


Public Transport in Pre-Apartheid Literary Johannesburg: Between Progress and Oppression

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ABSTRACT

A close reading of literary representations of Johannesburg's public transport in the early decades of the 20th century gives insight into the intricate way in which freedom, mobility, and narratives of progressive modernity interlink with urban mobility regimes of public transportation. The literary representations mark public transport simultaneously as progressive and oppressive, depending on access. Where access is denied, public vehicles become part of an oppressive racist mobility regime and exclude individuals from formative experiences of collective belonging. The present analysis engages with selected concepts from the field of mobility studies, namely Cresswell's thoughts on the relationship of mobility and modern citizenship, Bissell's observations regarding 'mobile collectives', and the idea of 'throwntogetherness' by the social geographer Massey. These will be used to analyze the gatekeeping function of public transport in representations of early Johannesburg, where black, male, urban subjecthood is negotiated against white urban modernity.

KEYWORDS

citizenship; mobile collectives; pre-apartheid Johannesburg; public transport; racialized mobilities; urban narratives; white urbanity

Introduction: Equating Citizenship with Mobility

Citizenship and mobility are often closely associated to a point where civic freedom becomes defined by the ability to move unrestricted within a nation state, as Cresswell observes (*On the Move*, 'Citizenship'). Yet, the theorization of African mobilities is a reminder that the equation 'mobility = freedom' only holds true for a privileged few. As Mavhunga, Chakanetsa, Cuvelier and Pype rightfully point out, the association of freedom, mobility, and progress is a false universalization resting on 'Western ethnocentric assumptions' as well as its dispersion by colonization. Taking an African mobilities perspective can 'open up a new analytical landscape at the crossroads of mobility, transport, and communication studies' (43–44) or, in the case of this analysis, literary studies. African literatures can give insights into the intricate way in which freedom, mobility, as well as narratives of progress and modernity interlink into urban 'mobility regimes' (Glick Schiller and Salazar) of public transportation. These urban mobility regimes symbolize simultaneously modernity and racial oppression. A close reading of literary scenes depicting

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encounters on Johannesburg's public transport in the early decades of the 20th century helps to explain this dual symbolism. The progressive effect of public transport relies on access to it. When access is denied, public vehicles become part of an oppressive mobility regime.

Unfortunately, the exclusionist character of such a mobility regime is systemic and goes beyond 'inconveniencing' an individual, as the analyzed narratives will show. Under discussion are the early South African novella *An African Tragedy* (1928), written by R.R.R. Dhlomo, the short story 'An Experiment in Colour' (1935) by H.I.E. Dhlomo, as well as the novels *Mine Boy* (1946), written by P. Abrahams, and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) by A. Paton. The selected narratives show that oppressive mobility regimes do not only impact the individual, but the greater collective is at stake, too. The stories are an attempt at negotiating collective belonging through participation in public transport, sometimes to Johannesburg's urban community, sometimes to the emerging South African nation. This is possible because the idea of modern citizenship has historically evolved with the idea of the civic subject as being a mobile subject (Cresswell, 'Citizenship' 84). This is the case especially in South Africa, a nation 'born out of processes of mobility' (Nuttall 735), with its history of the Afrikaner's Great Trek, its large-scale intra-national labour migration to the gold mines, and black people's displacement to Bantustans under apartheid. Even today, mobilities define the discourse of civic belonging because 'freedom of movement, especially by people deemed to be less endowed economically, is perceived by those who consider themselves more economically gifted as potentially disastrous' (Nyamnjoh 660). Nyamnjoh refers to contemporary labour mobility from the countryside or foreign nations to South Africa's urban centres. Mobility discourses are of persistent public concern in present-day South Africa. Mobility as every-day practice and right is a cornerstone of civic subjecthood in the post-apartheid state. The South African constitution guarantees under section 2 §21 the freedom of movement and residency to every citizen. Mobility is central to life in South Africa because of its history of racialized mobility politics (Gibson 35). In the past as much as today, public transport is the means (sometimes of choice) to practice mobility for many, and thus the individual becomes integrated into collective discourses of belonging, which makes the analysis of past representations of mobility practices meaningful for contemporary South Africa.

