting up of the Sekhukhuneland Mission, and attract Roger Castle to the religious life), to remark on the "delightful lack of self-consciousness" shown by one of the boys. This lad took it upon himself to lead others in his train compartment in evening devotions before retiring for the night. Evans was stung that he, like most other whites in similar circumstances, would fight shy of such initiative.[221] This complete involvement in school activities, even to the extent of joining in a game of soccer with cassock flying, together with a healthy regard for black pupils' gifts, would characterise all CR brethren at St Peter's for the next few decades, even if, in the early days, it was they who set the agenda.

Possibly the main Eurocentric influence demonstrated by the CR at this time was their fervour for the Pathfinder and Wayfarer movements. According to a 1932 document on Grace Dieu by its then Acting Principal, the Pathfinder movement originated there.[222] Canon SP Woodfield (who, as Principal from 1924 to 1938, may have drawn up the document) was a prominent office-bearer in the Pathfinders, eventually becoming Chief Scout Commissioner for the African Boy Scouts after JD Rheinallt Jones in 1953, and actually employed Peter Abrahams prior to his stint at St Peter's to do administration in the Transvaal Pathfinder office. Bertram Moloi, a student at Grace Dieu in 1940-1941 and sometime enthusiastic Pathfinder, recalls that Woodfield's nickname was `Mashona', bestowed on him for his scouting prowess, although Alfred Mokwele gives it as `Ramankejane', decorated Father of the African Boy Scouts.[223] A few years earlier, Ernest Mancoba had become involved while studying for his teacher's diploma at Grace Dieu, and was an

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[220] Alban Winter, letter dated 7 June 1923, *CR Quarterly* (83) Michaelmas 1923, 25-26.
[221] Gregory Evans, letter dated 26 Oct. 1925, *CR Quarterly* (92) Christmas 1925, 29.
[222] SAIRR, document dated 24 Sept. 1932, Diocesan Training College 1931-41, AD 843 / B 37.7.1.
[223] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 113.

Assistant Pathfinder master in the movement at Fort Hare in the early 1930s.[224] Alban Winter was the District Pathfinder for the Witwatersrand, and the Pathfinder troop at St Peter's were winners of the JB Young Trophy for at least four consecutive years in the early 1930s, according to the *St Peter's School Magazine*.[225] By December 1932 three-quarters of St Peter's boys were Pathfinders, accommodated in three troops (one being Rovers), and the girl Wayfarers in one troop.[226] One of the troops was under Stephen Mashupye, legendary teacher of Mathematics and Sesotho to Matric from 1933 to 1941; he was also responsible for singing in the junior forms, and choir leader for the Bantu Eisteddfod.[227] The St Peter's Log Book records that in October 1934 Canon Woodfield came to inspect the Pathfinders and, a month later, the Governor-General and Lady Clarendon visited the school to inspect both the Pathfinders and Wayfarers.[228]

Deborah Gaitskell's intensive investigation into the phenomenon on the Reef, particularly the girls' Wayfarer Guide movement, has demonstrated how the Pathfinders (founded in 1922) and Wayfarers (in 1926) were used to maintain the benevolent empire during the inter-war years. In "Upward All and Play the Game" she exposes the ambiguity of the mission-centred enterprise: the way in which black Wayfarer leaders tended to perpetuate mission ideology, and white leaders, particularly Edith Jones, influential wife of JD Rheinallt Jones, revealed strong traces of the infectious Transvaal liberal `adaptationist' virus. When one recalls that Rheinallt Jones was Chair of St Peter's Advisory Council for many years, had served on the Grace Dieu Governing Body, and had been Chief Pathfinder of the Transvaal since 1924, the relevance of this movement to an exploration of St Peter's is clear. Gaitskell attributes its establishment to three things in the main: the example

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[224] Miles, *Lifeline out of Africa*, 11.
[225] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(3) 1933, 2-3.
[226] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(2) 1932, 14-15.
[227] CPSA, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff (African), AB 2089 / I 9.2 file 1.
[228] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B. Mokwele mentions that the Pathfinders at Grace Dieu were inspected by the Earl of Athlone (1924), the Prince of Wales (1925), Lord Baden-Powell (1926) and the Earl of Clarendon, then Governor-General (1932), which situates the movement well within the imperial milieu ("The Grace Dieu Experience", 112).

of the white Scouts and Guides, then very much in vogue because of the emphasis on character formation; the concern of missions with youth and leisure, particularly in the urban areas,[229] and the ideas of educational `adaptation' which prevailed during the 1920s in the Transvaal.[230]

Unfortunately, for all its popularity and undoubted value, the Pathfinder / Wayfarer movement was tainted with the philosophy underpinning the Phelps-Stokes Commissions which attempted to make education functional in a colonial economy (or as Du Bois put it in 1913, to make Africa safe for white folks). Led by whites, mainly to keep society orderly, the movement characterises the spirit of the times, as shown in the following report on a rally which the Baden-Powells attended, written by one Mary Phillips in 1932:

> the Chief Pathfinder [Rheinallt Jones] spoke in clear tones to the Chief Scout [Baden-Powell] and said, "Sir, you see before you Young Africa" - one felt it was just worth every ounce of keenness and perseverance one could muster to help along this young Africa which is keen, so keen, to think rightly and to serve God with the devotion of which he is capable.[231]

The idea that Pathfinding and Wayfaring inculcated character traits like "honesty, responsibility, unselfishness", virtues "that we Anglo-Saxons take too much for granted sometimes", is stated by Matthew Trelawny-Ross CR in 1942.[232] For this reason, it would have been popular with a conscientious and ascetic pupil like Jasper Mduna, who carried his loyalties away with him from St Peter's. In the 1941 letter in the *CR Quarterly* quoted in the previous

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[229] The American Board missionary, Ray Phillips, was the driving force behind the idea of "moralising leisure time" and "constructive recreation". For a full exploration, see Tim Couzens, `"Moralizing Leisure Time": The Transatlantic Connection and Black Johannesburg 1918-1936', in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* (London, 1982), 319-322.

[230] Deborah Gaitskell, `Upward All and Play the Game: The Girl Wayfarers' Association in the Transvaal 1925-1975', in Peter Kallaway (ed), *Apartheid and Education* (Johannesburg, 1984), 228.

[231] Quoted in Gaitskell, `Upward All', 241.

[232] Matthew Trelawny-Ross, `Church Life in a Native Urban Area', *CR Quarterly* (158) St John Baptist 1942, 24.

chapter, he writes from Natal with the wistfulness often associated with rural service:

> Please tell Mr Habedi [Abraham Habedi, first St Peter's matriculant, then teaching at the school] that I am still a Rover Scout - `The solitary Rover Scout of Backworth.' I cannot take an active part as a member of the S. Peter's crew, since I am so far from the Rand. But I am an Honorary Member of that Crew, in which capacity I continue to do my best to carry out the Scout ideal in my daily life. I continue to wear the Rover Scout uniform, and I say the Rover Scout prayer.[233]

As time wore on, Africans came to view the Pathfinders movement with more suspicion. Ralph Bunche records how a speaker at the influential All-African Convention in December 1937 castigated the Pathfinders and Wayfarers as encouraging children to disobey parents, probably because of the other allegiance (to empire) they demanded.[234] Testimony to the prominence of the movement is Mphahlele's recording in "An African Abroad", shortly after his going into exile, how for a long time he mistook the women police of Lagos for Wayfarers![235] There is no evidence that the movement was as popular in the turbulent post-War years at St Peter's. By that stage, not surprisingly, sport had begun to supersede such ideological pursuits, although the unification with the Boy Scout movement in the late 1930s[236] might have altered the Pathfinders' ethos significantly.

2.2 Mr HW Shearsmith as Headmaster (1934-1939)

It seems that the appointment in late 1934 of Henry Wilson Shearsmith, who had spent two years at Grace Dieu, was a watershed for the school. Mphahlele, it must be remembered, arrived in mid-January 1935, and he

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[233] Jasper Mduna, letter dated 26 Aug. 1941, *CR Quarterly* (157) Lady Day 1942, 35.
[234] In Edgar, *An African American*, 259.
[235] Es'kia Mphahlele, `An African Abroad', *Fighting Talk* Dec. 1957-Jan. 1958, 10.
[236] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 112.

would have encountered some innovations and improvements. Close scrutiny of the Headmaster's Report to Diocesan Synod in October 1934 will serve as a useful picture of the school as it was when he arrived to take over from Alban Winter, who was transferred by the CR Superior to St Augustine's, Penhalonga.[237] Matric classes had been started in January 1932, ten years after the school began. Two boys sat in December 1933 (one year before Mphahlele arrived) and one, Abraham Habedi, passed and went on to Fort Hare where, Mr Shearsmith noted, "he is now doing well." A record fifteen out of 26 pupils passed the JC examinations that year. The school now had 236 pupils (of which 136 were boarders), a figure which, after peaking at 292 in October 1938,[238] was to remain constant over the next decade; according to interviewees, this small size was a major reason for the sense of belonging and achievement they experienced while at the school.

Curriculum changes were uppermost in Henry Shearsmith's mind when he took over. First to go would be History, to be dropped in favour of Geography in Form I, since the syllabus was far less Eurocentric than that of History.[239] Significantly enough, Mphahlele attests to having done American history which put him at a distinct advantage at a tiresome Boston tea party with women who knew little of Africa,[240] but Geography was to prove one of the standard Matric subjects from 1938 onwards (the year after Mphahlele left). This decision was made by polling all black high schools for particulars of their JC and Matric courses. Henry Shearsmith and the Council also recognised that Afrikaans would prove more useful to the pupils than Latin, although the standard required at JC level was much higher in Afrikaans. JD Rheinallt Jones reminded Council in September 1936 that candidates for law or medicine would benefit from Latin, but the perceived good of the majority held sway, one of the few instances of this occurring. Afrikaans B only would

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[237] SAIRR, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[238] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2.
[239] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 30 March 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14 (also Advisory Council Minutes 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1). With the arrival of Mr Mitchell, History would again be taught at Matric level throughout the 1940s.
[240] Es'kia Mphahlele, `An African in America', *Fighting Talk* Feb. 1962, 11.

be offered in Form I from 1937.[241] Mphahlele's JC year in 1937, then, was the last year in which Latin and Afrikaans B could be taken together at that level; he received a B for Latin and a C for Afrikaans, which perhaps reflects the different standards. From 1939 onwards, Latin would not be offered, and Afrikaans would assume additional importance. Miss ML Walker, who had been solely responsible for Latin from January 1938, left in February 1940;[242] a letter from Mr Darling to Stephen Carter CR mentions an ever increasing work load in Afrikaans, which led to the placing of the advertisement for the Afrikaans vacancy later that year.[243]

The other main investigation Mr Shearsmith started was the possibility of changing over from the Junior Certificate of the University of South Africa and Cape Senior Certificate[244] to the Transvaal Education Department equivalents. The TED Inspector was pressurising St Peter's to change over, and Mr Shearsmith prepared a memorandum to address the issue.[245] Although the changeover never occurred, it is instructive to glance at this memorandum for the clues it gives as to the JC and Matric syllabus taken by St Peter's pupils. Before the introduction of Bantu Education all schools, regardless of whether they were black or white, wrote the external examinations their province decided on. So, for example, all black schools in the Orange Free State, Natal and Transvaal (except for the two secondary Transvaal schools besides St Peter's) took the exams of the University of South Africa, while those in the Cape were the first to change over to the Cape Junior and Senior Certificates.[246]

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[241] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14 (also Advisory Council Minutes 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1).
[242] CPSA, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 1.
[243] SAIRR, letter dated 5 Aug. 1941, Native Education: General, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 14.11.
[244] This examination was conducted under the aegis of the JMB, since the results of Abraham Habedi who wrote it were published in the *JC Examination Handbook* for 1934.
[245] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 28 Feb. 1935, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[246] SAIRR, `Memorandum on the proposal to take the examinations of the Transvaal Province in place of the University Examinations', St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.

The two main implications for St Peter's, were it to change over to the Transvaal JC and Matric examinations were the emphasis on oral work in the languages (which entailed reading, recitation from the candidate's own anthology of prose and poetry, and conversation with the examiner), and the allocation of one third of the marks to the school record of the pupil. Mr Shearsmith was in favour of both, but expressed his reservation about the possibility of discrimination against black pupils when tested orally by the Inspector. The weighting of the oral examination, and the prejudice of TED inspectors, probably proved decisive in eventually keeping the status quo, particularly if one takes into account Stephen Carter's fulminations against the inspectors. Writing to JD Rheinallt Jones in 1944, he expressed his concern as Superintendent of 39 schools at the time that there was too much power in the hands of the inspectorate. He gave as an example the fact that seven percent of the Standard VI pupils in the Anglican primary school in Springs had been incorrectly failed by Mr Jansen, the relevant inspector, when they had actually passed, and mused as to whether this was deliberate sabotage.[247] As early as December 1937 Carter had written to Rheinallt Jones that "we might as well employ policemen as circuit inspectors and so save a considerable amount of money, as inspectors do no constructive work in schools and have no appreciation of good work; and Dr Eiselen himself seems to appear quite ignorant of the difficulties under which superintendents do their work".[248] Since no English-speaking inspectors were appointed for black schools in the Transvaal at that time, there was considerable risk, therefore, for black candidates who might take oral exams.

Furthermore, the Transvaal JC and Matric examinations seemed more difficult to pass, given that a pass in all six subjects was required, as opposed to five out of seven under the present system at JC level. The Transvaal JC, moreover, allotted the most marks for the difficult subjects English,

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[247] SAIRR, letter dated 7 March 1944, Native Education: General, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 14.14. In the letter Carter pointed out how the same Inspector refused to accept teachers trained in the Free State but himself produced one trained in the Cape; he also arbitrarily dismissed a teacher he had appointed and was doing sterling work, as soon as he found out that he only had one leg.

[248] SAIRR, letter dated December 1937, Native Education, AD 843 / B 37.13/14/15.

Mathematics, and General Science, "half as many marks again as any other subject", and were therefore weighted at the expense of the other three subjects, Afrikaans, the Vernacular, and Geography. Mr Shearsmith made the crucial point in his memorandum that the JC was "regarded as a finish to the school career of a native" (it was the entrance qualification needed for the Higher Primary Teacher diploma, and for Matriculation at Fort Hare), and it would therefore benefit more pupils to take an easier exam like the UNISA exam offered by St Peter's. However, the more difficult Transvaal JC exam might prove advantageous in that it "would weed out the students who would probably fail later on at the Matriculation hurdle".[249] This was a well-founded concern for, while St Peter's had a commendable pass rate for the JC examination, only very few candidates passed Matric. In the interests of the majority of pupils, then, St Peter's never changed. The school would be pressurised by the TED again in February 1947 but, despite further consideration, the changeover never occurred.[250]

The possible changeover to the demanding Transvaal JC General Science syllabus, however, necessitated consideration of the revamp of the science laboratory to do justice to it. As it turned out, the Transvaal syllabus was not followed, but the school got its upgraded laboratory anyway! The laboratory at St Peter's was particularly renowned in the 1940s, like the library, for being well-equipped, and this was jointly due to Mr Shearsmith and Mr Darling, the Science master who would become Headmaster for 14 years after him. They embarked on the drive to enlarge the lab to take 30 pupils from the present 18,[251] but this project was put on hold until the site of the school was declared permanent (there had been some doubt in the mid-1930s, as we have seen, given its siting in a white area, and residents had expressed their unease about black pupils in the suburb). Very comprehensive plans for the new laboratory were considered in a memorandum dated August 1935, after the

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[249] SAIRR, `Memorandum', St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14. All subsequent quotes are taken from this memorandum.
[250] CPSA, St Peter's School Executive Committee Minutes, AB 2089 / D 2.1.
[251] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 28 Feb. 1935, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.

labs of three (white) secondary schools had been inspected;[252] the Mining Houses and the Council of Education were approached for a grant and loan.[253] Eventually by the 1950s, according to Kgoleng, every pupil had his or her own table and equipment in the laboratory.

Mr Shearsmith's Report to Synod in 1934 reveals that, in Winter's final year as Headmaster, the school hall had been converted into a library for the whole school, and a reading room for the boarders. He also remarks that both "are being well-used and the provision of such facilities forms an important aspect of any Secondary School".[254] For Mphahlele, the library, like others on mission campuses, "built up such self-confidence as to shake the Verwoerds, the Eiselens, the Malans - that whole breed of ogres - when so many of us carried on and consolidated the tradition of political resistance begun since 1910".[255] He would spend "hours of free time reading in the school library" in the company of Dickens, Stevenson, Walter Scott, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Conan Doyle, Baroness Orczy, Pearl Buck, Quiller Couch, Buchan etc,[256] many of whom, as we have seen, were prescribed texts. As Arthur Maimane found that Mrs Lindsay did not quite appreciate his passion for *Bulldog Drummond*, so Mphahlele was once thrown out of class (by Mrs Lindsay one conjectures)[257] for reading a Tarzan book during a free period.[258] But Mphahlele did tell Couzens that, at St Peter's, "there was ample room for the teacher to swing around and encourage students to read things other

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[252] SAIRR, `Memorandum on proposed laboratory accommodation', Transvaal Advisory Board for Native Education 1931-39, AD 843 / B 37.15.
[253] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[254] SAIRR, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[255] Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', 118.
[256] Es'kia Mphahlele, `My Experience as a Writer', in MJ Daymond et al (eds), *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing* (Pietermaritzburg, 1984), 75.
[257] It may, however, have been Miss Wood, the "crooked old thing", as Br Roger addressed her, who also taught Latin. In his interview with me Mphahlele pointed out that Mrs Lindsay, although the English teacher for Matric, taught him history at JC level, while Miss Wood, also from England, taught him English. This does not tally with Abrahams's specific recollection of Mrs Lindsay teaching him English in Form I. It is unlikely that Mphahlele would have had only one English teacher for three years running, so perhaps Mrs Lindsay gave way in Form III to Miss Wood, whom Mphahlele remembers as being very thorough in her inculcation of language skills.
[258] Mphahlele, `My Experience as a Writer', 75.

than they were reading in class".[259] Mr Shearsmith, in fact, mindful of the importance of reading, tried to arrange a visit of senior boys to the Johannesburg Public Library and Africana Museum, then segregated under the colour bar. This, however, was not possible under a municipal by-law, and Mr Shearsmith met (unsuccessfully it would seem, for nothing changed) with the Librarian about the discrimination.[260]

Yet St Peter's was not only known for its library, but for its success on the sports field and in cultural pursuits, an integral part of English public school education. "Emphasis is laid on the training of character, for which provision is made by way of religious instruction and services, manual work and games," reads the early-1930s *Prospectus*.[261] Alban Winter, admittedly writing in 1932 when there was not much external competition, although the inter-House competition was tough, boasted that, "[i]n competing with outside teams we win so often that the authorities have honoured us by making us start with a minus percentage, on the ground that being an institution we have an undue advantage over day schools".[262] As far back as October 1934, Mr Shearsmith (who, in 1931, had introduced to Grace Dieu the inter-House System of annual Challenge Cups in Cricket, Football, Netball, Tennis and Athletics)[263] reported to Synod that the senior football team had won the Inter-School Shield and Inter-Schools Sports Cup, while the senior girls' hockey team had come second in their League;[264] they won the Umteteli Bantu Women's Cup in 1937.[265] In 1937, too, the senior football team topped

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[259] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 121.
[260] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14 (also Minutes of Advisory Council 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1). For an account of the ignominious segregated history of the Johannesburg and Durban Public Libraries during the 1920s and 1930s, which spurned the initiatives of AB Xuma and AWG Champion respectively, see Alan Cobley, `Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness: The Provision of Library Services for Blacks in South Africa in the Pre-Apartheid Era', *Libraries and Culture* 32(1) Winter 1997, 63-64.
[261] *Prospectus of S. Peter's and S. Agnes' Schools*, 3.
[262] Winter, `Growing Pains', 23.
[263] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 110.
[264] SAIRR, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[265] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B.

the first league of the Transvaal African Football Association.[266] Such sporting prowess would continue for the school's existence.

Ralph Bunche mentions twice the popularity of football and tennis among black students in 1937: not only do these sports comprise a core activity of Student Associations, but as Dr Moroka told him on his travels in Thaba 'Nchu, they were the two played under the aegis of the Orange Free State Native Sports Association.[267] Their popularity is also attested to by the fact that the Bantu Sports Club in Johannesburg (donated by Howard Pim, first President of the SAIRR, on twelve acres of abandoned mining land) included two football fields, tennis courts and a clubhouse.[268] Interviewees who participated in football and tennis in the 1940s and 1950s all said that there was no school to beat St Peter's in these key sports (remembering, of course, that official league matches were segregated under the colour bar, although friendly tennis games were played against St John's). Richard Kgoleng indicated that coaching from 1950 onwards was done by Solomon Ngakane, the Geography teacher, who himself was "a very good tennis player." Behind the encouragement of sport at school lay the public school belief in the ability of games to form character (and this was a credential for success in obtaining testimonials, bursaries or positions).

Cricket in particular was well thought of by the staff, although it was never as popular as soccer and tennis among the pupils; Kgoleng admitted to me, "it never really caught on, I don't know why." In 1935 financial difficulties prompted the Council to consider disbanding the cricket club, but Mr Darling, then still Science master, was not alone in opposing this, as he felt the game was invaluable in forming character and physical development. It was decided that subscriptions for football and boxing (the two popular sports) would be arranged by the pupils to defray the Hostel's expenses.[269] In his

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[266] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Inspection Reports, AB 2089 / I 6.2.
[267] In Edgar, *An African American*, 152.
[268] Ibid, 351.
[269] CPSA, St Peter's School, Council Sub-committee Minutes dated Aug. 1935, AB 2089 / D 2.1.

exploration of cricket's history among black South Africans, André Odendaal shows that the game, "a perfect system of ethics and morals", was the most popular sport among the Cape African elite in the nineteenth century, serving an explicitly political function in that the elite were intent on using it as an instrument of assimilation.[270] "In adopting British cultural values and seeking upward mobility in Cape society," Odendaal argues, "the aspiring petty black bourgeoisie often distanced itself from the mass of Africans who remained within the traditional framework or were becoming proletarianised".[271] The lack of commensurate enthusiasm in the Transvaal, although cricket was certainly played, is perhaps an index of how assimilation was no longer a preoccupation of the educated elite.

What did generate great enthusiasm across the board, however, was singing. Choirs under Mr Nongauza, founder and choirmaster of the male voice Hostel Choir, and Miss Broughton, trainer in church music and choirmistress of the School Choir, were recorded by Columbia in June 1930. Altogether they made some 18 records,[272] including a gramophone record for the League of Nations World Broadcast in September 1936,[273] and won many prizes at the annual Bantu Eisteddfod held at the Bantu Men's Social Centre. Mr Shearsmith reported in October 1934 that the School Choir had gained nine prizes at the Eisteddfod in December 1933, including the cups for the best Institutional Mixed Voice Choir and best Male Voice Choir. The Choir won the cup, yet again, in December 1936 for the best Institutional Mixed Voice Choir, from the favoured Adams College, as well as four individual prizes.[274] The culture of choir singing extended to smaller groups run by the pupils themselves: Bertram Moloi's choir in the late 1930s was called Duma Choir and included Oliver Tambo; it would join others in performing at end-of-year

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[270] André Odendaal, `South Africa's Black Victorians: Sport, Race and Class in South Africa before Union', *Africa Perspective* 1(7&8) 1989, 78.
[271] Odendaal, `South Africa's Black Victorians', 79.
[272] Winter, `St. Peter's School, Rosettenville', 19. Winter also mentions that Mr Nongauza's choir was broadcast from Johannesburg on the night of Empire Day (24 May 1935), which significantly underlines the imperial milieu in which St Peter's had its inception.
[273] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B.
[274] SAIRR, Report to the Missionary Conference of the Johannesburg Diocese dated July 1937, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.

concerts. The choir, in true African style, did not confine themselves to singing on these occasions; as Moloi told me, "We used to do the Charleston! It was, really, it was joyous times."

In his retrospective memoir, Alban Winter implies that the musical *King Kong*, composed by ex-pupil Todd Matshikiza and taking London by storm at the time of his writing in 1962,[275] was due to institutional fostering of musical talent. "I cannot help thinking," he speculates, "that all this earlier training and competing of school choirs, in which St Peter's had its full share, did much to foster this astonishing outburst of song, dance and acting".[276] However, this perhaps claims too much for the school, which Matshikiza attended in 1936: he came from a family of ten in Queenstown whose lives were surrounded by music, all of whom sang or played, and he grew up with a sure musical instinct which, of course, found expression in composition.[277] Moreover, DDT Jabavu made it clear that, along with a facility in languages, the African child "comes to school with a strong tendency towards singing and harmonising, gained from the musical habits of his parents," and he noted that one of his daughters at the age of two "could sing six tunes correctly, a thing that is not usual, I am told, among white children".[278] Interestingly, Mphahlele characterises `the Black Aesthetic' by two features: speech and music (the joy black people take in conversation and playing or singing together);[279] surely it is no accident that the two most popular cultural pursuits at St Peter's were choir singing and the debating society.

Initiated in September 1930, the debating society proved extremely popular among a certain type of pupil only, but was made more user-friendly by the addition of lectures from 1932 onwards, according to the 1932 *St Peter's*

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[275] Opening night of this legendary musical was 2 February 1959 at the University of the Witwatersrand Great Hall; the sold-out run lasted until 18 March, then resumed for a week in April before touring South Africa and finally reaching London (Mona Glasser, *King Kong: A Venture in the Theatre* (Cape Town, 1960), 53, 55).
[276] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 61.
[277] Glasser, *King Kong*, 11.
[278] DDT Jabavu, `The Child as He Comes to School', in Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations*, 434.
[279] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Reply to Addison Gayle Jr', *Black World* 23(3) Jan. 1974, 14.

School Magazine.[280] It was this forum which attracted speakers from the Youth League in the 1940s, and encouraged the famous climate of debate at St Peter's which Ken Hartshorne experienced as President of the Kilnerton Debating Society, arch-rivals of St Peter's in regular school debates, subjects for which invariably had a political flavour.[281] One enigma, though, is the cessation of what had been a "flourishing" School Magazine until 1934, with all articles contributed by the pupils, as Mr Shearsmith pointed out in his Report to Synod. Mphahlele makes no mention of it in *Down Second Avenue*, while he does say that Peter Abrahams would regularly write poetry. If it had still been running in 1937, no doubt Abrahams would have published his poems in it, as he did in the *Grace Dieu Bulletin* while he was there in 1936. There is only one bound copy in the CPSA Archive of five issues from June 1932 to December 1934, although, troublingly, the Advisory Council minuted in early 1935 (Mphahlele's first year) that the magazine was "still in a flourishing condition".[282]

Yet creative writing for performative purposes flourished as Br Roger testified in 1936.[283] He reports on a concert of several "extraordinarily good" plays written and produced by one of the boys (no name is given, unfortunately). One about a ghost was the funniest thing he had seen; another, supposed to be funny, was actually pathetic in that it caricatured sordid, if enterprising, life in Sophiatown. Interestingly, perhaps referring to the same concert, Mphahlele describes how the pupils in 1935-6, in addition to acting their Form Room plays , also loved to act "funny ones of our own composition", attributing to this activity his "passion for dramatics".[284] Abrahams, of course, published poems in the *Bantu World* during his time at St Peter's, and many years later, Arthur Maimane would write freelance for the paper on black school sports. But if Abrahams was serious about writing for non-

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[280] *St Peter's School Magazine* 1(1) 1932, 11-12. The debating and discussion society at Grace Dieu was only started in January 1939, after Abrahams's time there (Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 117.)

[281] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, 229 footnote 16.

[282] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 28 Feb. 1935, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.

[283] Roger Castle, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (136) Christmas 1936, 16.

performance, yet found no peer support or ready medium at St Peter's (as he had the *Grace Dieu Bulletin*), this may account in part for his decision to leave the school after an otherwise stimulating 1937-38.

It was the previous year, 1936-37, which comprised "a most successful and satisfactory year", according to Mr Shearsmith in his Report to the Missionary Conference in July 1937.[285] The school broke all previous records regarding examinations; as Br Roger wrote in the *CR Quarterly*, "[l]ast year we excelled ourselves and everyone else in the Transvaal".[286] 54 out of 65 JC candidates over the two years were successful, and, *mirabile dictu*, all nine matriculants entered passed, according to the 1938 CR pamphlet, *An Appeal for Funds for Development*. This may have influenced Canon SP Woodfield's suggestion to Abrahams in 1936, who was then a promising sixth in his class of 58 at Grace Dieu,[287] that he attend St Peter's with a view to matriculation.[288] The two candidates entered for the 1936 Matric exam both passed in the second class, one being Congress Mbata (with distinction in Latin) who went on to Fort Hare with a TED bursary of £30 per annum for three years. Br Roger relates the announcing of the results as "truly African", an index of the extent of the pupils' growing influence on the school:

> When the morning papers came with the results in them, Shearsmith, our Head, although a Yorkshireman, could not contain himself longer and read them from the steps of the office - unofficially amidst wild enthusiasm. Then they were read again, officially in church, amidst fairly reverent stirrings and murmurings. Surely the matter could have ended there. But no, at dinner time in the dining-hall, there were fresh scenes of delirious excitement when the Head Prefect read them out

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[284] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 129.
[285] SAIRR, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14.
[286] Castle, `Examination Results at Rosettenville', 16.
[287] SAIRR, 1936 college report, Diocesan Training College 1931-41 AD 843 / B 37.7.4.
[288] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 249. Abrahams gives the year of his attendance at St Peter's as 1938; he had been there throughout 1937 as well.

> once more - `We so like the sound of them,' he explained naively.[289]

This helps to account for Mphahlele's feeling the pressure in July 1937, when he had his nervous breakdown.[290] Obviously he could not fail his mother, who was sacrificing much to pay the £15 per year fees at St Peter's, when she only earned £3 a month in domestic service, but it would seem that the culture of competition also adversely affected him; when this was put to him in interview with me he confirmed his crushing need, since he himself was of a scholarly bent, to keep up with the achievement of previous pupils.

The culture of learning was particularly intense at this time, and Mphahlele was very aware of the scholastic tradition maintained by the school, "an atmosphere in which pupils ahead of us gloried in chalking out geometry riders and figures on the nearest board they could find. And then they ganged up to watch the heroes solve the riders".[291] Some of these heroes are cited by Mphahlele in his response to Chabani Manganyi's observation that St Peter's "seems to have been such an important school as far as African education is concerned":[292]

> It was a very reputable school. It had a discipline of its own. It wasn't Spartan at all. Both teachers and students were most inspiring. We had been preceded by fellows who had taken their matric in the first class. People like Senokwanyane, Oliver Tambo, Joe Mokwena. Those were our seniors and they were really inspiring. There was an open acknowledgement of students who were really good . . . . But there was a climate of real scholarship - academic achievement which was really

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[289] Castle, `Examination Results at Rosettenville', 16.
[290] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 134.
[291] Ibid, 126.
[292] Manganyi, `Looking In', 15.

> inspiring. Even those who came after us distinguished themselves in various ways.[293]

Oliver Tambo and Joseph Mokoena passed the 1936 JC examination in the first division of the first class, "an achievement never before accomplished by a Bantu student", according to the Headmaster's Report in July 1937, and there were three other first-class passes that year. Tambo and Mokoena were awarded bursaries of £10 per annum by UNISA, and Tambo also received a £30 per annum bursary for the next five years from the Transkeian General Council. Mphahlele would receive a Natal Education Department scholarship worth £22 for his training at Adams College on the strength of his first-class JC results a year later,[294] which he used to reimburse his mother. Mr Shearsmith attributed the success of pupils during the *annus mirabilis* to the "excellent and highly qualified staff, who were present for the whole year, and who spared no pains" in ensuring that their pupils did well. A contributing factor to the excellent results could be that, out of 242 scholars, 165 were boarders (99 boys and 66 girls), allowing them to participate fully in the life of the school.[295]

A year later in 1938, the two failures in Matric were offset by the three first-class passes of Aaron Lebona, Joseph Mokoena and Oliver Tambo. Tambo's distinction was in Mathematics, while Mokoena obtained three, in Latin, Mathematics and - the first ever African pupil to do so - in Physical Science. Because, as Mr Shearsmith put it, he was "the most brilliant boy we have ever had at this school and was top of quite a brilliant class", Mokoena received a bursary of £50 a year from St Peter's to attend Fort Hare.[296] The highpoint of the late 1930s was never reached again, and the distinction helps to account for Mphahlele's preoccupation with results. Manganyi, in his conversation with Mphahlele, reflects that the existence of St Peter's

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[293] Mphahlele, in Manganyi, `Looking In', 15-16. Senokoanyane, classmate of Zeph Mothopeng, passed Matric in the second class in 1937, and Mokoena and Tambo in the first class a year later.
[294] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 148.
[295] *An Appeal for Funds for Development*, 1938.
[296] CPSA, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1935-45, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 1.

constituted no less than an *era*, and the only other time he uses that word is more conventionally in talking of the legendary Sophiatown.[297] Carl Runge attested to this uniqueness when he compared the school favourably with the school of which he happened to be the last CR Headmaster, St John's:

> There is no native school in the Union to touch St Peter's. What we *must* now do is go ahead with improvements . . . . Despite the primitive equipment of St. Peter's, boys can do as well there and better, than the privileged white boys, and it is the most effective way of pointing the moral.[298]

This comparison moreover suggests that the link between the two schools was prominent at this time; Bertram Moloi, who passed the JC exam in 1938, recalls having debates against St John's, "and they were of a very high standard." So, after a decade of pioneering existence in the Transvaal, St Peter's School authorities were becoming aware that its incipient tradition ought to be fostered, and Rheinallt Jones proposed that a bursary fund for needy boys be established; recipients would be asked to repay the bursary after they had left school to help future boys at St Peter's.[299] The fees of boarders were stiff, if competitive: £12 per annum in 1934, plus twelve shillings a head, ten shillings per term for uniforms and a pound a term for books. These fees compared well with those of similar mission schools in the Transvaal, as Winterbach points out,[300] although parents always struggled. In 1949 the boarding fees were £18 per annum (£3 for day scholars) and 15 shillings a head.[301] In the last two years of the school's existence, with only 162 out of a possible 190 places filled as the spectre of closure advanced, boarders paid £26 per annum for hostel fees.[302] It is a nice irony that, of all

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[297] Manganyi, `Looking In', 18, 23.
[298] Carl Runge, letter dated 21 Jan. 1938, *CR Quarterly* (141) Lady Day 1938, 15. Emphasis and ellipsis in original.
[299] SAIRR, Advisory Council Minutes dated 18 Sept. 1936, St Peter's Secondary School 1934-46, AD 843 / B 37.14. The sexist language at this stage is understandable, given that it was only in 1941 that the first female matriculated.
[300] Winterbach, `The Community of the Resurrection's Involvement', 37.
[301] CPSA, Minutes dated April 1949, Advisory Council Minutes 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1.
[302] CPSA, Minutes dated April 1954, Advisory Council Minutes 1932-56, AB 2089 / D 1.

the elements of St Peter's which remained after its closure in December 1956, it was the post-Matric Bursary Fund, going some way towards sabotaging the Bantu Education Act which had closed the school, by seeing ex-St Peter's pupils through their university degrees in the late 1950s.[303]

3 St Peter's in the 1940s

3.1 The Restive Decade

The advertisement posted at the end of 1941 for the Afrikaans post which Mr Benade eventually filled described St Peter's as having 231 pupils (114 boys and 67 girls as boarders), a lay Headmaster (Mr Darling), and six white and five black teachers.[304] By 1946 the number of scholars had increased to 280 (200 boarders), and teachers to twelve (four white and eight black), as Mr Darling wrote to one IF Tilbrook, who had taught Geography from 1937 to 1939, in August that year.[305] Seven of the eight were all past pupils (two females, five males, including Oliver Tambo); and Mr Mitchell and Mrs Lindsay still held up the white side, and would do so for the next decade. Mr Darling's casual, almost flippant, comment in his letter on the series of Wardens ("When Br Roger left the Boys' Hostel, there was a rapid series of successors who were Fr Wall who was shot by a burglarious intruder one night, then Fr Thomas, then Fr Jenkins and now it is Fr Baynham") belies the serious significance of the turnover.

For the 1940s were notorious for the unrest and food riots in many mission schools throughout the country, which were an extension of the turbulence in the mining and industrial sectors, and the pressures of urbanisation (appalling

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[303] By that stage the CR network had proved lucrative: post-Matric bursaries included the May Palmer Bursary of £56 per annum for four years at Fort Hare and the Wolf Gordon Bursary of £50 per annum.

[304] SAIRR, Native Education: General, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 14.11 file 3.

[305] CPSA, letter dated 6 Aug. 1946, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 2. The school then had three Form Is, three Form IIs, two Form IIIs, two Form IVs and one Form V.

conditions and inadequate services). The resources of most mission schools were stretched to breaking point, and were unable to cater for the masses requiring an education in the face of post-War demands.[306] Shula Marks has noted that Adams College, approaching its centenary in the late 1940s, "was not a happy place", an unpopular Principal having been forced to resign after two cases of arson and examination boycotts and, even when Jack Grant replaced him, the trouble continued, with 175 students being sent home after refusing to attend chapel.[307] Baruch Hirson mentions that between 1943 and 1945 there were more than 20 strikes and riots in schools, and after the Lovedale strike in August 1946 there were five others in the Transvaal.[308]

St Peter's, however, escaped unscathed, unless one counts the mysterious murder of Vincent Wall CR on 13 April 1942. He was found dead that Monday morning and, while initially it was suspected that a disaffected pupil had committed the crime (certainly Benjamin Baynham construed it thus), the brethren thought it more likely that it was an outside job, the motive probably robbery. Edwin Ainscow, who was an English teacher at St Peter's a decade later, took issue with Baynham's reading and adopted the conventional line, viz. it was an outside job. This is not idle speculation; Baynham feels that it accounted for a serious lack of trust between pupils and staff for years thereafter, and led to boys sleeping with guns under their pillows for much of the decade. Br Edwin thinks this is too grave a construction, but then he only arrived a decade afterwards and would have probably swallowed the official line from hearsay. In his survey of black education in the 1940s, Hyslop interestingly highlights "a breakdown of previously existing trust relations between students and missionaries" owing to the political and social ferment of the 1940s.[309]

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[306] Jonathan Hyslop's work in this regard is the most challenging; see also Cynthia Kros's investigative paper on the Lovedale strike of 1946 and Anne Mager's innovative focus on the gender aspects of disturbances in the Alice schools nexus between 1945 and 1959.
[307] Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 28.
[308] Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, 31.
[309] Hyslop, `The Concepts of Reproduction', 18.

The official press release simply mentions that the 36-year old priest was "shot by an unknown assailant soon after midnight".[310] A Yorkshireman and schoolfellow of Henry Shearsmith, he had been ordained deacon and priest in Zululand (and was, unusually, a fluent speaker of the vernacular) and, after his profession of vows in 1936, came to the Sophiatown Mission. His ministry from 1938 was among blind Africans, and he helped to superintend Reef schools during 1939, until he took up the post of Hostel Warden at St Peter's after Br Roger left in May 1940. The obituary in the *CR Quarterly* mentions the spiritual influence he had on a wide range of people, white and black, especially on number of boys in the Hostel who later became priests, or chose instead a life of service.[311] Jasper Mduna, we remember, wrote to Fr Wall in 1941 only a few months prior to his shock death from the farm in Natal to thank him for `The Churchman's Almanack' which Wall had sent him and to record his spiritual disciplines.[312] The obituary also records that Fr Wall practised a rule of life similar to Br Roger's, with which the hostel boys would have been well acquainted: "Early to bed, he was up before anyone else, long before daylight, and engrossed in devotion before the Blessed Sacrament".[313] And it notes personal habits dear to Br Roger's heart, which would have set an example to the boys: "nothing negligent or slovenly either in his dress or appearance."

According to the press report, he was a gifted man, typical of his Community in that he put duty first and himself last. And he was more conscientiously indigenised than most, since the multilingual nature of the Reef did not encourage the CR to learn any vernacular seriously; the obituary mentions that "[t]o many Africans who knew Fr Wall his ability to speak Zulu was a sign of his love and intimacy with them".[314] Even allowing for the hagiographical nature of obituaries, it seems that Wall was a fine preacher and pastor, who gave unstintingly of his time and energy, not only to the boys under his care,

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[310] CPSA Archive, press release dated 17 April 1942, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 2.
[311] Eric Goodall, `In Memoriam', *CR Quarterly* (159) Michaelmas 1942, 7.
[312] Jasper Mduna, letter dated 26 Aug. 1941, *CR Quarterly* (157) Lady Day 1942, 33.
[313] Goodall, `In Memoriam', 7.
[314] Ibid, 6.

but to the sick at Baragwanath (known then as the Non-European Hospital). Alan Paton confirmed to Wilkinson in 1983 that, though "Father Vincent" in *Cry The Beloved Country* was based on Huddleston, his name derived from the much-loved member of the CR, Vincent Wall,[315] in whose memory a bursary of £12 was created. It seems likely that his murder was a sign of the times. Interestingly, the Church of Sweden's urban mission, St Ansgar's in Roodepoort, which went up to Standard VI (and educated Desmond Tutu in the 1940s for a time), was subjected to a burglary in the same decade. In August 1947, thieves stole the safe containing £266.10 of school funds and £7 of pupils' money, but no culprits were found; the Headmaster said that "the police interrogated some of the boys and teachers but otherwise seemed to be extremely uninterested, and that is customary for the police out here".[316] Since the murder of Fr Wall remains unsolved, the same might have been said of the police's response there, too.

3.2 Mr DH Darling as Headmaster (1940-1954)

Significantly, though, a number of boys had been expelled from St Ansgar's in 1946 for theft and other offences and, a year before Vincent Wall's murder, during Mr Darling's term as Headmaster, a certain incident occurred which may very well have a bearing on the murder. Mr Darling's letter to the father of one Patrick Mathabathe, dated 31 March 1941, tells the story, and reveals the kind of escapades embarked upon by less studiously-minded pupils:

> I have had to suspend Patrick from attendance at this school until after the July holidays. He was arrested by the police at five-past-two on Sunday morning together with another boy. They were found dressed in pyjamas and wearing overcoats in a street in the vicinity. When asked where they had been, they said they had been to the bioscope and had left the Hostel at 10.30 p.m. This very silly story has no truth in it because all the

[315] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 300.

> bioscopes close at the latest at 11 p.m. and they could not have got to the town before then. The police took them to the local station, put them in the cells and informed us next day. Fr. Wall bailed them out at 10/- each and when we questioned them here, they told the story I have just related . . . . It is my own opinion that they were out after girls and indeed it seems quite likely from what I have heard about Patrick's behaviour in Sophiatown during the holidays. I want you to keep him with you in the country at Sabie.

Mr Darling indicates his displeasure because the school's reputation and discipline is at stake, but concedes that the boys may attend as day scholars once their suspension has expired.[317] Mr Mathabathe's reply, dated 14 July, is most conciliatory, but records his hope that his son can be a boarder again as soon as possible. An interesting twist then occurs, with David Downton CR, in charge of the Sophiatown Priory, and mentor to many boys (including Bertram Moloi), writing to Mr Darling on 4 September, that Patrick had come to him "in great distress, imploring me to write and ask you to let him come back so that he should not fail in his exam".[318] It is worth quoting his letter in full, as it gives some indication of the greater tolerance of CR Fathers to wayward behaviour and their ability to take the longer view (although, to be fair, Fr Downton did not have the reputation of St Peter's to consider, nor school discipline to maintain):

> don't you think he has a kind of I won't say madness, but wildness, which causes these breakouts? If he fails in this exam it may finish him. He will probably chuck this renewed effort to become a decent citizen and we shall have another [? illegible] completely off the rails - Couldn't you punish him

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[316] Frederick Hale, `St Ansgar's Institution in Roodepoort, 1927-1958: A Study in Adaptation', *Historia* 39(1) May 1994, 61-62.
[317] CPSA, David Darling, letter dated 31 March 1941, Testimonials and Correspondence 1944-67, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.
[318] CPSA, David Downton, letter dated 4 Sept. 1941, Testimonials and Correspondence, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.

