

**Exploring the South African gangster film
genre prior and post liberation: a study of
Mapantsula, Hijack Stories and *Jerusalema***

Poobendran Govender

2011

DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the academic requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Graduate Programme in
English Studies,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Poobendran Govender
Student number 201505857

Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the gangster film genre and how it has been used to represent the sociopolitical and economic conditions of South Africa over an extended period of time. Firstly, by looking at the early history of the influence of the gangster genre on South African audiences, specifically the Sophiatown generation, a history of the genre being strongly linked to sociopolitical conditions in South Africa is established. The project then focuses on South African-made gangster films, beginning with *Mapantsula* (1988) and how it speaks to the tumultuous times of the 1980s prior to liberation. It then proceeds to examine *Hijack Stories* (2000) as a gangster film that represents South African society post-liberation. Lastly, it examines *Jerusalema* (2008) as a recent example of the gangster film and its representation of current issues, problems and tensions within South African society. The project delves into the messages that the gangster genre in particular holds as a genre that is intimately linked to social, economic and political conditions. The use of the genre as a tool to represent the experiences of South Africans prior to and post liberation is of particular interest to this research.

Introduction: Genre and the Gangster Film

This chapter attempts briefly to define genre in film studies, discuss how genres operate and explore the importance of genre. It also offers an elaboration of the history of the gangster film as well as discussion of the ideas of its three most significant theorists.

Chapter 1: The Hollywood gangster figure in Sophiatown

This chapter examines the influence of the Hollywood gangster figure on the audiences of Sophiatown. It explores the emulation of the style, mannerisms and behavior of the cinematic gangster by the residents of Sophiatown as a way of adopting a resistant urban identity in opposition to the dominant ideology of the time. However, it is found that this resistance fails to effectively become political in the form of an anti-government resistance.

Chapter 2: *Mapantsula* as Pre-liberation South African Gangster Film

This chapter explores the relationship between the ‘pantsula’ subculture and the cinematic gangster and thereafter makes a case for how *Mapantsula* can be read as a gangster film. Furthermore, it goes on to study how *Mapantsula* works within the gangster genre framework looking at the politicization of Panic with a focus on pre-liberation South Africa.

Chapter 3: *Hijack Stories* as Post-liberation South African Gangster Film

This chapter examines *Hijack Stories* as a South African example of the gangster film by firstly situating it within the genre and then examining how it functions as a post-liberation South African gangster film around the period of its release. The gangster figure here is linked to ideas of authenticity and black experience.

Chapter 4: *Jerusalema* as recent Post-liberation South African Gangster Film

This chapter examines how *Jerusalema* uses the conventions of the gangster genre to explore current South African issues in particular, the tension between the ideology of capitalist entrepreneurship and that of restitution and social justice. It goes on to then study how it works as a post-liberation recent gangster film exploration of modern day South African society.

Conclusion

This chapter briefly examines how the gangster film genre has survived in South Africa over a long and shifting period of time and how it has spoken to different periods in South Africa’s history through the films discussed in this research. The gangster figure starts as a resistant figure in *Mapantsula* who slowly moves away from material pursuits and becomes politicized. Thereafter in *Hijack Stories*, the gangster figure is used to explore issues of black identity in the post-liberation period and to explore the growing divide between the recently advantaged and the still disadvantaged black South African. Finally, *Jerusalema* uses the

gangster genre to stage the contradictions of the “South African Dream” and the lack of a firm direction for South Africa as the ideologies of capitalism and social justice clash while the period after the fall of an order leaves much in question as a nation finds its identity.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Introduction: Genre and the Gangster Film | 1 |
| Chapter 1: The Hollywood gangster figure in Sophiatown | 11 |
| Chapter 2: <i>Mapantsula</i> as Pre-liberation South African Gangster Film | 33 |
| Chapter 3: <i>Hijack Stories</i> as Post-liberation South African Gangster Film | 61 |
| Chapter 4: <i>Jerusalema</i> as recent Post-liberation South African Gangster Film | 79 |
| Conclusion | 100 |
| Bibliography | 104 |

Introduction

Genre in film studies has been defined by a number of theorists in a number of different ways. The word genre is a French word which refers to a 'kind' or 'type' of something (Neale, 2000). Genre has also been defined as "patterns/ forms/ styles/ structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the filmmaker and their reading by an audience" (Neale, 1980, cited in Altman 2002:14). Schatz adds that "because it is essentially a narrative system, a film genre can be examined in terms of its fundamental structural components: plot, character, setting, thematic, style, and so on" (1999: 642). In his *Film Genre Reader* Barry Keith Grant defines genre movies as "commercial feature films which through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations" (1986: xi). The key word in this definition is "familiar" and thus points to one of the undeniable strengths of genre films – their popularity. Film genres have distinct characteristics and the genre into which a film is classified results in certain expectations, as well as in limitations on what the audience expects to find there. Thus if genre films rely on a formula with specific themes, characters, settings and concerns that have slight variations, they undoubtedly offer the audience something that is predictable, yet which they want to see. Leo Braudy has argued that "genre films... make us one with a large mass audience" (1999: 608). It is precisely the existence of this mass audience despite (or perhaps because of) the formulaic nature of the product that evidences the powerful impact that genre films have, as they speak strongly to a mass audience and keep them coming back almost ritualistically for more of the same thing. The question that is then raised is: what is it exactly that the audience keeps coming back to see?

Genre films on the whole have been extremely resilient, with major genres like the Western, musical, science fiction, horror and gangster films surviving for decades. If genre films were simply offering the same unchanging formula for years upon years, then they surely would have run their course by now, having bored the audience away. The fact that genre films are almost as popular today as they were decades ago suggests that they have managed to stay relevant over the years by adjusting to the different cultural contexts and the concerns of an ever-changing audience. Genre films have survived as long as they have both because they tap into powerful myths, contradictions, dilemmas and concerns at the heart of a culture and

because they are able to change in response to changing contexts. Therefore these films are so resilient both because of what doesn't change – a key set of thematic concerns – and because of what does: the way the formula is adaptable to changing cultural and historical contexts. As Altman says, “genres have essential qualities that makes it possible to align them with archetypes and myths and to treat them as expressive of broad and perdurable human concerns” (2002: 20).

If one were to look at the Western genre for example, which dates as far back as 1903 with the release of Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, the genre serves as a vehicle for examining the mythology that is central to American history, culture and identity: 'the myth of the frontier'. Westerns often contain the idea of a moving western frontier that is marked by adventure, danger and opportunity and that serves to distinguish and chart the path for Anglo-American settlement (Neale, 2000: 134). Western films are thus constructed around a resonant set of oppositions: on the one hand promoting a new American identity as one of superiority and opportunity while contrasting it to the savagery, barbarism and unintelligence of native Americans and also at the same time separating that new identity from the industrialism and class consciousness of Europe in favour of the notions of working the land and equality.

Initially the Western genre proved to be immensely popular; however, it would soon find itself in steady decline and by the 1970s had failed to draw audiences and even as early as 1963 had fallen as a proportion of Hollywood's output by 18 percent (Buscombe, cited in Neale, 2002: 27). There are numerous reasons for the Western's decline in popularity and chief among those would be the rapidly changing audience who were becoming more urbanized and could no longer relate to the seemingly conservative and discriminatory genre in the face of an increasingly urban and multicultural American society. The genre, however, did not simply die out but instead became smarter, so to speak, and adapted itself to modern audiences in a series of revisionist and parody films that tackled issues of race, gender and America's history with movies like *Unforgiven* (1992), *Posse* (1993), *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993) and the television series *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman* (1993-1998). *Unforgiven* features Morgan Freeman as a black character who is a partner to Eastwood's Munny and rides with him as an equal at the front of the pack. Freeman's Ned is astute and far from unintelligent as he is able to pick up things that Munny himself cannot, such as Kid's nearsightedness. Munny himself is a different take on the Alpha male cowboy, as he settled

down and had children and remains devoted to his dead wife. Van Peebles' *Posse* features a large ensemble cast of mostly black actors and depicts them as skilled marksmen, capable heroes and fighters against injustice. The roles of black characters in the Western were initially very marginal and without depth or much characterisation, often presented as helpers and inferior to the cowboys who saved the day. In *Posse* the black characters are the cowboys and are even pitted against villainous racist white characters like Billy Zane's Colonel Graham. *Geronimo: An American Legend* focuses on the Apache leader and his battle against the Anglo-American settlers who have taken his land and broken their promises. The film chronicles the rise of a group of Native Americans who reclaim what has been stripped of them as they break free of a US government reservation. Television series like *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman* (1993-1998) presented new roles for women in a genre that was traditionally misogynistic and that marginalised women. This revising of the genre is critical to its survival as indeed the Western, while not as popular as it once was, is still in existence today because it has adapted with changing audiences and used the conventions that have been established to revise and critique what has been established in response to changing social contexts. Thus the Western and other film genres have survived because they tackle these cultural myths, contradictions and dilemmas that are at the heart of culture and they adapt with changing contexts and audiences.

This brief discussion of the Western also serves to reveal another important characteristic of genre films: that they are able to draw on their past traditions and conventions and use those to make new genre films. As Leo Braudy says: "genre films forge a deliberate connection between each new instance of the genre and its past tradition and manifestations" (1999: 608). Contemporary examples or instances of a genre thus often critique, satirise and reposition the conventions of that genre in a very socially conscious manner that reveals problems with both past and the present social contexts and with previous uses of generic conventions while artistically manipulating the parameters of the genre.

The functions of genre have been discussed in two main ways and thus two very different approaches have emerged. The first is referred to as the "ritual approach" which, drawing from Valdimir Propp and Levi-Strauss, suggests that genres perform a ritual function in that audiences create genres and look to genre for a sense of reassurance and the organisation of what could be described as a virtual community (Altman, 2002). Thus this understanding of how genres function views genre films as offering solutions to actual societal problems. It

therefore envisions audiences having a vested interest in genre films because they are the audience's own way of reassuring themselves and envisioning what lies ahead for them. Conversely, the second approach is referred to as the "ideological approach" and draws from Marxist critics, and in particular Louis Althusser. Rather than seeing genre films as offering solutions to societal problems this approach views those same solutions as false promises that lure audiences into false imaginings of societal unity and future reassurance (Altman, 2002). Thus while the "ritual approach" envisions genre films as providing inventive and creative solutions to a society's real problems, the "ideological approach" views those same 'solutions' as deceptive false promises which promote false ideas about societal unity and future happiness. With regard to my research and the gangster genre specifically, the figure of the gangster in most instances is essentially tragic. Thus I do not truly see the genre as one that is offering an answer to a problem – real or false. The death of the gangster is not a *solution* to anything; it is a site of critique and an indication of how intransigent the *problem* is.

The gangster film, along with the Western, was the most largely studied and commented on film genre during the boom period of genre studies in the 1960s and 1970s. Most critics concur that the chronology of the American gangster film begins in 1912 with DW Griffith's *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*. The gangster genre would reach the height of its popularity in the 1930s with films like *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931) and *Scarface* (1932) and this is frequently referred to as its classic period. The gangster film was largely developed by the Warner Bros. Studio as they were responsible for producing many of these early films in the genre's classic period. Roddick has noted that in the 1930s Warner Bros. produced many 'social conscience' films as the big five studios were trying to differentiate themselves and create separate identities (1983, cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999: 176). Given this distinctive Warner Bros. focus on 'social conscience' films, the gangster film fitted in perfectly with the studio as gangster films dealt with contemporary issues and did not require period costumes or expensive sets, like the Western for example. Instead contemporary clothes, common settings like restaurants, offices and hotels and untouched exteriors were commonly used. This meant that the studio could cut costs while still creating films that were appealing to the audience as 'social problem films' (Cook and Bernink, 1999). With the introduction of sound in film and the Warner Bros. Studio amongst the pioneers of its development, the focus moved to creating a more realistic film that would bring to life more of the senses and display the new technology. The gangster film was thus

the perfect instrument to showcase this new feature, as elements like gunfire and screeching cars could be brought to life like never before and flaunt the novelty of sound in film.

Given this focus on realism in film and the popularity this garnered, coupled with the novelty of sound brought to life through the elements of the gangster film, studios turned toward American contemporary society for more inspiration. During the 1930s America would experience what was to be called 'The Great Depression'. In October of 1929 the stock market crashed disastrously. Businesses were forced to close, factories shut down, banks failed, agricultural income dropped by around 50% and many lost their life savings as the economic collapse deepened to the point where by 1932, one out of every four Americans was unemployed (Nelson, n.d.). This seemingly hopeless state of affairs resulted in the mass propagation of desperate criminals who turned to organized crime. Around this time period gangsters like Bonnie and Clyde, John Dillinger, Machine Gun Kelly, Ma Barker and her four sons and the infamous Al Capone would rise to notoriety and capture the fascination of the American public. The media thrived on their exploits, with numerous newsreels and headlines occupying front pages, and often sensationalising their crimes. One such headline, from 1934 is documented in the Indiana Commission on Public Records online database and reads: "Dillinger Escapes from Indiana Jail After Taking Away Pistol from Guard at Point of Self-Made Wooden Gun". The headline has below it a picture of the initially apprehended Dillinger posing with his arm on the shoulder of the prosecutor who in turn has his arm around Dillinger. The prosecutor, sheriff and others who surround Dillinger are clearly in awe of his celebrity.

It did not take long for the motion picture industry to latch on to the popularity of these outlaws and films began not only to feature these criminal characters but to borrow heavily from, and base their content upon, actual crimes. Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932) is based upon the life of Al Capone and features the notorious 'St. Valentine's Day Massacre' where Capone infamously had seven members of the rival George "Bugs" Moran gang murdered in a warehouse on Valentine's Day.

Another significant factor of American life during the early 20th century was Prohibition. With government becoming increasingly concerned about the consumption of alcohol they sought to make the sale of alcohol illegal and thus in the process phase out saloons, bars and reckless behavior (Rukin, 2001). Alcohol was blamed for many societal issues and the

prohibition of it was undertaken to stop crime, violence, the haphazard spending of income and even accidents at the workplace (Rosenberg, 2011). By as early as 1919 there were 36 states that had ratified the amendment and in effect had made the sale of alcoholic beverages illegal (Rukin, 2001). What this in fact resulted in, however, was the opening up of a new enterprise for the underworld – bootlegging. Gangsters would take over the now illegal alcohol business and supply and trade in the product that government had created a niche market for. These gangsters would run organised gangs to smuggle in rum from the Caribbean, commandeer whiskey from Canada and sneak it into America or even set up underground distilleries themselves, all of which were often served at secret bars operated by the gangsters where people could come to drink and socialise (Rosenberg 2011). Gangster films were quick to exploit the thrilling possibilities of the illegal business that Al Capone and others had built their empires on and often depicted scenes of bootleg trade as *Scarface* (1932) does, with protagonist Tony Camonte (based upon Capone himself) plying his trade in illicit liquor. Societal issues and problems have thus always been intimately linked with the gangster genre as it delved into real issues at the heart of a society. The problems that came about with ‘The Great Depression’ and the issues of Prohibition were depicted in the gangster film and it featured men, who faced trying times where the opportunities and ideals of ‘The American Dream’ were hard to find, as enterprising and entrepreneurial in their pursuits. Further to this, issues such as the distinction between legitimate businessman and criminal were tackled at a time where there was a mass criminalization of the American people as Prohibition had created a society where the average citizen broke the law regularly and law enforcement officers were seen as the enemy of the people while gangsters epitomized the entrepreneurial spirit and hard work that the ‘American Dream’ championed.

The gangster genre has thus always been intimately linked with actual societal problems and issues. As Andrew Tudor argues, “the construction of the genre was almost contemporaneous with the construction of the events themselves” (1974: 196-197). In America this genre has always spoken of and to contemporary audiences, delving into the deep-seated concerns of society such as survival during ‘The Great Depression’ and even offering reassurance, as the gangster figure does in reaffirming a strong sense of a masculine identity that is enterprising, tough and respected in a period where American males were faced with mass unemployment and restrictions due to the socio-political conditions of the time.

Critical writing on the gangster genre has been marked by three prominent critics in particular: Colin McArthur, Robert Warshow and Jack Shadoian. These three genre critics have each contributed in different ways to the understanding of the gangster genre.

Firstly, Colin McArthur offers an indispensable visual technique to analyse the gangster genre. McArthur stresses the importance of iconography, which he understands as “the continuity over several decades of patterns of visual imagery, of recurrent objects and figures in dynamic relationship” (1972, cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999: 174). These iconographic elements can be divided into three large categories. Firstly, the physical presence, attributes and dress of the actors and actresses and the characters they play are distinguishable as recurring features. For example, cinematic gangsters dress in a particular way; they typically wear flashy suits and hats and carry themselves with bravado. In line with McArthur’s recurring visual patterns concerning characters, there are also stock characters that recur from film to film such as the ‘moll’ or the ‘hothead’. Secondly, the urban milieu in which the characters operate has been identified by McArthur as recurring through numerous urban settings and environments (Hutchings, 2007). The world of the gangster is most distinctive as it is the city. Lastly, McArthur identifies the technology at the characters’ disposal as recurring from film to film and principally makes note of guns and cars as common elements of technology in the gangster genre.

Robert Warshow was the first genre critic to write about the gangster genre extensively, which he did in his seminal essay *The Gangster as Tragic Hero* (1948). Warshow firstly draws attention to the tragic narrative of the gangster film, when he says: “from its beginning, it has been a consistent and astonishingly complete presentation of the modern sense of tragedy” (1948: 12). Warshow also significantly classifies the narrative structure of the gangster film as possessing “a steady upward progress followed by a very precipitate fall” (1948: 15). This narrative structure has since come to be referred to as ‘the rise and fall’ pattern. The gangster starts off with great ambition and little else and works his way to the top illegally. His rapid success is then followed by an even more rapid decline with his fame and fortune all snatched away from him as it would appear that his misdeeds catch up with him. Warshow thus argues that the gangster film is a form of modern day tragedy and views the fall of the gangster as not simply restricted to the world of the gangster but as easily applicable to ordinary Americans as well:

At bottom the gangster is doomed because he is under the obligation to succeed, not because the means he employs are unlawful. In the deeper layers of the modern consciousness, all means are unlawful, every attempt to succeed is an act of aggression, leaving one alone and guilty and defenseless among enemies: one is punished for success. This is our dilemma: that failure is a kind of death and success is evil and dangerous, is – ultimately impossible.

(Warshow, 1948: 15)

Warshow thus sees the effect of the gangster film as encapsulating this dilemma and resolving it by the gangster's death. The gangster's failure is inevitable. As Warshow says, the gangster must emerge out of the crowd or be nothing, yet it is this emergence from the crowd that secures his death. What this points to is a contradiction that affects not just the gangster figure but all of American society as the 'American Dream' "summons" one to strive to seize opportunities and rise above their circumstances to, in a sense, have it all. At the same time, however, in a society that prides itself on happiness, equality, wholesome values and fairness, success is individual aggression that is imposed on others, garnering hatred, bitterness and enemies such that the successful man is a criminal. The gangster's death therefore exposes this contradiction, as he is knocked back down to being a failure for he has failed while succeeding and while previously being an ordinary nobody, was succeeding while failing. This is the paradox that Warshow illuminates in *The Gangster as Tragic Hero* as these two positions are irreconcilable yet both are very much a part of the underlying philosophies of American society.

What Warshow offered in *The Gangster as Tragic Hero*, Jack Shadoian would build on and present in his 1977 essay *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster/Crime Film*. Shadoian's thesis concerns the fact that the structure of the gangster film is "ready made for certain kinds of concerns" (1977, cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999: 175). Shadoian argues that these concerns arise from the contradictions of 'The American Dream' which has at its foundation the drive to succeed and yet at the same time the ideals of a classless society where every man, woman and child is equal. Therefore, if America is indeed the land of opportunity and is driven by the idea to "have it all" and to rise above the general population and succeed, it cannot at the same time be classless and democratic in the sense that the basic principle of democracy is that all members of society are equal rather than divided by wealth,

possessions or social class. Central to Shadoian's thesis then is the idea that the gangster genre presents a "construction of the contradictions of capitalism as the simultaneous summoning and restricting of desire" (Cook and Bernink, 1999: 175).

Shadoian further argues that the gangster genre reflects society and changes as that society changes. He argues that in the early 1930s gangster films like *Scarface* and *Little Caesar* owed their popularity to "the public's fascination with actual criminals and their exciting, if alarming, exploits" (Shadoian, 1977, cited in Almarendez, 1980: 37). Shadoian thus attributes the importance of these early gangster films to the audience at the time, to the gangster's "show of strength within the disintegration of the depression" (1977, cited in Almarendez, 1980: 37). Thus the gangster genre provided a response to the crises of the time. As Marx has noted, "he [the gangster] was the reassurance that when the going got tough, the tough would get going: mobile, bounding with energy, resourcefulness and a kind of courage reminiscent of the Old West" (1996: 12). Shadoian thus argues that in the 30s audiences needed to be faced with the truth of hard times, but also to be reminded of the value of the human spirit and be provided in a sense with psychological support.

Moreover, in line with Shadoian's thesis that gangster films reflect the cultural context in which they are produced, he argues that as time went by the genre changed to reflect the changing contexts and by the 1940s it was less concerned with tragedy than the restrictions on individual freedom. "America had beat the depression and won the war, but all it had accomplished was to create new and more complex problems in place of the old, problems the structures of the genre was ready to handle" (Shadoian, 1977, cited in Almarendez, 1980: 37). The genre dealt with this by shifting towards film noir "where views of freedom and possibility narrow" (Shadoian, 1977, cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999). After the war cynicism and nihilism were very prevalent and were reflected in the genre in movies like *High Sierra* (1941) as film noir offered deep introspection, existential confusions and fatalism (Marx, 1996: 16). The late 1940s then reacted against the fatalism of film noir by affirming individual effort with movies like *Kiss of Death* (1947). As America moved into the 1950s Shadoian notes that gangster films began to, "take aim at well-defined targets. They are less detached and more morally outraged than films of the period 1945 -1950. They are looking to punch their way out of what noir sank defeatedly back into" (1977, cited in Marx 1996: 15). Shadoian further argues that the gangster films of the 1950s would go on to mirror the tensions of the cold war by connecting crime to communism and also reacting

against the placidity of the nation by interrogating the “guilts, fears and disturbances... hidden beneath social rituals that desensitised personal feeling and paralysed individual wills” (1977, cited in Almendarez, 1980: 37). Finally Shadoian sees the genre as moving into a modernist phase with movies like *Point Blank* (1967) which he refers to as a “non-illusionistic cinema” that prevents the audience from believing they are watching a real world as “the gangster is no longer to be confused with reality but is obviously an imaginative accretion of the culture’s schizophrenia and five decades of finding out how celluloid can be used and joined” (Shadoian, 1977, cited in Almendarez, 1980).

Thus Shadoian sees the genre as one where contemporary tensions are always reflected and issues, contradictions, problems and matters that concern a particular society will be explored. In addition Shadoian regards the gangster as outside and opposed to society, one who violates a set of rules that society lives by and in doing so makes visible the limitations and contradictions of those rules. He states, “meanings emerge whether deliberate or not, about the nature of society and the kind of individuals it creates” (1977, cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999).

The ideas of these three influential theorists will be most valuable in exploring the films to be studied in the proceeding chapters. The gangster film can be adapted to a different national context, but the figure of the gangster remains an effective way to stage both the aspirations that a particular socio-historical context gives rise to, and the forces that limit or punish those aspirations.

Chapter One: The Hollywood Gangster Figure in Sophiatown

In order to examine the portrayal of the gangster in South African gangster films, it is necessary to first look at what the figure has already represented to South African audiences. This will be done by looking at the influence of the gangster genre on the audiences of Sophiatown in the 1950s.

In 1903 Edward S. Porter would direct one of the earliest examples of narrative films in the history of cinema entitled *The Great Train Robbery* (Dirks, 2004). A year later in 1904, the film would be screened in one of South Africa's first cinemas 'The Empire' in Johannesburg (Gutsche, 1972). The importance of *The Great Train Robbery* was considerable as it was not only one of the earliest films to prove that film could be an international commercially successful medium but also served as the precursor to both the western and gangster film genres. While most critics acknowledge D.W.Griffith's *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912) to be the very first gangster film, I would propose that Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* was indeed the first narrative film to contain many early elements of the gangster genre. The film includes scenes of a daring robbery, organized crime, a gun battle between one of the gang members and an employee trying to protect the loot onboard the train, the robbery of the passengers, the violent assault of an innocent man by one of the gang members, who shoves him off the train after beating him senseless with a lump of coal, a fast-paced getaway with the loot, and a face-off with the authorities that leads to the violent deaths of all of the gang members one by one.

The gang members are all dressed in a similar fashion that marks them as gang members in dark outfits with boots, dark shirts, pants, belts and hats while the other characters in the film wear lighter coloured clothing without the same hats, boots, dark shirts and pants of the gang members. The hothead stock character that would become a staple of the gangster genre is even on display to a degree as one of the passengers tries to flee after they are all taken off the train and is instantly shot in the back with no warning or second thought by one of the gang members. Additionally, for the first time, there is a strong focus on one of the most important pieces of visual iconography of the gangster genre, as much later identified by Colin McArthur (1972): the gun. The climax of the film centres around this very piece of iconography as it entails a violent shootout between the gang members and authorities and concludes with all the guns of the dead gang members taken in addition to the reclaimed loot. Moreover, the film ends with a unique sequence as one of the gang members is shown very

much alive pointing his gun directly at the camera and proceeding to pull his trigger at what would be the audience. Of the 14 scenes in this early film, 12 of them focus on the gang members, which again is very much in line with the classic gangster genre films that would come some 30 years later, which indeed did revolve around the lives and crimes of the gangsters they depicted rather than those of the lawmen who tried to instil justice and bring about their downfall.

Thus rather than just being the precursor to the western genre, as it is often acknowledged to be, Edward S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* does indeed prove to be an early forerunner of the gangster genre. The movie also suggests a rise and fall pattern that would much later be classified by Robert Warshaw (1948) as one of the defining characteristics of the gangster genre. After capturing the loot on board the train by blowing up the strong box and stripping the passengers of their valuables outside the train, the gang members flee through the woods where they have horses waiting for them. During the getaway they are confronted by the authorities and engage in a shootout leaving one member of the gang dead. Nevertheless they manage to get away and empty the contents of their bags on the ground, gleefully going through their stolen possessions. The robbers kneel down and enjoy running their hands through their ill-gotten loot while celebrating their take. A short while later the gang is suddenly confronted by the authorities and rather than surrender, they instead open fire and engage in a shootout. The first gang member is shot almost instantly, then the second is shot after standing and firing and finally the last one stands alone shooting until he too goes down only to attempt to get up and fire some more before being shot again at close range. The authorities seize the loot from the dead criminals and claim their guns too. This rise and fall structure is very much an early precursor to the rise and fall pattern that would permeate the genre and mark the violent deaths of classic gangster protagonists Tony Camonte, Rico Bandello and Tom Powers in three of the most widely cited classic gangster films *Scarface* (1932), *Little Caesar* (1930) and *The Public Enemy* (1931) respectively.

Furthermore, a case could also be made for the framework of the gangster genre being relevant to *The Great Train Robbery*. This framework allows for a social interrogation of issues within a society as Shadoian would argue decades later in *Dreams and Dead Ends* (1977). The film itself is based on actual events:

The film was originally advertised as "a faithful duplication of the genuine

'Hold Ups' made famous by various outlaw bands in the far West." The plot was inspired by a true event that occurred on August 29, 1900, when four members of George Leroy Parker's (Butch Cassidy) 'Hole in the Wall' gang halted the No. 3 train on the Union Pacific Railroad tracks toward Table Rock, Wyoming. The bandits forced the conductor to uncouple the passenger cars from the rest of the train and then blew up the safe in the mail car to escape with about \$5,000 in cash.

