

AFRICAN WRITING IN ENGLISH
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

An interpretation of the contribution
to world literature of Black Africans
* Within the confines of the Republic of
South Africa, Rhodesia and the former
British protectorates in Southern Africa.

THESIS

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
English Literature in the University of
Cape Town.

by Ursula A. Barnett.

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PREFACE

I would like to express my thanks to Prof. R.G. Howarth for his encouraging and patient supervision of my work over many years. It is largely due to his pioneering and inspiring interest in South African literature that I was able to complete my work in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties. My thanks also go to Prof. E. Westphal for his supervision and help.

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I would finally like to thank the following writers particularly for their interest and for taking the trouble to answer my numerous questions about their own works: Mr. E. Mphahlele, Mr. O.J. Mtshali, Prof. S. Samkange, Mr. J.K. Ngubane, Mr. N. Mkele. The late Dr. A.C. Jordan and the late Prof. P. Segal are gratefully remembered for their help. Special thanks for their readiness to supply information go to Mr. Janheinz Jahn, Prof. J. Povey, Prof. R.E. McDowell, Rev. R.H.W. Shepherd, Prof. Wm. Branford, Prof. C.L.S. Nyembezi, Miss Phillippa Berlyn (Mrs. Christie) and Mr. K. Mew.

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INTRODUCTION

The definitions of African writing are as numerous as the writers defining it. They range from distinction according to Colour to a loose description as writing in Africa, based on the contention that "You can't carve up the country of the imagination into group areas";⁽¹⁾ from the meticulous classifications of Janheinz Jahn according to "stylistic features or pattern"⁽²⁾ to the definition of Ezekiel Mphahlele at a conference in Sierra Leone as literature with "an African setting authentically handled and to which experiences originating in Africa are integral".⁽³⁾

Since all these definitions are arbitrary, every student of African writing is entitled, and indeed obliged to make his own definition. For the purposes of this thesis I shall take African writing to mean the creative writing of those inhabitants of Southern Africa whose heritage is a culture other than Western European. White writers in Southern Africa and Black writers to the north of the Limpopo are mainly outside my terms of reference, except on a basis of comparison. This definition also excludes Coloured writers, but this distinction tends to become absurd at times, and I have therefore included them whenever I have considered it necessary.

NOTES

- (1) Philip Segal: "Taking Stock with The Classic"
(Vol. 2 No. 2, Autumn, 1963)
- (2) History of Neo-African Literature
- (3) Transition, (January - February 1964)

I shall consider only works written in English, or works translated from the vernacular by African writers. Other translations will be considered only for the purpose of comparison and in order to investigate the future of English as opposed to the vernacular in African literature.

It is my purpose to show that in Southern Africa African English literature as defined above has absorbed the culture of the West and has begun to reciprocate by adding its own distinctive features. My contention will be based on an investigation of the trends and ideas which appear in the novels, short stories, poetry, drama, autobiographical and critical writing of Africans. In 1937 the Zulu poet Benedict Wallet Vilakazi wrote in his M.A. thesis "Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu";⁽⁴⁾ "The Black man has something to contribute to the world's literature, for he has yet to interpret his conception of the end of human existence and the meaning of life. He has yet to consider the impact of the whole disordered world and tell us how he will resist the temptation to discouragement and even to despair when he looks upon the behaviour of contemporary civilisation and Western culture". I shall attempt to show that a beginning has been made in that direction.

The geographical boundaries of this thesis are the Zambesi to the north, the Atlantic and Indian oceans to the West and South, and Portugese-speaking territory to the East. But these are more than geographical limits. Literature in English in Southern Africa, and in the

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(4) Bantu Studies, (University of the Witwatersrand)

Republic of South Africa in particular, owes its very being to the prevailing political conditions. Modern African English writing in Southern Africa is largely based on political and social protest and it often becomes impossible to exclude those writers of different background who have made common cause with Black Africans in what they write.

A bibliography will be found at the end of this study. I have divided it into two main parts: works by African English writers in Southern Africa which fall within the scope of the thesis and works by other writers which I have consulted and from which I have quoted.

The difficulty in procuring some of these works in the country of their origin has been great. Roughly ninety percent of the books have been published abroad and many of those not available in South African libraries are out of print. I have had to scan, by correspondence, the second-hand bookshops in London and New York and to rely on friends in these countries for their willing help.

Added to this was the effect of the banning of books under the Publication and Entertainments Act, known as the Censorship Act, of 1963, which extended the Customs Act of 1955. Under this law many of the books within the scope of my thesis have been banned by the Publications Control Board, and I have had to ask for permission separately for each such book I wished to consult. Even more drastic was the effect of the Amendment to the Suppression of Communism Act under which all the works of certain authors are proscribed. This, in fact, affects most of the leading contemporary writers, namely

Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Can Themba, Alfred Hutchinson, Jordan Ngubane (later lifted), Todd Matshikiza, William (Bloke) Modisane and the Coloured writers Dennis Brutus and Alex La Guma. After lengthy correspondence with the Ministry of Justice, the Secretary of Justice in a letter to me explained that the Amendment does not prohibit the acquiring or reading of works by these writers but merely the dissemination of such works. I was told to submit each quotation by proscribed writers to the Ministry. However, since I do not think that the submission of a dissertation for examination purposes to the supervisor, the internal examiner and the external examiner of a University constitutes dissemination, I have not done so. I thus wish to make it clear that this work must not be disseminated in South Africa since I have quoted widely from works by proscribed authors.

In spite of these obstacles my bibliography is a fairly complete one, covering all published creative writing by Africans in Southern Africa in book form and a large part of such writing in periodicals, as well as of critical writing mainly in the form of essays and reviews.

My bibliography as well as general comments may prove useful in paving the way for further studies. I feel that there is room, for instance, for anthologies of African writing south of the Limpopo, both poetry and prose, instead of the inclusion of one or two items in continental African anthologies, or even fewer items in anthologies of Southern African writing by all sections. There is also room for collections of poems and prose of individual writers such as Can Themba,

Richard Rive, Alfred Hutchinson, as well as for biographies of some of the deceased writers such as H.I.E. Dhlomo, Sol Plaatje and Can Themba. I have also kept in mind the trend in other African countries and in the United States, of including African English writing in University - and sometimes even school-syllabuses, in the hope that one day this will spread to South Africa.

REVIEW OF RELATED INVESTIGATIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

In view of the difficulty in defining African writing, there may be some doubt about the value of a bibliography of writing by Black Africans in Southern Africa. My own list is a working bibliography which I hope will prove useful to other students of African literature even if the inclusions and omissions are disputable.

The first attempt at compiling a bibliography of African writing in the Union of South Africa was made in 1943 by N.M. Greshoff. Entitled Some English Writings by South African Bantu, it was prepared for the University of Cape Town School of Librarianship Bibliography Series. It covered only such writing as appeared independently in the form of pamphlets or as sections of a book. The compiler considered the number of articles in periodicals too large for inclusion for the purpose of her bibliography and thus, according to the introduction, found that she had to "neglect the most interesting section of the work".

Miss Greshoff found it difficult to trace the works, since she was breaking new ground, and she stressed that she made no claim to be exhaustive. Only one section deals with "literature", as well as "language". As a starting point to a study of African writing in English in South Africa this is a useful work, listing as it does the main works written up to 1943: Sol Plaatje's novel Mhudi, R.R.R. Dhlomo's novel An African Tragedy, H.I.E. Dhlomo's drama The Girl Who Killed to Save and his long poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills". (the latter two works for an unexplained reason

listed at the end, out of alphabetical order).

Thomas Mofolo's three works, Chaka, Pitseng and Traveller to the East are listed and the names of the translators given, but it is not stated that these are translations from the original Sesuto.

In 1962 A. Wilkov of the Department of Librarianship of the University of the Witwatersrand compiled a bibliography entitled Some English Writings by Non-Europeans in South Africa, 1944 - 1960. His avowed purpose was to complement Greshoff's work. He expressed surprise that no bibliography on the subject had appeared for almost twenty years.

Wilkov's work includes Indian and Coloured writers as well as Africans. The arrangement, like that of Greshoff's, is by subject, with an index of authors. Unlike Greshoff, however, Wilkov provided a cross-index of his subjects and did include writing in periodicals. The section on literature is divided into the various categories: novels, drama and so on. As his sources Wilkov's work lists the various libraries of the University of the Witwatersrand, the Union Catalogue of Theses and Dissertations of South African Universities and the Index to South African Periodicals. This Index, unavailable to Miss Greshoff since it was begun in 1944, was an enormous stride forward as a bibliographic help to students of African literature. It lists titles, subjects and authors with very adequate cross-references and provides still to-day an essential check-list for the student.

From the United States comes a bibliography of short fiction by non-Europeans in South Africa between 1940 and 1964. It appeared in 1969 as a supplement to the African Studies Bulletin and was published by the

African Studies Centre at Boston University for the African Studies Association. The compiler is Bernth Lindforth and he modestly calls it a "Preliminary Checklist". It is compiled from anthologies of South African writing before 1965 and from complete or nearly complete runs of periodicals such as Drum, Fighting Talk, New Africa, Classic, Purple Roster, Black Orpheus, Transition and Présence Africaine, as well as from entries in Wilkov's bibliography and the Index to South African Periodicals. Since he had only the names and previous entries as a guide and as an American was not familiar with the type of names, his entries are not strictly in accordance with the title. This, however, is of little importance to the students for whom the bibliography was intended. For a reader or student who wishes to study the fiction of particular South African Black writers, few of whom have as yet published collections, this work is invaluable.

There are, of course, bibliographies of South African literature covering authors from all sections of the community. No comprehensive bibliography of this nature, has, however, been published since 1938, when E.R. Seary prepared a "tentative edition", as he called it, mimeographed in Grahamstown where he was a lecturer in English at Rhodes University College. It was entitled "A Biographical and Bibliographical Record of South African Literature in English". Like so many students of South African and African literature, the author commented in the introduction on the difficulty of establishing limits to the subject. A bibliography, being of a more scientific nature than a literary study, must obviously pay even greater attention to definition. Seary wrote in his introduction: "..... South Africa,

following Mendelsohn, I have taken as Africa South of the Zambezi". As South African authors he regarded those whose works have been published in South Africa, who are represented in South African anthologies or who have lived there the greater part of their lives. He has left out those "conventionally regarded as English writers".

Seary's work gives a separate section on "Native" authors, which includes R.R.R. Dhlomo, H.I.E. Dhlomo and Sol Plaatje.

The South African Library in Cape Town held an exhibition of books in 1952 in conjunction with the Van Riebeeck Festival in order to show the development of the country in various spheres.⁽¹⁾ The section on English literature included Peter Abrahams' novel Dark Testament and there was a section of "Languages and Literatures of the South African Native Peoples".

A "Short List of South African English Literature in Cape Town City Libraries" was compiled in 1962 to mark the emphasis of the South African Council for English Education and the South African Academy of English upon "Our English Heritage", the title of the list. Several African writers in English are included. The list is not a bibliography but a list of books in the library. Only books of fiction, poetry and theatre are listed. Inclusions and omissions

(1) "South Africa in Print: Catalogue of an Exhibition of Books, Atlases and Maps held in the South African Library, Cape Town 1st March till 6th April, 1962."

are therefore the choice of the librarians for a public lending - and not a reference - library. Yet the casual reader, interested in writing by Africans, has most of the published books at his disposal: Peter Abrahams' novels, Plaatje's Mhudi, R.R.R. Dhlomo's African Tragedy, H.I.E. Dhlomo's The Girl Who Killed to Save and extracts from "The Valley of a Thousand Hills" in Macnab's Poets in South Africa. This poem is listed by name under poets in the index of the list. A strange omission is Mopeli Paulus' Blanket Boys' Moon when Turn to the Dark, a lesser known work by the same author, is included. In the introduction Dhlomo's African Tragedy is classed with Pauline Smith's The Little Karroo, Scully's Daniel Venanda and Daphne Muir's A Virtuous Woman as novels preoccupied "with human and racial issues, free from the prevailing romanticism" like those of Sarah Gertrude Millin; while Peter Abrahams is listed with Harry Bloom, Nadine Gordimer, Dan Jacobson and Daphne Rooke "and others who - writing after the Second World War - depict the changing tension-ridden world in which we live".

Several bibliographies dealing with sections of South African writing are available, such as that accompanying The South African Novel in English (1880 - 1930) by J.P.L. Snyman. This work was a thesis approved for the degree of Doctor of Literature by the University of South Africa and was published in the "In U Lig" series by the University of Potchefstroom for C.H.E. in 1951. The critical commentary section appeared in 1952 and will be discussed later. Once again Sol Plaatje's Mhudi and R.R.R. Dhlomo's An African Tragedy are listed.

In 1965 Gnyman's bibliography was brought up to date by Aviva Astrinsky as A Bibliography of South African English Novels 1930 - 1960.⁽²⁾ The novels of Peter Abrahams appear listed in this work.

Peter Abrahams' poems are the only poems by an African included in a bibliographical list attached to A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English by G.M. Miller and Howard Sergeant, published in 1957. In their critical commentary the authors quote from a collection entitled A Black Man Speaks of Freedom, which is mentioned in no other bibliography or commentary and was probably published in a small private edition. It is strange that this unknown, though interesting collection should have been included, when no mention is made of other poetry by Africans which had appeared by this time, notably H.I.E. Dhlomo's "Valley of a Thousand Hills".

English and Afrikaans Novels on South African History is the title of a bibliography compiled by S. Kielsen at the University of Cape Town School of Librarianship in 1958. It lists Peter Abrahams' Wild Conquest and Plaatje's Mhudi.