A literary analysis of public transport aids in explaining the functionality of a mobility regime that simultaneously enables and constrains collective belonging. These insights apply beyond the pages of South African novels and their discussion in scholarly articles. Nyamnjoh argues convincingly for the importance of creative representations, such as literary texts, by stating that 'the standard expectations of what constitutes a scholarly text do little justice to the multilayered, multivocal and multifocal dimensions of everyday negotiation and navigation of myriad identity margins' (653). In addition, Toivanen stresses the reciprocal relationship between fictional texts and reality, since 'representations of mobility also contribute to the process of making sense of real-life mobilities, and render experienced, embodied mobilities more tangible' (2). In the case of South Africa, literary analysis can also help to fill a gap in empirical scholarship on mobilities of the past. Pirie speaks of 'less exhaustive and less systematic research into racialized mobility in South Africa' than would be needed for a comprehensive understanding of the development of urban South Africa ('Colours' 40). Literary analysis of mobilities can contribute to

discursively underrepresented research into intra-national South African mobilities. In the hope of adding a valuable perspective, the following literary analysis engages with selected concepts from the field of mobility studies, namely Cresswell's thoughts on mobility and modern citizenship (*On the Move*, 'Citizenship'), Bissell's observations regarding 'mobile collectives', and the idea of 'throwntogetherness' by the social geographer Massey, which Koefoed, Dissing Christensen, and Simonsen applied to their anthropological research of a Copenhagen bus line. Together, these can explain why representations of public transport in literary texts about Johannesburg from the early decades of the 20th century symbolize racial freedom as well as oppression, depending on the accessibility of the portrayed means of transport.

A Theoretical Approach to Collective Belonging and Public Transport in Literary Narratives

My reading of the literary texts is based on the understanding that public transport enables a mobile, civic subjecthood. On the one side, it enables an individual to experience greater mobility and thus offers access to areas and people otherwise out of reach, therefore allowing for the creation of a larger community through encounter and imagined relationships. On the other side, the collectives that temporarily evolve on public transport make it a space to negotiate identity, which can set patterns for the formation of collectives outside of public transport.

Cresswell ('Citizenship') connected modern, Western ideas of citizenship to the spatial divide into private and public as well as to the right of citizens to freely move within their state. In addition, Cresswell discussed politics of mobility in relation to the importance that narratives of modernity take in the current Western understanding of mobility with the notion of 'mobility as liberty, modernity as progress' ('Politics of Mobility' 21). The process by which the discourse of modernity = mobility = freedom manifests itself in specific localities can be seen in the presented corpus of Johannesburg stories. In summary, a subject that understands itself as a modern citizen will expect the right to move freely within the borders of a modern state and to freely take public transport, regardless of their race. Access to public transport is a means to practice this civic right.

Moving on from the individual to the collective, public transport offers chance encounters because, according to Massey, space involves chance, multiplicity, as well as contingency and is thus a 'necessity for the institution of the social ... which, at a moment of antagonism, is revealed in particular fractures which pose the question of the political' (151). Massey theorizes a certain 'throwntogetherness' characteristic to space, meaning that closed, material space holds the potential for instability and order at the same time. Enclosed material spaces like a tram carriage or bus force the passengers to negotiate the meaning of the space as well as their relationships to other passengers, and the publicity of these spaces makes the acts political (151–152). The political character of public transport is also present in literary representations, as both are a means to portray and negotiate communal belonging. Upstone observes the importance of a (literary) mobile collective for an individual's development, since a 'novel's evocation of characters whose individual journeys bring them into contact with a community without which they are unable to move forwards' (52). The temporary collective has a formative character on individuals and the path they take in society. Bissell discusses the formative

aspect of public transport when he states that travelling on public transport involves the process of becoming a passenger (284). The individual becomes a passenger and as such becomes involved with other passengers who they are 'throwntogether' with. Such a situation requires sociality and acts of negotiation of difference and communal responsibility. Furthermore, these processes of becoming can turn into relational practices that impact on wider society and go beyond the temporarily created mobile collective. Public transport is a materially enclosed space, which makes it possible to control access to it, thus impacting the mobile collectives' 'throwntogethereness' and a citizen's ability to move freely. Koefoed, Dissing Christensen, and Simonsen could clearly observe the 'reproduction of images of otherness' during their anthropological work on a Copenhagen bus line (732), pointing to reproduction of racial stereotypes and its impact on mobile collectives on public transport. The possibility of controlling access to public transport causes the dual symbolism observable in the selected narratives on Johannesburg transport. The literary texts further prove the lasting character of these temporary mobile collectives. They live on in these texts for decades and continue to inform mobility practices for their readers outside the literary realm.