(Dirks, 2004)

Thus real life events and concerns of American society at the time were being delved into on film as audiences were presented with a film based on actual crimes of the time complete with a sense of the sensationalism of such daring crimes and a neat message of retribution as good wins the day and the criminal elements in society are punished for their crimes succinctly, affirming a sense of justice in society. Furthermore just prior to the release of the film, in 1901 the 25th American President William Mckinley was assassinated in public and died 8 days later (Kingseed, 2001). This combined with the brazen crimes of the time would have created a sense of sensationalism, fear and insecurity in the American people and thus a movie like *The Great Train Robbery* would explore the public's fascination with such crimes while still delivering a comforting message of justice, retribution, the 'crime does not pay' moral and fostering a sense of security in American society.

Meanwhile, in South Africa the reception of this precursor to the gangster film in 1904 by South African audiences was a warm one. Due to the lack of research and documentation of this early period in South African film history not many details are known about the reception of the film; however, South African film authority, Thelma Gutsche, is one researcher who has a small note on the film's reception in her book *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940*. Gutsche briefly describes the screening of the film in Johannesburg as "a great success", emphasizing that it was the perceived "realism" of the film that was its most impressive feature (1972: 71).

During the mid twentieth century, on the other hand, the popularity of the gangster film appears to have reached an all-time high in the township of Sophiatown. Through the books

that document the history of Sophiatown, the many autobiographies from black intellectuals that were written by former residents of Sophiatown and from *Drum* magazine, which ran throughout the 1950s, one can get a sense of just how influential the Hollywood gangster genre was on a South African audience half a century ago, and some twenty years after the heyday of the classic Hollywood gangster film. Sifting through these sources, a sense of the influence of the gangster genre on both the intellectuals of the time but also the common man will become apparent.

Just prior to the turn of the last century a pioneering investor by the name of Tobiansky acquired 237 acres of land just outside of central Johannesburg. After a few failed ventures he began to sell plots of the land, which he named in honour of his wife Sophia. What was most significant about this selling of plots of land is that Tobiansky sold them indiscriminately to people of any race and by mid-century there were over forty thousand residents in Sophiatown from various ethnic backgrounds (Hannerz, 1994: 165). Former Sophiatown resident, writer, journalist and acclaimed South African poet Don Mattera describes Sophiatown as a place where:

nobody looked at the colour of your skin . It was who you were that counted.

This is why I say that in another time Sophiatown will be reborn. Not the

Sophiatown of the slums, but the Sophiatown of the idea, the ethic.

(cited in Nicol, 1991: 230)

Sophiatown in many regards served as a multicultural experiment foreshadowing what has now become known as 'The New South Africa'. However, with its ethos of multiculturalism and social integration, Sophiatown was inevitably destroyed by the pro-segregationist apartheid government in 1955. Nonetheless, Sophiatown of the 1950s offers a unique location to investigate the reception of the gangster genre in South Africa as it served as a microcosm of South Africa of the time and also provides a varied look at how both intellectuals of the time and the general public regarded the gangster film.

Sophiatown, unlike most townships of the time, boasted two cinemas, the Odin and the Picture Palace (often referred to as the 'Balanski' after the owner). Of all the different types of films screened at these two theatres in Sophiatown, two genres would emerge as by far the most popular: the Western and the gangster or crime film (Modisane, 1986; Nicol 1991; Nixon 1994). Of these two genres the gangster film would prove to be far more popular

amongst Sophiatown audiences. In his book detailing the making of *Drum* magazine, former editor Anthony Sampson notes the popularity of both the Western and gangster film but lumps the two genres together with the term “bang-bang films” (1956: 97). This description, however, unwittingly conceals the numerous differences between the two genres and does little to suggest why the gangster film would be better received than the Western. A close reading of the autobiography of former Sophiatown resident, writer, actor and *Drum* journalist Bloke Modisane, on the other hand, offers insight into the matter as he vividly recalls fighting a gang of white boys at a mud pool as a boy himself:

...we are always playing cowboys and Indians. The mud pool was the Wild West of America or the dark interior of Africa; and to us, out there in the pool, the white boys were the Red Indians, and we were the cowboys.

(Modisane, 1986: 17)

Early westerns were often based on moral absolutism as there were ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ and little in between. Furthermore the opposition between good and evil was often depicted along racial lines. There was little moral ambiguity when it came to Native American characters. They were generally depicted as wild savages that were a threat to Anglo-American settlement. In Modisane’s description of playing as a youth, imagining himself a cowboy in opposition to the ‘Red Indians’ of the white children, lies a desire to switch positions with the empowered and to move away from and reject the figure of the ‘racially inferior’ other. It was, I would suggest, this lack of moral complexity and the depiction of innately villainous ‘Red Indian’ characters in opposition to innately good and technologically advanced white cowboys, that resulted in the Western genre not being as popular with Sophiatown audiences as the gangster genre. Another former Sophiatown resident and fellow journalist at *Drum*, Lewis Nkosi, says the following of the Western films screened in Sophiatown:

I definitely identified with the weak... people who were unarmed. Not because I knew anything about Indian culture versus white culture, but simply because they were unarmed and I saw the same forces ranged against them, the same technologies ranged against them, that seemed to be at play in my own particular situation.

(cited in Nixon, 1994: 35)

Thus there existed many similarities between the 'Red Indians' in many of the western films screened in Sophiatown and the black residents of the township who found that they could not support the same domination of 'Red Indians' by the white cowboys that they themselves experienced at the hands of similar white forces that oppressed and marginalised them. In addition to this the 'myth of the frontier' that was pivotal to the western genre and romanticised America as a place of unlimited free land and thus unlimited free opportunity, would not have gone over very well with Sophiatown audiences who would have realised sooner or later that they were in the same boat as the 'Red Indians' and did not share in this romanticisation of early settlement on 'free' land.

One of the most revealing features of the films screened in Sophiatown and available to black audiences is that they were carefully prescribed. The Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) which was often frequented by Sophiatown residents, would screen films and put on cultural shows (Huddleston, 1956). However, their content was condescendingly designed to cater for 'the Bantu', and the American Reverend Ray Phillips who was in charge of the BMSC had a patronizingly paternal view of the role of cinema in South Africa. Phillips was of the belief that whites went to the cinema to be entertained whereas blacks should be educated there (Couzens 1985). Phillips also strongly believed and brought into effect at the BMSC the notion that films shown to black audiences should be without negative depictions of white characters and should instead "promote wholesome images of European characters" (Couzens, 1985: 292). Moreover, in the 1950s, the South African Board of Censors had already decided to ban any films that portrayed 'Red Indian' characters as 'good fellows' and white men as crooks, because of the fear of the bad influence it would have on the 'natives' (Nixon, 1994: 34). Thus with these restrictions limiting the types of Western films screened to Sophiatown audiences, I propose that part of the reason the gangster genre far surpassed the Western in terms of popularity was that the types of Westerns largely available were of the 'cowboys and Indians' variety with the 'myth of the frontier' firmly entrenched that depicted on screen a racially based subjugation and romanticism of free land and opportunities that black South African audiences found themselves unable to support without betraying their own circumstances and feelings in South Africa.

During the late 1940s and 50s black South Africans were experiencing a change in identity as they moved away from rural areas to new urban areas. A new sense of identity had to be

formed as rural conventions, hierarchies and traditional values were out of place in the rat race of the city. The South African government, while wanting to use cheap black labour, also wanted to keep black South Africans away from the cities as places of permanent settlement and apparent advancement. The government had embarked on a process of retribilisation. In fact one of the very reasons Sophiatown was demolished was because it was deemed to be too close to the city and was thus later replaced with the white suburb Triomf. However, Sophiatown residents embraced the urban and rejected the rural in defiance of what the government prescribed to them. Alan Paton's *Cry The Beloved Country*, although extremely successful around the world, was rejected outright by Sophiatown's residents in Lionel Rogosin's film shot in 1950s Sophiatown, *Come Back Africa* (1959). The objections made to the book by Sophiatown residents and intellectuals in the film concern its portrayal of city life in Johannesburg as a cesspool for the 'native' while it is contrasted to the 'natural' home of the 'native': tranquil rural Natal. The notion that black South Africans were being lead astray, away from their natural, ideal place toward an evil city did not sit well with the residents in the film who felt patronized and treated as children by such an account of African life. It is thus the characteristic urban setting of the gangster genre that McArthur classifies as one of the iconographic features of the gangster film that would have appealed so much to Sophiatown residents, rather than the distinctly rural setting of the Western, as the gangster genre brought to life as never before their own struggle to adapt and survive in the urban environment.

Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932) is one cinematic classic that can be used to show just why the Hollywood gangster film had such an influence on the residents of Sophiatown. The protagonist of *Scarface*, the poor Italian second-generation immigrant Tony Camonte, finds himself drawn towards the ethos of the 'American Dream' and the idea of "having it all" but due precisely to his immigrant status cannot achieve his goals legally. Similarly, black South Africans of the time could not achieve desirable levels of wealth, ownership and belonging due to their non-white status that left them treated as aliens, not unlike the immigrant Camonte. Unlike the Western which often portrayed Native American characters as evil, and white cowboys as heroes, the gangster genre often depicted the struggles of an immigrant in American society which audiences in South Africa could identify with much more. Furthermore, Camonte and his fellow second generation Italian immigrants move away from some of the traditions of their Italian culture as it seems to restrict them in their new land. There is a sense of an old world and a new one as Camonte and other second generation

Italian immigrants come to terms with urban American society. This transition from the homeland to the new urban environment in the new land is very similar to what black South Africans underwent as they migrated from rural areas to the cities and townships.

In *Scarface* the character Angelo is a slow-witted henchman who, unlike Camonte, speaks in a thick Italian accent, which highlights his first generation immigrant status and function as representative of the old homeland. Angelo for the most part is portrayed humorously, (up until his rather pathetic death at the end of the film) and is the target of ridicule from the more urbanized Italian immigrants. In a memorable scene in the film Angelo pulls out his gun and tries to shoot the phone receiver in an attempt to fix the person on the other side of the line. His inability to use the technology of the urban environment is a marked one and depicts the ineffectuality of tradition and old values in the city. The older generation of Italian immigrants is further represented by Camonte's ineffectual mother. She plays a very marginal role in the film, seen as restricted to the domestic sphere where her attempts to chastise her son and protect her daughter are in vain, as neither will listen to her. She wears an ethnic shawl in contrast to her daughter's far less conservative American urban dress. Her daughter brushes aside her warnings and advice by telling her mother that she will live her own life. The old woman responds in broken English by saying: "Yeah! All of the time, Tony say like that. Afterward, he no belong to me no more". The division between the old country values and those of the younger generation is very clear and leaves Cesca and Tony's mother feeling as if she has lost both of her children. This illustrates the differences between the old traditional ways and the adaptations that have been made in the new land. Furthermore, 'Big' Louis Costillo is also a representative of the old Italian immigrant and is presented in the film as the last of the old-time gangsters. He speaks in broken English with a thick accent and unwittingly brags about his accomplishments moments before he is killed: "Look at me. A man-a always gotta know what he's got-a enough. I've gotta plenty. I gotta house, I gotta automobile, I gotta nice-a girl, (burp), I gotta stomach trouble too". Louis is thus the last of a dying breed in that once he is killed by Tony the gangsters that remain are urban, slick, newer generation Italian immigrants who are not as awkward in the new land as characters like Angelo, Louis and mother Camonte.

Don Mattera discusses an interesting parallel from Sphiatown in his autobiography. Mattera notes that there was a firm distinction between black urban residents and those that were fresh from the countryside. Those that were not urbanized and displayed country demeanors

were dubbed ‘moegoes’ or ‘greenhorns’ in Sophiatown (1987: 78). The latter term refers to an inexperienced or naïve person that is very gullible and easily tricked and the prior refers to a simpleton or a fool. A greenhorn is also a slang term used to describe a newly arrived immigrant or newcomer (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2009). The term greenhorn is also used in Sophiatown’s favourite gangster film, *The Street With No Name* (1948). Thus the portrayal of characters like Angelo, Big Louis and mother Camonte who are very old fashioned Italian immigrants, still very much belonging to the old country and lacking the urban sophistication that the younger generation sports, was easily lifted by Sophiatown audiences to describe their own rural, inexperienced ‘country bumpkins’ as the parallels between the two contexts were very similar.

The gangster film would also prove to be very influential when it came to the way people spoke in Sophiatown. Tsotsitaal soon emerged as the popular lingo in the township. This pidgin blended isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, Afrikaans and interestingly Hollywood gangster talk into a single seamless lingo (Thema, 1999: 103). Anthony Sampson, the former editor of *Drum*, describes this colourful use of Hollywood gangster talk during a trip to a “non-European” cinema in his autobiography:

The cinema was packed with tsotsis, shouting and catcalling...
Everyone was talking Afrikaans, tsotsi slang or Chicago-ese. A
man...turned round to us from the next row, snarling as he chewed
gum. “Say, ain’t youse the *Drum* guys, brother?”

(1956: 81)

Former Sophiatown resident, writer and journalist Derrick Thema also provides further evidence of words lifted directly from gangster films and incorporated into everyday speech in Sophiatown. He notes in his book documenting the life of Sophiatown gangster Kortboy, that the word ‘palooka’ became synonymous in Sophiatown with ‘moegoe’ and also that the word hooch was adopted for the varieties of liquor brewed in the township (1999: 103).

Nixon also notes how common it was to hear tsotsis in Sophiatown use lines from their favourite gangster films:

Sophia gangs embellished their lingo with punchlines from *Street With No Name* and other cult movies: ‘Remember guys I’m the brains

of this outfit'; 'take some bucks and go buy you some nice clothes.

I like my boys to look smart.'

(1994: 33)

The gangster movie would thus influence the way residents of Sophiatown spoke, but also as suggested in the above quotation, the way they dressed. Clothing forms an integral part of the visual iconography of the gangster as discussed when looking at McArthur earlier. In *Scarface* as Tony Camonte gains in power, money and respect he also begins to improve the value of his wardrobe. His suits become more expensive and more noticeable. Likewise, in *Street With No Name*, Stiles is meticulously decked out in expensive suits, shoes, hats and rendezvous coats. In fact when Stiles recruits a new member into his gang, the first bit of advice he gives to him is: "Go buy yourself a closetful of clothes. I like my boys to look sharp". Thus in line with McArthur's taxonomy of gangster iconography, expensive clothes and suits in particular serve as a marker of the gangster and also importantly as a signifier of the 'made man'. This concept was readily captured by the men of Sophiatown as they followed suit and clothing became a defining characteristic of the Sophiatown tsotsi just as it was for the Hollywood gangster. Revealingly, the word tsotsi itself was derived from a corruption of the American idiom 'zoot suit', which referred to the attire made popular by Hollywood gangsters (Nixon, 1994: 33; Fenwick, 1996: 620). In an attempt to emulate the narrow trousers of their heroes some tsotis even went as far as to vaseline their legs in order to fit into them (Nixon, 1994: 33).

McArthur's identification of the urban environment as a significant setting in the gangster film is also relevant to Sophiatown as the shebeens and locales of Sophiatown began to echo those of the Hollywood gangster. Shebeens were an important and much loved component of Sophiatown cultural life and existed as a place where residents could unwind and escape their hardships for a while. They were also used as meeting places for the planning and discussion of crimes and other activities. Leader of the infamous Sophiatown 'Americans' gang George Mbalweni refers to the Sophiatown shebeen 'Back o' the Moon' as "die Americans se spot" (cited in Stein and Jacobson, 1986: 70). The bars and speakeasies of the Hollywood gangster's world were strikingly similar to the shebeens of Sophiatown. Further to this, Sophiatown's popular venue 'The Ritz' was remarkably similar to the hangouts of the Hollywood gangster. Camonte in *Scarface* frequents the dining and dancing locale 'Paradise'

and *Street With No Name* depicts much the same type of establishment with the 'Meadowbrook'.

In addition to the above, there were certain figures that both the Hollywood gangster film and Sophiatown had in common. The imposing authority figure, the crooked cop, the sought-after yet marginalised woman, the lookout and illegal alcohol traders were common in both Sophiatown and the world of the Hollywood gangster. The cinematic enemy of the Hollywood gangster is the authority figure, as is the case in *Scarface* where Camonte is hounded by the police, questioned and assaulted by them and faces off with them on numerous occasions. Similarly the residents of Sophiatown were endlessly at odds with the police who regarded being black as synonymous with being a criminal. In *Scarface* Inspector Guarino offers a warning to Camonte that would have been all too familiar for the residents of Sophiatown:

You come into this town and you think you're headed somewhere, don't you? Someday you're gonna stumble and fall down in the gutter...right where you belong... I've spent my life mixing with your breed and I don't like it. Get me?

(*Scarface*, 1932)

With the residents of Sophiatown being constantly at odds with the police and with dialogue like this characterising cinematic face-offs with the police, I would argue that it didn't take much for the men of Sophiatown to identify with the Hollywood gangster. In addition to this there is also evidence that the genre did indeed influence the opposition between residents and the police as the identification with the cinematic gangster against the oppositional police began to fuel actions. The leader of the 'Vultures' gang notes: "when we fought the cops we were actively fighting against an enemy, it was a life-and-death battle against an enemy, just as we saw portrayed in the movies" (cited in Nicol: 1991 58). In *Street With No Name*, Stiles deals with another familiar figure to Sophiatown residents, the crooked cop. *Drum* editor Sylvester Stein, for example, documents in his autobiography how *Drum* writer Todd Matshikiza and his wife Esme, along with Stein and his wife, bribed the police into letting them go while being booked for an interracial gathering offence. Similarly, in *Street With No Name*, Stiles bribes the police into looking away from his organized criminal activities and also providing him with information.

The character of the trophy woman is one that recurs throughout the gangster genre and is on display in *Scarface* with the glamorous Poppy. Such a character is often seen as a trophy and a symbol of the status of the gangster and what he has accomplished. Former Sophiatown resident, Queeneth Ndaba states: “you were in trouble in Sophiatown if you were a beautiful woman” (cited in Glaser 1992: 49). There existed a sense of woman as status symbol and thus they were often treated as possessions that gangsters would fight each other over. Kortboy, for instance, once infamously claimed a woman from a rival gang’s territory, which resulted in a gang war between the ‘Americans’ and the ‘Skietmekaar’ gang (Thema, 1999: 37). If a gangster was courting an attractive woman, a fellow gangster high up in the hierarchy could challenge him and the woman (or the spoils) would go to the victor. In the Hollywood gangster film similar notions of woman as possession and symbol of status within the gangster hierarchy existed. Camonte has his eye on the glamorous Poppy and eventually when he has his former boss and Poppy’s lover, Johnny Lovo at his mercy, the latter bargains with his possession Poppy: “I’ll give you anything you want...you can have Poppy Tony. I’ll tell her”. Camonte disposes of Lovo and claims Poppy with the casual phrase: “go pack your stuff”, which she readily does. Don Mattera reinforces the idea of the Hollywood gangster influencing the way women were regarded in Sophiatown as he reflects upon his experience with women as a young tsotsi: “during those days it was risky business to refuse me, the leader... it was one of the fringe benefits of being a gangster” (1987: 3). Furthermore, the Hollywood gangster is often misogynistic and violent towards women. Stiles slaps his wife repeatedly and manhandles her when he believes that she has ‘ratted’ on him. Similarly Camonte also hits his sister to keep her in line. Thus a sense of masculinity being bolstered and defined by the control of women as possessions was very apparent in the gangster movies of the time and this was exactly what would happen in Sophiatown among the tsotis who idolized cinematic gangsters. Can Themba describes the first ‘romance’ of Dolly Rathebe with a gangster named Hasie with the words, “he hit her into loving him” (1985: 178). Thus the Hollywood gangster genre appears to have influenced the treatment of women by the men of Sophiatown in that it reinforced and promoted the misogynistic ideas of women as possessions and violence against women to reaffirm a masculine identity under an oppressive and emasculating apartheid system that mirrored the same social issues that protagonists of Hollywood gangster films confronted in America, as they tried to achieve success, power, fame and fortune as emasculated immigrants and ‘nobodies’ in their quest of the ‘American Dream’.

While the role of the gangster's 'moll' seems to be one forced upon women in Sophiatown from the above accounts, there is also evidence to suggest that like the men of Sophiatown, the women too identified with their counterparts on screen in the form of the glamorous molls of the genre and sought to emulate them. There was a sense of prestige that came from being the girlfriend of a fast-living gangster in Sophiatown as only the most attractive women were partners to these gangsters. Mattera describes the rise of his gang 'The Vultures' by saying: "territorial gains had been made. Younger gangs had been usurped... the girls were moving after us" (1987: 55). Dolly Rathebe further adds that initially "it was thrilling to be a strong-man's moll. The other girls envied her... and she could go to shows and movies when she liked" (cited in Themba 1985: 178). A moll could also afford to dress far better than the average Sophiatown woman and as noted by Glaser, their dress was influenced by the popular movies of the time as they tried to imitate Hollywood fashion (1992: 55). As mentioned earlier the most popular movies of the time were *Street With No Name*, *Scarface* and other such gangster films, thus providing an argument that just like the men of Sophiatown, the women of Sophiatown were also influenced by the gangster genre in terms of behavior and dress.

The 'lookout' is also not out of place in the world of the cinematic gangster and is an important part of Stiles' crimes in *Street With No Name*. In Sophiatown the lookout was also deployed to warn of the approaching police. Don Mattera recalls from his days as a young tsotsi: "women paid us to keep watch for the police truck known as the kwela-kwela" (1987:53). Former resident of Sophiatown and the biographer of Sophiatown gangster Kortboy, Derrick Thema, also notes that, "beerbrewers posted a isiyembangoti – factotum – at the gate to look out for cops, if he spotted them he'd whistle or swear loudly as if angry with someone...allowing anyone – even wanted criminals – to make a dash for it" (1999: 17). These beer brewing women lead me to my next key area of identification between Sophiatown residents and the world of the Hollywood gangster.

With the coming of Prohibition in America, the illegal business of bootlegging grew rapidly. From 1920 to 1933 it was forbidden by law to make and sell alcoholic drinks in America in an attempt by the government to curb the many problems associated with alcohol. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2000: 932). This illegal business of bootlegging was often portrayed in the gangster film, as in *Scarface* where Camonte and others make a profitable business from selling illegal liquor under Prohibition. Similarly, in Sophiatown illegal beer

brewing was a fairly common yet illegal and difficult way to make a living. The apartheid government prohibited the brewing of African beer and indeed the sale of any form of alcohol to black South Africans. Just as in Camonte's world, these restrictions opened up a market for the production and sale of alcohol. The brewing of alcohol with colourful names like sebakala le masenke (leaning on the fence), skokiaan and Barberton was undertaken by women in the township (Thema, 1999: 17). Bloke Modisane and his siblings, for example, were educated from the money his mother made from illegal alcohol brewing (1986: 35). Another Sophiatown alumnus, Ezekiel Mphahlele, also recounts in his autobiography how his mother used the money from her beer brewing to provide for their family (1959: 24). Thus the link between illegal alcohol trading in the gangster film and in Sophiatown was a firm one and one that Sophiatown residents of different backgrounds could easily identify with.

Most significantly, the influence of the Hollywood gangster genre on Sophiatown residents becomes apparent when interrogating the criminal activities of the township tsotsis. Many of the males in Sophiatown began to subscribe to a tsotsi lifestyle as they were faced with an identity crisis as a result of moving from rural to urban spheres where families were broken up and traditional knowledge, conventions and values were not useful. The reason behind this move away from traditional African values is perhaps best explained by Clive Glaser's idea of "urban-rural family instability" (Glaser, 2000: 26). Glaser reasons that families became divided as men moved into the cities leaving behind wives, children and elders. These newcomers to the city would then also resettle there and form new relationships and makeshift families there. Psychologically speaking such "family instability is one of the leading causes of juvenile delinquency" (Shaffer, 2002: 548). Hence this would explain why the potential existed for delinquency and a tsotsi culture. Even youngsters who came from intact families were often left unsupervised as both parents had to work in order to make ends meet, thus resulting in an unsupervised, impoverished and marginalized black youth who had a lot of free time on their hands. One of the favourite pastimes of the youth of Sophiatown became attending cinema shows at one of the two local theatres. The most popular movies screened in Sophiatown were Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932), Mervyn Le Roy's *Little Caesar* (1930) and William Keighley's *Street With No Name* (1948) (Nixon, 1994: 32; Hannerz, 1994: 168; Fenwick 1996: 622). One of the key aspects of the gangster figure is a sense of a strong masculine identity and one that has the drive and ambition to persevere and achieve his ends. Shadoian regards the importance of the early gangster films to the American audience at the time, on the gangster's "show of strength within the disintegration

of the depression” (1977, cited in Almarendez, 1980: 37). This same depiction of a strong masculine identity, striving to get ahead and working against a system that holds him back while simultaneously “summoning” him, would have spoken to audiences of Sophiatown as they too were looking for inspiration both in the face of a change of identity from rural to urban, and as they encountered the oppressive system of apartheid, which while allowing them into the lives and locations of the privileged for daily work, kept them at an arm’s length in townships. Through the cinematic gangster figure then, Sophiatown audiences were able to see a way to counter the marginalization they experienced and also a means of achieving the things that were “beckoning” to them but that they were not meant to have.

While the factors I have discussed thus far were ones that served to create identification between the members of Sophiatown and the Hollywood gangster and also to reinforce and promote ideas of pro-urbanity, recreational activities, locales, the treatment of women and the opposition to the police and so forth, the identification with and replication of the Hollywood gangster protagonist is an even stronger factor. The machismo-driven, alpha male, ‘make it at any costs’ character of the Hollywood gangster spoke powerfully to the people of Sophiatown. The aggressive and violent nature of the cinematic gangster is marked by his physical prowess in dealing with threats or rivals. Camonte is a good fighter and easily beats up a henchman who wants to walk out on his boss, Johnny Lovo. He also later easily manhandles Lovo. Stiles is also a very physical, macho character and asks a potential henchman to prove himself via a boxing match. Boxing became a very important part of Sophiatown life, as it was a sphere where the black man could fight the restricting oppression of apartheid. Evidence of this can be found in the countless stories, pictures and adverts featuring Jake Tuli in *Drum* during the year 1953, as he became the Fly-weight Champion of the Empire and thus proved the caliber of the supposedly inferior black athlete. The use of boxing and physicality to prove one’s manhood was thus something that the audiences of Sophiatown could easily identify with. Fistfights on the streets would become very popular around this period. Sophiatown gangster Kortboy gained a reputation through “no-holds barred fistfights in the dusty streets of Sophiatown” (Thema, 1999: 7). Moreover, Kortboy’s first fistfight occurred at the “bioscope”, as he reveals in an interview with Stein and Jacobson:

One day I went to the bioscope...it was fourpence then... somebody there was a bigshot. They called him Bok... he was one of the Black Caps...

there were no Americans yet...this bigshot took my fourpence... and I fought him and beat him.

(1986: 65)

Former Sophiatown resident and now journalist Derrick Thema notes that “the playful habit of wanting to emulate ‘die laaitie van die stuk’ – gave birth to a culture of clean fistfights” (1999: 18). It is thus the physicality, bravado, macho image, control and fighting driven spirit of the cinematic gangster that was emulated in Sophiatown.

Identification with the gangster protagonist was easy, but the Hollywood gangster also provided the men of Sophiatown with a strategy to achieve their aspirations and fight an oppressive ruling system. The Hollywood gangster film served as a blueprint for the men of Sophiatown to achieve similar levels of wealth, power, admiration and, perhaps most importantly, respect. In the biography of Kortboy it is noted that “Humphrey Bogart, Richard Widmark – known in Sophiatown as Stiles [sic], James Cagney and Edwin G. Robinson were revered idols” (Thema, 1999: 18). The influence of the Hollywood gangster on the people of Sophiatown was so strong, that when Anthony Sampson took over as the editor of *Drum*, Can Themba advised him to go see *Street With No Name*, “You won’t understand our readers until you’ve seen Stiles!” (Sampson, 1956: 101). Sampson did not have to wait long before the film was screened again at the “Non-European” cinema and he recalls: “Richard Widmark appeared in one corner. A shriek from the whole house. ‘Stiles! Attaboy! Go it Stiles!’ A tense silence. Stiles was shot dead by the FBI. The audience groaned as the FBI took over” (Sampson, 1956: 101-102). This rare insight into the actual audience reception of the film in the Sophiatown of the 1950s offers a sense of the acknowledgement of the rise and fall narrative of the genre but on a basic level and without the greater insight of the contradictions of capitalism noted by Shadoian and discussed in chapter one. Can Themba whispered to Sampson that after the film had been screened in Sophiatown “the sales of Benzedrine rocketed... everybody munched apples. All those tsotis wore those raincoats” (Sampson, 1956: 102). Benzedrine inhaling and the munching of apples were two of Stiles’ trademark mannerisms in the film.