In 1965 Rachel Silbert compiled an annotated bibliography for the Department of Bibliography, Librarianship and Typography at the University of the Witwatersrand entitled Southern African Drama in English 1900 - 1964. The compiler carefully defined her subject as being plays by local persons living in a clearly defined area and plays by persons outside this area of

(2) University of Cape Town School of Librarianship
1965 - typescript.

local interest. She included unpublished material accessible in the Johannesburg Public Library and the Gubbins Collection of Africana in Johannesburg. It is a pity that unpublished works in other libraries are not included in an otherwise comprehensive work, such as for instance the plays of H.I.E. Dhlomo in the Library of the University of Natal and in the Killie Campbell Museum in Durban. Admittedly these works are not readily available. Silbert does include H.I.E. Dhlomo's published play, The Girl Who Killed to Save and also a play about Chaka by an author who signs himself as "Goro-X". This interesting work, housed in the Gubbins Library in the Strange Africana section, which will be discussed later, is available in most South African Africana libraries, but it is not often mentioned in commentaries. Nowhere have I found any details about it or the real name of the author and Messrs. Juta & Co. of Cape Town and Johannesburg, who published it in 1940, can throw no light on the matter as they no longer have their records. It is listed neither in the Preliminary List of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Works Relating to Africa nor in Hallett and Laing's Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature.

The Dictionary of South African Biographies compiled by the National Council for the Department of Social Research of Higher Education will provide a useful reference when completed, and, judging by the first volume which appeared in 1968, African writers will be well represented. In Volume I, which covers persons who died before 1950, there is a full biography of the Zulu writers Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, whose creative

writing was mainly in Zulu, but who has contributed valuable critical studies in English. This biography is written by J.M.A. Sikana of the Department of African languages at the University of the Witwatersrand. E.P. Lekhela, B.A., M.Ed., Senior lecturer in the history of Education at the University College of the North, contributes a biography of Plaatzje, African journalist, novelist and translator, who wrote in Sechuana and English.

The publication of the University of the Witwatersrand, English Studies in Africa, produces "select bibliographies" annually. These are headed "Books and articles on English language and literature published or written in South Africa" and have been compiled since the first issue by M.E. Farmer at the Gubbins Library of the University of the Witwatersrand.

There are several bibliographies which cover African writing in English in areas that include Southern Africa. The fullest and best-known of these is by Janheinz Jahn, entitled "A Bibliography of Neo-African Literature (1965)". Jahn is a well-known scholar of African literature who has ^{had} a research fellowship in "neo-African Literature" at the University of Frankfurt since 1968. "Neo-African Literature" is his title for his chosen field, and he defines it as having "certain stylistic elements which stem from Negro-African literature and not the author's language...birthplace or colour of skin". (3) He says in his introduction that works written by Africans "which lack these

(3) Introduction to the above work.

specific elements do not belong to neo-African, but to Western literature". He admits, however, that these limits are "still under discussion" and that "the inclusion of much of this material is disputable".

Jahn's views on African culture are stated more fully in an earlier work entitled Muntu where African culture is defined according to cultural elements which allow the inclusion of writing from Africa, America and the Caribbean and, since his aim is to find the bond that unites Negro writers, he includes writing in all languages. Jahn has been widely attacked by African writers for his emphasis on symbolism and the metaphysical and for his arbitrary definition of Neo-African literature. The South African critic, Lewis Nkosi, for example, writing in the Manchester Guardian,⁽⁴⁾ says: "Janheinz Jahn belongs to that Germanic temperament which cannot bear a lack of system, which must forever classify and systematise and then uncover the Zeitgeist of the entire civilisation". But although Jahn uses the bibliography as another attempt to prove a theory, he has compiled a good working bibliography and so far the most thorough in the field. Recently, together with Claus Peter Dressler, Jahn has revised and augmented this work to deal with African literature alone under the title of Bibliography of Creative African Writing.⁽⁵⁾

Earlier, in 1959, Jahn collaborated with John Ramsaran, then lecturer in English at the University

(4) 3rd January, 1969.

(5) Kraus-Thomson in Lichtenstein.
in February, 1971.

College of Ibadan, in a work entitled Approaches to African Literature. Its reading list was expanded in 1965 by Ramsaran as New Approaches to African Literature; A Guide to Negro-African Writing and Related Studies. This work, which is a critical study as well as a bibliography, was intended as a reference work for the study of African writers, a field which had just been incorporated into the English degree syllabus of the University of Ibadan where Ramsaran was now a senior lecturer. Its aim therefore was different from that of Jahn's which was intended for the scholar and the librarian. By consulting Ramsaran's list, Nigerian students of English were encouraged to read, among others, South African writers such as Peter Abrahams, Harry Bloom, Nadine Gordimer, Doris Lessing, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Alan Paton.

Several publications on African literature carry regular bibliographical lists, as for example African Literature To-day, edited by Eldred Jones, Head of the Department of English at the University of Sierra Leone. It appears annually and each number has a current bibliography of new African literature, covering both books and periodical articles. The French journal Présence Africaine produces catalogues of works available from its associated publishing house.

In 1964 Margaret Amosu edited A Preliminary Bibliography of Creative African Writing in the European languages as a special supplement to African Notes, bulletin of the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ibadan. In the introduction Miss Amosu says that the bibliography is based on a German catalogue of an exhibition of books by African and West Indian writers, Schöne Schriften aus Afrika. It was compiled after the Dakar and Freetown conferences of African writers in response to a demand for a reference list to

books which were now being used in the Universities. The fact that it was never expanded into a larger work as intended is probably due to the publication of Jahn's work.

In the South African section Amosu has included "All those born in South Africa irrespective of colour whose work is clearly inspired (for better or worse) by their relation to the African social and political situation of that country". Although this seems like unscientific bias, we must remember that the bibliography was designed mainly as a reference list for African universities and schools whose students would have little interest in other South African works.

Barbara Abrash's bibliography, Black African Literature in English Since 1952 appeared in 1967. It was also designed to be used as "the necessary tool in the classroom" where African literature was being taught. It aimed to introduce African creative writing and in this way "the new Africa" to the American student. John F. Povey, Chairman of the African Languages and Literature Committee, African Studies Association of America, in introducing the work, says that it is unique "in that it is conceived in terms of the American student" and "makes reference to the American public".

Miss Abrash, as a member of the Russell Sage College Library, has prepared a professional and totally reliable work. She has no axe to grind and can therefore concentrate on her subject chosen only for a particular study purpose. Since most users will be engaged in a similar pursuit - the reading and study of African writing - they cannot go wrong in using this

work. It is to be hoped that Miss Abrahm will bring it up to date. In her preface she says: "This is a listing of creative works of literature in English by black African writers, along with relevant criticism". She includes "essays and autobiographies deemed to be of literary interest, as well as a few plays, performed but not published". Since it is obviously impossible to include all critical writing, she has chosen writing "from publications readily available in academic libraries".

The Africana Center, which houses a permanent exhibition in its Africana showroom at 101 Fifth Avenue, New York, publishes a quarterly bibliography and news bulletin. It is intended partly as a sales catalogue, though this section closed down recently, and partly as a bibliographical guide to publications on Africa and creative writing by African authors.

The editor, Hans M. Zell, in collaboration with Helene Silver as co-editor and with Barbara Abrahm and Gideon-Cyrus M. Mutiso, as assistants, was, at the time of writing, about to publish an "annotated bibliographical Guide to Creative Writing by Black African Authors to be entitled The Literature of Africa". It is to cover contemporary Black African literature, both in English and French. The American publishers, The Africana Publishing Corporation of New York, in their announcement, write as follows:

"This comprehensive annotated reference tool on contemporary black African literature - both in English and French - records details of over 600 books. In addition to creative writing, relevant criticism as well as anthologies and bibliographies are included. Each entry is accompanied by a brief descriptive outline on contents and, as a novel feature, extracts from book reviews frequently supplement the annotations.

"Great emphasis is put on the factor of availability; in addition to complete bibliographic data and publishers' names, prices are given and books that are out-of-print and no longer available are indicated accordingly. Essential addresses of publishers throughout the world as well as specialist book dealers are given in an appendix...."

This would therefore appear to be the most useful guide in that it co-ordinates all previous bibliographies and works of bibliographic guidance and I very much regret that it is being published too late for inclusion here. I look forward to finding out in how far it accomplishes its stated purpose. Since it is also to include an "inventory of bibliographic sources available", the reader and student of African literature will no longer have to battle on his own.

CRITICAL STUDIES

When two critical works appeared late in 1968, Janheinz Jahn's A History of Neo-African Literature and Margaret Laurence's Long Drums and Cannons, Lewis Nkosi, in a review in the Manchester Guardian,⁽¹⁾ wrote as follows:

"Of these two books on African literature the most that can be said for Margaret Laurence's is that in style and subject-matter it is less forbidding than the more pretentious sounding History of Neo-African Literature. Even so, I cannot myself see why this book was felt to be urgently needed. As matters now stand we are in great danger of being swamped by critical studies and exegeses of African literature, the volume of which can scarcely be justified by the paucity and quality of the original works".

What, then, is this profusion of literary studies of African writing to which Nkosi refers? Certainly there are innumerable articles, essays and reviews in literary and other publications, and there are prefaces to collections and anthologies, but comprehensive literary studies are not nearly so numerous as Nkosi would have us think.

Nearly all of them appeared in the nineteen-sixties and there are perhaps a dozen works. Of what Nkosi and others are possibly afraid is not so much the quantity of critical writing as the fact that it may be appearing for the wrong reasons. "The Literary Scramble for Africa" is what William (Bloke) Modisane calls his report of a conference convened by the Mbari

(1) 3rd January, 1969.

Writers' Club at Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda⁽²⁾ "because of the large number of British publishers at the conference, ready to pounce on literary territory".

Critics like Nkosi and Modisane, who would obviously be glad to welcome genuine critical interest in African writing, may have cause to fear. There is a definite tendency to-day towards accepting African writing just because it is African, a tendency which Richard Rive describes as a mere "manifestation of inverted racialism"⁽³⁾

It is interesting to note, for example, the difference in approach when a Black and a White writer criticise the same work, one which both obviously find very inadequate. In the same issue of Black Orpheus⁽⁴⁾, Lewis Nkosi and W. Stevenson discuss Richard Rive's novel Emergency. Nkosi finds it "wholly unimaginative, totally uninspired and exceedingly clumsy in construction". Stevenson says: "Perhaps the main difficulty an author of a protest novel now faces is that it is no longer sufficient to write what amounts to a documentary of an intolerable situation..." The technique used by Rive, Nkosi bluntly calls "a gimmick", while Stevenson speaks of "devices" which "become a trifle obvious".

Anne Tibble, surveying African literature,⁽⁵⁾ describes the plot of Nkosi's own melodramatic play

- (2) Published in West Africa 30th June, 1962.
- (3) Classic Vol. 1 No. 3
- (4) No. 19
- (5) African/English Literature.

Rhythm of Violence and says that it "bows to box-office dictates" and makes use of "modern stereotypes instead of characters". She hastens to apologise for her adverse criticism, in case she should be accused of conveying "an impression of frothy theorising on the delineation of a situation of agony". Nkosi himself shows no such compunction. He calls Black South Africans writing fiction in English "a group of writers operating blindly in a vacuum". "To read Richard Rive's Emergency", he says, "is to gain a minute glimpse into a literary situation which seems to me quite desperate".

Then there are the critics who are less interested in the literary than in the sociological aspect and look for certain features in African writing. One critic, for example, in reviewing W.H. Whiteley's Selection of African Prose Part II, (6) regrets the amount of space given to the better known writers and considers "the choice of sophisticated and elegantly written pieces unfortunate". He wanted to see more of the popular writing such as editorials of the Lagos press "with their blend of modern journalism and puritanical evangelism". If we imagine similar criticism of a selection of British prose on the grounds that it includes no articles from News of the World or columns from Woman's Weekly we shall appreciate the absurdity of the statement. The writer, in fact, becomes aware of it himself and admits that his viewpoint is that of the student of African societies, whereas Whiteley's interest lies in literature.

(6) John Middleton in Africa, October, 1965.

There is a parallel to the situation in the vogue for American Negro writing in the nineteenthcenties. The prizes and awards won by writers such as Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks and Langston Hughes were certainly deserved but other writers were weeded out in the ensuing years when they had to stand on their own merit. As one of the writers, Saunders Redding, put it: "Three times within the century writing by Negroes has been done nearly to death, once by indifference, once by opposition and once by the enthusiasm of misguided friends". (7)

Our concern in this study is with the writing of Africans in English in Southern Africa and the first to give attention to this subject was the Reverend R.H.W. Shepherd, retired principal of Lovedale College, though his main interest, as Director of Publications of the Lovedale Press, was in vernacular writing.

In his supplementary thesis for the degree of Doctor of Literature submitted to and accepted by the University of the Witwatersrand in 1945, Shepherd comments very briefly on African writing in English as having produced "books of merit". He does, however, predict that Africans would be writing more and more in English. The writers to whom he refers are D.D.T. Jabavu, S.M. Molema, Sol Plaatje, R.R.R. Dhlomo and H.I.E. Dhlomo. His thesis is an attempt to assess the future contribution which African literature can make to literature as a whole and he finds the answer in what is "unique and precious" in the writing of

(7) "The Negro Writer and American Literature" in Anger and Beyond edited by Herbert Hill.

"these children of nature". Black South African critics, as we shall see later, have rejected what they regard as this condescending attitude of the missionaries and their descendants who regard the Africans as a species apart, to be studied in separate departments. Yet Shepherd was aware of this charge and specifically warns those who fall to the "Temptation to think African Culture Inferior" (sub-heading of the final chapter).

When listing the contributions Africans have already made to literature as a whole - the praise poem, poetry of nature, folk-stories and proverbs, and new and original workshop forms - he is thinking of vernacular rather than English writing. The fifth and final contribution listed is "Literature springing from Culture contacts".

It was of course much too early to make any estimate of African writing and its contribution to literature. It is the contribution of the Reverend Shepherd himself which is of unique importance. If it had not been for him and his predecessors of the Lovedale Press, even though the aim of the Press was to provide literature for rather than by Africans, African writing in English would possibly have started only twenty years later.