> severely in some other way? He is scared stiff, and you have certainly done the effective thing to pull him up, but couldn't you *relent* before it is too late? So that he can get through this exam? I do hope you you [sic] will. Please forgive my writing, but I do so want the boy to go on at St Peter's. It may be the making of him.

It is not known whether Mr Darling relented or not, but what is evident is that emotions were running high, as is always the case with a child's future at stake, and the grievance is directly connected with the Hostel, in terms of both cause of offence and punishment. Wayward boys at this time obviously construed the penalty for irresponsible behaviour as too harsh, and were perhaps prepared to vent their anger in irrational fashion, even if they had to bide their time for a year.[319]

The tinder igniting the countrywide unrest at mission schools during the mid-1940s was the poor food, but the anger was fueled by deeper grievances.[320] When one considers the puritanical and authoritarian nature of RHW Shepherd, Principal of Lovedale at the time of the unrest (a frightening picture of him and his handling of the strike emerges in Cynthia Kros's paper), one realises that there would have been no sympathy for the way he ran his institution from the Headmaster, Mr Darling, and the CR brethren at St Peter's. The fact that St Peter's was largely spared the unrest suggests that pupils (who would have felt the same as their peers about black social conditions) felt they could not (or ought not to) protest at St Peter's in the same way. None of the minutes of the Council Sub-committee (1934-1945) or the Executive Committee (1945-1955) reflect disturbances at St Peter's.

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[319] For two instances of unrest in the Eastern Cape in which the Warden became the target of students' wrath, see Kros, `They Wanted Dancing', 7 and Mager, `Girls' Wars', 10-11.

[320] The disturbances at Lovedale were investigated in a private one-man commission by DL Smit, who had retired in 1945 as Secretary for Native Affairs. The main causes were the stringent missionary discipline, food grievances, and the prevailing sense of political unrest, heightened by the lack of opportunity for educated Africans and the denial of any form of equality (see Phyllis Lewsen (ed), *Voices of Protest: From Segregation to Apartheid, 1938-1948* (Johannesburg, 1988), 312 footnote 169). For more detailed findings, see the

Certainly the minutes of a special meeting of the Council called in May 1947 in response to the countrywide unrest (at which Mr Darling, Fr Carter, Oliver Tambo as staff member and two pupils were present) noted that St Peter's had not felt the disturbances in February, April and May that year, and none of the 185 boarders had been involved.[321] Tellingly enough, though, Vincent Wall's murder five years ago was brought up again, but written off hastily under the rubric of "suspected burglary" since there was still no evidence of pupils' involvement. A month later, the Log Book records the suspension of some boys for gambling and inciting disorder in the dining hall;[322] in keeping with the CR's usually indulgent approach, though, Stephen Carter decided all but one could return in the new term.

3.2.1 Trevor Huddleston's influence

The ethos at the school, however, might have prevented the pupils from expressing their grievances in violent fashion. The CR brethren had always tried to understand the life experience of their pupils, and engendered real love on the part of many pupils, according to Richard Kgoleng, who looked forward to being rostered to serve them at daily Mass, and being with them whenever they could. Meshack Ntsangani spoke about how the brethren would often pay a visit to the boys' homes, causing great consternation among the mothers when they heard that the "white Father" was coming! And yet many of the Fathers would share meals in poor dwellings after services, and Alban Winter mentions the intense sense of house-pride and spotlessness he would always encounter.[323] Trevor Huddleston, in particular, would spend time chatting with the boys in their dormitories at St Peter's from the late afternoons onwards until bed-time, finding out their problems or concerns in order to iron them out later, Meshack Ntsangani said, by

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Commission's letter to the Minister of Education dated 26 July 1946 (CPSA, Government: Riot Commission 1947-49, AB 2089 / I 6.5).

[321] SAIRR, Minutes of special meeting dated 28 May 1947, Schools 1943-47, AD 843 / B 92.7.2.

[322] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B.

[323] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 18.

counselling and even giving material help. "He made us feel very special," Ntsangani told me, "we used to adore him."

"Huddleston was never too busy to listen to a student's sorrows and ambitions - especially ambitions," said Arthur Maimane;[324] Sampson himself tells of his single-minded attention when requesting a job for Maimane on *Drum*: "He spoke with a simple directness, as if Arthur and *Drum* were all that he had ever thought about".[325] This was, significantly, the quality which struck Nadine Gordimer most about him, "in whom prayer functions . . . as a special form of intelligent concentration . . . . It asserts, always, that another way of thinking and living existed, and still exists".[326] The word that came immediately to the lips of both Ntsangani and Kgoleng in describing him was "fatherly." His biographer, Robin Denniston, traces this very characteristic throughout his life, demonstrating how he was, for example, "a real father of many in the [Sophiatown] servers' guild." Each evening, children would gather in the Sophiatown Priory to study with him, purposely "there to answer questions and help with difficult words, like any other parent".[327]

Children, in fact, were the reason for Huddleston's life-long activism against apartheid. His first letter home after coming out to Sophiatown in January 1944 reveals over and over again the impact of the youth of the location. "The children everywhere are simply fascinating in their friendliness and gaiety," he enthuses. "Words fail me to describe the utter enchantment of their solemn `crocodile' walk - each one holding on to the `pinny' of the one in front: they are `a joy forever'".[328] His quotation from Keats is no accident; the Romantic idealising of childhood proved a powerful motivating factor in his ministry. It was the children who were "the great joy of Sophiatown." The moment when Jacob, a Newclare nursery school boy of six, spontaneously leapt up to kiss his hand as he was passing, having said goodnight to them

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[324] Sampson, *Drum*, 164.
[325] Ibid, 166.
[326] Nadine Gordimer, `Huddleston: A Sign', in D Duncan Honoré (ed), *Trevor Huddleston: Essays on His Life and Work* (Oxford, 1988), 6-7.
[327] Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (London, 1999), 43.
[328] Trevor Huddleston, letter dated 5 Jan. 1944, *CR Quarterly* (165) Lady Day 1944, 17, 18.

all, a class of about fifty, Denniston sees as the defining episode in his life, "the moment when he accepted fatherhood, responding with love to the love of African children".[329] Huddleston has also acknowledged the power of this incident: "The kiss of Jacob still lingers, not only in my memory, but in my heart and will".[330] However, sixty percent of black children were not getting any education at all, and Huddleston's characteristic fervour injects rhetoric into what he apologises for as a sermon:

> It's all so blind and short-sighted, this neglect to build schools because it does quite truly mean building prisons instead. And we see under our very eyes this lovely material of childhood and young manhood simply rotting away into gangsterism and worse. Do get people in England to pray and pray hard about the children here and that we may be able to do more for them! build more schools of every kind: break down these great barriers of prejudice against their being educated fully and properly.[331]

This impassioned plea reminds us that, from the first, education was to be his personal crusade, because it truly determines the future of a people.

Yet the inevitable outcome of education within the political realities of the 1940s could be summed up in one word which was sounded like a refrain by the CR throughout this decade: frustration. In his sermon preached in the Cathedral to commemorate Johannesburg's Diamond Jubilee in 1946, the 33-year old Huddleston diagnosed the problem facing the city as one of

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[329] Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston*, 35. This putting children to sleep was characteristic, too, of all CR institutions with dormitories, not least St Peter's: Mphahlele recalls very distinctly Br Roger Castle and David Darling, and a Latin teacher called George Harwood, doing the rounds every night, sometimes even hugging the boys (not him, he acknowledged ruefully!), yet always without impropriety. To his knowledge there was never a single scandal, or messy incident, and this constraint Mphahlele suggests, was consistent with the ethos of self-discipline at the Priory. It should be noted, though, that Huddleston suffered a nervous breakdown in 1974 after a complaint of sexual harrassment of two schoolboys was levied at him when he was Bishop of Stepney, and put paid to speculation that he would be the next Archbishop of Canterbury (Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston*, 130-131).

[330] Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (London, 1956), 112.

"*frustration* - frustration physical, intellectual and spiritual [his emphasis]".[332] As instances of the former he gives the appalling slums ("the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual disgrace"); as an example of the last he mentions oppression, "a racialism which deliberately chooses frustration and denies fulfilment." Huddleston notes that one of the government secondary schools in the city had seven hundred children in six classrooms, yet managed eighteen first-class passes out of 50 candidates for the JC exam in 1945 (probably the more demanding one of the TED), and had only two failures. St Peter's, correspondingly, had nine first-class passes, 24 second-class passes and 17 third-class passes in the UNISA JC exam that year, yet conditions were more favourable, the total number in the school being roughly 230! If Huddleston's figures are correct, this indicates a remarkable drive (he calls it a "thirst") on the part of Africans to capitalise on the few educational opportunities available. "Yet what can they do with their gifts? What professions are open to them?" he asks. "The God-given gift of intellect is allowed to grow and blossom in the sunshine for a space - then it is plucked and trampled underfoot." "Is it any wonder," he pursues the metaphor, "that one of their leaders writes, `Amongst the urbanised and educated Africans there is a growing spirit of bitterness against the European which is sowing far and wide the seeds of mistrust and suspicion'".[333]

3.2.2 Benjamin Baynham's influence

During this turbulent anti-white War decade, no complaints were recorded (or, at least, have been kept) about white (or, for that matter, black) teachers at St Peter's. If they did not have the extraordinary common touch of Huddleston and some of the other brethren, they were nevertheless concerned about the total development of the pupils, witness Norman Mitchell. His friend Benjamin Baynham was one of the most popular teachers at this time and, significantly, the only CR Father, other than Br Roger who taught Latin in the 1930s, to have taught a secular subject, namely English. If, in his younger

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[331] Huddleston, letter dated 5 Jan. 1944, 18.
[332] Trevor Huddleston, `The Valley of Decision', *CR Quarterly* (176) Christmas 1946, 17.

days, he was anything like the sprightly and scurrilous man of 84 whom I interviewed ("a very nice old codger, with his beard and pipe" in Maimane's words), he would have complemented Dora Lindsay perfectly, to make a formidable team. Warden at St Peter's from 1946 to January 1951, Baynham is interesting in that his background differed from that of most of the CR brethren. Not born with a silver spoon in his mouth like Huddleston, for instance, he came from a working-class family in Canterbury. His father was a labourer and he grew up without a mother, who died young. These facts gave him much in common with the pupils he taught, and he was conscious of this throughout his five-year teaching career at St Peter's, and seventeen years at Penhalonga. Having attended Cambridge University on a scholarship, he knew acutely the value of education to a boy born with less advantages than his peers, particularly those from a rural background.

After ordination and a curacy he arrived at St Augustine's, Penhalonga in early 1938 to take Standard VI, and English in Standard V and VII. According to a letter in the *CR Quarterly* he also took over the care of the Pathfinders and football, two activities dear to his idol Alban Winter's heart.[334] St Augustine's became the first high school for Africans in Rhodesia in January 1939, and Baynham saw through the crucial first years of secondary education before undergoing his novitiate in Rosettenville in 1942 (not Mirfield, as was usual, because of the War). When interviewed, he made the point that, while his predecessors at the turn of the century (Latimer Fuller, Osmund Victor and others) saw education as an adjunct to Christianisation of Africans, both he and Alban Winter (to whom he was very close, although a generation separated them) viewed education as "a platform into life." He conceded that very few of the CR Fathers understood it in this way (possibly because they had little need of the social reclassing which education offers). Even Huddleston preferred to wage his campaign, not on the battlefield of education, but on the wider socio-economic and political terrain. Baynham

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[333] Huddleston, `The Valley of Decision', 18.
[334] Max Davison, letter dated 12 June 1938, *CR Quarterly* (143) Michaelmas 1938, 17.

was conscious all along of being an educator in order to give pupils the foothold they needed for a full life.

One of these pupils was Ida Dibe, daughter of very poor parents in Springs but "one of the best girl students we have had here for many years",[335] who, after five solid years at St Peter's and a JC obtained in 1946, matriculated in the second class in 1948 and proceeded with the aid of a bursary to Fort Hare before doing her medical training to become a well-known doctor. The fact that she and her contemporaries Henry Makgothi, Joel Mamabolo and Edward Makhene, who all matriculated first class in 1947, achieved this during the years of upheaval in the late 1940s, suggests the relative calm at St Peter's. However, because of the colour bar, and later apartheid, these reclassed achievers would find themselves frustrated and embittered as job opportunities commensurate with their abilities were denied them, they who were the equal of any whites who came through the same system, and certainly more worldly-wise.

Bitterness was indeed what Herbert Chitepo, the Rhodesian lawyer who had been one of the first intake in the new secondary school at Penhalonga, later experienced. He was Baynham's protégé there and, right up to his death in April 1999, Baynham still kept in regular touch with his widow. Baynham told me that he would often question his educational role in the Penhalonga context, where traditional beliefs and customs had a particularly high profile and the cultural divide was so obvious, but Chitepo, who obtained his JC second class in 1941 before Baynham left Penhalonga, vindicated his presence there. When the film *Cry the Beloved Country* (which included shots of the Sophiatown Priory) was shown in Leeds in 1952, Herbert Chitepo spoke at a meeting linked to it, as did Roger Castle.[336] Yet on his return in 1954 as Rhodesia's first black barrister he was subjected to humiliating treatment so that, as the Dean of Salisbury wrote, "I saw him gradually change from being a person of good-will, who wanted to make partnership

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[335] CPSA, St Peter's School: Correspondence Fort Hare, AB 2089 / I 1.3.
[336] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 300.

work, to a bitter anti-white extremist".[337] Chitepo left Rhodesia in 1962 to become a guerrilla in Lusaka, where in 1975, then secretary-general of the Zimbabwe National Union (ZANU), he was assassinated.

3.2.3 The ANC Youth League

Many of St Peter's alumni also became lawyers and prominent in the struggle for liberation. The young Duma Nokwe (30), Oliver Tambo (40), and Joe Matthews (28) were among six of the 156 accused in the Treason Trial of 1957 who were old St Peter's boys.[338] Joe Matthews, who had been introduced by Tambo to the Youth League, was "the quintessence of the militant, uncompromising spirit of the Congress Youth League" and, unlike his father ZK, product of Lovedale, revelled in discussing politics.[339] This is directly traceable to the atmosphere of debate and engagement at St Peter's, what Anthony Sampson called "the most liberal and colour-blind school in South Africa":[340]

> Joe flourished in this hot-bed of intelligent, argumentative schoolboys and the austerity was forgotten in the luxury of interminable talk. The masters, both African and European, were friendly and accessible, and one of them stirred the imagination of nearly all the St Peter's boys - the dark, silent, young mathematics master, Oliver Tambo . . . . It was Tambo who introduced St Peter's to the Youth League, and the gospel of proud and defiant nationalism swept through the dormitories of the disenchanted schoolboys, appealing not only to a sense of African disabilities, but to every schoolboy instinct. As a boy of fifteen, Joe paid his half-crown to join the League, together

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[337] Quoted in Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 326.
[338] The others were Alfred Hutchinson (aged 33 at the time of his arrest, then a teacher at the Central Indian High School), his friend Henry `Squire' Makgothi (29, who was discharged early from the trial because he contracted TB) and Joseph Molefi (27, a leader of the Evaton bus boycott, and one of the few defendants to identify with the PAC after its founding in 1959).
[339] Sampson, *The Treason Cage*, 129.
[340] Ibid, 132.

> with a group of friends who were all later to find themselves in the Drill Hall - Duma Nokwe, Alfred Hutchinson, H.G. Makgothi and Joe Molefi.[341]

For all his obvious journalistic sensationalism, Sampson is unequivocal in suggesting that St Peter's, "with its complete acceptance of Africans as mature human beings, gave them the gift of self-respect on which the Youth League was founded".[342]

"St Peter's boys and girls were allowed the freedom to debate on any kind of subject. For the first time in my life I felt a sense of release," Mphahlele acknowledged in his autobiography.[343] "We were free to develop our own learning environment," he recalled more recently, "We were free to debate issues at boarding school, short of being permitted to incite political action or rioting. Otherwise the intellect had free play".[344] My interviewees all mentioned the encouragement of political discussion at the school, hence the ready reception by the debating society of Anton Lembede, the Youth League's most prominent ideologue. After Lembede's death, office bearers in the Youth League, frequently old St Peter's pupils, took his place on platforms at schools on the Reef. Nthato Motlana was invited by Robert Sobukwe in 1949 to speak to his pupils in Standerton, and Godfrey Pitje approached Duma Nokwe to speak to a group of his senior pupils on his recent visit to China.[345] "Once we left [St Peter's]," said Zakes Mokae, "we were right in there with people like Duma Nokwe, and you were talking politics all the time." Nokwe was legendary for his argumentative nature; Alfred Hutchinson would arrange bouts of "perpetual disputations" between him and Orton Chirwa (the first black barrister in Nyasaland, as Nokwe was in the Transvaal) when they were students at Fort Hare,[346] and the picture Hutchinson gives us in his autobiography of Nokwe's successfully defending

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341 Ibid, 130-131.
342 Ibid, 132.
343 Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 125.
344 Mphahlele, `An Apple for the Teachers', 118.
345 Glaser, `Students, *Tsotsis*', 3.
346 Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 104, 109.

him at his trial for not carrying a pass is awesome in its demonstration of his rapier wit, dogged aggression and linguistic fluency, not to mention his consummate ease in a predominantly white courthouse.[347]

It has been invitingly suggested by Ntongela Masilela that the founders of the Youth League were guided by concepts introduced by Du Bois, like the `Negro Academy' in his 1897 essay, "The Conservation of Races", since they mooted the establishment of an `African Academy' in their organ *Inkundla ya Bantu* in July 1947.[348] Among the trio at Fort Hare who called for the Academy "to interpret the spirit of Africa" (in Lembede's words) was Herbert Chitepo.[349] Couzens shows how the idea grew and then waned, even though in December 1949 Chitepo was joined by Robert Sobukwe, and two St Peter's alumni, Ntsu Mokehle (later to be Prime Minister of Lesotho) and Joseph Mokoena, in convening an African Cultural Conference where the idea would take shape. Refusing to take direction from white liberal patronage, they drew their inspiration from the African masses, while still retaining the prerogative of leadership. Those who formed the PAC under Sobukwe in 1959, as Tom Lodge points out, also tended to remain elitist, or at least obviously middle class; in a SAIRR survey conducted in 1961 in Pretoria and the Rand, a relatively high degree of education, youth, acceptance of violent political methods and support for the PAC tended to coincide.[350] What Lodge calls "the Orlando Africanists" never picked up much of a local following despite their racially-motivated populism, for they were not activists in the sense we understand today, but "on the whole middle

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[347] Ibid, 51-59. Henry Makgothi, who knew them well and was himself president of the Youth League in the Transvaal from 1954, calls Nokwe "a rigorous logician" and Hutchinson "easy going" (`Alfred Hutchinson – A Profile', *African Communist* 52 (1973), 62).

[348] Masilela Ntongela, `The "Black Atlantic" and African Modernity in South Africa', *Research in African Literatures* 27(4) Winter 1996, 93. They may also have seen themselves in the `Talented Tenth' first mooted by Du Bois in the 1903 essay of that name, who would lead the masses into world recognition of the Negro (or African).

[349] Couzens, *The New African*, 294.

[350] Tom Lodge, `Political Organisations in Pretoria's African Townships, 1940-1963', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Class, Community and Conflict* (Johannesburg, 1987), 414. Clive Glaser notes that this survey is "thin and technically dubious", ignoring the vast bulk of working-class people and unemployed youths, who might have been expected to favour the PAC, but nevertheless indicates the dramatic rise in PAC support (`"When Are They Going to Fight?" Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC', in Bonner et al, *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*, 314).

class, and they were not interested in the issues arising from everyday life".[351] Their journal, *The Africanist*, under the editorship of Sobukwe, instead propounded the late Lembede's ideas of self-reliance, self-assertion and African-led nation-building.[352] Significantly, after the forming of the PAC, Sobukwe was invited successfully by the CR to address a regular "Shoe Party" at the Priory in Rosettenville,[353] and this indicates their receptivity to the new strain of Africanism, filtered through its middle-class, educated ethos.

Given their intellectual reputation, it is worth noting briefly the books prescribed for the JC exam taken by prominent ex-St Peter's pupils who would become active in the ANC Youth League. Congress Mbata, for example read Weyman's *The Red Cockade* and Q's *The Blue Pavilion*, Zeph Mothopeng, the slightly more respectable *A Tale of Two Cities*, but Oliver Tambo, Peter Raboroko and Lancelot Gama were plunged into the escapades of Scott's *Quentin Durward* and Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*. They would also have encountered legendary figures in Western culture in the form of drama, for *Form-Room Plays (Junior)*, prescribed for 1936, comprised "A Christmas Carol", "Alice in Wonderland", "Circe's Palace", "The Lady of the Lake" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Is it any wonder, after this surfeit, that Mbata and Mothopeng would reject this metropolitan imperialist literature for African nationalism? Yet exposure to these texts allowed them to decide on their value. Alfred Hutchinson read Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Julius Caesar*, Duma Nokwe *Great Expectations* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, and Joe Matthews RL Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *The Tempest*. Significantly, many Youth Leaguers went on to Matric, and for his exam Mbata drew *Barnaby Rudge* (and *Henry IV, Part I*) while Mothopeng's lot was to read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and *Richard II*. Tambo, Raboroko

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[351] Tom Lodge, `Political Mobilisation during the 1950s', in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Afric*a (London, 1987; repr. 1992), 315.

[352] Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 19.

[353] National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown (NELM), Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR, letter to Guy Butler, 30 April 1959 MS doc. no. 3063. This was called after the old woman who lived in a shoe owing to the many people who would attend.

and Gama read either Buchan's *Prester John* or Collins's *The Moonstone*, and Morton's *The Heart of London*; their Shakespeare was *As You Like It*. When the post-War change to the Matric syllabus occurred, among the books Alfred Hutchinson would have read were *Twelfth Night*, Shaw's *Saint Joan* or Sheridan's *The Rivals*, *Kenilworth*, *Bleak House* and *The Moonstone*. Duma Nokwe drew *Richard II*, and perhaps *Bleak House*, and Joe Matthews *As You Like It*, and *Barnaby Rudge*, while both might have read *Paradise Lost* and *Northanger Abbey* (though there is, unfortunately, no evidence as to which of the nine books set in Section C were actually taught).[354] Each of these matriculants, of course, went on to study further at Fort Hare.

In the 1940s and even into the 1950s, the constituency of the Youth League was predominantly that of the educated school-going youth, at both mission schools like St Peter's, whence Oliver Tambo returned to teach, and the newer government secondary schools like Orlando High, where Mothopeng and Mphahlele taught, or Standerton, where Sobukwe did his stint for five years. Paul Rich notes that by the end of 1947 the Youth League only had 278 members based in some four branches,[355] and Clive Glaser has shown in a number of articles how far removed the Youth League leadership and politicised rank and file membership were from the unemployed youth of the Rand, particularly those who formed the apolitical gangs in various townships. The Youth League never made any attempt to co-opt these gangs or non-schooled youth generally, although the 1954 mass protests against the removals from Sophiatown comprised a notable exception,[356] and it was the newly-formed PAC in the very late 1950s which capitalised on the youth constituency's anti-establishment aggression, never recoiling from mobilising its volatile and undisciplined tsotsi element.[357] It was only during the 1970s and 1980s, after decades of mass Bantu Education which had given some schooling, though ideologically quite unacceptable, to much more of the

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[354] All texts drawn from the annual syllabuses in *JC Examination Handbook* (Cape Town, 1938-1956) and the *Matric Examination Handbook* (Cape Town, 1933-1956).
[355] Paul Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Johannesburg, 1984), 84.
[356] Glaser, `Students, *Tsotsis*', 11.
[357] Glaser, `"When Are They Going to Fight?"', 297.

Rand's youth, that the Youth League became highly politicised and mobilised to make the townships ungovernable.[358]

4 St Peter's in the 1950s

4.1 The Defiant Decade

A picture of what schooling was like on the flashpoint of the Witwatersrand in the last few years of missionary control before the Bantu Education Act of 1953 can be reconstructed from sources in the SAIRR Archive. As an essential strategy for making the invisible visible, adopted elsewhere in my thesis, a comparison with other schools on the Reef will point up just what an extraordinary school St Peter's was at that time. By 1951, according to a SAIRR investigative report, there were five black secondary schools in Johannesburg itself: four government schools, and St Peter's.[359] Two of these offered Matriculation (Orlando Secondary and Western Native Township, also known as Bantu High), the other two went up to JC (Pimville and Pimville Cemetery). Competition for admission, understandably, was keen. But the government schools, whose fees were only £2 per annum, were forced to employ under-qualified teachers for the lower classes. Though scores of well-trained teachers were turned out annually, the TED would not pay enough for salaries to allow them to be employed.

Add to this the problems experienced by most black children from primary school upwards, as indicated in the SAIRR report: overcrowding in schools, distance to travel every day, hunger, and psychological problems associated with the urban environment. St Peter's was primarily a boarding school, even though it also took day scholars; most of these problems were therefore obviated, as Kgoleng pointed out to me: while others were travelling the long distances home from school, boarders like him were spending time in study,

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[358] Glaser, `Students, *Tsotsis*', 12-13.

or discussion, or debate. Throughout the late 1930s minutes of the Advisory Council show that the school authorities repeatedly tried to limit the numbers of day scholars and concentrate on making St Peter's a boarding school because of the better facilities for study (and the less savoury reason of appeasing the white residents of Rosettenville who objected to the daily travelling of day scholars).[360] The SAIRR investigative report observed from day scholars in government schools that the impact of urbanisation on African culture "increased fear" among black children, aggravated by police raids because of illegal skokiaan brewing. Moreover, both parents were often out working, so the pupils were shaped by the street when they returned home from school; insecurity of accommodation and parents' jobs (particularly if they were migrant mine workers) also influenced them adversely.

Mphahlele noted in 1989, an observation that is as relevant to the situation forty years ago as it is today, that it is the "after-school time-zone that's become a battlefield. This is where the battle is being waged for the soul of the child".[361] A boarding school environment obviates the problems of street influence and can preserve the childhood world intact; gutter education requires that "in the midst of these confused values, the child grows up incredibly fast. Like a weed." Traditionally, as Mphahlele notes, the child's world has been regarded as a preparation for that of the adult and has been fostered by adults as a time of innocence; now teenagers borrow too much from their anticipated adulthood and, like pole-vault athletes, leap from the age of ten to adulthood. In a second essay on the same subject, he again uses the metaphor of children leaping "over a decade of their lives without really experiencing the normal process of growth that develops a stability to ferry them across to adulthood".[362] He could have his three years at St Peter's at the back of his mind when he insists that a deeper awareness than

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[359] SAIRR, `Preliminary investigation of schooling conditions and facilities in African municipal townships', Schools General 1938-49, AD 843 / RJ / Kb 25.1.
[360] CPSA, Advisory Council Minutes dated, for example, May 1938, AB 2089 / D 1. These were also the two reasons listed in the CR pamphlet, *An Appeal for Funds for Development* (1938).
[361] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Big Shoe, Small Foot (Part 1)', *Tribute* June 1989, 128.
[362] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Big Shoes, Small Feet (2)', *Tribute* July 1989, 128.

political consciousness only "comes of an application of the mind to a disciplined learning programme over at least three years with minimum distractions. Not primarily for examinations, but for living." A learning environment after the school day, which might make a claim for the child's soul to rival that of politics, only comes with the middle-class lifestyle, or, for the working class, the contained environment of the boarding school.

In the 1950s, teachers, too, were often assaulted by delinquents at government schools, since respect for authority had been eroded by urban conditions. Their living conditions, the SAIRR report remarked, differed in no way from those of "the ordinary labourer" and therefore did not inspire pupils to try to emulate them as role models. Teachers at St Peter's, however, mainly resided in the Hostel or the Theological College: in 1955, for example, Mr Mfeka and Mr Mkwalo ran the boys' Hostel, and Miss Moloto was responsible for St Agnes' Hostel, residing there with the sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin (CSMV), according to the Report of the then Headmaster, Michael Stern, to Diocesan Synod in August 1955.[363] Although the number, race and gender of teachers remained roughly constant from the 1940s through the 1950s (eight black, four white and three part-time white teachers, which included Baynham teaching English to Matric level and Scripture),[364] the number of pupils declined as the sands of time were running out for St Peter's. The Government Quarterly Return for 1954 indicates 252 pupils, mainly boys; in Matric, for instance, there was only one girl, and none in Form IV.[365] In November that year, the fiery Bishop of Johannesburg, Ambrose Reeves, announced the closing of all schools in his Diocese, and Mr Darling left St Peter's a month later. The Report of his successor, Mr Stern, to Synod in August 1955 reflects a total of 187 pupils (110 boys and 50 girls boarding, and 23 day boys and 2 day girls). The Government Quarterly Return for that year corroborates this; there was no

[363] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod dated 10 Aug. 1955, College of the Resurrection Scrapbook 1950-64, AB 632.
[364] CPSA, Departmental form dated 15 Aug. 1950, St Peter's School: Correspondence (European), AB 2089 / I 9.3 file 3.
[365] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Quarterly Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.1. There were 105 pupils in Form I, 80 in Form II, 42 in Form III, 24 in Form IV and 11 in Form V.

intake in Form I. Again, boys were in the vast majority; there was no female matriculant.[366] By Easter 1956, when the school was functioning as a private school with increased fees, only 61 boys and 39 girls remained, and these had declined to 56 boys and 37 girls by August.[367]

4.2 Mr MA Stern as Headmaster (1955-1956)

Michael Stern arrived at the end of March 1955 to see the school through to its closure, and Edwin Ainscow a week later to teach English and Science.[368] Ainscow had been invited, as a young teacher in England, by Trevor Huddleston to head up English at St Peter's. He would have been a dynamic teacher, for even in his mid-sixties, when I interviewed him, he had a vibrant ministry to prisoners in and around London, and communicated an obvious love for this job. I was astounded at his uncanny memory for names of pupils he had taught exactly forty years before at St Peter's. Poring over a group photograph of the pupils and staff in *Father Huddleston's Picture Book*, taken four decades earlier, he was able to put names to virtually every face and give the notable characteristics of many.[369] Not only that, but, on our second meeting, he drew out an exercise book in which the names of the pupils he taught were written; these he had written down from memory after the school closed in December 1956 so that he could remember them in prayer.

He was deeply affected by the closing of St Peter's, because the pupils, for whom he had grown to care, were simply dropped after closure. He was particularly eager for news of the lawyer, now judge, Fikile Bam and the journalist Obed Musi, who has proved far less stable than his peer.[370] He

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[366] CPSA, St Peter's School Government Quarterly Returns, AB 2089 / I 6.3.1. By this stage there were only 83 in Form II, 72 in Form III, 10 in Form IV and 22 in Form V.
[367] CPSA, Headmaster's Reports, St Peter's School: Reports 1953-56, AB 2089 / C.
[368] Both continued in their respective capacities at St Martin's School until the early 1960s, before Stern left for Waterford Kamhlaba in Swaziland, and Ainscow returned to England to test his vocation to the religious life, eventually becoming professed as a member of the Community of the Glorious Ascension.
[369] Trevor Huddleston, *Father Huddleston's Picture Book* (London, 1990), 62.
[370] Not that either proved his mettle while at school: both passed their JC in the third class, Bam in 1953 and Musi a year later; while their Matric results indicate initial failure, this could have been aggravated by the school's imminent closure.

remembers Musi as an intense and difficult boy, not at all trusting of whites and notably more politically aware and anti-regime than his peers, "frequently stubborn and saturnine", but who loved the library. He was Ainscow's assistant in the library, which provided opportunity for informal chats; Musi went on, like many other St Peter's boys, to become a journalist on *Drum*. Ainscow had only the happiest memories of St Peter's, and specifically mentioned that it was one of the two schools at which he most enjoyed teaching (the other was in Bristol) since the pupils were so forthcoming. Ainscow remembers particularly the fun and mischievous pranks of the pupils; in this St Peter's resisted the nineteenth-century Lovedale impulse, as explored by Leon de Kock in *Civilising Barbarians*, to create stiff-upper-lip English clones, allowing pupils subtly to transform the educational process with their own games, habits and deportment. Mphahlele, too, has spoken of "such a happy" learning environment at St Peter's, "*one which we ourselves created* which is very different from what you have today [my italics]".[371]

The last era of St Peter's was ushered in with the passing of the Bantu Education Act in September 1953, among the string of discriminatory legislation enacted by the Nationalists after they came to power in 1948. Most of the legislation was passed before the middle of the Decade of Defiance, and the writing was on the wall for St Peter's throughout the 1950s, which began with the Defiance Campaign of 1952, reached a high point in the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, and culminated in the Treason Trial of 1957 onwards. Trevor Huddleston said that this Act was a "very significant one" for him personally, because at the time he was Superintendent of the CR primary schools in Sophiatown and St Peter's, Rosettenville, what he viewed as "the nursery of all the great resistance leaders." The "great trauma over the Act" was whether to co-operate with the government or to opt out and lose all grants.[372] The latter course was desperately tried for a year in 1956, but it was simply not viable. Sampson records Huddleston as saying that the decision to close St Peter's was made in anguish and only after the

[371] Mphahlele, in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 56.
[372] Huddleston, in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 75.

most careful thought and prayer, for "it means the end of forty years of labour and devotion, and it means the break-up of a tradition of which we are unashamedly proud".[373]

With Michael Stern's arrival in 1955, once the death knell had been sounded, briskness was brandished to counter dismay. Mr Stern introduced changes like a new timetable, supervision and duty rosters, and weekly staff meetings. The minutes of the latter, from 1955 to 1956, reflect a noticeable drop in morale among pupils and staff due to the imminent closure of the school.[374] Regular mention is made of an increase in smoking outside the stipulated times and places, and unkempt appearance among the boys in particular, and the need to stimulate the few brighter pupils with extra prep work (obviously standards have fallen to accommodate the average pupil). In May 1955 Mr Stern noted that 16 days had been lost in the past month through staff absences, and the school hours were not being adhered to by staff, a problem even in November that year. Minutes of the staff meeting on 15 June mention that general maintenance would be done to school buildings in the holidays "to raise morale", but the dismay can be imagined from the minutes of 31 August which record that the new syllabus for "Bantu Education" would be passed around for comment by the staff.

So, in order "to maintain morale for the final year", the interior of the school buildings was repainted and repair work was carried out during the winter of 1955, as Mr Stern reported to Synod.[375] With the threat of closure, the JC and Matric results of the mid-1950s took a nosedive. The Report to Synod mentions the "disappointing" 7 failures out of 11 for Matric in 1954, and 27 failures out of 39 for the JC. The Report to Synod in Easter 1956 shows that the trend worsened in 1955, with 18 failures out of 22 entries for Matric, and 41 failures out of 70 entries for the JC. Michael Stern suggested rather hopelessly, given the impending reality of closure, that "a more settled staff,

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[373] Huddleston, in Sampson, *Drum*, 173.
[374] CPSA, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff meetings 1955-56, AB 2089 / I 9.1.
[375] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod dated 10 Aug. 1955, College of the Resurrection Scrapbook 1950-64, AB 632.

fixed time table, closer work supervision, regular set homework, and a general all round effort" might produce better results at the end of the final year, but "the standard of ability and effort is still far too low" to make this a realistic expectation.[376] "All the heart had been taken out of this great adventure," wrote Alban Winter, looking back at the end of an era, "and the future loomed darker and darker".[377]

Yet the extra-mural activities in the school remained vibrant. Mr Stern's Report to Synod in 1955 made a small but crucial mention of what would later prove to be a major development, the creation of the "Huddleston Jazz Band." The story of Huddleston's giving Hugh Masekela a trumpet has been recounted in *Naught for Your Comfort*.[378] With Masekela's trumpet came a request by Jonas Gwangwa for a trombone, which Huddleston duly satisfied, and the band was born.[379] Boys used to do their stint in the band: Zakes Mokae played saxophone with them for a bit while at school,[380] and Meshack Ntsangani, though as a day boy regretfully not a member of the band, took jazz lessons at the BMSC from the old boy Todd Matshikiza, who would compose the jazz opera, *King Kong*. The Jazz Band, according to Mr Stern, played a "major part in school life", available for "Mixes" (dances) which were regularly held on Sunday evenings. The encouragement of dancing and engagement with the opposite sex characterises St Peter's, and sets it apart from an institution like Lovedale where, as Kros has shown, dancing (because of its association with sexuality and hence subversion of moral authority) became a central concern of the authorities enquiring into the Lovedale unrest of 1946, who saw it as a dangerous activity.[381] Richard Kgoleng told me that the CR by the 1950s (and the chronological qualification

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[376] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's School: Reports 1953-56, AB 2089 / C.
[377] Winter, `Till Darkness Fell', 66.
[378] Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 224-227.
[379] Appropriately, Hugh Masekela played this very instrument at Huddleston's Memorial Service in Westminster Abbey on 29 July 1998 (Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston*, 69), as Jonas Gwangwa had paid tribute to him at the Memorial Service in Johannesburg Cathedral on 5 May.
[380] NELM, Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR, letter to Guy Butler, 4 April 1961 MS doc. no. 3063.
[381] Kros, `They Wanted Dancing', 13. The `Lambeth Walk' of her paper's title was a line dance which obviated the need for pairing off in couples, and thus metaphorically the only dance pleasing to the authorities!

is important) was easygoing about relations between the sexes, provided propriety was observed: "You'd invite a girl friend to go out shopping on a Saturday morning, and the CR Fathers used to take strolls outside, they would meet you there and they would regard it as something normal."

One interesting development at St Peter's was the conscious supplementing of the monthly entertainment films screened at these social occasions with educational ones. Screen adaptations of Shakespeare and Dickens were shown from the late 1940s onwards.[382] *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Tale of Two Cities* were screened in October 1948, and were followed by *Great Expectations*, *Henry V* and *Oliver Twist* in November. In February 1950 it was the turn of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Hamlet*, followed by *Scott of the Antarctic* in August. Arthur Maimane attested to the importance of the monthly screening of films adapted from setwork texts: "we'd been slogging through Shakespeare without much enthusiasm, and they had Sir Laurence Olivier in *Hamlet*. Finally I got the rhythms of Shakespeare, and that was it." The point to be made about these films is that they took the realm of literature out of the classroom and so broadened the pupils' horizons. However, Stern and Ainscow still tried to maintain standards of reading, despite (perhaps because of) the fact that the writing was on the wall for St Peter's. In April 1955 they instituted an extra reading scheme for English within individual Forms to encourage reading, and staff were reminded in September to ensure, since there had been some laxity along with the general slipping of discipline, that all pupils spoke only English on Tuesdays and Thursdays.[383]

Reading through the St Peter's School correspondence files for the years after closure confirms the vast number of ex-pupils writing to Mr Stern and other teachers asking them for work, or to use their influence in the job market. For all the success stories of St Peter's, there were myriads of pupils who left for financial reasons, or who failed to pass the external examinations,

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[382] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B.

[383] CPSA, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff meetings, AB 2089 / I 9.1. Even this indicates how standards had slipped in twenty years; Mphahlele, for example, had to speak English *every* weekday.

or who were expelled. The plaintive letters tend to come from the ranks of the less successful pupils, and many hope that their connection, however tangential, with the school might pull the right strings. This correspondence sounds the one discordant note amid the welter of positive aspects of the school: even at the best-equipped schools like St Peter's, education was an eliminative agent, more concerned with a few who survived than the many who dropped out. Mr Stern acknowledged this as a weakness of St Peter's in his Report to Synod in August 1956, attributing the pitiful results of the last years to an inadequately careful selection of intake, overly sympathetic promotion from one form to the next, deterioration in work standards and attempts to tackle too much too quickly.[384]

Most sad of all are those pupils who were forced to leave St Peter's through its closure at the end of 1956, and attend schools vastly inferior to what they were used to. One cameo case is that of Lucas Motlhosi, and it is given to show by contrast just what pupils had come to expect by right from secondary education through their experience at St Peter's.[385] Compelled to attend a new school, Sekitla Secondary, at Hammanskraal, Motlhosi writes to Mr Stern on 3 March 1958: "I was highly taken on as a former student of St Peter's, because most of the staff are from St Peter's", but complains about the poor accommodation and food. In his next letter (undated, though Mr Stern's reply is 19 March), he asks for textbooks, Keats's *Poetry and Prose*, Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Conrad's *Four Tales* and an anthology, *Poems for Discussion*. He is struggling with the lack of infrastructure and desires to surround himself with familiar buildings and people, asking in a letter on 26 May for accommodation for the June holidays, so that "in the evening I will have ample time to read `Keats' and ask questions".[386]

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[384] CPSA, Headmaster's Report to Synod, St Peter's School: Reports 1953-56, AB 2089 / C.
[385] CPSA, letters dated March 1958 to Oct. 1959, St Peter's School, Pupils: Correspondence 1957-63, AB 2089 / I 8.1 files 5 & 6.
[386] All the above from CPSA, St Peter's School, Pupils: Correspondence 1957-58, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 5.

In sad contrast to what he was used to at St Peter's, Motlhosi indicates that he is behind schedule regarding both the literature and science syllabuses, although the teachers are giving extra science classes over the weekend, and he regrets particularly the absence of a laboratory: "I am now thinking back to St Peter's days where everything was done smoothly, always in time for everything". His persistence bears fruit at last; whether from altruism or exasperation Mr Stern has him to stay at St Martin's over December and, on 20 August 1959, offers him a job as a laboratory assistant at the school, so that he can do Matric in his spare time. Motlhosi accepts with alacrity on 2 September, and asks Mr Stern on 13 October to settle his school fees, which he does; the saga ends inconclusively, though, it seems, with promise.[387] That Mr Stern was dealing with the wrapping up of one school in the wake of the Bantu Education Act, and the starting of another, the all-white private boys' school, St Martin's,[388] during this year makes his regular and helpful responses to Motlhosi all the more exemplary. One cannot help comparing him to Mabel Palmer, in her own words the "very busy woman with a great deal to do for [her] own students",[389] though she was distinctly more acerbic. Nevertheless, she and Mr Stern demonstrate what Deborah Gaitskell, in her review of the three-way correspondence, has described as "the personal lengths to which liberal individuals might go to help the disadvantaged and the way limits were reached and forthright exasperation expressed".[390]. Obviously St Peter's represented a lifeline to Lucas Motlhosi, and it was the gratuitous severing of it in 1957 which motivated Michael Stern to do all he could for pupils forced to leave through the school's closure.