While Warshow’s notions of the critique of the contradictions of the ‘American Dream’ offered by the genre may not have been picked up by the audiences of the gangster films shown in Sophiatown, the identification and adoption of McArthur’s visual iconography certainly was. In addition to the earlier elements discussed, the tsotis of Sophiatown were

quick to pick up that the key to success for the cinematic gangster was crime and the gun was the great tool to be used to achieve this success. As Camonte says in *Scarface* while displaying his gun: “There’s only one thing that gives orders here and this is it”. In a Sophiatown where oppressed residents felt disempowered and were tired of taking orders, Camonte’s words would have resounded strongly. Guns became extremely popular among the gangsters of Sophiatown and the ‘Berliners’ gang was rumored to have access to more guns than the police (Mattera, 1987: 100).

The major robberies committed by Kortboy’s gang the ‘Americans’ had a strong Hollywood gangster movie influence. In addition to standard robberies, assaults and trafficking of illicit goods, the ‘Americans’ even dared to commit train robberies, in keeping with the argument that one of the great precursors to the gangster genre was Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* (Dickos, 2002: 113). In fact the crimes committed by the gangs were so similar to gangster movie exploits that Don Mattera notes that at the time many white South Africans, unaware of the inspirational gangster films screened in Sophiatown, believed that the American underworld syndicates had a stake in South African crime (Mattera 1987: 100). Can Themba also commented to his then editor Anthony Sampson: “You know I’ve seen tsotsis in Sophiatown planning petty robberies as if they were Stiles and his gang: they draw a map, which nobody understands, and ‘the brains of the outfit’ tells them where to go” (in Sampson, 1956: 103). The emulation of the Hollywood gangster by Sophiatown tsotsis resulted in the same initial rewards as their screen idols. As Anthony Sampson describes the tsotsis of Sophiatown, “they not only earned more money, and led a more comfortable life, but they were often in the first place more lively and intelligent than their law-abiding brothers” (1956: 99).

This leads to the question, then, of how the intellectuals of Sophiatown viewed the gangster genre as it is clear from Can Themba’s statements that they recognized the strong connection between the gangster film and the residents of Sophiatown. In one sifts through the autobiographies of the black intellectuals from Sophiatown, it becomes apparent that a number of them were influenced by the gangster genre onto criminal paths. Bloke Modisane, for example, formed a gang as a youth that he directly links to the gangster movies he watched: “because of the influence of the Hollywood films, the daredevil complex of the American male...we formed a street corner gang” (Modisane, 1986: 67). Similarly, Don Mattera also formed a gang as a youth which would become one of Sophiatown’s most

infamous gangs 'The Vultures'. The name of his gang also has cinematic origins as it was taken from the Harry Watt film, *Where No Vultures Fly* (1951) (Gready, 1990: 154).

However, in addition to this there does seem to be a deeper awareness on the part of the intellectuals of Sophiatown of the power of cinema and in particular the gangster genre. Modisane, who worked as an usher at the Odin cinema, would purchase film magazines in order to read about the movies that were not available and just prior to leaving South Africa worked in the film library of the United States Information Service, where he spliced films and assisted with their screenings (Modisane, 1986: 296). Similarly, Don Mattera also worked at the Odin in two different capacities. He would stand outside the cinema and ensure that no one got out of hand and he also worked as an usher (Mattera, cited in Stein and Jacobson, 1986: 10). A greater understanding of cinema was thus available to both men and is reflected when Modisane confesses: "I was a cinema fan – the cinema being the only cultural recreation for the Africans" (1986: 133). This in a way explains the fascination of the Sophiatown intellectuals with Hollywood. Anthony Sampson describes the situation by saying: gangster films, street corner gambling, drinking to get drunk, were open to all. Theatres, decent houses, open spaces, libraries, travel abroad were for Europeans only" (1956: 99). Thus it would appear that in attempting to engage with culture the intellectuals turned toward Hollywood cinema because embracing a cinematic Hollywood experience was a way of rejecting a South African reality. Modisane sums it up by saying:

If Hollywood had intended to influence the development of a particular kind of person, I am that product; the tinsel morality, the repressed violence, the technicolour dreams, these are the things I absorbed in the name of culture.

(Modisane, 1986: 172)

Another Sophiatown journalist and writer, Arthur Maimane, produced a series of short stories in *Drum* that also point to a deeper understanding of the Hollywood gangster film. His first story 'Crime for Sale' appeared in January 1953. Maimane would take the stories that he heard from real gangsters in the shebeens and use them in his short stories, just as Hollywood gangster films would use the real-life exploits of American gangsters in their narratives. As a result he earned the ire of many Sophiatown gangsters and was once even arrested for carrying an illegal firearm for protection after threats from a gang he had written about

(Maimane cited in Stein and Jacobson, 1986: 52). Maimane's short stories centred on the character 'The Chief', a street smart former policeman who now makes his living from extortion by filming the misdeeds of his targets.

Maimane's 'Crime for Sale' escapades follow many of the conventions of the gangster film quite closely. The gangster figure, while volatile, exudes a raw physical charisma that in most cases is irresistible to female characters in his world (Altman, 2002: 25). 'The Chief' boasts of how women simply "fall over me" (Maimane, cited in Chapman, 1989: 25). The idea of women as possessions and trophies is also characteristic of the gangster genre as discussed earlier and depicted in *Scarface* when Camonte claims Poppy after killing Johnny Lovo. In 'Crime for Sale' 'The Chief' not only takes the money of his targets but also sleeps with their women (Maimane, cited in Chapman, 1989: 25). Film authority BK Grant recognizes that "the gangster survives as long as he does against heavy odds because of his energy, cunning and bravura" (1986: 163). These characteristics sum up 'The Chief' quite well, as we learn from his escapades that he is a man of great ambition, wit, intelligence and boldness. The social conditions and characters portrayed in many gangster films are also very similar to Maimane's escapades as the handling of prohibited liquor is common in both, the opposition to the police and also the corruption within the state authorities as well.

Maimane's narratives clearly follow the rise and fall pattern that is characteristic of gangster films. 'The Chief' is a slick and ambitious character who has big goals of financial success and illegally acquires £600 from 'Mr Big Noise', but after appearing to get away with it all is arrested by the police and imprisoned. In addition Maimane seems to have grasped the key iconography of the gangster film as he closely follows what McArthur would later identify as recurring visual patterns that mark the genre. The world of 'The Chief' is distinctly that of the city as he strolls down urban streets, follows targets and frequents establishments like restaurants and gambling dens. His style of dress is very similar to Hollywood gangsters but not as overstated given that he is involved in following targets and retrieving incriminating evidence covertly. 'The Chief' is far more American than African in mannerisms and speech and Maimane seems to even wink at his audience in recognition of the Hollywood cinematic style of his narrative as 'The Chief' remarks at one point "don't you think I should get an Oscar for this one?" (Maimane, cited in Chapman, 1989: 30).

The narrative structure of the closing instalment of 'Crime for Sale' is particularly interesting as it is remarkably similar to the real life fall of Al Capone, who inspired the Sophiatown

favourite *Scarface* (1932). ‘The Chief’ manages to extort a large sum of money from a target after beating off a gang of rivals who try to rob his target, much in the same way that Hollywood gangsters would eliminate their rivals. He extracts his money and gets away with his crime as he has done many times before with his slick demeanor. However, just as ‘The Chief’ is enjoying his illicit gains his lifestyle catches up with him. During a police raid, all of his films are discovered, thus bringing about the fall of Maimane’s protagonist who is arrested and imprisoned. In the closing installment of ‘Crime for Sale’, it is revealed that what brought about the police raid of his room was the fact that the shebeen queen he rented from had failed to pay the police “the agreed cut” (Maimane, cited in Chapman, 1989: 31). Similarly Capone, though an infamous criminal and gangster, was never arrested due to a lack of witnesses willing to testify against him just as ‘The Chief’ had many victims who also never took action to bring him to book. Capone was eventually brought to book by the US Treasury Department and sentenced to 11 years imprisonment primarily for tax evasion (Cullers and Wolpert, 2000). At a time when bribing the police to look away from illegal activities was rife, failure to pay would have undoubtedly been the Sophiatown equivalent of tax evasion.

Thus it would appear that the intellectuals of Sophiatown did possess some awareness of the gangster film’s potential to raise issues and promote role-models relevant to the lives of black South Africans. Looking through *Drum* magazine from the 1950s it becomes apparent that the Hollywood gangster was not just adopted by chance in an effort to find a new urban identity, but instead was actively promoted. *Drum* magazine played an integral part in the promotion of the gangster figure in Sophiatown. Throughout the 1950s *Drum* consistently ran pieces on gangsterism. Interestingly, the magazine initially condemned crime and the gangster lifestyle. In October of 1951 volume 1 no. 4 of the magazine ran a story headlined “Inside Johannesburg’s Underworld”. The cover features a gangster with a Stiles-inspired Woodrow hat and a menacing look on his face as he towers over the city of Johannesburg. The article strongly condemns crime and calls upon Africans “to build up discipline in the locations from the inside, and outlaw tsotsis from the home (11). However, this message did not go over too well with the residents of Sophiatown who were clearly opposed to such a patronizing message and were perhaps already identifying strongly with the gangster figure. *Drum* magazine at this stage was a financial disaster, reportedly losing £2000 a month (Sampson, 1956: 7). In a survey taken around Sophiatown in order to better understand why the publication was unpopular, one resident commented: “it’s got the white hand on

it...*Drum*'s what white men want Africans to be, not what they are" (Sampson, 1956:8). Subsequently *Drum* was drastically revamped, and a new editor and newly hired black writers saw the publication soar in popularity and become a financial success. One of the marked changes in the magazine was its stance on crime. In the year 1953, *Drum* ran the following pieces: "The Crimson League" (profiling the exploits and earnings of the gang with that name) in January; "My life in the Underworld" in May; "Confessions of an ex-gangster" from November 1953- March 1954, and numerous other pieces that sensationalised the life of the gangster.

Drum also ran numerous advertisements during the 1950s promoting and glamorising the attire of the Hollywood gangster. Zoot suits, Woodrow hats, coats and suits would frequently appear in *Drum*. *Drum* would continue to push the figure of the gangster and along with 'man of the year' and 'girl of the year' even created an award entitled 'thug of the year'. This feature included a picture of local gangster Shadrack Matthews dapperly dressed like a Hollywood gangster (Fenwick, 1996: 621). Fenwick has noted that the gangster content in *Drum* reached a peak around 1955, saturating the magazine more than ever before. It then slowly began to diminish until by the 1960s gangster content was hardly apparent (1996: 619). However, this peak of the gangster content and its subsequent decline is not unrelated to what was occurring in Sophiatown at the time as in February of 1955 the destruction of Sophiatown had begun. Thus the promoting of the gangster figure in *Drum* correlates with the threat to the township posed by the government. Just before Sophiatown is to be demolished the rebellious gangster figure appears in *Drum* more frequently than ever and after the township has been buried the promotion of the gangster in the pages of *Drum* disappears.

The gangster figure thus seems to have been used to promote a sense of resistance and rebellion against the state government at the time. The writers and intellectuals of Sophiatown were aware of the identification of the people of Sophiatown with the cinematic gangster and promoted this identification in an attempt to further resistance to the oppressive conditions under which they lived. Similar social conditions between both the cinematic gangster and township contexts like the urban environment, restricted opportunities within a ruling system based on ethnicity or race, the opposition to the police and illegal alcohol business activities created a strong sense of identification with the cinematic gangster which went as far as emulation. The gangster genre inspired a sense of resistance in Sophiatown in

terms of dress, style, language and crimes. The cinematic gangster's bravado and drive to achieve his goals and to have what had been withheld from him spoke to the Sophiatown audience as they too were allowed into the lives of the privileged as basic workers and had material objects and possessions and fame and glamour "call out" to them but could not achieve these things legally, given the conditions of the time. Embracing the Hollywood gangster film and lifestyle was a way of rejecting the South African realities and conditions of the time. By promoting the gangster figure via stories and articles and adverts, the staff of *Drum* were promoting an urban culture that was foreign but which the people could identify with and adopt in resistance to the prescribed roles of blacks that the government wished to enforce. Further, the rebellious nature of the cinematic gangster as outside of mainstream society but created by that very society, resonated with the people of Sophiatown as they developed new urban identities on the fringes of Johannesburg. However, Warshow's notion that the gangster film offers a critique of the problematic quest for material wealth and the contradictions of capitalism was not picked up by the audiences of Sophiatown. The 'American Dream' philosophy of having it all certainly did beckon to Sophiatown's audience but it did not explicitly contradict the idea of a free society built upon equality for all, since South Africa did not have such an ethos.

Chapter Two: *Mapantsula* (1988)

Having looked at the Hollywood gangster genre and its impact on Sophiatown of the 1950s, this chapter will now look at a South African made film in *Mapantsula*. Once South African filmmakers began producing local versions of the gangster genre, they did so in a context in which the figure of the gangster already had a particular resonance. Thus the figure of the gangster already had a place in popular consciousness, as discussed in the preceding chapter, even though, by the 1980s, the initial impact of these Hollywood gangster films would have faded to an extent. The 1980s were a time of political turbulence and resistance in South Africa, so perhaps it is not surprising that the figure of the cinematic gangster re-emerges. However, that re-emergence is not immediately recognized by everyone who writes about the film. This chapter thus seeks to suggest why *Mapantsula* deserves classification within the gangster genre and how it functions within the genre, what it reveals and how the gangster genre has been used to bring to life the concerns and issues of its time period of the 1980s, just prior to liberation in South Africa.

2.1. Past Research on *Mapantsula*

The critical studies done to date concerning *Mapantsula* have largely ignored the film as a gangster film but instead have chosen to pick up on other aspects of the film, often reading it as a simple crime film or political drama. Duncan Brown, in his study of *Mapantsula*, refers to an early version of the script as a “non-politicised gangster film” (1994: 32). In this simple classification of the gangster genre lies the problem. The rich fabric of meaning that lies within the genre has been overlooked and the idea that any gangster film could be non-politicised shows a lack of understanding of the thematics of the genre as a whole. Brown notes the complexity of the movie, but dismisses the gangster genre framework, stating that “...the film shows up the limitations of that genre and the ideology which it embodies” (1994: 34). This easy dismissal of the genre indicates the need for a study of *Mapantsula* via a genre analysis approach. Such a genre analysis would aim to make apparent the depth that becomes evident once the film is located within the gangster genre.

Keyan Tomaselli (1991) also alludes to the gangster film attributes of *Mapantsula* in passing and says that the film succeeds even though it has such “thematic constraints” (46). He

elaborates upon these constraints by stating that “the central theme of this low budget genre is ‘crime does not pay’” (Tomaselli, 1991: 46). Such an analysis of *Mapantsula* once again rests on a relatively superficial understanding of the genre and its thematics. Whereas elements of tragedy, and certainly the rise and fall trajectory of the protagonist, have always been a part of the genre, this can not be reduced to the simple cliché ‘crime does not pay’. The ‘crime does not pay’ theme within the gangster genre is one that was often forced upon filmmakers in an attempt to balance the glamorisation of the gangster and dissuade the audience from admiring the criminals the genre portrayed. Thus if anything this dimension was one largely forced upon the filmmakers by studio executives certainly during the period of classic Hollywood filmmaking when directors like Hawks had clumsy ‘crime does not pay’ endings or opening statements forced upon their films to highlight the repercussions of criminal behaviour. Hawks’ *Scarface* (1932), for example, had scenes chastising gangsterism added in by another director and a more sermonising ending re-shot (Dirks, 1998). The film was also tweaked by the subtitle “The Shame of the Nation” and the opening words:

This picture is an indictment of gang rule in America and of the callous indifference of the government to this constantly increasing menace to our safety and our liberty. Every incident in this picture is the reproduction of an actual occurrence, and the purpose of this picture is to demand of the government: 'What are you going to do about it?' The government is your government. What are YOU going to do about it?

(*Scarface* 1932)

Genre analysis critics would disagree with Tomaselli’s thematic claims and would argue instead that the central concerns of the genre are the contradictions of the ‘American Dream’, commentary on the society that creates such criminals and an analysis of the contemporary tensions within society at the time of a film’s production. Rather than unpacking *Mapantsula* via genre analysis, critics like Tomaselli and Brown have instead chosen to downplay its generic characteristics, apparently as a result of a negative view of the genre as a whole, and have focused instead on other elements of the film. Thus these critics have read the film to some extent as the censors would have in Hollywood’s classic gangster movie period, noting

the superficial ‘crime does not pay’ message rather than the intricate critique hidden within the genre that is, as Shadoian has argued, “readymade for certain kinds of concerns” (cited in Cook and Bernink, 1999: 175).

Other critics who have looked at the film like Jeanne Prinsloo (1996) have also downplayed the gangster genre framework of the film. While Prinsloo does make reference to certain gangster genre elements of the film such as Panic’s demeanour, criminal nature and dress, she nevertheless reads the film as a political narrative and steers clear of any genre analysis. More recently Jacqueline Maingard (2007) has discussed the film in a chapter entitled ‘Cinema against apartheid’ from her book *South African National Cinema*. Maingard offers many thought-provoking insights but does not conduct any genre analysis of the film. Maingard focuses on the ‘black point of view’ that the film has been shot from, which is very much in contrast to the ‘white point of view’ of South Africa that at the time was dominant in South African film. However, Maingard does not make connections between this and the social production of the Hollywood gangster, who is outside of accepted mainstream society, yet was created by such a society and ultimately is at odds with that very society. Maingard offers an analysis of the film as resistant South African cinema but does not read the film as a gangster genre text. Thus even more recent work on the film leaves a genre analysis approach to the film as a relatively untapped area of study.

The little work that has been done in this regard was conducted by Lesley Marx (1996). Marx is one critic who has recognised the film’s gangster genre framework. She looks at *Mapantsula* as a product of the gangster genre and uses a genre analysis approach to the film. Furthermore, her work on *Mapantsula* utilizes the useful theories of Shadoian and Warshow. However, this work is limited to a brief section within a journal article. Nevertheless, while brief, her analysis is conducted with a conscious awareness of the importance of genre and is thus valuable and will be utilised later in this chapter when I look at how *Mapantsula* functions as a South African variation on the Hollywood gangster film.

2.2. The ‘Pantsula’ and the Cinematic Gangster

Having looked earlier at how the Hollywood figure of the gangster influenced the residents of Sophiatown, and indeed the tsotsi subculture, it is interesting to note that the ‘mapantsula’

subculture also has links to the cinematic gangster. The movie opens with the following statement:

AMAPANTSULA South African street gangs identified by their style of clothing and music. In their harsh surroundings there are no rules and the survival of the fittest is the order of the day.

In the press release for the film from Electric Pictures, the term 'mapantsula' is defined as "A South African term for a wideboy" (Electric Pictures, 1988: 1). This reference to a 'wideboy' is in actual fact a reference to the wide legged pants that were fashionable among pantsulas, who in some circles were thus referred to as 'wideboys'. It also alludes to the wide range of fashion and items of extravagance that they were known for flaunting in similar fashion to the tsotsis and street gangs of Sophiatown. The style of the 'pantsulas' is a very expensive one, with the items of clothing they are known for wearing coming from abroad and being very costly. A Castle Lite beer advertising campaign, launched a few years after the release of the film, offers a sense of a South African understanding of what a 'pantsula' was at the time. It describes 'pantsulas' as, "the 'township clevers' ... one group of people that really understand that life is all about living it up. They love to look good while they're about it too. Spending R1500 on a pair of shoes is not uncommon" (*Sunday Times*, 1994: 28). This sense of extravagant spending and flashy dress is not dissimilar to the tsotsi subculture discussed earlier, which was present in the heyday of Sophiatown. The apartheid vision for black South Africans was one of servitude, labour, subjugation and inferiority. Bantu education exemplified this ideology as it promoted the creation of semi-skilled labourers who were being prepared to fulfil their marginalised roles as designated by the nationalist government's vision of South Africa. Thus black South Africans were intended to be semi-skilled labourers who were to be exploited by the nationalist government as cheap menial workers. The very style of the 'mapantsula' thus stands firmly and rebelliously in opposition to everything that was being promoted as being 'for black South Africans'. The expensive and flashy clothes, shoes and hats that characterized the 'mapantsula' were never meant for black South Africans who were never intended to have access to such luxuries, let alone have the time or money to wear such items while performing semi-skilled labour. The expensive and flashy attire of the 'mapantsula' thus has many things in common with the attire of the Hollywood gangster. Just as the flamboyant, expensive and 'illegal' appearance of the Hollywood gangster marks his stand as a successful man in society and apart from the role he should play there as a member

of the underclass, without the legal upward mobility to achieve his ends, so too does the attire of the 'mapantsula' mark his defiant stand as outsider and in opposition to the vision of the black South African that the nationalist government promoted.

Another definition of the word 'pantsula' focuses more on gait and movement in terms of the pantsula dance form, noting that "the Zulu word pantsula can be translated to mean to waddle like a duck or alternately to walk with protruded buttocks - a characteristic of this dance form" (Elias, 1999: 3). Thus, in the same way as that of the tsotsis of Sophiatown, the pantsula subculture is one that is based on rebellion and resistance through body movement and behaviour. The dance style of the pantsula is one that is very exaggerated and based largely on quick, almost threatening movements involving the limbs. It is a style of dance that showcases the performer's control of his body, involving both rapid movements and slowed down sequences. The pantsula dance form involves a strong sense of showboating and is usually performed in public as the admiration of the audience is important. The 'mapantsula' subculture has not remained stationary and has evolved in terms of dress, dance and look. However, at the time of the film's release in the 1980s the dance of the pantsula was very much a masculine one, and one that could be, and most often was, performed by just one person, as depicted in the film. This style of dance is also one that has a strong sense of a display of sexuality and power. This use of dance by the gangster figure is one that goes back to the Hollywood gangster and as Marx notes: "Panic, especially, demonstrates the grace and debonair style of all those dancing gangsters: Cagney, Raft, even Astaire and Kelly" (1996: 21). The pantsulas in turn flaunt their bodies and exercise body movement as a form of physical release from the constraints of their environment. This sense of skilful body movement and artistic performance once again stood in contrast to the apartheid vision of black South Africans who were supposed to be occupied with their performance as semi-skilled workers.

Furthermore, the elements of braggadocio and boastfulness that are on display via the 'pantsula' dance are very similar to the qualities of the cinematic gangster. Camonte, for example, demonstrates this in the barber shop scene in *Scarface* when he is questioned by the police after the murder of 'Big Louie'. Camonte insults the police and proceeds to take out a match and strike it against the investigating police officer's badge in order to light his own cigarette. Elements of swagger, showmanship and skilful body movement are further on display when Camonte's right hand man Guino Rinaldo catches a coin that Camonte's sister

throws towards an organ-grinder from her balcony. He flips her coin once then exchanges it for one from his own pocket and flips it before he gives the organ-grinder his coin. He then repeatedly flips her coin smiling at her as a sense of mutual attraction is built. Furthermore, in *Mapantsula* the sexuality of the performer is on display as is exemplified when Panic and his friends go to a nightclub. It is here that Panic performs a pantsula dance that is overtly sexual as he begins to undress while dancing, even going as far as to take down his pants. The overt sexuality being displayed here via dance is very resistant and very bold and this is reminiscent of the animal-like sexuality displayed in the Hollywood gangster which makes him both attractive and dangerous at the same time. To illustrate this, Camonte in *Scarface*, visits his boss Johnny Lovo with his new toy, a submachine gun and proceeds to demonstrate the power he has acquired by “writing his name” all over the walls with bullets from the gun in a sexually charged demonstration of his defiance and masculinity: “Get outta my way Johnny, I’m gonna spit!”. Lovo’s moll, Poppy, who has been watching all of this and loading a gun in the background, supportively throws Camonte the now loaded hand gun to use in his battle against Irish rival Gaffney, teasingly saying “in case that bean shooter doesn’t work”. The sense of desire to be a spectacle and to have an audience is further evident in the fact that when Panic’s girlfriend gets up and leaves the club he immediately stops his dancing and rushes out after her. He desires her to view him displaying his swagger and his strutting resistance to societal norms. This is very similar to the characterization of the Hollywood gangster who is often in the company of friends and fellow gangsters and feeds off them to become even more cocky and confident when around them.

Since he shunned conventional methods of earning a living, the pantsula had to find a way to sustain the extravagant appearance that marked him as pantsula. The lavish clothing and attire did not come without a high price and the most common means of achieving these material signifiers was through crime. Thus the criminal nature of the pantsula furthers the comparison between the Hollywood gangster and the South African pantsula of the 1980s. Both were rebelliously in pursuit of items and lifestyles that they could not achieve due to their status in their specific society as either working class immigrants or black South Africans respectively. Thus the move toward crime served as a way to achieve the expensive signifiers they flaunted but was also a resistant means to rebel against the roles that they were assigned to in society, by attacking complacent members of that society and the authorities that upheld such a system. In the classic Hollywood gangster film, the protagonist is beckoned by the messages of the ‘American Dream’: the idea that anyone can achieve their dreams and have it all

regardless of who they are, and albeit by illegal means, the classic Hollywood cinematic gangster pushes forward to try to fulfil these promises. However, in the South Africa of the 1980s there was no such dominant ideology beckoning *all* South Africans to drive toward great capitalist aspirations and neither was there one that espoused equality for all, fairness and opportunity. Thus the adoption of consumerist culture by a group like the pantsulas became a token of resistance to an ideology that did exist in the 1980s, that of black marginalization and subjugation. *Mapantsula* therefore features depictions of Panic committing many crimes in order to sustain his lifestyle. Panic refuses to work but instead relies on crime to earn a living, much like the Hollywood gangster. Panic robs petty street gamblers of their money, he works in concert with other hoods to steal wallets from people on the streets, he attacks people with knives, he shoplifts expensive suits and he attempts to steal appliances from the white employer of his girlfriend under the pretence of being a serviceman. While the crimes committed are not as ambitious as the crimes of the Hollywood gangster, nevertheless the pantsula shares the common trait of criminal activities to make a living just like the Hollywood gangster.

In conclusion, the opening of the film, then notes the style, music and the violent behaviour of the pantsulas in its definition of 'amapantsula'. The embracing of style, dance and behaviour by this subculture was in opposition to the image of the black South African that the apartheid government promoted and served as a form of resistance to their society. To be in possession of such items and traits marked the pantsula as defiant and different from the apartheid version of a black South African. A pantsula focused on style, dance, sexuality and crime and thus stood defiantly in opposition to the government sanctioned 'black South African'. While the classic Hollywood gangster chased the 'American Dream' and ultimately illustrated the contradictions underlying it, the pantsula of the 1980s was not beckoned by such an ideology but instead adopted a capitalist mentality in defiance of their state prescribed roles. Thus the pantsula and the Hollywood gangster share a number of rebellious and defiant characteristics.

2.3. *Mapantsula* (1988) as gangster film

Before analyzing *Mapantsula* and suggesting how it functions as a South African gangster film, it is necessary to demonstrate that *Mapantsula* deserves classification as part of the gangster genre. This will be done by addressing McArthur's useful technique of visual

analysis in terms of genre iconography and also by looking at the recurring characters in the gangster genre and in *Mapantsula*.