The writers published or encouraged by Lovedale are largely forgotten now and rarely included in anthologies and collections. It is my contention that they will be rediscovered in time to come. When Africans in Southern Africa can work in an atmosphere of literary, social and political freedom and no longer feel that they have to provide evidence that they are not apart in their culture, they, like Africans further to the north, will go back gladly to a heritage which,

when combined with the give and take of the contact cultures, produces a growing and thriving literature. This is my interpretation of the prediction of the Reverend Shepherd, writing in 1945.

In other works Shepherd deals with more general subjects. African Contrasts (with B.G. Paver), subtitled "The Story of a South African People", includes biographical notes and commentary on two or three African writers; Literature for the South African Bantu is the report of a visit to the United States under the Carnegie Corporation and compares Negro Achievement with South African prospects. It makes many recommendations regarding research grants, educational and library facilities, but all directed towards a vernacular literature. Bantu Literature and Life is a collection of articles previously published in various journals. It gives an interesting history of the African press, including English writing, and again biographies of several African writers and comments on their works.

There are no other works during this time or since dealing specifically with African writing in English in Southern Africa. The nearest to any book-length commentary on African literature in South Africa is a work in German entitled Schwarze Intelligenz (Black Intelligence), with the subtitle "Ein literarisch-politischer Streifzug durch Süd-Afrika" (a politico-literary sauntering through South Africa) by a Swiss writer, Peter Sulzer. Sulzer's travels began in September 1952 and ended in March 1953. During these six months it was his aim to get to know Black Africans by speaking to them and reading their work in order to judge their attitude towards Europeans in and outside

Africa, what culture and Christianity meant to them and their attitude towards South African problems. He visited Langa, Fort Hare, Morija Mission Station, the Transkei and Cape Town. Apart from the Institute of Race Relations, his contacts were mainly German mission stations. Each chapter begins with a quotation from an African writer, for example Jabavu and A.C. Jordan. Sulzer was concerned with attitudes rather than literature as such. What interested him, for instance, was the difficulty of the African writer in portraying White characters. He felt that they barely thought of the White man as human. Again, he points out the frequent use of technological images and says that the African looks upon mechanical devices as pieces of life with an organic relationship to man, and it is thus legitimate to use them as poetic themes and images. Sulzer treats English and vernacular literature as one.

There are no comprehensive works dealing with African writing in South Africa generally, including the vernacular. A few papers were published such as D. Ziervogel's Linguistic and Literary Achievements in the Bantu Languages of South Africa. This was an inaugural address delivered on his appointment to the Chair of Bantu languages at the University of South Africa in 1956. Similarly P.S. Groenewald gave an address in 1967 when he took over the Chair in the Department of Bantu Languages at the Pretoria University. It was entitled "Die Studie van die Letterkunde in die Bantoetale". Neither Ziervogel nor Groenewald mentioned any writing in English.

P.D. Beuchat, lecturer in Bantu Languages at the University of the Witwatersrand, wrote a paper

"Do the Bantu have a Literature?"⁽⁸⁾ which also deals with the vernacular only. Raymond Kunene's Master of Arts thesis, in the Department of Bantu Studies of the University of Natal, is an "Analytical Survey of Zulu Poetry Both Traditional and Modern". He used his researches later for the introduction to his volume of poetry, Zulu Poems, published in 1970 under his Zulu name of Mazisi Kunene. At the time of writing, a book on Shona literature by Kriel, also based on a doctoral dissertation for the University of Cape Town, was about to be published in Cape Town. None of the above, however, deals with English writing.

The Zulu poet B.W. Vilakazi's Master's and Doctor's theses deal with African literature. His Master's Thesis, for the University of the Witwatersrand, was entitled "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu"; (1938), while his thesis entitled "The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni" gained him the degree of Doctor of Literature in the same University in 1946. Although he has stated that he does not consider writing in English as African writing, Vilakazi does not always distinguish between vernacular and English writing. He deals at some length, for instance, with the poems and plays of H.I.E. Dhlomo and the journalistic contributions of R.R.R. Dhlomo.

D.D.T. Jabavu, in an address given at Lovedale to the Fort Hare branch of the English Association in 1943, and published by the Lovedale Press, speaks of

(8) Paper No. 7. Publication of the Institute for the Study of Man in Africa.

"The Influence of English on Bantu Literature".
 C.L.S. Nyembezi delivered a lecture reviewing Zulu literature to the University of Natal in 1961 in which he asked for support in the encouragement of Zulu vernacular writing. The University of Natal Press published his "Review of Zulu Literature" in 1961. Harold Scheub prepared a doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin in 1969 entitled "The Ntsemi: A Xhosa Performing Art", of which a long extract was published in Research in African Literatures in the Fall 1970 issue. S.M. Guma published a work entitled The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho in 1967.⁽⁹⁾ Again none of these dealt with any English writing.

The most important work on vernacular literature south of the Sahara is still in preparation. Daniel P. Kunene, formerly of the University of Cape Town and now head of the Department of African languages and literatures at the University of Wisconsin, has initiated a project of research which is to be entitled "A Digest of African Vernacular Literatures". All works published in Africa south of the Sahara will be listed with publication details and summaries of each work. Literary appraisal and social contextualisation are envisaged. The editors will decide which works are suitable for translation as a whole or in part and will undertake the translation. In this way the work "opens the floodgates of African vernacular literature to flow out and join the stream of world literature". "The

(9) Hidding-Carrier Publications of the University of South Africa No. 8. Pretoria. J.L. Van Schaik.

project", says Kunene, "opens up Africa to herself."⁽¹⁰⁾

Commentary on African literature as a whole, on various South African writers of all colours and on South African Black writers in particular can be found in Home and Exile, a collection of essays by Lewis Nkosi. In an essay entitled "The Fabulous Decade: The Fifties" he gives vivid pen-sketches of the leading African writers assembled on the staff of Drum during that period: Can Themba, Bloke Modisane, Arthur Maimane. Another of the essays is entitled "Fiction by Black South Africans". Writing in 1965, Nkosi says that he cannot detect any talent. No tradition, he says, stands behind such fiction as it does in The Palm Wine Drinkard, nor an alien tradition as in the fiction of Camara Leye. The excitement, he says, is "external" and "does not come from the inner tension of talent confronting inept matter". He praises Ezekiel Mphahlele's story "In Corner B", and viciously attacks the writing of Richard Rive. Black South African writers, say Nkosi, live in an insulated and sterile atmosphere "in which it is possible for minor talent to be inflated beyond sensible proportions and in which mediocre writing by Black writers is painlessly endured". Significantly, he concludes the essay by commenting on the writer Dugmore Boetie. Although he had read only one story by this writer, he finds that he has "the tough pitiless nerve which one has come to associate with the modern sensibility in European literature. One would like to see more writing by him". In 1969 there

appeared posthumously Dugmore Boetie's novel (with Barney Simon), Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost. I shall have a great deal to say later about this novel which points to the direction in which South African literature by Africans writing in English is heading.

Besides the above works, the student or reader who wishes to know about South African Black writing in English must go to works about South African literature or about Black continental African literature. Very little has been published in book-form about South African literature. Manfred Nathan's South African Literature A General Survey, published in 1925, makes no mention of African writing.

In 1952 J.P.L. Snyman presented his thesis on "The South African Novel in English" for the degree of Doctor of Literature to the University of South Africa. I have already referred to this work, published by the University of Potchefstroom, in connection with its accompanying bibliography. Snyman discussed two works by Africans, Plaatje's Mhudi and R.R.R. Dhlomo's An African Tragedy, and in doing so takes the sociological viewpoint. Although he makes some legitimate criticism of Dhlomo's style, he praises both writers for writing about their own people, in contrast to five unnamed Negro writers of the same period, of whom only one writes about Negroes. Surprisingly, Snyman says that these writers should be encouraged to express their thoughts in English. In this way, he feels, they will be able to enlighten the White man on the Black man's attitude. This, apparently, should be the only object of the African writer.

G.M. Miller and Howard Sergeant wrote A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English, published under that title in 1957. They, too, find "racial consciousness and pride" most praiseworthy in an African writer and comment favourably in this respect on H.I.E. Dhlomo's "Valley of a Thousand Hills". They also discuss the poetry of Peter Abrahams as published in 1940 in A Black Man Speaks of Freedom. They find his poetry "rather crude, if vigorous and sensitive".

When we come to African Literature, currently understood to comprise countries south of the Sahara, we find that about seven or eight works appeared before the two studies which Nkosi considers redundant. Three of these are works by Janheinz Jahn, who also compiled the bibliography mentioned earlier: Muntu - An Outline of Neo-African Culture, Approaches to African Literature (with John Ramsaran) and A History of Neo-African Literature.

Muntu is not a study of literature but a statement of Jahn's conception of the so-called African mind as demonstrated in African culture and its effect on the works of Black writers and artists on both sides of the Atlantic. He follows and elucidates a theory which became popular after World War II. He held, to put it simply, that Black civilisation is not inferior to but different from Western civilisation, that is that African civilisation developed in a different direction from that of the West. Jahn calls the upsurge of African nationalism which revived African cultural tradition the "African Renaissance". It is, of course, more commonly known as Negritude.

We shall hear more of Negritude later, when

comparing South African Black thinking with the philosophy of Africans to the north.

Jahn does not advocate the revival of the past as it was. "On the contrary," he says in Muntu, "African intelligence wants to integrate into modern life only what seems valuable from the past. The goal is neither the traditional African nor the black European but the modern African... Thus something new is already at hand; we call it neo-African culture".

The avowed purpose of Muntu is to "sketch neo-African culture as an independent culture of equal value with other cultures". He goes into detail about the characteristics of African philosophy. The African, he says, when writing poetry for instance, must always express "something" (italics his) - it is never a question of expressing "someone". He does not consider "the agitation style", that is the literature of protest, as truly African. Logically, therefore, Jahn should consider as un-African the greater part of English Black literature in South Africa. But, as an admirer of Mphahlele's, he stretches a point. He claims that the author of Down Second Avenue treated his own life "as a symbol of the situation in South Africa" where "every experience becomes a paradigm, every personal oppression a general experience".

Jahn includes a short survey of modern Black South African literature in Muntu in which he names Thomas Mofolo as the first great African author. He discusses other early African writers, mainly those writing in the vernacular but also a few who wrote in English such as Plaetje and the two Dhlomos. He calls theirs a "literature of tutelage", where the author,

practising a foreign language, follows foreign models and expresses his thanks to his teachers.

The next stage, Jahn says, is a literature of emancipation and in this light he considers the writing of Peter Abrahams, Mopeli Paulus and Ezekiel Mphahlele.

In Approaches to African Literature written before Muntu but published later in English, we find that Jahn views literary works in the light of his cultural theory. To what extent an author can be considered "neo-African" seems to be his chief concern. Plaatje, for example, according to Jahn, writes well when reporting to London on the treatment of Africans in South Africa. In his novel Mhudi, however, Jahn feels that the author fails in his aim because he tries to make his characters "individualise" in a European way.

Jahn's Outline of Neo-African Literature appeared in 1968 in English. It is valuable mainly for its historical research into early African writing, including a clear picture of the early mission days in South Africa. Yet in this work once again Jahn tries to classify and measure writers against his own yardstick of what he considers to be African literature. His many critics are justified in accusing him of making a self-chosen mystique his sole criterion, a method which makes critical discrimination impossible.

In 1962 there appeared The African Image by Ezekiel Mphahlele, a writer who to-day ranks as a leading authority on Black African Writing in English in South Africa. I shall consider his critical writing in essays and reviews in more detail later, when discussing critical writing by South African Black writers.

The African Image does not set out to be a

work of literary criticism but an answer to the constant demands to which Mphahlele was subjected outside Africa "to put myself across". He examines that controversial concept, "The African Personality; something that could express the longings and ambitions, aches and torments, the anger and hunger of our people and shout them out to the outside world". Right from the start, however, he states that the idea of the African personality "must needs remain a myth". At best, he says, it can be "but a focus, a coming into consciousness". Such "coming into consciousness" can, of course, only be expressed through the medium of writing and thus the book eventually becomes a work of literary discussion. This is hardly surprising, since Mphahlele, under the most difficult conditions, continued his post-graduate studies by correspondence "for the sheer love of studying English".⁽¹¹⁾ The book was possibly written around his Master of Arts thesis, "The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction"⁽¹²⁾ which, in altered form, appears as one of the chapters "White Man's Image of the Non-White".

In the chapter "Black Man's Literary Image of Himself" Mphahlele deals with South African Black writers, in English as well as in the vernacular, to a much larger extent than with writers in other parts of Africa. His study of the Black man's image is largely a history of Black South African writing

(11) Down Second Avenue,

(12) Submitted to satisfy requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English, University of South Africa, December 1956.

beginning with the writers who were products of missionary teaching and going on to the beginning of political awareness, a time when "the creative writer swayed between romantic-escapist at the one end and protest literature at the other" (Mqhayi, Vilakazi and later H.I.E. Dhlomo and Moses Mphahlele). Next he deals with the writers of historical novels under the heading "The Romantic Hero". He goes into great detail about Mofolo's Shaka and also discusses Plaatje's Mhudi and Peter Abraham's Wild Conquest. Finally he deals with the protest writers, the other works of Peter Abraham, H.I.E. Dhlomo's poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills" and the short fiction of the writers who contributed to the magazine Drum: Can Themba, Bloke Modisane, Arthur Maimane, Dyke Sentso, Alfred Hutchinson, Casey Motsisi, Todd Matshikiza, and their Cape Town counter-parts, Richard Rive and Alex La Guma.

"These South African writers," says Mphahlele, "are fashioning an urban literature on terms that are unacceptable to the white ruling class. They are detribalized or Coloured..., not accepted as an integral part of the country's culture....But, like every other non-white, they keep on, digging their feet into an urban culture of their own making. This is a fugitive culture: borrowing here, incorporating there, retaining this, rejecting that. But it is a virile culture. The clamour of it is going to keep beating on the walls, surrounding the already fragmented culture of the whites until they crumble".