Even pupils whose time at St Peter's ended in failure ostensibly valued the experience, and made much of it where they felt it would count for, as Zakes Mokae said, "I think every St Peterian will tell you there was a certain `thing' about it, because by now everybody should know about St Peter's: it's again

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[387] All the above from CPSA, St Peter's School, Pupils: Correspondence 1959-63, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 6.
[388] The new school opened after two years of reconstruction for this purpose in January 1958.
[389] Letter dated 17 June 1949 in Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 77.
[390] Deborah Gaitskell, `"Mrs Palmer Gave Me Scholarship to Sterkfontein"', *Southern African Review of Books* Winter 1987/88, 19.

that little arrogance." It is an indictment on the white citizenry of South Africa that no more money was forthcoming to salvage pupils who had the will to continue, if not the means. One Reuben Mokoena wrote in January 1948, having failed the JC and being unable to afford another try, that "it is a bad thing to leave school, because everybody outside is looking at us, to see what we can do for the Africans. We have got a very low standard in education and everybody is struggling very hard to get his way through." Another letter two years later avers "I am also very proud of receiving education from St Peter's. Now I know what I am, and that will teach me to wake up in time".[391] Sadly, the only record of an RM Mokoena reveals a fail in the JC of 1949. The sense of failure and frustration evident in these correspondence files tempers the achievement of alumni like Abrahams and Mphahlele, who acknowledged to Couzens the element of "sheer luck" which kept him in the system while others "dropped out or fell by the wayside", attributing it to the need "to keep pushing" in the urban areas, always on the lookout for better things.[392] The truth is that St Peter's provided the ideal conditions for some to flourish, and they grasped the opportunity in both hands; yet it also proved the stumbling block to many, many others.

[391] CPSA, letters dated 10 Jan. 1948 and 24 Jan. 1950, St Peter's School Pupils: Correspondence 1946-50, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 2.
[392] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 119.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TEXT

1 The road to self-discovery

It is now time to examine the responses of ex-St Peter's pupils to the liberal education and affirmative environment offered by the CR, which started them off on the course which Es'kia Mphahlele has called "rightfully integral to education ie. the road to self-discovery", "the broad daylight odyssey towards the realization of self".[1] The most prolific written reaction was, indeed, the output of Mphahlele, with countless journal and newspaper articles dealing with the culture clash of the West and Africa,[2] leading to what he has termed the `dialogue of the two selves' within the African personality. Because they are frequently autobiographical, the more substantial will be explored[3] - perhaps `mined' is a more accurate word - for clues as to how Mphahlele wrote back to the imperial, and later apartheid, fiat of his day and the aesthetic and ethical codes he and other ex-St Peter's pupils espoused in order to handle their rejection by the society which had educated them. The extent to which St Peter's was responsible for the growth of the personality, and for the shaping of the artistic consciousness, will also be probed through investigation into the subject matter and style of their mature autobiographical writings. These include Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* (1959) and *Afrika My Music* (1984), along with Abrahams's roughly contemporaneous *Return to Goli* (1953), *Tell Freedom* (1954) and autobiographical novel, *The View from Coyaba* (1985), as well as Alfred Hutchinson's *Road to Ghana* (1960) and Todd Matshikiza's *Chocolates for My Wife* (1961).[4] We must bear in mind, however, that the texts are coloured by subjectivity of feeling and experience

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[1] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self – A Personal Essay', *The Teachers Journal*, 23(5) 1980, 2, 3.

[2] While I have tried to avoid using these terms in a homogeneous and essential way in this thesis, fraught as they are with fissure and complexity, they have been employed by Mphahlele and Abrahams, and, indeed, within imperial and African nationalist discourses, and I have reluctantly been compelled to use them, as it were, on cue.

[3] All are drawn from Catherine Woeber and John Read, *Es'kia Mphahlele: A Bibliography* (Grahamstown, 1989).

and the inaccuracy of memory which distance of time and space lend to written life stories. Then, of course, in any autobiography there is the difficulty of the interplay between imagination and reportage, the embroidering or outright fictionalisation of incidents for more vivid effect; few autobiographies, in fact, are free from embellishment or omission.

First to be explored are the mature autobiographical writings, Mphahlele's non-fiction and Abrahams's last work, in order to demonstrate the nature of the mature self. Then the earlier autobiographies will be tackled in the light of what we know of this mature self, focussing particularly on Abrahams, Mphahlele, Hutchinson and Matshikiza, with brief mention of Modisane simply to point up the other four. The evidence suggests that there are many points of coincidence in their lives, however different the trajectories, and it seems useful to interweave the life stories of Abrahams and Mphahlele, alongside those of Hutchinson and Matshikiza, so that the connections can be made by the reader. It is to be hoped that the material, presented in this fashion, demonstrates that their education engendered a hybrid identity which, when embraced after agonistic struggle, led them to their respective belief systems, at least in the case of Abrahams and Mphahlele, who have lived on into old age. Texts which are not autobiographical have been omitted, such as Hutchinson's plays, Mphahlele's short fiction, not to mention Abrahams's novels. Obviously these are the products of their life experience, but they fall beyond the limits of this thesis. Some theorising on autobiography has been included, using particularly poststructuralist insights, because it helps to elucidate why it is the writers chose autobiography when they did, and to underline the problematic equation of writing self with textual subject.

1.1 The straitjacket of South Africa

Where a novel leads towards a climax or resolution of the conflicts set up, an autobiography tends to lead outwards and onwards to the author without

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[4] For reasons of space, Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me on History* (1963) will only be used to point up, by contrast, the autobiographies of those writers who actually attended St Peter's.

coming to a resolution, as the life of the author (and, indeed, the course of history itself) continues beyond the text. Robert Fraser likens it to a pond: "There is a thin plop called birth followed by widening ripples which stretch out in every lateral direction".[5] It seems preferable, therefore, to begin with the ripples, continually dynamic and unresolved as they are, and to work back towards the plop called birth or, more accurately, to the explosion called education, as Mphahlele has memorably described the first encounter with words:

> They set your mind on fire; longings and desires you would never have known are released and seem to whirl around in currents that explode into other currents: something like what you see in a glass flask of water that you have on a naked flame to observe the movement of heat in liquid.[6]

Mphahlele's avowed confessional streak discourages a reading of *Down Second Avenue* and *Afrika My Music* as discrete entities; Lynda Gilfillan has intelligently suggested that these texts should be seen as forming part of a vast corpus of autobiographical writings,[7] in which the search for identity comprises both the individual self that is Ezekiel, Eseki, Zeke, Es'kia, and the communal self that is Mphahlele, the tribe of the father he lost at thirteen, and the tribe that was lost to him.[8] The discussion in pursuit of Mphahlele's response to his education, however, has been limited to only those articles, numerous as they are, which seem to offer evidence of the effect of that education. A thorough reading of his non-fictional oeuvre leaves one in no doubt that exile from South Africa in 1957 gave him the distance and experience required to place his education in perspective and reject distinct parts of it. As he related to Norman Hodge in an extensive and important

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[5] Robert Fraser, `Dimension of Personality: Elements of the Autobiographical Mode', in Doireann MacDermott (ed), *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing in the Commonwealth* (Barcelona, 1984), 87.
[6] Es'kia Mphahlele, `African Literature: What Tradition?', *Denver Quarterly* 2(2) 1967, 42.
[7] Lynda Ann Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic: A Critical Study of Black South African Autobiography from 1954 – 1963" (DLitt et Phil, University of South Africa, 1995), 150.
[8] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 168.

interview in 1979,[9] the four years he spent in Nigeria restored to him his `African-ness', the sense of being African, and began a process which would only be fulfilled with his return to ancestral soil in 1977, however difficult the first few years on his return were to prove. The pressures of shanty life in urban Marabastad where he grew up, as he told Tim Couzens in the same interview, had prevented his mother and grandmother from sharing with him his ancestral heritage, or telling him stories in the oral tradition, for "life just seemed to tumble from one day to the next".[10]

A recurrent motif in Mphahlele's writing is the deadening effect of the pressures of slum life on a writer, and he informed Hodge that the exhausting travel in overcrowded Johannesburg trains after bitter racial encounters prevented him from assessing who he was and what he believed: "I would feel so bitter that I couldn't move, I couldn't write a thing".[11] To Kate Turkington in the same interview he mentioned that, after a day of humiliating experiences, the train home was the final straw: "you're crowded, you're chafing, you're pushing and tugging, and you're spilled out on to the platforms back home, and it's already getting dusk and you're worn out emotionally and physically".[12] A similar description is given by Alfred Hutchinson in *Road to Ghana*, as he is about to leave for exile amid "the wash of bodies pressing to the station", "home-pressed, time-pressed, train-pressed".[13] And later Hutchinson is not to be outdone at pushing his way to disembark from the Tanganyika steamer: "The impossible mornings and evenings, the stampedes, the Orlando trains had not been for nothing".[14] Lewis Nkosi concurs that the currents of life in 1950s Johannesburg were not conducive to thought, for there was too much direct experience to be had involuntarily, without having to wait for the mediating intervention of art. Life was too public, too precarious, too unpredictable for reflection. "It seems to me," he

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[9] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Looking in: Interviews with Es'kia Mphahlele', *English Academy Review* (4) 1987, 135.
[10] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 119.
[11] Ibid, 126-127.
[12] Ibid, 137.
[13] Alfred Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (London, 1960), 61.
[14] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 123.

says today, but anticipating, as it were, the outburst of autobiographies written in exile, "that literature begins where life fails".[15]

"I had come from a life which an artist could only discern in concrete minute-by-minute, day-by-day responses," Mphahlele wrote in his tribute to Léopold Senghor on his seventieth birthday. "Yet, something that I saw around me," he averred about Nigeria to the West African, "did something to steady me, to measure the energy of Africa in me, the thing we had taken for granted in ghettos where you could never efface your blackness".[16] Mphahlele has explained his reasons for leaving as an inability to teach and write in the South Africa of the 1950s. Banned from teaching along with Isaac Matlare and Zeph Mothopeng because of their militant campaign against the Eiselen Report of 1951, and unable (and unwilling) to continue teaching at St Peter's when it had to close down in defiance of the Bantu Education Act, he left to teach in Lagos in September 1957. Nigeria gave him space and leisure and time to begin incorporating his African heritage which, as he came to see it, did not allow for the Christian faith into which he had been baptised with his infant eyes barely open and nothing "but a yell in the minister's face" to signify his objection.[17]

After the "dispossession" wrought by Christianity, Mphahlele has suggested, it is the responsibility of artists, social workers and educators to "repair" the damage done and "restore" what has been lost:

> while all such creative people try to negotiate the tricky bend which is the meeting point of urban needs and rural idioms, the social worker and the educator will help build up an audience for the creative few, among which audience will also be found potential creative talent.[18]

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[15] Nkosi, in Mike Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse* (London, 1991), 158.
[16] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Tribute to LS Senghor', *Présence Africaine* 99/100 (1976-77), 288.
[17] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Exile, the Tyranny of Place and the Literary Compromise', *UNISA English Studies* 17(1) 1979, 38.
[18] Es'kia Mphahlele, `African City People', *East Africa Journal* 1(3) June 1964, 8.

Given the later careers of noteworthy ex-St Peter's pupils, it is significant that Mphahlele identifies, in particular, writers, artists and musicians as people whose recording of experience "goes a long way towards defining [their] environment" and what they produce "must be seen as part of the culture which has made [them]".[19] In other words, they chart the future, even as they map the past, a process he has recently called "the myth concerning who we are, and where we come from . . . and what it is we want ahead of us".[20] Peter Abrahams, too, is very aware of the need to "see the whole scheme of things with the long eye of history",[21] a recurrent motif in his writings, and, preoccupied as he is with `race' in his writing, specifically mentions black writers, musicians and artists who, once they have become respected in the wider world, will help to raise the image of black people and encourage others to follow in their footsteps.[22]

When Mphahlele was asked to speak to the clause `the doors of learning and culture shall be opened' of the Freedom Charter adopted at the Congress of the People in June 1955, he told the tale of a snake that swallowed the chicks of a dove. As the mother dove was crying, a musician walked by. Realising the reason for her grief, the musician "started to compose a song to the time of the weeping of the dove, and he did this in such a way that his music so moved and stirred all the other animals in the world that they came together and joined forces. They drove the snake out and killed it".[23] This fable might be construed as a call to propaganda, to harness art to the struggle, but that is short-sighted in the context of the 1948 Youth League Manifesto which, in its statement of its cultural policy, accepted the need for both propaganda and true art: "African works of Art can and should reflect not only the present phase of the National liberatory struggle but also the world of

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[19] Mphahlele, `African City People', 4.
[20] Richard Samin, `Interview: Richard Samin with Es'kia Mphahlele', *Research in African Literatures* 28(4) 1997, 189.
[21] Peter Abrahams, *Return to Goli* (London, 1953), 17.
[22] Peter Abrahams, `A Letter to My Mother', *The African Drum* Oct. 1951, 24.
[23] Es'kia Mphahlele, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 203.

beauty that lies beyond the conflict and turmoil of struggle".[24] The performing arts, says David Coplan, though he could well include the plastic arts, provide "an ongoing, dynamically affective series of expressive cultural images which create the kind of positive self-awareness necessary to make the process of modernization ideological as well as technological, and thus potentially subversive of the old form of domination".[25]

Mphahlele calls urban black culture in South Africa a "virile" and "synthetic fugitive culture",[26] which contributes to the irrepressible will to survive, the constant renewing of initiative, another of his motifs. In *The African Image* he uses similar terms to describe the writers of the 1950s (chief among whom are St Peter's graduates) who, he feels, are fashioning an urban literature on terms unacceptable to the white ruling class, whose milieu is "a fugitive culture: borrowing here, incorporating there, retaining this, rejecting that",[27] which erodes the basis of apartheid. In a later article, "The Tyranny of Place and Aesthetics", Mphahlele importantly attributes the black South African autobiography to the urban context, speaking of the need to

> hold on to it [the urban setting], document it, even though, or because, it riles you up. You feed on the poison it releases; it drains much out of you, but you love it for all that. And always you feel it absolutely necessary to give an account of yourself, of how you grow up in such a setting; you probe every phase of your life. You dare not let up, because you dare not forget.[28]

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[24] Manifesto: Basic Policy of Congress Youth League, 1948, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II: Hope and Challenge 1935-1952* (Stanford, CA, 1973), 326. It should be noted that, although Mphahlele joined the ANC in 1955, he criticised it for its failure in the campaigns against the Western Areas removals and the implementation of Bantu Education (*Down Second Avenue* (London, 1989; orig. 1959), 191-192).

[25] David Coplan, `The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry: The Struggle for African Culture on the Witwatersrand', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg, 1979), 195.

[26] Mphahlele, `African City People', 9.

[27] Es'kia Mphahlele, *The African Image* (New York, 1962), 192.

[28] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Tyranny of Place and Aesthetics', *English Academy Review* 1981, 6.

"To give an account of yourself": here we see the essential autobiographic motive. Crucially, Mphahlele calls the autobiography an "aesthetic", linking style and self through a way of writing which articulates growing identity: the "impressionistic style you employ is a way of measuring your anger and therefore flexing the muscle of your identity." He qualifies "aesthetic" as "the way you express yourself, the way you contemplate and assess reality, your personal beliefs in relation to the society you come from",[29] and his autobiographical writings adopt an increasingly obvious jazz idiom over time.

1.2 Teacher and writer in a strange land

The years in Nigeria also planted seeds in him which the consumer materialism and competition he encountered while teaching in Denver and Pennsylvania threatened to kill unless he returned to home soil where they could flourish. In words reminiscent of the Babylonian exiles' lament, his piece on the eve of his return, "Portrait of a Man in a Glasshouse", asks plaintively: "how can a man teach among people whose cultural goals he cannot share?" And in his own jazz style, later to form the aesthetic of *Afrika My Music*, he confesses memorably:

> I can't help but say under my breath as I stand before undergraduates; You're going to listen to me you dumb clattering tincans and cymbals you bouncing bundles of tender cartilage, because you want to gather credits like ripe mangoes because you're on your way up to the middle-class totempole that you spit upon because you crave the respectability you pretend to scorn because to shake off Papa's subsidy you've got to earn your independence because among your stampeding herd are those who'll take to other hills other pastures other streams for their own survival . . . .[30]

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[29] Mphahlele, `The Tyranny of Place', 11.
[30] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Portrait of a Man in a Glasshouse', *Era* (12) 1976, 6-7.

As he says later, borrowing from *Hamlet* (and echoing ideals held by the CR who preferred to live on the periphery and work among the marginalised): "there's something rotten in the state of middle-class values: certain notions of success, the way parents want to devour their offspring, the where-did-we-go-wrong refrain, the phony sanctity of marriage and notions of manwife fidelity and christian morality".[31] The American dream had cheated him; he could no longer function as a teacher there and chose to return.

Of course, the leitmotif throughout his life is that of the wanderer, driven over three continents by the dialogue of two selves, the continual interplay between the rural and urban sensibility begun by *Down Second Avenue*,[32] and led home again by the tyranny of place to determine his aesthetic. He has all the time avoided a universalising, transcendent approach to things, which he sees as essentially Western; one is reminded of Fanon's "I do not come with timeless truths." Writing of ideologies as *historical* moments, and art products as *historical* items (the emphasis is his and, incidentally, validates my historical approach to his work), he believes that "Today we need this kind, tomorrow we need another, the next day we may return to today's source of moral guidance".[33] Even the shifting terminology he uses to denote black people and describe himself in his non-fictional oeuvre changes according to the context.[34] "But while we live," he implores us, "let us work toward an aesthetic that will answer the vital questions of today", just as he has always been sensitive to the imperative of the moment and moved with it.

During the brief visit Mphahlele made in July 1976 to test the waters for his return, he wrote three important articles for the *Sunday Express*, the first of which, "The Agony of Exile", touches on the key ideas of (elected, not imposed) service to the community and full development of the individual which, we have seen, underpinned the CR teaching. Mphahlele says he had

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[31] Mphahlele, `Portrait of a Man', 7.
[32] Samin, `Interview', 199.
[33] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The African Critic Today: Toward a Definition', in Houston A Baker, Jnr. (ed), *Reading Black: Essays in the Criticism of African, Caribbean, and Black American Literature* (Ithaca, 1976), 19.
[34] See Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 161.

to leave South Africa to "be useful to myself in a way that would also be useful to others" and again, "I wanted self-fulfillment".[35] Or in haunting words which illustrate the quality of being able to make a difference: "It is not fame you want in my line of work. It is having your shadow noticed - in the words of the Sesotho saying to have `seriti', a presence." Irrelevance makes for anonymity. A related idea in this article is the impossibility of achieving the same scholarship or prolific writing within apartheid South Africa, yet the desperate need for a response from his own people to his writing "who will shout back in approval or disapproval", and for an educational environment receptive to his calling as teacher and writer: "It's all tied up with the chafing desire to teach in Africa for the rest of my life, I want to teach in a cultural context where all the echoes of a people, materialistic or spiritual, interact with an educational philosophy as long as the people themselves evolve it." He attributes the untenable "dissociation between cultural and educational goals" and its concomitant, "an unbridled materialistic drive", which he encountered in America to capitalism, "the system of ruthless, restless enterprise in the United States that goes with the label `free'."

It is my contention that, although he rightly finds the antidote to this in African humanism, and seeks to return to an environment where these ideals can still be found, his schooling among the Christian socialist CR would have planted the seeds of an ethical system based on the dignity of the individual and hence the imperative for collective living, where the good of the whole depends on the complementary responsible actions of the part. It is noteworthy that Abrahams, in his preface to his early volume of poems, *A Blackman Speaks of Freedom!*, not altogether originally, given their common materialist roots, describes communism in terms of incarnation: "To me God is many things. But first and foremost he is your Body", and God (or `the human form divine' *à la* Blake) is not worshipped and laughter is absent "because man and his God are both enslaved by Big Business".[36] His

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[35] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Agony of Exile', *Sunday Express* 4 July 1976, 21. Parts of this article were later incorporated into *Afrika My Music: An Autobiography 1957-1983* (Johannesburg, 1984).

[36] Peter Abrahams, `For Laughter', *A Blackman Speaks of Freedom!* (Durban, c.1940), 7-8.

declaration, "People are more important than *any thing* [his emphasis]", is echoed years later in *Return to Goli*, where he insists "people, individual people, would always be more important than causes for me".[37] Mphahlele told Chabani Manganyi that he laid a premium on compassion, as the hallmark of African humanism. "[P]eople reach out because they then become self-fulfilled," he claimed, "you are enlarged and increased when you go out of yourself".[38] Call it African humanism or Christian socialism, the essence is compassion, not competition, identification in the pursuit of common goals, not separation in the interest of individual advancement.

1.3 African humanism

Mphahlele has never used a class analysis to diagnose the injustice of South African society (in fact, he repudiates this in typical nationalist fashion as downplaying racial disparities in what he has termed "an intellectual chess game in our struggle");[39] as other educated African nationalists he is content to elide class under colour. Like Sol Plaatje, though, his lifelong service to (but more importantly, identification with) the poor of his community is the necessary outworking of his African humanism. "There is nothing wrong in developing an elite in the process of educating a people," Mphahlele has asserted. "White society has an educated elite which, because of white privilege, is highly productive".[40] His dedication to a life of teaching arguably fulfils the ideals of the CR, who, with the limited means at their disposal, in an unequal and unjust dispensation, inculcated in their pupils both "mental and moral equipment" for eventual leadership of (ie. service to) others. Though he might attribute the motivation in his case to African humanism (a rejection of the ideological accretions of the West) which was achieved *in spite of* his education, it might be suggested, in the light of his favouring the paradoxical middle ground, that his humanist motivation was also achieved *because of*

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[37] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 17.
[38] Chabani Manganyi, `Looking In: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele', in his *Looking through the Keyhole* (Johannesburg, 1981), 9.
[39] Mphahlele, `Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self', 2.
[40] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Education: Towards a Humanistic Ideology', in *Report on the Conference on Educational Priorities in a Developing State* (Pretoria, 1980), 23.

his education, which was, however distasteful it became in years to come, morally grounded.

African humanism forms a constant thread throughout Mphahlele's non-fictional writing. A letter he wrote in exile to the East African journal *Transition* shows beliefs in perfect consonance with those of Christian socialism, though he terms them `African humanist', the targeting of whatever diminishes life for the many in the interests of the few. He notes the puncturing of the American dream among African intellectuals and artists who recognise "the naivete in so much of the `Great Society', the cruel realities of private enterprise," and states his credo:

> I firmly believe that those who have, have the moral duty to give to those who haven't. All my life I have insisted that individuals who are wealthy should give and not expect the recipient to kiss their hands for it or be expected to repay in kind. I have not the slightest modesty about this: maybe because I know what poverty is.[41]

"I do know the evils of capitalism," he wrote in *The African Image* of white farmers withholding food produce for higher prices and the absentee-ownership of land, "because I was born and bred in its climate".[42]

"Do I forget Shelley, the young revolutionary atheist who rebels against despotic gods and demi-gods in the form of capitalist rulers?" he had asked twenty years earlier in "About My Library", a piece published in the mimeographed paper he ran with his close friend Khabi Mngoma (later to become Professor of Music at the University of Zululand), which is highly revealing of his early hedonistic indulgence in the riches of the Eurocentric literary tradition (he assumed the *nom-de-plume* Rabelais when writing for

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[41] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Mphahlele on the CIA', letter to *Transition* 7(iii)(34) 1968, 5.
[42] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 85.

The Voice).[43] The piece is also indicative of the humanist way in which English literature had been taught to him; all the great novelists, poets and dramatists he revels in are invoked here precisely for their humanity, the way in which the literary text reflects, and should inform, life. He identifies, for instance, about the time of his painful rejection of the Church, with Coleridge's "troubled soul" mingling with the troubled elements, and with Browning "who rebels against false morality".[44] Understandably, there is a certain arrogance at work here, and perhaps some exaggeration in listing Dostoevsky and Tolstoy as writers he likes "to dig into"; it seems likely that this pretentiousness would have been repudiated on Nigerian soil, along with his exclusive celebration of the English tradition itself.[45]

His schooling (and subsequent undergraduate study) also inculcated in him the music of Western poetry, for his articles resound with echoes of the Romantic poets, whom he read at St Peter's, and Shakespeare, whom he encountered at UNISA for his BA degree. Mazisi Kunene has contended that one reason for the popularity of the Romantics among black writers was their comparative readability;[46] if so, this suggests that, before Bantu Education, a competitively high standard of education was achieved. Even if Mphahlele took issue with that education (in the third article he wrote for the *Sunday Express*, "The Scars That Scream", he berates how he was taught poetry in high school and college, "the way that leaves in you the impression that pastoral surroundings must inspire the writing of poetry and poetry must

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[43] This means he was probably responsible for the political parody of Byron's `The Vision of Judgement' published in July 1950 (see Tim Couzens, `Politics and Black Poetry in South Africa 1930-1950', *Africa Perspective* (7) April 1978, 13).

[44] Es'kia Mphahlele, `About My Library', *The Voice of Africa* Nov. 1950, 5. The paper only lasted two years before it was banned in 1952.

[45] Interestingly, though, this piece yields evidence of his later affinity with Oriental poetry, especially Rabindranath Tagore, for he mentions, too, Lin Yutang's anthologies of writings from India and China, which include Laotze, Confucius, and the Bhagavad-Gita.

[46] Tim Couzens, `The Continuity of Black Writing in English in South Africa before 1950', in André de Villiers (ed), *English-Speaking South Africa Today* (Cape Town, 1976), 368. Another reason might be the Romantics' emphasis on a common humanity, necessary in a period in which British society was coming to think of people in terms of instruments of production (see Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 59) or, in the South African context of the colour bar, as sub-human.

express `nice' sentiments"),[47] he found the Romantics indispensable in his writing. Later in that article he drops quite casually, yet vividly, a reference to Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters" as he tries to make sense of drunkenness in Soweto: "Sensibility blunted so that you can suspend pain for a while, in the never-never land where it is always twilight." And if the teaching of poetry did not help his own verse, begun at Ezenzeleni, it certainly gave him a powerful arsenal for his subsequent non-fiction, always the richer for its frequent recourse to poetic illustration, whether from Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" in his piece in *Fighting Talk* in 1963, or from Tennyson's "In Memoriam" in that of *Leadership* in 1987.[48]

In "Portrait of a Man in a Glasshouse", that poetic interlude in which he assesses his exile like a "roomy but borrowed" glasshouse, where he perceives everything, yet cannot belong,[49] he compares himself in an extended metaphor with Kubla Khan. It is inspired, for one perceives the ease of his existence in America, but understands the deception and imprisonment, too: "I hear a warcry voices from the whirlwind prophesying chaos and doom like I think not even that dome-crazy reefer-stricken Kubla Khan would have dreamed in the splendour of his sacred river".[50] Yet the voices Mphahlele hears must draw him out of his `stately pleasure dome', "Because I'm a helpless captive of place and to come to terms with the tyranny of place is to have something to live for to save me from stagnation, anonymity".[51] The trope of Romantic escape is very seductive, but Mphahlele realises, as the Romantics reluctantly acknowledged, the place is not in the glasshouse: "The place is not here alas, so the moment must wait come renewal time", another leading motif in his writings. This moving sketch of exile presents Mphahlele to himself and to us on the threshold of his most

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[47] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Scars That Scream', *Sunday Express* 18 July 1976, 19. This article was later incorporated wholesale into *Afrika My Music*, 186-192.
[48] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The First Congress of Africanists', *Fighting Talk* 17(2) 1963, 8-9; `Dark Gods and Hope', *Leadership* 1987, 6-7.
[49] The central metaphor of open surveillance in this article contrasts with that of the keyhole common in his earlier writing, the narrow perspective of which characterised life in South Africa.
[50] Mphahlele, `Portrait of a Man', 4.
[51] Ibid, 5.

momentous decision, even more crucial than his leaving, that of returning. It engages with time, the fear of delaying a moment of `kairos', the sense that, as he acted on other milestones in his life, so his late fifties demand movement - before the distractions and impotence of old age hit him, for `now is the time.' The question is one of responsibility, to himself, to his people. It deals with belonging, the need to make a difference, the admission of what really matters, where his heart really is. The issue is of fulfillment, in his own life, among his own people.

1.4 The gadfly which is education

In vindication of my elaborate earlier chapters, Mphahlele has linked education with culture in his prefatory remarks to *Chirundu*: "education is for me an agent of culture even as it is culture itself";[52] elsewhere he calls it "a vehicle of culture". Hence his need to teach in a community whose cultural goals and aspirations he could understand and, indeed, it is the same need in any teacher who takes education seriously, which leads to discomfort when the aims and processes of educational authorities are at odds with the teacher's deep-seated beliefs. Mphahlele actually makes the point in 1981 (one wonders in passing whether distance of time has blurred the earlier memory of his vehement opposition to Bantu Education) that, had he not been banned, he would still have continued to teach under Bantu Education "because I had confidence that I could give more to the kids than the inferior syllabuses and curricula allowed".[53] He is supported in his contention, though, by Alfred Mokwele who considers the well-qualified or experienced teacher as being "less captive and freer as far as departmental educational ideology and curriculum offerings are concerned".[54]

It has also been argued that the learning experience is facilitated by the quality of the interpersonal relationships between the pupils and teacher,

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[52] Es'kia Mphahlele, `To the Reader', foreword to *Chirundu* (Westport, CT, 1981), vii.
[53] Mphahlele, `To the Reader', ix.
[54] Alfred Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience of the Anglican Church, 1906-1958" (MEd, University of the North, 1988), 135.

"irrespective of whether what has to be learnt is personally meaningful or not".[55] The need is for good teachers, without whom, as Mphahlele brutally notes in his preface to *Chirundu*, "kids are left in the wilderness":

> As it is, they are learning enough to know that they are being cheated, and we now see them as a living evidence of the fact that the mind is a dangerous thing to experiment with. A good education sets up a divine discontent; a poor education, especially of a racist kind, sets up discontents that breed defiance.[56]

"A good education sets up a divine discontent": with these words, Mphahlele has encapsulated the motivation behind this thesis. For all its limitations, St Peter's brought out Mphahlele's strengths which South African society at the time would not recognise: the confidence that one has been equipped to demand one's dues and the conviction that one has a responsibility to discharge. "I am convinced," he avowed to Pat Schwartz, "that nobody can chain the mind and that once you have given it an education it is going to want more".[57]

"My parents started me off that day," wrote William Conton, "on the long, endless road of schooling; a road on which, for me, every milestone was to be a signpost pointing ahead, and every step of the way a sharpener of the intellectual appetite".[58] Mphahlele is just as alert to the dynamism and infinite possibilities in the very concept and process of education. "Education sets up conflicts but also reconciles them in degrees that depend on the subject's innate personality equipment," he wrote in an important article midway into exile, "African Literature: What Tradition?"[59] However Eurocentric, and

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[55] Len Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation* (Johannesburg, 1987), 104.
[56] Mphahlele, `To the Reader', ix.
[57] Es'kia Mphahlele, `"Nobody Can Chain the Mind Forever"', interview with Pat Schwartz, *Rand Daily Mail* 14 Mar. 1979, 13.
[58] Conton, quoted in James Olney, *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature* (Princeton, NJ, 1973), 139.
[59] Mphahlele, `African Literature', 36.

however disruptive, his education set him on the path to integration of the Western and African experience, so that all his subsequent work, teaching, writing, and involvement in the arts would be an attempt to integrate the two. Mphahlele does not mitigate the shell-shock of secondary education: "Every time an African mother sends a child to high school, it is like giving birth to him all over again. She knows she is yielding something".[60] But he values the self-development it initiates, perhaps recognised from his own years at St Peter's: the pupil adapts to an irrevocably-changed filial relationship, for "the very educational process that wrenches him from his moorings helps him to arrange a harmonization within himself."

Formal education must lead to a "rupture", he feels, an "ever-widening gulf" between the individual, and family and community. It is a powerful differentiating force, and one there is no stopping: "you assimilate patterns of thought, argument and so on from an alien culture in an alien language; they become your own".[61] What is very noticeable in the autobiographies of Mphahlele and Abrahams is the sense of no longer fitting into life in Marabastad or Vrededorp whenever school holidays occurred. Mphahlele writes that "after the first six months at St Peter's I felt strange back in the streets of Pretoria during winter vacation . . . . My sensitivity to conditions had sharpened frightfully".[62] In *Afrika My Music* he writes: "what we were learning at school had very little to do with our daily torments, our living conditions. Most often it was an escape from our miseries".[63] With Abrahams, this alienation is even more pronounced. The twin strands in his life, his growth as an artist and his coming to maturity, are alluded to at the start of Book II during his first years of schooling when he had fallen under the spell of Lamb's Shakespeare, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and Keats: "I desired to know myself in terms of the new standards set by these books. I lived in two worlds, the world of Vrededorp and the world of these books".[64]

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[60] Ibid, 41.
[61] Ibid, 42.
[62] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 130.
[63] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 179.
[64] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), 161.

Yet it is, according to Lynda Gilfillan, at the very time he attends Grace Dieu near Pietersburg, that the fragmented self which was the product of the colour bar, through being acknowledged assumes coherence and stability.[65] At the end of his first year at Grace Dieu he arrived at his sister Maggie's house for the Christmas holidays:

> She stared at me for a while.
>
> `You've changed,' she said slowly, frowning.
>
> `I've grown,' I said.
>
> `It's more than that.'
>
> She was more subdued after that. She sat opposite me and watched me eat. There was a curiously intense quality about the way she watched me. It was as if she would force something out of me with her eyes.
>
> `Matter, Mag? I'm the same me.'
>
> She said nothing. Her eyes said: No, you're not. And because she had made me aware of it, I realized I had changed. I had a new, seeing coldness that had nothing to do with coldness of feeling.[66]

"Sharpened sensitivity" and "seeing coldness": the same response after the middle-class ethos of boarding-school education to appalling slum conditions? Abrahams knew his family was happy to have him back but very worried about what would become of him under the colour bar with his education.[67] After the holidays he returned with relief to the peaceful valley of Grace Dieu: "Except for Maggie's home and the Bantu Men's Social Centre, I

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[65] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 141.

[66] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 228.

[67] Ibid, 232. Interestingly, Abrahams wrote to Richard Wright in April 1947 that Fieta in *The Path of Thunder* tells Lanny Swartz after his return from university to leave the `coloured' Northern Cape community "because education would only bring unhappiness to his people, would raise new desires that cannot be satisfied and thus bring unhappiness and trouble" (quoted in Michel Fabre, `Richard Wright, Negritude and African Writing', in AS Gerard (ed), *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Volume 2 (Budapest, 1986), 1159).

had felt out of place in Johannesburg. I had been on the outside of things. The things I had wanted to do had been `Reserved for Europeans only'".[68]

This growing restlessness about oppressive conditions, alienation even, in Abrahams's case, from his own community, was directly caused by their exposure to an alternative way of living, starting with their schooling. The to-and-fro transgression from one world to another, Mphahlele would write later, "going out of the queue of Western orientation now and again" to reassess things from an African perspective, yet remaining in the queue so as to belong to the world-wide intellectual or economic community, is the result of higher education.[69] The need to express both the educated and traditional selves can, for the thinking person, only be exorcised in writing, articulating the augmented identity, or creating fiction which engages with these opposing forces: "And so our writing becomes the very process by which we communicate with tradition, define ourselves by defining it".[70] The point here is a defiance of boundaries, a richness of experience which demands a context for participation in both orientations. If that is not forthcoming in the country of birth, a dynamic life will have to be sought in exile.

1.5 Crossing boundaries

"Exile, like memory," wrote Eavon Boland, "may be a place of hope and delusion . . . . The expatriate is in search of a country, the exile in search of a self." Denied a self in South Africa, Mphahlele needed the space and retrospect of exile in Nigeria, first of all, to pose the age-old questions of identity, and secondly, to begin to answer them. As he told Norman Hodge of the time before he left, "there is no South African writer that I know of, particularly in urban life, who ever stopped to ask himself `Who am I? Where am I going to? Where do I come from?'"[71] Exile for Mphahlele entailed the same juggling act as did the `dialogue of the two selves' (within an African

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[68] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 234.
[69] Mphahlele, `African Literature', 42.
[70] Ibid, 60.
[71] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 129.

educated in the Western tradition): was he to adapt to his new and ever-changing setting and be assimilated by it, or should he retain the certain distinctiveness of being South African? He told Hodge, "one finds one has to learn to live with this without becoming neurotic or becoming mentally unbalanced. You have to know how to play these two forces yourself".[72] In prolonged exile, Mphahlele notes, one's aesthetic, which requires a constant interplay between experiencing self and writing self, between the anger felt and the figuring of that anger, "seems to be forever in a state of suspension", without a touchstone, "[a]nd so you fluctuate between hope and despair".[73] Mphahlele's prolific non-fiction written during his exile (and Abrahams's fictional writings, which have been notoriously called `novels of ideas') bear out the truth of his remark that `ideas' tend to become more obvious a focus than `experience': "Having been thrown into the bigger milieu of ideas outside your homeground," Mphahlele notes of the condition of exile, "your writing registers ideas more readily than it dramatizes concrete experience. How to resolve this dilemma becomes a painful preoccupation".[74]

In "Exile, the Tyranny of Place and the Literary Compromise", Mphahlele uses the idea of a "compromise" to depict the dialogue of teacher and writer within him, and the tension between outsider (the exile) fighting the tyranny of place and insider attached to place.[75] He also employs the term to discuss the dichotomies of imaginative literature: how it oscillates between being an historical item and transcendental phenomenon, of relative relevance and enduring moral value, and how the writer may have to make a compromise between the inner compulsion to create and to enter social action.[76] Again Mphahlele reveals his keen awareness of (and desire to remain in) the zone between, for "the African personality is not static".[77] Abrahams, meanwhile, employs the complementary idea of "the long view", contrasting the writer with the politician, the one speaking to people from the depths of their hearts

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[72] Ibid, 130.
[73] Mphahlele, `The Tyranny of Place', 11.
[74] Ibid, 12.
[75] Mphahlele, `Exile, the Tyranny of Place', 44.
[76] Ibid, 43.
[77] Mphahlele, `Education: Towards a Humanistic Ideology', 9.

and conscience, the other, to their passions and prejudices. Life is an unending process of change, he believes, and the writer who understands this will not be cowed by the violent passions of the day. "Only humanity, and the thousands of years of human struggle to a greater dignity and freedom – only these are fixed",[78] and recognition of this encourages the writer to take the long view and "speak in the genuine accents of all humanity", "looking both ways, blending the past and future in his dream".[79]

A resistance to moving between acceptance and protest, an inability to inhabit any marginal area, Mphahlele sees as the failure of *négritude*. His protracted crusade against it as a cultural movement is notorious, but he did welcome it as a political concept, in its necessary protest against French cultural hegemony and, after independence, assertion of African culture. But it was too prescriptive, seeking "to herd all Africans in the same pen" and even worse, "to regimentalise the writer".[80] Herding and regimentalising take away the freedom to live on the margins, take away any sense of irony or paradox, and hence, for Mphahlele, critically impoverish a literary work. And, indeed, a human life. As he remarks in his letter to *Transition*, on a list of what he considers "robust" writers (a truly eclectic bunch), "don't their best works move along the physical, emotional and intellectual planes of meaning?"[81] The creative spirit always eludes prescription: "literature and art are too big for *négritude*".[82] In his battle with proponents of *négritude* he continually underlined that black South Africans did not need to assert their African dignity but rather their *human* dignity under a regime which did all in its power to stress their perceived subhumanity.[83] Since English-speaking Africans were discouraged from assuming British cultural norms, other than speaking with their masters' voice, "*négritude* as a socio-political concept

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[78] Peter Abrahams, `The Long View', *African World* June 1952, 11.
[79] Abrahams, `The Long View', 12.
[80] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Polemics: Replying Chinua Achebe', letter to *Transition* 3(9) 1963, 7.
[81] Ibid, 7.
[82] Es'kia Mphahlele, `A Reply', in Gerald Moore (ed), *African Literature and the Universities* (Ibadan, 1965), 26.
[83] "I had taken my Africanness for granted", wrote Mphahlele in 1980, "because I had grown up fighting to protect my humanity rather than my blackness" (`Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self', 2).

defines the mind of the assimilated African in French-speaking territories." His reply to W Jeanpierre in March 1963 is a powerful piece of writing, reprinted no less than four times over the next decade, a relentless and eloquent argument exposing the weakness in proponents' insistence on *négritude* as an artistic, as opposed to a political, concept. "Let it not be forgotten," the lover of Romantic poetry intones with some irony, "that *négritude* has an overlap of 19th century European protest against machines and canons. In the place of the cuckoo, the nightingale, the daffodil, Africa has been dragged to the altar of Europe".[84]

In other essays, using the essentialist term coined by Edward Wilmot Blyden, he insists on the ambivalence of the `African personality', whose "nuances defy the politician's definition of the concept",[85] and advocates continual seeking after "the real `African Personality' which will replace the romantic image of it".[86] "[N]o, we can't define it," he concludes in *The African Image*, "at once submissive and violent, accommodating and uncompromising, full of laughter and tears", we can only search for it.[87] Over and over again he places hope in the artist, the writer, the musician, the actor to reveal it. Even the struggle to engage with modern technology and other ways of life, as Africa has done all along with Western products, "must give as valid a definition to our culture as its historical past".[88] Mbari in Nigeria, Chemchemi in Kenya and Fuba in Soweto were all highly successful projects with one aim in mind: "to create the necessary climate for an integrated personality".[89] Artistic centres such as these help the artist and intellectual "to negotiate the tricky bend which lies between their basic African-ness and outside cultures, to help them contain the shock that they experience in confrontation with

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[84] Mphahlele, `A Reply', 25. Early on he showed the same attitude to Abrahams's romanticising of blackness as a pupil at St Peter's, writing verse "straining to justify and glorify the dark complexion with the I'm-black-and-proud-of-it-theme" (*Down Second Avenue*, 128).
[85] Es'kia Mphahlele, `The Fabric of African Cultures', *Foreign Affairs* 42(4) 1964, 618.
[86] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Chemchemi: Rediscovery of the African Culture', *Africa and the World* (Nov. 1964), 42.
[87] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 186.
[88] Mphahlele, `The Fabric of African Cultures', 618-619.
[89] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Africana: Chemchemi Creative Centre, Nairobi', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 3(1) May 1965, 117.

other cultures that have different sets of values from theirs".[90] As he wrote in response to Addison Gayle's criticism of his 1974 text, *Voices in the Whirlwind*, for supposedly being too enamoured of Western culture (or too `involved with the West'), colonised people can approach the culture of their colonisers on two levels: "the utility level and the philosophical".[91] These two terms perhaps correspond with the concept of strategic identity (adopted when necessary, like John Dube's `ambiguities of dependence') and ontological identity. Africans cannot avoid truck with the West on the levels of modern everyday life, from housing and transport to education and employment (and this level, perhaps, proves a unifying factor across the continent), but they can certainly choose whether or not to engage with "the stink of the West", its ongoing history of destruction, acquisitive acts, and racism, "the furies the West rained over Africa".[92]

Mphahlele's detailed reply to the African American critic is his *apologia pro vita sua* on the eve of his return to South Africa, and maybe a catalyst in his decision to return, given how woefully he had been misunderstood by the African American, hence its impassioned, even "hysterical" tone (the word is Gayle's). In it he tries to isolate the extent of his involvement with the West, beginning, significantly, with his learning English at the age of thirteen. "Confrontation and clamour for emancipation is the immediate result of the mastery of the colonist's language," he would write in 1984 regarding Africa's upstart appropriation of Western tongues. "The Promethean gift can only begin to give a good account of itself when the ex-colonial strives towards a synthesis, a point of equilibrium".[93] This is an exciting process, the hammering out of a new idiom, but also excruciating because of the ambivalence engendered towards the language and culture appropriated. There are no clear-cut answers, or simple resolutions. "Why should I not, after having been immersed in the writing techniques and a language of the

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[90] Mphahlele, `Africana', 116.
[91] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply to Addison Gayle Jr.', *Black World* 23(3) Jan. 1974, 5.
[92] Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply', 6.
[93] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Prometheus in Chains: The Fate of English in South Africa', *English Academy Review* 1984, 93.