McArthur offers the following as a means of identifying the visual characteristics of the gangster genre:

The recurrent patterns of imagery can be usefully divided into three categories: those surrounding the physical presence, attributes and dress of the actors and the characters they play; those emanating from the milieux within which the characters operate; and those connected with the technology at the characters' disposal.

(cited in Hutchings, 2007)

In *Mapantsula*, Panic's physical presence is often a menacing one as he robs and abuses anyone in his path and serves as the catalyst of tense altercations. When the audience is first presented with Panic in his familiar environment of the streets, he is in the process of stealing the wallet of a white man in broad daylight. Panic is thus introduced as dangerous, violent and rebellious, even across racial lines, under a government driven by white supremacy. Moments later Panic interrupts a group of gamblers who are rolling dice on the pavement by stepping on the dice and then taking their money as they protest sheepishly. Even to fellow street-smart hustlers like himself, Panic is a threat. Moreover, Panic's landlord Ma Modise shouts at him each time she sees him because of his tendency to default on his rent. Similarly, Panic's girlfriend Joyce is more often than not displeased by his presence because of his troublemaking ways and habit of taking her money for his own selfish pursuits. Upon seeing him show up at her workplace, Joyce doesn't even say hello to him but immediately barks "What are you doing here? You'll get me into trouble" to which he responds "Why is that? Is there anything wrong with me?" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 75). Thus the recurring patterns surrounding Panic's presence and character are very similar to those of early cinematic Hollywood gangsters such as Tony Camonte in *Scarface* (1932) who is street smart, ruthless at times and determined to succeed without any thought for those around him as he pursues his selfish ends. The cold, hard, immoral and ruthlessly ambitious nature of the cinematic gangster is recognized by those around him as is well illustrated when Camonte's mother says to her daughter Cesca "He hurt you. He hurt you. He hurt everybody" (*Scarface*

1932). In *Mapantsula* Panic's hardnosed nature similarly becomes more and more evident to those around him as various characters begin to distrust Panic and distance themselves from him. His girlfriend keeps away from him after he hotheadedly costs her her job by throwing a brick through her employer's window. Even his only friend and partner in crime, Dingane, abandons him after Panic once again loses his temper and wildly stabs a white man in a busy shopping mall:

Dingane: [upset] ... Panic, hey, ucishe wasifaka emasimbini! (you nearly got us in big shit!)

Panic: Haai Fokof! ... (Fuck off! ...)

Dingane: Nee, nee, nee Panic, ek wil fokol hoor ukusuka namhlanje! (No, no, no Panic I don't want any part of this anymore!)

Panic: [grabbing Dingane] Hey wena! Yini ngawe? (What's wrong with you?)

Dingane: Nee man Panic, vergeet van my, cut my uit man! (No man Panic, forget about me, cut me out!)

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 115).

Dingane has come to realise just how dangerous it can be to be associated with Panic and from this point on in the film never returns to his side. Panic is willing to take bigger risks, be more ruthless and achieve more rewards by any means necessary. This is in line with a recurring generic pattern concerning the relationship between the gangster protagonist and his side-kick, such as with the relationship between classic Hollywood gangster Tom Powers (James Cagney) and his best friend and side-kick Matt Doyle (Edward Woods) in the classic Hollywood gangster film *Public Enemy* (1931). The movie follows the lives of two friends who find their way out of poverty through crime and gangsterism. These gangsters are not born gangsters but are created by their environments and actually start as naughty children in the movie. Powers and Doyle grow up as partners in crime but there comes a point where the lengths and extremes that Powers will go to surprises even Doyle himself as he looks on in stunned silence while Powers murders their one-time mentor and boyhood role model, "Putty face", with a broad smile across his face. Similarly, Marx also notes that the abandonment of Panic by Dingane, dramatises the increasing isolation of the gangster, and is "reminiscent of Rico's abandonment by Tony in *Little Caesar*" (1996: 20).

The cinematic gangster is characterised by wearing distinctive attire. This attire serves to distinguish him from the crowd and often serves as a sign of the achievement and success of the gangster in pursuit of the materialism that the 'American Dream' promotes. The dress of the gangster often incorporates elements of flashiness and style in an overstated and cocky manner. Typically the attire entails formal wear in the form of suits, shirts, formal pants, smartly polished shoes, coat jackets and hats that are worn in particular ways such as the precise tilt of a hat for example.

In *Mapantsula* Panic, is dressed nattily, always wearing formal pants, shirts, well-shined shoes, suit jackets and hats. Looking dapper and fashionable is very important to Panic and his attire instantly distinguishes him from the rest of the crowd. In the opening sequence of the film Panic is shown in the back of a police vehicle with many other men who have just been arrested. Panic's appearance here is striking as he is dressed in stylish, expensive clothing and is described in this scene of the screenplay as "in his thirties, tough, and looks incongruous in his flashy evening suit" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 53). There are many occurrences in the film that further emphasize the importance of Panic's clothing. This is evident when Panic attends the 'Hi-Lite' club where, upon entering the establishment, his attire earns him the ire of the night club owner. The night club owner notifies Panic that he must remove his hat, to which Panic responds by walking on indifferently and proclaiming "hat se gat (hat, my arse)" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 64). Panic's partner in crime, Dingane, who joins Panic at the night club, is also dressed in characteristic gangster attire wearing formal pants and a shirt, a coat, shiny shoes and a hat. The two of them stand out in the night club from all of the other patrons by way of their appearance. This exclusiveness is further emphasized when Dingane offers to pay for all of the drinks at the table, to which Panic's girlfriend Pat responds by asking Dingane where he works. He replies: "Mina? (Me?) [pointing conspiratorially between himself and Panic] Same Same" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 65). Dingane alludes to the common 'job' that both do as small-time gangsters by referencing their attire as if it were a uniform. It is the flashiness and the expensive nature of their clothing that makes them recognizable as involved in illegal activity, given the difficulty of coming by such things legitimately.

Being a petty crook, Panic must find ways to acquire his flashy attire. It is, after all, his ability to sport such unobtainable items that serves to symbolise his classification as other. He is not a part of the society that the men and women in the community around him belong to

and he does not abide by its rules and the restrictions that would prevent him from obtaining the items that he has. As a result, his appearance in itself is illegal, just as the ways in which he obtains his expensive attire are too. This is suggested when Panic visits a clothing store in the film and picks out a flashy suit. He then goes into the changing booth and rolls up his pants and skilfully winds the suit pants around his leg holding them in place with his sock. Thereafter Panic rolls the suit jacket around his other leg, before resetting his pants and casually walking out of the store. When he jumps onto a bus to make his getaway; two women on the bus look at him and one says to the other: “You see how this person looks? He’s like a gangster” (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 91). Panic proceeds to change clothes on the bus into the more dapper suit that he has just stolen as the women look on in awe. When questioned by the two women as to how he can do such a thing, Panic says to one of them: “What you wear is who you are Mama” (Schmitz and Mogotlane). Panic’s words here suggest his desire to appear as outsider to the marginalized black South African community and as materially successful. This could be seen as a South African version of the Hollywood gangster genre’s focus on the pursuit of the ‘American Dream’ which is, as Warshow (1948) says simultaneously calling and restricting just as Panic tries to appear to be successful in the society he lives in even though he has very little going for him, struggles to pay his rent and has no job.

The gangster figure himself is characterized by possessing certain characteristics and behaviours. The cinematic gangster is a criminal: brash, confident, street smart, aggressive, ambitious, violent, rebellious, charismatic and possessing an animal magnetism. All of the above characteristics can be found in the protagonist of *Mapantsula*. Panic has been involved in violent criminal activity for over a decade as is revealed when detective Stander reads his rap sheet:

1977... Dagga merchandising, '77... housebreaking, two years maximum, one year suspended... '79 – breaking into a factory, armed robbery, assault of a white man. Three years maximum.
1983 – arrested on suspicion of being involved in a gang slaying
– no charges pressed. '84 – housebreaking.

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 79)

Thus the criminal characteristic of the cinematic gangster is well developed in *Mapantsula*'s Panic as he has a long history of various crimes and was even involved in a gang slaying.

Like many a Hollywood gangster, Panic has a confidence and self assurance about him that is evident in many of his interactions in the film. Panic robs a white man of his wallet in the middle of a crowded street and makes no effort to cover his tracks. When confronted by his businessman victim he barks at him "voetsek! (fuck off!)" and casually leans against a wall and goes through the contents of the man's wallet (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 57).

Additionally, Panic's charisma and animal magnetism are well depicted via his interactions with Pat. Even though he frequently insults her and jeopardizes her job with her madam, she is still clearly attracted to him and gives him her money. Similarly Panic's landlady, Ma Modise, engages with him when he emerges from his room smartly dressed. Although he has not paid his rent for a long time and is chastised for this, Ma Modise still looks at him admiringly and says "If I were twenty years younger... if I were twenty years younger I'd watch out for you!" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 61).

Panic's rebellious nature is on display throughout the film as he refuses to conform time and time again. Panic has no job and the subject matter arises as Dingane considers getting a job while looking at the classifieds in the newspaper. Panic dismisses the concept entirely: "Ok, get into the queue. [he lights a cigarette] When you want more money what will they say? They will kick you out and say next!" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 84). Panic refuses to be just a worker and will not conform to the conventional working life of the average man or woman. Additionally Panic has not paid his rent for a long time according to his landlady Ma Modise. While he clearly does make money via his criminal activities he never uses it to pay his rent. Furthermore, Panic ignores racially enforced boundaries and visits Pat in a white suburb where she works as a domestic worker. It is there that he is confronted by Pat's clearly displeased employer, Mrs. Bentley. In reaction to her disgruntled threats he simply glares at her and responds to her question of what he is doing there by saying "I'm talking to my girlfriend" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 94). Panic is then set upon by Mrs. Bentley's Alsatian dog. In true aggressive, selfish and rebellious cinematic gangster fashion, he throws a brick through her window.

In addition to these recurring elements surrounding the protagonist of the gangster genre, critics have also noted the recurrence of common characters that are referred to as 'stock

characters'. Typically in the gangster genre one would find characters than I shall describe as 'the hothead', 'the faithful lieutenant', the 'opposing authority figure' and 'the trophy woman' or 'moll'. In *Little Caesar* (1930) one finds stock characters in the form of Joe Massara (Douglas Fairbanks Jr.) as Rico's 'faithful lieutenant' who helps him with his crimes initially before choosing to reform. Sargeant Flaherty (Thomas E. Jackson) represents the opposing authority figure who is out to bring Rico to justice and eventually does so by gunning him down. *Public Enemy* (1931) has stock characters in the form of protagonist Tom Powers who is very much 'the hothead', not hesitating to deliver a deft slap to the face or a bullet to the chest for the slightest of grievance. In one of the most memorable scenes of the film James Cagney's Tom Powers pushes a grapefruit into his mistress Kitty's (Mae Clarke's) face over breakfast because of his annoyance with her. Matt Doyle (Edward Woods) is depicted as the faithful lieutenant of Tom Powers and assists him with all of his criminal deeds until he is gunned down. The female characters, Mamie (Joan Blondell), Kitty (Mae Clarke) and Gwen (Jean Harlow) all serve as 'arm pieces' or trophy girlfriends and women who are attracted to the drive, brutish and rebellious nature of Powers. Similarly, *Scarface* (1932) also features stock characters in the form of Tony Camonte (Paul Muni) as the hothead who never falters when it comes to killing people that get in his way. Guino Rinaldo (George Raft) appears as Camonte's right hand man or faithful lieutenant who aids Camonte in his crimes until he himself is a victim of Camonte. Poppy (Karen Morley) serves to fuel the gangster's need for control, success and power. Lastly, Camonte has a rivalry with Inspector Ben Guarino (C. Henry Gordon) who prophesies his downfall and indeed does bring about Camonte's end.

In *Mapantsula* then, one finds that Panic himself illustrates some of the hothead characteristics of the protagonists of *Scarface*, *Public Enemy* and *Little Caesar* even if his temper and aggression are not as well developed as those of the classic Hollywood gangster. Nevertheless, Panic stabs people at will, gets into fights and arguments and destroys property. His faithful lieutenant or right hand man is Dingane who helps Panic with many of his crimes until he realizes just how dangerous working with Panic really is after a reckless stabbing incident. Inspector Stander plays the part of the opposing authority figure in *Mapantsula* as he interrogates Panic throughout the film. Keeping with the centrality of the 'face-off' in gangster films, much of the film contains scenes revolving around the contest between the two men:

INSPECTOR STANDER: What were you doing at 5959 Tshabalala Street on December the 10th?

PANIC: [smiling] I was visiting.

INSPECTOR STANDER: Ugh, ugh. Those people don't know you. Don't try to fool us... I'm warning you! [Moves closer] I can lock you up so they never find you again.

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 98)

The urban setting that McArthur identifies as part of the visual characteristics of the gangster genre, is well represented in *Mapantsula* as it is in gangster films generally. The environment of the gangster is the city. This environment is dangerous, hostile and threatening. However, it is an environment which the gangster skilfully negotiates his way through. Settings of clubs, restaurants, streets, slums, police stations and buildings are commonplace in the gangster film. In *Mapantsula* one sees Panic and his friends frequent the 'Hi-Lite' club and also the local shebeen where they dance, drink, plot and scheme. The environment of the cinematic gangster is dangerous due the potential conflicts that can pop up at any time. These conflicts often arise with the gathering of many unsavoury characters as is illustrated when Panic recounts to others in a shebeen how his attempt at mugging a woman on the street was foiled by someone else. He is instantly interrupted by another tsotsi (Jabu), who is in actual fact the mugger that beat him to it:

JABU: Die ou is 'n mampara. Net die tyd waar hy wil chaya – toe kom ek, ek chaya die ding. (This man is a bumpkin. Just as he wants to grab the thing, I come and I grab it.) [laughs] Ek sien hom net met hom tong wat nou uitsteek! (I saw him standing there with his tongue hanging out!)

Panic's face darkens. He grabs Jabu's arm... Jabu pulls back and draws a knife. Pat gasps, the room goes quiet... Panic grabs a beer bottle and smashing [sic] it on the table. People scream. In a flash he holds it against Jabu's throat. Jabu loses his nerve and drops his knife. Panic pushes him, bottle at the throat, to the doorway. Panic pulls the bottle away, nicking Jabu who staggers out of the shebeen.

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 87-88)

In this scene the hostility of the environment is brought to light but also the ability of the gangster figure to negotiate his way through the environment with skill and ingenuity. The shebeen is inhabited by dangerous criminals who share their escapades with one another and challenge each other in a game of one-upmanship. Violence, conflict and threats can arise at any moment in the environment of the gangster. Finding himself unarmed in the face of a seasoned, knife-brandishing rival, Panic creates a weapon by breaking a beer bottle and then successfully forces his opponent out of the shebeen. Furthermore, the film also contains a scene of Panic and his criminal partner Dingane at an eating house. The urban setting is well represented by the fast food, coca-cola refrigerators and the constant buzz of business occurring along with the noises of the city. In the eating house a pantsula petty crook dressed like Panic is eating a packet of fresh chips. The hostility of this environment is once again formulated via the gathering of petty criminals but also the presence of a policeman who is there to purchase some food. The pantsula casually inserts chips into the policeman's gun holster as he chats to the shopkeeper. He flirts with disaster carelessly and at any moment could be caught, but this is part and parcel of the environment in which the cinematic gangster lives. It is filled with threats, risks and hazards that at any moment could land one in trouble or even lead to death but the gangster manoeuvres his way through it demonstrating a sharpness and skill that the ordinary man does not display.

Lastly, McArthur identifies the technology at the characters' disposal as a key part of the iconography in the gangster film. By this he is referring to cars, guns, money, weapons and other technology that is distinctly urban and, in the original Hollywood gangster films, 'new'. *Scarface* (1932) famously depicts one of the first uses of a Thompson submachine gun (Tommy gun) on screen. Panic does deal with money quite a lot, but not so much new technology and weaponry. In *Mapantsula* one does not encounter many cars or guns at the disposal of the main characters but one does see Panic using weapons such as knives and broken beer bottles. The knife and beer bottle weapon speak of the environment in which Panic operates. Obtaining and using a gun and cars would be much harder for Panic to do in his environment. Furthermore, unlike the traditional Hollywood gangster, Panic is much more of a petty criminal and hasn't graduated to the more ambitious and large-scale crimes committed by the traditional Hollywood gangster. Most Hollywood gangsters; however, start off by committing smaller crimes and then graduate to the harsher ones. Panic could end up being the type of criminal who brandishes a gun, kills at will and steals cars or obtains one by nefarious means but this is still to be determined as his character is in progression.

Robert Warshow argues that the gangster film follows the structure of a 'rise and fall' narrative. He suggests that the narrative structure of the gangster film involves the rise of the cinematic gangster to the top by illegal means and then the downward spiral of the gangster to his death or defeat by the end of the film. This 'fall' would see the gangster's rapid decline after his meteoric rise, and would often end with the death of the gangster. This structure is very apparent in classic Hollywood gangster films such as *Scarface* (1932), *Public Enemy* (1931) and *Little Caesar* (1930). Tony Camonte, Tom Powers and Rico all follow a similar path to notoriety and fortune via illicit means. Camonte achieves this with a series of assassinations and by increasing his stake in the illegal liquor trade. Powers rises to power via sheer ruthlessness and the bootlegging trade as well. Similarly, Rico Bandello achieves his success by forcing out his boss and taking over the gang and also through a string of murders. All three protagonists find themselves at the pinnacle of success but, as is often the nature of the gangster narrative, all three soon find themselves experiencing great losses as they slip to the bottom. Camonte loses his best friend, his girlfriend, his sister and eventually his life when he is shot down by 'copper' Guarino. Tom Powers similarly experiences a rapid fall from influence and illicit fortune when he initiates a gang war and is gunned down by his rivals. He is kidnapped from hospital and delivered pathetically to his mother's house where he falls to the ground dead. Likewise, Rico Bandello finds himself on a rapid journey to the bottom after achieving his initial success. He has lost his best friend, his gang leader fame and is forced to hide in a fruit store where he is even blackmailed by an old woman. After months he is lured out of hiding by newspaper articles calling him a coward. Rico is finally gunned down by police after being isolated and surrounded.

Mapantsula, then, does not offer an obvious rise and fall pattern in line with the classic gangster films discussed above. Panic does not begin his journey with a lack of means and through ruthlessness rise to the top of the underworld to build something of an ill-fated empire, in the process of revealing the contradictions of capitalism and the 'American Dream' in the vein of the protagonists of *Scarface*, *Public Enemy* and *Little Caesar*. Panic is never wealthy, notorious, successful, respected or feared, nor does he become any of those things through his shady dealings. In *Mapantsula* then, what is illuminated is that the conditions of the time offered few possibilities for the sort of 'rise' discussed above and 'the rise and fall' narrative is not used in the same way. The black South African gangster can appropriate the gangster persona only at the level of style and symbolic resistance in the

1980s. However, given the uncertain times of the 1980s, the film hints at the potential for him to reach something along the lines of ‘successful gangster’ aspirations as one possible path. What will happen to Panic is a major issue in the film. What choices he will make are unclear. The potential for Panic to form a gang in the film to facilitate his ‘rise’ is suggested in the form of Panic’s criminal friend Dingane and the young, impressionable Sam. The narrative of young impressionable boys learning the ins and outs of crime and gangsterism from older hoodlums is a common one in the gangster genre and occurs in many of the classic gangster films. Dingane and Panic plan and commit crimes together from the start of the film and the young Sam has a fondness for Panic and early on in the film emulates his behaviour and is enamoured of his swagger and anti-authority attitude:

SAM, still standing behind her, makes signs at PANIC. She turns.

MA MODISE: Wena Sam, watch your step, mfanam, Ndiyakuxelela ndizakubeth’unye! Usapotwa ndim apha!

(watch your step my boy, I’m supporting you!)

She storms inside. SAM crosses the yard grinning at PANIC

PANIC: Ukhuluma too much umama’akho. (She talks too much.)

SAM: Uthetha gqitha ke lomama. (She can’t stop.)

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 73)

Sam even shares Panic’s dismissive view of black South Africans who earn a legitimate living under apartheid, as he describes their lifestyle as “take a taxi during the day, in the evening, in the morning, to and fro but earning fuck-all” (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 75). There is also the presence of other hoodlums in the film, whom Panic associates with at various times, such as those depicted when Panic visits the township shebeen and shares crime stories with a collection of nameless but like-minded individuals.

At the same time, besides the more direct and conventional trajectory to gangster fame and success, there is also another opportunity for Panic to rise above his position in society. This opportunity is provided to Panic after he has been arrested. Detective Stander makes Panic an offer to get him to snitch on his cellmates and divulge any information he may have about “these terrorists” (Schmitz and Mogotlane 1991: 96). As the film progresses Stander offers

Panic greater incentives to give him information. At the conclusion of the film Stander bolsters his offer:

STANDER: You are a strong man. I like working with men of your caliber. Men with guts... strength. Such men, I can make them smile, rich, important in life...

He pauses, gets up, and squats next to PANIC.

STANDER: Johannes I can give you a new identity, a new name, five thousand rand in your pocket! I'm not asking much of you.

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 129)

Thus Panic has the opportunity to break out of his low position in society and be better off, either by forming a gang and amplifying his criminal activities and thus rewards, or by taking up Stander's offer and being rewarded for his snitching both monetarily and in terms of position. However, with these two possible directions that he could take, Panic instead goes in a third direction. Panic becomes preoccupied with chasing after the people that have disappeared from his life and is eventually arrested doing this, thus reining in his criminal actions. Furthermore, he eventually refuses to cooperate with Inspector Stander, thus rebuffing his offer of wealth and position.

Mapantsula therefore does not follow a conventional 'rise and fall' pattern as has been discussed earlier. Panic does not have a material 'rise' like that of Hollywood gangsters like Tony Camonte, Rico Bandello and Tom Powers in *Scarface*, *Little Caesar* and *Public Enemy* respectively. On the other hand, there is much more of a clear 'fall' for Panic. After boldly refusing to sign Stander's implicating document it is clear that Panic may have sealed his fate as the screen symbolically fades to black. The fall is not in question. Panic is most probably killed for his defiance as has been foreshadowed by Stander's earlier threats. Rather than presenting a material rise then, the film uses the genre's 'rise and fall' convention in a different way, to depict a slow rise in terms of the growing political awareness of Panic which culminates, ironically, in his stand against the corrupt powers at play and which results in his implied death at the end of the film. Panic does not gain great material wealth or become the leader of a gang of pantsulas. Instead he slowly begins a process of political awakening that results in him taking a stand by the end of the film and refusing to cooperate with Inspector Stander. His fall is implied thereafter by the symbolic fade to black as Stander

has come close to killing Panic before. Thus there is a rise and fall trajectory in *Mapantsula* but the rise is not material at all but rather an ascending awareness of the politics of Panic's cultural context: an issue that Panic has avoided taking a stand on initially as he steers clear of the resistance politics around him throughout the early stages of the film. His political awareness grows to the point where the man who once accepted food as a bribe to provide details on the conversations of his resistance cellmates boldly refuses Stander's offer, knowing full well the implications of his refusal.

2.4. How does *Mapantsula* function within the gangster genre framework?

“The gangster/crime film looks at a world that is opposed to legitimate society. Focusing there, it can make discoveries not possible from within; make us see things that would otherwise be hard to see” (Shadoian, 1977, cited in Almarendez, 1980). The ‘legitimate’ social order is presented in the film through depictions of black labourers such as Pat and Ma Modise, and white authority and affluence through characters like Inspector Stander and Mrs Bentley. The social order is clearly depicted in *Mapantsula* as the film portrays the accepted roles of black and white South Africans under the apartheid system. Ma Modise earns a living by doing loads of washing for white women from the suburbs. Pat works as a domestic in an upper-class white suburb for a woman called Mrs Bentley who lives a very lavish and self-indulgent lifestyle as shown with a shot of her floating in her pool on an inflatable seat with sunglasses on and a fashion magazine in her hands, as she kicks her feet lazily in the water. If Panic was to follow one of the capitalist paths suggested above and pursue something like the classic Hollywood gangster trajectory, then the film suggests that he too would become in a way similar to someone like Mrs Bentley, a successful capitalist. Because his resistance to the state lacks direction, being instead just a matter of style and symbolism, Panic could potentially follow a capitalist path that would not result in change or equality in South African society for all, but instead just the extension of a capitalist model of success from privileged white South Africans to criminal black South Africans like Panic. Characters like Ma Modise, Pat and Mrs Bentley are shown initially to represent the ‘legitimate’ social order. “By definition, the genre must shed light on either the society or the outcasts who oppose it, and by definition the gangster is outside, or anti, the legitimate social order” (Shadoian, 1977: 3). Panic is very much an outcast from this ‘legitimate’ social order right from the onset, as he blatantly opposes and rejects it. He scoffs at fellow black labourers who perform their

roles within the 'legitimate' society: "Me work like these people!" (*Mapantsula*, 1988). He refuses to conform and be under white rule and rather than being subjugated he lashes out at white South Africans as he robs, stabs and does damage to their property. While he rebels against the social order, his resistance, however, is shallow and without thought or direction. In an interview that *Mapantsula* director Schmitz conducted with Peter Davis, he points towards perhaps the major theme in the film:

...there are a lot of gangsters, and what is interesting is their defiance, their open defiance to the society, it's just that it's a defiance that is non-political...what would happen if those gangsters actually became politicized?

(Davis, 1996: 118)

Thus Panic is not the only outsider to the legitimate social order, as standing outside of this legitimate order are political activists who oppose the apartheid system and prescribed way of life for black and white South Africans. The film depicts resistance to the legitimate social order as black South Africans rise up against the inequalities of the apartheid system. This resistance movement is represented throughout the film. The film opens with an exterior shot of the streets of Soweto where the police are confronting a robust crowd toyi-toying and singing. The authority of the 'legitimate' social order is represented as is the resistance to it by the angry crowd:

Heyta! Ta ta. [the comrade leading the song points at police] Na Ziya!
Ziya, ziya. (There they are!) Pull up your guns, ready to shoot! Aim the boers, the farmers. Kill the Boers, the killerman. Shayani izandala macomrades. (Clap your hands comrades.) Heyta! Ta ta..."

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 53)

This resistance to the 'legitimate' order is further represented by the comrades that Panic meets in prison. All of these men have been imprisoned for their part in organized resistance against apartheid policies. The comrades stage a hunger strike in prison, refusing to eat anything, thus continuing their resistance. They sing resistance songs to boost their spirits: "Oliver Tambo thetha noBotha akhulul' uMandela... (Oliver Tambo talk to Botha to release Mandela...)". Further depicted in the film are rent boycotts and uprisings against

government-appointed authorities. The mayor of the community is one such authority who has been appointed to his job and has the interests of his apartheid bosses at heart and not those of the people in the community. “Black leaders” like this created the appearance of black participation in governance but were little more than apartheid stooges. Resistance to such a system of false autonomy is represented in the film in a scene where the mayor is confronted at the community hall by Duma:

Mr Mayor... I will call you as such even though you were not elected by us and have no mandate to stand on this platform. [grunts of approval from the crowd] You speak of ‘democracy’... we must do this, we must do that...but who is this ‘we’ you are talking about? We have no money for rent, we do not earn enough to support our families... whereas you Mr Mayor, have a high paying job – have many businesses, houses, cars... so maybe for you apartheid is comfortable [laughter in crowd] ... but it is at our expense...

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 105)

Therefore the ‘legitimate’ social order is widely resisted throughout the film and the character Duma represents the politicized black South African who serves as a leader in the community, creating awareness and facilitating activism. The points that Duma makes in this scene regarding the benefit of the mayor as an apartheid stooge at the expense of the people of the community, are central to film as the mayor has traded in a life of hardship as a black South African to live a capitalist one, where he is enriched but his people are impoverished and exploited. This is similar to the choice that Panic has to make in the film. Duma, while also a heavily resistant character, in many ways serves as the polar opposite to Panic. Unlike the self-centred Panic, Duma is very concerned about his fellow South Africans, political issues and the well-being of the community. Additionally, guided by principle, he puts the wellness of others ahead of himself:

PAT: At the union you’re always fighting for other people to earn a living wage, but you don’t earn anything.