He compares the South African Black writer with the West African, a full citizen of a country that is wholly Negro, where the problem is mainly the clash between the old and the new, a problem that does not occur to the South African writer with the exception

of Africans living in a rural setting and writing in one of the three main vernacular languages. Accordingly he discusses a novel written in an African language by a South African, A.C. Jordan, in this section and compares it with Chinua Achebe's stories as "two sides of the same theme". Mphahlele feels, however, that in South Africa the subject of conflict between the two forces, tribal and modern, "is fast becoming irrelevant except as a symbol of the larger irony in black-white relations," because "hereditary chieftaincy is now a thing of the past, and the Government has for the last half-century been appointing chiefs who will obey it, in the place of rebels".

T.R.M. Creighton, reviewing The African Image in Modern African Studies,⁽¹³⁾ finds it a "rather foggy, disproportioned and untidy parcel of interesting reflections". This is true to some extent, yet the thread of search for personal and Black identification through literature runs through the book.

Ezekiel Mphahlele is one of the seven whom Gerald Moore discusses in his critical work Seven African Writers⁽¹⁴⁾ written in 1962 when he was Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Makerere University College, Uganda. The remaining six are French and English-speaking Black Africans from other territories. "To read Ezekiel Mphahlele," says Moore, "after a diet of West and Central African writers, is like twiddling

(13) March, 1963.

(14) First printed in 1962, then reprinted with corrections in 1966.

the fogging knob on a pair of glasses". He discusses Mphahlele's stories, such as "We'll have Dinner at Eight" and "The Suitcase" and finds that they have "neatly implausible plots", ...making for thinness of texture". "The Living and Dead" and "He and the Cat", however, he finds "offer something more than ironic fatalism and move on to an altogether richer level of awareness". He discusses the question of why South African Black writers in English rarely write novels.

The aim of this book is to introduce these seven writers to the European reader - "a bit of missionary salesmanship", as one reviewer calls it. (15)

This, too, is the aim of Anne Tibble, who combines a critical survey and an anthology in her work published in 1965, African/English Literature. She expresses the hope that she will persuade scholars and students as well as general readers to seek the whole books mentioned in the bibliography and anthology. As an additional aim she hopes to develop "tentative insights" into the interpretation of another race and culture "by which alone....human understanding can grow".

Like many critics and bibliographers, Miss Tibble mentions the difficulty of tracing certain works. She complains, for instance, that she could not find A.C. Jordan's novel The Wrath of the Ancestors in the British Museum's catalogue of printed books. The reason for this is simple: the novel had never been published in English. The difficulty in finding a copy of H.I.E. Dhlomo's Valley of a Thousand Hills is less

(15) David Rubandiri in Modern African Studies
Vol. 7. No. 3.

excusable. Even in South Africa very few full copies of this interesting poem are available.

The Pall Mall Library of African Affairs, edited by a former South African, Colin Legum, is "intended to provide clear, authoritative and objective information about the historical, political, cultural and economic background of modern Africa". In this series appeared Claude Wauthier's The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa - A Survey. Wauthier was in charge of the South African bureau of the French press agency, Agence France Presse, for several years. The book was published in 1966 but the "closing point for this study of African thought and literature is May 1963", the date of a conference at Addis Ababa of thirty-two independent African countries which founded the Organisation of African Unity. Wauthier's primary interest, he says, is the "modern trend of nationalist thought as expressed in the language of the colonial powers", and he proceeds to study literature "in the more general context of the whole African cultural revival". He continues: "Side by side with a politically committed literature, there is in present-day Africa a committed history, a committed ethnology and a committed theology". The books by Black South African writers he discusses, therefore, are works such as H.I.E. Dhlomo's historical plays, S.M. Molema's historical books, Chief Albert Luthuli's autobiography Let My People Go and Peter Abrahams' political novel A Wreath for Udomo. He also gives a history of South African "committed" literary journals, such as Contact and Africa South.

Martin Tucker, Associate Professor of English

at Long Island University, in his Africa in Modern Literature (1967), makes "an attempt", as he puts it, "to survey literature about Africa written in English in the twentieth century", and thus treats American and English writers, as well as African, as an integral part of African literature as a whole. When dealing with South Africa he speaks of writing in the vernacular as well as in English, and of Black as well as White writers. He feels that the question of dividing writers into categories according to colour will become irrelevant eventually when the "color question is resolved". In the meanwhile, however, he does insist in putting the writers into categories and becomes somewhat confused in doing so. He refers to Peter Abrahams, for example, as a Cape Coloured writer, a category which elsewhere he defines as being descended from the marriage of Hottentot and European/Asian parents, later correcting this to Asian and/or African. Again, in his "Selected Reading List" he places Gerald Gordon under "non-African" writers, when he has previously defined African as being resident in Africa and as such quite correctly includes Roy Campbell, Stuart Cloete, Jack Cope and other White South African writers under "African". This ethnic hair-splitting is quite irrelevant to his study and it would have been better if he had omitted it.

Tucker deals with a wide range of South African writers, but explains that some of the works are pure "pot-boilers" or written for a temporary market. He includes some who are not generally mentioned in literary studies, yet barely mentions writers such as Rive, Nkosi, Mphahlele, Dennis Brutus and Alex La Guma.

By 1969 Lewis Nkosi was complaining that the only justification for yet another study of African writing would be a new insight of the subject or a background study of one particular region. (16)

Margaret Laurence, he says, does study a particular region, Nigeria, in Long Drums and Cannons but has nothing new to say about it. Wilfred Cartey on the other hand, according to Nkosi, might "fill a need in American black studies" but "will not necessarily add anything fresh to the field of African literary criticism". Cartey, an Associate Professor in African literature at Columbia University, includes a detailed and unbiased account of South African Black literature. He analyses, rather than criticises, and leaves the reader to form his own judgements. One hopes that his readers - presumably mainly university students - will go to the books themselves and not rely on Cartey's detailed descriptions of plot and contents. Works such as Bloke Modisane's Blame Me on History, Mphahlele's short stories and Hutchinson's Road to Ghana are treated in a chapter headed "Alienation and Flight...Apartheid", as "a contemporary representation of immediate social situations wherein the writer is actor". What we miss is Cartey's evaluation of the success of such representation.

(16) "A Question of Literary Stewardship"

Africa Report, May/June, 1969.

HISTORY OF AFRICAN WRITING IN ENGLISH IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA

When studying the history of African writing in English in Southern Africa it becomes necessary to investigate the reasons why some Africans began to write in English rather than in the vernacular, why some continued to do so and why others continued to write in the vernacular.

Writing in Southern Africa began in the middle of the nineteenth century with the missionaries whose primary purpose was to publish reading matter for, rather than by, the African. It did not matter whether the translations of the Bible and religious works were written by Whites or Blacks provided that the writers were sufficiently proficient in the language likely to reach the largest number of potential converts. When Africans did begin to write they were certainly encouraged to do so and many works were, and still are, published by the mission presses. In Southern Africa the Paris Evangelical Mission press at Morija and the Church of Scotland mission station press of Lovedale became the centres of early African literature in the African languages.

The Reverend R.H.W. Shepherd at Lovedale was one of the first to see the importance of expanding African literature by the Africans themselves, and he eventually envisaged an "all-African publishing house", "asking no favours, seeking no patronage or props from others...." He felt that "there is that in Bantu culture and language which is well worthy of preservation,

something unique, the loss of which would be a loss to the world at large".⁽¹⁾ By publishing books he also wanted to counter the frequent complaint made against missionaries that they had taken away the games, dances and other recreations of the people without providing substitutes.

The missions began to encourage the preservation of folklore and also the writing of novels, naturally with a religious or Christian moral background. One of the earliest works by an African writer was Thomas Mofolo's Traveller to the East from the Morija Press.

The earliest work to be published in English was by John Knox Bokwe, Ntsikana, The Story of an African Convert (Lovedale 1914). This story of one of the first Christian converts is dramatically told and reads like a novel.

Bokwe at this time had had considerable experience in journalism, after editing The Kaffir Express from the age of fifteen in 1870. Later, as the Christian Express and subsequently as the South African Outlook this journal used both Xhosa and English as a medium. Other publications were also being published partially in English, and Africans took an active part in their editorial production. The Bechuana Gazette (Koranta ea Bechoana), established in 1901 by Silas Molema was one of these. Sol Plaatje and others also launched bi- or multi-lingual journals. Towards the end of the century C. John Tengo Jabavu was contributing to the Cape Argus under a pen-name. His life-work became the journal African Opinion (Imvo Zabantsundu); and in Natal John L. Dube pioneered Ilanga Lase Natal which still to-day publishes large portions in English.

(1) Bantu Literature and Life, 1955.

Many of the leading African creative writers such as H.I.E. Dhlomo and Jordan Ngubane have been among its contributors in English.

The first novel in English by an African writer was An African Tragedy by R.R.R. Dhlomo. (2) As a teacher and a journalist of wide experience - he was at one time even on the editorial staff of a White publication, Stephen Black's The Sjobok - R.R.R. Dhlomo was used to writing in English and doubtlessly wanted to reach the same readership to whom he addressed himself through the press. The mission press was publishing only books suitable for schools and, according to his brother H.I.E. Dhlomo, R.R.R. Dhlomo did not want to "water them down to the tone and requirements dictated by the selection committee" (3). Thus three historical plays which he wrote in Zulu were never published and he wrote no further books in English.

Sol Plaatje's novel Mhudi was written in 1922 but was published only in 1930. Plaatje wrote in English because he aimed deliberately at an English-speaking, mainly White, readership and not because he scorned the vernacular. On the contrary, he hoped to cultivate "a love for art and literature in the vernacular" by collecting and printing Sechuana folk-tales "which, with the spread of European ideas, are fast being forgotten". One of the aims of the publication of Mhudi, as expressed in the introduction, was to

(2) Lovedale, 1928.

(3) "Three Famous African Authors I Knew"
(Inkundla ya Banto) August, 1946.

collect money for this purpose. Earlier, he had compiled a collection of Sechuana Proverbs ("with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents") which was published in London in 1916.

The name Plaatje is a Korana word meaning short and stout, and was the nickname given to Sol Plaatje's father, a Rolong of the Noto tribe who lived among the Korana. Solomon Tshkiso was born in 1876 in the Boskop district while his family was on the way to moving to Priel on the banks of the Vaal river. He went to school there and reached the fourth standard, which enabled him to teach. In 1894 he became a post-man in Kimberley and at the same time studied for a civil service certificate. He moved to Mafeking where he became an interpreter and magistrate's clerk to the Court of Summary Jurisdiction under Lord Edward Cecil. During the siege of Mafeking, and later during the war years, he interpreted for the British officers. He continued to study and became proficient in eight languages: English, German, Afrikaans, High Dutch, Tswana, Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa. In 1904 he persuaded Chief Silas Molema of Mafeking to finance the first Tswana-English weekly, Koranta ea Becoana mentioned above, which he edited; and in Kimberley he established another newspaper, Tsala ea Batho (Friend of the People). In 1912 he became first Secretary-General of the African National Congress under John L. Dube.

He was a member of a deputation which went to London in 1914 to protest against the Native Land Act of 1913. War broke out and the deputation was recalled. His first published work, Native Life in South Africa before and since the European War and the Boer Rebellion,

appeared in London in 1916. It gave the reasons for the deputation and appealed to the British public for help. In 1918 he led another deputation, this time to the Peace Conference at Versailles. He remained in Europe, then travelled to the United States and Canada, lecturing about conditions of the African in South Africa and explaining his political status.

In 1921 Plaatje founded the Brotherhood Society which strove to bring about racial harmony. He represented the African National Congress at a conference in Pretoria in 1927. His work led to more avenues of employment for the African on the railways. In 1921 there appeared in New York a now unfortunately quite unobtainable work entitled The Mote and the Beam, "an epic on sex-relationship 'twixt white and black in British South Africa". Further, this almost completely self-taught man translated several Shakespeare plays into Tswana: Julius Caesar, The Comedy of Errors, The Merchant of Venice, Othello and Much Ado about Nothing. The esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries was shown by the fact that they subscribed and bought him a freehold site at Kimberley in 1928. He died in 1932.

Mhudi will be evaluated later as a novel, but I have gone into detail about Sol Plaatje's life at this stage in order to show that not all the early writers were mouthpieces of the missionaries or the European as has often been stated. Plaatje, known to his contemporaries for his humour, kindness and humanity, was a member of early protest organisations and wrote of the conditions of his people with bitterness.

The London Times Literary Supplement,

reviewing Mhudi, (4) wrote: "Plaatje's whole endeavour and mental direction were towards Europeanism and away from Africanism. It continues:

"What secret fountain of African art might not have been unsealed, if, in interpreting his people a writer of Plaatje's insight had thought and written 'like a Native'. That might well have been the first authentic utterance out of aeons of African silence".

Europe was not yet ready for a Plaatje and the new African. They misunderstood him. He did not turn away from Africanism, but sought the aid and assistance of a European readership in helping Africa emerge. He was the forerunner, not of those intellectuals who followed him and wrote in English because they needed a European language as a basis for Western learning, but of the protest writers of the sixties, the spokesmen of the new mentally emancipated African in South Africa.

The Lovedale Press published several other early works in English and by 1945, in his "Supplementary to the Main Thesis" for the degree of Doctor of Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, Shepherd was predicting that African writers would be writing more and more in English. Among works in the nineteen-twenties and thirties were D.D.T. Jabavu's Native Disabilities in South Africa (1932), his The Black Problem, H.I.E. Dhlomo's play, The Girl Who Killed To Save (1936) and a volume of poems by J.J.R. Jolobe.