West by historical accident," he asked Gayle, "be aware of and feel the paradox of standards and audience and tradition?".[94] Here again is the language of ambivalence, born of intertwined histories, which Mphahlele implies is the only true articulation of the dialogue of two selves: "Africa will evolve its own methods of dealing with the West, of containing it, methods that defy any formula based on a simplistic total rejection".[95]

2 The decolonisation of the mind

In the mid-1960s Peter Abrahams wrote of the new Afro-Asian leadership as demonstrating "ambivalence", having experienced "such psychological and emotional assaults on their sense of self-respect and dignity that, although they have come away children of the West because of their training, they nurse deep resentments against it".[96] He suggests, not altogether convincingly, that it might only be the next generation of Afro-Asian leaders without the "memory of an intimate and painful experience of a `master-and-man' relationship with the West", and with no emotional involvement with it, "and therefore with no ambivalence toward it",[97] who might facilitate a more normal relationship, and this is explored in his last work, *The View from Coyaba* (1985). Mphahlele reveals how closely he has moved to the position Abrahams propounds in that novel in his address to the Council for Black Education and Research in 1981, "Towards a Humanist Philosophy of Education." His address was premised on the assumption that the only way forward for Africans was the decolonisation of their minds as a prerequisite for liberation and hence their identity: "Only a free mind that is sure of its identity, that is not ashamed of it can, from a position of strength, go beyond mere survival. It can sort out the germ from the chaff that white values have

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[94] Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply', 10.
[95] Ibid, 11.
[96] Peter Abrahams, `We Can Learn to Be Color-Blind', *New York Times Magazine* 11 Apr. 1965, 107.
[97] Ibid, 107. As long as Western technological supremacy dominates, however, and is coveted and admired by the new Afro-Asian leadership, Abrahams's hypothesis remains moot.

to offer".[98] Winnowing, sloughing, excavating, the metaphor is the same; both men from the vantage (and advantageous) point of sixty-odd years of age are performing the task of cultural archaeologist, sloughing off the accretions of centuries, excavating various convoluted layers of African history to find the bedrock (however contaminated) and the complications of identity to reach the core (hybrid though it may be). We are reminded of Homi Bhabha's problematising of identity as never *a priori* nor a finished product, but always a process towards an image of totality.

Abrahams told Itala Vivan in 1989 at the end of an important interview,[99] that he has come to realise that life is only a process, and there can be no ultimate solution to intractable problems; a result is perhaps not even desirable. This extends to the individual life, or identity itself, which in youth may fix on an image of totality, but eventually looks back over the process of seeking as the reality. Again pointing to the intersection of ironies which came unasked for along with Western culture and which need to be sorted out, Mphahlele mentions in his 1981 address the sense of shame inculcated by the West which must be dispelled before identity can be attained, shame which comes of being unable to please the West. For, if black people withdraw to seek their own historical identity (as Abrahams advocates in his last novel) they are viewed as supporting segregation, a white ideology; and if they embrace white values and the lifestyle predicated on them (as Abrahams initially tried to do), they find this has been made impossible by white society: "Only a mind that is free, independent," states Mphahlele, "shall outlast this dilemma, shall outlive the sense of shame".[100]

2.1 The retrospective view from Coyaba

"Our minds have been so colonized that we are ourselves the most effective propagandists of the process which sets other people's limits on our own

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[98] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Towards a Humanistic Philosophy of Education: An African's View', in *The Capricorn Papers* (Johannesburg, 1982), 36.
[99] Unpublished interview with Itala Vivan, Red Hills, Jamaica, Feb. 1989.
[100] Mphahlele, `Education: Towards a Humanistic Ideology', 23.

thoughts and options," says David Brown, one of the main characters in *The View from Coyaba*.[101] Abrahams's last epic novel may be considered a summation of his writing; to Itala Vivan he admitted that questions of religion, philosophy and psychology interest him more than literary works at this late stage in his life (although, as we have noted, he has always been called a `novelist of ideas') and it is therefore to be expected that this book is as much a philosophical treatise as novel, drawing especially on the writings of WEB Du Bois, Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon. Abrahams also pointed out to Vivan that *The View from Coyaba* wraps up a major cycle of his life's work, namely the struggle to find a solution to the problem identified by Du Bois as characterising the twentieth century, that of `the colour line'. He indicated that this cycle runs from *Tell Freedom* to *The View from Coyaba*, the personal quest for liberation being identified with the struggle of people of African descent to be themselves or, as Du Bois called his own life story, the `autobiography of a race concept.'

Michael Wade has demonstrated how *The View from Coyaba* introduced two major developments in Abrahams's lifelong quest for wholeness and affirmation: firstly, a healing of the relationship which he never had with his father because of the Ethiopian seaman's early death, and with what became the father substitute and role model, the West; and secondly, a deliberate reverting to the Christian faith, specifically that of the socialist variety which he had encountered at school.[102] The two ideas are linked, in that the father's `betrayal' of his young son through his early death becomes identified with the West's betrayal of the young man, since it gave him an education which equipped him for, and encouraged him to desire, an abundant life outside of the ghetto, but then denied him its benefits in South Africa. Abrahams's schooling, as recounted in *Tell Freedom*, led to the educated youth of nineteen actively seeking a Western cultural matrix, leaving South Africa for England, but his later life experience and reading of WEB Du Bois gave him an understanding of the West's long occupation of the black mind,

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[101] Peter Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba* (London, 1985), 433.
[102] Michael Wade, `Identity and the Mature Writer'. Unpublished paper, 1988, 11.

as propounded in *The View from Coyaba*, which ends with the young doctor, David Brown, rejecting a Western matrix for a return to his roots in Uganda. For the first time, says Wade, Abrahams introduces into his oeuvre "a new theme of major importance: the incorporation into black life of the message of the Christian gospel as a lived ethical system".[103]

Until this novel, Abrahams never seriously considered Christianity as a means of bringing about the liberation of black people, preoccupied as he was with results, with finding an antidote to racism in his own lifetime. His oeuvre shows how he turned in succession to Marxism (*Mine Boy*, 1946), liberal humanism (*The Path of Thunder*, 1948) and Pan-Africanism (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956) for a solution to Du Bois's diagnosis of the malady this century, ending in disillusionment (*This Island, Now*, 1966). Yet concurrently he clung to the idea of Christianity as a revolutionary force, perhaps a vestige of the social gospel encountered at St Peter's. This idea informed an important article in 1954, for instance, when he asserted that "the true motive forces of Western culture" were to be found in "the teachings of the Christ who taught a new concept of men's relations with their God and with each other, a concept that cuts across tribal gods and tribal loyalties and embraces all men in all lands, offering them a common brotherhood".[104] It was simply a question of time, perhaps, for, in the last stages of his life, he has come to a point of acceptance that there can be no millennial solution (a Western fallacy, part of its love affair with achievement), that the process of moving ever onwards is the best that can be striven for. Neither communism, nor liberal ideals, nor Pan-Africanism in a purely political sense, can return dignity and freedom to people of African descent, only Christianity, he suggests, leavened by `African socialism.'

Abrahams had represented South Africa at the fifth and most militant Pan-African conference in Manchester in 1945, chaired by the 73-year-old Du

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[103] Michael Wade, `The View from Pisgah? Peter Abrahams at Seventy', *Southern African Review of Books* June/July 1989, 10.

[104] Peter Abrahams, `The Conflict of Culture in Africa', *International Affairs* 30(3) July 1954, 308.

Bois, and had drawn up the declaration which began by calling on "intellectuals and professional classes of the colonies to awaken to their responsibilities" such as "fighting for trade union rights, the right to form co-operatives, the freedom of the press, assembly, demonstration and strike, freedom to print and read the literature which is necessary for the education of the masses".[105] Influenced by the February 1945 meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions, according to Vincent Thompson,[106] the conference accepted socialism as the basis of an emergent African society. This philosophy had been advocated in the 1940s by Anton Lembede, which perhaps made him particularly desirable as a speaker at St Peter's, even though he was implacably opposed to compromise and accommodation in his fight against the paternalism of British `trusteeship' and `indirect rule.' Edgar and Msumza note that Lembede's essays promote a variant of `African socialism', characterised by black exclusiveness and self-awareness as a community, but always subsume class under race, offering only a few hints of a critical assessment of capitalism.[107] Heated debate was provoked within Youth League circles by his conviction that "Africans had to emancipate themselves psychologically and rely on their own leadership in order to challenge white domination, and that national liberation took primacy over class struggle".[108] One of his key slogans was "[a]fter national freedom, then, socialism": national liberation would usher in an era of African socialism.[109]

This concept also formed the guiding principle of the Youth League Manifesto, drafted by Lembede, and his fellow Roman Catholics by

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[105] Quoted in David Busumtwi-Sam, `65 Years of Pan-Africanism: The Idea of Pan-Africanism from 1900 to 1965', *Africa and the World* (10) July 1965, 16.
[106] Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, `Pan-Africanism - Past and Present', *Africa and the World* (12) Sept. 1965, 13.
[107] Robert Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Athens, OH & Johannesburg, 1996), 29-29.
[108] Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 35. Lembede's ideas were often romanticised and not defined, and thereby laid themselves open to interrogation. In this he anticipated both production and reception of Abrahams's novels; it is no accident that both were admirers of Marcus Garvey, and rallied to his essentialist slogan, `Back to Africa.'
[109] Anton Lembede, `Policy of the Congress Youth League', *Inkundla ya Bantu* May 1946, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 318.

upbringing, AP Mda and Jordan Ngubane in March 1944,[110] in which communalism and society's needs were favoured over those of the individual. The manifesto attacked `trusteeship' as perpetuating white rule, and `gradual change' as maintaining black bourgeois privileges, but was perhaps blind to the irony of the founders being themselves drawn from this class, and, indeed, once wards of white mentors. Perhaps conscious of this irony, Abrahams ensures that his main character Jacob Brown in *The View from Coyaba* becomes the ward of a black mentor, no less a person than WEB Du Bois, in order to flesh out Garvey's slogan `Africa for the Africans' in the less exclusive terms of the vision which undergirds the novel, "Africa for the Africans. The Africans for humanity. Humanity for God and for Africa".[111]

2.2 Autobiographical elements in the novel

The View from Coyaba is an attempt to give fictional form to the writings of Abrahams's lifelong mentor, WEB Du Bois. It offers a profoundly religious vision of oppression, suffering and relations of power, particularly with regard to the human psyche, drawing on the exploitation of people of African descent over 150 years to explore different approaches to overcoming subjugation politically, and also psychologically.[112] The main character, Bishop Jacob Brown, is the grandson of Jamaican slaves, led by the messianic figure Samson, who broke away from bondage some years before the Emancipation in 1834. Following on from his grandfather David's

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[110] Congress Mbata recalls the debate provoked by the writing of the Manifesto between the out and out Africanists and those who did not want to lose the ideal of non-racialism (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 105).

[111] Mbata, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 105. This formula appears in both Sobukwe's `The State of the Nation' address, 2 August 1959 (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 547), and on a PAC flyer issued c. late 1959 calling for Africa's freedom by 1960, "the year of African Independence and self-determination" (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 560).

[112] Anthony Appiah has demonstrated how Du Bois's early definition of a race, namely a group of human beings "of common history, traditions and impulses [and] ideals of life" (`The Conservation of Races', 1897) expressly avoids `colour.' Yet this "badge of insult" is intrinsic to his later definition of the black race (*Dusk of Dawn*, 1940), where "the real essence of this kinship is its social inheritance of slavery; the discrimination and insult" it has suffered (Appiah, `The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race', in Henry Louis Gates (ed), `*Race', Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1986), 29). Du Bois assigns to race "a

example, he is scrupulous throughout his life in his refusal to be part of a white-run church, believing that this would perpetuate the mental bondage which characterises the church in the West, in its complicity with commerce and colonialism. His church is never specified, but with its headquarters in the USA and being wholly black in character, it resembles the African Methodist Episcopal Church.[113] Jacob works in Liberia as a mission priest, then is promoted to Bishop and works for thirty years in Uganda in a prosperous mission station which he founded, before it falls prey to the ravages of Idi Amin, again not named, but unmistakable. There is a clear reversal of the black Diaspora in the book, with Jacob's son David, a freedom fighter in the Algerian War of Independence, taking a Ugandan name and returning the Brown family `back to Africa', whence they were brutally removed two centuries before.

There are important grounds for seeing this book as the most autobiographical since *Tell Freedom*, especially if one considers Edward Said's suggestion that exiles who are cut off from their roots, their land, or their past often seek to reconstitute their broken lives in narrative form, "usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people".[114] On an obvious level, much of the book is set in Jamaica, where Abrahams has lived since 1957, and it encompasses the glorious if turbulent years of the 1950s and 1960s when Africa was shaking off her foreign yoke, in which Abrahams was involved owing to his friendship with Nkrumah and Kenyatta. Going deeper, however, the reader marks how the young slave David's relationship to the group leader Samson echoes the young Abrahams's recollections of his father and his yearning for a father figure as expressed in *Tell Freedom*. One of Abrahams's stories in *Dark Testament*, "The Homecoming", focused on the relationship between father

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moral and metaphysical significance", on which I believe Abrahams has seized for the shaping spirit of his novel.

[113] Wade, for instance, notes that the novel "weaves influences from the Old and New Testaments, Marx, Fanon, Du Bois, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanism into a rich and deeply satisfying chromatic pattern" (`The View from Pisgah?', 10).

[114] Edward Said, `The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile', *Harper's* Sept. 1984, 51.

and son;[115] Michael Wade has argued that this particular bond, non-existent for Abrahams since his father died when he was still young, has become an *idée fixe*, so that, in his most recent work, there is evidence to suggest that Abrahams has at last resolved his feelings of early abandonment and his search for communal identity. In this work, the recounting of David's close relationship with his wife Sarah, the strong inspirational woman who converts him and shares in his ministry as leader of an independent church could only have been written by someone secure in the love of many years' companionship with his wife Daphne, "the present-day keeper of Coyaba", to whom the book is dedicated.[116] The characters speak for Abrahams or the people closest to him, and live in places or through events which he has experienced. Abrahams has always presented his ontological identity as closely bound up with the collective identity and experience of black people; and if this is their history, it is also Abrahams's, viewed from the perspective of Coyaba, the name of his home in Red Hills, signifying `heaven', `peace', `tranquillity',[117] which is the one haven of the oppressed down the ages, a refuge from the pernicious influence of the West.

Abrahams espoused Marxism during his last days in South Africa and worked on the *Daily Worker* in London, before he became disillusioned with its narrow approach to life. Yet it was a formative influence, allowing him to believe in a common fair destiny for all people, and in *The View from Coyaba* he gives it its due, but shows how Christianity is clearly superior to it, when informed by African socialism. Jacob Brown, who is a mouthpiece for the `novelist of ideas' (as Wade has called Abrahams), denotes the Church as "the oldest political movement in the world and, at times, the most revolutionary",[118] just as Christ is "the greatest revolutionary who ever

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[115] Peter Abrahams, `The Homecoming', *Dark Testament* (London, 1942), 93-102.

[116] David is taught to read by Sarah, using the Bible, the only printed material she has, but portentous in its symbolism as the link between them: it is "well used . . . clearly handled with much care and love" (*The View from Coyaba*, 107), and is on his desk when David dies there.

[117] Abrahams, `We Can Learn to Be Color-Blind', 38.

[118] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 259. There are two main foils to this view of Christianity in the book: Dr Daniel Lee, an atheist medical doctor with a caustic sense of humour (Abrahams was called Lee as a child) who is Jacob Brown's closest colleague in Liberia, and his son, David, also a medical doctor, also an atheist (until the end of the novel,

lived".[119] And he is scrupulous in demanding that the end is just as important as the means which, perhaps, in the final analysis, distinguishes a religious from a materialist belief system: "What you fight for determines how you fight, and how you fight determines how you win, and all these, together, determine what comes after".[120] Jacob is convinced that the winner of the "last great ideological encounter" between communists and Christians, significantly the classic dialectic of the 1930s during Abrahams's formative years, must be won by Christianity, because Christ's "is a revolution of love, not hate".[121]

2.3 Black Christianity

Time and again throughout the book, however, a dichotomy is set up between true adherents of a faith (those who remain loyal to the original spirit or founder) and those who, through human error, self-aggrandisement or lust for power, have subverted the original message and used it to oppress others. The novel deplores especially how Christ's revolutionary message has been perverted by the West to sanction its colonisation of Africa and underpin cultural and commercial hegemony totally at odds with Christ's promise of abundant life and freedom for humanity:

> And so it was that the central idea of the teaching of Jesus Christ, to love thy neighbour as thyself, and to have life and have it more abundantly, was distorted and institutionalized into a Christianity of burnings at the stake, of the mass murder of the so-called lesser peoples of the earth, of imperial plunder

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when he does acknowledge something of what his father believes). Both are very attractive people, hence their views have credibility, but Dr Dan's presence wanes after the Liberia episode, and David comes to an acknowledgement of the viability of his father's lifelong belief that, however slow revolutionary Christianity's influence, it is probably the only way forward.

[119] Ibid, 390.

[120] Ibid, 277.

[121] Ibid, 408. This phrase echoes what he wrote in 1952, that authority in writers is reserved for those who speak out of love rather than hate (`The Long View', 12) and that "art and beauty come of love: not of hate" (*Return to Goli*, 17). Significantly for a revolutionary faith, "the rage and anger of love can be more powerful than that of hate."

> and domination, of slavery, and of the ugliest period of racism in the known history of man.[122]

Yet Abrahams still feels that Christianity is the authentic way to liberation for black people by virtue of Christ's having been both victim and revolutionary, endemic black experiences. In stunningly sustained iconography, Samson, the leader of the escaped slave band, becomes an avatar of Christ in the novel, which clearly states the revolutionary potential of the Christian faith:

> the teaching of Christ provided each converted slave with a sense of his own humanity and therefore with a measuring rod against which to judge his status; and the result led to rebellion. And this makes your God of love a revolutionary, a fomenter of discontent, dissatisfaction; He causes a questioning of the status quo, He causes self-examination and a posing of what is against what could and should be.[123]

This is Du Bois speaking to Jacob Brown, the student he takes under his wing at Atlanta University, where the young man has enrolled to study theology; its rigour epitomises the principles underlying Abrahams's schooling at Grace Dieu and St Peter's. It is perhaps significant to note that Mphahlele's dispute with the Church was attributed, though perhaps rather tenuously, by Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR to what he had learned from the social gospel from the CR, revolutionary attitudes which brought him into conflict with the establishment.[124] In Du Bois's Thursday evening discussion groups Jacob learns to question everything, particularly human suffering, which adds a depth to his faith not all his own professors like.

Christianity is presented in the book as the only solution to centuries of power struggle in which the whites have always emerged as victors because,

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[122] Ibid, 359.
[123] Ibid, 154.
[124] Martin Jarrett-Kerr, *African Pulse: Scenes from an African Hospital Window* (London, 1960), 122.

Abrahams suggests through Jacob, they are the more ruthless in their lust for domination: "We have not yet developed, as a race, that arrogance of power that wants to control whatever it touches. Perhaps we will one day. I hope not. That is the key difference now".[125] Nevertheless, Jacob is continually challenged by his son David about the ineffectuality of Christianity to change the world, being too slow and contaminated by its association with the West, whose guile all too often slides into naked violence. The young doctor voices the views of Frantz Fanon for much of the novel and believes that only force will stop force. But his father interrogates this, given that victims (as survivors) so often assume their oppressor's values. Abrahams argues that only the black-run Church has the credibility and ability to keep the new victors on the right track, and ensure that, even if they do deviate, it will be less than before. As Abrahams said in his interview with Vivan, by dint of slow upwards progression, gradually learning new things each leg of the spiral, humanity should progress towards an ever new dispensation. It will have taken people of African descent to show this to the West, what it could not achieve after centuries of technological progress, and pillage.

The main thrust of the book is that the time has come for blacks to show whites a new way of living, through their collective survival down the ages of slavery, rape, oppression, sharecropping, discrimination. In this Abrahams follows closely the argument of WEB Du Bois who is a guiding spirit or presiding genius throughout the novel, something like the indigenous Arawak spirits who inhabit Coyaba. The eminent scholar, who "thought longer, more engagedly, and more publicly about race than any other social theorist of our century",[126] wrestled with white hegemony throughout his long life and was convinced that its survivors had a peculiar message to offer, as he indicated in his 1897 address to the Negro Academy, "The Conservation of Races":

> How shall this message be delivered; how shall these various ideals be realised? The answer is plain: By the development of

[125] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 202.
[126] Appiah, `The Uncompleted Argument', 22.

> these race groups, not as individuals but as races . . . . For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity.[127]

And to this task Abrahams harnesses Christian socialism. Just as Christ the victim suffered and opened up a new, revolutionary way of living for humanity, so the victims of the enforced Diaspora and constant discrimination in Africa and elsewhere have the key to a way of living for all humanity: a compassionate life of solidarity with the oppressed. As Du Bois put it in the same address:

> We are the firstfruits of this new nation, the harbinger of that black tomorrow which is yet destined to soften the whiteness of the Teutonic today. We are the people whose subtle sense of song has given America music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humour amid its mad money-getting plutocracy.[128]

The constant danger is that the materialism of the West will offer a new `mind-forged manacle', an insidious new bondage to enthrall black people, just as completely as many whites have lost their souls. Or that the violent means to freedom will trap freedom fighters in an endless cycle of wars, just like the West, whose "history in the last few centuries has become an endless bloodletting".[129]

2.4 Education for liberation

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[127] WEB Du Bois, `The Conservation of Races', in Andrew Paschal (ed), *WEB Du Bois: A Reader* (New York, 1993), 24.
[128] Du Bois, `The Conservation of Races', 26.
[129] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 278.

Yet one of the undoubted benefits of the West as argued in *The View from Coyaba* is education and, while the book shows clear respect for animistic religion and the simple courtesy of tribal life (even attributing to its cohesion the reason for Africa's survival after her dismemberment), it is insistent in advocating education as a means for black people to take their leading position in the world. This belongs to them by virtue of their suffering, and thus their understanding of the human condition at the close of the twentieth century; as Abrahams wrote in 1954, in an early elaboration on the idea of threading the universal with the particular, the African's "unique and often devastating experiences as a black man in this modern world have given his [artistic] output qualities that set it apart", but also made it "an integral part of the unfolding world culture which is currently called Western".[130] It is a strange irony that Abrahams might not have found his prophetic role for people of African descent without education. Education gave him the ability to read and interpret specifically the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the Romantic poets and Shakespeare, all of whom ratified his worth as a black person and human being. But he would use his experience as a victim of the colour bar and racial discrimination, yet a fellow-sharer in the solidarity and irrepressibility of black people, to understand these writers and speak of a new obligation, based on Du Bois's message at the close of the 19th century: for the darker `races' to restore to humanity its soul.

To empower black people and achieve this vision, educated and dedicated leaders are needed. Trying to sell the benefits of Western education to a venerable but hesitant chief of a tribe in Liberia, Jacob mentions the probability of a mission-educated doctor returning to his tribal village to work there: "For it is our purpose to train those among whom we work, so that the day will come when they will be in control of the missions and the hospitals and the schools and the governments of their own lands".[131] Abrahams shows time and again how educated black people have an obligation to pass on their skills and knowledge to their own community. Here he follows Du

[130] Abrahams, `The Conflict of Culture in Africa', 309.
[131] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 232.

Bois's famous clarion call for the college-educated `Talented Tenth', an idea originally mooted in 1903 but still frequently invoked in pieces thirty years later, "thinkers whose legitimate reward is the advancement of the great mass of American Negroes and with them the uplift of all men",[132] and "planners of a group of people in whose hands lies the economic and social destiny of the darker peoples of the world, and by that token of the world itself".[133] Abrahams saw himself in this mould early on for, as he wrote in an open letter to his mother in 1951, "more important than becoming rich and making money" was to do something with his life which would "make my people feel proud and raise their heads", and would show the rest of the world what black people could do if given a chance.[134]

It is Abrahams's message in the closing years of the twentieth century, for black people both in Africa and the Diaspora not to be seduced by Westernism, but to draw strength from and build up an African way of living, just as generations of black people have done under unbearable conditions. Here Abrahams is very close to Amilcar Cabral's idea of a `return to the source', encouraging people of African descent, different among themselves as they are, to concentrate on their values, their lifestyles, their continent, asserting their ontological identities before adopting the strategic identities of the West. As he put it in the interview with Vivan, black people are acknowledging how they have been brainwashed into wanting the things of the West, or as David reiterates, how they have seen "the whole world through the eyes of those who had colonized our minds, as they saw it or wanted us to see it".[135] This way of looking at problems is no longer from a Western viewpoint, but from Coyaba, a radical black Christian perspective which is what David, through watching and learning from how his father runs

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[132] WEB Du Bois, `Where Do We Go From Here?' (1933), in Paschal, *WEB Du Bois*, 156.
[133] WEB Du Bois, `Education and Work' (1930), in Paschal, *WEB Du Bois*, 323. Neville Choonoo shows the connection between Du Bois's Talented Tenth, and intellectuals in the Pan-African movement, like Abrahams in the 1940s, in their common belief that they have been tasked with officially leading black people "into fair competition with the rest of the Western world", through industrial progress under the direction of an educated elite ("Parallel Lives: Black Autobiography in South Africa and the United States" (PhD, Columbia University, 1982), 221-222, 226).
[134] Abrahams, `A Letter to My Mother', 24.

the mission station in Uganda, and reading the notebooks and journals kept by Jacob and his Christian great-grandmother, Sarah, feels is needed now by the black world:

> I suggest they learn from you, from your church, the other way of long-term historical struggle. You are the people who elected not to be part of a religious system which had ceased to be revolutionary and become counter-revolutionary; you kept your way alive and strong at a time when there was no hope for black independent churches.[136]

For Cabral the only possible reply to colonialism was for people of African descent to seek contact and interrelatedness with one another, not so much an act of struggle against hegemony, but rather a denial of the supremacy of that dominant power, a *kenosis* of the destructive and an assumption of the creative. Fanon believed that black people must plumb the depths of degradation and oppression, a literal `descent into hell', before rising up to smash the forces of oppression: victory after defeat, resurrection after death. Du Bois continually sounded the need for a `Great Sacrifice', whereby humanity would be emancipated and the forces of evil broken down.

This is the discourse of a black Christianity, and ultimately the discourse that informs *The View from Coyaba*. Its symbol and apotheosis is the burial of the black Christ, the messianic figure Samson. After tremendous psychic violation and physical abuse, the slave's withdrawal from what he called the "trap for our minds" which whites set "in order to destroy our manhood",[137] to the haven of Coyaba with its view of the Blue Mountains to the east, "where the air is clear and a man can think", gave him back his dignity.[138] But

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[135] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 434.
[136] Ibid, 411.
[137] Ibid, 80.
[138] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 17. This perspective gains dimension with Abrahams's description of the view from Coyaba, his house in Red Hills, as reminiscent of "aspects of Capetown seen from the slopes of Table Mountain", where, however, he could never have lived: "it becomes both tragic and bizarre to realize anew that South Africa and Jamaica are

Samson's question as to whether people of African descent would ever be free had to wait for Bishop Jacob Brown and his black church, constant "in the struggle against the enslavement of their minds by white folk using the word of God".[139]

2.5 The ultimately misleading lights of the West

As long ago as March 1947, Abrahams had written of this quality to Richard Wright: "My contact with the West has convinced me that there is something much more vital, much more dynamic and creative among the Africans I have grown up with than in all the thought processes that I have passed through in the West".[140] This is what kept Du Bois writing until his ninety-fifth year, and what has shaped Abrahams's last novel: an unshakeable confidence in the ability of people of African descent to offer the West the next step up in the process of life because, after all they have suffered as a `race', they have survived emotionally intact, as thinking and feeling human beings, not as monsters and creatures of hate. If *Tell Freedom*, as Abrahams wrote to Richard Wright in October 1946, begins to trace "the making of me which is intimately tied up also with the making of my generation of black men in South Africa, and also with my definition of Freedom which, if well done, should at once be the definition of a group",[141] *The View from Coyaba* completes this process. Where the young autobiographer went for his role model to Europe, the philosophical old novelist, disillusioned with the West, has rejected, in Micere Mugo's words, "the very predator who destroyed and continues to destroy the very initiative, freedom and wholeness that makes men and women human".[142]

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parts of the same world; that I was born and grew to manhood in one, and that I had to come and live in the other to enter fully into the promise and meaning of my manhood" (`We Can Learn to Be Color-Blind', 38).

[139] Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba*, 219.

[140] Quoted in Fabre, `Richard Wright, Negritude and African Writing', 1159.

[141] Ibid, 1158.

[142] Micere Mugo, `The Battle of the Mind', *UFAHAMU* 13(2-3) 1984, 242.

What struck Mphahlele most about "the white world", as he increasingly participated in it, was its relentless "unity of purpose".[143] Once this was realised, he had to find ways of resisting its powerful network, just as Abrahams tried to do by settling in Jamaica and espousing a black Christianity, and Mphahlele's search led to his return to South Africa and African humanism. He admits how, until the age of 30, he would "glory in [his] conquest of knowledge: Western literature and science, the history of revolutions in Europe, some of the ideas of the West and so on" in order to survive his ghetto existence.[144] "It was only the high water mark," he observes, "in a process that had begun that day the conquest of the written word in grade school fired our imagination." Because of the need to survive the ghetto, he was unable "to see the lure of neon lights in white man's territory as ultimately misleading: lights that symbolize all that oppressed people associate with power which they are denied. And that power includes the most dubious spiritual values whites cherish".[145] So after the "period of enchantment",[146] which significantly, ended with his agitation against the Eiselen Report in 1951, came "one of the bitterest periods" in his life before exile, when all he learned "would have to be geared to the restoration of an equilibrium, the creation of African institutions".[147] Like his fellow Africanists, Matlare and Mothopeng with whom he was banned from teaching, he knew that decolonising the mind would "lead to the liberation of the self, which in turn must be a rediscovery of self".[148] The aggression of Western culture which rode roughshod over African culture brought about a cleavage "between an educated elite and the masses, between the indigenous self and the new sensibility in the individual" which sees itself as distinct from the community. "The rediscovery of the self," concludes Mphahlele, "should be through the rediscovery of one's community", which became the focus of his philosophy of African humanism and Abrahams's idea of a black Christianity.

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143 Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply', 7.
144 Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 9.
145 Mphahlele, `Opening Address: Education and the Search for Self', 2.
146 Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply', 9.
147 Ibid, 9.
148 Mphahlele, `Towards a Humanistic Philosophy of Education', 36.

3 The hybridity of the autobiographical subject

3.1 A counterhegemonic discourse

What we have seen above of Mphahlele's preoccupation with cultural seepage has, of course, been theorised by postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Francoise Lionnet. Rejecting the simple dyadic approach of earlier theorists like Fanon, who insisted on the binary oppositions of self/other, coloniser/colonised, subject/object as a way of making sense of his predicament (but the result of which is actually stasis or silence), as the character David Brown articulates for much of Abrahams's last novel, these critics remain in the fluid zone between these dyads, too aware of hybridity to dismiss it as a means (perhaps *the* means) of finding meaning. Their insights, of course, are particularly relevant to the industrialised South African context where, as Mphahlele is so keenly aware, cultural boundaries have not been as impervious as elsewhere in the colonised world or even as envisaged by apartheid. As Lynda Gilfillan puts it in her thesis on the autobiographies of the 1950s, "cultures have been learned and unlearned through processes of mimicry, transgression and assimilation".[149] Salient points for our purposes, to use Gilfillan,[150] include those of "métissage" (Lionnet) which suggests interconnectedness, heterogeneity and heteronymity, "intertwined histories" (Said) and "ambivalence" (Bhabha), with which Mphahlele is continually concerned.

Written during the 1950s, a hybrid, incongruous period in which apartheid was rapidly institutionalised and the counter-discourse of non-racialism flourished in opposition to it, the autobiographies of Abrahams and Mphahlele, in particular, offer a counternarrative of a self which defines itself in the process of re-collecting and re-membering its times and denying the official version of the narrative. Gilfillan argues that, by setting up a `self' to

[149] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 29.
[150] Ibid, 25.

counter the hegemonic narrative's `other', an `I' to displace the scripted `you', the autobiography of the 1950s functions as a narrative mode that informs the process of reconstruction and nation-building.[151] It counters the apartheid ideologies of difference and inferiority by constructing alternative forms of identity, and thus approaches a counterhegemonic position, in the sense that it offers a constructive, integrated challenge to apartheid, rather than the fragmentary antihegemonic one proposed by postmodernism, which would prefer a deconstructive response to apartheid's assault on identity. The autobiographies reflect "the seepages, entanglements and intertwinings of South African culture";[152] they are palimpsests,

> each a multilayered record that registers traces of the impacts and contacts of the colonial experience. As histories of `contaminations', of the meeting and mingling of peoples, the autobiographies function in profoundly subversive ways to counter the myth of racial and cultural purity.[153]

She finds this subversion in what she terms their "re-envisioned humanism", a humanism "which recognises in the self a procession of `others', ignoring the limits of race and gender",[154] or, in Bhabha's phrase, the possibility of becoming "the others of ourselves", nicely imaged by Mphahlele who sees fulfilment in the "oneness" of humanity, "in the concern over that limping beggar with fingerless hands who will yet play the drum and sing at our own funeral".[155] Gilfillan suggests that "while the anti-Humanist aspects of poststructuralism are inadequate to the postcolonial task, and the Humanist enterprise contradicts its aims, defiant voices define a new, hybrid humanism".[156] Although she reaches this conclusion after a theoretical exploration, this "new, hybrid humanism" can be traced back to the schooling

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151 Ibid, 4.
152 Ibid, 55.
153 Ibid, 241.
154 Ibid, 244.
155 Es'kia Mphahlele, Introduction to *Night of My Blood*, by Kofi Awoonor (New York, 1971), 18.
156 Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 92.

at St Peter's which, by its very nature, stressed a common humanity between the cultural polarity, even if it did participate in the prevailing discourse of the time, and therefore solicited a counterhegemonic, not antihegemonic, discourse from its graduates, namely, a redefined humanism. This is clearly seen in both Abrahams and Mphahlele's variously deconstructing the category `oppressive white' (the corollary of `oppressed black') through their focus on whites who affirm them,[157] in the interests of a new humanism.

The serious and literary-minded Mphahlele, for example, bonded with the intellectual Martin Jarrett-Kerr, "considered to have put on Father Trevor Huddleston's mantle in non-European politics".[158] He also had a meaningful friendship with Fr Arthur Blaxall, the Anglican priest who was in charge of Ezenzeleni Institute for the Blind, near Roodepoort, where Mphahlele worked after Adams College between 1941 and 1945,[159] and 1953 after he had been prevented from teaching because of his opposition to Bantu Education. It was Blaxall who visited him in his exile in Basutoland during 1954, and they "talked the night away, confiding in each other, learning from each other".[160] The "unmissionary missionary", was invited to Mphahlele's MA graduation, along with Jenny Stein, the feisty wife of Sylvester Stein, editor of *Drum*.[161] *Down Second Avenue* is, in fact, dedicated to Jenny, who had "the sort of pluck and cheek South African white snobbery cannot accommodate".[162] The autobiography was prompted by her suggestion, after he had graduated MA *cum laude* in 1956, that his life story would make interesting reading: "She was persuasive, making me believe that my experiences that culminated in the UNISA success were worth recording, if only as a kind of compensation at a time when my bitterness (lingering on since 1952) was

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[157] In Abrahams's case, these include Mr Wylie, Mr Visser, the red-headed missus at the market, Mr Jansen, Canon Woodfield, Br Roger, and most Jewish characters.
[158] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 215.
[159] It is perhaps significant that Mphahlele began writing while at Ezenzeleni, which was "a very secluded place" and had nothing of the ghetto about it; it gave him the perspective he needed for his stories about ghetto life in his first book, *Man Must Live* (1946).
[160] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 185.
[161] See Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 4, 181, 232.
[162] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 199.

seemingly proving to be my enemy".[163] The time was right for the birth of what Mphahlele called "the child of a cumulative impact reading had on me", especially since, like Ngugi at Alliance High, he had read *Tell Freedom*.

Tell Freedom itself was written at the prompting of Zena, the partner of the trade unionist Max Gordon, who was ridden with shame and guilt after she had slighted Abrahams in the street in order to save face with her prejudiced prospective employer, and the autobiography is dedicated to her. She it was who paid for his fare to Cape Town as he set out to pursue his career as a writer, to allow him to keep his books and the typewriter he threatened to sell, for he could, as Max Gordon had put it, "do damn all from here".[164] Zena "had suffered as grievously from the colour-bar as I had done", says Abrahams,[165] which puts a new spin on the audience to whom he consciously told freedom, no less than *all* South Africans. Mphahlele said recently that his autobiography was intended not for a world audience, although it did ultimately appeal to the outside world because it was accessible to them, but for a South African audience, "specifically my people, and be understood by them".[166] He wanted "to portray *people, their hates, loves, desires, faith, hopes, enduring values*, who at the same time inspired these attributes in me [his emphasis]",[167] which witnesses to the resilience of his community in what he termed "a minor key", rather than a diatribe against white hegemony.

Gilfillan's thesis, however, is written from a poststructuralist position, which is sceptical of an unproblematic identification of textual protagonist and real-life author, and of unproblematised identity itself (*à la* Bhabha), but is nevertheless crucially aware of the counter need for colonised subjects to articulate both an integrated identity and identification with the collective identity. Simply put, the political context demands recognition of the author's identity as inscribed in the text, but this identity is problematic in that it is

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[163] Mphahlele, correspondence, 28 August 2000.
[164] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 264.
[165] Ibid, 265.
[166] Samin, `Interview', 193.
[167] Mphahlele, correspondence 28 August 2000.

constructed in and by a text; due recognition of the differences between author and textual subject must allow for greater subtlety of response. While my exploration of the texts themselves is not informed by poststructuralist criticism, since it has been employed already by Gilfillan (and in places exposed by her, following Henry Louis Gates, as perhaps not holding true for texts produced outside the milieu of the West and even worse, `recolonising' them),[168] it acknowledges that the textual `I' is structured by language (and thus has no autonomous existence), just as the re-creation of the past is mediated by language (and thus cannot be regarded as fact). Both the strident self (identity) and the patterned narrative (history) have become textual constructs. Claims to self-definition and veracity must be taken *cum grano salis*, because they are textually mediated; but the material reality of author and social context cannot be gainsaid. In fact, their interaction, as has been painstakingly demonstrated in the previous chapters, provides the very matrix of the text itself.

The issue in the autobiographies is identity, a hybrid self who counters the lie of the hegemonic narrative of racial and cultural purity, and who therefore requires of the critic suspension of postmodern disbelief. As Tim Couzens among others has noted, literary production by black South Africans from the earliest days has been one of the ways (together with political organisation and separatist church movements) in which continuous resistance to white rule was manifested.[169] And Keith Shear remarks further that autobiography, in particular, within the South African context has tended to be a serious pursuit, because of the proximity of these texts to our history.[170] Apartheid participates in the conditions required for a metanarrative (a discourse which demands that all alternative narrative possibilities be repressed or subsumed into it), as defined by David Carroll, because of its dependence on the fixed ideology of `race':

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[168] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 50.
[169] Tim Couzens, `Black South African Literature in English, 1900-1950', in Hena Maes-Jelinek (ed), *Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World* (Liege, 1975), 89.
[170] Keith Shear, `Depictions of Childhood in South African Autobiography, with Particular Reference to the 1920s', *English in Africa* 16(1) May 1989, 40.

> It programmes all responses in advance and blocks all nonprogrammed responses. From this perspective, a theory and a practice of discourse can be considered to be critical, therefore, only if they resist, subvert, and undermine such blockages, if they reinsert openings that have been closed off through brute political force, philosophical coercion, or rhetorical persuasion.[171]

It is my contention that the hybridity which is celebrated in the autobiographical texts of Abrahams and Mphahlele (what Gilfillan views as a new, or redefined humanism)[172] necessitated the spaces of exile to flourish. The choice of exile `reinserted an opening', a way out of the metanarrative, just as the writing of an alternative identity to that envisaged by the metanarrative `undermined the blockages.' The autobiographers' election of discursive means (autobiography, although the Latin root *currere* `to run' adds a rather nice angle to their exile) to subvert a totalitarian discourse is crucial to the writing of South African history and black identity.

3.2 The historical dimensions of autobiography

It is a commonplace of criticism that what we recognise as autobiography (as Gandhi believed, a practice peculiar to the West, only written by those in the East who came under its influence) came into existence along with the Romantic period. With the death of the *ancien régime* and essentially feudal way of life, the individual entered and began to shape history; resistance to hegemony signified the gaining of identity. Karl Weintraub, for example, has argued in "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness" that autobiography took on its full dimension when "Western Man acquired a thoroughly historical

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[171] Quoted in Leon de Kock, `"Drinking at the English Fountains": Missionary Discourse and the Case of Lovedale', *Missionalia* 20(2) Aug. 1992, 121.
[172] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 92.

understanding of his existence", which he dates conventionally from 1800.[173] He considers this form of expression best suited to reveal the developing self-conceptions of individuals in the West; it might be argued that African writers, through Gilfillan's "processes of mimicry, transgression and assimilation", have appropriated the genre for the same reason. Leon de Kock voices a truism which we tend to forget in usually privileging content over form, that, given our history of contestation and domination, the political content (or the `counterhegemonic') of a black text is not nearly as instructive as its emergence into the form in which it is encountered.[174] "If formal differences between texts - and forms themselves - have become of little importance," he suggests, "then the homogenisation of the past century's colonial processes have been completed".[175] My contention, therefore, is that the choice of the autobiographical form must be probed, to render the antecedent history of text and author both visible and relevant, if we are to avoid an uncritical acceptance of this mid-century phenomenon in our literary history.

I take as my starting point Kelwyn Sole's idea that African writers, because of their schooling, are in the unique position of trying to translate European literary forms to express different concerns, and, in understanding the dubious cultural and educational legacy left them by colonialism, they "are forced to rediscover their own past and remould their view of it to fit present conditions".[176] In his exploration of childhood in autobiography, and the corresponding gaining of self-awareness, Richard Coe observes that "the origins of the Childhood as a genre coincided from the outset with a major period of upheaval, with the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution each in its own way hard at work destroying the past".[177] In similar fashion, the African (and Indian) autobiography was only launched once traditional life

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[173] Karl Weintraub, `Autobiography and Historical Consciousness', *Critical Inquiry* 1(4) 1975, 821.
[174] Leon de Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', *Journal of Literary Studies* 8(1/2) June 1992, 37-38.
[175] De Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', 37.
[176] Kelwyn Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature, 1948-1960', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 146.
[177] Richard Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven, 1984), 65.

had been ruptured by colonialism and perhaps required a Western form of portraying reality to reflect the changing cultural reality. Traditional orality celebrated the virtues of other people, not the self: TA Ndungane, editor of the Xhosa Dictionary Project, said that he had never come across traditional prose writings where individuals speak directly of themselves: "it was either left to another to assess individual achievements and failures within the context of the community, or individuals spoke indirectly of themselves as, for example, is apparent in [SEK] Mqhayi's work".[178] And GN Devy has indicated that, although the tradition of biographical writings in India can be traced back to at least the eighth century before Christ, autobiographical writings have a history of barely eighty years in Indian literature.[179]

It is instructive to note that two of the earliest English texts by black South African writers were the journals of Lovedale-educated Tiyo Soga (written in the 1860s) and Pniel-educated Sol Plaatje (written during the Siege of Mafikeng in 1899),[180] who broke new ground with their writing of that most introspective chronicle, the diary. These diaries, significantly a form little favoured and explored by African writers, are arguably the antecedent of the literary autobiographies of the 1950s and 1960s, in that they foreground the experiencing `I' (document historical experiences from a black subjectivity), even if they do not necessarily acknowledge the vantage point of the reflecting `I' (record the effect of the experiences on that subjectivity). Soga's does shade into this at times, notably his rumination in 1865 on the role of the `Kaffir Race', but in the main, as Donovan Williams notes, the journal is significant as "a reflection of a personality poised between cultures".[181]

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[178] Karin Paasche, "Changing Social Consciousness in the South African English Novel after World War II, with Special Reference to Peter Abrahams, Alan Paton, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer" (MA, University of South Africa, 1992), 89 footnote 13.