Public Transport in Early Literary Representations of Modern Johannesburg

The selected narratives do not constitute a fully representative history of the literary portrayal of public transport in South African texts of urban novels set in Johannesburg in the pre-apartheid era. However, the texts have been carefully selected as exemplary for the entanglement of discourses on freedom, mobility, and the progress towards modernity and how it manifests itself in its specific, recurring dualism in these texts. Despite the selective character of the corpus, it is possible to gain a general insight into the development of public transport in Johannesburg since the texts make references to historical developments. The first short story, 'Bus-drivers', is part of the collection *Dark Johannesburg*, published by the Dutch Jacob Lub in 1912. Originally, the collection was released in Afrikaans as *Donker Johannesburg* and then translated into English while Lub was living in Johannesburg (Pretorius). Following Pirie's periodization, 'Bus-drivers' references the first phase of racialization in South African public transport. This phase was a 'spontaneous application of fare-class distinctions' that was commonly found in the countries from which the infrastructure services were adapted ('Colours' 40). In the colonies class and race often overlapped due to economical discrimination by the colonizer. Thus, the status as colonized became many times effectively marked by race and class. Therefore, it was 'mostly white people who used the first rickshaws, bicycles, horse buses and trams in South Africa' ('Colours' 40–41). 'Bus-drivers', with its all-white characters, plays out against the historical context of the first phase of racialization of public transportation caused mainly by affordability. The analysis will show how 'Bus-drivers' depicts Johannesburg as a place of white urbanity.

Pirie identifies a second period of transport racialism that correlates with an increase in the labour migration of black people to urban centres, such as Johannesburg. The introduction of a racialized mobility regime was deliberately created by limiting the access to vehicles with greater seating capacity based on racial difference. The novella *An African Tragedy* (1928), published by R.R.R. Dhlomo, prides itself in its preface to be the first

novel written in English by a Zulu writer. Its main character, Robert Zulu, experiences the deliberate exclusion from public transport that is characteristic for the second phase of racialization. However, the deliberate racialization of public transport started already in the 1880s in some communities, such as Durban, and gained more systemic character after the South African Union of 1910 with the construction of a single, national train network. On national trains, the first class was for white people and the third class for black people, making it the most racialized form of public transport in the early phases because it could be centrally organized. The novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) by Alan Paton portrays this racial divide in the train journey that Kumalo, the main character, takes from the countryside to Johannesburg. During the second phase, the enforcement of access limitation to mobility based on race was still partially dependent on the resources and willingness of local communities (unlike the central national train network), as differences in enforcement between Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban show. Nevertheless, the existence of segregationist measures increasingly limited black citizens' mobility and caused conflict (Pirie, 'Colours' 41), which explains the anger and upset of the black, middle-class main character of the short story 'An Experiment in Colour' (1935) by R.R.R. Dhlomo, where only white citizens of Johannesburg can take the tram. Black characters have to make do with semi-public African taxis, that are notoriously overcrowded, underregulated, and unreliable in their departure times. This historical development explains perhaps why in the urban novel *Mine Boy* (1946), by Peter Abrahams, scenes of public transport are limited to one bus ride and one ride in an African taxi. These are, nevertheless, key scenes in the novel that articulate to its readers the importance of urban modernity and racial equality. Eventually, under apartheid, the racialization of public transport became spatially manifest in separate transport services and infrastructures (Pirie, 'Colours' 42) although, here again, economic circumstances hindered the implementation of a complete spatially segregated public transport (Pirie, 'Economic Limits'). In addition, apartheid depended on labour exploitation that favoured unskilled, cheap labour, limiting the formation of a black middle class, thus hindering black people to obtain private vehicle ownership. Apartheid turned black South Africans into 'non-citizens in the urban', as Jones observed (21). In contrast, the post-apartheid era promised the freedom of mobility to all its citizens regardless of race (Graham 70–71). However, the racialization of public transport due to structural economic disadvantages that black people face was not only characteristic of the first phase but continues until today. Systemically speaking, the majority of South Africa's poor population is black and has difficulty to afford public transport; the wealthier (and disproportionately white) population opts for private automobility instead of public transport, which is perceived as less convenient and unsafe (Pirie, 'Colours' 47–50; Livermon 275).

Dark Johannesburg: Mobile Collectives and White Urbanity

The realist short story 'Bus-drivers' (1912) by J. Lub offers a curious glimpse into the first period of the racialization of public transport in South Africa. In his discussion of bus mobility in Cape Town, Rink states that despite racial 'segregation in South African railways from 1910, buses were mobile sites of racial mixing until 1953, when an Act of Parliament forbade whites from sharing any vehicle with a member of another race group'