Like his brother R.R.R. Dhlomo who was once its assistant editor, Herbert Dhlomo was on the staff of

(4) 31st August, 1933.

the Bantu World in Johannesburg. Although he has given us much information about the lives and activities of other writers - his brother, Vilakazi, Plaatje - biographical information about him is sparse, and we have only his published plays, a large collection of unpublished plays, carefully preserved in the Library of the University of Natal, his long published poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills" and numerous so far unclassified articles and poems in various journals. An abortive attempt was made to preserve some of the latter in the Killie Campbell Museum in Durban, in an anonymous collection of clippings and typescripts probably by Mrs. Campbell herself. Herbert Dhlomo was born in 1904 and educated at Adams College, a Church school which also produced writers like Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele. He became a teacher and journalist. He also pioneered a non-European library service in the Transvaal, with headquarters in Germiston. At the time of his death in 1956 he was assistant editor of Ilanga Lase Natal.

According to Shepherd, Dhlomo saw no future for Africans writing in the vernacular and asked Africans to abandon "tribal literature".⁽⁵⁾ Yet, like Plaatje, it was never Dhlomo's aim to Westernise African literature or to discard African heritage. "Art is understanding and expressing the feelings and experiences around you", he wrote. "An artist must come out of himself and enter into the general emotion, thought and opinion of the people. He must express not only himself, but the

(5) Lovedale and Literature, 1945.

thought and feeling of the people".⁽⁶⁾ Art, for Dhlomo, was universal, and perhaps in that spirit he wanted to reach as wide an audience as possible, whether Black or White: "Great art or thought (art is thought-feeling) is more than national; it is universal, reflecting the image - the spirit of the All-Creative Being who knows neither East nor West, Black nor White, Jew nor Gentile, time nor space. The tragedy of a Job, a Hamlet, a Joan, a Nongqause, is the tragedy of all countries, all times, all races".⁽⁷⁾ ?x

A reader of the publication South African Outlook, T. Makiwane, writing to the editor in 1935, tells the story of how he met two Basuto graduates of Fort Hare. "We could only discuss in English, and if they should ever venture to write, I should be glad if they did so in English, so that I also, a Xhosa-speaking man, might enjoy their thoughts and ideas". The idea of English as a lingua franca in literature for Africans in Southern Africa or even in the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, like Latin for Europe of the Middle Ages, had been born and subsequently found its exponents everywhere.

An interesting publication appeared in 1944. Entitled Bantu Babel and subtitled "Will the Bantu Languages Live²", it appeared in the Sixpenny Library edited by Edward Roux and was published by "The African Bookman." The author, Jacob Nhlapo, was principal of the

(6) "Drama and the African" (South African Outlook, 1st October, 1936.)

(7) Ibid.

Wilferforce Institute. "We ought not to let our feelings blind us to the truth. The truth is that language is just a tool for letting other people know what we think", wrote Nhlapo. "If a language is a bad tool, there is no reason why we ought not to make it better by putting words from other languages into it, or if need be, by throwing it away altogether." Calling English "the educated Africans' 'Esperanto'," he looks upon it as a second language, useful for communicating with the rest of Africa. For a first language he suggests joining the Bantu languages in South Africa into two languages only: Zulu and Xhosa into one Nguni language and Southern Sotho, Tswana and Pedi into one Sotho language.

By this time Africans at the Universities were beginning to appreciate the importance of a Western language as a basis for learning. It would be impossible, they felt, to "understand and appreciate the machinery of modern civilisation" through the medium of languages "which are relatively speaking still in their infancy in literary development", as Z.K. Matthews later put it when discussing the ethnic Universities. (8)

Opposed to these ideas were the active exponents of African literature in the vernacular. The most explicit of these in this respect was the Zulu poet Benedict Wallet Vilakazi who engaged in literary arguments with H.I.E. Dhlomo in the columns of Outlook. "I do not class English or Afrikaans dramas on Bantu themes, whether these are written by Black people, I

(8) Africa South, July-September, 1957.

do not call them contributions to Bantu Literature (sic)," he wrote to the editor on 1st July, 1939 in reply to Dhlomo's essay "African Drama and Poetry". (9) "I have an unshaken belief in the possibilities of Bantu languages and their literature, provided the Bantu writers themselves can learn to love their language and use them as vehicles for thought, feeling and will. After all, the belief, resulting in literature, is a demonstration of people's 'self' where they cry: "Ego sum quod sum". That is our pride in being black and we cannot change creation".

The missions, too, were still encouraging vernacular writing. A conference of African authors was convened by Shepherd on behalf of the Committee on Christian Literature at Florida, Transvaal in October 1936, in order to encourage African writers in the Bantu languages. Yet the authors, who included Vilakazi, H.I.E. Dhlomo, D.D.T. Jabavu, R.V. Selope Thema and the two Bantu graduates mentioned by Makiwane above, now identified as D.M. Romochoana and S.S. Mafoyana, were already beginning to question the motives of the Whites in encouraging the vernacular. They stressed that they desired complete freedom to use whichever language they desired. The conference adopted the following resolution: "While this Conference is particularly concerned to encourage and assist the production of literature in the Bantu languages, the Conference expresses its conviction that African authors should be entirely free to use any language medium they desire and that those who use English or Afrikaans are fully entitled to help and encouragement in their efforts to produce works of merit".

The argument continues to the present day. At the Conference of the English Academy of Southern

(9) "African Drama and Poetry" (1st April, 1939)

Africa held at Rhodes University, Grahamstown in 1969, Guy Bytler, in his opening address as president, called English "the heritage of all South Africans". "English", he said, "is an African language, not merely the language of culture and commerce, but a language which has been used by several rooted and restless generations to articulate their feelings and thoughts about their lives in this particular portion of earth". (10)

English as a medium for African writing in South Africa suffered an almost killing blow when the Bantu Education Act of 1955 became law. It put into practice the government policy of separate development as applied to education, by transferring the control of African education from the provincial education departments to the central government and within the government from the Department of Education to the Department of Native Affairs. In higher education training schools and institutions were now required to take pupils only from their own ethnic groups. Colleges, under the University of South Africa, were set up in half a dozen main regions and were soon referred to disparagingly as the "tribal colleges". The medium of instruction was the vernacular of the particular area. There was an immediate outcry from all sections of the population, and African writers voiced their opposition. Matthews, in the article referred to above, as acting principal of Fort Hare University College, calls the imposition of the medium of a language which is confined to a small

(10) English Studies in Africa - Report of Procedure, (March, 1970)

area or is spoken by too small a number of people "a cruel imposition which can only be perpetrated upon a voiceless and defenceless people". "....the Government is trying so hard to legislate the African back to the past", says Lewis Nkosi (letter to me). Writing in The New Statesman in 1960, ⁽¹¹⁾ Ezekiel Mphahlele says that Black writers in South Africa are on the "threshold of a dark age" because Bantu Education hindered their writing creatively in English.

Yet it would appear that the legislation had the very opposite effect; it became an impetus rather than a hindrance. Whereas in other African countries south of the Sahara thinking men were beginning to stress a pride in Blackness and tradition, Black writers in South Africa, in opposition to Government policy, used the medium in which they could stress the universality of literature.

A new generation was now living in the towns, side by side with members of different tribes and language groups. The African in the towns heard all these languages as well as English and Afrikaans and had a smattering of many of them. C.L.S. Nyembezi, then Professor of Bantu languages at the University College of Fort Hare, told a conference of African writers held at Atteridgeville, Pretoria (7th - 9th July, 1959) that as examiner in Zulu for the Orange Free State Bantu Teachers' Examination he often found papers with Zulu,

(11) "Black and White" (10th September)

Xhosa and Swazi words in the same sentence, "with a Sotho construction thrown in". "Imagine someone in that position trying to write a Zulu book".

The books - or rather the stories, poems and essays coming from the townships were being written in English, not as a vehicular language but as a symbol of equality. "In their joint use of English, Africans reach with greater ease the various levels of common ground which are of importance in the process of eliminating tribal division with all its unwelcome consequences. To the African, English has become a symbol of success, the vehicle of his painful protest against social injustice and spiritual domination by those who rule him". (Nathaniel Nakasa: "Writing in South Africa"). (12)

Books in the vernacular continue to be written and are encouraged by publishing houses often run by a semi-official government group, such as Afrikaner Pers. The readership is mainly in the schools, however, and writers have to fulfil certain requirements of conforming to a specific moral standard to pass the board responsible for literature.

For the English writers Sophiatown in Johannesburg became the centre of literary activities until this area ceased to exist in 1953. Writers like Todd Matshikiza, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane formed a coterie which met to discuss literature. They met at each other's houses or, more

(12) "Writing in South Africa" (Classic, Vol.1, No.1, 1963)

often, at a shebeen. When Lewis Nkosi in his collection of essays Home and Exile compares the shebeen with an English club he is not being facetious. The shebeen was the centre of African life in the townships.

Nkosi, in Home and Exile calls this period "The Fabulous Decade". Everything that went before in African literature was discarded as being "purposefully Christian and aggressively crusading; the rest was simply eccentric or unacceptably romantic". They revolted against what they conceived as the naive and simple-minded generation personified, according to Nkosi, by Alan Paton's character in Cry, the Beloved Country, Stephen Kumalo, just as the Afro-American had revolted against the concept of Uncle Tom many years earlier.

The idea of a journal for Africans in English, was conceived by Bob Crisp, a well-known White journalist and broadcaster at the time. He envisaged a vehicle for all African art forms with separate editions not only for South, East and West Africa but also for the Western Hemisphere and Europe, including the West Indies - and its many African students and emigrants. Since he lacked the necessary funds, he asked Jim Bailey to finance him. This was in 1951 and Bailey, a younger son of Sir Abe Bailey, the Rand gold millionaire and race-horse owner, is still chairman of the proprietary limited company which owns Drum and its sister publication Post. Bailey's aim as he once wrote to one of his editors, Tom Hopkinson, was to "do a great deal by the inhabitants of this continent", (13) and although his methods of achieving this

(13)

Tom Hopkinson: In the Fiery Continent

were often the subject of controversy and led to the resignation of his editors from time to time, he has adhered to this purpose for the past twenty years.

Bob Crisp left the magazine because, as he put it, Bailey had "johannesburged" it. African Drum was in fact moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg where its name was changed to Drum. Crisp's place was taken by Anthony Sampson, who had been at Oxford with Bailey. Sampson had already been working under Crisp in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Sampson had little journalistic experience but he was full of enthusiasm. Four numbers had appeared when Sampson first arrived, and he gives the following account of their contents in his book of reminiscences: (14)

"It was a sixpenny monthly magazine, written in English, printed on cheap yellow newsprint; the bright cover showed two Africans facing each other, symbolically, across the continent; one in a Western hat and suit, the other with African skins and assegai.

"African poems and stories, articles on 'Magic of the Tribes' and 'Know Yourself' recounting the history of the Bantu tribes, instalments of Cry, The Beloved Country; features about religion, farming, sport and famous men; and strip cartoons about Gulliver and St. Paul".

He quotes a poem by Countee Cullen from one of these issues in which Cullen describes his Africa as one of "Jungle Star" and "Jungle Track".

"This," continues Sampson, "was Drum's Africa; it was as exotic and exciting as I had hoped Africa to be, unspoilt by the drabness of the West".

There were some African contributors and they supplied legends such as the story of a young man so ugly

that he cannot find a wife, so he chisels a tree into a beautiful woman and marries her. When she becomes unfaithful to him he sends the birds to take away first her kaross, then her mantle and finally the magic pin on her head, upon which she collapses and turns into dead wood. Other stories were variations on the hackneyed theme of the dangers of the town as opposed to the simple life of the country. A story entitled "Nomoya of the Winds" by Randolph Ben Pitso⁽¹⁵⁾ is told in the Biblical style used by Paton in Cry, the Beloved Country. Nomoya is murdered in Johannesburg while "Far away in Swaziland, the segenade of the wind was low and wild the sway of the bush; for no more, no more, would the jingle of anklebands sound to the mellow tread of lovely Nomoya".

It did not take Sampson long to find out that while a story with a subheading "True Story of How a Brave Man Loved an African Chief's Favourite daughter", with its explanation of Native custom, might appeal to European readers, it held no interest whatsoever for the Black people of Johannesburg whom he was learning to know. Drum was making the mistake of stressing the exotic which meant little to the African in the towns.

Bailey and Sampson thereupon proceeded to give their readers what they now believed that they wanted, and it was at this point that Crisp left. Gulliver's Travels and the Bible were replaced by American comic strips featuring Negro heroes and all tribal references were eliminated. More African journalists were taken on the staff. One of these was Todd Matchikiza, who was

(15) Drum, April 1951.

later to gain fame as the composer of the African musical King Kong. According to Sampson, it was mainly Matshikiza who transformed Drum. "He wrote as he spoke, in a brisk tempo with rhythm in every sentence. He attacked the typewriter like a piano". They called his style "Matshikese" and this became the style of Drum, often degenerating into American-style "tough" prose.

When Tom Hopkinson took over as editor he found reading Drum "like watching clippings from unnumbered murder and gangster films strung together and run through at four times the normal pace...It is not like the violence of Horror Comics or of the No Orchids School - something mentally stewed up to horrify and outrage. It is the violence of the urban African's daily life, transposed and heightened".⁽¹⁶⁾ He, like others, was reminded of seventeenth century England - John Webster's plays in particular - not in the literary form or value of the stories but in the subject matter.

Drum became, as Lewis Nkosi put it in Home and Exile not so much a magazine as a symbol of urbanised Africa. It represented African literature in English in South Africa for almost a decade. While attempting to compete for African readership with the Daily Mirror in providing "cheese-cake" pictures, crime and sentiment, it also gave a voice to writers who had no other outlet whatever at the time: Todd Matshikiza, Arthur Maimane, Can Themba and others most of whom were also on its staff at one time or another. Many Africans who were school-teachers when the Bantu Education Act was passed refused

(16) Tom Hopkinson: In the Fiery Continent.

to accept its provisions. Thus Ezekiel Mphahlele resigned from his school and joined Drum where he became fiction editor. Nkosi worked as a reporter for Drum and Post until he left South Africa in 1961 to study journalism at Harvard University on a Nieman fellowship. Can Themba joined Drum after he won a prize in its first short story contest in 1953 and eventually became assistant editor. The crusading spirit of the journal appealed to these writers.