DUMA: Well, that’s the difference between being exploited and exploiting oneself!

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 122)

Thus the contrast of two forms of resistance to the 'legitimate' social order is depicted in the film as the gangster figure and the political activist are both at odds with the 'legitimate' social order. While Duma is one who is a champion of the people and a community builder, Panic has made selfish choices throughout his life and has pursued a capitalist lifestyle that while resistant to the 'legitimate' order is without direction. However, the film suggests a parallel between the Hollywood gangster and his society, the activists against the South African society of the 1980s and lastly, the pantsula gangster figure who in a different way resists the same 'legitimate order'. The film therefore offers an illustration of the black South African resistant experience as it focuses on those outside of 'legitimate' society and culture and raises questions as to why they are who they are:

The gangster film was generated by the historical appearance of the gangster, but it rapidly became a metaphor...What is more important is that its structure, which manifests distinctions between insider and outsider (however each is defined), survived and is still highly serviceable. This structure makes it possible to handle virtually anything the culture is concerned or distressed about.

(Shadoian, 1977: 4)

At the time of *Mapantsula*'s production there was great unrest and trouble in South Africa as riots and protests swept across Soweto and the nation in what was termed the township uprising. South African was in its third state of emergency. The depiction of the social order and those outside of the order but at the same time created by it, thus serves to raise issues that were at the heart of South African politics during the late 1980s. Panic, who represents the resistant criminal, slowly becomes more politically aware of his surroundings. He learns to use his rebellion in ways that are more powerful and constructive than the petty crimes that he initially commits.

At the start of the film Panic is indifferent when it comes to anything concerning the struggle against apartheid. In fact Panic is just uncaring about all matters and feels that he does not need to involve himself in anything outside of his own needs. Panic's rise, then, is a slow and gradual one whereby he begins to become more selfless and more politically involved. Initially, while Panic is aware of resistance movements he is in no way interested in them and

refuses to participate in any activity involving organized resistance to the government and its policies. When Panic is arrested along with a group of activists he is questioned by them as they try to figure him out:

Teacher: Panic! Awuchaze ke mfowethu. (Please tell us brother).

Uze kanjani la? (How did you come here?)

Panic: [advances on Teacher] Ngilethwe amacomrades, uyangithola?
(because of the comrades, get me?)

Mandla: Look my brother, ngibona sengathi awazi ukuthi kwenzakalani
la. (I think you don't understand what is happening.)

Panic: [turning] Hey! Ek is nie jou broer nie! (I'm not your brother!)

...

Panic: [shaking off the Activist] Cut my uit! (Cut me out!) Jy ken my
nie, ek ken jou nie! (You don't know me, I don't know you!)

...

Mandla looks at the others then at Panic who again retreats to the far
side, wary, isolated.

(Schmitz and Mogotalane, 1991: 63)

In this scene Panic's reluctance to have anything to do with the activists is very apparent as he not only refuses to be associated with them but also blames them for his incarceration, rather than the oppressive authorities and an unjust police force.

Panic, however, slowly becomes less self absorbed after he learns that young Sam has been arrested at a funeral for a UDF comrade. At the funeral, police try to subdue the crowd and one policeman rips the UDF flag off the coffin, resulting in chaos. Sam attacks the policeman and is dragged away, beaten and thrown into the back of a police van. Panic learns of Sam's arrest from Ma Modise. She informs Panic that Sam is missing and that the police said they did not have him when she went to the police station. Ma Modise is distraught, and for the first time Panic himself shows signs of concern and the beginning of his political awareness. Marx (1996: 20) supports this reading suggesting that "Panic's quest for Sam has taken on the symbolic value of a search for his own political identity". Panic goes looking for Sam and for his one-time girlfriend Pat. He has come to realise that Pat has given up on him and is now moving around with Duma, the political activist and champion of community causes.

This movement of Pat from Panic to Duma utilizes the classic Hollywood gangster conventions of the 'gangster's moll' in new ways. Rather than being taken by or following a more powerful or successful gangster figure, as Poppy does when Tony has Johnny Lovo killed in *Scarface*, for example, Pat instead chooses not to move on to a higher ranking pantsula but instead to the more community-driven, politically aware and selfless Duma. Panic seeks out Duma to warn him to stay away from Pat and also to retrieve any information Duma may have about Sam since it was Duma's politics that got Sam in trouble. While at this time Panic is still very self-centred and politically indifferent, he is beginning to act in ways that indicate greater depth and awareness of the political situation surrounding him. When finally confronting Duma, Panic naively leads the police to him and the two run off while police chase after them. In the thick of this chase the two have a heated conversation:

DUMA: You've just put the cops on me for your private shit!

PANIC: [listens] Moenie raas nie man. (Don't shout man.)

DUMA: [incredulously] Moenie raas nie! Are you stupid? You

Don't give a shit for other people do you?

(Schmitz and Mogotalane, 1991: 132)

In this scene, Panic comes face to face with the reality of his existence. He has been selfish, has never concerned himself with anything or anyone unless it was for his own gain and ultimately has avoided playing any role in the resistance politics that would go far beyond his selfish existence. Panic becomes more introspective during this conversation with Duma and rather than reacting aggressively, as he would have in the past, he is calm, quiet and reflective while being yelled at.

Shortly after this, Panic is told by Ma Modise that Sam has been killed. He is in shock and his face conveys a new awareness of a startling reality. The young boy, who looked up to him, has been killed. This is the reality of the situation and Panic realises that he has done nothing to save Sam. He has been unmindful of what has been going on around him and has ignored the politics and resistance movement, choosing to be indifferent. While pursuing material ends, Panic has betrayed his community. With Sam's death comes greater awareness for Panic. As Duma, Panic and Ma Modise walk down the street they walk into an open space where demonstrators confront the police. The riot situation is being fueled further by the police demanding that everyone disperse. Ma Modise pushes people aside and shouts at the

police accusingly, calling out for her son, “waar is my kind? Waar is my kind? Julle donner’s se boere! (where is my child? Where is my child? You damn boers!)”. Shots are fired and Ma Modise slowly collapses. This time Panic is quick to react as he and Duma join forces in a combined effort to drag Ma Modise away from the chaos and take her away to a patch of grass as police fire wildly at the crowd. Panic does not flee, he does not think only of himself and he makes an effort to save Ma Modise even if it is in vain. The Panic that we encountered prior to this would not walk into a riot situation and he certainly would not stay when things became dangerous. He would never risk his life to attempt to save a shot woman and he would never work arm in arm with a political activist. Panic’s political awareness has grown tremendously at this stage and he is no longer the same selfish petty gangster he was.

The incriminating evidence that Stander has against Panic, is video footage that shows Panic amidst the crowd at the confrontation with the police. This false evidence incriminates Panic even though he actually does not have anything to do with the political struggle shown in the footage and hardly knows Duma, “the terrorist”. Marx notes regarding the footage that, “it is clear this is false evidence, not the unambiguous document of his putative political activities” (1996: 19). Thus the film brings into question the role of the media in depicting the events that were occurring in South Africa at the time. Schmitz admits to using South African news reports as inspiration for the film and in utilizing the footage from the confrontation as evidence against Panic in the film, calls into question the validity of what the media was reporting in South Africa at the time. Thus questions of the media’s role in fueling the misunderstanding of black experiences and actions are brought to the fore in *Mapantsula*. The classic Hollywood gangster genre also often raised questions about the media’s role in sensationalising the crimes of gangsters and the public’s fascination with them. *Scarface*, for example, includes a scene where newspapermen squabble over what the headline should be after Big Louie’s death. They settle on “COSTILLO MURDER TO START GANG WAR!” even before any such war is evident.

The rise of political awareness in Panic climaxes when he is arrested at the riot and later asked to sign a statement written by Inspector Stander, that reads:

I, the undersigned, Johannes Themba Mzolo, confess to being an accomplice of Duma Sithole, a known terrorist and communist agitator. I admit helping Sithole bring arms into the country and distributing them. I further admit to

inciting acts of violence and aiding Sithole and other accomplices in fleeing the country on the date of my arrest. I swear that this statement is truthful and was made of my own free will, signed...

(Schmitz and Mogotalane, 1991: 138-139)

After a moment of pause and reflection, Panic makes the most defiant statement he can as he firmly refuses Stander. Panic has become fully politically aware and is aware that his choice will most likely result in his end but he refuses to be indifferent and allow things to continue as they have been. He will no longer be a self-centred petty criminal out for his own good but instead he will protect those that are fighting in a struggle that he too realises he has always been in. From Inspector Stander's early conversation with Panic, it is revealed that Panic has received lighter sentences in the past for working with the police and being an informant. Panic has always done what was best for Panic. Now, with Stander offering him his freedom, a large sum of money and a deal to make him "smile, rich, important in life" (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 129) he chooses to take a political stand and to further the resistance to the social order that he has been implicitly living as a pantsula. Panic channels his resistance by refusing to be an informant and sign a document that is false. Panic's death then, is almost certain and he is well aware of this too. Earlier, Panic was beaten badly and dragged to the window of the high building he was being held in:

Panic's point of view of the open window, which is now much closer, is seen. STANDER and the DETECTIVE grab PANIC from behind and start dragging him towards the window. PANIC drags his feet, straining against their grip. He breaks free, and turning, hits the detective. The detective punches him. Panic falls against the window. The detective punches him again and he falls half out of the window. The ground is far below. Again the detective hits him as he hangs out of the window.

(Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 121)

Thus Panic's 'fall' after refusing to sign Stander's document has been well foreshadowed by this scene of the potential of a literal drop from the building. In true Hollywood gangster fashion, Panic will have his fall but for Panic it will be both literal and figurative as he is most likely thrown out of the window at the climax of the film and will lose his life. However, Panic's slow rise to political awareness from a position of resistant criminal to one

of an earlier informant has also reached its pinnacle at this point as he takes a firm stand and refuses to accept the social order.

The fact that the film was initially banned in South Africa by the Directorate of Publications points to the fear the authorities had over the messages in the film. In an interview with Jeremy Nathan, Mogotlane notes that the film wanted to speak to the masses and be “entertaining and informative at the same time... to try to get to the masses, to the simple ordinary people” (1991: 23). Furthermore, Schmitz wished to put on film the events that were being broadcast on South African television during the turmoil of the time, that he felt showed “township life, but in a very clichéd, stereo-typed way” (1991: 22). The political aspects of the film were, in fact, concealed from the authorities in order to get the film made and a dummy script was written that was “a pure adventure story” (Schmitz and Mogotlane, 1991: 23). The film also made use of subtitles to allow anyone, and in particular a white audience unfamiliar with *tsotsi-taal*, to decipher exactly what was being said as Schmitz wished to talk to “a greater South African society, and not...a clique inside that society” (1991: 24). Thus in line with the theories of Shadoian *Mapantsula* indeed reveals through the gangster genre framework the concerns of the society at the time as it portrays different forms of black resistance to the dominant order and delves into the lives of both insiders and outsiders to the social order of the time. Through Panic, the resistant criminal, and Duma the political activist, a strong narrative of resistance is told. The pantsula is resistant to the social order by way of his style and material ambitions but without direction. Through Panic’s experiences in the film, he slowly becomes more aware of the causes people like Duma are fighting for, to the point where he himself is willing to channel his resistance into a firm refusal to go along with the continuation of the social order. Panic reaches the point where he is willing to die to protect Duma and stand up against the oppressive order that took the life of Sam and so many others. Through the gangster film, Schmitz then, has crafted an intricate South African tale within the framework of the genre to reveal the concerns of the time and the lives of those outside the legitimate social order. The order will not hold is the message. Those outside the order have been created by it and will not be compliant anymore even if that means the greatest of sacrifices.

In ending this chapter, it is interesting to note that Dolly Rathebe, who played such an exuberant role in *Sophiatown* of the 1950s and who was discussed in chapter two, is also cast in *Mapantsula* as Ma Modise. This link serves to highlight the continuity of black experience

and also point to the inefficacy of the Sophiatown gangster culture in forming a strong resistance to the state as the intellectuals at *Drum* wished them to. The adoption of the style, crimes and symbolism of the Hollywood gangster did not translate into a solid, meaningful resistance to the injustices of the time. Ma Modise is a helpless mother in *Mapantsula*, still struggling against the forces of the government and one who ultimately loses her son. This use of a Sophiatown alumnus further drives the call to action and political awareness and change in the 1980s by referencing the potential for the politicisation of the gangster that was perhaps wasted in the 1950s. Ma Modise does not have a husband in the film; as one is conspicuously absent as she raises her children by herself (Magogodi, 2003). This absence of the paternal figure is again indicative of the failure of the Sophiatown gangster to play a significant role in the struggle against oppression. Instead the superficial pursuit of material ends and the adoption of crime and style of the Hollywood gangster has presumably lead the Sophiatown gangster down the same tragic path as his Hollywood counterpart.

Chapter Three: *Hijack Stories* (2000)

Having just looked at an example of a South African contribution to the gangster film genre and how it functions in the context of the late 1980s, I shall now turn my focus to a South African gangster film post-liberation and interrogate how the genre is used in *Hijack Stories*, keeping in mind the socio-political context of the first decade after the coming of democracy.

3.1. Writing on *Hijack Stories*

Bianca Jacobsohn has done the most extensive work on *Hijack Stories* in her thesis entitled “In the car with Oliver Schmitz's *Hijack Stories* (2000): The journey of a South African film in translation” (2008). Jacobsohn, however, focuses primarily on *Hijack Stories* as an example of a South African film in translation, with an emphasis on the various processes that lead to a film's existence and how it is packaged and marketed internationally. The research, therefore, does not contain any genre studies approach to the film and looks more toward how the film was translated abroad across different cultures. Furthermore because of the focus on translation, Jacobsohn does not delve into the themes of the film or offer interpretations of its meaning. Adam Haupt (2008) offers a brief study of the film along with Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* and the SABC 1 television series *Yizo Yizo*, as he discusses the construction of black masculinity in post-apartheid cinema. Haupt sees the film as providing an opportunity to think about the media's role in constructing limited roles for black South Africans as it tackles issues of authenticity which I will pick up on later. Nevertheless, other than Jacobsohn and Haupt, *Hijack Stories* is a film that has largely not been studied or written about but has gone unnoticed for the most part.

Bongani Majola, in offering a South African review of the film, has said that: “The movie provides a more contemporary evocation of township life, but runs the risk of reinforcing the stereotype of Soweto as a den of criminal activity. Township characters in the movie are mostly career criminals whose lives revolve around drink, sex and crime” (2003). Such a review of the film is very thin in that it misses the use of the genre in interrogating the social conditions that give rise to such figures in South African society. Furthermore, with the reversal of roles in the film neither protagonist is a career criminal and relegating the film to lives that revolve around “drink, sex and crime” is not an accurate reflection of the content of

the film at all. Derek Malcolm of the United Kingdom *Guardian* focuses instead on the politics of racial representation as he notes: “It may be a hard sell, even in South Africa, but its importance lies not in how much money it makes but how it proves that even a white director can have a direct line into what's really happening at ground level in a troubled and crime-ridden society” (2001).

Comments from the larger film viewing public have been mixed. Jean-Marc Liotier, a French viewer, notes the value of the film in its “authentic” portrayal of the South African experience. He goes on to defend the film’s lack of special effects and glossy car chases (which have been criticised by some viewers) by noting the value of the story and the minimalistic approach being in line with the environment of the movie. South African viewer, Robert Benjamin, on the other hand, views the film as “an insult to the SA film industry” and believes stories like *Cry the Beloved Country* and *Shaka Zulu* are great stories that we could tell instead (2007). I would suggest that Benjamin has missed the point completely. Such a reading of the film and the preferred antiquated narratives, suggests a lack of understanding of the content of the film and its engagement with *modern day* issues that concern South African society. This naïve understanding of the gangster genre and how it has been appropriated by South African films points exactly to the need for such an analysis. As Shadoian has said and Benjamin has missed, the gangster genre is: “ready made for certain kinds of concerns” (1977, in Cook and Bernink, 1999: 175).

3.2. *Hijack Stories* (2000) as gangster film

Hijack Stories fits the mould of a gangster film more clearly than does *Mapantsula*, as it deals largely with the experiences of a Soweto gang and their exploits. However, the model has shifted from the classic Hollywood gangster film to the black American gangster film such as John Singleton’s *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), Mario van Peebles’ *New Jack City* (1991) and Leon Ichaso’s *Sugar Hill* (1994). This brings with it a concern with the authenticity of black life. The film centers around the characters of Zama and Sox, who once went to school together but have since taken very different paths in life. Zama has become the leader of a car-hijacking gang in Soweto, while Sox has left Soweto and gone on to become an actor living in the plush suburb of Rosebank. The movie thus can be compared to Michael Curtiz’s

classic 1938 gangster film *Angels With Dirty Faces*. Curtiz tells the story of two friends from similar beginnings who take very different paths in life due to their circumstances as Rocky (James Cagney) becomes a gritty, pugnacious career criminal while Jerry (Pat O'Brien) ends up a compassionate priest. The contrasts between the two central characters play a key role in the development of both films and this alludes to the exploration of the social conditions within a society that shapes these men and that is most relevant to *Hijack Stories*.

McArthur's emphasis on identifying the visual conventions of a film as part of a genre is vital in locating *Hijack Stories* within the gangster genre. As influential genre theorist Edward Buscombe has said, even before McArthur's influential work in *Underworld USA*, "since we are dealing with a visual medium we ought surely to look for our defining criteria on the screen" (1970: 36).

Firstly then, the physical presence of the protagonists in the film is one that follows the visual conventions found in the gangster film very closely. Zama, Joe and Fly all subscribe to the same code of dress in *Hijack Stories*. They wear clothing that is similar in appearance and that defines them as gangsters in their environment. Other gangsters that they hang around with also subscribe to a similar appearance. In *Hijack Stories*, the characters are not decked out in suits, hats, shirts, pants and impeccably polished shoes. This more stylish and formal image that is often found in the classic Hollywood gangster film, would not fit in with the authentic image of a 21st century township gangster and thus is represented instead via a modern urban take on fashion by way of impressive township stylings. The ethos behind the dress of the gangster characters in the film is, however, not that different from that of the characters from the Hollywood gangster genre. In a scene in the film, Zama, Sox, Joe and Fly go shopping at expensive boutiques after scoring a big heist of cars. The clothing that they purchase is modern and urban but similar to the attire of characters in the Hollywood gangster film in purpose. The clothes serve as signifier of the status of the gangster and his accomplishments. They set him apart from the common man and elevate him to a status within society of the fortunate and successful, even if this is by illegal means. Nowhere better is this illustrated in the film than when the gang start to process their clothing at the cashier. She begins to cut off the price tags and is quickly reprimanded by Fly: "Don't cut it! I want people to see what I'm worth!" In similar fashion Tony Camonte in *Scarface* leads Poppy into his bedroom suite, to show off extravagant piles of new dress shirts that reflect his rising status in the gangster world. He says to her: "What I'm gonna do is wear a shirt only once...

and then give it right away to the laundry... a new shirt every day." The appearance of success and means is what drives the purchasing of such expensive items of clothing and Tony too wants Poppy to know what he is worth. In the store while reviewing a price tag, Joe comments to one of the girls that the gang has picked up: "Look at this, my father never earned this much money in a month". The dress of the gangster in *Hijack Stories* thus echoes the same ideals of the Hollywood gangster's attire in signifying an upward mobility and a move away from the class and circumstances that defined the generation of their parents. At the same time, however, in the scene discussed above Zama does not buy anything when the gang goes shopping for new clothes. This points toward a deeper understanding on Zama's part of the superficial nature of looking good as a criminal. Zama already has the look of a successful township gangster and would rather be successful than splurge his money trying to look successful.

The idea that a gangster is in part defined by his clothes is also present in the film as it explores the transformation of Sox from a Rosebank yuppie to a Soweto gangster. Upon Sox's first arrival in Soweto he is immediately out of place as he is dressed in a tight shirt and pants with black-framed eye-glasses on. His gait and appearance set him apart from the rest of the gangsters there. His walk is uncomfortable and awkward, overly swaying and swinging his limbs as he moves through the street. Zama and the other gangsters Sox encounters wear clothing that is urban and loose fitting, with their faces concealed by sunglasses, and most wear bucket hats that are pulled low as well. In trying to get to grips with playing a Soweto gangster character, Sox slowly begins to change his apparel, gait and body language in order to fit the part. He starts wearing bucket hats and swaps his black-framed eye glasses for sunglasses. Sox trades in his tight fitting clothes for loose fitting casual urban clothing and starts to walk with a township swagger in his step while projecting more confidence and a threatening presence. He learns how to move like a Soweto gangster from his uncle Bra Dan who shows him a movement punctuated by a lunging forward stabbing action to an unsuspecting victim. Zama on the other hand is always cool and threatening right from his first scene where he asks questions, does not provide answers and drives off abruptly. He is menacing and does not hesitate to throw people around, point guns in faces and get physical even with women as he demonstrates when he takes a swipe at Grace for providing Sox with information about him. This pattern of misogyny by the gangster figure is a common one and is well represented in classic Hollywood gangster films as discussed earlier.

The figure of the gangster is associated with recurring patterns of behavior presented via a set of visual tropes. The rebellious nature, confidence and animal magnetism of the gangster character is evident in *Hijack Stories*. Zama, in particular, is very confident and commanding as he goes about his business. He is cool and self-assured and does not look for approval. At the same time there also exists a charisma about him that makes him attractive both to the viewer and to the other characters in the film. Fly and Joe look up to Zama, and Sox is the one who is drawn to him in trying to understand what a gangster is. Initially Sox uses Wesley Snipes for inspiration as he auditions for the part of Bra Biza. This channeling of Snipes as a black American gangster, does not win him the part. The director is not impressed and has Sox refocus before trying again. Sox is blank. His identification with a black American gangster does not fit the part of a black township gangster and thus his journey of discovery towards understanding the township gangster begins. In fact as the movie progresses Sox in many ways becomes Zama as he uses what he knows and sees about Zama to craft his own understanding of a Soweto gangster character for the part he is auditioning for. Indeed in Sox's final audition he is drawing from Zama's life as he presents a performance to the casting director that positions himself in Zama's shoes. As Sox becomes more like Zama he too projects the same dangerous charisma and gangster charm that Zama and the rest of the gang exude. Before splurging their money on lavish clothing the gang manages to pick up a group of girls with the greatest of ease. The women are drawn to them and it is the same 'bad boy' dangerous charm that is seen recurring in classic Hollywood gangster films such as *Scarface*, *Little Caesar* and *Public Enemy* and in black American gangster film equivalents like *New Jack City* that is on display here as well. One of the women reveals her attraction to the animal magnetism exuded by the gangsters when she asks Sox to tell her how bad he is. When Sox replies "bad", she enticingly asks him "how bad?" Her desire to know all about the misdeeds of the gang reveals the dangerous attraction that the gangster character exudes. The rebel nature of the gangster in going against the lowly position he found himself to be in and climbing up a hierarchy on his terms as a rule breaker is attractive as he exposes the flaws of the laws that govern and hold back certain members of a society. By bucking authority he becomes a hero in a way as he challenges what the members of his society are unhappy or disillusioned about. At the same time because of the contemporary nature of the genre in reflecting the social conditions of a time, the genre allows the audience an opportunity to explore a critique of the problems and issues of their society. By striving to be an alpha male, the gangster has a primal charisma about him, in contrast to the complacent members of society who accept their positions tamely.

Furthermore, the visual iconography of criminal behavior is well represented in *Hijack Stories*. Zama and his gang steal cars for a living. They drive around together and find the cars they are looking for, break into them quietly and drive them away rapidly. They also stop cars in transit and hijack unsuspecting victims by gunpoint by throwing them out on the street before speeding away. They evade the police in high speed chases and work with underworld operators in selling off the stolen vehicles. Part of Sox's induction into the gangster world of Soweto is thus to learn how to commit crimes. Grace first teaches Sox how to steal wallets by bumping into people and as the film progresses Zama forces Sox into pulling off a hijacking himself, which goes awkwardly wrong. The gang advises Sox as to what to do and how to make a victim focus on the gun during a hijacking. Sox is given a gun and pointed to a car to hijack. He is later involved in a high speed chase with the police and a shootout as well. Thus the visual iconography of an exciting criminality is well represented in the film.

The stock characters of the gangster film genre are also found in *Hijack Stories*. The 'hothead' stock character is portrayed by Zama in a sense as he can lose his temper very easily and behave rashly. He attacks at a moment's notice and in one scene smashes a car window rashly when he cannot get keys to a vehicle. In many ways the downfall of the gang is brought about by Zama's hotheaded reaction to Sox as a threat to his leadership. Zama acts swiftly and does not hesitate to pull a gun on anyone and does so within the blink of an eye at various stages in the film and to various targets as well ranging from vehicle owners to the police. At the same time, however, Zama reveals that he models himself on action heroes like Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone. This suggests that the anger and violence he displays are studied and thus is not as uncontrollable as the conventional hothead. When Sox shows Zama a Hollywood move he picked up from watching Wesley Snipes operate a gun, Zama is highly impressed and wishes to be shown how to do the move. This suggests that authenticity is central to the film with regard to black identity and how it is formed and represented. In a post-apartheid period shifts in identity are commonplace as the country moves from an old order to a new order and the issue of what constitutes black male identity is thus explored in the film. Zama's character is therefore used in *Hijack Stories* to bring to the fore the dissatisfaction and anger that many South Africans have, who have not seen the promised opportunities and changes implemented. Zama grew up in Soweto and lived through the transition to liberation but did not find the opportunities promised during this time period and thus uses the anger and frustration from this along with the yearning and drive that these promises instilled in him to react violently and aggressively while still

searching for an identity in the “New South Africa”. Interestingly, Zama does not identify with the township gangster character of Bra Biza and is appalled when Sox suggests the connection. He also does not identify himself as a criminal: “He thinks we are criminals...do I look like a dirty criminal?”

The ‘faithful lieutenant’ stock character is on display in the film via the characters of both Joe and Fly. Both men are extremely loyal to Zama and do his bidding for him. They take orders from him and execute his plans and on more than one occasion Fly refers to Zama as his “general” in the film. Their allegiance to Zama and reference to a military rank suggests a sense of a revolution against an order that they are fighting against: almost a war. This reference is one that the audience could identify with as many South Africans became frustrated with the lack of equality and opportunities for all and the sense of a building revolution against these unjust practices was apparent at the time of the film’s production. In 2003, economist Sampie Terreblanche contended that: “the poorest 60% of the African population became 50% poorer between 1975 and 2000. While the formal economy employed 5.3 million Africans (34% of all Africans) in 1970, by 2000 only 4.7 million (14% of the total African population) were employed” (Terreblanche, 2003, cited in Maloka, 2006). These statistics indicate the growing frustrations of the time, especially, when better opportunities were promised for all. These feelings have grown since then with marches for “economic freedom” and the call for the “nationalization” of mines recently.

The visual representation of stock character authority figures is present in the film via the police that try to apprehend the gang after various crimes. Shootouts and high speed chases with the police also contribute in this regard to recurring images in the genre. The police are portrayed in the film superficially and without any real character development but this is by design. There is a sense of indifference about the police in *Hijack Stories* as they go about their jobs in a superficial manner often displaying inadequate competence. Again, this portrayal of the police speaks to the problems of South Africa at the time with ordinary South Africans becoming more disillusioned with the lack of police competence in protecting society as crime increased rapidly. Lastly, the moll stock character is fulfilled by the character Grace who partners Sox as he delves into the criminal underworld of Soweto and learns how to become a gangster. Her reputation is called into question early on, and Sox is warned by his uncle: “Stay away from that bitch”. The film’s use of the moll character is interesting as Grace does not ‘belong’ to anyone in the film as Poppy, for example,

'belonged' to Johnny Lovo and Tony Camonte at different stages in *Scarface*. Instead Grace is more of an independent take on the moll stock character and unlike the classic Hollywood gangster films, where the moll is regarded in more glamorous and coveted terms, here Grace is seen as an independent woman who is not to be messed with. Bra Dan warns Sox: "That Grace she spreads it around. She's probably got AIDS". The sexuality of the moll stock character is thus being used by the film to explore the way women are perceived in modern day South African society and the perception of the independent woman and the control of her sexuality. In a country with a horrible record of women's rights abuses and sexual violence especially in the period of the film's production such an exploration of the treatment of Grace and the labeling of her as a "bitch" and whether such a label is valid at all is brought to the fore. Through Sox's relationship with Grace we come to find Grace undeserving of such a label but instead labeled in such a manner because of her more independent nature and control of her own sexuality.