(66). However, racial mixing is entirely absent in Lub's story about different bus drivers in Johannesburg. The drivers of horse-drawn buses as well as their passengers hint at an entirely white mobile collective. The author advocates to recognize the humanity of a bus driver as a 'fellow mortal, who does his duty' (161), while he tells of different encounters the drivers make on their routes through Johannesburg. No encounter describes a mixed racial experience. What readers are presented with instead is the bus driver as a gatekeeper of class. The drivers guard their buses against the poor while voicing criticism of different white ethnicities. Hans, one of the drivers, tells a story about himself allowing Oom Gert onto his bus despite knowing that the old man, who doesn't 'look over-clean', will not be able to pay the fare (155). Nevertheless, Oom Gert is allowed in solely by Hans being accepting of his presence and granting him access. Hans goes even further in his gatekeeper function by actively encouraging certain people to take his bus to Johannesburg (159). In that sense, he pre-selects the characters that can become passengers of his bus and become part of this particular mobile collective. The strong class aspect of the first period of racialization of public transport in South Africa is clearly present and further confirmed by the driver Gert Steyn, who continuously complains about the poverty of his passengers and their expectations of his services (that he experiences as disproportionate to the fare they pay) (159). The white, male bus driver selects the mobile collective but also guards it against environmental forces such as bad weather and dust (160), the dangers of excessive modernity as embodied in all-electrified 'nasty tram cars' (154), and class transgressions, which occur when passengers want to skip the fare (160). The bus driver guards and co-constitutes the character of the mobile collective by selecting his passengers by class and indirectly by race. This selection is an example of how racialization is used to prevent class-based solidarity to maintain social hierarchies. By centring racial difference, the bus driver sides with the political and economic elite instead of other working-class people, thus consolidating his own economic exploitation.

The absence of direct engagements with race in the narrative can be explained in a twofold manner. The first explanation relies on the previously discussed character of racial segregation on public transport that is eclipsed by class difference, which is perceived as more relevant during the first period of transport racialization. Class, as a dominant organizing factor of society, is also evident in the built infrastructure of Johannesburg with its racially mixed slums. The racially mixed spaces of the poor will take several decades and the institutionalization of apartheid to disappear completely from Johannesburg's cityscape. The city becomes fragmented primarily based on race rather than class (Crankshaw). The second explanation lies in the increasing popularity of 'white urbanity' as a discourse for spatial organization. In 1922, the Stallard Commission found that cities like Johannesburg were 'the white man's creation', where the black labourer 'should only be allowed to enter ... when he is willing to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefore when he ceases to minister' (Posel 39 quoted in Wenzel 109). Black South Africans were thus forced to the margins. The exclusion was further strengthened through various land acts that prohibited black citizens from landownership and forced them into circular labour migration: from the countryside to the goldmines and back. Black South Africans' claims to urban citizenship are cast into a temporary character (Pirie, 'Colours' 44), 'making them non-citizens in the urban' (Jones 21) and artificially 'whitening' the metropolis (Pirie, 'Colours' 44).

The bus drivers in Lub's short story acknowledge the modernity of Johannesburg with tram cars that run on electricity, which works 'like a dose of medicine' (154), and indirectly by portraying only white mobile collectives. These depictions are indicative of colonization and its associated discourses of modernity. However, the mobile collectives they form and the urban landscape these collectives see on their routes is that of a white metropolis. This results in prominent discussions of white ethnicities in the narrative. The ethnic origin of drivers and passengers is discussed at length. There is Hendrik Bruyn, who, despite his name, claims to be of Huguenot descent and not a 'Hollander' (158). There are the 'Russian Jews' 'jabbering away for all they're worth' as passengers on Hans's bus (156). Even though the 'Russian Jews' are not on par with white immigrants from Britain or the Netherlands, they are considered white enough to be granted access to the bus without obvious restriction, which should be understood as a form of white privilege. White ethnicities are used as a framework of reference to organize bus drivers, passengers, and even horses into hierarchies by appointing value. An 'Afrikander' horse is apparently better than an 'Irish' one (155), referencing notions of rising Afrikaner nationalism at the turn of the century. Race was undoubtedly central in the social organization of South African society at the time, as exemplified by an early incident in 1893 in which Gandhi was thrown off a train because of his presumed race. However, the short story stresses the absence of race as a conscious point of reference for the white bus drivers and the mobile collectives that are represented in the fictional account of public transport in early 20th-century Johannesburg. Due to class (caused by colonial exploitation) race does not need to be considered relevant as a selecting factor when granting access to a bus ride in Lub's Johannesburg. Race seems out of sight for those who are accepted to operate within this portrayal of white urbanity.