In Home and Exile Nkosi explains what was expected of a Drum man, apart from his responsibilities as a writer. He took "sex and alcohol in his stride... and stayed in the front line of danger so long as there was danger to be endured".

There was certainly no lack of danger when Drum took up the cudgel on behalf of its readers. Drum became well known and widely quoted abroad for its crusading articles and exposés. The best known of these were an article entitled "Bethal Today" which exposed the contract system and recorded cases of flogging and torture, and one showing photographs of naked prisoners taken secretly with a telescopic camera.

In Drum the African could give expression to what one of its contributors, Peter Clarke, called "a very virile, passionate, conscious entanglement with living our lives". Can Themba's reply to people who queried "the cheeky abuse of English in Drum" was: "Confound the cultural ideas of those men! All we seek is the fullest expression of the bubbling life around us and the restless spirit within us".

Today the crusading days of Drum on behalf of the oppressed and on behalf of literature are largely a

thing of the past. In 1957 the editorship fell to Tom Hopkinson, who was essentially a professional journalist of vast experience. He worked hard to "make a magazine which the African reader would take to with enthusiasm, and then, having captured his interest, to use it to give him a much fuller picture of the outside world, to break down his isolation, to widen his tiny location-bound horizon". He felt that he had failed, and when Bailey proposed to lower the price and the standard - "the magazine needs a youthfulness, hard stories and a rapport with its public...So for the next 6 - 12 months can we avoid being highbrow and work out the strong, sensational stories which our public goes for?" - Hopkinson resigned. He was followed by a succession of editors. In 1969 Drum had its first non-White editor, an Indian. Although short story contests were still occasionally held in the nineteensixties, very few stories were published after 1963. Sensational articles on sex and crime, pin-up pictures and photo-picture novellas made up - and still make up - the contents of the magazine.

As far as African short story writers were concerned, Drum had served its purpose of introducing them and was now dead.

African short story writers now needed a more serious platform and South Africa of the nineteensixties was ready to give it. A spate of literary and other journals appeared almost all of which were anxious to include African writing: Africa South, Contact, Contrast, Classic, Ophir, New Coin, The Purple Renoster.

The aim of The Classic was to seek African writing of merit according to the first editor,

Nathaniel Nakasa, when introducing the new publication. At the beginning the contributors to The Classic, like its editor, were Black. Later, however, stories, poems and articles by White writers were also accepted, because, according to Philip Segal, "You can't carve up the country of the imagination into group areas".

Anthologies with reprints from these publications were beginning to appear in Britain, the United States, and other English-speaking African countries as well as in translation in Germany and Sweden. British publishers vied with each other to publish full-length books by Africans. The prospects looked good. But the appeal of their writing lay mainly in its expression of protest against the position of the African in South African society, and it therefore clashed with Government policy.

Within a few years almost all the writers mentioned above, who still constituted the leading exponents of African writing in English in South Africa, could no longer be read in that country. This was the result of the Amendment of 1966 to the Suppression of Communism Act (Section 11(g) bis of Act. No. 44 of 1950), which put a blanket ban on all the work of many of these authors. Among them were Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane who left the country, Todd Matshikiza and Can Themba who died abroad and Nathaniel Nakasa who committed suicide in New York. The Act prohibits the recording, reproduction, printing, publication or dissemination of any speech, utterance, writing or statement (or any extract therefrom) made or produced by such writers. It does not prohibit the possession or perusal of the material. This is controlled by the Publication and Entertainments Act, known as the Censor-

ship Act, which extended the Customs Act of 1955. Under this act a Censorship Board responsible to the Minister of the Interior decides which foreign works may be imported. It may also ban publications produced within the country.

Those writers who had left the country were turning to periodicals published abroad. There were not many openings, since the readers of literary journals were demanding more sophisticated reading matter. Occasionally a story would appear in Encounter or Twentieth Century. As interest in Africa increased, publications were established in other parts of Africa and in America, some of which included creative writing. Most important of these was Black Orpheus, which was founded in 1957 as "a platform for creative writing". Its contributors were the leading writers in Africa and its editors some of the best known literary figures in African literature. Contributions by Mphahlele were appearing as early as 1958 ("The Suitcase", October, 1958). Occasionally there were special publications and one of these was Mphahlele's collection of short stories The Living and Dead and Other Stories. Similarly Transition, published from Kampala in Uganda with East and West African editors, encouraged young writers. A few stories by South Africans have appeared in its pages, such as Maimane's "The Day After" and one or two stories by Beccie Head. Interesting literary controversies - should Africans write in English or in the vernacular, for instance - appeared on the readers' letter page in which South Africans participated. The journal ceased publication recently when its editors were arrested and tried for sedition for printing a letter critical of the contention that the courts in Uganda should not be

independent of the views of the ruling party.

There are several American journals published by the African Studies departments of the Universities and by other organisations devoted to the study of African culture. Typical is African Arts - Arts D'Afrique a magnificently produced publication of the African Studies Center, University of California. It "aims to record Africa's traditional art and stimulate its contemporary art" which sometimes leads to incongruous juxtapositions comparable to a European cultural magazine devoting its pages alternately to pictures of Giotto and the poems of Boris Pasternak and calling itself "Art of Europe". The traditional and contemporary converge, however, in a tribute to the late A.C. Jordan whose translation of a folktale "Nomabhadhi and the Mbulu" is introduced by Hilda Kuper, following an obituary by Daniel P. Kunene.

A few contributions by African writers are still being published in the literary journals mentioned above and when they do appear in publications like The Classic and Contrast, they are usually indistinguishable from contributions by White South Africans. Writers are no longer addressing Black readers as in Drum, but all South African readers with a literary palate. To these readers the city African no longer has to prove that he exists and that he can write as well as read. Contrast, edited by Jack Cope, rarely brings contributions by Africans. In Number 3 the editor states that the "race theme" in writing will not last, which perhaps explains its absence. The rare appearance of African writing in other literary journals, though mainly due to the banning of the writers, can also be attributed to the fact that these writers are still concentrating on socio-realistic

themes and are thus out of touch with contemporary trends. It is interesting to note that the only African short story considered by Don MacLennan when addressing the Conference of the English Academy in Grahamstown in 1969 on the South African short story was "Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost", which first appeared as a short story in The Classic. As we shall see, the author Dugmore Boetie, is almost the only one of the writers attuned to the late nineteen-sixties. We shall also see later that English poetry by Africans in South Africa, far more than fiction, has kept pace with the times. Poems by Africans, notably Oswald Mtshali, appear regularly in various mediums, and several collections of poems by Africans have appeared abroad. Novels, autobiographies and anthologies are also being published in England and the United States and some plays have been broadcast in England.

This is the present position of African writing in English in the Republic of South Africa. Its future will be discussed later.

In Rhodesia and the former Protectorate, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland writing by Africans in English is still in its infancy.

In Rhodesia, as in South Africa, Governmental emphasis is on writing in the vernacular, and even in the local languages nothing was published until 1957. The Rhodesia Literary Bureau was established in 1954 to

encourage local authorship in Shona, Ndebele and English, to conduct research into readership requirements, to give advice and criticism to authors, to edit and prepare manuscripts for publication and introduce authors to the public. So far, the only English writing has been instructional books and school readers used by the Department of Education. The bureau holds writers' workshops at missions and other institutions and organises competitions and conferences. The appeal here is to a popular rather than a literary readership. At the National Creative Writers' Conference of August 1964, for example, the best-selling White Rhodesian writer Wilbur Smith began his opening speech by saying that "the way (of a new awareness in Southern Africa of starting to develop a culture of our own) has been blazed by people like Francis Brett Young and Stuart Cloete..."

Men who are proficient in English have turned to politics and history rather than pure literature. Ndabaningi Sithole, for instance, author of African Nationalism, once said that he always wanted to write fiction but never had the time except for an occasional short story. Stanlake Samkange, on the other hand, one-time General Secretary of the African National Congress of Rhodesia, and now Professor of History at the University of Indiana from which he holds a Ph.D. degree, did write a novel, On Trial for my Country. He also contributed a story to the school reader series mentioned above, The Chief's Daughter Who Would Not Laugh, in which he transposes an old fairy tale into an African background.

Samkange, Sithole and others contributed political, historical and other articles to the Central African Examiner, which also ran competitions for works in English. When, following Unilateral Declaration

of Independence, censorship was introduced in Rhodesia, the daily press as well as the Examiner appeared with large blank spaces to show what portions had been officially eliminated. The last issue of the Examiner appeared in 1966 with several pages and sections of pages left blank.

There are to-day one or two popular outlets such as the monthly magazine Parade which publishes mostly very unsophisticated short stories and serials in an effort to encourage readers "to spend a little money on reading material". (17) Sitholi contributed a love story entitled "Busi" based on folk-lore which contains the following passage: "It is well father," said Busi politely. She rose to her feet. Any princess would have envied her that pair of perfect legs." In 1966 an anonymous critic in Parade complained that much of what passes for African literature was "narration of tribal or traditional folk-lore disguised in fiction and directed to a foreign audience," the same criticism which readers ten years earlier had directed at Drum in South Africa.

Stories by Africans occasionally appear in general publications. The police-journal Outpost recently published two competent detective stories by Amos M. Munjanja, "The Magic Solution" and "Killers Around".

In 1968 there appeared the first issue of a review of poetry, Chirimo, from Salisbury. "We need a cross-fertilisation of influence between the races", the editorial stated. Poems by Africans were mainly translations from the vernacular. Chirimo appeared three times a year but closed down some months ago. Earlier,

in 1964, another literary quarterly, Two Tone, was initiated by Phillipa Berlyn. Here too African contributions were mainly translations from the vernacular, but in several cases the poets did their own translations. Some of these were reprinted in Rhodesian Poetry.

Several of the younger writers have also been writing drama recently. None of these has as yet been published but one or two have reached stage production by amateur groups.

Unlike Rhodesia, Lesotho has a literary tradition which goes back even further than that of South Africa. More writing in the vernacular has been published in Lesotho than by any other ethnic group south of the Sahara. This was due to the modern ideas on education introduced into Basutoland by the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Society who also opened the Sesotho Book Depot at the Morija Mission Station which became the centre of early African vernacular literature. Although only vernacular works were published, at least one of these, Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, is better known in the Western world in translation than most works written in original English by Africans in southern Africa. Mopeli-Paulus, who wrote in English in conjunction with two White South African writers, was also born in Lesotho, though he spent a large part of his life in South Africa.

French influence in education is still strong in Lesotho today and very little is written in English. Lesotho authors have contributed to South African journals, for example Dyke Sentso who was one of the early Drum writers. He also wrote a book in Southern Sotho published by the Morija Mission Press.

The University College of Roma, which grew out of a Roman Catholic institution - the Pius XII College established in 1945 for the purpose of preparing undergraduates for external degrees of the University of South Africa - became secularised in 1964. A literary journal, Expression, appeared from Roma in 1966 as a medium for English writing. Several African poets have contributed, notably Njabulo Simakahle Ndebele, who has also contributed to South African literary journals.

In Botswana books are published at the Gaborone Book Centre, but only in Setswana. English writing here and in Swaziland appears only in school journals.

THE NOVEL

" 'Say 'mother'! Go on, say 'mother', you son of a bitch!"

"Wham! Wham! went the leather strap.

" 'Say 'mother'! damn you! Louder, you little bastard, louder!" she shrieked.

"The strap went wild all over my face, head and neck. It was as if she was suffering more than me.

"My mouth opened, and instead of the word 'mother' a clot of blood rolled out. It was followed by a distinct 'Futsek!'. She shrieked and swung a frying pan, cracking four of my ribs. I pushed and her skinny body fell to the greedy flames of a healthy fire-galley.

"Maybe I had broken her back, or maybe she was just too exhausted to lift herself. Anyway, my mother just fried and fried and fried..."

It is customary to begin commentaries on the African novel in general and the West African novel in particular, by quoting the opening paragraph of the ingenious novel by Amos Tutuola, The Palm Wine Drinkard, because to the European critic it represents Africa. I have chosen the quotation above, from Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost by Dugmore Boetie (with Barney Simon) which appeared in 1969, because this work represents the new African in the south. It is one of the few novels in English by an African writer in Southern Africa and I have quoted its opening paragraph in order to demonstrate the direction which fiction in South Africa is beginning to take. Boetie's novel brings the futility of individual action within the framework of a sham-ethical society sharply into focus. I shall return to Boetie's novel presently in order to show how contemporary thinking in the West is now beginning to

find its way to South Africa through the writing of Black Africans in English.

The reason why so few novels have appeared in Southern Africa in English in comparison with short fiction and autobiographical writing has been of great concern to those interested in African writing. It is due partly to the lack of encouragement in the form of publication as well as from other sources in South Africa. When mission presses were no longer sufficient, writers of book-length reading matter - Black and White - had to rely on publishers in England and later in America who all wished to present Africa in a particular way. There is no semi-official patronage as in England or University support as in the United States. The Government of South Africa did offer a prize for English writing recently but it has not been awarded because of an argument between the Government and the English Academy, ^{which} ~~who~~ had been asked to judge but refused to do so under the title of the "Hendrik Verwoerd Prize". The Academy itself awards an annual prize, the Pringle Award and there are other awards such as the Olive Schreiner Poetry Prize and the Roy Campbell Poetry Prize. One publishing firm, the Central News Agency, offers prizes for South African writing, and Dugmore Boetie's novel was one of the ten books nominated in 1969. No prize, however, was awarded for that year.