Recurring patterns of imagery surrounding the milieu in which the characters operate are found in *Hijack Stories* just as they are found in the Hollywood gangster genre. The film contains many interspersed shots of the urban setting within which the characters operate. Shots of busy Soweto streets, taxis zooming down roads, buildings and vendors and pedestrians tightly packed on pavements paint a distinctly urban setting. The frequently seen interiors of restaurants, clubs, bars, pubs, diners and eateries are scattered throughout the film. The spaces the characters occupy are tight and many scenes are shot within cars themselves to accentuate the pressures and difficulties of the environment.

Lastly, McArthur identifies the technology at the characters disposal as a source of iconography in the gangster film and this is prominently on display in *Hijack Stories*. The recurring patterns of imagery in terms of guns and weapons are found in the film as the members of the gang use them freely, pointing, shooting and flashing them at people to intimidate others. Zama frequently raises his shirt to expose his gun tucked into his pants when he wishes to intimidate others and even does this on the escalator of a mall in response to a stranger just looking at him the wrong way. Guns are used in shootouts with the police and in hijackings. The use of automobiles permeates the film as it deals specifically with the criminal activity of hijacking. The gang members steal and make use of various vehicles, use stolen vehicles to steal more vehicles and utilize vehicles in making their getaways.

Warshow's 'rise and fall' narrative structure, which he uses to characterise the gangster film genre, is found in *Hijack Stories*. However, because of the dual nature of the film in contrasting two protagonists, the rise and fall structure applies very differently to the two protagonists. Firstly, when the film opens Sox has already had a gradual rise from his humble beginnings as a Soweto schoolboy. It is revealed that he left Soweto and went to one of the "schools in town". From there he apparently excelled at his studies and went on to become an actor and presenter on local television. Sox's main goal is to land the part of Bra Biza in the big screen adaptation of a successful television show chronicling the exploits of a township gangster. This part will be his big break and this is the sole reason he delves into the underworld. Sox's rise then, relates to his mastery of a township gangster character. The more he is able to become a township gangster the more he is able to relate to the character he is auditioning for and the closer he is to getting the part. Thus his big 'rise' comes when he is told to pull off the transportation of ten "class one" vehicles from the Brixton police station parking lot to the point of collection. If Sox can pull this off he can prove his capability as a township gangster and thus the mastery of his exploration into the character of Bra Biza. Sox does well but is accosted by the police while attempting to move one of the last vehicles. With the help of Zama and the driving skills of Fly, he manages to flee the scene but with the police hot on their heels. During the high speed chase and shootout, Sox experiences the pinnacle of his 'rise'. He is contacted on his mobile by his agent who tells him that he is the number one prospect for the role of Bra Biza after his last authentic Zama-based audition. This has been Sox's number one goal throughout the film and he has achieved it. His 'rise' has been achieved. He has mastered being a Soweto gangster to such an extent that he has managed to perform robberies, hijackings and move stolen vehicles from right under police watch. He has become so good at this that he is evading the police and proving to be above the law at this moment in the film. To top it off he has achieved success in his latest audition and is the top prospect for the role he coveted. However, Sox's fall then comes rapidly as he is shot during the shootout car chase with the police. He is dragged from the vehicle by Zama and taken to a government hospital. He is in bad shape and is not getting proper treatment there. He finally has his identity stolen by Zama and misses the final audition for the part of Bra Biza due to his shooting, losing the part that had been his goal since the beginning of the film.

On the other hand, Zama initially comes from much of the same conditions as Sox. He too was a schoolboy in Soweto. Zama, however, reveals later that he was not as gifted

academically as Sox. While Sox left Soweto for a better school and life, Zama remained behind. Zama's 'rise' is also a slow and gradual one but it is more concerned with crime and achieving success through it than is Sox's 'rise'. Zama has become a notorious gangster in Soweto. People know who he is and they know that he is arguably the biggest and baddest gangster there. It is Zama that Grace points Sox in the direction of when he asks her if Soweto has any "real badass gangsters". Sox's use of the word "badass" here again brings to the fore various images of black masculinity and the black gangster as it points toward Hollywood images of black masculine identity while noting the search for identity that Sox is undergoing. Zama has risen to the top of the gangster circles from his humble upbringings as a schoolboy who struggled with maths. He is powerful, he is successful and he is feared and respected. Zama manages to steal ten "class one" vehicles in a single day and this is the height of his rise as a gang leader. His fall in the film, then, comes about at the same time as Sox's fall. During the shootout and high speed chase from the police, Joe is shot and killed, Sox is badly wounded and the car they have journeyed in from their first appearance in the film is blown up. The car serves as a metaphor for their gang, which is no more. At Joe's funeral, Fly who is a wanted man, is shown driving by and stopping briefly with tears in his eyes before driving off. It is evident that the gang has been destroyed and that only Zama remains. He is no longer a gang leader for there is no one to lead and his gang has been crushed. As Zama says words at Joe's funeral it is clear that he has experienced his 'fall' and that Zama the gang leader is no more: "Africa my beginning... Africa my end. I was born here... I will die here".

3.3. How does *Hijack Stories* use the figure of the gangster?

Shadoian has said that the gangster film looks at a world that is in opposition to legitimate society and that by focusing in this area, it can make discoveries that are simply not possible from within. It can thus make the audience see things that would otherwise be difficult to see (Shadoian, 1977: 4).

The legitimate social order in *Hijack Stories* is depicted as one that is in a state of transition. In a post-liberation society, the new roles for black and white, men and women and township dwellers and city inhabitants are still not clearly defined. The film portrays two very different

positions within the social order then. On the one hand Zama is a young black man who finds himself still in the conditions that liberation presumably ought to have remedied. He has very few possibilities in his life and this is symptomatic of the society in which he lives. His chances of success have been limited and, post-liberation, few of the promises made have been met. He frequently makes fun of concepts and mottos that were thrown around after the elections. He mockingly calls Sox, “Mr Rainbow Nation”. Zama exists within a social order of black South Africans who have become disillusioned by a post-liberation rhetoric of unity and equality. He knows that things have not been delivered as promised and that while concepts like “simunye – we are one” sound good, they are thinly veiled facades over the large gaps that exist in a post-liberation society. Zama then finds himself forced to turn to crime as his means of achieving the promises made during the post-liberation period. The ideas of freedom for all, equality, access to free education and job opportunities beckoned to him as they did to all South Africans and they appealed to him too but he never saw any of these things come to fruition in his environment. He remained disadvantaged and thus took to illegal means to achieve those ends.

On the other hand, Sox finds himself in a different position to Zama. Sox left the township and went to the city where he experienced change and himself changed. Sox’s post-liberation experience is in direct contrast to Zama’s. Unlike Zama, Sox found himself in a better position to take advantage of the emphasis placed on black development in the city. Sox became an actor and a presenter as part of the SABC’s new direction post 1994. He presents a music show on television called *Simunye Grooves* with a white woman who speaks in isiZulu while he speaks in English. The show’s motto is “we are one”. Sox lives in the upper class suburb of Rosebank and is far removed from his beginnings in Soweto. He has a white girlfriend who stays with him casually and in an individualistic Western spirit lives alone without any of his family present in his life. He has truly benefited from the post-liberation emphasis on black empowerment and development and has assumed the role of an urbanite in the suburbs. The social position for Sox is thus one of an educated, upwardly mobile young black man.

Hijack Stories then, depicts two very contrasting spaces within the social order. There is the township of Soweto and the people that live there and operate within this space. This is an impoverished, harsh space with little that is positive in it. Life here is depicted as a struggle in the film, and success in Soweto is not possible, legally, without leaving Soweto as Sox has

done. Shebeens, streets, interiors of taxis, township shacks and other people's cars are frequently used in the film to depict Soweto. On the other hand, there are also the prosperous suburbs where life is depicted not as a struggle but as much more leisurely and with far more opportunities. Sox is a successful presenter and television actor, but he seeks more than this and it is available to him. He has the upward mobility to achieve his goal of becoming a big-screen actor. Clubs, upmarket restaurants, apartment interiors with decorative detail, television studios and audition sets serve to form this space within the social order. Post-liberation, there has been an unequal rate of development and spreading of opportunities and wealth. Racial lines no longer signal the division of the 'haves' from the 'have nots'. Those in the upper echelon of society and those lower down are separated by the unequal opportunities that have been afforded to people since liberation. The struggle is over but the redistribution of resources, infrastructure, development, opportunities and means to achieve ends has not been equitable. Two young black men from the same beginnings find themselves in completely opposite positions due to the failure of a post-liberation society in addressing the inequalities of the past in an equitable way. Rural and peri-urban spaces have largely not been developed but urban areas have and black youth who find themselves wanting to achieve the neo-liberal "South African Dream", find themselves giving up part of their identity in order to become part of a higher echelon within the social order.

Sox represents a character in the film who has lost a part of his identity as he has assumed a role within the upper sections of the social order. He has lost a part of his culture and is alien to the black experience of the majority of the country. Right from the onset, Sox is identified by the other characters in the township as someone who is 'other'. He is not a part of them. When Sox first goes to see his uncle, Bra Dan, he is immediately targeted by two thugs who pick him out as a soft city boy and try to rob him. Grace refers to him as "part of that group that ran away to the white suburbs". Even his uncle looks at him curiously and remarks how he doesn't look like his mother. The gangsters that he meets in the township are especially harsh towards Sox initially. One ignores him completely as if he isn't even speaking and the two that do respond to him when he first shows up are especially hostile in making clear distinctions between Sox and themselves. Sox asks for Zama and is immediately called a faggot and asked who he is. When he replies with his name he is insulted further and asked where he comes from: "Hey wena we don't know any Sox here! Where do you come from? Oh Rosebank? Get the fuck back to Rosebank! Voetsek!". At other times, Sox is badgered on account of his lifestyle and position. Grace mockingly sings the SABC 1 catchphrase at the

time “Simunye – Oh, we are one” to him when they see him on television. Zama calls him “Mr Rainbow Nation” and a “spy”. He is completely removed from their experiences of black life in South Africa. Even when talking about food, Grace makes the distinction between “pap and vleis” and dishes like “chicken ala Sox” referring to him as “a boy from the white kitchen”. The way Sox walks, talks, behaves and carries himself is completely out of place among not just the gangsters but the black community of the township. In assuming a higher position within the social order he has lost his connection to his roots and the black experience at large.

The film depicts very interesting clashes between representatives of the two positions within the social order and they do not all revolve around Sox either. Zama visits Sox in his environment of the lavish suburb of Rosebank. He goes to see him in an upscale establishment. Zama is very aloof here in this scene and while he makes fun of various aspects of the environment there is also a sense of desire about him. He comments on the light-coloured beer that Sox is sipping, and when Sox tells him it is Mexican beer and it costs “just ten rands” he is appalled and replies, “Ten bucks! Fuck. You can get drunk for ten bucks in Soweto”. Thus the contrasting of the two positions within the social order is brought to the fore at many moments in the film. Zama tells Sox that “there’s no high class in the streets”. Their positions within the social order clash throughout the movie as they become more involved with one another.

One of the sequences that best exposes the contrasting positions within the social order of the two protagonists comes about when Sox is told to pull off a car hijacking himself, in order to prove himself. This scene is set in the suburbs and background images include high walls surrounding large properties, neatly pruned gardens and a quiet street with a car parked outside a house. This is an environment that Sox identifies with. When he botches the hijacking and the car alarm goes off, Sox freezes up. He is confronted by the owner of the vehicle, and his reaction here is telling in that he raises his hands along with the middle-aged white man who is his victim. It is a moment of identification. The gun is in Sox’s hand but his hands go up along with his victim’s. This man that has emerged from his suburban house is, like Sox, a member of the upper echelon within the social order. Sox struggles to stay within this identity of black township hijacker and instead uses politeness and reason to engage with the victim as he would in his normal life under normal circumstances: “I’m sorry sir, I need your car keys. Will you give them to me? Please”. The victim is stunned and dazed

by Sox's approach to him and cannot make sense of Sox. Sox is indeed a strange sight as he struggles to come to terms with the two identities he is balancing. On the one hand he is a successful, black actor from Rosebank who has no need to rob or steal and, if anything, identifies more with his victim. On the other hand he is trying to understand the mentality of a black township gangster and portray himself as such but he lacks the real motivations that drive such an individual from the bottom of the social order.

Hijack Stories then, juxtaposes these two positions within the social order. Problems with the neo-liberal 'South African Dream' are already visible at the time of the film's release, and just as Shadoian proposes with American society and the 'American Dream', the "dream" both "summons and restricts". All of the messages sent out to the masses post-liberation were positive and promised equality, freedom for all, development, opportunities and a country in which anything could be achieved by anyone regardless of race, class, sex or creed. Realistically however, this was not achieved and this is what lies at the heart of *Hijack Stories* as it uses the gangster genre framework to elucidate the problems with the neo-liberal 'South African Dream' ideology. In order for someone like Zama actually to achieve the enticing ends advertised by the post-liberation 'South African Dream' he has to go about things illegally as the routes for upward mobility have not become accessible to all. There are some who have capitalised upon this and others who have seen little change prior to and post-liberation. Sox has seen much change and has benefited, but for Zama things stayed the same in Soweto. He has had to become a criminal to chase after the beckoning 'South African Dream'.

The film, however, goes further in its exploration of the social order post-liberation by looking at what has been lost in gaining the promised ends of the 'South African Dream'. Sox is successful and he is upwardly mobile. He has achieved a lot and is still pursuing further goals. He is an educated, sophisticated urbanite who sips Mexican beer and models himself on Wesley Snipes. However, in moving away from Soweto and his beginnings he has lost touch with his roots. He has had to become someone different from the person he started out as, in order to succeed within the social order. Sox has lost part of his identity and has lost touch with the larger South African black experience, but in many ways he had to do this in order to assume a higher position within the social order. He has assimilated the culture of those who occupied the higher rungs within the social order and has done this at the cost of his own culture, roots and background. It is interesting, then, that in order for him to find his

roots and to once again be a part of the South African black experience at large, he has to become a gangster. The media's construction of black South African identity then is foregrounded in the film as it is, after all, the vision of the film making industry that has Sox turn into a gangster in order to offer a 'real' portrayal of the black South African male. When he first auditions, he is considered unthreatening and too tame for the role. When he becomes a snarling, aggressive hoodlum modelled on Zama, this is the perfect audition. Thus the media's representation of the black South African is brought into question in the film as it brings to the fore the strong promotion of a certain image of 'blackness' that is linked strongly to crime and recklessness. Similarly, Haupt has commented that in *Hijack Stories* the thug or tsotsi appears to have the most currency in the entertainment industry and that the "image of the black man as thug/gangster/tsotsi has been commodified" (2008: 378).

Sox's journey in the film then, is very interesting as he finds himself needing to become more authentically "township black" in order to play a generic character in a film. During his journey Sox discovers more about his past by interacting with Bra Dan, and learning about what came before him during Bra Dan's generation. He learns about the motivations that drive township criminals as he participates in crimes himself. He begins to fit in more and more as he comes to grips with the larger South African black experience. Sox regains some of the culture and identification that he has lost. At the very end of the film, Grace sits with Sox by his hospital bed and she asks him if he found what he was looking for. Sox gives a slight nod of his head and says "thank you". The scene then fades to black as we see Sox for the last time. His appreciation for Grace's endeavours in helping him discover his roots and an authentic South African black experience post-liberation from those lowly ranked in the social order, suggests a moment of realisation within Sox. He has come to understand what he has lost in order to succeed within the social order post-liberation and appreciates what he has rediscovered. There is no mention about the audition or the role in the film he coveted in this scene. Sox has moved beyond the role of Bra Biza and has found a more significant identity that he had lost. This identity of a township gangster that Sox took on, has helped him to understand the motivations of the ordinary black South African and has served to bridge the gap between those who have benefited from the promises of liberation and those who have not. Director, Schmitz has also noted in an interview with Matt Arnoldi, his intentions in exploring this division in society:

What I found fascinating was this split developing between kids in the

township and kids who had better chances. They were not sharing the same experiences and I could see that could lead to antagonism and resentment. I eventually settled on this story of an actor and a gangster where there's an interchange of identities.

(Arnoldi, 2005)

The township gangster is seen as a pathway toward a more authentic identity for Sox due to the frustrations of the majority of black South Africans who remain impoverished and misunderstood while a few benefit and isolate themselves from the impoverished once they have gained material success. The film thus uses the gangster genre framework to explore a concern in South African society and suggests the removal of the high walls that those who have succeeded have put up to isolate themselves from their backgrounds and from the current state of affairs in the country that see the majority languish while a few flourish without looking back or around them.

For Zama then, the film ends differently in that he takes a new turn after the fall of his gang. Zama assumes the identity of Sox and auditions for the role of Bra Biza. He is exceptionally convincing and impressive and gets the part. Zama has managed to take what were his own authentic black township experiences and use them to give life to the character of Bra Biza. He has found a way to succeed in climbing up the social order other than hijacking cars by relating his life to a character that has proven to be so popular he is getting his own movie. At the same time; however, what Zama is doing is still criminal. In other words he is hijacking the part from Sox. He hijacks Sox's identity and steals his role. The criminal nature of Zama remains but interestingly he is not exposed as a fraud. None of the people at the audition recognise him as different to the original Sox. This suggests the contrasting characters of Zama and Sox are not so different after all. They both started as Soweto school boys and travelled paths under transition into a post-liberation South Africa. They both chased the same promised ends that the neo-liberal 'South African Dream' flaunted. They both came to understand the value of their cultural identity and the larger South African black experience. Zama has managed to take what he has experienced and parlay that into a potential breakthrough big-screen acting role. Sox has come to understand what he had lost in assuming an upper position within the social order and is thankful for regaining a more authentic sense of self and connection to the realities of the majority in South Africa. Sox and Zama are very much the same and even though they took different paths, they both tried to

chase down the 'South African Dream' and therefore learnt how to manoeuvre within the post-liberation society in order to achieve the ends promised to them.

The movie thus ends with Zama laughing as he is told he is going to be a big star by the producer. The screen fades to black with this image. The future is not clearly defined for either Zama or Sox but what both have realised is the value of their identity and experiences as black South Africans. Zama has taken the same entrepreneurial spirit and determination that he exhibited as a gang leader of car hijackers and applied it to a legitimate business. He is using the "black township" experience and the hustle and ambition of a gangster to carve out a legitimate career for himself, which he has done, ironically, by hijacking the identity of Sox. Sox has regained a part of his lost identity that he gave up when he assumed a higher position within the social order. He understands his roots and value of his once lost identity. Both men have struggled to get to this point in the film but even though they have been contrasted throughout the film, they are very similar and point to the inequalities of the neo-liberal South African society and those that it creates as it both "summons and restricts" desire. Both men have been transformed by what they have been through in chasing the 'South African Dream'.

Even with its socio-economic exploration and analysis of South African society as discussed above through a genre studies approach, *Hijack Stories* did not find great commercial success in South Africa and Jacobsohn (2008) has suggested that this may be because of the international audience that it targeted in the face of the lack of South African film support within the country. Evidence of such a focus comes from the fact that Schmitz originally drew up a script of the film and had it "South Africanised" by Lesego Rampolokeng, only to remove certain South African terms to ease the meaning making for an international audience (Jacobsohn, 2008). An example of such an occurrence is with the line that Zama delivers to Sox when encountering his world: "So, this is how you baby food boys live?" Rampolokeng notes that this line was originally rewritten by him as "So, this is how you NESTUM boys live?" (cited in Jacobsohn, 2008: 61). The use of a South Africa popular brand of baby food would have strengthened the identification with a South African audience but its removal with international audiences in mind that would not have understood the NESTUM brand, points perhaps in addition to its limited release, as to why the film did not reach great popularity in South Africa.

In line with the trajectory of this dissertation, it would be worth pointing out in concluding this chapter that *Hijack Stories*' use of the character Bra Dan points back to the earlier eras discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Bra Dan is from an older generation and has lived through the old bootlegging days and the rise of the pantsula sub-culture too. There is a respect for Bra Dan as a former gangster in that Sox seeks his help in researching his film role and Zama only recognises Sox when he mentions his relation to Bra Dan. In relating his past Bra Dan tells Sox that he used to "drive liquor to shebeens while it was still illegal" and he used to carry a gun. He is positioned awkwardly in the film, however, as he doesn't quite fit in with the new generation and representatives of his generation are largely missing from the film. Grace and her room mate tease him about his one-time appeal to the ladies as a pantsula. The younger generation of township gangsters also are bemused by Bra Dan. In the shebeen, when Bra Dan warns Sox not to get involved with Zama and his gang, Fly pokes fun at Bra Dan by saying: "we were just discussing your generation". Bra Dan responds with "Generation se moer man! Ek slaan jou met 'n one two combination!" Bra Dan's tsotsitaal stands in contrast to the younger generation here who speak in English to him and his threat of violence in boxing terms seems humorous and antiquated as well. The way in which the younger generation poke fun at Bra Dan suggests an acknowledgement of his past but with a sense of amusement at his style and mannerisms. The earlier generations, while resistant in style and the adoption of a materialist culture inspired by the Hollywood gangster, were not effective in achieving either great material wealth or political success against the oppressive government at the time. Neither Sophiatown's tsotsis nor the pantsulas of the 80s became effectively politicized and a force against the state. Bra Dan's character thus functions in the film in that he has recognition in the township as a former gangster but at the same time is poked fun at and teased in acknowledgement of the fact that the adoption of the gangster figure by these earlier generations did not fulfill the potential it had as a resistant figure for change in South Africa's past.

Chapter Four: *Jerusalema* (2008)

Having now looked at the use of the gangster genre at two distinctive times in South Africa's history, prior and post-liberation, I shall now turn my focus to a South African gangster film that is more recent and that will reveal how the genre is being used to illuminate and speak to the issues and concerns of South African society today.

4.1. Writing on *Jerusalema* (2008)

Jerusalema has received comments from a variety of sources. It has easily been identified as a gangster film and Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* describes the film as “set in post-apartheid Johannesburg”, and adds that “it begins strongly and seems at first like a plausible South African version of *Goodfellas* or *Scarface* or *City of God*” (2010). Eddie Cockrell from *Variety* also sees the connection between *Jerusalema* and other gangster films and describes the film as: “A propulsive, glossy, Johannesburg-set actioner charting the rise of an ambitious ne'er-do-well a la “Scarface,” “City of God” and virtually every other rags-to-riches-to-ruins underworld epic” (2008). However, Cockrell goes on to say that he sees the film as able to “punch home its crime-doesn't-pay message on chutzpah alone” (2008). Cockrell thus does not see the film's modification of the message that ‘crime does not pay’ as Lucky does not suffer a violent death or incarceration for long. On the contrary, in a sense, crime does pay for Lucky. He is free at the end of the film, at the beach with a sports car and a suitcase full of money. Such an unconventional ending raises issues central to South African society, which Cockrell clearly misses. South African film critic Barry Ronge says the movie “succeeds brilliantly and delivers a jolting, high-energy thriller that lifts the lid on poverty, crime and street-life in contemporary Johannesburg as no previous movie has done” (2010). While his comment is certainly positive it also refers to the film as a thriller, and thus misses the potential insight provided by the gangster genre framework.

Churches within South Africa voiced their objections to the film. The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Johannes Ramashapa, said he was upset that the biblical name “Nazareth” was used negatively in the movie, as the name of a gangster (Lekotjolo, 2009). Similarly, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa's general secretary, Prince Dibeela, said of the film: “The movie glorifies crime - it is about hijacking and prostitution, and the level of swearing is inappropriate” (Lekotjolo, 2009). Most

interestingly, former Sophiatown resident, and a one-time gang leader himself, Don Mattera, who was discussed earlier in chapter 2, is not very positive on the film. Mattera objects to “yet another inexplicably violent depiction of Africa and Africans” (2009). While Mattera links the film to the gangster films of his youth like *Street With No Name*, also discussed in chapter 2, he ultimately laments that these films “shaped his negative social consciousness and subsequent behaviour” (2009). He says the film “is a sad and colossal glorification of crime” and critiques it for depicting “just crime; just bloodshed; just routine; just South Africa” (2009). Mattera’s view of the film in many ways misses the point. The gangster film provides an exploration into the issues and concerns at the heart of a society and *Jerusalema* offers an intricate insight into post-liberation South Africa and the direction of the country, causes of crime, the problems of capitalism and contradictions within the ‘South African Dream’. Mattera’s comments show the need for a genre studies approach to the film. While he may, as a youth, have adopted the stylings, criminal behaviour and attitude of the gangster figure from Hollywood cinema in Sophiatown, he seems unaware of the many layers of meaning that the genre conceals within its structure and how a film like *Jerusalema* can use the conventions of the genre to critique and expose problems within South African society today.

4.2. *Jerusalema* (2008) as gangster film

Jerusalema uses the conventions of the classic gangster film more explicitly than *Mapantsula* or *Hijack Stories*. The film tells the story of Lucky Kunene and his quest to have it all and live his dreams which include “a seven series BMW parked outside a beach house”. The narrative thus mirrors one seen in a number of classic Hollywood gangster films such as *Scarface* and *Little Caesar* which both tell tales of ambitious men who ascend the ranks through criminal means until they reach the top.

Through McArthur’s indispensable taxonomy of gangster iconography *Jerusalema* reveals itself strongly to possess the visual conventions that he suggests mark the genre. The recurring patterns of imagery concerning the physical appearance, attributes and dress of the characters in the gangster genre are on display in the film as Lucky Kunene and his fellow gangsters have a distinct dress sense about them that marks them as different to the

underclass from which they come and also at the same time as successful. Initially Lucky starts out in uniform as a schoolboy, dressed exactly like all the other scholars but as his criminal activities grow so too does his dress sense. He begins to wear clothing very similar to the township gangster attire discussed in *Hijack Stories* earlier. Lucky and his best friend Zakes, don caps, chains and jackets as they start to succeed in their criminal activities through car hijacking. Comrade Nazareth, who represents the older gangster role model for Lucky and Zakes, is always dressed in dark clothes, jackets, chains and leather. As Lucky and Zakes become more successful in their rise to the top they adopt a more formal dress that moves away from the township gangster attire that they wore earlier and that was reminiscent of *Hijack Stories*. Indeed Lucky and Zakes take on a similar appearance of the Hollywood gangster as they wear suits, ties, formal shirts and pants, polished shoes and jewellery. As Lucky grows his attire can no longer consist of township gangster wear as he has moved beyond just success and gangsterism in the township and he matures into a more polished dress sense wearing similar attire to the Hollywood gangster. At the same time, however, this dress sense is also very similar to that of a legitimate South African businessman. Lucky's dress allows him entry into successful mainstream society as he appears successful and well to do. This is revealed when he knocks on the doors of tenants to inform them of his meeting. One tenant opens her door glumly but upon seeing Lucky in his suit welcomes him with a smile and a "Hello Sir". The similarity in dress between the successful gangster figure and the successful businessman raises issues of capitalism, corruption and the similarities between the gangster and the conspicuously successful South African businessman. As Lucky uses Marxist philosophy in regarding "property as theft", the similarity of his dress to a businessman, questions the issue of the accumulation of wealth in the "New South Africa". The question is raised of whether what Lucky does is any different from an ordinary businessman who accumulates wealth while others struggle to make ends meet. This issue will be picked up on later, but it is important to note that just by playing with the conventions of the symbolism behind the dress of the gangster figure, the film poses an issue central to South African society in this day and age.