An African Tragedy: White Urbanity and Black Mobility

The black mobile subject is put out of site in an attempt to negate its subjecthood. Nevertheless, black subjecthood finds its representation in literary discourses on urban modernity and public transport in South Africa. Jones points out in her discussion of apartheid that the spatial politics of white urbanity place a black speaker in a particular place but cannot hinder black people to claim a literary voice and rework these collective spaces within the existing limitations of racial oppression (32). The pre-apartheid novella *An African Tragedy* (1928) can also be read as such a voice that advocates for the mobility of the black, male subject; however, it derives the subjecthood from a pious, rural Christian lifestyle voiced in opposition to black participation in urbanity during the first period of public transport racialization. The novel portrays the main historical limitations to African mobility in an urban context and the exclusion from mobile collectives on public transport. Robert Zulu comes as a migrant worker to Johannesburg to earn the money for *lobodo* (bride price) (2). His journey by train from the countryside around Pietermaritzburg is uneventful though his lifestyle becomes morally questionable from a conservative Christian perspective. After his arrival in the city, readers witness his fall from grace caused by the city's 'strong drinks and prostituted bodies' (5). The inability to use public transport in one instance turns the questionable lifestyle into a crisis that leads to his death. At one point, Robert is forced to walk back from the western neighbourhood New Clare to his room in the eastern Prospect Township. He is unable to use

the public tram due to a curfew on racialized people (13). Walking through a metropolis is often associated with flânerie. However, in South Africa, the figure of the migrant is a key image of literary texts depicting urban walking (Mbembe and Nuttall 23), and in contrast to the flâneur, it stands out by class and race. Therefore, the racialization through mobility politics stresses the vulnerability of the body when exposed to urban environments that is commonly absent in depictions of walking the metropolis in European literature. Yet it needs to be kept in mind that the migrant worker as well as the flâneur are conceptualized as male bodies, unlike passengers, which the stories analyzed here occasionally represent as female and black. Robert Zulu is part of the literary representations of urban labour migrants as a symbol of African modernity. In fact, he is the first representative of the still productive genre 'Jim Comes to Joburg' (Gray), highlighting once more the impact literary representations of racialized urban spaces and mobility politics have on the discourse of belonging in South Africa.

Walking in *An African Tragedy*, however, is situated in a wider discourse on public mobility and collective belonging. Unsurprisingly, the coerced walk back home leads to Robert's unplanned physical displacement and makes him vulnerable to the violence of racialized mobilities since mobility per se 'cannot be idealized as a practice of liberation' (Upstone 44–45). The violent character of colonial mobilities becomes evident when Robert encounters two Zulu policemen demanding his pass, that he forgot to carry. He eventually runs and hides from them at a friend's place in Marshalltown. There, he stumbles into a card game that ends in a murder and raises questions of belonging, since the characters define their communal loyalties along ethnical lines (R.R.R. Dhlomo 14–19). Subsequently, the fear of being wrongfully accused leads to Robert's hasty return to the countryside (21–22) and his final fall, or as he puts it, 'to think that I've been through all this trouble through forgetting this slip of paper behind' (20). The exclusion from public transport exposes the protagonist of *An African Tragedy* to the violence of racist mobility regimes and hence racializes communities based on their ability to participate in organized transport. It additionally shows that the communities are further fragmented by granting some individuals exceptions to the exclusion, as seen in the case of the Zulu policemen, thus maintaining white urbanity even in a narration that is devoid of white characters.

'An Experiment in Colour': A Class-Based Demand for Equal Participation

Where *An African Tragedy* places its representations of black subjecthood in the countryside, the short story 'An Experiment in Colour' (1935) advocates for the participation of black subjects in urban modernity. Jones stresses the potential of urbanization to challenge the city as 'white' during apartheid, which, I would argue, is also exactly what H.I.E. Dhlomo's pre-apartheid narrative strives for. It portrays the struggle for a black voice to be heard and the black, male subject to participate equally in modernity. The author intriguingly intertwines questions of citizenship with racialized access to public transport. The protagonist, Frank Mabaso, comes to settle in the 'aristocratic' Johannesburg township of Sophiatown. He is a university-educated 'headmaster of an African school' and, therefore, belongs to the historically small black middle class. Nevertheless, he is excluded from the privileges of transportation of his white counterparts. He is refused access to the mobile collectives described in Lub's story that would allow him