[179] GN Devy, `Romantic, Post-Romantic and Neo-Romantic Autobiography in Indian English Literature', in MacDermott, *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing*, 63. He mentions further that there was little scope for the genre in a society where the minimal unit of activity was the community (as in Africa), and which believed the atman to be only an infinitesimal part of the brahman.

[180] Donovan Williams (ed), *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga* (Cape Town, 1983); John Comaroff (ed), *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje* (Cape Town, 1973), rev. with Brian Willan and Andrew Reed, and publ. as *Mafeking Diary: A Black Man's View of a White Man's War* (Johannesburg & London, 1990).

[181] Williams, *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga*, 9.

Perhaps the black autobiography had to wait until Western culture was thoroughly entrenched in the post-World War Two era (after the heyday of missionary activity in the inter-war years), so thoroughly that Hendrik Verwoerd felt the need to bring back `Bantu' culture. Once apartheid had pegged the boundary lines which straitjacketed the hybrid self, once the metanarrative had blocked out alternative narratives, the rash of autobiographies in the 1950s was the logical outcome. Verwoerd and his henchmen prepared the ground for a remaking of the African `other', a new form of subjectivity, in a way as systematic as the European cultural agents a century before had done, and introduced a new order in which identity would have to be negotiated. As De Kock warns regarding black South African writing, the use of form must never be taken as read, neither should the struggle around the adoption of form be ignored. The task of the critic is to understand the conditions of emergence of written discourse in different forms (in our case, black autobiography),[182] to explore "the continuing negotiations and reappropriations of inherited forms".[183]

Three types of history writing, namely annals, chronicles and narrative history proper, have been distinguished by Hayden White, who posits that the writing of the first two fail to achieve narrative closure.[184] The chronicle does not so much conclude as simply terminate (a fine example of this is Matshikiza's *Chocolates for my Wife*); annals lack even narrative form. Nevertheless, autobiography approaches the condition of the chronicle as a particular product of a possible conception of historical reality[185] (or, indeed, the events of a life), but also of the history proper which, for White, "reveals to us a world that is putatively `finished', done with, over, and yet not dissolved, not falling

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[182] In his exploration of Modikwe Dikobe's choice of established literary forms, Tim Couzens warned that there are restrictions regarding form: no artist chooses arbitrarily from any number of forms, and limits are placed on the possibilities set up by new forms (`Nobody's Baby: Modikwe Dikobe and Alexandra 1942-6', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 97, 100).

[183] De Kock, `English and the Colonisation of Form', 49.

[184] Hayden White, `The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* 7(1) Autumn 1980, 5-27.

[185] White, `The Value of Narrativity', 10.

apart".[186] It presents both a self whose existence continues beyond the termination of the text (as in the chronicle), and a discrete self whose world and time is bounded by the text, yet also validated or given meaning and preserved by it (as in the history proper).

In the demand for closure in the history proper, White discerns a demand for moral meaning, through the assessing of sequences of real events as to their significance as making up a *moral* drama. In other words, a moral standard is invoked to distinguish between those real events worthy of being recorded (narrated), and those unworthy of it (the lack of the moralising impulse in the annals and chronicle, argues White, results in a lack of meaning itself).[187] Morality informs the ending of both Abrahams and Mphahlele's autobiographies; Abrahams closes his account with his voyage away to a world he thinks can give him the identity which the discrete self has not been able to find in his country of birth *up till now*, and Mphahlele ends his with his flight to a country which will validate his vocation as teacher and writer which his discrete self has been prevented from doing *up till now*. Hutchinson's *Road to Ghana* is an extreme example of narrative closure, dealing with no less than what White calls "the *passage* from one moral order to another." The plot sequence (or trajectory) of their lives requires a shift of plane for resolution, a moral demand, which permits the text to end in a way different from the chronicle. In fact, it is the need for this shift which leads White to ask, "Could one ever narrativise *without* moralizing?":

> I confess that I cannot think of any other way of `concluding' an account of real events; for we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that reality itself disappears, that events *of the order of the real* have ceased to happen. Such events could only have seemed to

[186] Ibid, 24.
[187] Ibid, 26.

> have ceased to happen when meaning is shifted by narrative means, from one physical or social space to another.[188]

White argues further that there is no way other than the moralising impulse that real events (of human history or, it might be argued, of a human life) can be endowed with the kind of meaning "that both displays itself in consummation and withholds itself by its displacement to another story `waiting to be told' just beyond the confines of `the end.'" Other than Matshikiza, the autobiographers of the 1950s and 1960s end their works on the threshold of a new life in England, Nigeria or Ghana, and invite us to share in their intimations of immortality. But that's another story . . . .

3.3 Retrospective patterning

The significance of past events, James Olney feels, is to be seen only in the author's discerning of and imposing a pattern on them; mere chronology achieves no pattern and hence discovers no meaning.[189] To use White's terminology, there is no moral. Olney actually alludes to the idea of the moral when he argues that the autobiographer

> casts a net of present awareness back over the past in an attempt to find a significance there that exists, in fact, not in the past itself but in this very effort of present consciousness to order and organize according to the pattern that has evolved as the artist's own personality, his vision, his moral awareness.[190]

There is a correspondence in the need to rediscover the past which constituted a preoccupation of African nationalists in the 1940s, particularly those of the Youth League, which, as Kelwyn Sole has convincingly suggested is an indication of a final alienation from first-hand knowledge of

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[188] Ibid, 26.
[189] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 20-21.
[190] Ibid, 22.

oral traditions and history,[191] and the autobiographical impulse, certainly in the case of Abrahams and Mphahlele, to re(dis)cover their past with a view to what they could be and were becoming. The essential autobiographic motive, believes Olney, is the desire to discover an order and meaning in experience, to sift memories and recreate events to find the pattern they establish.[192] He posits a broad spectrum of African autobiography, weighting each text according to its patterning.[193] At one extreme is the mere chronological record (which corresponds, perhaps, to White's `chronicle'); the type ranges through the thematically arranged narrative and the fictionalising of personal experience, through to the other extreme, where the content of the autobiography is no less than the whole of African history (perhaps White's `narrative history'). While not a true representative of this type, Abrahams's *The View from Coyaba* could usefully be viewed as participating in this extreme: the organising principle, or the moralising impulse, is unmistakable. This vision is considered the *sine qua non* of art; without moral awareness, Olney suggests, a writer will fail to produce a work of art.[194]

The author's skill, argues Robert Fraser, is best seen in the angle from which he or she looks at the widening ripples of the story and the point at which he or she elects to confine the process.[195] The author's stance at the time of writing the autobiography is therefore crucial, not only because of the temporal shift involved between the events and the remembering of those events (dislocation between past selves and present narrating self),[196] but also because of what John Colmer, in connection with the Australian Hal Porter's autobiography, notes as "the shifting present", the fact that the person who finishes an autobiography is not the same person who began

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[191] Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change', 172. Abrahams is a fine case in point, having no tribal roots and therefore most receptive to African nationalism, while Mphahlele repudiated tribal culture around the time of his marriage and only after his exile on the African continent and subsequent return, did he consciously seek to re(dis)cover those roots.
[192] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 271.
[193] Ibid, 51.
[194] Ibid, 23.
[195] Fraser, `Dimension of Personality', 87.
[196] This, of course, is made explicit in *Tell Freedom*, where the experiencing self is someone called `Lee de Ras', and initially speaks only Afrikaans, although he gains the name `Peter'

it.[197] "He may be changed by outward events," remarks Colmer, "but also and more importantly by the actual process of writing".[198] There is a process of "double indeterminacy" at work:

> Firstly, the observer who is a measurer of his past self changes the object in the very process of observing and recreation. And, secondly, the transformed past self changes the nature of the observer, who is certainly not the same at the end of the work as at the moment of writing the first page. The recreation of the past self or selves must inevitably change the writer's idea of his present self.[199]

If the process of writing impinges on the artistic consciousness, an example in Abrahams's case is the intriguing question of language. He grew up speaking Afrikaans, unable as a boy to reply when an Indian addressed him in English.[200] The Lord's Prayer is said in English at his Aunt Mattie's home, but an English mangled to very humorous ends.[201] Is the turning point of his life therefore credible when, before he has even attended school, a Jewish secretary reads to him the story of Othello from *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*? Could Abrahams really understand Lamb's English and, if not, do we have to do here with the romanticisation of his childhood memories? Following Olney's suggestion, perhaps, that education can be the chief motive in a writer's life and the controlling structural principle in his book,[202] Stephen Gray has proposed that Abrahams `doctored' or selected his memories of his childhood so as to draw a clear trajectory of the growth of a poet's mind, the portrait of the artist as a young man.[203] "Elements of past

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from the time he receives his first book, *Lamb's Tales* (150) and begins his education at Mr Visser's school (152), while the writing self is called Peter Abrahams, and he writes in English.

[197] John Colmer, `Hal Porter: *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony*', in MacDermott, *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing*, 60.

[198] Colmer, `Hal Porter', 60-61.

[199] Ibid, 61.

[200] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 57.

[201] Ibid, 114.

[202] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 45.

[203] Stephen Gray, `The Long Eye of History: Four Autobiographical Texts by Peter Abrahams', *Pretexts* 2(2) 1990, 110. See also Gray's discussion of the text as act of

experience are wrenched loose a little bit from the context in which they originally stood," notes Weintraub of this sort of selection; "they are singled out because they are now seen to have a symptomatic meaning they may not have had before".[204]

4 The testimony of the autobiographies

4.1 Abrahams and Mphahlele

Interestingly, however, Richard Priebe makes the point that the African writer who returns to his or her childhood does so, unlike Western writers, more with an eye to understanding those changes affecting the present and which will affect the future than out of a need (in Romantic vein) to salvage the past.[205] This is borne out by the simple fact that the autobiographies of both Abrahams and Mphahlele focus most fully on childhood and adolescence, the formative years, Abrahams's ending, of course, with his leaving South Africa on the cusp of twenty-one, and Mphahlele's with his exile in the similarly crisis-point years of the mid-thirties (which, it might be held, are the real years delimiting innocence from experience).[206] Allowing for the fact that the most memorable and immediate autobiographies (whether Western or African) have childhood as their focus (Doireann MacDermott suggests that the most vivid chapters in any autobiography are those dedicated to childhood, and many autobiographies decline in interest as the years advance),[207] is it too

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translation, which never signals that the various working-class characters in Vrededorp and Elsburg have to be reconceived in English (113-114).

[204] Weintraub, `Autobiography', 827.

[205] Richard Priebe, `The Canonization of Texts: The Childhood and Allegories of Salvage and Change', in Raoul Granqvist (ed), *Canonization and Teaching of African Literatures* (Amsterdam, 1990), 15.

[206] Even though Hutchinson did not have much choice as to when he should leave South Africa (he slipped out during a recess in the Treason Trial in 1958), he was thirty-four at the time, and thirty-six when the account of his journey into exile was published. Matshikiza was thirty-seven when he followed *King Kong* to London in 1959, and thirty-nine when his account was published.

[207] MacDermott, `Introduction', in her *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing*, 9. See also Richard Coe's full-length exploration of this phenomenon.

fanciful to find the reason for this in the Wordsworthian truth that `the child is father to the man'?

Writing before poststructuralist critiques of the genre, Richard Coe argues that the structure of the Childhood (his term for any piece of autobiographical writing whose structure reflects step by step the development of the writer's self) follows the Aristotelian ideal of tragic drama, in which the end is implicit in the beginning.[208] Childhood and adolescent experiences therefore determine maturity, and common to the 1950s autobiographers during this impressionable period was their education. Quoting Jean Cocteau's provocative aphorism, "Il faut mentir pour être vrai" (`lies are essential if one is to tell the truth'), Coe also maintains that the Childhood, eschewing the more factual approach of other forms of autobiography, prefers to focus on incidents of emotional or symbolic significance for their (perceived) contribution to the gaining of self-consciousness and shaping of identity.[209] One of these is the first memory of childhood, such as that memorably embellished in Abrahams's *Tell Freedom*, of the beautiful raindrop world which separates him from the real world, and out of which daydream his father calls him.[210] This first memory, "a clear picture, like a still photograph, entirely without context and surrounded by mists", as Coe describes it,[211] has been chosen as "a fully meaningful event which relates so intimately to the whole personality that it comes to be felt as the symbolic starting point of consciousness".[212] And, because it tracks the growing self-awareness, the literary structure "is complete exactly at the point at which the immature self of childhood is conscious of its transformation into the mature self of the adult".[213]

In this the Childhood is the inverse of the *Bildungsroman*, suggests Coe, because while the *Bildungsroman* relates the development from the first

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[208] Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller*, 79.
[209] Ibid, 79.
[210] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 9.
[211] Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller*, 96.
[212] Ibid, 97.
[213] Ibid, 9.

awareness as an individual to the final and positive integration into society, the Childhood narrates the development "from a point of non-awareness to a point of total awareness of himself as an individual, and particularly as a writer".[214] It is at this point that the individual begins to write, and to judge and frequently condemn the world in terms of the self. Jean Jacques Rousseau, for example (and it is significant that he was a Romantic, given the penchant both Mphahlele and Abrahams, and indeed the CR, have for that period), was sadly aware that the social world in which he lived "not only stood in the way but actually falsified and corrupted the unfolding of the truly natural, good, and uncorrupted man he knew to be his ultimate destiny".[215] "Falsified and corrupted": these, we have seen, are discursive words signifying the agency of hegemonic narratives. For Rousseau, "[a] man could be true to himself and his desired inner development either *by absconding from a false world or by changing society* [my italics]".[216] Coe posits, along the lines of Rousseau's adopting a hostile stance towards the world, that this isolated self will need to possess "a vitality and an originality which is very far from common" and to be spurred on "by the imperious urge to *impart a message or reveal a truth* which may not be allowed to vanish [my italics]".[217] Surely we have in these discursive processes White's moralising impulse, the crucial ingredient of narrative history. More to the point, we have Abrahams and Mphahlele's desire to `tell freedom' for themselves and their community, to witness to the validity of their life experience.

To read a black South African autobiography, it has been argued, is to enter the psyche of a nation at the various phases of its struggle to be free from racial discrimination; the classic pattern of such autobiography describes a progressive alienation that results in spiritual and physical exile.[218] Donald Burness who, refreshingly (given later problematising) takes each

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[214] Ibid, 9. Mikhail Bakhtin's distinction between the novel as "the genre of becoming" (*bildung*, or formation) and the autobiography as a genre of *having become* is helpful here.
[215] Weintraub, `Autobiography', 832.
[216] Ibid, 832. Translated into the South African context of the 1950s and 1960s, this can be read as exile or civil disobedience (modulating into the armed struggle after November 1961).
[217] Ibid, 15.
[218] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 250.

autobiography on its own recognisances, has pointed out seven common themes, among which, important for our purposes, are the avowed love of learning, and the need to escape from South Africa to preserve integrity as a person and artist.[219] Abrahams's first memory, for example, in which he imagines being inside the warmth and colour of the raindrop world, is to be complemented artistically at the end of the book with his walking into the sea on the eve of his departure to seek a world without colour-consciousness; exile as logical outcome proves the climax of both book (structure) and young life (trajectory). The Romantic imagination is employed from the start to validate his human dignity in South Africa, just as the trope of the Romantic quest is used to take him out of South Africa: "I walked briskly down to the docks," he concludes, "And all my dreams walked with me".[220] Burness finds Mphahlele's autobiography more meditative than imaginative, more lucid than beautiful. The distinction is a useful one, for it reveals Mphahlele's deepest desire throughout his life to *engage*, whereas Abrahams's motivation is possibly to *invent*, to create anew. The choice for the black creative writer under racial discrimination (unlike the choice elsewhere in Africa between maintaining artistic integrity and writing *négritude*) was between dealing with reality or evading it, between writing protest and writing escape. What Mphahlele and Abrahams are seeking is a complexity of response, where protest shades into engagement, and escape into invention. Mphahlele wants to change reality and insists on being taken on his terms; Abrahams envisages an alternative reality, one which has yet to be worked out.

4.1.1 "I shook hands with notable men"

Writing *Down Second Avenue* was generated not by broad themes like cultural collision, but by a "purely personal experience shared by a whole number of people" when Mphahlele was 37 years old. He told Kate Turkington that by his mid-thirties it was time that he "recalled" the kind of life

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[219] Donald Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', *Présence Africaine* (76) 1970, 84.
[220] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 311.

he had lived: "it was a way of trying to understand myself better".[221] Completing it in Nigeria gave him the means to pose questions of identity, both personal and communal, like "`Where am I, now? What has it all been about? And what others have shared this?"' It is unlikely that it was generated by any paradigm or archetype; as he told Richard Samin about his novel, *Father Come Home*, inspired by the life of one of his neighbours in Lebowakgomo, "I just followed the story, the factual story . . . . It is just so real to me, as a human story. That's how I presented it, that's how I conceived it".[222] Writing his own "human story" also gave him the chance to assess without acrimony the mutual influence of black-white relations, and work through it in his writing: "I was really consciously looking for the ways in which we have influenced one another":

> So there was this kind of tug-of-war between this acceptance and rejection; and we were unconsciously trying to reconcile the two. I think having lived so many cycles in this kind of situation we have to a large extent come to a point of equilibrium. We are still pretty unsteady about it, but relatively it's a point of equilibrium where we know exactly what it is we don't want from those fellows there, and what it is that we need to consolidate in ourselves.[223]

Writing their lives obviously enabled Abrahams and Mphahlele to re-enter the impressionable world of childhood to retrace the `tug-of-war' experience with the white world. This typically resulted in textual features more in keeping with the novel than the autobiography,[224] such as vivid scenic presentation, extended dialogue, description of gestures and even facial expressions, and,

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[221] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 136.
[222] Samin, `Interview', 186.
[223] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 138.
[224] Indeed, some have even considered them autobiographical novels. Neville Choonoo finds them governed by the element of the picaresque, so that the life story becomes a series of episodes into which the hero/writer falls ("Parallel Lives", 65-66), and Stephen Gray observes that the formation of the writer is seen in retrospect as triggered by story-telling in *Tell Freedom*, so that the writer is constituted out of intertwining stories (`The Long Eye of History', 109-110).

crucially, as Nick Visser observed, a "surprising amount of rendered or reported thought",[225] thoughts, astonishingly, of the experiencing, not reflecting self.

Mphahlele believes these embellishments are a technique of the reflecting self (ie. the writer) to recapture the otherwise elusive world of childhood. When pressed by Cosmo Pieterse about the extent of objectivity in autobiography, Mphahlele replied that romanticism and lyricism are natural to the genre because autobiographies are normally written at a point far removed from childhood, "and some of the things one recalls one reports as an adult would see them rather than as a child would have seen them even though they took place in the child phase of one's life",[226] and they are captured "in impressionistic terms." The five `interludes' of *Down Second Avenue* are heightened examples of this lyricism; he mentioned in 1972 that they were written at the same time as the events were being related, and were an attempt "to think about what these things were doing to me",[227] and recently that, in using them, he was "looking for a corner of myself, more lyrical, personal, of the stream of consciousness".[228] The interludes, then, through the immediacy of the stream-of-consciousness technique, form a link between experiencing and reflecting self.

As Abioseh Nichol remarked of African autobiography in 1964, the "most significant feature in all these childhood memories of African writers is the enormous desire and striving for education, at home and overseas",[229] and Abrahams and Mphahlele are key cases. They offer, too, a similar response to the education they received at St Peter's and, in Abrahams's case, at Grace Dieu: an acknowledgement of the freedom of thought and debate the

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[225] NW Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 11(1) Aug. 1976, 51.
[226] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele interviewed by Cosmo Pieterse', *Cultural Events in Africa* (45) 1968, (supplement) 4.
[227] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Interview with Ezekiel Mphahlele', in Bernth Lindfors et al (eds), *Palaver: Interviews with Five African Writers in Texas* (Austin, TX, 1972), 40.
[228] Samin, `Interview', 192.

CR encouraged, but a painful awareness that this stopped at the walls of the school. St Peter's was experienced as an island in an increasingly hostile sea, probing for any opportunity to breach the walls. For the first time in his life, Mphahlele became aware of how some whites thought and lived:

> There was complete harmony between us and the white teachers at school and between them and the African staff. And yet no one, Brother Roger or the Principal, or the Community fathers, ever said anything about the attitude they thought we should adopt towards whites and white authority outside school. Slowly I realised how I hated the white man outside the walls of St Peter's.[230]

Although he writes in *Afrika My Music* that "we had been told education was the key to a decent livelihood and respectability, and we wanted those - oh, how desperately we wanted them in order to rise spiritually above our sordid conditions",[231] his initial education was not auspicious. He hated the rural school he attended in Maupaneng, and swore he would loathe school to the end of his life.[232] He sometimes played truant, and felt that even the teachers seemed to view it with nothing but boredom. At senior primary school in Marabastad, run by the Methodist Church, Mphahlele still struggled, particularly since the medium of instruction was English. But he was an avid reader who "continued to rummage for discarded, coverless, rat-eaten, moth-eaten, sun-creased books",[233] and the story is well-known of how his chums used to pay for his cinema seat in return for his reading the sub-titles on the silent movies of the 1930s. In Standard VI, however, the last year of senior primary, his school career first began to take on a definite shape: "What had

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[229] Quoted in Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 44. I would argue, however, that the desire for *freedom* is the shaping principle in Hutchinson and Matshikiza's books, focussed as they are on escaping, or having escaped, from South Africa.
[230] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 126.
[231] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 15.
[232] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 12.
[233] Ibid, 85.

earlier on been a broad and obtuse shaft of light, was narrowing, sharpening and finding a point of focus".[234]

Mphahlele passed in the first class and entered Form I at St Peter's for his secondary schooling in 1935, when he was fifteen. The library at St Peter's furnished him with the same joy that the African-American section of the library at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Doornfontein did Abrahams: "For the first time in my life since I met Cervantes, a vigorous figure in tattered garments, during my primary school years, I shook hands with notable men".[235] In *Afrika My Music* he would acknowledge St Peter's as providing "basic skills for acquiring knowledge, good libraries, and a learning environment",[236] and to me he mentioned how the dictionaries, and other reference works with their idioms and proverbs, excited him as a "lover of the word".[237] "I kept pushing, I kept pushing," he said, "in order to grasp so much in the English language usage." Mphahlele has explicitly credited the process of studying English literature with enhancing his writing ability. "While my general reading was for pleasure," he notes in "My Experience as a Writer", "it was also for learning the language. My books are full of markings that trace the paths of a mind obsessed with idiom, the well-chosen word or phrase, the exquisite narrative and descriptive line".[238] What has been lost in teaching English to black (and Afrikaans) pupils since 1953 through the dubious `scientific' principles of "second language teaching" is literature's indispensable role in the acquisition of a second language, because of the pleasure it provides and the world it opens up; and the thought and feeling it is forever stirring up.[239]

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[234] Ibid, 86.
[235] Ibid, 129.
[236] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 179.
[237] Interview with Es'kia Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August, 1999.
[238] Mphahlele, `My Experience as a Writer', in MJ Daymond et al (eds), *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing* (Pietermaritzburg, 1984), 77. Compare the comment in *Iso Lomuzi* in 1934 that Anton Lembede, then a T3 student at Adams College, "makes a careful note of any new words, phrases and idioms he meets with" in English and Afrikaans (Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 37); he would become fluent in seven languages.
[239] The earlier linguistic hegemony of English is evident from the fact that EG Malherbe was educated in Malmesbury earlier this century through that medium, when English "was not such a foreign language as it is often today made out to be when their children have to use it

In 1935, too, Abrahams was finding out about the power of books at the BMSC,[240] which is the topic of a piece he wrote for the *Grace Dieu Bulletin* when he was there a year later, and which he calls "one of the hidden treasures of the world." "Would you waste your time in idle gossip about nothing if you could spend it speaking to Stevenson, or Scott or Shakespeare?" he asks.[241] Comparing books with victuals, he insists that, without reading, "the nobler part of our nature will die", and it is for this reason that the 17-year-old is concerned about the little interest taken in reading "by my people of South Africa", who are agitating for equal political rights:

> How can you expect to be able to compete with the civilisation of the West if you do not know how the people of the West live and what they are thinking? How can you find those things out? Only by reading what such people have written. We cannot hope to advance unless we know how others have advanced.

Notwithstanding the fact that all mission schools since Lovedale in the 1840s had established at least rudimentary libraries, much of the blame for this lack of reading after the school years can be laid at the door of the white citizens of South Africa, whose prevailing segregationist consensus delayed the provision of public library services for Africans until the end of the 1930s, and even then, as Alan Cobley has demonstrated, used them as a form of social control through the selection of their books.[242]

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even as a partial medium at school" (Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment* (Cape Town, 1981), 17-18).

[240] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 196-197. By then the BMSC was a major receiving centre of the Carnegie Non-European Library, although its secretary, JR Rathebe, bewailed the relative lack of patronage, owing to the nature of the books and lack of desire for reading, and later to the limited choice available in a circulating library (Alan Cobley, `Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness: The Provision of Library Services for Blacks in South Africa in the Pre-Apartheid Era', *Libraries and Culture* 32(1) Winter 1997, 65-66). None of these reasons impeded Abrahams, however.

[241] Peter Abrahams, `Books', *Grace Dieu Bulletin* II(3) Dec. 1936, 6-7.

[242] Cobley, `Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness', 60.

It was, however, in the BMSC that Abrahams read Booker T Washington's *Up from Slavery*,[243] and it is tempting to speculate that perhaps this book became the first of subsequent models for his own autobiography.[244] He certainly read Richard Wright's *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*, published by Harper in 1945, after which their friendship developed in Paris;[245] both the artistry and sensibility of *Tell Freedom* closely follow *Black Boy*. Their lives and personalities were very similar,[246] and indicate the constant tension between the claims of racial particularity on the one hand, and the appeal of modern universals that transcend `race' on the other. Largely self-educated, Wright's formal schooling ended when he was 15 and thereafter he read widely, joined the Communist Party in 1932, and worked at developing a Marxist perspective in the poems and short stories he was writing at that time. His individualism, however, brought him into conflict with other party members, and he resigned from the party in 1944 after witnessing a trial for ideological deviationism, as did Abrahams when he was criticised for not submitting *Dark Testament* (1942) for party approval in London, tired of communists' seeing "only one side of a question, their side".[247] The stories in Abrahams's first volume show evidence of his having read Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*, inspired by the life of a black communist Wright had known in Chicago, published by Harper in 1938 and reissued with another story two years later. Both books depict varying responses to the degradation and poverty in which the characters, through no fault of their own, find themselves.

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[243] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 194, 197.

[244] We have no evidence of any others, but it is possible that he read some, if not all, of the following by the time he began *Tell Freedom*: WEB Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York, 1940), Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York, 1940) and *Not without Laughter* (New York, 1945), Zora Neal Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (Philadelphia, 1942), James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) and *Along this Way* (New York, 1933), Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (1937) and *Home to Harlem* (New York, 1928), Robert Moton, *Finding a Way Out: An Autobiography* (New York, 1920), J Saunders Redding, *No Day of Triumph* (New York, 1942), Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923). Some of these were published by Harper & Row and Alfred Knopf, the American publishers of Abrahams's novels.

[245] Wright helped to get Harper to publish *The Path of Thunder* (1948) and *Wild Conquest* (1950).

[246] For an extended comparison of the two, see Choonoo, "Parallel Lives", Chapters IV and V.

[247] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 16.

In *Black Boy* Wright told the story of his Southern childhood up to the time he left Memphis for the northern city, Chicago, as does Abrahams, leaving Durban for London. *Tell Freedom* borrows from Wright's autobiography vivid descriptions of the urban and rural environment, its brutalising effects on the young personality, but also the fresh human responses to that world brought by the sensitive child. Along with the accounts of mistreatment by whites, Wright and Abrahams both describe the complicity of blacks in their own oppression, where their own families strive to make them conform to the submissive behaviour expected of black people.[248] Significantly, Wright portrays Christianity as an instrument of white oppression and bitterly rejects the black Church; Abrahams, however, never renounces Christianity, possibly because of his experience of the faith as practised by the CR but, once he sees the error in the religious equation, questions its efficacy in overcoming oppression. Both writers, however, use many of the techniques of fiction, and some incidents may even have been invented,[249] in order to portray the growth into identity of a particularly sensitive type of artistic personality.

In strong contrast to Abrahams, who was never concerned about dropping out of formal education, because he had cultivated the habit of reading since his time at the BMSC, and had thus "found the way to Knowledge", Mphahlele's results run like a refrain throughout *Down Second Avenue*. "I was easily the best in English and Latin, and managed to keep up a respectability in this first position in mid-year and promotion tests," he writes of his first year. "I kept on top of the class," he says of his second.[250] Mphahlele's school testimonial, dated 11 January 1938, corroborates his consistent achievement, leading to Mr Shearsmith's obvious regret about his decision to leave:

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[248] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 38-41.
[249] For some of these, see Gray, `The Long Eye of History', an article which nicely plots the genesis of *Tell Freedom* from three early texts, `I Remember . . . .' in *Dark Testament* (1942), `A Letter to My Mother' in *The African Drum* (1951) and *Return to Goli* (1953).
[250] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 126, 133.

> Ezekiel has been with us for three years now. He came to us after passing Std VI and has this year taken the University Junior Certificate; as he is the second in his Form of thirty three candidates, I am confident that he will pass. He has always done well here and he is a very keen and interested student.
>
> His character is excellent and he is a very willing and pleasant boy; very conscientious and capable and always keen to do his best. He has always taken great pains in his work and everybody has been pleased with him.[251]

This diligence is also evident in the initiative he and other keen pupils took to make use of their expertise in certain subjects. Mphahlele mentioned to me how some in his JC class organised themselves into a group to make weekly presentations in various school subjects. Not surprisingly, he was chosen for English, while Ambrose Phahle was chosen for Maths and Science; another, by name Hodges,[252] was chosen for history. They worked to a weekly timetable, and this serious approach to their studies must have influenced their final marks. Mphahlele says he was one of the three (actually four) who obtained first class JC passes, and this even after a breakdown mid-way through his final year, because of his determination to succeed.[253] Such results vindicated the expectations he had of himself, so when, after two years of part-time self-study, he passed Matric in the third class in 1942, he "felt most disheartened".[254]

Before coming to St Peter's, Mphahlele was brought up by his maternal grandmother, a strict Lutheran to whom regular prayer was very important, and who never lost an opportunity for a religious aphorism, which contributes

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[251] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1935-45, AB 2089 / I 8.1 file 1. A second testimonial dated 12 April 1938 ends with "I can recommend Ezekiel to any employer who requires an able and loyal clerk, and he would carry out his duties to the very best of his ability"!

[252] This was probably HJTP Makhetha who, together with Thomas Bennett, Mphahlele and Phahle, obtained his JC first class.

[253] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 134.

[254] Ibid, 150.

to a rather endearing portrait of this formidable matriarch. Mphahlele's mother, however, was a Methodist, and it was only with her permission that he was confirmed in the Anglican Church once he was at St Peter's. For roughly ten years he was a regular worshipper in the Anglican Church, emotionally and sensuously involved in each service, "thrilled at the sight of the pomp and regalia and the smell of the incense on which the service floated".[255] Like Abrahams at Grace Dieu, where religion and "the symbolism of religion were all about us, real and compelling",[256] Mphahlele took pleasure in the "atmosphere of stability" and beauty of the buildings, and the "scholastic aura" of the school.[257] However, he was later to question any practice of a faith without a practical component, especially one that fostered a merely aesthetic experience: "I realized all the more how I hated formalism, especially when it contained an element of mysticism; how I detested formal allegiance to groups other than those closely connected with the arts and with the struggle to attain freedom".[258]

It was the Church's unwillingness to take a stand against the poverty, job reservation, forced removals and pass laws that were the daily experience of black families which led directly to Mphahlele's painful withdrawal from the Anglican Church in 1947 and his later espousal of African humanism: "For years now I have been thinking it was all right for me to feel spiritually strong after a church service. And now I find it is not the kind of strength that answers the demand of suffering humanity around me".[259] His life around this time was at a particularly low ebb: he had been banned by the Government from his first love, teaching, was suffering consequent poverty, and the Church, in the person of Jacob Wardle CR, rector of Holy Cross Church, Orlando, was demanding its dues in the form of `church shillings'

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[255] Ibid, 130.
[256] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 224.
[257] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 124, 145.
[258] Ibid, 180.
[259] Ibid, 178. Significantly, Fr James Calata, at this time senior chaplain to the ANC, believed that Christianity would never develop genuine roots in South Africa until African grievances were dealt with politically (Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV*, 16).

with very little understanding of Mphahlele's physical and emotional circumstances, "the forces that were tearing inside me".[260]

Both Church and State, moreover, were intent on claiming credit for the education received by the black elite, without being prepared to ensure that they claimed their rightful place in society. Jacob Wardle chided Mphahlele, "You mustn't misjudge the missionaries, though, after all you were educated in mission schools and your children are in an Anglican nursery school. No government ever thought of building schools for you before the missionary came here, still less nursery schools".[261] The interview with Fr Wardle could have been stage-managed by Mphahlele to reflect his experience of the ubiquitous patronising attitude of the Church, or the sentiments expressed may have indeed come from a smarting Wardle, at a loss in the face of Mphahlele's pain and consequent rejection of the Church.[262] Either way, they are echoed in the paternal advice from the Chief of the Security Branch to Mphahlele's request for a passport in 1957 to take him to Nigeria: "it would not do to speak ill about the country that had given me the education I had. I was to bear in mind the fact that South Africa was doing more for its non-white population than any colonial power in Africa".[263] This is reminiscent of an incident in *Tell Freedom*, when a white sergeant in Durban taxes Abrahams about his work with the Liberal Study Group: "Here you are, the country's given you a good education. You could make something good out of it for yourself. Instead you mess around with these foreign communists".[264] The arrogance of this attitude, the voice of the "eternal missionary", unwilling to receive as well as give, is what drove Mphahlele away from the faith of his grandmother, and of St Peter's.

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[260] Ibid, 179.
[261] Ibid, 179.
[262] Wardle had been newly professed on 8 January 1948, and only recently posted to Orlando when he clashed with Mphahlele, so his legalism regarding `church shillings' might have been occasioned by insecurity, as he was still feeling his way into community and congregation.
[263] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 208.
[264] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 305.

Karin Paasche, however, has intelligently probed the vehemence of Mphahlele's rejection of the Christian faith, given his "almost obsessive preoccupation with the superiority of African humanism"; she suggests that it

> makes one wonder if he has really come to terms with his own `defection' from the Christian church which once meant so much to him. It seems more likely that he still seeks a synthesis between these two philosophies, as he did between other aspects of Western and black African culture.[265]

The evidence from his own writings (for example, his recent and moving poem, "Silences", invokes the sages of world religions)[266] certainly points to her conclusion. Ever alert to the ironies and paradoxes at work in art, moreover, Mphahlele said as early as 1963 that "a writer who is too sure about his rejection of the use of a god can be as overbearing as the one who is too sure of his need for the existence of a god".[267] His rejection of Christianity, as he recounted in some depth to Couzens,[268] because he found it ritually empty and meaningless, in no way invalidates his education, though, but rather reflects favourably on its integrity in that it encouraged critical thinking and growth into full personhood. This sort of education, John Bowker has suggested, is risky, "because it confers on every individual an autonomy which he or she may well use to turn around and destroy the very process which has enabled him or her to be precisely that person. We grow into the possession of our own selves – which is actually what every person has to do in order to become an independent adult".[269] Mphahlele alleges in *Afrika My Music* that education under the CR "allowed for freedom of intellectual mobility, though this was censored by such religious authority as

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[265] Paasche, "Changing Social Consciousness", 90 footnote 17.
[266] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Silences', in GE de Villiers (ed), *Ravan: Twenty-Five Years (1972-1997)* (Johannesburg, 1997), 143-149.
[267] Mphahlele, `A Reply', 25.
[268] Mphahlele, `Looking In', 116.
[269] John Bowker, `The Religious Understanding of Human Rights and Racism', in D Duncan Honoré (ed), *Trevor Huddleston: Essays on His Life and Work* (Oxford, 1988), 166.

we had absorbed into our consciousness". [270] If his retrospective view on his education some fifty years later is jaundiced, he does acknowledge that "[i]ts saving grace was that one could, as an adult, disengage oneself from it, re-educate oneself, and develop a constructively critical attitude".[271]

4.1.2 "The error of the equation"

Abrahams's eighteen months in Form I and Form II at St Peter's until June 1938, when he was nineteen, is recounted in a flashback at the start of Book III in *Tell Freedom*, while he lies in bed after empty lovemaking, which leads him to reassess his earlier idealism.[272] The reason for his departure lies in what he terms "the error of the equation".[273] The Christian faith was meant to liberate and give abundant life; yet most white Christians treated blacks as ordure. He asks in confusion: "Where was the error? In the religion? In the white people? In us? In God or in man? And how were we to work it out?"[274] To find the answer he reluctantly left Br Roger Castle, his "first Christian socialist",[275] who had opened up the world of art and music and committed English poetry of the 1930s and introduced him to Sammy and Phyllis Lieberman, his first white friends. Br Roger's obituarist wrote in the *CR Quarterly* of 1971, "I know no-one of whom it could be more truly said that where he went life and hope began to spring afresh, and lives were actually and visibly changed".[276] At St Peter's Abrahams also met the communists Cath and Harold who regularly invited him home, and who affirmed him by showing him that their friendship with him "was something they valued and desired",[277] just as his relationship with Jane, Cath's sister, temporarily

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[270] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 179.
[271] Ibid, 179.
[272] Abrahams has structured each of the three books into which *Tell Freedom* is divided around a new phase in his drive for education, Book I with his awareness of family identity, Book II with his record of three years at primary school (aged 12-15), after being given a copy of *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*, and Book III with his memories of St Peter's (aged 18-19), after having spent a fulfilling year at Grace Dieu.
[273] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 245.
[274] Ibid, 238.
[275] Ibid, 249.
[276] William Wheeldon, obituary of Roger Castle, *CR Quarterly* Michaelmas 1971, 21.
[277] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 250.

liberated him from the burden of his colour.[278] From them he also learned a creed that seemed to make sense of South African realities: dialectical materialism. Like Nelson Mandela, who told the court at the Rivonia Trial in 1964 that for decades communists were the only group in South Africa who treated Africans "as human beings and their equals; who were prepared to eat with us, talk with us, live with us and work with us",[279] Abrahams gauged its adherents by their actions and found them "wholly free of any taint of racialism in their dealings with me and other non-Europeans".[280]

His formal education at St Peter's was complemented by the opportunity given him for meeting the communist couple Cath and Harold, and so finding a creed whose adherents measured up to the standards they proclaimed, unlike so many in the Church, as Huddleston wrote prophetically, which had "enough colour prejudice, enough uncharitableness and enough sheer blindness to lose it its influence over the African people in the next generation or less".[281] Marxism was to provide Abrahams with a *raison d'etre* for years to come, answering the deepest need he had to be of service to black people, for "it offered me the privilege of being socially useful to a suffering humanity".[282] But always, as with Christianity, there was a questioning, in this case about the lack of `heart' in its adherents, "something that would take in human feeling, love and laughter, poetry and music, and the dear warmth of pure, motiveless friendship. Had Marxism any room for the compassionate humanity that pervaded the life and teaching of Christ?".[283] This was answered, of course, in *The View from Coyaba*, written from a perspective

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[278] It should be noted that a contradictory approach characterised Abrahams's quest to legitimise himself under the colour bar: to claim a black identity (seen in his poetry in *A Blackman Speaks of Freedom!*) and to transgress the colour bar (later celebrated through the inter-racial relationship between Lanny and Sarie in *The Path of Thunder*). There would always be a tension between the claims of racial particularity and the appeal of modern universals in his writing, epitomised after both these works by the text of *Tell Freedom*, a site where these contending discourses compete.

[279] Nelson Mandela, Statement during the Rivonia Trial, 20 April 1964, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 789.

[280] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 251.

[281] Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (London, 1956), 71.

[282] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 16.

[283] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 251.

sympathetic to Christian socialism, which marks Abrahams's return to that faith after years of wrestling with the equation.

He had not found wanting, though, the CR brethren who ran Grace Dieu, the teachers' college near Pietersburg, where he studied before St Peter's until December 1936, during his seventeenth year. He recounts how they were the first whites whose colour he forgot: "After a very short while they were just men, men of God, men without colour".[284] He devotes more time to relating this episode in his life, so the Grace Dieu experience was probably seminal in his development, corresponding perhaps to Mphahlele's time at St Peter's. Neville Choonoo significantly observes that his descriptions of his time at Grace Dieu are embellished with metaphor while his later experience with leftist groups is narrated in a more detached manner.[285] Grace Dieu, coming as it did after the BMSC,[286] and where Abrahams was registered for the teacher's diploma,[287] opened up for him abundance of life as a person and as creative artist. He describes it as a place of peace and affirmation, and his style takes on a biblical cadence: "I was among people who were as brothers one unto another, and there were books and the land was beautiful. Almost, I was in another land. A land free of hurt, insult, colour and poverty".[288] In his study of Grace Dieu, Alfred Mokwele remarks particularly on the staff creating "feelings of security, acceptance, trust and safety" in their students, among whom he numbered: "And this in itself made the students susceptible to the good and the beautiful, and open to religious and moral influence".[289] Even the Afrikaans teacher, the gentle-natured Mr Jansen "soon broke down the reserve all non-whites have towards Boers" and helped Abrahams to discover "the rich body of Afrikaner literature and the beauty of the language

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[284] Ibid, 222.
[285] Choonoo, "Parallel Lives", 157.
[286] The *Grace Dieu Bulletin* II(1) Dec. 1935, 10 records that Abrahams came to Grace Dieu from the `Eurafrican Training Centre' in Johannesburg, perhaps the correspondence college at which he was enrolled; he would use the BMSC library to study for his courses (*Tell Freedom*, 198).
[287] The qualification for this was Standard VI; in 1935 the Cape Native Higher Primary Course for those with the JC was introduced.
[288] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 224.
[289] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 61. While Mokwele may not be impartial, he nevertheless speaks from personal experience.

itself".[290] An outstanding feature, according to Mokwele, was the harmony in which English and Afrikaans-speakers lived together with the black staff,[291] due in no small measure, perhaps, to the fact that the majority of teachers were single, either lay or professed, devoting their time and energy to the students, like the CR living on the margins in pursuit of a common goal.