The recurring stock characters of the genre are present in *Jerusalema* in the form of the ambitious, defiant protagonist, the hothead, the faithful lieutenant, the authority figure in opposition to the protagonist and the prized woman. Lucky shares many of the same characteristics as classic Hollywood gangsters like Tony Camonte. He is ambitious, ruthless,

violent at times, driven and rebellious. Just like Camonte, Lucky will do anything to get to the top and appear successful but he is much more of a thinking man than Camonte, who often appears child-like in his desires and responses and seems to lack a conscience in his criminal dealings. Lucky, like Camonte, finds it hard to achieve his ends because of his place in the underclass of society. While Camonte makes the transition to crime very easily and kills at will, often with no real sense of right and wrong, Lucky tries to earn a legitimate living but turns to underhanded dealings when the futility of his attempts becomes apparent after his taxi is hijacked. Lucky is less violent than Camonte and when he first sees the brutality of the gang in shooting dead guards from the cash-in-transit vehicle, he is shocked and stunned into silence.

The hothead character which recurs in the genre and is seen in many gangster films (for instance, the character of Sonny in *The Godfather*) is represented in *Jerusalema* by Nazareth. He is impulsive, mercurial and shoots first and asks questions later in true Hollywood hothead gangster fashion. After being told to “fuck off” by a Nigerian tenant brandishing a large firearm, Nazareth shoves him through a window to his death on the street below. Later, when approached by two men acting on behalf of the building owner, Nazareth pulls out his gun and shoots them both dead in broad daylight over the slightest of provocations. He walks up to the fallen men and shoots them again, making sure they are dead. All of this because one of the men said “you haven’t heard the last of this” as they left. He does not think about his actions but reacts violently and impulsively. Like many of the hothead characters in the gangster genre, he dies a violent death. The use of the hothead stock character in *Jerusalema* is very insightful as the root of Nazareth’s anger is explored and raises issues pertinent to modern day South Africa and the legacy of the past. Nazareth provides a fascinating understanding of an individual outside of the legitimate society. He was trained in Moscow as part of the armed struggle and since returning from exile has struggled to fit into the “New South Africa”. He is a man filled with anger and frustration and one who was trained for combat and violence. In his conversation with Tony Ngu, Nazareth says “they told us we were going to punish these whities. We were going to take from them”. He has not been reconditioned to fit into society and his anger and frustration lives on as he is in many ways lost in the ethos of the “New South Africa”. Nazareth thus points to another problem with the ‘South African Dream’ in that the past has not properly been addressed while the ethos has shifted towards the idea that anybody can have it all. This tension from the past thus has fuelled the aggression behind criminal activities in the “New South Africa” as old ways of

behaving have been used as means to achieve the ends that the ‘South African Dream’ flaunts. Nazareth reveals the rationale behind all of his brazen crimes and misdeeds when he sheepishly says towards the end of the film, “all I wanted was a house in Sandton and a Mercedes convertible”. Added to Nazareth’s lack of reconditioning and residual vendetta against white South Africans, comes a second source of his anger. Nazareth feels ousted from the lineage of the ruling party as the spoils of the “New South Africa” have not gone to him and other former ANC soldiers, who have been ignored or glossed over in the history of the country in favour of a more united and reconciliatory ethos. While politicians and businessmen have benefited from liberation Nazareth, and former ANC soldiers like him, have been cast aside. The use of the hothead stock character in *Jerusalema* thus exposes reasons for such anger and aggression in the “New South Africa” as well as how past issues have been skirted. However, the Umkhonto We Sizwe Military Veterans’ Association, did not receive the film very well. National chairperson Kebby Maphatsoe commented to *News 24* that the film painted former veterans in a bad light and that “The insult is painful as it does not afford the people of South Africa and our children the opportunity to learn the truth about their history” (Alfreds, 2008). The film’s producer Thendeka Matutu responded by saying:

During the research of the script we came across many MK vets who are living on the very edge of poverty and who, after fighting for a better life for all, now feel betrayed. Some had turned to violent crime to survive, others had not, this is what we based the character of Nazareth on. Hopefully the debate, that the film has sparked around this issue will help us further investigate if, as a society, we are doing everything we can to look after and honour those heroes who fought and died for South Africa's freedom.

(Alfreds, 2008)

I would suggest that the national chairperson has missed the point of Nazareth’s character in the film. In using the gangster genre hothead stock character to portray a former MK veteran who is struggling to deal with the ethos of “The New South Africa” after years of military conditioning and at the same time now finding himself a black sheep in a reconciliatory atmosphere, the film thus raises issues that are most relevant to the veterans’ association and exposes these problems to a wide audience. While the chairperson is concerned about the

history of MK soldiers, their role in modern day South Africa and the current treatment of them is more pressing and that is what the film explores through the character of Nazareth.

The faithful lieutenant stock character is represented in the film by Lucky's childhood friend Zakes. They work together, plan together and scheme together. They operate their criminal activities together and Zakes is always there to support Lucky as his right hand man. Their relationship is thus very similar to that of Powers and Doyle in *Public Enemy* or Camonte and Rinaldo in *Scarface*. As is often the case with the faithful lieutenant character, Zakes dies toward the end of the film in gunfire leaving the protagonist by himself. This is indeed the case with both Doyle and Rinaldo as well in *Public Enemy* and *Scarface* respectively. Zakes, however, also represents a different viewpoint from Lucky. While he does follow Lucky and backs him up, he also presents other ideas too. Zakes tries to steer Lucky away from crime and towards a more legitimate life. He is a proponent of Lucky studying at university and reminds him about his degree even years later when they are in Hillbrow running their taxi business. When the two of them first meet Nazareth as scholars in the film, Zakes tells Nazareth boldly, "leave us alone!" He is also quick to see through Nazareth and his rhetoric by summing him up to Lucky as: "you see, comrade thug here... he's a hijacker". While Zakes is a faithful lieutenant to Lucky, he also possesses great insight and attempts to protect Lucky. Zakes and Nazareth clash at different times in the film. When Nazareth gets out of jail he asks Zakes why he did not come to visit him. Zakes replies: "Nobody goes to jail unless they have to. Anyway a man must face his own music". Zakes' comments here show that he does not buy into the 'tragedy' of Nazareth as an ex-MK soldier that has been forgotten and has been forced into a life of crime. Rather Zakes poses the question of personal responsibility and just how far the past can be used to justify present choices. This again, is an issue central to South African society today and the various perspectives presented in the film reflect the different perspectives on the issue in South Africa today. Later in the film Zakes and Nazareth have a heated discussion. Lucas, their attorney, praises Nazareth for the "sacrifices he made for this country". Zakes is quick to disagree with this hero worship of Nazareth: "You ran to exile when things were tough... you were in jail when we started our business". When Nazareth replies "that's the price of freedom" Zakes retorts, "I thought that was the price you paid for armed robbery". This discussion between Zakes and Nazareth again points to Zakes' insightfulness as more of an unusually thoughtful 'faithful lieutenant'. He raises issues of hero worship and whether it is justified for former soldiers, and at the same time critiques Nazareth's presentation of a 'let down by the system' struggle veteran by

suggesting that his personal choices have made his life hard and that waiting to receive praise will not get you anywhere when the real work lies ahead in building a nation: “I don’t need any gratitude”, Nazareth snarls. “Good, ’cause you’re not going to get any”, Zakes fires back.

The authority figure in opposition to Lucky’s gangster character is well represented in the film by Detective Blakkie Swart who is set up as Lucky’s nemesis and in true gangster genre fashion swears to bring him to book. Furthermore the two engage in a series of face-offs that is again a recurring pattern in the gangster genre. Lucky and Swart face-off in particular when Swart raids his home, later when he arrests Lucky and when Lucky bumps into him after altering the docket in the police station. Their opposition is set up right from the onset when Swart introduces himself: “My name is Blakkie Swart and I’ll be your reckoning from now on. So your days are numbered Mr. Kunene”. The character of Blakkie Swart is very interesting and he brings to the fore a number of issues concerning modern day South African society. On his film website South African film critic Barry Ronge (2010) describes Swart as “a tough, tenacious white cop, ironically named ‘Blakkie’ Swart”. I would suggest that the irony of the detective’s name lies in the fact that it would translate into English as “Blacky Black”. Swart is a policeman from the old days of apartheid and has found that this history acts against him significantly in his quest for law enforcement in the “New South Africa”. The name of the detective thus could symbolise the shift of power in the “New South Africa” in the relationship between a former apartheid policeman and a black criminal based on the racial politics of the past that carry over today. The former apartheid policeman, no matter how committed he is to upholding justice is still in an awkward position and is disempowered in a sense. He has become the term that was used to signify the disempowered in South Africa, “black”. This exploration into the politics of policing the “New South Africa”, becomes further evident as Lucky is able to get the better of Swart by playing up the racial politics of the past. Lucky incites Swart when he is almost caught after switching docket by saying “voetsek wena ma boertjie boy!” Lucky knows which buttons to push and plays the system very cleverly as he causes Swart to react violently. “Hey! What is this!?! Apartheid policing!?!”, Lucky shouts for others to hear. Swart also reveals another interesting dynamic in policing modern day South Africa as he raises the issue of past criminality being seen as resistance to the former government. This issue was discussed earlier when looking at Sophiatown and the criminal resistance of the gangster figure adopted by residents there as well as the resistant pantsula subculture discussed in chapter 3. In *Jerusalem* we find that this idea of “resistance through crime” has repercussions in modern day South Africa. Swart

says: “Look who’s running the country. I mean these are the guys we arrested. We put them in jail. No wonder they think the criminal’s the victim”. Thus resistance through crime, a strategy from the past, creates a very complex interaction in modern day South African society between the police and criminals as the police were seen as the enemy and the criminals as resistant rebels against an unjust, fascist system. Lucky also exploits this clash between the past and the present when he shouts that he would like to lay charges against Swart, “it’s my democratic right!” A third revealing aspect of the politics of policing in the “New South Africa”, becomes evident as we see that when Swart is in control of his emotions and thinking clearly, he has a black cop beat up Lucky and does not do the dirty work himself. This interaction is very peculiar when Swart and his entourage first visit Lucky. Swart does the questioning but the black cop smacks Lucky around each time he is cheeky with Swart. The racial politics of having Swart hit Kunene are evident and this again points to the film’s exploration of policing in the “New South Africa”.

Lastly, the ‘prized woman’ is represented by Nomsa at first and later by Leah. Lucky has his eye on Nomsa as a schoolboy as she is one the prettiest girls in school and is ambitious and smart and has been accepted to study computer science after high school when she is first introduced to the viewer. As Lucky becomes more successful as a criminal his relationship with Nomsa grows and indeed scenes of his progressive criminal success are woven together with his progressive intimacy with Nomsa. His relationship with her marks his success and status and she serves as a trophy in a way while Lucky is in Soweto. Later, his relationship with her sours as she becomes involved in crime herself and is not the trophy she once was in the township, now that he is in the big city and she is no longer as attractive. Leah then serves a similar role as she and Lucky begin a relationship and her beauty, career as a nutritionist, rich family and race add to her appeal as a trophy partner who signifies Lucky’s success. Leah represents a liberal white South African and her view of Lucky is often clouded as she tries her hardest not to stereotype him as a ‘black criminal’. She has clearly dedicated herself to uplifting previously disadvantaged communities as she “runs a clinic in Alex” and teaches the community about proper nutrition. Leah tries not to show her fear of Lucky and Nazareth when they first meet but Nazareth describes her as “shit scared of us darkies”. In her attempts to avoid stereotyping Lucky as a “black criminal”, Leah does not see the signs of Lucky’s misdeeds. Her Jewish ethnicity also contributes to this as she is reluctant to in a sense ‘persecute’ Lucky, as a member of a faith that suffered persecution itself. She also presents a very pertinent issue when Lucky asks her: “what’s with you white people? You have nice

houses, smart cars, fancy clothes and you're still coming here, why?" Leah responds by saying, "I guess when you're rich poverty seems glamorous". Director Ralph Ziman says of this scene, in an interview:

I remember years ago, being in Mozambique, and being in a war-torn part of the country; we were just driving around and this old guy came up and asked what's wrong with these South Africans? "They've got nice houses, and lawns and why do they want to come and see us here when we are poor, and we are in poverty? What's wrong with you?" That always stuck with me and kind of worked its way verbatim as I remember it into the film. It was a very awkward moment for me as well, because you don't really know how to respond to that...

(Dercksen, 2008)

Ziman's comments and thus Leah's words point toward a very relevant issue in modern day South Africa. Poverty becomes glamorous to the upper class because of its authenticity, danger and struggle. These three elements are missing from the lives of more privileged South Africans, as they are so out of touch with the common experience of ordinary South Africans. The same issue arose in *Hijack Stories* as Sox gets in touch with the township and moves away from his Rosebank yuppie lifestyle. In that film township life is seen as glamorous and a television series on it is about to be turned into a big-screen production. It is also interesting to note that all of the things Lucky mentions in the above scene are material possessions. I would argue that this in a way then points to the ideals of capitalism but also accentuates the emptiness of capitalism. Once one has achieved material success, it is not satisfying on a more profound level and is rather empty. This fascination, then, with poverty and the lifestyles of the lower class in society becomes intriguing and also then takes one in more of the opposite direction to capitalism. In a post-liberation South Africa, the ideas of capitalist gain and those of equality and fairness are at odds with each other as the 'South African Dream' advocates freedom, equality, fairness and opportunities for all but at the same time when some become rich and others languish in poverty, the dream fails. In highlighting the charm of poverty to the upper class, the film explores the contradictions within our society and how South Africa, today, is still lacking a clear sense as to whether it aspires to be a capitalist society or a democratic one concerned with the upliftment of all its citizens.

The recurring patterns of imagery which McArthur identifies as surrounding the milieu within which the characters operate is very much on display in *Jerusalema*, as is the technology at the characters' disposal. The urban environment presents itself throughout the film. Firstly, the bustling township of Soweto is depicted with shots of run-down houses, crowded, tight spaces, roads and taverns. Urban iconography is never absent throughout *Jerusalema* as Lucky moves to the city and shots of overcrowded streets, hundreds of vehicles and taxis on roads, interiors of clubs, bars and buildings make up many of the settings in the film. What is interesting about Hillbrow, and the environment depicted in the film, is that the space was originally a "whites only" area in the 1970s and was quite cosmopolitan. The disintegration of Hillbrow into a slum and the reclamation of the space by largely black inhabitants and foreigners from the African continent raises issues central to the "New South Africa". Hillbrow became what it is because of a severe shortage of appropriate housing and because of the dreams that were sold to people both in and outside of South Africa. The title of the film refers to this very issue. A "promised land" has not been delivered and instead the slums are what have been inherited. Lucky describes his business by saying, "we were taking back the streets, one building at a time". This raises issues of ownership which is central to the film in line with Marx and capitalism. The 'owners' of Hillbrow were the apartheid government who completed the prominent Hillbrow tower there in 1971, which was called the JG Strijdom tower at the time (Davie, 2004). As Lucky says at the start of the film "Karl Marx said all property is theft". The appropriation of the space by whites and the use of it by the apartheid government was, using this philosophy, theft. Post-liberation Hillbrow is a slum, still managed by government but a new one. Hillbrow is in a sorry state of affairs that the government is aware of but has not done much to resolve. When Lucky reclaims these buildings, he then in a sense is doing nothing different than what has been done already: stealing spaces and managing them poorly while profiting from it.

Furthermore, the mastery of various aspects of the environment by the gangster figure is on display as Lucky is able to steal many cars and make bold escapes, burst into clubs and open fire, chase down rival gangsters without losing his life, escape from gunfire as a boy by dodging bullets running through the township and get away from hijackers himself by zigzagging through urban spaces while being shot at. When Lucky and Zakes are being chased by the police, they manage to evade the police car by driving into a garage that is quickly concealed by a vendor's goods. The gangster figure is able to negotiate his way through the environment because of his familiarity with it, and the goodwill of the denizens

of that neighbourhood, while those outside of the environment are at its mercy. When Leah first meets Lucky she is lost, scared and confused in his environment, but he on the other hand takes charge of the situation, directs her to the building, finds Ngu and manages to retrieve her brother. The technology at the character's disposal is represented by the use of numerous guns, ordinary cars, sports cars and vehicles like trucks and taxis to commit crimes. The use of ATM cards to transact with car hijacking ringleaders as a means to be paid for stolen cars delivered is on display in the film as well through the use of cell phones to communicate plans and information. The visual foregrounding of new technology for criminal enterprise is very reminiscent of *Scarface* which famously depicted one of the first uses of a Thompson submachine gun on screen.

4.3. *Jerusalema* as a post-liberation South African gangster film

Gilberto Perez argues:

The classic gangster believes, and his story belies, the ideology of the individual in the land of opportunity. He is a doomed overreacher because he represents the ambition of the underprivileged, the drive for success of those – which is to say, most of us – not marked for success.

(2000: 254)

In *Jerusalema*, the journey of Lucky from a young schoolboy to “the hoodlum of Hillbrow”, thus offers a fascinating insight into the creation of a criminal gang leader and the motivations of such an individual. Shadoian says the gangster film looks at an individual in opposition to legitimate society and this is relevant to Lucky Kunene as he becomes a criminal mastermind and leads a gang of men in achieving his ends. It is thus through the gangster genre framework that South African modern day society can be analysed and critiqued.

When Lucky begins to tell his story to the journalist at the start of the film, he goes back to 1994 as his starting point. This is most significant as it is the year of the first democratic election in South African history and the beginning of the “New South Africa” which is accentuated by the use of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika during this sequence in the film. The fervour and excitement created by the fall of an oppressive regime and a new start is apparent when

Lucky recounts: “freedom... a new South Africa... a new dawn... a new day... a fresh start... a clean page... a new beginning... and I had dreams”. Lucky has lived through the change of government and has been aware of the many positive messages that the post 1994 era produced. The idea of a country where anything is possible and where anyone can achieve their dreams regardless of their background, skin colour or ethnicity is one that Lucky has had thrust at him and one that he has bought into. Lucky tries to use his entrepreneurial skills in a variety of ways but finds himself short of reaching his dreams each time. At first Lucky peddles perfumes as a scholar with the tagline “it’s the sweet smell of success, the good stuff”. The woman he tries to sell it to, however, labels it “fong kong (fake)”. This is symbolic of the deceptive nature of the promises that were abundant at the time, of good opportunities and wealth and freedom, as he soon discovers them to be “fong kong” themselves. Selling perfumes gets him nowhere and he comments in retrospect: “selling peanuts for peanuts... free enterprise was never encouraged”. This is ironic in the sense that it was precisely the idea that anyone could now be an entrepreneur that the new dispensation promised. The many promises that were made after the elections in the “New South Africa” failed to be delivered and Lucky soon realises this as he sees himself and his family in the same circumstances as they were prior to the elections and change over of government.

Lucky does not start out as a criminal and does not see crime as his answer to achieving his goals of a sports car, big house and fancy clothes. Initially he studies hard at school and applies to university for a place. Opportunities were promised to him and this is what he seeks as he applies at Wits and is successful. However, his happiness is short lived as he is offered a place but no financial aid. The contradictions of the “New South Africa” thus reveal themselves as the opportunity is there but not for him. Lucky cannot afford to study at university and his dreams are dashed until he can save up enough money to do so. At this point, he doesn’t immediately turn to crime but instead does odd jobs like washing taxis to earn a pittance. He soon realises that this will not work and he will never earn enough money for university fees by continuing this way. In order to chase his dreams he has to deviate from legitimate enterprise.

Once Lucky begins his life of crime, he is constantly reluctant to continue as he does not see this as his future. He still wishes to study at university and claim the opportunities promised to him in the neo-liberal, capitalist South Africa post 1994. Significantly, he uses the money from his car hijacking crimes to provide food and clothes for his family. Lucky has wanted to

do this but could not do it by legal means as the things promised to him such as free education and opportunities for financial success were not accessible. He thus uses criminal means to achieve the ends the 'South African Dream' promised him. His actions are immoral and he is aware of this but it is the only way that he can see to achieve his dreams and thus he invents for his mother the story of a legitimate job "in the automotive industry". While this is a lie that he tells to his mother, at the same time it isn't, in that he is indeed a part of the automotive industry in delivering vehicles that will be resold. What he is doing is illegal but again the film then raises the issue of possession and theft and the similarity between the gangster and the businessman in that "all property is theft". While his family are struggling to make ends meet and even to feed the household, is it appropriate for someone to be driving an expensive car? As he becomes more successful as a car hijacker he uses the money to furnish his mother's house and to purchase items like television sets, Hi-fi systems and television cabinets. His family eat better meals as opposed to the dry bread and tea for supper they had earlier. The use of the South African fast food brand *Chicken Licken* here serves as an interesting equivalent to the ethnic food that signifies Italian culture in mob movies. Again, however, Lucky is not using his money for illicit activities but instead is trying to have what the "New South Africa" promised him and his family.

Lucky tries to quit his life of crime because, again, he is aware of the immoral nature of his activities and wants to achieve his goals legally, through the opportunities that he is trying to access. However, he soon sees that going straight and trying to achieve his ends is still as hard as ever. With his mother in hospital he finds it hard to provide a good meal for the family and even after getting a job as a petrol attendant at an Engen garage, he is no closer to chasing down his dreams. He still plans to reapply to university but he does not have the money to study further and reluctantly gets involved with Nazareth and criminal activities again.

Ten years later, we see that Lucky is still trying to achieve his dreams and again he is attempting to do so legally by operating a small taxi business with Zakes. After his criminal past and being talked into the last crime with Nazareth, the viewer is initially surprised to see Lucky in legal employment but again this speaks to his true nature as an ambitious young man who was promised the world in the "New South Africa" and has legitimate dreams he wishes to fulfil. However, the grown up Lucky soon finds that once more he cannot achieve his goals legally. He is beaten, kidnapped and hijacked by rival taxi operators. He is angry

and disillusioned and realises that he cannot achieve his dreams by being a legal citizen within this society as it is not what it was made out to be. Lucky turns to gangsterism after being a victim himself and this is symbolic of the fact that he has been denied what the post 1994 neo-liberal society told him he could be and could achieve. He has been the victim of a system that needs people to be at the bottom in order for there to be a top. He has dreamt of the top but cannot get near it because of the contradictions of the 'South African Dream' and this scenario is identical to that of the protagonists of Hollywood gangster films and their battle to chase the 'American Dream'. Lucky's staring out of the window at this point in the film, gazing at the Hillbrow tower of the Johannesburg skyline is reminiscent of Tony Camonte's gaze at "THE WORLD IS YOURS" sign in *Scarface*. Both images serve as signifier of achievement and a desired place at the very top. The blinking sign in *Scarface* also points to the ideology behind the 'American Dream' and the driving force behind both Camonte and Lucky with the 'South African Dream' in that they have both been "summoned" by these messages in their respective societies.

Furthering the comparison to *Scarface* is the voiceover by Lucky at this point as he recounts the words of Al Capone, the gangster king-pin who *Scarface*'s protagonist Tony Camonte was based on: "Al Capone said you can go a long way with a smile. You can go much further with a smile and a gun". It is at this point that Lucky makes a revealing statement when he says, "if I was meant to graduate from this shit hole to my beach house, it would take a gun in one hand, a briefcase in another and my best shit-eating grin". Lucky's words here indicate that he realises that his dreams can only be achieved by criminal means and by upping the stakes and exploiting the political and economic ideologies of contemporary South Africa. They also suggest a realisation that he needs to put on the appearance of an upwardly mobile black South African in order to fit into the successful block of the structure that exists in the post 1994 hierarchy. Lucky must present himself as an entrepreneurial legitimate black business man who is succeeding through the opportunities that the post-1994 government has provided. By pretending to succeed in chasing his dreams as a legitimate black South African in a neo-liberal society he appears part of the success story of the 'South African Dream' and can "naturally" take his place at the top of the societal pyramid.

The very first building that Lucky takes over is called 'Dunvista Mansions' and the name itself points to the contradictions of the 'South African Dream' in that what was promised to the masses has not materialised and the so-called "mansions" are run down, overcrowded

shabby, urban eyesores. Lucky has begun to realise that in order to achieve his ends he has to play the game and thus uses the laws of his society in order to profit. He also effectively uses the terminology of the “New South Africa” and brands his property scheme as “urban renewal” and in the interview he has with the journalist paints a picture of himself as “a legitimate businessman providing shelter for the poor and disenfranchised”. Lucky realises that this is the lingo of the “New South Africa”, but also that while these fancy words are thrown around they are not acted upon by government or the people that use them and so he adopts them to run the same scam as the people who have been scamming him and the masses. In his defence, after Lucky is arrested, his lawyer says, “it is convenient for the government to blame Kunene. The government has failed dismally to provide the houses they promised the people”. This is exactly what Lucky is playing upon as he gets a piece of the pie himself. The people have not been given what they have been promised and told to dream about. Lucky was one of the masses disappointed by the system that let him down and now he has become a puppet-master as he uses the same strategy to get ahead while manipulating the masses with the same promises. As Lucky says ironically, “during community outreach tenants were incentivised to exercise their democratic rights to give us their money”. At the same time, however, there are moments in the film where Lucky uses similar language without the irony. When he defends himself to Loretta Dlamini from *The Sowetan*, he says he is “providing shelter for the poor and disenfranchised”, which is true. He also proclaims: “I operate within the limits of the law”. Again, this is true as what he is doing is not strictly illegal. Due to a loophole in legislation that does not cater for the theft of fixed assets like a building, Lucky technically is not operating illegally. The film thus acknowledges that the discourse of transformation and restitution can be used both cynically and sincerely in the current ideological climate.

The film explores issues central to South African society and one of these is xenophobia as it uses the multi-ethnic population of Hillbrow to explore the issue. South Africa suffered a series of xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2009 that left many foreigners victimised. The film presents Nazareth pushing a defiant, armed Nigerian tenant through a window to his death. This is reminiscent of a xenophobic incident that occurred in 2009 and that was reported on the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA) website:

A Zimbabwean told the Durban Regional Court how foreigners were forced to jump from a high-rise building by people wielding bush knives in January

this year. "When they forced me to jump from the fifth floor, I saw two other bodies lying motionless on the pavement. They pushed me and I landed on one of the bodies," testified Eugene Madonda.

(2009)

The film thus explores the issue of xenophobia and raises questions about its origin. The common stereotype that foreigners are criminals, ruining communities within South Africa is explored. We see that even though the Nigerian is heavily armed and menacing, he is no different from Nazareth and in fact pales in comparison to Nazareth who shoves him to his death. If crime is the source of xenophobia, why then is Nazareth not persecuted by South Africans in the community? Early on it explores the danger of stereotypes as Lucky and Zakes drive their taxi while a man preaches to the passengers. He blames foreigners for AIDS and ridiculously states it came about by them: "fucking monkeys and then eating them! Sies!". Such a scene points towards the use of the 'other' to take the blame for societal issues that may be taboo or too difficult to face. The preacher turns his wrath towards foreigners instead of dealing with the harsh realities of the situation within society. These stereotypes and misguided notions by "preachers" lead to violence. "The character of Tony Ngu, also furthers the film's exploration of xenophobia. Lucky is quick to rebuke Tony Ngu for calling him "brother" and tells him "I'm not your brother". However, they are very similar in many ways as the two "princes of Hillbrow". Later when they meet again Lucky questions Ngu: "Why did you come to South Africa? You fucked up your country, you wanna fuck up mine?" These views are common in South Africa regarding foreigners and are presented in the film for discussion. Later when Ngu and Nazareth speak, Ngu refers to himself as belonging to a group he calls "the Jews of Nigeria". He himself suffered persecution and came to South Africa in the hopes of a better life. "Now they call us filthy stinking makwerekwere. How do you think that make [sic] me feel Naz?" Nazareth responds with, "pissed off". This conversation is most revealing as it explores the fact that foreigners are no different from South Africans as they come to South Africa to live a better life and escape persecution in a land of supposed equality and opportunity, promised by the 'South African Dream'. The frustration in finding neither equality nor opportunity is presented in understanding the criminal dealings of a foreigner like Ngu.