Of greater importance, however, is the internal motivation. On the positive side the short story, as we shall see, is a more suitable medium of expressing what the writers have to say. On the negative side it must be admitted that most of the writers lack the competence necessary for the sustained effort required ~~for~~ longer fiction. Moreover, since the novel as a genre becomes a personification of ideas, or, as E.M. Forster put it, it has the power to make secret life visible, it is alien to African culture where the idea is embodied in

a more abstract form. We must not forget that the novel is a relatively new form of art even for Western civilisation and it is also interesting to note that orthodox Marxism, in its early days, regarded the novel as essentially bourgeois because of the emphasis on the individual. All these influences must have had some impact on the Anglophone African writer with his varied background. More difficult to explain is the phenomenon that it is among those writers who are carrying the African tradition linguistically that the novel is becoming increasingly popular, whereas those who have consciously rejected such tradition cannot project and develop their thoughts within the framework of longer fiction. However, in vernacular writing too, it is the epic quality of man in relation to a society rather than of man as an individual in conflict with society or nature which is stressed.

Almost from the beginning of fiction writing in English by Africans in Southern Africa it was the situation rather than the individual characters and the interaction of characters which interested the writers. R.R.R. Dhlomo's African Tragedy was the tragedy of the African in a changing society, and not the tragedy of one particular man. The plot of an African coming to the city and succumbing to its evil ways has been repeated ad nauseam since then, but rarely by Africans writing in English in Southern Africa because it was no longer a situation which interested them. Later writers were brought up in the city. What the city had to offer was no longer evil temptation to the Christian hero, but the amenities of a world of technology and culture which was closed to the African. Fiction consequently took the form of protest against apartheid, a subject which lends itself

to short fiction rather than to sustained writing, unless the writer follows the activities of a character from situation to situation. Since the situation was always one experienced by the writer himself, the longer works were autobiographical rather than fictitious.

There is little point in discussing African Tragedy in detail. It has little intrinsic value and is a dead end as far as African writing in English is concerned. Dhlomo's novel is merely a collector's piece of Africana as the first novel in English by an African in South Africa and is not of sufficient literary value to be regarded as predecessor to later novels in the vernacular, in Afrikaans and in English on this theme, which reached its climax with the publication of Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.

The innocent African in the city is the subject of one other fairly early work of fiction by an African writer in English, John J.B. Khafula. Published in 1946, it already deals mainly with the injustices of apartheid. This Thing has Got to Stop is the title, a phrase most probably taken from a newspaper report of a court case as having been spoken by a judge when passing sentence. What is this thing that has got to stop? asks Khafula. Did the judge mean the passing of a death sentence on an innocent man? Or was he perhaps referring to the hero's mother who knew nothing of the events until afterwards? There are only fourteen pages, but the story spans events and a plot too involved to class it as a short story. As in all the novels of this nature, the characters, although presented with a veneer of realism, are stereotypes rather than individuals and the narrative mostly reads like a political tract.

The theme of A.C. Mopeli-Paulus' novel Blanket Boy's Moon (1953) is somewhat different. While Monare, the Basutho, is also a country boy who comes to the wicked city and falls into evil hands, he does not become the innocent plaything of circumstances. Mopeli-Paulus, who was born in Lesotho -- then Basutoland -- in 1913 and was variously a medical student, teacher, war-time soldier and lawyer's clerk in South Africa, saw Monare as the Pilgrim making Progress. Monare smokes dagga to forget his pain, he hesitates just too long before rescuing a friend from ritual murder so as to remain close to the chief who ordered it. His problems include homo-sexuality and extra-marital sex. Again it is man rather than a particular Black man who faces conflict with the world around him.

Blanket Boy's Moon cannot, however, be considered entirely as a work by an African in English since it was written in collaboration with Peter Lanham. Collaboration is always disturbing to the reader who wishes to some extent to establish rapport with the author, even though ideally a work should be able to stand apart from its creator. The general reader becomes confused if he cannot look upon a book as the product of one individual mind and wonders constantly how much each author has contributed. Blanket Boy's Moon is sufficiently different in style from a later novel, Turn to the Dark (1956) "by Mopeli-Paulus with Miriam Baener", to tip the balance of authorship towards the two White collaborators.

Mine Boy by Peter Abraham is also about a country boy who comes to the city. I shall, however, deal with all the novels of this author separately.

Whereas R.R.R. Dhlomo had tried his hand at a

fairly new genre for the African reader, Sol Plaatje, by writing dramatically of historical events, was continuing an African tradition which went well back to the days of oral tribal literature. Mhudi was written before African Tragedy, but published only in 1930. From what we have learnt of Plaatje's political activities and other writing, it seems likely that he wrote a novel about the traditional life of the tribe deliberately in order to arouse the interest of the African in his past. It is difficult to see what other reason he may have had in writing a novel. Plaatje was well-read, humane and intelligent and as an interpreter of Western life to the African and of African life to the European he was unrivalled in his time. But he was not a story-teller nor was he able to discipline his thoughts into a coherent structure. We learn a great deal about the days of the early trekkers and of the conflict between the Matabele and their subject tribes. We are fascinated by flashes of insight into the character of a historical figure, like Mzilikazi. Mhudi, the heroine of the title, is a charming figure, turning in fear to her rescuer from the attack of a lion, or, with a mind of her own, rejecting her husband's White friends because of their callous indifference towards the suffering of an offending slave under torture. There are powerful scenes of conquest and defeat and of danger foiled but the story weaves inconsequentially in and out of history and the characters barely touch emotionally.

Once more it was given to an African writing in the vernacular to write a powerful historical novel in the early days. Thomas Mofolo's Chaka is a historical tragedy in Western tradition where the hero's behaviour is motivated psychologically. As such it is

one of the few African novels from Southern Africa in any language which have enjoyed a wide literary readership.

The only other writers of historical novels are Peter Abrahams and a Rhodesian, Stanlake Samkange. On Trial for My Country, which appeared in 1967, was the first novel by a Rhodesian African in English. Samkange has written a study of two historical figures, Cecil Rhodes and Lobengula, who stand trial, the one before his father, a Christian Minister, the other before Chief Mzilikazi, and each must justify himself "according to the code of ethics and conduct of the society in which they had been nurtured and brought up". The idea is a witty one and is carried out with great skill. Cecil Rhodes, accused of lying, cheating and murdering, defends himself on the grounds of expedience to gain a desired goal, whereas Lobengula, accused of allowing himself to be fooled by the White man, pleads ignorance of their ways. For the "final act of the drama, at both the Great Indaba Tree Council of the Amandebele Nation and the Congregationalist Bishop's Stortford Church in England...the atmosphere was charged with excitement and expectancy". At last the riddle was to be unravelled:

"Did Lobengula sell out or was he victim of unscrupulous men? Did he understand what was going on or did he not? Was he a weak or a strong man? Did he lose his kingdom because of some weakness inherent in his character...Did Lobengula have two sets of ethical standards; one which he applied as an individual - a man - and another as king of the Amandebele?...One which he applied to white men and another to black men?

"And Rhodes! Was he scrupulous, fair, honest and straightforward in his dealings with Lobengula or did the end justify any means, as far as he was concerned? What motivated him? Was it self-glorification,

love of money, power, or love of mankind? Which mankind? Whites or blacks - British, or just white-men? Did the end justify his means? Is the end justifiable as far as Africans are concerned and as far as white men are concerned? What of the future?

"Will men consider themselves indebted to Rhodes for a thousand years to come, as he once said, or will they curse him for that long? And Lobengula? What will men think of him in a thousand years? Who really won in Matabeleland?"

"These questions and many more were soon to be answered". But of course they were not. The dreamer who comes to a strange land and witnesses the trial wakes up just as the verdict is about to be given. The dreamer is the narrator, who represents the point of reference from which the historical characters are judged and he, like the reader, must needs draw his own conclusions from the historical interpretation given.

Sankange has incorporated the actual words of the historical characters as taken from their letters and speeches and has succeeded in making it sound like natural speech. Dr. Jameson, for example, is giving account to the "court", meeting in the Reverend Rhodes' Church, of events which took place after he had asked Lobengula to dig for gold East of Bulawayo and to use some of the Matabele young men to cut the road:

"I immediately informed Rhodes that Lobengula had sanctioned our occupation of Mashonaland and soon after this left Matabeleland with Thompson."

"Rev. Rhodes then asked, 'but had Lobengula actually done that? Had he sanctioned your occupation of Mashonaland?'"

"He had said we could go and dig another hole in the east."

"Was permission to dig a hole the same as permission to occupy a country?"

"No, it was not. But he had said that we could go there and surely while we were there it was expected that we would have some sort of

an administration for the maintenance of law and order amongst our people.

"I see. You reported your permission to dig as permission to occupy."

"Jameson took his seat and Rhodes continued his story".

The book is entertaining and readable, but the idea behind it is a serious study of the period. Every effort is made to present an attitude of justice and fairness but the book remains an attempt to debunk the British version of the history of Rhodesia and by no means the first attempt by a writer to do so. Felix Gross, in Rhodes of Africa, for example, also presents this period in narrative form and allows Cecil Rhodes and his associates to condemn themselves in their own words.

Samkange is interested in his characters only in as far as their historical motivation is concerned. He is concerned with analysing historical fact in relation to the ethics of historical action, not with the morals of the individual. It is not a historical novel in the popular sense, where fiction is used to close the gaps in historical knowledge of events or to elaborate what is known of historical characters; nor does Samkange use history as a framework for his thoughts as in the great historical fiction of the West. History as a study is his direct aim and interest.

In 1968 Samkange published a work entitled The Origins of Rhodesia, for which he was awarded the Herkovits Award of the African Studies Association of the United States and Canada in 1970 "as an outstanding scholarly work on Africa". Samkange was a student at the University College of Fort Hare, where he graduated with honours in History. He gained a Master of Science degree in Education in the United

States, at Indiana University, to which he returned later to gain a doctorate degree in History (1968), which he now teaches there. He has been involved in Rhodesian history in the making in that he was general secretary of the African National Congress there. Education is another of his interests shown in such diverse activities as founding a technical college for Africans and contributing a fairy-tale to a series of readers for African school-children. He has, however, also written another novel which is to be published shortly.

For a number of reasons it has been difficult to decide whether Peter Abrahams should be included in this study. He left South Africa in 1939 at the age of twenty when he signed on as a stoker on a ship. After two years at sea he reached England where he lived until 1957. Since then he has been resident in the West Indies. Ethnologically, the choice must needs be arbitrary, as I have explained in the introduction. Abrahams says that his father was of Abyssinian origin and his mother Cape Coloured. In one of his autobiographical works describing a short return home, he tells how a Coloured teacher complained that he "met a Native fellow who said you belong to them more than to us", to which Abrahams replied: "I'm glad he said so". Much earlier, he tells the story of how a little African friend, Joseph, boasts of the Black kings who lived in days before the White man. The next day, after consulting with his mother, Abrahams admits to Joseph: "'We didn't have Coloured kings before the white man'

"And he comforted me and said: 'It is

of no moment. You are my brother.
Now my kings will be your kings".

Again, in Dark Testament he emphasises the relationship:

"Stretch your hand
And greet your darker brother
That's the only way to be freed".

If Abrahams is to be included we must take his preference into account, or else we must classify him according to Jahn's method by "style and by the attitude revealed". When, at a conference of African writers at Sierra Leone, African literature was defined as "creative writing in which an African setting is authentically handled or to which experiences originating in Africa are integral", Chinua Achebe remarked with amusement that this would include Joseph Conrad, a Pole (The Heart of Darkness), but exclude Peter Abrahams when he writes about the West Indies.

In proportion to his output Abrahams is not often included in anthologies and works of reference. Jahn considered him and Mphahlele the most important writers when writing in 1959 (Approaches to African Literature) and includes an extract from his autobiographical writing in his anthology Das Junge Afrika (1963). It seems to be his autobiographical works rather than the novels which made their impact on the critics. Claude Wauthier calls him the Richard Wright of Southern Africa (The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa) and C.P. Snow looked upon Wild Conquest as the forerunner of an entire school of African literary art. Drachler in his anthology African Heritage (1964) includes a political article about his visits with Nkrumah and Kenyatta and Paul Edwards' Through African Eyes has an extract from the autobiographical work Tell Freedom. Nadine Gordimer, addressing the

National Art Winter School at the University of the Witwatersrand on the subject of themes of communication in the African Novel (1968), uses A Wreath for Udomo to prove a political point but does discuss Wild Conquest as literature in "The Novel and the Nation".⁽¹⁾ Alan Paton, in a paper on the South African novel in English read to the Conference of Writers, Publishers, Editors and University Teachers of English at the University of the Witwatersrand, calls Abrahams a "forerunner worthy to be placed with Olive Schreiner". But he fails to say why or of what Abrahams is the forerunner:

Mphahlele and Nkosi, as the leading African critics of literature, rarely mention him. Mphahlele says in an article entitled "Black and White"⁽²⁾ that Path of Thunder and Wild Conquest are the works of "an anglicised man, seemingly fighting to recapture his roots". They judge him perhaps, as the other characters in A Night of their Own judge the hero of the story, for adhering to "the flabby moralistic standards of the middle class Europeans among whom you've spent so much of your life".

In Wild Conquest Abrahams goes back to history to find the germ of these roots and of the conflict between Black and White. Rather than investigate, however, as Sankange did later, Abrahams uses his novel

(1) Times Literary Supplement, 11th August, 1961.

(2) New Statesman, 10th September, 1960.

to deliver a message to South Africa to "build in hope instead of fear, to live with love instead of hate". He expresses the message through his chief characters in this work and repeats the theme throughout most of his novels. Paul van As, the young Voortrekker in Wild Conquest, is the prototype of the White man who lives out the message and we find him again later in A Night of their Own as his descendant Karl van As, a rising young diplomat. In Mine Boy he is Paddy, the Irishman, and he appears even in a story with a setting outside South Africa as the young Jewish businessman in This Island Now. This White man in his various guises is out of tune in some form with, and despised by his contemporaries: Paul van As hates killing, Karl van As loves across the Colour line, Paddy invites Africans to his home; and he always puts humanity before Colour. Playing his part opposite the White man is the African Dabula in Wild Conquest - and repeated as Richard Nkosi alias Dube in A Night of their Own and as Xuma in Mine Boy - who is prepared to meet the White man without fear or hate. Dabula stands out from his associates by his voluntary monogamy, Richard Nkosi by his horror at murder as a means of gaining a radical political goal.