a comfortable, class-appropriate travel to educated entertainment venues in the white racialized urban centre. He and his wife rely on 'bantu buses' for Africans. These are overcrowded and sites of 'bad conduct', or in other words a site where class lines are transgressed (490). The 'throwntogetherness' of public buses leads eventually to a crossing of boundaries, which ensues a process in which the individual needs to negotiate with the temporary mobile collective those transgressions that are more acceptable over boundaries that should be kept at all costs. The story references experiences of public transport from the second period of racialization discussed earlier. Upon arrival in the city centre, Frank Mabaso and his wife cannot find admission to any theatre due to the preference given to white people. This causes the pair to walk through the streets from one theatre to another, which emphasizes their visibility and limited access to modernity due to their racialization as black and urbanity as white. The short story features two offensive encounters with Afrikaner policemen demanding to see their passes (492). The story highlights the deep connection between the right to move freely within urban borders, citizenship, and class by marking the couple as limitedly mobile and thus second-class citizens. 'An Experiment in Colour' challenges restricted access to public transport by race but not so much by class. In fact, class belonging is presented as integral to the demand to participate with white characters on par. 'An Experiment in Colour' argues that the exclusion from public transport leads to increased costs of living (492), making it less obtainable for the black middle class, thus placing them economically, socially, and physically below their white counterparts. The short story does not advocate for class equality.

Later in the short story, the ability to take public transport is linked to the ability to participate in white urban modernity and to form a romantic relationship with a white, female character: 'Frank Mabaso entered European public libraries, restaurants, cinemas and hotels, boarded European tram-cars and motor-buses, and had the unique experience of going passless without fear of molestation' (494). Frank combines 'tribal' wisdom from 'Zululand' with university knowledge, developing a drug that makes a person change their racial appearance (493–494), in the vein of Jekyll and Hyde. 'An Experiment in Colour' is the only text from the selection that employs a fantastic element. However, with the exception of 'Bus-drivers', all the works analyzed here argue for the participation of black citizens in urban modernity. The texts do so by drawing on other, wider political ideologies – that already include some discursive demands for equality and notions of achievable utopia – to legitimize their claim. *An African Tragedy* and *Cry, the Beloved Country* rely on Christian teachings of 'loving thy neighbour as thyself' whereas *Mine Boy* has a clear Marxist message. In contrast, 'An Experiment in Colour' argues for the maintenance of class difference and refrains from using Christianity or Marxist ideology. Therefore, the narrative needs a different means to break the established status quo of racial inequality. The fantastic element exposes and ridicules the exclusive character of South African citizenship in the 1930s and its association with discourses of urban modernity and progress, which paradoxically draw on ideas of equality in their exclusionary character.

The development of the drug is accompanied with an increase in mobility between differently racialized neighbourhoods aided by public transport in the form of trams, though the text only indirectly references this through an increasing number of settings. Similar to Jekyll and Hyde, Frank's black persona turns violent, abusive, and negligent

towards his wife and community, since 'he found he could not enjoy his "white" life with his wife, whom he dared not let into the secret' (H.I.E. Dhlomo 494). At the same time, his white persona enjoys the middle-class lifestyle with modern, urban entertainment and easy access to institutions of knowledge such as the city library. The protagonist moves freely and gains positive interracial encounters with a white woman. However, leading a secret life of two differently racialized personae takes a toll on the protagonist's finances, health, and relationships. Trying to be white as a black person is simply unaffordable, highlighting the class aspect again, but emotionally it is also presented as a paradoxical impossibility (495). Frank attempts to solve his own dilemma, and the race conflict in general, by presenting his findings to an audience full of prominent figures from all races. At this point the story ends with Frank being shot by an Afrikaner claiming to protect Afrikaner women (497– 499). The protagonist was able to participate in white urbanity and engage with a white character free of racist discrimination because he was changed by the drug and he was able to use affordable public transport. Trams, as a form of affordable and efficient transportation, represent access to urban modernity in both stories, the novella *An African Tragedy* as well as in 'An Experiment in Colour'. Simultaneously, they allow for a veiled racially mixed mobile collective to form and alter the protagonist's lived reality. Despite not providing a resolution to South Africa's race conflict nor equal citizenship, the stories discussed so far stress that increased mobility through public transport must be part of the solution because it grants (or denies) access to formative mobile collectives.

Mine Boy: Mobile Collectives and Black Urban Citizenship

Mine Boy and *Cry, the Beloved Country* were published during the 1940s. Both portray the increasing spatial segregation of public transport, which is also present in their approach to participation in urban modernity and ideas of conflict resolution between differently racialized groups. Common for both narratives is the cyclical character of the presented mobility. The respective main characters travel to Johannesburg, where they are able to create a temporary home. From there they begin to map the city through their repeated and circular movements, first on foot and later by using public and private transport, also referencing the historical increase in (predominantly white) private car ownership. The mobility on foot correlates with the protagonists' building of a family. In *Mine Boy*, it is a family of kind not kin living and growing together in the same place in Malay Camp, a township of Johannesburg. In *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the protagonist finds his lost sister, grandson, son, and pregnant daughter-in-law living in different townships in and around Johannesburg. Forming familial ties can be seen as a first cycle that is marked by walking. Similar to *An African Tragedy* and 'An Experiment in Colour', walking is again presented as being visible and thus vulnerable to the exclusion from mobile collectives and independent, free mobility in general. The portrayal of physical violence in run-ins with police (Abrahams 15–17, 28, 62, 71) or discrimination through the exclusion from affordable transport, appropriate housing, and well-paid labour that leads to physical exhaustion and crime (Paton 41–48) show that race has become a central category of urban organization in 1940s South Africa. Therefore, the second cycle of mobility unsurprisingly reveals the impossibility to maintain familial ties under exploitative racist regimes. This correlates with the use of public transport and a decrease in the description of mobility within domestic spaces or movements within or near places that feel like home.