Fr Reginald Adams at Grace Dieu expanded Abrahams's acquaintance with books, and, as Br Roger was doing with fine artists at St Peter's, engaged the seventeen-year-old in informal literary discussions which confirmed and encouraged Abrahams's reading of these texts.[292] It seems likely that he was directly responsible for Abrahams's characteristically strong, simple style of writing, both in his journalistic pieces and novels:

> Father Adams was a purist about both spoken and written English. He set an exacting standard in these private lessons. Whenever I used big words or made clumsy and almost meaningless sentences, he sent me to the Bible:
>
> `The Bible says "And Jesus wept". I suppose that would be too simple for you. Read the Bible if you want to see how good English should be written!'
>
> I read the Bible and saw.[293]

Abrahams's literary bent found an outlet working with the Principal, Canon SP Woodfield CR, on the stencilled biannual college magazine at Grace Dieu,[294] which stood him in good stead for his later editorial work on the monthly bulletin of the Liberal Study Group in Durban and the *Daily Worker* in London.

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[290] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 222. Werner Jensen (*not* Jansen), BA, taught Afrikaans from 1934 to June 1938, and was the first "Anglican-missionary-hearted Afrikaans-speaking teacher" which Grace Dieu opportunely landed (Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 140).
[291] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 136.
[292] Fr RF Adams taught English from 1935 to 1937, was Vice-Principal from July 1938 to 1947, and became Canon of Matabeleland in 1954 (Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 203, 206).
[293] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 223.
[294] Fr SP Woodfield was Principal of Grace Dieu from 1924 to 1938, and became Canon of Pretoria in 1932, and Archdeacon in 1946. The longest serving Principal, it was he who set

He was also writing poems in English throughout his years at Grace Dieu and St Peter's.[295] Some were published from September 1936 in the *Bantu World*, and the editor, HIE Dhlomo, sent him a letter of encouragement.[296] Another batch was published some months later, and he received his first payment and regular copies of the paper from the new editor. His poetic efforts even spurred on one or two other young black readers.[297]

One of his first poems in the *Bantu World*, "The Last Journey", was also selected for publication in the *Grace Dieu Bulletin*, presumably because of its imperialistic subject matter, being a tribute to King George V:

> Farewell, O King!
> Thus will I sing
> To one who was
> Always the last
> And yet the greatest of all Kings.
> Rest among the brave,
> History your name will save.
> For others to sing,
> The glory of our King,
> Godspeed to thee, O King!
> Through strife of war and pain,
> With strength and confidence you reigned
> Never thinking to abstain
> From the bitter cup of pain.
> Rest in peace, O King!

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the stamp on the place, what old students at a meeting at the BMSC in June 1953 called "the tone" of Grace Dieu (Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 182).

[295] The *Grace Dieu Bulletin* III(3) Dec. 1936, 32 records that "Peter Abrahams, a first year student, has been contributing poems to *Bantu World* and some show great promise."

[296] The dates of these, which anticipate the poems Mphahlele remembers justifying the `I'm-black-and-proud-of-it-theme', but also show evidence of Christian faith and driving ambition to succeed, are as follows: `Higher! Ever Higher!' and `Merit' 5 Sept. 1936, 16; `Henry Peters' 24 Oct. 1936, 16; `The Call of the Sea' 7 Nov. 1936, 18; `To My Mother' 14 Nov. 1936, 16; `Out of the Past' 21 Nov. 1936, 16; `The Negro Youth' 5 Dec. 1936, 18. For discussion of the liberal influence on some of these see Couzens, `Politics and Black Poetry', 1-2.

[297] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 239.

While the bugles blow
And the footsteps slow
Carry you yearning home,
On your last journey – home.
May the Almighty keep you, O King![298]

With its Tennysonian echoes of *Morte d'Arthur* and blowing bugles, it anticipates a later poem, "Out of the Past", in the *Bantu World*, which is clearly modelled on Wordsworth (in its depiction of the simple rustic) and Tennyson's lyric in *The Princess*, "Tears, Idle Tears" (in its evocation of divine despair): the old loner Dick, "dim of eye", remembers loved ones with names such as Matt, Lucy and Tom, and sighs repeatedly "for the days that are no more." In its preoccupation with the past, which has always haunted Abrahams (he has said that, in addition to a sense of universal humanity, a writer must have a sense of history),[299] it is an early index to his consistent need to take a long view of things; and in its mention of roaming on the seas far away from loved ones, it anticipates the ending of *Tell Freedom*, and links up with another poem, "The Call of the Sea":

The world is calling me,
Over the sea.
I have no other plea,
Under the sea.
Away I must flee,
To the sea.
The ship is calling me
From the sea.

[298] *Grace Dieu Bulletin* II(2) June 1936, 12. The editor of *Bantu World* (presumably Fezile Teka) says of this poem that it is "unequalled in its expression of the sense of loss the African felt at the passing of a great man and a beloved father" (14 Nov. 1936, 16), which again underlines the imperial milieu in which Abrahams's education took place. That the editor considered the "depth of thought and feeling and the polished style" remarkable (whether he did or not), could only have served to encourage the budding poet, which was probably his intention (see *Tell Freedom*, 227).

To the home of Drake and Raleigh,
Where the waters break and dally,
When they make a sudden sally,
On the great sea's angry belly.
Oh! for the sea –
It's calling me;
But just to flee,
To the sea.[300]

It is quite obvious that he was already intending to leave overseas after his explosive encounter with books in the BMSC in 1935, so his single years at Grace Dieu and St Peter's were both steps towards that goal, which is probably why he never completed either his diploma or his matric. He was following the grail of England, impelled by the need to make a pilgrimage, as much as Mphahlele was by the self-imposed pressure to be educated. Mphahlele remembers him at school as "always yearning for far-away places", which frightened him a little.[301] Speculating as to whether to go to the United States of America or England first, should he have the chance, Abrahams felt that the former promised him political emancipation, having "more to offer [him] as a black man"; England, however, was the home of the writer, and "going there would be in the nature of a pilgrimage", because "men now dead had once crossed its heaths and walked its lanes, quietly, unhurriedly, and had sung, with such beauty that their songs had pierced the heart of a black boy, a world away, and in another time".[302] But it was after the most humiliating experience of his early life, while at Grace Dieu, that art took second place to politics for a time.

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[299] Abrahams, `The Long View', 11.
[300] The editor of *Bantu World* compared this poem to John Masefield, saying hyperbolically that the "lilting lyric compares with the best of its kind in the English language" (14 Nov. 1936, 16), which again could only have encouraged the lover of English poetry in his efforts.
[301] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 129.
[302] Ibid, 200.

His closest friend at Grace Dieu was the Mopedi, Jonathan, from a rural background, and the two boys would often brood over the way whites treated blacks outside of the precincts of the training college:

> Here, in this peaceful valley, the equation worked out. The Fathers who taught us lived up to their teaching. They were good men and they poured their lives into good work. Belief was translated into reality . . . . But we would leave this peaceful valley and go out into the big world. And there, among the whites, it did not work out.[303]

So Abrahams began to question staying at the training college, especially since he never intended to be a teacher.[304] What clinched it for him was the humiliation he underwent while on a trip to Pietersburg with Jonathan. After buying a loaf of bread he stumbled into the arms of an Afrikaans man who good-naturedly caught him, until he realised his colour. "He flung me away like one near the point of nausea through touching human waste".[305] If this had happened in Vrededorp he might have put it down to common black experience. But his education at the BMSC and at Grace Dieu had changed him by affirming his identity. He suffered a mental breakdown: "Why did he look so sick with disgust? The other wouldn't have mattered if he had not looked so sick with it. Am I really like ordure to him?".[306] Two white Christians became part of that humiliating memory: an Afrikaans witness to the incident who, as he was flung aside, mumbled something about `church arrangements', and even Canon Woodfield, for whom Abrahams had recently booked a first-class train coupé, solely a white person's privilege. "Savagely,

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[303] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 238.
[304] The industrial part of the Lower Primary Certificate (School Method, Agriculture and, later, Apparatus Making) was added at second-year level (Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 94), which may well have influenced Abrahams's decision to leave after first-year. The Secondary School at Grace Dieu only opened in 1945 and offered classes up to JC level (Transvaal).
[305] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 244.
[306] Ibid, 245.

insistently, my mind forced the error of the equation into the peaceful valley called the *Grace of God*".[307]

There and then Abrahams relinquished his faith, even though, like Mphahlele, he had been confirmed as an Anglican.[308] The world of Grace Dieu was not that of South Africa: "If there were any fault that we could lay at the door of the good Fathers and Sisters, it was that they had taught us too well. They had made Christianity a living reality for us, a way of life, a creed to live by, to measure our relations by".[309] But it did not hold good elsewhere, and this humiliating incident may have led to his writing the short poem, "The River" composed, he told the *Cape Standard*,[310] along the banks of a river in the Northern Transvaal, perhaps that which formed the lower boundary of the precincts of Grace Dieu. It is clearly influenced by the poets of the Harlem Renaissance:

> This River whispered into my ear
> A tale as old as the mountains.
> This rippling River sang me a song
> I never heard from the mountains.
> This River's so deep, so ancient, so calm,
> No gurgling here as up yonder.
> This River is dusky, quiet and sad –
> This River knows pain like my people.
> This River whispered into my ear.
> This River's a well of dusky tears!

He left Grace Dieu at the end of term, offering Canon Woodfield an excuse about not intending to be a teacher. He received a gentle reply suggesting

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[307] Ibid, 245.
[308] Abrahams was confirmed on 17 May 1936 by Bishop John Latimer Fuller CR, founder of Grace Dieu, and Bishop of Lebombo until 1920 (*Grace Dieu Bulletin* III(2), June 1936, 23).
[309] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 239.
[310] Anon [`Jeseeg'], `Peter Abrahams: Student of South African Folk Lore', *Cape Standard* 17 Jan. 1939, 3. The story of this interview is told in *Tell Freedom* (269-271) and the journalist who wrote the profile must have been George Manuel.

he finish his schooling at St Peter's and Abrahams acquiesced, "with a feeling of guilt and a sense of double-dealing",[311] possibly because he already knew his destination and heart's desire. Yet it was at St Peter's that Dora Lindsay played her part in fostering his artistic consciousness, revealing to him "the independent life possessed by a work of art and the strange loyalty art demands of those who would serve it".[312] Abrahams's testimonial from St Peter's, dated 27 June 1938, which expresses Mr Shearsmith's regret at losing him, indicates his devotion to literature and, interestingly, his position in class:

> In December 1937 he passed Form I and is now in Form II. He passed Form I with a 60% aggregate mark and was 5th in a class of 41. He is particularly good at literary subjects and languages. Peter now wishes to leave this school because of financial difficulties at home and he wishes to attend the Vrededorp Training Centre as a day scholar. I have no objection to his transfer and we all wish him success in his future scholastic career.
>
> Peter is an able and conscientious worker. He reads very widely and takes an intelligent interest in school life outside the classroom. His conduct is good and he has a very friendly disposition. We are very sorry to lose him in this school.[313]

His decision to leave St Peter's is marked by the first publication of his poems, infused no longer with Christian hope, in the *Cape Standard*.[314]

4.1.3 Unreliable memories

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[311] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 249.
[312] Ibid, 250.
[313] CPSA, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1935-45, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 1.
[314] The dates of these, which move from celebrating his blackness to indicting capitalism, are as follows: `Freedom' 28 June 1938, 6; `Old and New', `To a Brown Girl', `The Brown Road' and `The River' 17 Jan. 1939, 3; `Heritage' 7 Mar. 1939, 4; `Little Grease-Men' 4 Apr. 1939, 7. For discussion of this development see Couzens, `Politics and Black Poetry', 2-4.

What Mphahlele has acknowledged as "a fatally beautiful lady called bitterness", who could only be strangled after she had been embraced,[315] haunts *Afrika My Music*, not surprising, given the twenty years of exile forced upon Mphahlele as the only answer to the conundrum of existence in South Africa. He admits that he has "tamed that lady" and "can contain the bitterness" and "need never again feel ashamed of bitterness when white liberals say disparagingly that I have a chip on my shoulder".[316] Yet this deep resentment permeates the later autobiography and colours his memories of whites and his education, even to the extent of contradicting his earlier observations. While an author has Walt Whitman's famous license to do so ("Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself"), it makes the task of the literary critic that much more difficult. Any exploration of autobiographical texts has to face the tricky prospect that they could be closer to lies than to the truth, in that they may contain a considerable amount of fictitious matter: "Memories are unreliable, the faces in the water and the flaws in the glass return distorted images of the self".[317]

In *Down Second Avenue* Mphahlele mentions Peter Abrahams as one of his "two Coloured friends" during his first year in 1935 (the other being Thomas Bennett),[318] but Abrahams tells us that he was only there for a year in 1937. Is this a case of name-dropping, or simply forgetfulness? A small point, but either way, it demonstrates the unreliability of an autobiographical text, and a strong case for a contextual reading. Distorted memory is also evident in what Mphahlele says in *Afrika My Music* about his former teachers: "Every teacher in my schooldays had tried blissfully and unwittingly to murder any love I had for literature . . . . we had to chew on a lot of literary sawdust and wash it down with a smile".[319] What then are we to make of his great affection for his English teacher at St Peter's,[320] even if she is not mentioned by name? A further provocative statement about his high school education, "I

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[315] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 186.
[316] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 248.
[317] MacDermott, `Introduction', 8.
[318] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 128.
[319] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 15.
[320] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 129.

had thus come out of that bludgeoning with perhaps a fragment of Dickens, a chunk of undigested Shakespeare" (probably in Lamb's version, for the plays themselves were not set),[321] is refuted by his obvious passion for producing and acting in parts of Shakespeare and scenes from Dickens which he adapted for the stage,[322] when teaching at Orlando High and as leader of the Syndicate of African Artists which Coplan calls "perhaps the first organized urban cultural movement to actively promote the cultural identity and sociopolitical aspirations of Johannesburg's blacks".[323]

Moreover, it is difficult to reconcile Mphahlele's objections to the way poetry was taught for his JC and diploma, in that it concentrated on the pastoral and celebrated noble sentiments,[324] with the ubiquitous quoting throughout his non-fictional writing and later autobiography from poets in the `Great Tradition', especially Coleridge, Keats and Tennyson. Yet the poems he nonchalantly echoes in characteristic jazzy fashion throughout *Afrika My Music* are anything but pastoral, yet finely apposite. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is invoked to describe the confessional eagerness of Chiume, one of Banda's exiled ministers,[325] and the river Alph in "Kubla Khan" is alluded to as a comparison with Mphahlele's river of memories.[326] Keats's Grecian Urn becomes a comment on one of Sekoto's portraits of the arrested, contained beauty of an African woman,[327] and the ennui of the knight-at-arms in "La Belle Dame" is a fine description of the haunted, lonely life of Alfred Hutchinson.[328] Mphahlele cites Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters" to comment on the use of alcohol to blunt sensibility to black living conditions,[329] and slightly misquotes from "Come Down, O Maid", the lyric in *The Princess*, to demonstrate the suspended state of exile for some refugees.[330]

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[321] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 16. He mentioned to me that *Lamb's Tales* was a set text in Form I at St Peter's in 1935 (interview with Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August, 1999).
[322] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 166, 180.
[323] Coplan, `The African Performer', 203.
[324] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 187.
[325] Ibid, 49.
[326] Ibid, 159-160.
[327] Ibid, 64.
[328] Ibid, 125.
[329] Ibid, 189.
[330] Ibid, 247.

These echoes give the lie to Mphahlele's claim that mission education "murdered" his love for literature. Especially since he has so internalised these Romantic poets that to use them in African contexts has become second nature. Mphahlele passed his Junior Certificate in the first class in 1937, with an A in Mathematics and a B in Latin, both of which he shared with Ambrose Phahle. He says he "scraped through in arithmetic",[331] the symbol on the certificate being a D. What he omits to tell in *Down Second Avenue* is that his English mark was also a D, which may explain why he later felt that his teachers "murdered" his love for literature. Would he have said that if he had not obtained his MA with distinction in 1957? Did he bear a grudge against St Peter's, for not achieving better marks in English when his literary acumen was later vindicated? But we know that he lost the mid-year tests that year as a result of the nervous breakdown brought on lest his mother "couldn't afford to pay fees for a repeat performance the following year".[332] The lapse in his English mark is probably attributable to this, for he "was easily the best in English and Latin" throughout his years there.[333] It seems likely that, during the mid-1950s when he began the autobiography, a time in which all he "thought and did was a loud protest against whites",[334] he was too consumed by anti-white sentiment to be wholly objective.

This may be borne out in *Down Second Avenue* by his problematic recollection of anti-British feeling by the pupils when he was in Standard VIII, who viewed the coronation of George VI in May 1937 with scepticism. Offered refreshments in mugs with the King's picture on them to celebrate the public holiday:

> Fifth Form boys decided to boycott the affair and refuse the refreshments. Most of the boys in the school followed their example. We smashed the cups. Word went round that we

[331] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 134.
[332] Ibid, 134.
[333] Ibid, 126.
[334] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 136.

> couldn't with any amount of self-respect accept refreshments on an occasion that wasn't going to bring us the things that we so urgently wanted: more schools, more opportunities for university education; higher wages for our parents; better houses. The school authorities were indifferent and we felt slighted.[335]

However, Bertram Moloi, one year behind Mphahlele (in Standard VII) at the time, has absolutely no recollection of this event,[336] and this might suggest Mphahlele's account is fictitious, based perhaps retrospectively on the 1940s school disturbances. It is an account strangely out of consonance with the rest of the year, the first really successful one academically, and, indeed, the whole ethos of St Peter's. There is also no mention of the incident in the otherwise detailed minutes of the Advisory Council, neither does the St Peter's Log Book (which scrupulously records the April 1947 visit of the King, where two days were given as holiday) refer to any holiday celebration or disturbance in 1937. There is a reference to a protest meeting held in June by 23 St Agnes Hostel girls, one of whom was expelled for her part in fomenting discontent, but it had possibly more to do with careless marking and punishment as a (nameless) white teacher was warned in August for the second time against these.[337]

Perhaps, more plausibly, the problem lies with Mphahlele's memory. In his article, "The Big Lie", published in 1986, he mentions disruptions involving mugs in 1936 (not 1937), the year Johannesburg celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and before the *annus mirabilis*. Why, fifty years after the event, his memory rings truer than only twenty years' distance, is a mystery, but clearly it is important whether metropolitan Britain or the Dominion was to be held responsible for slum housing and pathetic wages:

> The City Fathers had Golden Jubilee mugs made and distributed in all the schools as a souvenir. Word got round on

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[335] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 133.
[336] Interview with Bertram Moloi, Johannesburg, 22 January 1997.

> campus that we should not allow ourselves to be co-opted into this euphoria. We had nothing to celebrate. Certainly not the urban slums and rural poverty we had come from. We were all exhorted by the more politically aware on campus to destroy the mugs. But not before some of the more demonstrative students had urinated in those jubilee vessels. That, incidentally, was the beginning of my political education.[338]

In *Afrika My Music* Mphahlele also reneges on his earlier claim of free discussion at St Peter's: "We had to be careful, on pain of expulsion, not to allow politics to go beyond the level of school debates . . . . No independent interpretations of history, geography, the Bible, were allowed or encouraged in the classroom".[339] However, this is refuted by Zakes Mokae when he says classes given by the geography teacher, Mr Mitchell, in particular, were the most exciting because of pupil participation.[340] Such a discrepancy can perhaps be attributed to the turbulent political climate of the 1950s on the Reef, which included the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the campaigns in February and April 1955 against the Western Areas removal scheme and the Bantu Education Act, the Congress of the People in 1955 at which the Freedom Charter was adopted, and the Women's March on the Union Buildings of 1956, all of which would have impacted on St Peter's,[341] as well as the demonstrable sea-change which the CR itself underwent along with these political developments, as Trevor Huddleston and Martin Jarrett-Kerr, whom Mphahlele termed "people's people, people's missionaries",[342] took a deep interest in community life and its activities. It is therefore possible that, in *Afrika My Music*, Mphahlele may be reading his education, which occurred in the far less politicised 1930s, with less bitterness that it appears.

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[337] CPSA, St Peter's Log Book 1939-54, AB 2089 / B.
[338] Mphahlele, `The Big Lie', *Leadership* 5(3) 1986, 110.
[339] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 179.
[340] Interview with Zakes Mokae, Johannesburg, 18 May 1995.
[341] The government interpreted these demands for equality as a call for violent revolution, resulting in the arrests for treason in December 1956, which Karis and Carter say marked the beginning of a new phase in black political responses (*From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 5). This perverse misconstruction would have increased Mphahlele's vehement anti-white stance in the mid-1950s, and contributed to his exile in 1957.

Whatever Abrahams and Mphahlele's response to their high school education may have been, the supreme irony is that they could never have told their life stories without that education. Yet their autobiographies testify to their need to define their own identity, to say `I shall tell you who I am' and `I shall tell you what happened' in contrast to a society which claimed the right to define them and their experience. In an oppressive society, writes Rowan Williams, "certain people have the right to construct an identity for themselves; others have their roles scripted for them".[343] Abrahams and Mphahlele used their education to tell freedom and identity, yet the condition of that education was exile and a rejection of the error in the religious equation. Their life stories are the result of what Olney calls the essential autobiographic motive, namely their desire to discover an order and meaning in experience by "the sifting of memories and the recreation of events to see how they relate, where they connect, what pattern they establish",[344] or as White put it, "that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a *moral* drama".[345] Yet these events were void of meaning in South Africa, and only became meaningful (ordered into an autobiography) in exile. As Abrahams says: "Perhaps life had a meaning that transcended race and colour. If it had, I could not find it in South Africa".[346]

4.2 Hutchinson and Matshikiza

Neither, of course, could Alfred Hutchinson and Todd Matshikiza. Their autobiographies are guided by the need not so much to `tell freedom' as to find freedom, Hutchinson's sharing more in the conventions of the novel, with its first-person narration of escape into exile, and Matshikiza's approaching the chronicle, as it touches on events before and after the pivot point of exile. *Road to Ghana* is a spirited account of Hutchinson's escape via Central and

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[342] Interview with Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August 1999.
[343] Rowan Williams, `Nobody Knows Who I Am Till the Judgement Morning', in Duncan Honoré, *Trevor Huddleston*, 140.
[344] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 271.
[345] White, `The Value of Narrativity', 24.
[346] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 311.

East Africa to the emotionally-charged first independent African state during a recess after the withdrawal of the indictment against the accused in the Treason Trial in October 1958, and *Chocolates for My Wife* opens with Matshikiza's arrival in England in May 1959, before a series of flashbacks return the reader to his life in Johannesburg. Both participate in the requirements for texts commonly read at school during the late 1930s and 1940s (it is unlikely that this is coincidental): the one is an exciting adventure story, with the hero winning through only in the nick of time, the other a tragicomedy, along the lines of `all's well that ends well.'

4.2.1 Ghana as metaphor for self-realisation

The three main sections of the journey which Hutchinson makes out of South Africa, through Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and through Tanganyika, are allotted increasing proportions, as if to suggest, once Ghana is arrived at, it will be unlimited in its scope. And driving it on throughout is the trope of adventure story or escape. As one of the minor characters, Chungwa, says halfway through, as the train pulls out of Salisbury, "It sounds like a story from a book . . . Escape and all that . . . "[347] The story has a goal, which gives it its purpose, its gravity, or, to use White's term, its moralising impulse. On the strength of *Road to Ghana*, Dennis Brutus (an old friend of Hutchinson's since Fort Hare) considered him the most promising writer in South Africa,[348] and thought that he would fulfil himself in Britain, but nothing came of it, other than two plays *The Rain-Killers* (1964) and the shorter *Fusane's Trial* (1965), both set in rural Swaziland, and possibly born of his hankering for home. Brutus isolated the power of the autobiography in its "pace and momentum, simplicity and directness, and best of all, a freshness of language, a new minting of idiom and of image", which he never saw in any other South African writer before 1970. This was blunted, however, after Hutchinson's move to Britain in 1960, where he taught in schools in Brighton and London but, according to Brutus, was plagued by the agonies and anxieties of exile

[347] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 87.

which prevented full fruition of his talent. Although he eventually settled in Nigeria in late 1971, raising hopes that his creativity would be rekindled,[349] he died there only a year later of a heart attack.

A serious, considered and thoughtful re-enactment of the great escape to Ghana, which zig-zagged perilously across Africa, the autobiography uses the flashback technique to give insight into Hutchinson's personal life, as opposed to the trajectory approach of Abrahams and Mphahlele. At key moments in the text which deal with transitions from one country to another, he alludes to his `coloured' father, George, and his Swazi mother.[350] Hutchinson endeavours to use his journey across Africa towards freedom in Ghana, and reunion with his white girlfriend Hazel Slade, as a symbol of his coming into the full humanity desired by his parents. Ghana is the end product of his conscious eschewing of racial categorisation throughout the autobiography, and his determination to blend both of his grandfathers' lines in his identity. It is no accident that he traces his ancestry in his mind during his defence in a bizarre court scene for failing to carry a pass; he refused to register under the 1950 Population Registration Act and categorise himself as either `native' or `coloured. ' On one side is his English grandfather, on whose knee he sat eating biscuits outside his store, "Jojo [George] the pioneer of Kimberley and Barberton, who knew Rhodes and Sir James Fitzpatrick and the great hunter Selous", and who died in 1930 when Hutchinson was six,[351] and on the other, the Swazi Chief Matsamo, with fifty wives, who guarded the eastern approaches of Swaziland, and who thanked his daughter, rather prophetically, upon Hutchinson's presentation to him "for giving him a boy `who would write letters' for him".[352]

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[348] Dennis Brutus, `Protest against Apartheid', in Cosmo Pieterse and Donald Munro (ed), *Protest and Conflict in African Literature* (New York, 1971), 99.
[349] Anon, `Alfred Hutchinson' (obituary), *Sechaba* 7(2) 1973, 18.
[350] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 134, 190. His father is mentioned as he enters Tanganyika, which is "my brother George's first love" (126), and his mother as he arrives in Ghana.
[351] Ibid, 55.
[352] Ibid, 59.

St Peter's, which we have seen, was mainly but not exclusively for Africans, is used as evidence by the Crown to try to classify Hutchinson as a `native' for matriculating there in 1945 and therefore guilty of not carrying a pass.[353] The trial is extended purposely in the book through cross-questioning in order to set the parameters for the journey into exile: it gives the reader insight into his background, schooling at St Peter's and tertiary education at the universities of Fort Hare and the Witwatersrand, and underlines the reason for his need to go into exile. There is no place in South Africa for a person who refuses to have his role scripted for him, and insists on writing his own or who, as Choonoo posits of the picaro-figure in black autobiography, wants to avoid the static role imposed upon him and "create a self outside of the one society has clothed him with".[354] As his plane touches down in Ghana, Hutchinson has a vision of his brother first, then his mother:

> I ask: "Where is the road to Ghana?" And Victor replies: "You must plunge deep into the hippo and crocodile pool . . . sink into oblivion of water. On the other side is the road."
>
> I hide behind a tree, apprehensively looking at our house where the police are searching for Hazel. I shush my mother but she begins to dance, Swazi-wise, stamping her feet in youthful ecstasy, and sings: "You are beautiful – I bore you . . . ."[355]

The northward train from Mafikeng to Bulawayo, the "all-African train", the first train to take him out of South Africa, was described as a dancing woman, which "swung with slow looping movements, like an African woman playing with her hips", and again, "like a buxom African woman coquettishly flouncing her hips".[356] The plane to Ghana, too, "heaves like the mighty heart of a woman", and signifies the beginning of the end.[357] This linking of identity and purpose with the road to Ghana, it might be argued, demonstrates how

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[353] Ibid, 54-55.
[354] Choonoo, "Parallel Lives", 66.
[355] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 190.
[356] Ibid, 68, 74.
[357] Ibid, 189.

Hutchinson is aware of how fulfilment can only come through exile, which will allow him not only to love whom he will, but also to live and write how he will.

The autobiography is carefully crafted, with each `zig-zag' of the journey across Africa given its own particular flavour, whether it is the swinging desert train to Bulawayo, the urgent, anxious train to Salisbury, or the slow goods train to Blantyre, the crazy mammy wagons in Nyasaland, or the crowded steamer into Tanganyika.[358] Each discrete stage underlines the analogy with the growth of the personality towards fulfilment. For Olney, the book reads like a novel, with its definite direction and thematic structure; in its narration (and we remember White here), it "conveys not just experience, but experience with meaning".[359] We recall Bakhtin's assessment of the novel as pre-eminently "the genre of becoming" (*bildung*, or formation), what Coe has described as the protagonist's movement "from the point of his first awareness of himself as an individual to a concluding point of his final and positive integration into the society of which he is a member".[360] This is most clearly seen in the compassion Hutchinson shows when he relates to a wide range of people, indeed, even as he strives in the southern reaches of his journey to have a `northern' face befitting one Alfred Phiri, his assumed identity, to take him on the first lap of his journey, and it is only when Ghana is four hours away that Alfred Hutchinson can say "Now I needed no face but my own".[361] Dissembling and ambiguity (strategic identity) become the means to liberation but, more importantly, disguise serves the symbolic purpose of identification with others, what Mphahlele understood as self-fulfilment through reaching out (ontological identity).

Hutchinson identifies closely with Moses Banda, the Nyasaland migrant worker, and draws strength from his sensitivity and composure, whose

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[358] Is it fanciful to see in these zig-zags an image of the Black Star state? The emotion and optimism generated by the year-old nation (and Hutchinson was *en route* to Accra to attend the All-African People's Conference in December 1958) must not be downplayed when assessing its iconographic significance.
[359] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 255.
[360] Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller*, 9.
[361] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 189.

"wonderful face" was "strong and calm and deeply compassionate",[362] and who, in contrast to him with his adopted identity, Phiri, was "solid, unequivocally honest", with "a terrifying self-containedness – like a man long used to living and relying on himself".[363] As his journey always third or fourth class progresses and he comes to rely on his fellow travellers for protection and companionship and hope, he finds that any class difference which had once alienated him from the migrant masses is no longer operative:

> I think I see something which I did not see before. In Johannesburg I had known a disturbing sympathy for these people as they trotted like frightened animals with bundles on their heads across the streets, or stood trembling at a street corner waiting or the W.N.L.A. escort to take them across. Then I was an outsider. Now I am one of them.[364]

It is significant that this revelation occurs in the context of his asking wearily on the way to Portuguese territory: "I have travelled west to get to the east. Must I zig-zag across Africa to reach Ghana." The long journey is becoming a symbol of his growth into full humanity, so that, even as he sits in the car with two Nyasaland MPs on the way to the Tanganyika steamer, he remembers

> with a rush poor Moyo carrying sprouting potatoes from a Delmas farm to Mzimba – and his old *Farmer's Weekly* calendar, the old torches and the senseless wiggles he made with the stump of a pencil. Had he reached home? . . . . And I thought of Moses Banda continually adding sums of money, and of the hoard of sewing machines he was taking home to Salima; and Mweli and the old man who had looked after me so well on the journey to Nyasaland . . . .[365]

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[362] Ibid, 65.
[363] Ibid, 71.
[364] Ibid, 88.
[365] Ibid, 117.

And this sense of solidarity tracks him right into the aircraft on the last leg to Ghana, where in a fit of pique he wants to prick the self-righteousness of a European timber merchant and force him to take responsibility "for the battered passless man, the crying Indian woman, and Moyo taking sprouting potatoes home from a Delmas farm".[366]

Hutchinson's ability to get alongside a wide range of people is perhaps the most significant aspect of the autobiography. Although the gravity of his predicament and suspense of his precarious escape are always felt, not to mention the fear lest his disguise be uncovered (which work together to give the story its strong forward movement, the many shifts from threatened failure to success helping to hasten the tempo), it is his solidarity with a wide variety of fellow travellers, which leavens the texture of the writing, much as his fellow feeling had led to his political activism and the Treason Trial itself. *Road to Ghana* for Burness is "the portrait of a man interested in all men . . . . Hutchinson is able to get outside himself to care for other people".[367] And Visser identifies among its best passages "the sections in which Hutchinson depicts other people in telling detail and with penetrating insight".[368]

It is significant that his close friend, Henry Makgothi (who was president of the Transvaal ANC Youth League in May 1954 when Hutchinson was its secretary and had his famous spat with Potlako Leballo, chair of the Orlando East branch of the Youth League with its Africanist sympathies),[369] underlines how the "humility of Hutch" made him a favourite with practically everyone:

> At his room in Alexandra Township, he is never lonely. Sometimes a colleague comes round to confide in Hutch; sometimes it is his neighbour who just wants to talk to

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[366] Ibid, 185.
[367] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 93.
[368] Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', 53.
[369] See, for example, Clive Glaser, `"When Are They Going to Fight?" Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC', in Philip Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, 1993), 303-304.

> somebody about himself, and often it is the cripple `Texas' who does not mind Hutch's outbursts of temper against him because he knows that he will ultimately get his own way.[370]

When they went together, along with Duma Nokwe and other Youth Leaguers, to Romania to attend the 4th World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship in Bucharest in August 1953, Hutchinson "would go among the people and speak directly to them", leading to "friendships with workers and professional men he had made in the pubs over mugs of beer", and the `kissing dance' with women in the streets of Bucharest. And yet for all that `common touch', he would never be "part of the herd", and Mphahlele records that he was ultimately alone all his life, especially when his marriage to his English wife failed and he moved back to Africa.[371]

A good portion of that close identification with a wide range of people, however, would have been picked up at St Peter's and honed at Fort Hare. Once he came under the influence of Duma Nokwe in 1951, to the extent that he registered for legal studies and participated fully in the Defiance Campaign of 1952, any vestiges of `individualism' which, owing to his background and upbringing, had hitherto kept him from solidarity with the people, were, in Makgothi's words, "smashed" (although this may be a little strong, or premature, given Hutchinson's confession in *Road to Ghana* about his alienation from the masses until the journey forced him to rely on them for help), and he became steadfast "in the search for the new life".[372] Like Abrahams before him, he espoused Marxism throughout his "informative years" teaching at the non-racial Central Indian High School when his imprisonment for his activism during the Defiance Campaign prevented him, along with Makgothi, from teaching under Bantu Education.[373] Hutchinson was not merely a teacher to his pupils, it seems, but a friend to them, and, during his imprisonment during the Treason Trial in 1957, "Indian school girls

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[370] Henry Mokgothi [sic], `Alfred Hutchinson – A Profile', *African Communist* (52) 1973, 61.
[371] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 125.
[372] Mokgothi, `Alfred Hutchinson', 62.
[373] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 19.

and boys outside the Drill Hall in the long months of the trial were the sign that it was visiting day to Hutch".[374] A prophetic play he wrote jointly with the Central Indian School's white Headmaster, Michael Harmel, dealing with a period fifty years after the Freedom Charter, "2005",[375] was confiscated by the Security Branch, quite possibly in the infamous raid on 27 September 1955,[376] and lost forever. Exile should have allowed him to write, as it should have allowed Matshikiza to compose and perform, without harassment; the irony was that, owing to the strains of exile, this promise would not be fulfilled.

4.2.2 England as artistic haven

Road to Ghana reflects Hutchinson's "tall, powerful and jovial personality",[377] but also gives evidence of the "vulnerably sensitive and yet private" side,[378] which Mphahlele would come to know in exile. Matshikiza's autobiography, in complete contrast, is written in imitation of jazz style, with improvised chronology and extempore description, typical of the energetic little man himself.[379] Burness, writing from a Western critic's viewpoint, finds the improvisation problematic,[380] but his by now outdated and limited approach should be disregarded. *Chocolates for My Wife* works because of its integrity: its structure and style mirror the unpredictable and hybrid jazz composer who wrote it, and wrote it flamboyantly in a "pressurized, sparkling prose",[381] what his colleagues at *Drum* called `Matshikize'. As Visser remarks in appropriately musical terms, "the devastating mimicry of accents and mannerisms, and the quick cinematic cross-cuts and flashbacks contain beneath their surface an intricate counterpointing of present with past,

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[374] Mokgothi, `Alfred Hutchinson', 63.
[375] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 13.
[376] See Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 39. The minutes of the ANC national conference in 1954, which Hutchinson as the new Administrative Secretary had taken, were also seized, leading to some recrimination.
[377] Anon, `Alfred Hutchinson', 18.
[378] Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 125.
[379] Alf Kumalo calls him "jockey-sized", but underlines the quality which was to make Matshikiza so successful, his perfectionism, so stringent that he earned the younger apprentice's resentment in his first few days with *Drum* (`Todd Matshikiza' (obituary), *The Classic* 3(1) 1968, 10).
[380] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 94.
[381] Es'kia Mphahlele, `My Heart Said Speak Bold', *Topic* (33) 1968, 9.

London with Johannesburg, comic treatment and underlying reality".[382] Olney goes one better: "a scene here, and a memory there, an impression of this and an idle recall of that, riffs and improvisations blown on a variety of momentary subjects but composing nothing very coherent".[383]

And yet we remember that Hayden White considers that autobiography may approach the condition of the chronicle as a particular product of a possible conception of historical reality (or a life), not an `imperfect history', but comprising "*conceptions that are alternatives to*, rather than failed anticipations of, the fully realized historical discourse that the modern history form [or autobiography] is supposed to embody [my emphasis]".[384] For all its lightweight and improvisatory character, and its detached, ironic and always humorous tone, the autobiography demonstrates, through contrast and counterpoint, just how constraining the South Africa of the 1940s and 1950s was to an artist like Matshikiza. The first 75 pages are expansive in their depiction of the world opening up for him and his family in England where, for all the occasional tinge of racism as "Britain's huge historical backside" (Mphahlele's phrase)[385] began to lose its blank homogeneity around this time, the reader is swept up in the hope and exhilaration Matshikiza is feeling. While Aggrey Klaaste might find that there is "too much gush" in the well-known opening gambit as the plane crosses the English Channel, "as if he was entering a demi-paradise", he does acknowledge that it was an unusual trip for black South Africans to make, and, perhaps, there might be more humour and tongue-in-cheek there than meets the eye.[386]

Once the transition back in memory is made at Bishop Phillip's dinner party in London, however, one week into their stay, through Matshikiza's calling to mind the journalist Eric Hopland (probably Tom Hopkinson; the work is given a further element of detachment through Matshikiza's use of pseudonyms),

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[382] Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', 53.
[383] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 253.
[384] White, `The Value of Narrativity', 10.
[385] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, 218.
[386] Aggrey Klaaste, `Down Memory Lane – ', *The Sowetan* 20 Dec. 1982, 8.

the reader is plunged back into a world of pressure and harassment, one ultimately which precludes the spontaneity and free creativity demanded of an artist. The recollections, often imaginatively extended, such as Matshikiza's arrest in a liquor raid on Hopland's home,[387] and his three days in prison before his "resurrection",[388] point up by contrast the freedom revelled in during the first part of the book. It is significant that it ends with his harassment at the hands of both nightwatchman and hooligan police after a standard late-night rehearsal for his musical, *King Kong*, where what most concerns him is the protection of a box of chocolates destined for his wife Esmé. The autobiography, through the elaboration of random incidents in true jazz fashion, is a set of variations of the theme of freedom, the freedom to be able to give, without hindrance and infringement of dignity, a simple thing like a box of chocolates to one's wife.

This is the reason Matshikiza eschews the trajectory approach adopted by Abrahams and Mphahlele. Composer and jazz musician that he is, he is concerned simply to counterpoint life for an artist and human being in England with that in South Africa, and allow these riffs, if you like, repeatedly to sound the difference.[389] It is not a serious work, but its significance lies in its reflecting how exile became the necessary step for him to develop as artist, like Sekoto and Mancoba before him. Note should be taken of the Afrikaans establishment's limited response to *King Kong*, which goes a long way to show how necessary exile was for an artist like Matshikiza: the Pretoria City Hall and Pretoria University refused to stage *King Kong* in April 1959 (notwithstanding the rave success it had been at Wits University); the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad nevertheless added that "they did not want in any way to stand in the path of the Bantu in the development of his culture", [390] and *Dagbreek* reductively suggested that such presentations comprise "a rare opportunity to show the outside world an essential aspect of South African

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[387] Todd Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife* (Cape Town, 1982; orig. 1961), 82-95.
[388] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 96-105.
[389] In this it does follow the contrapuntal pattern of *Tell Freedom* and *Down Second Avenue*, in which a meaningful idyll or affirmative episode is always followed by racist reality.
[390] Letter dated 20 Feb. 1959 to *The Star*, cited in Glasser, *King Kong*, 55.

Bantu culture".[391] The critic of *Die Burger* in Cape Town found it "a scandal to have misused the natural talents of the players, to have taken their wonderful indigenous music and distorted it into stereotyped jazz",[392] and even found a Morse sign for communist victory in the drum beat which orchestrator Spike Glasser had intended as a solemn death knell. If Afrikaners were spying reds under every bush, so distorting the aesthetics of the musical, exile for the sake of artistic integrity was the only option.