The rise and fall narrative structure that recurs in the gangster genre initially appears to be that of *Jerusalema*. Lucky has humble beginnings as a schoolboy in Soweto as part of a

family with very little space and even food to eat. He slowly rises through the ranks as he becomes a car hijacker and then again as he begins his property scam in Johannesburg. He becomes the powerful leader of his gang and no longer is under the guidance of Nazareth but instead gives orders to his one time “hero” and gang leader. Lucky comes to own over 20 of the buildings he has run his scam on with the ‘Hillbrow People’s Housing Trust’ and lives his dream of driving his BMW 7 series car as he constantly upgrades his vehicles as he grows in stature. He is seen as a hero to the masses and is likened to Robin Hood and called the ‘champion of the poor’. He has young boys admire him as he once admired Nazareth and when he visits his home in Soweto one of the boys there gawks at a newspaper cover featuring Lucky and calls Lucky “the man”. Drug kingpin, Tony Ngu, refers to Lucky and himself by saying “you and I have become the princes of Hillbrow”. Lucky also has the attractive Leah as his girlfriend: a woman who is from a middle-class family and with a legitimate career as a nutritionist thus providing the role of the beautiful partner he dreamed off at the beginning of the film as a schoolboy with big dreams. He rises to the top of the underworld, becomes a millionaire, has the fancy car, the big house in the suburbs and the beautiful partner he dreamed of. All of this constitutes his ‘rise’ in the classic pattern of the gangster film. Lucky’s fall then comes about as he himself is arrested after being shot, his gang largely gunned down in a bust and arrested, his paying occupants evicted and his buildings cleared, condemned and destroyed. Furthermore Zakes, his childhood friend, is shot in a drive-by shooting and killed and Leah wants nothing to do with him.

However, this is where the film takes an unconventional turn away from the traditional rise and fall narrative of the gangster genre. Normally, the classic gangster film ends with the fall of the gangster and his death, usually at the hands of the authorities and the authority figure that he has been facing off with throughout the film, which in this case would be Detective Blakkie Swart. *Jerusalema* appears to follow this trajectory as Lucky is shot, bleeding and stormed by the police but he does not suffer the violent death that usually befalls the gangster figure in the Hollywood version of the genre. Instead, Lucky is arrested and taken into custody. He manages to phone Leah and even though she does not want to see him, he gets her to do him a favour. He manages to concoct a plan to escape that is aided by a number of people. Lucas, his attorney, manipulates the police officer to remove the handcuff he used to secure Lucky to his bed. A suspicious few minutes later, Anna Marie Van Rensburg, the woman who has been helping Lucky with his finances, walks in with a basket of items including a conspicuous bottle of alcohol, which the officer, as planned, appropriates, and

passes out, drunk. Once Lucky is outside of the hospital, the car he gave to Leah awaits him with a change of clothes and a briefcase full of money inside of it, as it becomes apparent that this is the favour he asked of Leah. He changes into the suit businessman/gangster attire he once wore as the leader of his gang and drives off. The manner in which he is aided by a collection of people in making his escape makes a statement about crime and corruption in the country and points toward the fact that a network of people are involved in business and in crime. It is not a solitary activity. Lucky's escape alludes to the nature of corruption and success in the "New South Africa" and how a blind eye or a helping hand is given under the right circumstances, which are usually financial ones. He says: "They say behind every fortune is a crime. The greater the fortune, the greater the crime...but I don't know about that. It seems the only people that say that probably never made one". This statement raises issues of capitalist gain and the contradictions of the 'South African Dream': there must be a network of people in order for a capitalist system to work and one where a hierarchy is in place of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. In business a similar system is at play with corporations at the top and workers and consumers at the bottom from which a profit is made. The fact that Lucky is aided by this broad network of people points to this issue and the web of capitalism in the "New South Africa".

What is also noteworthy is that Lucky trades positions with the policeman at the hospital guarding over him. He cuffs the drunk policeman to the bed and takes his uniform. He thus walks out not just a free man but a police man. This points to corruption within the system and the superficiality of the police in upholding justice as crime increases in South Africa with little done in areas like Hillbrow. Interestingly, the tone of the film is very celebratory here, enjoying the audacity of Lucky's escape. We recognise him as someone who can exploit a system that we know to be imperfect, and want him to get away with it. This scene also poses questions regarding the line between criminal and authority in South Africa as more and more corrupt police officials are exposed for seeking capitalist ends and attempting to acquire wealth by any means necessary rather than upholding justice. In 2007, the National Prosecuting Authority issued a warrant of arrest for national commissioner of the South African police force Jackie Selebi with regard to corruption, fraud, racketeering and defeating the ends of justice (Alcock, 2007). Similarly, his successor Bheki Cele has now also been suspended following charges of corruption. When Lucky changes into his flashy suit, he throws the police uniform into the bin and this is a powerful statement but one that echoes the thoughts of many South Africans.

The last scene in the film has Lucky walking down the beach on the KwaZulu-Natal coast, just as he had dreamt about earlier. His last words in the film are, “after every revolution comes a new order but before that comes opportunity. After all wasn’t it P W Botha who said ‘adapt or die’”. Lucky’s words here are very resonant as they point to the unsettled times that occur after the change of an order. South Africa post-liberation is still in a state of flux and just what the “New South Africa” means is not clear. Having it all and accumulating great wealth and materialism is clearly a message that is prominent in the “New South Africa” and has resulted in many people chasing these goals no matter what the consequence, from poor township dwellers to police commissioners. At the same time the spirit of ‘ubuntu’ and the ideals of community development, equality, fairness, democracy and opportunities for all regardless of race, ethnicity, background or gender are found in messages everywhere regarding the “New South Africa”. Lucky’s future is uncertain but so is South Africa’s, as who we are as a nation and country has not been decided.

Jerusalema’s ending thus does not conclude with a fall but instead the sense that Lucky is far from defeated. There is an optimistic tone here as Lucky starts walking down the beach. He is not dead or imprisoned and conversely his prospects look good. This unconventional ending to this gangster film can thus be interpreted as a comment on the nature of the “New South Africa”. The gangster figure is usually punished for his misdeeds and this has not happened in *Jerusalema*. Instead Lucky dons the uniform of a police officer and in a sense then becomes the law himself for a moment as he grants himself his release. The message here is that justice is not an unbiased instrument by which every man shall be tested but instead is a construct and another element of the system which is manipulated by those in control of it. Lucky has learnt this and uses his acumen to negotiate his freedom just as many wayward political figures and government officials have done increasingly in the neo-liberal post 1994 “New South Africa”. Lucky’s last words then, concerning the ideas of P W Botha, are most profound, as he suggests a similarity between the ethos of the nationalist government and the strategy needed to negotiate to the top of the “New South Africa”. Botha delivered these words in a famous speech and urged white South Africans to adapt or die as he reformed ‘petty apartheid’ policies while still maintaining ‘grand apartheid’ policies (van der Vat, 2006). Adaptation is critical and using the guile and street smarts of a criminal can serve one quite well in the neo-liberal post-1994 society as the gaps between criminals and authority

figures have become blurred, as in a sense they always were with the past government as well.

Finally, Lucky states: “They say behind every fortune is a crime, the greater the fortune, the greater the crime, but I don’t know about that. It seems the only people who say that probably never made one”. His words here point to the fundamental contradictions of capitalism which has been promoted as an integral part of the ‘South African Dream’ where anyone can have it all regardless of race, sex, ethnicity or background. The idea of equality and an equal chance for success and happiness for all South Africans clashes horribly with the promotion of a capitalist culture where there must be competition and a hierarchy. Lucky’s words at the start of the film, then, evoke the two conflicting discourses within modern day South Africa:

I had two heroes, Karl Marx and Al Capone. Al Capone said if you’re going to steal, steal big and hope like hell you get away with it... and Karl Marx said, all property is theft. I think they’d both be proud of me.

Amazingly, Lucky tries to reconcile Marx and Capone here and thus, as he lies on his bed bleeding, stages the uneasy coexistence in the “New South Africa” of the discourses of social justice and the discourse of entrepreneurial success. This also has relevance to a scene early on in the film where two positions clash in a conversation between a young Lucky and Nazareth. Lucky says: “but come on man, we didn’t fight the struggle to become criminals”, and Nazareth counters, “we didn’t fight it to be poor either”. This contest over the direction of the new society ultimately is what *Jerusalema* illuminates through the gangster genre framework, but the lack of punishment for Lucky and his misdeeds suggests a deeper critique of justice and fairness within the neo-liberal post 1994 South African society where criminals and role models for success are one and the same, and the society moves further towards capitalism under the thin guise of equality. *Jerusalema* then stages the debate around whether South Africa as a nation should be a capitalist society where previously dispossessed individuals strive to get rich or whether wealth should be equally distributed. This issue is raised in the film and in modern day South Africa of 2011, is most relevant with suspended ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema, holding marches for “economic freedom” and the “nationalisation of mines”. Malema’s lavish lifestyle has also been called into question by many who see such opulence as a slap in the face of the impoverished he tries to lead. Those in support of Malema see no such contradiction and view his success as a model for the

impoverished. As Lucky says in the film: “why should we be embarrassed about being rich? Those days are over. Just because I’m a darkie doesn’t mean I have to live in the slums”. Issues such as these are what the film explores, and are at the heart of South African society today.

Conclusion

In America, the gangster genre has been seen to reflect the society of the time and as Shadoian argues, changes as that society changes. Warshow notes that the genre has tragic elements as it stages the dilemma between the obligations to succeed while success is always to some extent perceived as an act of aggression. As demonstrated throughout the preceding chapters, the gangster film genre holds a prominent role in representing the sociopolitical and economic conditions of South Africa. It is a genre that refuses to die and has adapted and transformed with the South African context. The efficacy of the genre as a representation of social, economic and political conditions in South Africa has been insufficiently explored but is most relevant.

Looking at Sophiatown of the 1950s it becomes apparent that the Hollywood gangster genre influenced the style, attitude, actions and criminal behavior of residents there as they saw the gangster figure as a rebel against an unjust system and identified strongly with his 'outsider to mainstream society' identity. The immigrant status of the Hollywood gangster figure furthered the identification as black South Africans were similarly treated as outsiders within their own country. The gangster figure's constant opposition to the authorities created further identification, as did the brewing of illegal home beer and the gangster's negotiation of the urban environment as black South Africans moved from rural spaces to urban ones. The gangster figure's negotiation of his traditional culture and the new urban environment helped shape the identity of many of the young men and women of Sophiatown. Gangster film protagonists like Styles from *Street With No Name* were emulated in terms of dress, mannerisms and criminal activities. The gangster figure not only created identification but also shaped and fueled the behavior of the Sophiatown residents. Gangs were created with the Hollywood gangster as inspiration and their crimes showed such strong similarities to the Hollywood gangster films that many believed the Chicago underworld had a hand in South African crime as well. Accepting a Hollywood resistant gangster identity was a way of rejecting a South African subjugated labourer identity. Moreover, the intellectuals of Sophiatown were aware of the influence of the gangster figure and used it to attempt to drum up a consolidated resistance to the oppressive conditions of the time and create opposition to the state government. The gangster figure appeared more frequently in *Drum* in an attempt to stir resistance and politicize the gangster figure as Sophiatown came under threat of eradication. However, this was in vain as the Sophiatown gangster did not become politically

aware and the township was destroyed. The presence of the gangster figure went into decline and slowly disappeared from the pages of *Drum*.

The gangster figure, then, re-emerges with *Mapantsula* as a South African gangster film in the 1980s. The film offers an exploration of some of the issues at the heart of South African society during this period. Released at the time of South Africa's third state of emergency, it speaks to the tumultuous times prior to liberation. The gangster figure is presented through the pantsula subculture and Panic is an outsider both to the black community he lives in and to white society, as he refuses to accept a prescribed role as a black South African. His attempts to achieve capitalist goals are thwarted, as even via criminal means he is in not really in a position to 'have it all' in a system where white capitalism and black exploitation are the status quo. The 'rise and fall' narrative structure of the genre is reimagined as Panic experiences a 'rise' in terms of political awareness. He lets go of the selfish and materialistic style-centric lifestyle that he once lived and instead becomes involved in the lives of others in the community, ultimately leading to his arrest. The climax of his 'rise' comes when he firmly stands up to the apartheid detective Stander and refuses to sign his falsified document. His "fall" is a certain one as he is most likely thrown off the building to his death. Panic's slow rise to political awareness from a position of resistant criminal to one of an earlier apartheid police informant reaches its pinnacle as he takes a firm stand and refuses to sign the falsified document and thus refuses to accept the political order that governed the society of the time. The gangster genre is thus used as a means to explore South Africa's movement toward political change and the gangster figure is used to suggest the need for the politicization of resistant figures like Panic in order to take a stand against an oppressive regime.

Hijack Stories offers a different take on South African society as it is set post-liberation and uses the gangster genre to bring into focus issues central to South Africa during this period. The use of gangster genre conventions such as dress are played with, as more urban attire is worn but the focus on expensive clothing remains as issues of capitalism in a post-liberation South Africa are explored. The unconventional use of the 'rise and fall' narrative points to a sense of uncertainty for the future of South Africa. Zama has been denied opportunities in Soweto: Sox has been given them in the city. Sox has lost part of his connection to the black experience in South Africa and needs to find this in order to win a film part. The fact that he must do this by becoming a gangster speaks to the media's negative stereotype of the black

male as criminal but also suggests the degree to which crime has become part of the very lives of South Africans at large. The figure of the gangster here represents a kind of authenticity: the epitome of “real” black experience. In this respect Zama is something of a role model for Sox. Meanwhile, Zama’s criminal identity has value and he is given the part of township gangster Bra Biza, but while he is posing as Sox, which goes unnoticed. The film suggests the uncertainty of what lies ahead but also the separation of the recently privileged from the still unprivileged in a “New South Africa” that promised equality, fairness and equal opportunities for all through the portrayal of two men who grew up side by side in the same township. Through the use of stock characters like the moll, the film explores gender relations in South Africa and the control of female sexuality.

Jerusalema follows the conventions of the gangster genre even more clearly than the two films discussed above. Set later in post-liberation South Africa than *Hijack Stories*, it explores contemporary South Africa and offers a powerful demonstration of the contradictions of the ‘South African Dream’. Lucky has been beckoned by the post-liberation messages of being able to “have it all” with equal opportunities, fairness, success and equality regardless of race, class, ethnicity or gender. However, these promises are not delivered upon as he struggles to achieve his dreams. He turns to criminal activities, and succeeds to a large extent by using the same lingo as the ruling party, and by manipulating loopholes in legislature to achieve his ends. His two heroes, Marx and Capone, sum up the contradictions of modern day South African society as capitalist wealth accumulation and social justice are at odds with each other but are nonetheless both promoted in the post-liberation ethos. Stock characters, like the hothead and oppositional authority figure, offer insight into the roots of crime, aspects of South Africa’s past that have been glossed over, and the failure or inability of the police to uphold justice in the “New South Africa”. Lucky’s trajectory or a rise and fall and subsequent rise again, plays with the conventions of the genre and suggests a future of limitless possibilities but also of uncertainty as the period after the fall of an order leaves much in question while a nation finds its identity.

Thus the gangster genre has proved to be most valuable in revealing the issues at the heart of a society and has had an important place in South African popular culture since the 1950s as Sophiatown audiences identified the same socio-economic conditions in gangster films that were at play in their lives and emulated the style, behaviour and criminal actions from them as they resisted the prescribed roles for black South Africans. While the deeper critique of the

'American Dream' in simultaneously "summoning" and "restricting" desire was missed by the audiences of Sophiatown, they did nonetheless adopt the gangster's pursuit for capitalist gain, but this did not clash with the ideal of an equal, fair society as one did not exist in South Africa of the time. The genre was later used to send a strong message against the state government and those who sat back and allowed the status quo to remain by using the pantsula as a resistant capitalist driven but restricted petty criminal, to argue for the politicization of such forms of resistance in a bid to reform the state government. Post-liberation, the genre is called upon to explore issues central to South Africa society, and the creation of 'haves' and 'have nots', the loss of roots, capitalism and criminality are explored. Lastly then, through a very recent use of the gangster genre with *Jerusalema*, issues of xenophobia, race relations, crime, unresolved tensions from the past and the very direction of South Africa are explored and the clash between capitalism and social justice in the "New South Africa" is made visible as the 'South African Dream' beckons and restricts desire. Therefore as Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema* recalls PW Botha's words "adapt or die", so too, has the gangster film genre adapted and survived, as it continues to elucidate contemporary tensions and to reflect on issues, contradictions, problems and possibilities that are central to South African society.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Hijack Stories. (2000). [Film]. Directed by Oliver Schmitz. Germany and United Kingdom: Schlemmer Film GMBH and Xenos Pictures.

Jerusalema. (2008). [Film]. Directed by Ralph Ziman. South Africa: Muti Films.

Mapantsula. (1988). [Film]. Directed by Oliver Schmitz. South Africa: Max Montocchio.

Secondary Sources

Alcock, S. (2009). Surprises in store at Selebi trial. *Mail & Guardian Online*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://mg.co.za/article/2009-10-05-surprises-in-store-at-selebi-trial>> [Accessed 5 November 2011].

Alfreds, D. (2008). Jerusalema raises the bar. *News24*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.news24.com/Entertainment/SouthAfrica/Jerusalema-raises-the-bar-20080918>> [Accessed 28 October 2011].

Almarendez, V. (1980). Dreams and Dead Ends. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlineessays/JC23folder/ShadoianReview.html>> [Accessed 16 July 2010].

Altman, R. (2002). *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute.

Angels with Dirty Faces. (1938). Directed by Michael Curtiz. USA: Warner Bros.

Arnoldi, M. (2005). Soweto Exposed. *Inside out film*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.iofilm.co.uk/feats/interviews/h/hijack_stories.shtml> [Accessed 20 September 2011].

Benjamin, R. (2007). Bad, bad, bad!!! *Internet Movie Data Base*. [Internet]. Available from: [Accessed 3 September 2011].

Boyz n the Hood. (1991). Directed by John Singleton. USA: Columbia Pictures.

- Bradshaw, P. (2010). Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema. *Guardian.co.uk*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jul/08/gangsters-paradise-jerusalema-film-review>> [Accessed 5 November 2011].
- Braudy, L. (1999). *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, D. (1994). The Film as Text (or Panic in the Lecture Theatre): Teaching Strategies for 'Mapantsula'. *Current Writing*. 6 (1): 29 – 42.
- Buscombe, E. (1970). The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema. *Screen*. 11 (2).
- Chapman, M. (1989). *The Drum Decade*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Cockrell, E. (2008). Jerusalema. *Variety*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117936417/>> [Accessed 5 November 2011].
- Collins English Dictionary*. 10th Edition. (2009). William Collins Sons & Co.
- Come Back Africa*. (1959). Directed by Lionel Rogosin. USA.
- Cook, P. and Bernink, M. (1999). *The Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute.
- Couzens, T. (1985). *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Cullers, R. and Wolpert, J. (2000). 'Scarface': The Shame of a Nation. *American Studies at the University of Virginia*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG02/gangsters/home.html>> [Accessed July 2009].
- Davie, L. (2004). Hillbrow Tower – symbol of Joburg. *Southafrica.info*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.southafrica.info/travel/cities/hillbrowtower.htm#ixzz1e2MIDFK7>> [Accessed 3 November 2011].

- Davis, P. (1996). *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the jungles of cinema's South Africa*. Cape Town: Raven Press.
- Dercksen, D. (2008). Paradise lost in 'Jerusalema'. *Writingstudio*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.writingstudio.co.za/page8.html>> [Accessed 5 November 2011].
- Dickos, A. (2002). *Street With No Name: A History of the Classic Film Noir*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Dillinger Gang. (n.d.). *Indiana Commission on Public Records*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.in.gov/icpr/2830.htm#gov>> [Accessed 2 August 2009].
- Dirks, T. (1998). Scarface: The Shame of the Nation. *Filmsite*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.filmsite.org/scar2.html>> [Accessed 4 January 2011].
- Dirks, T. (2004). The Great Train Robbery (1903). *Filmsite*. [Internet]. Available from: < <http://www.filmsite.org/grea.html>> [Accessed 30 October 2006].
- Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*. (1993-1998). [TV series]. Created by Beth Sullivan. USA: Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).
- Electric Pictures Press Release. (1988). *Oliver Schmitz and Thomas Mogotlane's Mapantsula*. London: Electric Pictures.
- Elias, L. (1999). Entertaining History of the Pantsula. *Daily Dispatch*, 8 July, 3.
- Fenwick, M. (1996). 'TOUGH GUY, EH?': THE GANGSTER-FIGURE IN DRUM. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 22 (4): 617- 634.
- Geronimo: An American Legend*. (1993). [Film]. Directed by Walter Hill. USA: Columbia Pictures.
- Glaser, C. (2000). *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*. Oxford: James Curry Ltd.
- Glaser, C. (1992). The Mask of Zorro: Sexuality and Gender Relations in the Tsotsi Sub-culture on the Witwatersrand. *African Studies* 51 (1): 47 - 67.

- Grant, B.K. (1986). *Film Genre Reader*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Gready, P. (1990). The Sophiatown Writers of the Fifties. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 16 (1): 139 - 164.
- Gutsche, T. (1972). *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940*. Cape Town: Timmins.
- Hannerz, U. (1994). Sophiatown: The View From Afar. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 20 (2): 181 -93.
- Haupt, A. (2008). "Black Masculinity and the tyranny of authenticity in South African popular culture" In: H. Wasserman, A. Hadland, S. Sesanti and E.Louw, eds. *Power, Politics and Identity in Post- Apartheid South African Media*. Cape Town: HSRC Press: 378 -397.
- Huddleston, T. (1956). *Naught For Your Comfort*. Johannesburg: Hardingham and Donaldson.
- Hutchings, P. (2007). Genre Theory and Criticism. *A. Alastair's Film Appreciation Course*. [Internet]. Available from: < <http://afc-theliterature.blogspot.com/2007/07/genre-theory-and-criticism-by-peter.html> > [Accessed 7 July 2011].
- Inside Johannesburg's Underworld. (1951, October). *Drum*. 1 (4): 11.
- Jacobsohn, B. (2008). *In the car with Oliver Schmitz's 'Hijack Stories' (2000): The journey of a South African film in translation*. MA thesis. University of Witwaterstrand.
- Kingseed, W. (2001). President William McKinley: Assassinated by an Anarchist. *Historynet*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.historynet.com/president-william-mckinley-assassinated-by-an-anarchist.htm>> [Accessed 15 November 2011].
- Lekotjolo, N. (2009). Churches slam 'Jerusalema'. *Sunday Times*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/2009/09/01/churches-slam-jerusalema>> [Accessed 3 November 2011].
- Liotier, J. M. (2004). Nice Movie. *Internet Movie Data Base*. [Internet]. Available from:

- <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0215841/>> [Accessed 3 September 2011].
Little Caesar. (1930). [Film]. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy. USA: First National Pictures.
- Magogodi, K. (2003). "Sexuality, Power and the Black Body in *Mapantsula* and *Fools*" In: I. Balseiro and N. Masilela, eds. *To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa*, Michigan, New Jersey: Wayne State University Press: 187-200.
- Maingard, J. (2007). *South African National Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Majola, B. (2003). Role Reversal in Hijack Stories. *Southafrica.info*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.southafrica.info/what_happening/arts_entertainment/hijackmovie.htm> [Accessed 15 August 2011].
- Malcolm, D. (2001). Hijack Stories. *Guardian.co.uk*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2001/may/15/cannes2001.cannesfilmfestival2>> [Accessed 15 August 2011].
- Maloka, E. (2006). Turning Points – The Fruits of Freedom. *South African History Online*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/turning-points-book-6-chapter-4> [Accessed 15 November 2011].
- Marx, L. (1996). Underworld RSA. *South African Theatre Journal*. 10 (2): 11-30.
- Mattera, D. (2009). Jerusalema: South Africa's New Oscar Hope? – Review. *NFVF*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.nfvf.co.za/content/jerusalema-south-africas-new-oscar-hope-review>>.
- Mattera, D. (1987). *Sophiatown: Coming of Age in South Africa*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- McArthur, C. (1972). *Underworld U.S.A.* London: Secker & Wartburg/ British Film Institute.
- Modisane, B. (1986) *Blame Me on History*. Cape Town: Ad Donker.
- Mphahlele, E. (1959). *Down Second Avenue*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Neale, S. (2000). *Genre and Hollywood*. London: Routledge.

Nelson, C. (n.d.). The Depression in the United States – An Overview. *Department of English – University of Illinois*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/overview.htm> [Accessed 23 March 2010].

New Jack City. (1991). Directed by Mario van Peebles. USA: Warner Bros.

Nicol, M. (1991). *A Good-Looking Corpse*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Nixon, R. (1994). *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*. Cape Town: Ad Donker.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 6th Edition. (2000). Oxford University Press.

Perez, G. (2000). *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium*. Baltimore: John Hopkins.

Posse. (1993). [Film]. Directed by Mario Van Peebles. USA: Polygram.

Prinsloo, J. (1996). South African Films in Flux. *South African Theatre Journal*. 10 (2): 31-49.

Public Enemy. (1931). [Film]. Directed by William A. Wellman. USA: Warner Bros.

Ronge, B. (2010). Jerusalema. *Ratherronge*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.ratherronge.co.za/html/sub_content.aspx?reviewid=1118> [Accessed 5 November 2011].

Rosenberg, J. (2011). Prohibition. *About.com 20th Century History Guide*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://history1900s.about.com/od/1920s/p/prohibition.htm>> [Accessed August 2011].

Rukin, J. (2001). Prohibition: Noble Achievement or Failed Experiment? *Illinois Periodicals Online*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.lib.niu.edu/2001/ihy010222.html>> [Accessed 7 February 2006].

Sampson, A. (1956). *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa*. London: Collins.

- Scarface*. (1932). [Film]. Directed by Howard Hawks. USA: The Caddo Company.
- Schatz, T. (1999). *Boom and bust: American cinema in the 1940s*. Berkley, California: University of California Press.
- Schmitz, O. and Mogotlane, T. (1991). *Mapantsula: Screenplay and Interview*. Johannesburg: COSAW.
- Shadoian, J. (1977). *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster/ Crime Film*. Cambridge: MIT.
- Shaffer, R. (2002). *Developmental Psychology*. London: Wadsworth Thomson.
- Stein, P. and Jacobson, R. (1986). *Sophiatown Speaks*. Johannesburg: Junction Avenue Press.
- Stein, S. (1999). *Who Killed Mr. Drum?* Ndabeni: Rustica Press.
- Street With No Name*. (1948). Directed by William Keighley. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Sugar Hill*. (1994). Directed by Leon Ichaso. USA: Beacon.
- Thema, D. (1999). *Kortboy: A Sophiatown Legend*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.
- Themba, C. (1985). *The World of Can Themba: Selected Writings of the late Can Themba*. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.
- The Godfather*. (1972). Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. USA: Paramount.
- There's Nothing like a bit of Kwela, Mbaqanga, Sakkie Sakkie and an Ice Cold Castle Lite. (1994). *Sunday Times*, 30 January, 28.
- They forced me to jump from the fifth floor. (2009). *Somali Association of South Africa*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.somaliassociation.org/news/node/312> [Accessed 30 October 2011].
- Tomaselli, K. (1991). Popular Communication in South Africa: 'Mapantsula' and its Context of Struggle. *South African Theatre Journal*. 5 (1): 46 - 59.

Tudor, A. (1974). *Theories of Film*. New York: Viking.

Unforgiven. (1992). [Film]. Directed by Clint Eastwood. USA: Warner Bros.

van der Vat, D. (2006). PW Botha. *Guardian.co.uk*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/nov/02/guardianobituaries.southafrica>> [Accessed 15 November 2011].

Warshow, R. (1948). "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" In: A. Silver and J. Ursini, eds. (2007). *Gangster Film Reader*. New York: Limelight: 10 - 17.