The Marxist novel *Mine Boy* features walking as its main mode of mobility, yet a scene set on a bus for Africans during the second cycle of mobility marks the protagonist's growing awareness that South Africa's racist regimes must be overcome. After being rejected by his love interest Xuma goes on a journey with a female friend, Maisy, to visit friends in a rural township. The bus is overcrowded, but in contrast to 'An Experiment in Colour' this intense intimacy is not perceived as a nuisance or affront against one's class but rather an opportunity to be close to others, in this case especially Xuma's female travel companion. Pearce argued convincingly for the importance of mobility in practices of courtship and developing romantic relationships, and the relationship between Xuma and Maisy is another case in point for her argument. Maisy symbolizes an independent, mobile black womanhood, born in the city and working as a domestic helper in a white suburb (Abrahams 98). The mobile collective on this journey places Xuma intimately close to a black character that could not be more urban. The notion of urbanity that the mobile collective raises is contrasted with the initially light-hearted experience of the countryside, which brings forth fond memories of home for Xuma (91–93). The escapist character of the journey fades evidently through the ensuing interactions with friends in the township. It is a place divided by race, one side for coloured, one side for black people, and it cannot hide the fact that none of the characters can own land. It is one of the 'white man's ventures to get natives and coloureds out of the towns' (95) and 'kill' the centres of black urban life, practically excluding them from the urban sphere and turning them into non-citizens. The journey becomes almost an escape without return, since the couple misses the last bus and must take an African taxi, so crowded that people sit on top of each other (98). Public transport allows the characters to escape but is presented as a way out that may quickly turn into a one-way street and exclusion from the urban. The semi-public African taxi maintains access, though limited, to modern urbanity appointing value to black communal self-organization.

The ambiguous portrayal of transport continues in the representation of private cars. On the one hand, they are associated with modernity and upper social mobility. Private cars are a status symbol, as exemplified by the character of the black, middle-class, car-owning doctor (71–76). On the other hand, the destruction of the protagonist's familial ties is aided by cars. One of his close friends is killed by a car (141–142), and the police approach in cars to arrest the people who belong to his new urban family (136, 165, 180). Transportation is simultaneously a symbol of modernity and a means of racial oppression. The increase in the portrayals of cars (however few there are in the narration) corresponds to a decrease in portrayals of mobility within domestic spaces. It cumulates in the arrest of Leah, Xuma's mother figure in Malay Camp, that leads to the dissolution of his new home (165). Yet, the novel suggests that racist regimes can be overcome once one has become aware of them and demands equal treatment and political participation in urban modernity. Supposedly, increased mobility through transport can be a means to create the modern civic subject by helping Xuma in his awakening as a leader for racial equality.

Cry, the Beloved Country: Urban Mobility and Rural Stagnation

The portrayal of transportation in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is similarly ambiguous as in *Mine Boy* and underlines that the novel's core message of racial reconciliation is imagined

under the leadership of white men. The protagonist, Kumalo, a black priest, first maps Johannesburg on foot, familiarizing himself with his new urban surroundings while finding his lost relatives in order to reunite the family in the countryside. Walking is presented as vulnerability to systematic racial violence and becomes replaced halfway through the first of the two parts of the book with mobility on public transport. Going by bus and train allows Kumalo to cover greater distances without being limited by his physical ability, thus reuniting his family. Apart from that, public transport is a symbol of access to urbanity and participation to the discourse on racial reconciliation. Nevertheless, it also correlates with the demise of his newly reunited family when it becomes evident that his son turned to crime in the city and his sister to prostitution. Conforming to gendered mobility discourses, his sister is only portrayed in fixed domestic settings while his son actively moves all over the city before his arrest, albeit he seems to do so on foot. The narration apparently reserves the portrayal of characters on public transport to those that work towards the resolution of South Africa's race conflict and have not committed any crime or moral transgressions.