It is significant that John Matshikiza sees his father's greatest work, *King Kong*, as an incomplete masterpiece, considering its final form "a compromise that no one was entirely happy with", having emerged "through a process of improvisation, negotiation and sheer blackmail",[393] qualities which Matshikiza quite obviously himself possessed. Its "modern, `hybrid' nature", David Coplan notes, was disturbing to those playgoers in London who were expecting a `tribal' show, and significantly, thought it `inauthentic'.[394] Anthony Sampson remarks that Matshikiza, more than any other of the *Drum* staff, was a man of two worlds, slipping easily from one to the other.[395] He moved freely among Europeans with his genius for friendship and musical talents, and yet never rejected his African (specifically Xhosa) roots. Sampson relates an incident during the Second World War when the RAF opened a camp outside Queenstown: once the British airmen invited Matshikiza, then playing the piano at a white café in town, back to the camp, he thrived away from the barrier of colour.[396] Another occasion reveals his pride in his Xhosa heritage, when, on holiday from Lovedale where he was completing his JC,[397]

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[391] Cited in Glasser, *King Kong*, 54.
[392] Ibid, 66.
[393] John Matshikiza, `An Incomplete Masterpiece Waiting in the Wings', *Mail & Guardian* 5-11 Feb. 1999, 16.
[394] Coplan, `The African Performer', 205. Ross Posnock considers the desire for the cosmopolitan and the universal the defining trope of the black intellectual, as against those who advocate the particular (or `authentic') and the local in deference to, or at least as a means of dealing with, white hegemony (`How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual', *Critical Inquiry* 23(2) Winter 1997).
[395] Anthony Sampson, *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa* (London, 1956), 88.
[396] Ibid, 89. This incident is also cited, with some variation, by Matshikiza himself (*Chocolates for My Wife*, 8).
[397] Interview with Mphahlele, Turfloop, 3 & 5 August 1999. The two met at St Peter's, where Matshikiza would play the piano a lot, mostly jazz. He began to compose at Lovedale.

he underwent initiation, which gave him "a sense of confidence and responsibility".[398] Matshikiza demonstrates this agility in his autobiography, where he is able to hold his own at Bishop Phillip's sophisticated dinner party (and get the upper hand),[399] and play the requisite `raw Kaffir' to Gumede, the nightwatchman and Koekemoer the policeman, in order to wriggle out of their clutches.[400] He moves as easily in High Anglican circles in London,[401] partly the product of his Anglo-Catholic acquaintance at St Peter's, as he does in the prison in Marshall Square, even managing to solicit a telephone call out of an African warder, never having lost his roots among his people.[402]

As his son, John, recently wrote, "[p]eople were his thing, and he saw the weird and the wonderful side of all the different species who crossed his field of vision", most memorably encapsulated in his *Drum* column, "With the Lid Off".[403] Casey Motsisi, who joined him on *Drum* in 1954 after Matshikiza had been there for two years, says that "[i]n a nutshell, his philosophy read: `We art brethren'",[404] and the photographer Alf Kumalo that "he loved people no matter how humble".[405] Burness makes the point that Matshikiza's chance encounters with other people, like a street violinist in crowded Kensington High Street playing Liszt, "serve to awaken in Matshikiza a sympathy for all humanity".[406] As Hutchinson found it easy to relate to the old Nyasaland miner, Moses Banda, so Matshikiza identified with the old fiddler, white though he was, because of his dignity and the sense he gave of being "very intimately, positively, predominantly present".[407] Matshikiza is momentarily taken out of London to Johannesburg (or perhaps better, the two cities fuse for him), the incident ending with a cryptic comment; "That's how I found my way back home." What, indeed, was home? Edward Said's suggestion that

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[398] Sampson, *Drum*, 91.
[399] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 73.
[400] Ibid, 79, 84, 126.
[401] Ibid, 72.
[402] Ibid, 103.
[403] John Matshikiza, `In the Words of My Father . . . ', *Mail & Guardian* 5-11 Feb. 1999, 25.
[404] Casey Motsisi, `Todd Matshikiza' (obituary), *The Classic* 3(1) 1968, 9.
[405] Kumalo, `Todd Matshikiza', 11. After some years in London, Matshikiza still enquired of Kumalo about Slingsby, the nightwatchman at the *Drum* offices in Johannesburg.
[406] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 94.
[407] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 47.

exile gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, which he calls contrapuntal, is particularly apposite here and, indeed, to Matshikiza's text as a whole. For the exile, "habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment", so that old and new are "vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally".[408] This counterpoint can be pleasurable, he notes, and there may even be a sense of achievement in "acting as if one were at home wherever one happens to be." Matshikiza, who had spent 1936 at St Peter's as a Form I pupil, was able to root himself in English soil, a sapling which had received its vital nourishment from the quadrangles of St Peter's and been favoured by propitious winds from the global network of the Anglican Church.[409]

Both worlds are best illustrated by his hybrid use of language, which switches from impeccable English to the vernacular and back, according to the exigencies of time and place; Obed Musi mentioned that while on *Drum* Matshikiza spoke either English or isiXhosa.[410] He also evinces a sensitivity, as does Hutchinson with the young *New Age* reporter, Tennyson Makiwane, who insists on breaking into slang for dramatic effect,[411] to the talk of other people, whether it is the indigenous British, or his countrymen, and his mimicry further aerates the already sparkling prose. The trademark of the artist who was so adept at kicking the English language around[412] was, as Sylvester Stein put it, "a flinging-off, a naturally uninhibited style".[413] Olney suggests that Matshikiza's book, unlike the other autobiographies, was not written for himself, or for the outside world, but rather for black South Africans (essentially *Drum* readers, it might be ventured, because of the famous style,

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[408] Said, `The Mind of Winter', 55.
[409] It should be noted that Mphahlele believes Matshikiza found London unfriendly, governed by an exclusive cultural machinery, which was not helped by the constant problem of finding a way to make a living (`My Heart Said Speak Bold', 9). This view does not come out of the autobiography, however, possibly because it is governed by the aesthetic of favourable counterpoint with South Africa, and I do not agree with Mphahlele that the style of the section dealing with London which, in his view signified what was happening to the man himself, "flagged, lost its tension and heaved along as if it were lugging a wet blanket."
[410] Musi, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 85.
[411] Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 45.
[412] Mphahlele, `My Heart Said Speak Bold', 9.

`Matshikize'), as if to say, "`Look at what London is like', and `See how too clever I am moving in cosmopolitan circles - especially cosmopolitan white circles . . . . Read it and admire and eat your hearts out that it is not you'".[414] But where Olney shows little understanding of black South African life and, indeed, Matshikiza's personality, is in his implied criticism of this cavalier attitude; Matshikiza's readers would have seen his success as redounding on them too: a vicarious enjoyment of and participation in the freedom and validation which London had provided to a son of the soil. Matshikiza himself articulates this reciprocity in true showman fashion when he writes, "This will be a proud day for me when I write back home to tell them I have been practising piano near Kensington Palace".[415]

Like his character, Ezekiel `King Kong' Dlamini, "a `country boy' who was drawn to the City of Gold",[416] that place of irony and paradox, Matshikiza, more obviously than the other autobiographers, revels in the zone between, which often results in topsy-turvy humour. We catch a glimpse of this in Sampson's description of Todd and Esmé entertaining a mixed bunch, including that living paradox, Arthur Maimane,[417] at their home in Orlando:

> Todd played a recording of Hamba Kahle (`Go Well', the African `goodbye'), the choral song which he had composed for the Queen Mother at Bulawayo. He poured out some Spanish sherry. We sat down to table, and Esmé served roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. We talked about writing and who would be the first of us to write a book.[418]

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[413] Stein, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 85.
[414] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 253.
[415] Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 45.
[416] John Matshikiza, `An Incomplete Masterpiece', 16.
[417] For reasons of space, I have been obliged to omit a lengthy discussion of Maimane in earlier drafts of this thesis, as a fine (and self-consciously aware) example, both in his life and writing, of Lionnet's concept of *métissage*. I was guided in my reluctant decision by consideration of the fact that he never wrote his autobiography, and to this date has only published plays, short fiction and a novel *Victims* (1976), revised for its first South African publication as *Hate No More* (2000).
[418] Sampson, *Drum*, 92.

In the event, Matshikiza beat Maimane to it, by a decade and a half. But, "in his pursuit for acceptance and recognition he burnt himself out",[419] as Motsisi saw it, the energy of the "Mexican jelly bean" fortified with daily half-nips from `The White House' proving too white-hot to sustain. Matshikiza's rightfully bitter piece, "King Kong – Making the Music", published during the London run, employs to sinister effect the image of "the white claw" which managed to distort or strangle everything he and other black composers like Griffiths Motsieloa turned their hand to in South Africa, whether it was Sponono and Marabi music, or the "Song of Joy" he was commissioned to write for Johannesburg's 1956 seventieth celebrations, the white conductor effectively making his composition unrecognisable.[420] When *King Kong* found itself in the clutches of the white claw, "[b]ecause there was money and power behind that claw",[421] it was the last straw, and the bitterness of this piece written in exile unsurprisingly has much of Bloke Modisane's autobiography about it.

Alfred Hutchinson and Todd Matshikiza never fulfilled the promise of their autobiographies; "the weary, uncertain road of exile and frustrated genius"[422] became a dead-end and, when it seemed that African soil might prove fertile for their art (as exile in Britain had once promised to do), death took them both in their late forties. This is sadly ironic, for the people who knew both men well testify to their love of life. Henry Makgothi said of Hutchinson, "Life is his interest and it throbs in his writing",[423] while for Mphahlele, "Matshikiza was just bristling with life".[424] And yet Mphahlele was always aware of an undercurrent in both men, which exile, as in the more extreme case of Modisane, only exacerbated: he laments in *Afrika My Music* how he could not find the answer to the torment of soul which was so obvious on Hutchinson's expressive face, nor could he arrest the flow from the widening crack in

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[419] Motsisi, `Todd Matshikiza', 8.
[420] Todd Matshikiza, `King Kong – Making the Music', *The New Statesman* 24 Feb. 1961, 315. The cantata, also known as "Uxolo" (`Peace') told the story of a city founded on gold and greed.
[421] Mphahlele, `My Heart Said Speak Bold', 9.
[422] Ibid, 9.
[423] Mokgothi, `Alfred Hutchinson', 63.
[424] Mphahlele, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 86.

Matshikiza's busted dam.[425] In a curious way, the abrupt ending of Matshikiza's autobiography, what Aggrey Klaaste calls "a slap in the face with a wet towel",[426] prefigured the premature end of his "elegantly sardonic" life, as the inconclusive ending to Hutchinson's pointed the way to the unravelling, and not the intimated expansion, of his life after exile.

4.3 Bloke Modisane

In contrast to Matshikiza who matriculated at Adams College, Modisane, who had been a Matric pupil at the new government school in Orlando, Bantu High, during 1949, employs as a leitmotif in his autobiography, *Blame Me on History*, the fact of constantly being denied that which he most desired, leaving him "a displaced person, caught between and rejected by the two worlds with which I presumed a mental level".[427] "I am the eternal alien between two worlds," he repeats.[428] Denied acceptance into the white society he craved, he became a product of the "tinsel morality, the repressed violence, the technicolor dreams" of Hollywood, because it was only the (Indian-run) cinema houses which he could attend, and which he "absorbed in the name of culture".[429] What he really wanted was the theatre and art gallery, but they were closed to him, and he was forced to resort to reading reviews of stage and ballet and opera performances, and the private lives of Hollywood stars, in order to hold his own in liberal white company, predictably, a "terribly exhausting" exercise.[430] Curiously, Can Themba, Bloke Modisane and Nat Nakasa were the three *Drum* journalists who insisted on speaking only English, according to Obed Musi, and, moreover, they lived "in this dream world, this white world" which, he says, "created immense problems for them".[431] None, of course, was a St Peter's graduate. Is it fanciful to speculate that, never having been accepted totally within a

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425 Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music*, 121, 125.
426 Klaaste, `Down Memory Lane – ', 8.
427 Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (Harmondsworth, 1990; orig. 1963), 88.
428 Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 218.
429 Ibid, 172.
430 Ibid, 252.
431 Musi, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 341.

white urban milieu during their impressionable years, such as obtained on St Peter's campus in Rosettenville, these three found it necessary to create a European world for themselves, one ultimately unfulfilling and hence embittering? A strong case could probably be made for this reading, given that no noteworthy St Peter's graduate tried as hard as these three journalists to create a European world for himself and, if anything, came to repudiate it.

Modisane's room in Sophiatown was the stuff of legend, a "fly-over which connected the two worlds",[432] in which he displayed with much pretension whatever he could of the white world which had rejected him ("bow-ties, lumps of sugar" mocked Obed Musi),[433] and of which, unlike St Peter's pupils, he had never felt a part. Ingesting his own vitriol, "I am a freak," he declaims,

> I do presume an appreciation for Western music, art, drama and philosophy; I can rationalise as well as they, and using their own system of assumptions, I presume myself civilised and then set about to prove it by writing a book with the title, *Blame me on History*, which is an assumption that if I am a freak it should not be interpreted as a failure of their education for a Caliban, but a miscalculation of history.[434]

The emptiness and loneliness of his life he blames on wanting, without gratification, to listen to Western composers, to engage with Western thought, to feel his soul touched by Western painters and, a longing which demonstrates the universalist way literature was taught then, "to find a nobler design, a larger truth of living in literature".[435] The time for black people to appreciate Western culture, he points out bitterly, was not yet deemed to have come, an observation which could have been made, and indeed, was made, by Western-educated blacks from the time of George Grey in the

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[432] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 254.
[433] Musi, in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 289.
[434] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 178-179.
[435] Ibid, 218.

1850s. Abrahams's statement on arriving in England that the "libraries and theatres were open to me, and so were the concert halls and museums",[436] and Mphahlele's exclamation while listening to Vivaldi in the garden of his Lagos house four months into exile, "what a glorious sense of release!",[437] are significant because of where and when they occur.

The outcome of this intransigence in Modisane's case was the impulse to destroy: he is "obsessed with death, decay and dissolution".[438] *Blame Me on History* is the logical end product of the five autobiographies, which become progressively bleaker and more accusatory the deeper the apartheid chains bite. Form breaks down too, as Gray has demonstrated, "from Abrahams's classic formative model, through Mphahlele's repetitious entrapment to Matshikiza's reversed progress and Modisane's shattered, existential hell".[439] *Blame Me on History* contains all the poison Abrahams and Mphahlele tried so hard to avoid; even Modisane's exile "was no victory or solution, the compulsive agony was still with me, the problem was still with me; only its immediacy was removed." One crucial reason for this cynicism and self-loathing might be the fact that Modisane was the only one of the five autobiographers who did not attend St Peter's, and had therefore never been validated during an impressionable period of his development, nor introduced to a belief system which, at the time, Abrahams recalls, was "real and compelling." Crucially, religion, as Modisane tells us in his autobiography, had never meant anything to him but hypocrisy and manipulation, from childhood upwards, whereas Abrahams and Mphahlele were both caught up in the CR's Anglo-Catholicism, and found affirmation in its ethos, at least as long as they were at the school. Hutchinson and Matshikiza identified

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[436] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 15. Compare his remark that, during his year at Grace Dieu, he had wanted and found out of bounds "the concerts and theatres, the libraries and the parks, the bookshops and the clean, fresh-looking tea-rooms" (*Tell Freedom*, 234). It was only after he left in 1939 that the Johannesburg Public Library took over the library at the BMSC, which then, staffed and stocked by the municipality, became the first branch of a new Non-European Public Library (Cobley, `Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness', 70).

[437] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 220.

[438] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 89.

[439] Gray, `The Long Eye of History', 103. His suggestion that the formal shift from modernism to postmodernism which took half a century in Europe, is here compressed into an intense nine years (1954-63) perhaps invites further exploration.

nominally with the Anglican Church (as can be seen throughout their autobiographies)[440] and which, in Matshikiza's case, included collaboration with Alan Paton on the musical *Mkhumbhane* in 1965, three years before his death from liver failure in Zambia in 1968.[441] If, as Burness finds it, *Blame Me on History* "is one long, agonising scream of a man denied dignity, freedom and self-respect",[442] this existential scream comes from a person who never found something to believe in. For Visser, Modisane communicates "the partial psychological and moral disintegration of a personality in a dehumanising situation",[443] which might have been obviated by the healing and integration which a belief system offers.

Like so many others, Sonja Bahn has noted how *Tell Freedom* and *Down Second Avenue* both avoid the polemical, and hence do not submit easily to the strictures of `protest writing': the autobiographies are "infused with a deeply rooted spirit to survive and grow in the face of enormous odds", so that from their testimonies "there flows hope rather than despair, awareness rather than apathy, reaction rather than resignation".[444] Significantly, she remarks on Mphahlele's "belief in human decency and sacrifice", and on how neither he nor Abrahams found it necessary to use polemics or lose himself in emotional outbursts, which could be ascribed to the dynamism of their respective belief systems. That they both felt bitter is freely admitted; we have seen how Mphahlele could only strangle the beautiful lady after she had been embraced, and life in South Africa had made Abrahams "humourless, intense and bitter", so that he left "suffering a colossal inferiority complex, and carrying a huge chip on [his] shoulder".[445] "I had to escape," he

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[440] For instances of these, which significantly have a political, not spiritual, import and tend to involve Trevor Huddleston, see Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana*, 8, 142, 175 and Matshikiza, *Chocolates for My Wife*, 32, 71-72, 127.

[441] His funeral was held in Lusaka's packed Anglican Cathedral, where he had lived since 1964, working for Radio Zambia.

[442] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 90. Like Camus's Sisyphus, however, Modisane is conscious of his situation and his ability to articulate it.

[443] Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', 52.

[444] Sonja Bahn, `Autobiography as a Vehicle of Protest in South Africa?', in MacDermott, *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing*, 25.

[445] Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, 14.

acknowledges of their common predicament, "or slip into that negative destructiveness that is the offspring of bitterness and frustration".[446]

Yet the remarkably generous-spirited quality of their autobiographies might be attributed partly to the education experienced at St Peter's (as opposed to that at a new government high school like Bantu High), which was informed by a moral code of mission (purpose) and service (solidarity) and which, in alternative formulations, came to undergird their lives. Abrahams and Hutchinson, in addition, gave themselves initially to the communist cause, "a fine faith to live and fight for", as Abrahams described it. "For the young, sensitive, idealistic, angry, frustrated and embittered non-European," he wrote, "there can, on the face of it, be no greater prize".[447] While Mphahlele spoke to the clause dealing with education at the adoption of the Freedom Charter in June 1955, and this during his vehemently anti-white period, Modisane dismissed the Freedom Charter, particularly provisions in the two clauses advocating protection by law and equal rights for "all national groups", as racialist when the exigencies of the time demanded non-racialism.[448] Burness diagnoses that Modisane, in contrast to the other autobiographers, "has lost his capacity for faith, love and the awareness of the common humanity of mankind".[449] In a peculiarly ironic turn-around, because of an excessive self-focus, Modisane comes to suffer from the Western illnesses of egocentrism and existential crisis. He has lost - if, indeed, he ever had it - a sense of individual purpose and fellow feeling, which would have been imbibed, for example, within the ethos at St Peter's School, and worked out through the structures of the Communist Party, or artistic collaboration in Mbari, Chemchemi and Fuba, as the case might be, leading to an integrated personality. For, as Mphahlele asks, "[i]s this indeed not the ultimate end of the arts?"[450]

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[446] Ibid, 15.
[447] Ibid, 16.
[448] Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 237-238.
[449] Burness, `Six Responses to Apartheid', 90.
[450] Mphahlele, `Africana', 117.

And so, one last, but crucial, point must be made. All these autobiographies were either the sole full-length prose work (in the case of Hutchinson, Matshikiza, and Modisane), or the first major work in a prolific and varied writing career (that of Abrahams and Mphahlele). The fact that these writers in exile needed to come to terms with their own lives through inscribing them *before* they turned to other genres like novels and literary monographs (or, indeed, dried up as authors completely) suggests the fundamental importance of education in their lives, the expectations it set up for the hybrid self it shaped, and the obdurate reality against which these were dashed. Even if we buy the postmodern idea that the author and his or her world inscribed in the text are linguistic creations that exist only within that text, and therefore suspend our disbelief at the truth claims of that text; even if we accept the poststructuralist dictum that all identity, textual or real, comprises a series of subject positions defined afresh by language and culture with each moment of existence, the fact remains that the authors themselves believe in what they have written, firstly, to understand the trajectory of their lives (even if this is altered in the very process of inscription) and, secondly, make sense of their present identity (which is moulded by their very understanding of this trajectory). In oppressive situations *bios* must be privileged over *graphos*: the political claims of *bios* must be acknowledged over and above the disbelief engendered by *graphos*.

As James Olney put it, rejecting any separation of a writer's attitudes from the events described: "we cannot deny the autobiographer his understanding or his vision any more than we can deny him the events of his life - they are both, and equally, his material".[451] The autobiographers, at least, believe that they are writing the story of a coherent life, a life which crucially participates - to varying degrees - in the collective (oppressed) identity of their community and therefore demands to be heard as coherent, even if the poststructuralist reader chooses to view it as a story of a variety of past selves. Even when applying critical theory to such texts, it is still possible, suggests Patricia Geesey, to discover the autobiographer's *own* expressed concern with the

existence of a fragmentary subjectivity.[452] Mphahlele perceived his account "of an African's life on the other side of the tracks" as one which witnessed to "the heroism of the people, resilience, dignity, warmth, compassion, in spite of the grinding poverty, soul-battering politics of racism and the brutality of `white' power".[453] Making so obvious a point that it can be overlooked, Olney has remarked that the political machine of South Africa has been the secondary cause of all of the finest literary autobiographies from Africa; "caught, and in various degrees mangled, in the wheels of political oppression", these writers have responded with testimonies to what it means to be black and an artist in a system which denies them identity and creativity.[454] "Exile and literary autobiography," he observes, "have been their typical answers".[455] Leaving South Africa was a way of providing the element of significance in an otherwise insignificant chain of events, the equivalent, Olney feels, of giving all the details in an autobiography significance by the climactic gesture of exile to which all those details are seen inevitably to lead.[456] Everything acquires meaning precisely by relation to this climax, the one event in life and text that could be placed as a keystone for all the rest.

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[451] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 135.
[452] Patricia Geesey, `Why African Autobiography', *Research in African Literatures* 28(2) Summer 1997, 2.
[453] Mphahlele, correspondence 28 August 2000.
[454] Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, 43.
[455] Ibid, 42.
[456] Ibid, 274.

CONCLUSION

1 Education as a crucible of identity formation

This investigation into the contribution of St Peter's School to our black literary history has used in the main the historical method of research, heuristics, hermeneutics and synthesis, following Es'kia Mphahlele's consistent advocating of a holistic approach to African literature, which focusses not simply on the text (nor trendy textual approaches) but on the cultural, historical and sociological context as well.[1] **Chapters One**, **Two** and **Three** comprised heuristic evidence from the source material relating to the thirty years that St Peter's was in existence, in order to sketch the educational milieu, religious ethos and scholastic atmosphere. **Chapter Four** hermeneutically examined the evidence from the extant autobiographies in order to evaluate the influence of their school education on the writers. Both types of evidence were all along assessed towards a synthesis which I believe has indicated the role which St Peter's School played within black South African literature, essentially the social formation of an elite class of significant individuals, many of whom increasingly responded to the claim the popular classes had on them. It has gone some way towards answering the question which Tim Couzens posed twenty years ago apropos of the anomalous writer Modikwe Dikobe, whose strongly working-class writing contrasts with that of most black writers of his generation: why do petty-bourgeois elements (or, as he would rephrase it now, middle-class concerns) dominate black literature to the exclusion of all else until at least the late 1960s?[2] The answer has, of course, to do with education, and, more specifically, education in a pre-apartheid, pre-Sharpeville world.

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[1] See Richard Samin, `Interview: Richard Samin with Es'kia Mphahlele', *Research in African Literatures* 28(4) 1997, 194-195.

[2] Tim Couzens, `Nobody's Baby: Modikwe Dikobe and Alexandra 1942-6', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg, 1979), 94.

When Rev Abner Mtimkulu presented the ANC resolution on education to the Minister of Native Affairs in May 1939, during the highpoint of St Peter's existence, he pointed out that education "is the means of progress and the making of good citizens", and "we know of no other kind that will help us today".[3] Two years later Dr Alfred Xuma cited St Peter's alumnus Joe Mokoena among many other black achievers as a fine example of the best that Africa can produce, and he compared the wealth of South Africa with her "most valuable, precious and priceless jewel", the African himself:

> if the African's brain were polished and developed by a process of liberal education with unrestricted opportunities to function according to ability and capacity without restriction on account of race and colour, South Africa would have tapped within her borders an oasis of material, mental and spiritual power which would make her truly independent and self-contained indeed.[4]

Although Xuma overlooks half of the African population, which to modern ears is offensive, the point he makes is a salient one: the African insists on a liberal education, and the polished gem of that education demands a society in which all its facets can shine to their best advantage. Xuma identifies the colour bar as the barrier to that full functioning, what Kelwyn Sole, in his demonstration of how the class position of black writers in a specific period influenced what they wrote, has identified as a continuous theme in black South African literature, the tension between their aspiration to middle-class status and what prevented them from achieving this. "Often," says Sole, anticipating the argument of this thesis, "the education they received provided the spark for their discontent".[5]

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[3] Report of a Deputation from the ANC to the Minister of Native Affairs, 15-17 May 1939, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II: Hope and Challenge 1935-1952* (Stanford, CA, 1973), 139-140.

[4] Address by AB Xuma at the Mendi Memorial Celebration, Johannesburg, 23 February 1941, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 163-164.

[5] Kelwyn Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature, 1948-1960', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 144, 151.

1.1 Education for modernisation

The African middle class in Johannesburg, educated in the mission-nexus all over South Africa in the first half of the century, regarded themselves as an elite cultural vanguard of African society, attempting "by word and deed to direct the processes of acculturative modernization".[6] This linking of education with the modernisation of Africa is frequently evident, as might be expected, in the letters written by ex-pupils of St Peter's School. A letter to the last Headmaster, Michael Stern, for example, from Piet Mavuso, a conscientious and reliable pupil who had taken the JC second class in 1956, indicates his appreciation for having been helped by Martin Jarrett-Kerr to find a clerical position with a Mr Adler of Johannesburg, who obviously capitalised regularly on the school's reputation in his search for staff.[7] In a second letter Mavuso writes, echoing Pixley ka Seme's binary metaphor fifty years earlier which he employed to evoke the regeneration of Africa: "I wish all those who passed can go ahead with their studies, until they are great men who will be able to lift Africa out of darkness and St Peter's will always be remembered".[8] Another ex-pupil, Solomon Ngakane, who had matriculated in the third class at St Peter's in 1944, and had taught Mathematics and Geography there before leaving in 1953 to become principal of the new Kwa-Thema Public School, wrote to David Darling, "You cannot imagine how many times I think of St Peter's and wish secretly I was still there. One never knows how much a place can mean to him until he has left it".[9] He was obviously cavilling at the constraints of Bantu Education, for a letter dated 18 November 1957 in which he deplores the name change of St Peter's to St Martin's, with the change of status this involved, is written from the newly-established Moeng College in Palapye, Botswana.

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[6] David Coplan, `The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 184.

[7] Church of the Province of Southern Africa Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (CPSA), letter dated 4 Jan. 1957, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1944-67, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.

[8] CPSA, letter dated 29 Jan. 1957, St Peter's School Pupils: Testimonials 1944-67, AB 2089 / I 8.2 file 4.

[9] CPSA, letter dated 14 Feb. 1954, St Peter's School Correspondence: Staff (African) 1952-61, AB 2089 / I 9.2 file 3.

Exile virtually became a condition of successful pupils' education, because while some earlier intellectuals like Albert Lutuli and ZK Matthews still believed that the world was opening out for educated black South Africans, apartheid society was becoming steadily more constrictive, stifling later generations both as people and creative artists. For the young Lutuli it had "seemed mainly a matter of proving our ability and worth as citizens, and that did not seem impossible" whereas, a generation later, Africans knew that "their strivings after civilized values [would] not, in the present order, ever earn for them recognition as sane and responsible civilised beings".[10] When a context is static, like that of apartheid South Africa where the "social parameters are set; the ceiling is fixed; the landscape is pegged", the scene is set for the playing out of an ancient Greek drama, as Mphahlele noted in "South African Literature vs the Political Morality":[11]

> Human drama within this context can only be created when a person, black or white, moves outward to realize himself fully, to realize the freedom nature calls upon him to claim. Other things happen: the person pushes his energy until he hits the high-voltage fence or clears it. Either way he is going to leave us for good.

If the politics of society prevented that self-realisation, the society would have to be changed, led by those whose self-realisation was thwarted (mainly the repressed elite) using the mass power of those whose very livelihood was prevented. The fact that many youths of school-going age could not afford the education or take full advantage of it once in the system, or even rejected the nature of that education outright after they had passed through it, does not invalidate what the Community of the Resurrection were doing in the Transvaal. The CR took seriously the malleable power of the formative years, as did the architects of the Bantu Education Act after them: "[o]n the

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[10] Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography* (London, 1987; orig. 1962), 42.

principle that the child is father to the man the apostles of *baasskap* believe that if they can condition the African child through a special system of education prepared for him . . . he will grow up into a man who will willingly accept the status accorded to him by his white masters".[12] The CR, however, intended to educate "the African child for a free society and not for a slave society as contemplated by the Act".[13] If the ideal was that all young Africans would have the chance to be educated, and the reality was that only a few were able to capitalise on the opportunity, the fact remains that those few made a difference to our literary and political history.

The *laissez-aller* ethos of Grace Dieu and St Peter's, which aimed to open things up, not shut them down, to ensure that each person, in Mphahlele's powerful phrase, "moves outward to realize himself fully", was curtailed by the Afrikaner Nationalists for that very reason. "In weeping for St Peter's," wrote Peter Abrahams, "I weep for a new generation of slum kids for whom there will be no escape, as there was for me, through St Peter's".[14] And the reality of that "escape", as Anthony Sampson termed it, which took him first to Europe and then a successful career as African novelist and Jamaican radio journalist, is no more evident than in his brief, and sole, return to South Africa in 1952. His time abroad had given him a new confidence, and he spoke to his friends and community much as do his characters in his novels. According to Sampson, he talked of the folly of wasting money and excluding women from the public sphere, and underlined the imperative for the spirit of debate among Africans.[15] The gulf was palpable: to his wistful and frustrated friend Henry Nxumalo, "Peter was the image of what might have been", while to a guest at a banquet given in his honour by the Coloured Garment Workers' Union, "[h]e isn't one of us".

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[11] Es'kia Mphahlele, `South African Literature vs the Political Morality', *English Academy Review* 1983, 22.
[12] ZK Matthews, Presidential Address to the Cape ANC, 18-19 June 1955, in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 173. This may be attributing too much to the architects, however, who, as Jonathan Hyslop has shown, were perhaps more immediately concerned with education's usefulness as a form of social control and labour provision.
[13] Matthews, Presidential Address to the Cape ANC, 177.
[14] Anthony Sampson, *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa* (London, 1956), 173.

Although Sampson does not say whether he himself attended Abrahams's farewell party at his mother's house in Coronationville, and his remarks must therefore be taken at face value only, his account of Abrahams flitting between guests, chatting to some about Dylan Thomas and EM Forster, and engaging with others on African suffering, suggests an ease with both worlds and a sophistication which came initially from being educated under the CR at Grace Dieu and St Peter's, and one not shared by his family:

> his mother, happily pottering in the kitchen, shy in front of Peter's sophisticated friends: his brother, a jovial, toothless labourer, muttering incomprehensible jokes half in Afrikaans: his sister Maggie, a factory worker, beaming at the younger brother she had helped to educate.[16]

Yet, as Len Holdstock points out, "We can subject the student to as many `educators' as we wish, in the final analysis, all education begins and ends with the student".[17] What he calls "the directional tendency within each individual", in which "the world's great educators steadfastly believe",[18] was fostered by the CR, but responsibility for his final destination rested with Abrahams alone. As Galileo is reported to have said, "You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself".[19] Nevertheless, the whole St Peter's experience went into fashioning the pupils on the threshold of adulthood; as Meshack Ntsangani, decidedly one of the less academically-minded pupils, admitted, "Part of what I am is what I definitely learnt at St Peter's; I don't think I'd be what I am [if I hadn't gone] - I'd be a different person".[20]

1.2 Competing claims of exile and service

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[15] Sampson, *Drum*, 64-65.
[16] Ibid, 66.
[17] Len Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation* (Johannesburg, 1987), 44.
[18] Ibid, 44.
[19] Quoted in Holdstock, *Education for a New Nation*, 28.
[20] Interview with Meshack Ntsangani, Potchefstroom, 18 May 1995.

The self-consciousness, and further, the double consciousness, engendered by Western education demands fulfilment. If it encounters frustration, argues Mphahlele, it may work through the stumbling block through art – through autobiography – in a "drama of survival": "I am consciously trying to answer the question, What of this ghetto life can process itself independent of or in spite of the malicious gods that waylay it, regardless of this brooding fate that they represent?"[21] Exile was one means to outwit the brooding fate of the Greek drama that was apartheid South Africa. While all the autobiographies were written in exile, and it was the artists, musicians and writers who craved the personal fulfilment and freedom then proscribed, the politicians had mixed responses to this brooding fate, most deciding on the imperative to fight for freedom outside the borders, while others were forced to mobilise the community within apartheid South Africa. It is not without significance that a survey of Karis and Carter's *Political Profiles 1882-1964* shows that a high percentage of those leaders in the ANC and PAC who had matriculated at St Peter's went into exile. Other than Zeph Mothopeng, who chose to stay and served a string of prison sentences before being banished to a remote area, and Henry Makgothi, who did try to leave in 1960 but was arrested and served a decade-long sentence on Robben Island, and on his release was restricted to Mabopane,[22] all the others left South Africa. Following Joe Mokoena (who left for Ghana in 1957, then on to London and Zambia)[23] were Alfred Hutchinson (to Ghana in 1958), Oliver Tambo (to London via Bechuanaland in 1960), Joe Matthews (to Basutoland after Sharpeville, then to London and Botswana), Peter Raboroko (to Ghana after Sharpeville, then Kenya), Joe Molefi (to Basutoland in 1961), Duma Nokwe (left secretly in early 1963), and Congress Mbata (to USA in the mid-1960s).

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[21] Mphahlele, `South African Literature vs the Political Morality', 22.

[22] Makgothi eventually became ANC commissar for East Africa in the late 1970s, and was associated with the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College.

[23] Mokoena taught first in Ghana after obtaining his PhD in Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand, then moved to Britain, and finally to Lusaka, Zambia, to work for a United Nations agency. His memorial service in Lusaka's Anglican Cathedral after his death in a car crash in 1969 was a testimony to the regret South African exiles felt at the diminution of the future black leadership (Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume IV: Political Profiles 1882-1964* (Stanford, CA, 1977), xxi).

Moreover, it is no accident that every one of these men went into exile during the very decade that South Africa's first black autobiographies in English were written. Calling on white voters in April 1958 to use their votes for change in an election which the Nationalists would return two-thirds of the seats, Albert Lutuli underlined the increasing repression of the past decade:

> Every door through which we might have sought advancement, culture and a higher civilisation has been slammed in our faces. Our schools are being turned into schools for ignorance, tribalism and servitude. The universities are being closed to us. Any sphere of employment other than ill-paid unskilled labour is being closed to us. Every means of legitimate national expression and protest is being closed to us. Our leaders and spokesmen are arrested, banned, deported and silenced.[24]

But exile, which seemed to be the answer to personal fulfilment, or the effective way to bring about political change, could not answer the equally pressing need, certainly among some ex-pupils of St Peter's, to be of service to the community, and here `service' is used not as it was understood by the Victorian middle class, but as participating in Raymond Williams's definition of solidarity: "Improvement is sought, not in the opportunity to escape from one's class, or to make a career, but in the general and controlled advance of all".[25] Both Abrahams and Mphahlele consistently advocate the return of black professionals to communities in need of their expertise, Mphahlele from an African humanist viewpoint and Abrahams from a Christian socialist perspective. Mphahlele said soon after his return from his twenty-year exile that he was always "drawn back to the people, the labourers, the non-professional people" all of whom "still feel life at its basic roots",[26] and who, it

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[24] Albert Lutuli, `A Message to Every Voter from the African National Congress', in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 427.
[25] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 313.
[26] Chabani Manganyi, `Looking In: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele', in his *Looking through the Keyhole* (Johannesburg, 1981), 10.

seems, never resented his making good his education and welcomed him back to pass on that education which, given his life-long vocation, he has done in exemplary fashion. His fellow teacher in Orlando, Nathan Molope, believed he "answered the very highest demands of that call", as teacher and human being, for he has always been "a man of simple habits, sober minded in every way, principled and of high moral standards".[27]

Just how many of these deeply-held beliefs on the part of Abrahams and Mphahlele can be attributed to the influence of the Community of the Resurrection is debatable, but the evidence suggests that, born into an age when spiritual values were taken seriously, schooled and assisted during impressionable years by the CR, and thinking deeply about their links to the African continent in need of renewal after colonisation, these writers were undoubtedly affected by their encounter with the CR. Certainly if Alban Winter's underlying assumption in his monograph, "Till Darkness Fell", namely that the educated elite will want to devote their lives to the advancement of black people, was made by other CR brethren, such a conclusion may be justified. One of the reasons why missionaries stressed the importance of Christian character formation in education must have been so that those who achieved middle-class status would lead a life of sacrifice and service rather than self-aggrandisement. Once bantustans were created, of course, this issue became highly complex in that the apartheid government was prepared to educate Africans to the highest levels in bush colleges for well-paid `service' in the rural areas. But this socio-political engineering should not be confused with the altruistic motive behind the education offered by missionaries, who genuinely believed that the Christian call of commitment, and African humanist connection to one's people, would justify the validity of higher education.

Mphahlele himself identifies one of the reasons for an appalling teaching ethic in present day black education as "a lack of an ideology which would

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[27] National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown (NELM), Nathan Molope, letter to Ursula Barnett, 6 May 1974, MS doc. no 9636, acc. no 85.2.6.

give us a sense of purpose".[28] "How long are we going to fritter away time and money on beauty contests," he cavils, "while the African mind is waiting to be unchained and redefined and re-routed towards a worthier sense of being?"[29] The legacy of Bantu Education has resulted in teachers being permitted to leave their classes "in order to be seminared, workshopped, up-and-down-graded, in-serviced", like "cattle being forced into a dipping tank." And all this for a mere certificate, not to "increase" them, to render them able "to give more of themselves to their students".[30] When teachers are motivated by ideals beyond mere earning a living, Mphahlele suggests, they are bringing a humanist education into play.

Neither African humanism, nor Christian socialism, has been meaningfully adopted by most educated people as the twentieth century draws to a close. In fact, they are consistently under threat from that fin-de-siècle scourge, consumer materialism, which makes Mphahlele's and Abrahams's consistency of vision and sincerity all the more outstanding, for all the melancholy and tangibly elegiac strain in their writing.[31] The sadness in their later work is occasioned in part by the realisation that such service is a tall order, often at odds with the imperatives of exile, and requiring nothing less than a vocation. Educational institutions, Mphahlele has recently indicated (as Althusser, of course, was very much aware), comprise "one constituency which is in a sense regenerative", because they can disseminate spiritual values:

> You have one generation for a number of hours in a school career and we can inculcate these values, let them know that these values have always existed and that there are still signals of their survival. If we can do that, when they move out of school and they go into the outside world, outside of their

[28] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Education: Towards a Humanistic Ideology', in *Report on the Conference on Educational Priorities in a Developing State* (Pretoria, 1980), 24.
[29] Ibid, 25.
[30] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Prometheus in Chains: The Fate of English in South Africa', *English Academy Review* 1984, 99.
[31] Samin, `Interview', 198.

> environment, they will be equipped to question the assumptions of the colonizing religion.[32]

He is referring to African humanism, of course, but the principle holds good for any belief system or ideology inculcated at school which encourages pupils to interrogate received ideas and lifestyles.

2 Exile in search of fulfilment

Arthur Nortje's memorable phrase, "Exile was implanted / in the first pangs of paradise", might be employed to describe how the education given by the Community of the Resurrection set up expectations on the part of successful pupils which could never be fulfilled in South Africa. "All over the world," said Ronald Ure CR, as St Peter's took on its distinctive ethos, "education does lead to a fuller life of opportunity for self-expression and you can see that at work in the African mind. I think we can claim without being unduly aggressive that this is a Christian principle, since Christianity has to do with the fullness of life".[33] The Anglo-Catholicism of the CR favoured fullness of life, not simply conversion, the finding of a faith which would bring meaning, not empty cultural practice; and the social conditions had to be created for this incarnational faith. The arts similarly defined a quality of living, believed that key figure in the intellectual discourse motivating the CR, William Morris, which it was the whole purpose of political change to make possible: socialist change was the means to a recovery of purpose.[34]

The Community of the Resurrection left Orlando in 1959, Sekhukhuneland in 1961, Sophiatown in 1962, Penhalonga in 1983, and Rosettenville in 1986. However, they made their mark in these places while they were there, and the people they educated are now leaders, or ex-leaders, in all fields

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[32] Samin, `Interview', 184.
[33] Ronald Ure, `Missionary Work in the Transvaal', *CR Quarterly* (98) St John Baptist 1927, 24.
[34] Williams, *Culture and Society*, 161.

throughout southern Africa. The CR's express purpose was to train Africans to take over from them, to appropriate their institutions and infrastructure, and Africanise them sooner rather than later. As Roland Oliver notes of the missionary enterprise in general, there were African priests and ministers long before there were African district commissioners;[35] and diocesan synods with African participation (even if this did not include a vote) long before anything similar in colonial legislatures. Alan Wilkinson acknowledges this boldness of vision for any real assessment of missionary initiatives but frustratingly leaves the assessment open: "The achievements were massive and measurable, but in view of what has happened to African countries since independence the nature of both colonial and missionary enterprise needs drastic re-examination".[36]

2.1 Leavening the material with the spiritual

The reasons for Africa's decline in the last decades of the twentieth century will continue to be speculated about from various perspectives. One factor in this collapse must certainly be the survival among African leadership of the worst traits which drove Western powers to plunder and disfigure the continent (such as the self-aggrandisement of capitalism and technological progress), but the perishing of spiritual values indigenous to the continent (African humanism), and those brought by missionaries and embraced earlier in the century (Christianity). At the height of Empire, which coincided with the heyday of the English missionary enterprise, Robert Baker CR powerfully emphasised the need for spiritual values to leaven the materialism fostered by the West. "For good or ill," he noted, "the externals of our civilization are spreading through the African continent at a rate hitherto unknown in the history of the world. Our task is to see that the `salt' of the Christian society is widely and thickly strewn, for where this is not done civilization becomes no more than a rotting and festering corruption".[37]

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[35] Roland Oliver, *The African Experience* (London, 1991), 212.
[36] Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, 1992), 243.
[37] Robert Baker, `Penhalonga', *CR Quarterly* (120) Christmas 1932, 9.

Violence and exploitation used by the West in its conquest of Africa are rife throughout the continent at the end of the century; a spirit of communalism, the heritage of the Christian faith and African humanism (which some CR brethren eventually learned to appreciate) is all but absent, or present only in pockets. Communalism is absent, too, in the West, which maintains its hegemony throughout the world by the same means as before, only far more sophisticated under the guise of globalisation. Orders like the Community of the Resurrection have been shrinking in the developed world at an alarming rate during this same period, and this is a manifestation of a sweeping secularisation which has the world, including the African continent, in its grip. However posterity views the double-edged sword of missionary enterprise, it is bound to be more indulgent than its view of this secularisation, which has little to commend it. The warning was sounded by the CR fifty years ago:

> The native people of Africa will be christianised eventually by the impact upon them of the Christian European way of life. If European civilisation slips into the neo-pagan abyss, or if it exhibits a sub-Christian spirit in its practical every day dealings with the non-European coloured people of the land, they will turn from it to Christs of their own fashioning and one of the greatest opportunities of history will go by for ever.[38]

Yet this thesis has shown how ex-pupils of the CR, from the different vantage points of Christian socialism and African humanism, have written against this secularisation, or have devoted their lives to working out their vision of an Africa reborn. The key word here is *responsibility*, which John Bowker has identified as the only point on which all genuine belief systems must insist, namely "the affirmation and acquisition of responsibility", which we have met variously in this thesis as `service', `leadership', `self-sacrifice', `solidarity' and

[38] `Advance at Rosettenville', *CR Quarterly* (186) St John Baptist 1949, 15.

`identification'.[39] Or, as Raymond Williams has noted in the writing of Thomas Carlyle,[40] a *reverence*, what he calls "the governing seriousness of a living effort, against which every cynicism, every kind of half-belief, every satisfaction in indifference, may be seen and placed, in an ultimate human contrast".[41] Williams himself, in his formidable conclusion to *Culture and Society*, considers the institutions of cynicism, denial, and division as "the deposits of practical failures to live", and a long conversion of the habitual elements of denial in a person may result in "a slow and deep personal acceptance of extending community".[42]

The CR's contribution to South Africa, as Wilkinson notes, has been quite out of proportion to its numbers, and it virtually created the ethos of the Diocese of Johannesburg, established in the same year as St Peter's, in 1922:

> Again and again during the past ninety years it has had the courage and foresight to discern and to man the crucial frontier posts: providing education for blacks and whites; training Africans for ministry; sharing life in the townships, offering a ministry of solidarity and hope to the persecuted.[43]

Many Africans now advanced in years remember the CR with deep affection, and priests often attribute their entire careers to the Community, from primary school through ordination to constant inspiration in their ministry. Yet only two were ever professed as CR brethren, Leo Rakale (1946), whom Alban Winter called "a much loved brother",[44] and Simeon Nkoane (1959).[45] While

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[39] John Bowker, `The Religious Understanding of Human Rights and Racism', in D Duncan Honoré (ed), *Trevor Huddleston: Essays on His Life and Work* (Oxford, 1988), 166.
[40] While it might seem strange to bring Carlyle into a thesis in which socialism and democracy have been the leading threads, we should remember that he had a very deep influence, in terms of both ideas and style, on no less a person than WEB Du Bois. Carlyle's vision of an active and responsible governing class in society (his chastising them for their dereliction of duty became the basis of the appeal of reformers like the socialist Charles Kingsley), specifically what he called an `organic Literary Class', found its way into the idea of the `Talented Tenth' of Du Bois, and hence into the discourse of Pan-Africanism.
[41] Williams, *Culture and Society*, 98.
[42] Ibid, 320.
[43] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 320-21.
[44] Alban Winter, `Till Darkness Fell'. Unpublished typescript, 1962, 71.

Frs Ambrose Duba and Jasper Mduna were received as novices, making their first profession in 1950, neither went beyond the novitiate. Wilkinson feels that its ethos, for all its century-long work in Africa, remained too English and middle-to-upper class "for it to develop in a more corybantic direction".[46] Trevor Huddleston, when Bishop of Masasi in Tanzania, concluded that none of the established orders exported from Britain would appeal to African men,[47] and hoped that more indigenous orders would evolve. These have begun to do so, for as the CR booklet *Anglican Religious Communities in Southern Africa* points out, African culture and the consecrated life both place a high value on community, understand sharing in common, recognise ideals in leadership, give respect to tradition, and understand the need for norms of behaviour.[48] But perhaps it is the call of the religious life to live on the margins, or, in Thomas Merton's multivalent phrase, to be a marginal person (which literally gave the CR the edge in its educational endeavours in Mirfield and Africa), which ultimately scuppers what they have in common.

Former students preparing for ordination speak gratefully of having received from the CR "an example of discipline and dedication, and a conviction that the church must care in particular for the poor and dispossessed".[49] Margaret Mazambozi (Majombozi), who probably taught at St Peter's in the 1930s, describes in a letter to the *CR Quarterly* how this care was seen:

> This vast Rand Mission, which has now become a huge tree, spreading its manifold branches farther than eye can reach, and affording spiritual sustenance and shelter to so many Africans, was, not long ago but a tender plant that had to be nurtured by

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[45] This perhaps says more about the CR's `Englishness' than about African response, for Wilkinson observes that only two white South Africans joined the order during the first fifty years, Jerome Dieterlé and Gordon Arkell, who had been at St John's (*A Centenary History*, 225).

[46] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 301.

[47] Black women have been far more receptive to the religious life, especially in Roman Catholic orders, which raises interesting questions about black masculinity. There are only five Anglican orders of men in southern Africa, but fifteen of women, some indigenous, including three at Penhalonga. Two indigenous orders (in Zimbabwe) comprise both men and women (*Anglican Religious Communities in Southern Africa*, 31-33).

[48] *Anglican Religious Communities in Southern Africa*, 22-23.

> Fr. Hill, and others of the C.R. The size to which it has grown testifies to the grand work they put in.[50]

Yet Africa came to mould the ethos of the CR, too, so that, as Wilkinson writes, for many of the brethren, being sent to Africa was the real making of them, and the CR has come to mean not Mirfield, but Penhalonga or Sophiatown, Orlando or Rosettenville.[51] Huddleston's broken-hearted invocation of Walt Whitman at Oliver Tambo's funeral in April 1993, "*Oliver*! O Captain! My captain! / Our fearful trip is done", and his question, "How can I ever do justice to the memory of one who changed the course of my life?"[52] underlines the mutual enrichment of Mirfield and Africa over nearly a century.

From its earliest days under Charles Gore, the Community of the Resurrection was motivated by a socialist vision; they saw the need for state intervention in the economy in order to reorganise society on a more egalitarian basis, and they understood the responsibility of those with intellect and property to demand it. In this they were unlike many of their Christian contemporaries in South Africa who, with no clear conception of the kind of society they wanted in a fascist age, Richard Elphick maintains, "assumed the reasonable human being of liberalism, assumed the capitalistic order, assumed the continuing validity of British legal traditions in South Africa".[53] Christianity, to the uninformed and unsympathetic, has become synonymous with capitalism, because of its historical connection with hegemonic systems and its focus on the individual. Certainly to the Marxist, it participates in the ugly `three C's', if Nosipho Majeke's pronouncement is taken at face value: the missionary can do no other than carry out "his function as the servant of Christian capitalist civilization".[54] This view has led otherwise sound scholars like Robert Ensor to read *The View from Coyaba* as an apologia for

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[49] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 318.
[50] Margaret Mazambozi, undated letter, *CR Quarterly* (158) St John Baptist 1942, 29.
[51] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 330.
[52] Trevor Huddleston, Address at Requiem Mass, 30 April 1993, in Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (London, 1999), 264, 268.
[53] Richard Elphick, `Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism', in Jeffrey Butler et al (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Middletown, CT, 1987), 79.

international capitalism and a rejection of the idea of socialism after liberation, simply because Abrahams affirms the values of Christianity, when the opposite, as the previous chapter indicated, is obviously the case. Ensor is of the opinion that Abrahams "articulates the contradictory striving of the domestic bourgeoisie within the underdeveloped capitalist societies of Africa and the Caribbean for independence and integration within an international society, without domination by the culture and economic and political interests of the metropoles of America and Europe".[55] This might be the objective of the present ANC leadership within the context of global capitalism, but it is not a view which comes out of the novel.

The View from Coyaba does not accept the premise that the economy of developing societies has to be capitalist in nature: Karin Paasche is more on target than Ensor, when she reads a crucial portion of the novel as a vindication of Christian socialism, the often problematic marrying of the needs and rights of the individual with those of the community. She argues that Abrahams explicitly explores two forms of collectivism in his contrasting early on in the novel of the two runaway slave bands. The pure socialism evolved by Maria and Samson's group leads to dissatisfaction among individuals (and, interestingly, infringement of women's rights), while the Christian socialism of the second, led by the aptly named Sarah and David, makes for both inner liberty, the freedom to refuse to participate in unjust structures, and communal protection, the preservation of the common heritage.[56] Paasche views the contents of Bishop Jacob Brown's exhortatory letter to his Ugandan congregation later in the novel as outlining "the Christian socialist values he believes will ensure the stability and continuity of the new community".[57] These entail blending traditional African ways with the universal teaching of Christ, the key factor of land belonging to the people, or

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[54] Nosipho Majeke, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (Cumberwood, c.1986), 137.
[55] Robert Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams and the Rise of Nationalism in Africa* (Essen, 1992), 224-225.
[56] Karin Paasche, "Changing Social Consciousness in the South African English Novel after World War II, with Special Reference to Peter Abrahams, Alan Paton, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer" (MA, University of South Africa, 1992), 45. Of course, as Abrahams concedes throughout his oeuvre, such ideals are seldom achieved in practice.

production generated by the people, as a collectivity to be worked and shared together. Neville Choonoo has persuasively suggested that this vision goes right back to Abrahams's stay in England during the early 1940s, where he tried "to create a marriage between his Christian liberalism and Marxism", and what emerged was "a form of Christian socialism which he finds appropriate to his involvement in the Pan-Africanists",[58] an ideology which depends on leadership based on self-sacrifice in the service of the people. Significantly, a profoundly moral attraction to the doctrine of *kenosis*, or self-sacrifice, is evident in Charles Gore's Bampton Lectures of 1891, which state that an incarnational faith of necessity brings with it "a Christian socialism, by the very fact that the law of brotherhood is the law of Christ".[59]

Ensor reads Abrahams's endeavour to reconcile a humanist and materialist conception of historical processes as signifying an attempt to reconcile, at a conceptual level, class conflicts which were increasingly dominating African nationalist politics.[60] It entailed realising, as it were, the individual within the dialectic of history, which this thesis has understood as Christian socialism:

> Abrahams attempted to define the space which individual enlightenment, reflection and a universal concept of human authenticity have within the dialectical processes of social history. Thus while conceiving of history as the contradictory movement of class struggle, as a dialectical process in itself, he incorporates into this concept a further humanist and idealist dialectic which stands in opposition to the dialectic of historical events and yet realises itself within historical processes.[61]

While Abrahams conceptualises historical processes themselves "as undergoing negation by a more universal, transhistorical and transcultural

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[57] Paasche, "Changing Social Consciousness", 44.
[58] Neville Choonoo, "Parallel Lives: Black Autobiography in South Africa and the United States" (PhD, Columbia University, 1982), 206.
[59] Wilkinson, *A Centenary History*, 24.
[60] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 105.
[61] Ibid, 108-109.

human condition", Ensor feels it is "the intervention of the individual, the protagonist, in social relations that draws the two dialectical processes together, uniting the struggle of classes and races for their liberation with the struggle of the individual for his full realisation in social being".[62] In his last work, it would seem, Abrahams has given serious thought to GK Chesterton's aphorism: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

2.2 Threading the universal with the particular

Just as `Christianity', though not homogenous or monolithic, is often called upon to sanction some very questionable views, `blackness' is often invoked wholesale by nationalists as a powerful unifying trope, to be marshalled in opposition to specifically racialised forms of power. Yet the internal divisions and fissures of class, gender, age and ethnicity must be recognised. Like Mphahlele a generation before him, who insisted on a distinction between the political and artistic forms of *négritude*, Paul Gilroy is sensitive to the attractiveness of racial essentialism in fighting political oppression, while preferring the `polyphony' or `saturnalia' of cultural expression.[63] Further, he rejects both the extreme Manichaean idea that the cultures of colonisers and colonised were hermetically sealed off from each other (resulting in such simplistic dyads as `black' and `white' etc), which Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper call "that myth" in which both colonial history and historiography have invested,[64] as well as the idea currently in vogue of `creolisation' or `hybridity' which rightly celebrates acculturisation and movement but is limited in its tendency to deny rootedness or origins. Abrahams himself has said that to live without roots is hell; the deepest human need is for cultural roots, the need to belong somewhere.[65]

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[62] Ibid, 109.
[63] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 24, 32.
[64] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, `Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in their *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 9.
[65] Abrahams, `The Conflict of Culture in Africa', *International Affairs*, 30(3) July 1954, 306.

Empty theorising of stark opposites (`self'/`other,' `identity'/`difference') or shifting ambivalences (endless crossing of boundaries) proved inapposite to this study. There seems to be one main movement, a desire on the part of those who encountered Mirfield in Africa to transcend the limitations imposed by colonial and then apartheid society because of their `race', even while drawing strength from belonging to that very `race'.[66] As Gilroy puts it, using the long nomadic life of Du Bois as example,

> Whether their experience of exile is enforced or chosen, temporary or permanent, these intellectuals and activists, writers, speakers, poets, and artists repeatedly articulate a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even `race' itself.[67]

The condition of being an exile, moreover, opens up the existence of at least two cultures, two homes, a plurality of vision which Edward Said calls a contrapuntal awareness.[68] Similarly, the social role of the black intellectual, Ross Posnock has suggested, is founded "on a refusal of the ideology of the authentic" or, in Frantz Fanon's provocative words, which echo Du Bois's burdensome but necessary `double consciousness', "against origins and starting from them".[69] Like Henry Louis Gates, who is responsive to the current turn from a politics of identity to one of identification (or, if you like, the exchange of racial for human identity, what Lynda Gilfillan in her thesis has called a re-envisioned humanism),[70] Ross Posnock believes that Fanon and Du Bois regarded nationalism (`blackness') as a critical stage "to be worked

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[66] And on the part of some of those from Mirfield who encountered Africa, such as Trevor Huddleston and Martin Jarrett-Kerr, to transcend the limitations of their `race', in effect choosing to adopt the double consciousness that was foisted on the black intellectual.
[67] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 19.
[68] Edward Said, `The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile', *Harper's* Sept. 1984, 55.
[69] Ross Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual', *Critical Inquiry* 23(2) Winter 1997, 325.
[70] Henry Louis Gates, `A Liberalism of Heart and Spine', *The New York Times*, 27 March 1994.

through to reach a telos of the universal".[71] As Mphahlele explained to Guy Butler on the eve of his return in 1976,[72] and as Abrahams propounds in his last novel, this perspective sponsors a raceless society without erasing the historical experience of racism that unites all black people, advocating "a dialectic that preserves the interplay of the universal and the particular rather than liquidating them in an optimistic teleology".[73]

This dialectic forms the distinctive texture of the very different autobiographies published within a decade, which Nick Visser viewed (like Lewis Nkosi, up to that point) as South Africa's most singular contribution to black literature.[74] He considered that, between 1955 and 1965, South Africa was in the early stages of what promised to be a full-fledged literary renaissance, a movement "of such intensity and magnitude" which was cut short and then "thoroughly effaced" by the censorship, bannings and violent oppression of the 1960s onwards.[75] Crucial was the emergence of what Visser called "an exciting group of black authors writing in English", centred around Cape Town and Johannesburg. This thesis has contended that the Johannesburg group, many of whom were educated at St Peter's, owed their existence in part to that education, and their exile within this very ten-year period to the expectations set up by that education.

The dialectic that preserves the interplay of the universal and the particular is evident in what Visser identified as the common "formula-like" blueprint of these autobiographers:

> attended St Peter's School, Johannesburg; then to Fort Hare; lived in Sophiatown, a Johannesburg African township; wrote for *Drum* magazine; went into exile; wrote an autobiography.[76]

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[71] Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem', 329.
[72] NELM, Es'kia Mphahlele to Guy Butler, 13 Jan. 1976, doc. no 3109, acc. no 94.2.3.191.
[73] Posnock, `How It Feels to Be a Problem', 329.
[74] NW Visser, `South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 11(1) Aug. 1976, 50.
[75] Visser, `South Africa', 42.
[76] Ibid, 46.

Visser was incorrect in dragging in Fort Hare (and discussion is notably absent), as only Can Themba went there. But St Peter's is crucial. "When the full history of black South African literature is written," wrote Visser, "the story of St Peter's School should receive considerable attention".[77] As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, St Peter's fulfilled the role which Lovedale - in a different century and rural milieu - had played before it, producing "an entire generation of African leaders: teachers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, and writers",[78] termed by Jonathan Hyslop its "luminous educational achievements".[79] What helped to set this generation of black intellectuals apart from the earlier one educated at such places as Lovedale, Kelwyn Sole has suggested, was that the writers among them saw themselves as writers, not journalists, pamphleteers or sermonisers; specialisation for the first time is noticeable.[80] This shift in focus begins to be evident in the late 1930s with HIE Dhlomo and Peter Abrahams, really our first professional black writer, and the founder, as Stephen Gray has remarked, of dark testimony in our literature. The desire which Abrahams had from his earliest days at primary school, as revealed in the sketch which prefaces *Dark Testament*, "I Remember . . . . ",[81] when (as he remarked to Itala Vivan) he was no more than "a hole-in-the-pants-little-boy", was to mature as a writer, in exile if need be. He is the only writer to have deviated from Visser's blueprint; he left well before *Drum* hit the literary scene.

As Visser suggested, it would be difficult to underestimate *Drum*'s contribution to the growth of black South African writing.[82] Mike Nichol lists nine, most of whom have already appeared, as the main cast of players: Henry Nxumalo (joined in 1951, died in 1956), Todd Matshikiza (1952, exiled

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[77] Ibid, 46.
[78] Ibid, 47.
[79] Jonathan Hyslop, `"A Destruction Coming In": Bantu Education As Response to Social Crisis', in Philip Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, 1993), 397.
[80] Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change', 148, 151.
[81] Abrahams, `I Remember . . . .', *Dark Testament* (London, 1942), 9-11.

in 1960), Arthur Maimane (1952, exiled in 1958), Can Themba (1953, fired in 1962), Casey Motsisi (1954, died in 1977), Es'kia Mphahlele (1955, exiled in 1957), Bloke Modisane (1955, exiled in 1959), Lewis Nkosi (1957, exiled in 1961) and Nat Nakasa (1957, exiled in 1964).[83] Three of the nine were ex-St Peterians, and among the first to join *Drum* in 1951, thereby setting the tone for the decade to come. Graeme Addison went so far as to say of the educated *Drum* writers (short-sighted, though, from today's perspective) that we shall probably not see their like again, "since the imperatives of a revolutionary state are expected to rule out bourgeois individualism".[84] Addison believes that *Drum* remains a problem for the critic because it sprung from "a matrix of white entrepreneurship, editorial opportunism and non-militant black talents"; this cavil is similar to those raised by materialist historians about missionary education, but is, as always, too simplistic.

The *Drum* writers, none of whom as Addison remarks, "had a prime interest in the liberation of the masses", nevertheless drew their inspiration from and definitively represented the cosmopolitan melting pot of Sophiatown or `Kofifi'.[85] Don Mattera, who lived there as a youth and witnessed its demise from 1955 onwards, significantly lists key St Peter's graduates as his neighbours in the rather bohemian and intellectual Gerty Street area: Hugh Masekela, Arthur Maimane (whose sister, Maisie, was his girlfriend), Todd Matshikiza, and Duma Nokwe.[86] The Sophiatown artists have been called "forerunners of a kind of cultural understanding, and cultural critique, which has become much more prominent a third of a century later",[87] employed by

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[82] Visser, `South Africa', 48. Writing in 1979, Kelwyn Sole postulates that with *Drum*, and its sister *Golden City Post*, black journalism "achieved a peak of proficiency probably unequalled since" (`Class, Continuity and Change', 155).
[83] Mike Nichol (ed), *A Good-Looking Corpse* (London, 1991), 7.
[84] Graeme Addison, `Drum Beat: An Examination of Drum', *Speak* July/Aug. 1978, 9.
[85] For a fine account of the history and nature of Sophiatown before the Second World War, together with Martindale and Newclare, pawns in the battle for a white city, see André Proctor, `Class Struggle, Segregation and the City: A History of Sophiatown, 1905-1940', in Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, 49-89.
[86] Don Mattera, in Pippa Stein and Ruth Jacobson (eds), *Sophiatown Speaks* (Johannesburg, 1986), 14. Esmé Matshikiza, however, says that she and Todd did not live there, but would visit relatives in Sophiatown (in Nichol, *A Good-Looking Corpse*, 230).
[87] Ulf Hannerz, `Sophiatown: The View from Afar', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20(2) June 1994, 189.

those, like Lynda Gilfillan, who celebrate hybridity and creolisation as a counterhegemonic discourse. Ulf Hannerz has demonstrated a dynamic cultural continuum at work in this little Paris of the Transvaal, the cultural forms coming out of Sophiatown, he argues, being found pre-eminently "in *Drum*, in *King Kong*, in the music with which Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela have toured the world".[88] It is worth noting that, in each of the three forms he mentions, at least one St Peter's graduate was a prime mover. The cosmopolitan aesthetic of Kofifi thus became a form of local resistance to apartheid or, in the metonymy of Hannerz, "[a]ccepting New York could be a way of rejecting Pretoria."

The populace has been described as `Elizabethan', where intellectual and gangster, stand-owners and unemployed lived cheek by jowl; the language was hybrid, *tsotsitaal*; the conversation, according to Anthony Sampson, a heady combination of being "explosive" and "very well read, an odd mixture of academic knowledge with drunken conversation".[89] Its residents refused the ideology of the authentic: on opening the door to Modisane's place in Sophiatown, Sampson comments on the sight of "an amazingly elegant room where everything was just perfect with classical music playing and the bookshelves across the wall".[90] Far from viewing this as among "sad examples of the overwhelming cultural power of the centre over the periphery", although it would be wrong to play down Modisane's dissatisfaction, Hannerz sees it as a counterhegemonic discourse against the apartheid government "who was intent on inserting barriers of discontinuity into the cultural continuum of creolisation, who wanted to redefine the situation as one of the global mosaic rather than the global ecumene".[91] Sampson in his overblown way refers to many Kofifi residents' ease of allusion to the Bible and literary works, for they "went to marvellous schools like St Peter's and had a tremendous depth of understanding particularly of

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[88] Hannerz, `Sophiatown', 193.
[89] Anthony Sampson, in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 43.
[90] Ibid, 44.
[91] Hannerz, `Sophiatown', 192.

Shakespeare".[92] Mphahlele, however, corroborates the journalist's impression: "Can Themba might throw rich Shakespeareanisms around but he knew that a great number of people would understand it".[93]

In his exploration of the `unreal reality' of the world of the Sophiatown writers, Paul Gready notes that the "content and style of the literature these writers were reading and the literary atmosphere of the surrounding community are important contributors to the range of variables affecting the nature of their writing".[94] This affectation came from their familiarity with the works in the Great Tradition which, we have seen, were read at mission schools around the country, and at the Bantu Men's Social Centre on the Reef, quotations from which were bandied about, almost in a continuation of the spirit of the debating society, for pretentious purposes.[95] But by the 1950s this `culture of learning' was ultimately hollow for, as Gready points out, the repressed elite's acquaintance with Western culture and white society offered them a "shadow passport" to an unreal reality and "the frustration of a world that they could taste but not make their own".[96] Nevertheless, the struggle to make real the unreal reality continued, primarily in the autobiographies written in exile.

It has been posited by Stephen Gray that, while Mphahlele has continually re-contextualised his writing, Abrahams is no longer meaningful to us unless we offer fresh responses to his work. He believes that Sole's historical markers "are the vital context within which to achieve any understanding of the text at all", and suggests that Abrahams's much vaunted `long eye of history' is the only means to finding contours.[97] This thesis has suggested that one of

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[92] Sampson, in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 44.
[93] Es'kia Mphahlele, in Stein and Jacobson, *Sophiatown Speaks*, 56.
[94] Paul Gready, `The Sophiatown Writers of the Fifties: The Unreal Reality of Their World', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16(1) March 1990, 144.
[95] This is not to deny the stratification and class-orientation of social networks among Africans in Johannesburg, which, as David Coplan has demonstrated, affected performance styles, the places where these were staged and the social identity and aspirations of their participants. These socio-cultural distinctions were, however, not meaningfully acknowledged by white authority, which facilitated levelling processes and spurred an increase in African nationalism among the elite (`The African Performer', 188).
[96] Gready, `The Sophiatown Writers of the Fifties', 151.
[97] Stephen Gray, `The Long Eye of History: Four Autobiographical Texts by Peter Abrahams', *Pretexts*, 2(2) 1990, 100-101.

these could be an examination of the educational matrix which helped to shape Abrahams's artistic consciousness with which, in his autobiographical writing at least, he is preoccupied. If it is agreed that the identity constructed in the autobiographical text is threatened by the inevitable silences and contradictions in that text, a rewriting of the history inscribed in the text (the forces operating at the moment of writing and the specific experiences of the subject) has its appeal. While Robert Ensor is wrong to reduce Abrahams's last novel, through its elision of class differences under a black nationalism and Christianity, to a buttress of capitalism, he is helpful in advocating in his historical-materialist approach to Abrahams's fiction that the literary text is constructed in relation to history and is an interaction of discourses. His response, as it were, to Gray's conviction that we need to reposition Abrahams has been to develop a framework for reading the text in its historical and political context:

> In constructing the relation of Abrahams's cultural practice and his novels to a mode of conceptualisation informing social practices, I wish to stress that these social practices are related to what I understand to be apparatuses of class formation. These might be St Peter's Missionary School, the Bantu Men's Cultural [Social] Centre, the SA Communist Party, the Pan-African Federation or state apparatuses and the body of state legislation which determined the formation of those fluid categories, the black petty bourgeoisie and the black working class.[98]

Defecting intellectuals like Abrahams, who side with the working class, in Sole's opinion,[99] remain petty bourgeois in their interests, which are irreducible to the general interests of the working class: these include guarantees of intellectual, artistic and scientific freedom, and freedom of

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[98] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 52.

[99] Neville Choonoo prefers the term `class drifters' to `class defectors', which is probably more appropriate in Abrahams's case, who moves through different ideologies, and connections with various black communities, during his life ("Parallel Lives", 156).

expression and information. "In the continued existence of this coherence of attitude," he suggests, "schooling plays a vital role".[100]

3 Autobiography as the product of an incarnational matrix

"I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly": this claim made in St John's Gospel effectively mapped out the CR educational enterprise in the Transvaal, even as it underpinned the cardinal points of the lives of those pupils who inscribed them. Ensor notes that Abrahams's novels "signify a concept of the process of liberation and transcendence of the material level of existence and its extension, that of racial or national exclusiveness, towards a transcendence at a universal spiritual level, without any devaluation of the intermediate levels".[101] This is fleshed out in his non-fictional writing in the paradigm of three levels of living, which he first articulates in *Return to Goli*, all of which can only be addressed by belief systems whose most captive audience, as Mphahlele suggests, is probably at school (since Abrahams took with him from St Peter's the principles of Marxism leavened by the need for individual recognition beyond category):

> First, there is the basic struggle: the struggle for life, which is the struggle for bread, home and security . . . . On the second level, this basic struggle is charged with social content and consciousness. The protection of the individual is the security of the group . . . . But on the last level the mind takes hold of the instinct. The will casts out fear . . . . Such is the freedom of the last level: the level of the whole man, freed, ultimately from his fear.[102]

The colour bar of South Africa denied fulfilment of all three, its laws increasingly proscribing aspirations towards certain standards of living. But it

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[100] Sole, `Class, Continuity and Change', 146.
[101] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 239.

was the desire for fulfilment of the third need which became "an obsession" and necessitated exile; as Abrahams said earlier, "my spiritual and emotional want, much more than my physical want, had been the driving motive behind my leaving the land of my birth".[103] This need was articulated variously in conversations Abrahams had with islanders on Puerto-Rico on a visit there in 1961, and was codenamed Operation Security by the island's governor, Muñoz-Marin, who embarked on a programme to break out of the poverty that gripped the island, to work out a form of political freedom based on sound economic principles, and finally, "to give to the economic effort and political freedom objectives that commend themselves to the spirit of man in its function as leader of, rather than servant to, the economic processes." This could not be defined other than through each individual's sense of being completed: "an invitation for us to know ourselves and know what we want and why",[104] or "the habit of seeing your world whole".[105]

Ambivalent on the threshold of exile, Mphahlele toyed with refusing this invitation: "you might deny the existence of that in you which cherishes ambition and the rest, and seek no more than food, shelter, clothing".[106] This was not possible, however, for, as Lutuli put it at around the same time, still hoping that South Africa would change: "Man must participate in all the aspects of life; political, social and religious. A man is not whole if he is deprived of participating in some aspects of life; he will grow to be a lopsided man".[107] Lutuli's conviction that freedom was the apex of human achievement had earlier been mooted by Anton Lembede, who proposed in *Inyaniso* in 1945 that "[m]an is body, mind and spirit with needs, desires, and aspirations in all three elements of his nature. History is a record of

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[102] Peter Abrahams, *Return to Goli* (London, 1953), 26.
[103] Ibid, 14.
[104] Peter Abrahams, `The Puerto Ricans', *Holiday* (29) Feb. 1961, 133.
[105] Abrahams, `The Puerto Ricans', 140. The yearning which Abrahams experienced after he began school for "the new horizons of my needs" is similarly indefinable: "I felt lonely and longed for something without being able to give it a name" (*Tell Freedom* (London, 1954), 136).
[106] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 202.
[107] Albert Lutuli, `Freedom is the Apex', Address at meeting of Congress of Democrats, c.1958, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 459.

humanity's strivings for complete self-realisation".[108] His philosophy, Africanism, gave rise to what Ensor has termed "an idealist mode of conceptualisation . . . of individual autonomy and enlightenment, and a materialist conception of history".[109] Ultimately, "history is the process of realising an immanent humanity which itself is enduring and is not subject to historical flux", and political and cultural conflict is a necessary part of the historical realisation of this "immanent humanity".[110] Lembede plays no small part in the story of St Peter's, and two of the finest tributes to him came from St Peter's alumni, his colleagues in the Youth League, Joe Mokoena and William Nkomo.[111] Both are convinced that he would have made a great leader, and that the most honest and appropriate response is to follow the trail he blazed, his legitimacy based on astonishing self-sacrifice in the service of his community.

"One of the tests of a good educational system," stated the All-In Conference in October 1956 as St Peter's closed its doors, "is whether it is able to throw up leaders of ability and character." The 394 high-profile African delegates, most of whom had been educated before Bantu Education, condemned it because "[t]horoughness, breadth of vision and individual excellence are being played down as against superficial education of the mass of the people".[112] While the time was long overdue for creating an education system which would get most African children on board, a system "free, compulsory, universal and equal" in the words of the Freedom Charter, which the African leadership had consistently demanded throughout the 1940s, the

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[108] Lembede, `Some Basic Principles of African Nationalism', *Inyaniso* February 1945, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume II*, 315.
[109] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 311.
[110] Ibid, 114. It is significant for the argument of this thesis, which has highlighted the incarnational focus of the CR, that Ensor refers to the birth of Christ, the Incarnation, as "the moment of transcendence in which immanent humanity is realised in history."
[111] See Joe Mokoena, `Gone Ere His Prime Some Account of the Remarkable Career of the Late Anton Lembede', *South African Outlook* 1 Sept. 1947, and William Nkomo, `Tribute to a Victorious Life', *African Advocate* Aug./Sept. 1947, in Robert R Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Athens, OH & Johannesburg, 1996), 165-169, 171-172.
[112] Statement by the All-In African Conference called by the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation, Bloemfontein, 4-6 October 1956, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 254.

Bantu Education Act of 1953 was not the means to do it, because it compromised quality for quantity in the interests of an education for servitude and control. In this WWM Eiselen struck the rock at the heart of African nationalism, for the concept of leadership to African leaders had been raised almost to the status of a myth, as Ensor suggests, a myth of mutual self-sacrifice in the interests of leadership and people.[113] In 1956, the year that St Peter's closed, Alfred Xuma wrote in an open letter critical of tendencies then developing in the ANC, that "Africa expects all her sons and daughters to serve the cause of the people loyally, sincerely and honestly", for, as he claimed his `Kindergarten Boys' of the ANC Youth League in the 1940s had understood, "[l]eadership means service for and not domination over others".[114]

3.1 The ideal of leadership as service

A document dated May 1916, ten years after the founding of the institution by Latimer Fuller CR, indicates the main aim of Grace Dieu, an aim which was to be carried out in the Anglo-Catholic spiritual tradition: "It is also the function of the training college to take the untried dependent youth and transform him from a mere thinker and imitator into an independent actor on the stage of life able to lead rather than be led".[115] Grace Dieu's aim was also that of St Peter's, which marshalled all the resources of education at its disposal, both formal tuition and extra-mural activity, within an urban boarding school environment, to foster independent thought and initiative. An educational institution is primarily responsible for intellectual adulthood, but it must also situate adulthood in community, or, to use Mphahlele's term, *socialise* youth, for it is only through the community that, as the 1916 document put it in the exclusive language of the day, "man can properly respond to his individual calling and give proper shape to his humanness".[116] Community, according

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[113] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 264-265.
[114] AB Xuma, letter to *The World* 28 Jan. 1956, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 245.
[115] Alfred Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience of the Anglican Church, 1906-1958" (MEd, University of the North, 1988), 63.
[116] Mokwele, "The Grace Dieu Experience", 64.

to the document, indicates human ties, human co-existence and co-existing self-realisation which were highly developed in all the autobiographers, with the notable exception of Bloke Modisane, who never attended St Peter's. Canon Woodfield's report as Principal of Grace Dieu in January 1935, a year before Abrahams enrolled, recorded the perception of one school inspector that "a greater desire for social service in the towns and villages came from those teachers trained at Grace Dieu than was usual in those trained at other Colleges".[117]

The principle of common betterment, ultimately a divine discontent with the hegemony of the world in order that development be not individually but commonly interpreted, undergirds Abrahams's poem, "To Grace Dieu", as, indeed, it became the keynote of his later writing. With some discussion, it serves as a fine way to end:

> No stately buildings roaring high
> To meet the morning sun.
> No work of architecture fine,
> No honour to thee done!
>
> A poor and simple place thou art,
> With one aim in thy mind:
> A seat of learning and of God.
> To me thou wert so kind.
>
> Thou taught me how to watch and pray –
> To do my best in all.
> Thou taught me how to love and toil,
> To give; to work for all.
>
> Once more the sun will shine on thee –
> As it then shone (on) me –

[117] Ibid, 66.

Once more I'll find myself with thee,
In unison with God.[118]

What the illustrious architectural partnership, Baker and Fleming, who designed the main buildings in 1914 would have thought of the first verse, is not without amusement, but Abrahams's capturing of the spirit of place some twenty years afterwards is accurate. For all its present windswept dereliction and solitude,[119] it still conveys an overwhelming impression of a place of sacrifice and service. Abrahams attributes to Grace Dieu, in simple ballad metre noteworthy for its British provenance, the virtues of patience and diligence, summed up, we have seen, in the Benedictine motto, *ora e(s)t labore*, pray and work.[120] The strong sense of commitment is nothing short of monastic, and had been articulated by Abrahams's rough contemporary, Jasper Mduna, who lived his own FR rule of life on a remote Natal farm before entering for the CR novitiate in 1950.

What undergirded Mduna's dedication, and increasingly the CR teaching enterprise, was the vision articulated by Robert Sobukwe in his address on behalf of the graduating class at Fort Hare in 1949: "Let me plead with you, lovers of my Africa, to carry with you into the world *the vision of a new Africa, an Africa re-born, an Africa rejuvenated, an Africa re-created, young AFRICA* [his emphasis]".[121] Alban Winter, Roger Castle, Benjamin Baynham, Trevor Huddleston, Martin Jarrett-Kerr; all these in their different and idiosyncratic ways tried to give dress to this deeply spiritual vision, which would validate not only Mirfield's contribution to Africa, but Africa's contribution to Mirfield, and beyond. Unlike the racist Passport Office officials Abrahams and Mphahlele encountered as they prepared to leave South Africa, whose eyes

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[118] Ibid, 184. I have been unable to trace this poem elsewhere, and Mokwele does not give its provenance, but it is of a kind with Abrahams's early verse.
[119] Grace Dieu closed in 1958, two years after St Peter's, in protest against Bantu Education, and became the Setotolwane College of Education, but the original buildings are still there, though most are boarded and locked up, and falling into grave disrepair.
[120] Lutuli invokes this "Christian principle" as the means to freedom (*Let My People Go*, 169).
[121] Robert Sobukwe, Address on behalf of the Graduating Class at Fort Hare, 21 October 1949, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume II*, 335.

"looked at a thing, not a person",[122] or whose mouths delivered the alienating message "*Die groot baas is nog besig*",[123] the CR Fathers acknowledged the unique personhood of each pupil. They thus assisted the transformation, from silent object to speaking subject, of those who chose to represent that transformation in the form of a life inscribed in autobiography. This is, quite simply, St Peter's contribution to black South African autobiography. Identity was generated out of an educational matrix predicated on an incarnational faith. "[M]onolithic categories, both racial and religious," Lynda Gilfillan has noted of the various autobiographical accounts of St Peter's School, "begin to crumble as the writing self inscribes an alternative vision of South Africa",[124] and "tells the freedom of *human* values in a humane society".[125] It was, significantly, a group of ex-St Peterians (Oliver Tambo, Congress Mbata, Joe Mokoena and Lancelot Gama), who, as science students at Fort Hare during the 1940s, had styled themselves `The Syndicate', and pledged themselves to work for a better world after their graduation.[126]

If this thesis, which started out as an empirical investigation into a particular schooling, has ended up as an eschatological sermon, it at least has the distinction of following the example set by that monumental 12-volume work by the historian Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, published over twenty years with the qualifications, revisions and second thoughts so long a period requires. Analysis gave way after some three million words to prophecy: after chronicling the rise and decline of civilisations, seeing no hope for the West as it tried to seek refuge from the consequences of its own technology in the cultural forms of Christianity, the venerable 85-year-old Toynbee fell back on the need for what might inadequately be termed moral rearmament.[127] Similarly, Abrahams and Mphahlele, the only two autobiographers to have survived into their eighties, owing, it might be suggested, to secure

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[122] Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, 279.
[123] Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 209.
[124] Lynda Ann Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic: A Critical Study of Black South African Autobiography from 1954 – 1963" (DLitt et Phil, University of South Africa, 1995), 142.
[125] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 146.
[126] Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 39.

partnerships from which they have drawn strength for over fifty years and to their respective belief systems, have sought refuge, not in the forms of religion, but in its transformative power for individual and society alike, the seeds of which, it has been argued above, were possibly planted by the CR. Abrahams, in particular, has often been called prophetic, especially as regards his political novels, and Choonoo also finds this quality early on in *Tell Freedom* where, to counter racism, he "assume[s] the role of a prophet by writing about the ills of his society, in order that it will recognize the ugliness of its own face in the mirror of his art".[128]

Artists and intellectuals infuse into the wider population a "perceptiveness and an imagery" which are otherwise lacking,[129] and are important, Paul Rich suggests, "for being close to the symbols that can motivate or reorganize social and political activity." In his last exhortation to the class of '49, Sobukwe employed just such a symbol, what he, in a significant Freudian slip, called "my exaltation": *REMEMBER AFRICA!* [130] Mphahlele's lifelong response to the spirit of that exhortation, which animated the discourse of the 1940s as the Youth League built up its branches on the Reef in the shade of the "huge tree" which had dominated African education for half a century, would comprise

> My intellectual journey; my involvement with Africa since I was born; the questions I have tried to grapple with in my teaching; the quest for meanings of literature and its function in Africa; my role in the campaign to give African literature prominence or supremacy in African high schools and universities, my role in workshops for creative writing, African theater, and my active participation in the creation of idioms in music, drama, fiction

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[127] James Joll, `Two Prophets of the Twentieth Century: Spengler and Toynbee', *Review of International Studies* (11) 1985, 102.
[128] Choonoo, "Parallel Lives", 216.
[129] Paul Rich, *Hope and Despair: English-Speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics 1896-1976* (London & New York, 1993), 1. The suggestive phrase is Edward Shils's.

> and poetry hammered out of the very substance and essence of Africa.[131]

The thrust of this thesis has been that those who told freedom through writing their life stories, told it – lived it - in the terms of service and sacrifice, the seeds of which were first laid in their Western education at St Peter's under the CR, an education which was at odds with the prevailing ideas of what was appropriate for black South Africans to learn and the dominant script of how they should live. That education demanded exile towards fulfilment and opened itself to repudiation with the autobiographers' increasing sense of commitment to Africa, and to belief systems indigenous to or informed by the continent, manifested in Mphahlele's return from exile, Abrahams's commitment to the `black Atlantic' and, before they died, Hutchinson and Matshikiza's return to African soil.

3.2 The witness to individuality and wholeness

However, as Stephen Gray has noted, this is one of the most heterogeneous generations in our literature, each of their autobiographies being "uniquely individual, quirky and eccentric, indelibly printed with the style of the particular personality writing", and it would be doing them, and their teachers at St Peter's, an injustice to reduce their inventiveness, which arguably reflects on the individual focus of their education:

> Besides, reducing them to their common tale would be missing the point of the whole movement – its alert responsiveness to the possibilities of difference, the individual freedom to take preferred directions. Stylistic variety to them is affirmative of the spirit itself not being crushed.[132]

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[130] This was a rallying cry of the 1940s, for as AB Xuma later exhorted the ANC Youth Leaguers he had nurtured, "To them I say remember the 1940's, Remember Africa!" (letter to *The World* 28 Jan. 1956, 244).

[131] Es'kia Mphahlele, `Ezekiel Mphahlele's Reply to Addison Gayle Jr.', *Black World* 23(3) Jan. 1974, 8.

[132] Gray, `The Long Eye of History', 102.

It has been suggested that the wide appeal of black autobiographies (both American and South African), in which the narrative self tends to become part of the reader and the reader is invited to be a part of that self, often over and above the divisions of colour, creed and gender, lies in "their empathy for suffering, their ability to break down the division of `I' and `you', their knowledge of oppression and discovery of ways to cope with that experience, and their sense of shared life, shared triumph, and communal responsibility".[133] As Gray and Ensor have noted, not without concern about the prescriptiveness, these texts "compel a humanistic response – that is, empathy, agreement, consent",[134] and appeal to "liberal concepts of individual freedom and national self-determination" located outside of themselves, which the reader is spontaneously supposed to share.[135]

At a time of great political ferment on the African continent, Gray has suggested, it was "only the authentic testimony of disabilities and reports on `real conditions' which could be admitted", making autobiography the preferable and distinctive form of attack against apartheid. The desire for freedom, to be successful, must create the conditions of its own liberty, and autobiography "is the *only* form through which the [writer and the reader] can meet one-to-one, on a true basis of equality".[136] Gilfillan makes the autobiographies' contingency on the socio-historical events of the 1950s even more explicit, as the clash of emergent ideologies sought to define South African identity, which had to be resisted in their life stories, the products both of "the non-racial class-analysis propagated in intellectual circles and trade unions" and "the assimilationism propagated by the mission schools".[137] These comprise aspects of the "repertoire of conflictual positions" (the phrase is Homi Bhabha's) that constitutes their fluid subjectivity. Perhaps in the final analysis, Abrahams and Mphahlele, Hutchinson and Matshikiza were driven

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[133] Stephen Butterfield, quoted in Choonoo, "Parallel Lives", 166.
[134] Gray, `The Long Eye of History', 103.
[135] Ensor, *The Novels of Peter Abrahams*, 122, 151.
[136] Gray, `The Long Eye of History', 114-115.
[137] Gilfillan, "Theorising the Counterhegemonic", 114-115.

by the need to witness to the reality of who they were, and could become. Their life stories, whether inscribed as trajectory or escape, were conceived as a testimony to the truth about humanity, as the very titles of their autobiographies suggest. *Tell Freedom* and *Road to Ghana* bear witness to freedom which, Albert Lutuli insisted at that very time, in 1958, would always be the apex of human achievement and striving, while *Down Second Avenue* and *Chocolates for My Wife* consciously extend that freedom:

> "Is this vision of a democratic society in South Africa a realisable vision? Or is it merely a mirage?" I say, it *is* a realisable vision. For it is in the nature of man, to yearn and struggle for freedom. The germ of freedom is in every individual, in anyone who is a human being. In fact, the history of mankind is the history of man struggling and striving for freedom.[138]

This is a profoundly religious vision, and the life story as witness to this may owe its genesis to the ideas encountered initially at St Peter's School, which testified to the gospel of fullness of life, even if the autobiography was not consciously conceived of as such. While Mphahlele certainly read one or two Gospels at school, he never wrote his autobiography with that kind of testimony in mind as a paradigm, or even vaguely shadowing his own.[139] Nevertheless, the autobiographical writing witnesses to an ideal, the `good news', if you like, of what Gilfillan calls "an alternative vision of South Africa" which, in its turn, validates the text, and that text is, in the final analysis, a product of its time and place, formed out of its connection with the apparatuses of class and identity formation, especially the secondary school.

Education's close relationship with liberation is evident in Albert Lutuli's use, in his first address as ANC President in 1953, of the very same term employed by Mphahlele in his preface to *Chirundu* when speaking of the

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[138] Lutuli, `Freedom is the Apex', in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 457.

effects of a good education: "the urge and yearning for freedom springs from a sense of *DIVINE DISCONTENT* and so, having a divine origin, can never be permanently humanly gagged [his emphasis]".[140] Freedom, however, can never be attained, said Lutuli in his second address in 1954, overshadowed by the passing of the Bantu Education Act, without "a sense of service and sacrifice." In words reminiscent of Du Bois's call for the `Great Sacrifice', a sentiment which inspired Abrahams from his youth onwards, and eventually brought Mphahlele home, he warns, "Freedom comes only to people who are prepared to pay dearly for it".[141] Liberation was not achieved without the physical, mental and emotional sacrifice of countless ordinary people in South Africa, who, in their own and costly way, took to heart Lutuli's injunction at the close of his address in the very year of the publication of the first black South African autobiography: "Develop in you the spirit of resisting anything that curbs or limits the development of your talents to their fullest capacity."

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[139] Mphahlele, correspondence 28 August 2000.
[140] Albert Lutuli, Presidential Address to ANC Annual Conference, 18-20 December 1953, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 115.
[141] Albert Lutuli, Presidential Address to ANC Annual Conference, 16-19 December 1954, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, *Volume III*, 141.

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4.3 Television broadcasts

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