Public transport here is not represented as an opportunity for a racially mixed mobile collective. An historical explanation could be the increasing double racialization by law and geography of that period, which meant that 'many bus, taxi and train services used by African passengers did use corridors which traversed "white" space, but racial mixing on board was contained by instruction and convention' (Pirie, 'Colours' 44). Later in the narrative, racial transgression on transport becomes only possible inside private automobiles.

The initial journey to Johannesburg takes place on a train (Paton 13–18) and gives Kumalo the opportunity to be present in the city, where he enters into a discourse with black and white characters about the solution to the racial conflict (57, 95, 110). Interestingly, the awareness of the necessity to overcome racist regimes is again found in a countryside setting, coming full circle to *An African Tragedy*. Kumalo becomes 'seeing' when he visits a rural institution where blind black people are cared for by white Christian clerics (Paton 79–81). Unlike in *Mine Boy*, the solution is situated in the reformation of the countryside, not in better access to urban modernity. Therefore, the novel continues the discourse of the genre of 'Jim Comes to Joburg' by situating black subjecthood in the rural periphery. Conforming to this genre, the first part of the novel ends with the protagonist's train journey back, accompanied by some of his family members. At the same time, the novel depicts more frequently the mobilities of a white character, a farmer, Jarvis, from the same village as the protagonist. Both characters are linked by death because Kumalo's son killed Jarvis's son. The white farmer is never portrayed on public transport. Jarvis moves around in private cars (Paton 116) and, upon the death of his son, is offered preferred air travel by the police, who inform him that 'if [he] wish[es he] could take an aeroplane' to Johannesburg (118).

In the second part of the novel, Kumalo is only portrayed walking and that mostly within the village perimeters. In contrast, Jarvis travels back and forth between different urban centres and the village to gather permission, resources, and people for the improvement of the village's agriculture. The decrease in Kumalo's mobility and absence of the use of public transport can be read as an increased limitation of agency in solving the racial conflict. Jarvis is presented with unlimited access to private transport and agency, which makes him the leader in overcoming the racial

conflict. This becomes especially obvious in the scene of their last meeting, where Jarvis sits on horseback conversing with Kumalo standing, while the priest thanks him from below for his efforts towards reviving the village. Ultimately, the modern civic subjects that the novel advocates stay heavily racialized and paternalized in *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Conclusion

Transportation as a symbol of modernity's freedom of movement and simultaneously of racial oppression becomes possible because public transport requires access, which can be controlled and has thus a gatekeeping function beyond the mobile collectives that temporarily come into existence in these literary representations of early Johannesburg. The controlling mechanism impacts not only the racial character of temporary mobile collectives but also wider discourses of (civic) belonging. The paradox arises out of the fact that Johannesburg is built on colonial mobilities where colonial subjects transfer their own discourses to new localities (Upstone 43), imparting racial and class limitations to the emerging public transport system in Johannesburg and its literary representations. Public transport is so particularly impactful because it shapes individual belonging as well as collective belonging and integrates them into existing discourses that equate modernity, free mobility, and civic community. The political character of the 'throwntogether' mobile collective in combination with the materially enclosed space of buses, trams, and taxis turns public transport into arenas of constantly practiced negotiations of transgressive identity formation. That is why an exclusion from these collectives has an impact on racial representation in the urban sphere in general. The selected texts offer examples of how this process works in literary representations. In Lub's short story, bus drivers function as gatekeepers to an urban modernity that is discursively constructed as white while entirely relying on black labour for its existence. In *An African Tragedy* it becomes evident that exclusion from mobility can never be complete because exceptions need to be granted in order for racialized communities, that form a population majority, to police themselves. 'An Experiment in Colour', *Mine Boy*, and *Cry, the Beloved Country* confirm the impossibility to completely exclude certain collectives from mobility regimes, especially in an urban and modern environment with its particular equation of mobility, race, and citizenship. The mobile collectives that form offer intimate encounters that make it necessary to redraw ethical priorities. However, the literary representations make it very clear that these are not per default challenges to existing hegemonic discourses on identity formation. Some of the narratives argue openly for the maintenance of class-based separation while others continue colonial discourses that firmly situate black subjecthood in the countryside. And none of the narratives challenge established gender norms on mobility or seek to actively engage with mobility regimes that pertain to the large group of people racialized as coloureds in South Africa. Mobile collectives are formative on an individual as well as a collective level because they demand practiced, daily negotiations of belonging caused by the selective 'throwntogetherness' of public transport as a material practice. These are practices that manifest themselves in immobility regimes and ideas of citizenship that outlast their context of origin and bring past hegemonic discourses on mobility into present South Africa.

Notes of Contributor

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