The minor characters fit into their allotted roles. There is, for example, the older man who communes with nature, the woman who complements the man, the vicious rival, representing evil in the form of sex. Even if one cannot quarrel with Abrahams' ethical values it is all far too glib and belongs to that school of political fiction popular before and

during the Second World War when readers yearned to have their liberal beliefs confirmed in story-book form by writers like Arthur Koestler. Abrahams found a formula that worked and exploited it thoroughly. His novels seem to lack the emotion and sincerity of his autobiographical writing, which I shall discuss later. In his appeal to a wide market-Path of Thunder, for example, had twelve printings in Russia and has been shown on the screen there and used as a ballet; and all the books have been translated into many languages- and in the range of his subject matter, Abrahams stands outside the stream of African English writing in Southern Africa.

In his historical fiction Abrahams uses history as a backdrop for his ideas and where history will not cooperate he twists it to prove a point. The background and part of the plot of Wild Conquest are lifted from Plaatje's Mhudi. Abrahams is, of course, a far more accomplished craftsman than Plaatje. His writing is facile and his dialogue never stilted. The characters, however, are mere puppets and they move on a stage with a few props rather than in a living world of veld and bush, or trees, rivers, animals and people.

A better way of demonstrating human relationships between Black and White than an understanding and friendship between a Black man and a White man is love across the Colour line. Peter Abrahams was not slow to grasp the popular appeal of miscegenation as a subject for a novel. In Path of Thunder he weaves a melodramatic plot around the White girl and her Coloured lover, with an unlikely dénouement in which everyone turns out to be related. Again the characters are

stereotyped except perhaps for the woman Fieta. She is the prototype of the shebeen queen whom we find in Mine Boy and later in many short stories by other writers; and like them she sparkles occasionally with a zest for life which is sadly lacking in his heroes and heroines as well as in his villains.

Abrahams repeats his characters over and over again. Lanny Swartz could change places with Richard Nkosi and Sarie Villiers with Elsie unnoticeably. The old grandmother in Wild Conquest is the Griqua woman in A Night of their Own. Swartz, Nkosi, Dabula, the two van As's and Udomo indulge in endless political discussions at the most unlikely times. The effect in a story like A Night of their Own, about dramatic underground resistance and police action, is often quite absurd.

When Abrahams first began to write, British readers were still accustomed to reading about an Africa where Black stood for pagan and evil and White for civilisation and good. Abrahams, like William Plomer and Sarah Gertrude Millin, was hailed as an apostle of a more liberal attitude. It was the Negro writers of the nineteen-thirties who set Abrahams on his path as a novelist. W.E.B. Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk, Abrahams said, had the impact of a revelation on him. Until then he had had no words in which to voice his Blackness. Richard Wright must have been his model, but he lacked the single-mindedness of purpose which kept Wright under the influence of Marxism but also lent fire to his writing. With little means of intellectual contact, the African writer, especially in the early days, could not imitate the mental life-history followed by most of the other

Negro writers: from Marxism through Freudian psychology to existentialism. Abrahams tried to copy the naturalistic technique of these writers - Wright, William Gardner Smith and others - while at the same time operating within a conventional formula for popular fiction. The combination was not a happy one.

Later, when Abrahams chose a West African subject in A Wreath for Udomo, he was criticised by African critics for failing to recognise the real forces at work. "He succumbs", says a review in Black Orpheus, "to the white man's myth of the 'primitive Negro'". Udomo, a Black man, is on the side of civilisation and progress and on the opposing side is tradition representing evil. Similarly Martha Lee, in this story, and repeated again as Mildred Scott in A Night of Their Own, sees herself as "a new breed, a kind of outpost of the future trapped here in the Twentieth century". Udomo, like Abrahams, identifies himself with the West and as such has been rejected by his contemporary African readers.

There are only two more novels by African writers to consider: Bessie Head's When Rain Clouds Gather and Boetie's work. Miss Head's second novel, Maru, published in 1971, was unfortunately received too late for inclusion, and censorship has held up the arrival of Mphahlele's first and recently published novel, The Wanderer, apparently a kind of Bildungsroman.

When Rain Clouds Gather by Bessie Head first appeared in the United States in 1969 and in England

later that year. Two paperback editions followed. Miss Head writes of Botswana where she lives, though she was born in Pietermaritzburg, in 1937. She never knew her parents and was brought up by foster parents until the age of thirteen when she was placed in a missionary orphanage. She worked variously as a teacher and journalist in Cape Town, contributing short stories to publications like Transition and The Guardian. While she should probably be classed ethnically as Coloured she lives among Africans and writes of them in such a way as to justify her inclusion in this study.

In an article in The New African⁽³⁾ Bessie Head explains why she did not write a novel earlier and at the same time clarifies one of the reasons why so few novels by Black Anglophone writers have come out of South Africa:

"When I think of writing any single thing I panic and go dead inside. Perhaps it's because I have my ear too keenly attuned to the political lumberjacks who are busy making capital on human lives. Perhaps I'm just having nightmares. Whatever my manifold disorders are, I hope to get them sorted out pretty soon, because I've just got to tell a story" (author's italics)

She had previously written two books, she says, but they were lost in the post or at the publishers! "It was a hotch-potch of under-done ideas". "If I had to write one day I would just like to say people is people and not damn White, damn Black. Perhaps if I was a good enough writer I could still write damn

(3) September, 1962.

damn Black and still make people live". (again author's italics).

Let us see to what extent she achieves these aims in When Rain Clouds Gather. The "hate-making ideologies", says her chief character, Makhaya Maseko, "gave rise to a whole new set of retrogressive ideas and retrogressive pride, and it was almost a mania to think that the whole world was against you. And how many pompous bombastic fools had not jumped on this bandwagon". It is the British agriculturalist, Gilbert, who is the practising socialist in the story.

But the bitterness is there. Most of the time it runs quietly through the narrative, but sometimes it bursts forth in a violent outpouring of hatred through Makhaya and interrupts the even flow of the story:

" 'Do you know who I am? I am Makhaya, the Black Dog and as such I am tossed about by life. Life is only torture and torment to me and not something I care to understand'.

"He might have said it was much more than torture and torment, that it was an abysmal betrayal, a howling inferno where every gesture of love and respect was repaid with the vicious snapping jaws of the inmates of this inferno until you were forced to build a thick wall of silence between yourself and snapping jaws...

" 'What is a Black Dog', she asked abruptly. "Makhaya laughed his bitter sarcastic laugh. 'He is a sensation', he said. 'He awakens only thrills in the rest of mankind. He is a child they scold in a shrill voice because they think he will never grow up. They don't want him to, either, because they've grown too used to his circus and his antics, and they liked the way he sat on the chair and shivered in fear while they lashed out with the whip. If Black Dog becomes human they won't have anyone to entertain them anymore. Yet all the while they shrieked with laughter over his head, he slowly became a mad dog. Instead of becoming human, he has only become a mad dog, and this makes them laugh louder than ever'.

"Ma-Millipede looked down. The quietly spoken words carried in them a violent torrent of hatred, and she was swept out of

her depth, uncertain if there was anything in her own life with which to counter this hatred. The pitch black arm still lay across the table, like a question mark, and she was pitch black too, but she had lived all her life inside this black skin with a quiet and unruffled dignity".

What is disconcerting in this passage is not so much the overt attempt to shock the reader by the violent metaphorical presentation as the intervening of the author's own bitter comments. The author should have allowed Makhaya to communicate his message to the old woman on her behalf, and the old woman would have absorbed them on behalf of the reader. This dramatic technique is employed in most of the rest of the work.

The plot is well devised even if the tribal politics do not always ring true. It is the land and the people who become the focussing point of action, whereas Makhaya is an onlooker and mirror of the story as it unfolds. Lack of rain, for example, is not an external circumstance and cattle are not mere possessions:

"Man and beast had always lived this way. If there was no food or water for a man, then there was none for his cattle either. Both were as close to each other as breathing and it had never been regarded as strange that a man and his cattle lived the same life. No doubt the cattlemen who lived in the lonely isolated cattle posts at first stared in disbelief when their cattle began dropping dead before their very eyes. There were always droughts. There had been many in each man's life-time, but never in the memory of any man had the cattle dropped dead. By the time the men panicked, hundreds and thousands of cattle had died".

Such a crisis was a far greater one than a quarrel to the death between a chief and his brother.

Unlike Abrahams whose effort obtrudes, Bessie Head has an instinctive understanding of the natural

listic method of telling a story. She also has a -- grasp of the mass mind; "The sight and sound of their cattle crashing dead on the ground were still full in the men's eyes, and they walked away with the heavy tread of people who were grieved beyond consolation". But, like so many African writers, she stands before the individual mind as before the "blank calm wall" which she describes Makhaya as having built for himself; "You see, it said, I'm quite safe. No one can invade my life". And that, unfortunately, includes the reader. Occasionally there is a flash of insight into the unconscious mind. The lonely old woman, Ma Millipede, in the village of Golema Mmidi where the action takes place, takes in Makhaya, a refugee from the south where he had been jailed for carrying a plan to blow up installations; "He was a little repelled at first by the generosity of the strange old woman. It was too extreme. It meant that if you loved people you had to allow a complete invasion by them of your life, and he wasn't built to face invasions of any kind". When the chief of the village demands the removal of this refugee with his dangerous modern ideas, it is the White police-chief who sees that he obtains a residence permit. The police-chief is vividly characterised by a brief conversation;

"After Matenge had walked out, George Appleby-Smith remained staring at the wall ahead of him for a long time...His assistant-in-command of the station entered and had to click his heels several times before he gained the attention of his superior. George Appleby-Smith looked at him with laughter-filled eyes.

" 'Sergeant Molefe,' he said. 'Tell me why I hate people?'

The sergeant remained stiffly at attention. He was used to the oddities of George Appleby-Smith. 'I think you only hate people when you have a headache, sir', he said".

As the above extracts have shown, the novel contains an uneven mixture of quietly dramatic and—often humorous style and also of tortuous writing. Bessie Head has the power she ascribes to her police-officer "to streamline the complex into a single clear detail". These series of clear detail, however, tend to make the book somewhat disjointed at times.

The popular appeal of this author's novel in America and England was doubtlessly due, apart from the growing interest in anything African, to her competence in telling a story, but also to the intriguing tribal setting which is worked into the story rather than presented as anthropology as so many West African writers tend to do. Progress, for example, is symbolised briefly by mud kitchen shelves and curry-powder. The chief character is a foreigner to this part of the country and customs and background are explained to the reader as they are unfolded to him. The African landscape, he finds, differs from that of the south and so we get a description of the scene as it happens around him, instead of a static picture:

"At first not a thing stirred around him. It was just his own self, his footsteps and the winding footpath. Even the sunrise took him by surprise. Somehow he had always imagined the sun above hills, shining down into valleys and waking them up. But here the land was quite flat, and the sunshine crept along the ground in long shafts of gold light. It kept on pushing back the darkness that clung around the trees, and always the huge splash of gold was split into shafts by the trees. Suddenly, the sun sprang clear of all entanglements; a single white pulsating ball, dashing out with one blow the last traces of the night. So sudden and abrupt was the sunrise that the birds had to pretend they had been awake all the time. They set up a shrill piercing clamour all at once, thousands and thousands of them. For all their clamour they turned out to be small dun-coloured creatures with speckled dun-coloured breasts, and their flight into the deep blue sky was just like so many tiny

insects. More secretive types of birds lived in the depth of the bush, and these were very beautiful, ranging in colour from a shimmering midnight blue to bright scarlet and molten gold. Unlike the chattering little dun-coloured fellows, they called to each other in soft low tones and, being curious about his footsteps, frequently flashed briefly onto the footpath ahead of him.

"I wonder what the birds live on, he thought. The land on either side of the footpath was loose windblown sand and thorn-bush. Often the thorn-bush emerged as tall straight-trunked trees, topped by an umbrella of black, exquisitely shaped branches, but more often it grew in short low tufts like rough wild grass. Long white thorns grew on the branches, at the base of which were tightly packed clusters of pale olive-green leaves. And that was all. As far as the eye could see it was only a vast expanse of sand and scrub but somehow bewitchingly beautiful. Perhaps he confused it with his own loneliness..."

It will be interesting to see whether in her second novel Bessie Head carries out the promise of Where Rain-Clouds Gather by disciplining her ideas and narrative talent, her instinctive insight and conscious manipulations of plot and character into a cohesive whole.

Dugmore Boetie, whose "life-story" appeared in the same year, 1969, is not introspective like Bessie Head's hero. The chief character as well as those in the supporting roles have little overt psychological life. Boetie's is the epic objectivity of a Smollett or a Fielding, with whom he has been compared for his picaresque approach and like whom he has "endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices".⁽⁴⁾ Boetie never doubts but that life is an

(4) Dedication, Tom Jones by Henry Fielding.

external contest between man and his circumstances. That is his starting point, his term of reference, and thus he feels that there is no need to question the reason for the behaviour of his characters.

The conflict between Boetie as an individual and the South African scene as he finds it is Boetie's theme and he does not interpret it for us but renders it with an air of dramatic realism. The realism is deceptive, however, in that it is distorted time and again in order to emphasise a point or for the sake of satiric humour. James Baldwin once accused Richard Wright of trying to "redeem a symbolic monster in social terms". Boetie's chief character is no symbolic monster but in terms of realism he is beyond redemption.

The dustcover of the book Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost gives a different and less wildly uninhibited incident from the one with which I began this chapter, but it expresses the same sardonic attitude towards the morals under which he is expected to live:

"A European woman was sitting in the driver's seat. Lying negligently next to her was her handbag. The window beside the bag was open.

"Sitting in the back seat and looking lost was the woman's African servant. I made a bee-line for the open window, while Tiny walked directly towards the servant. He shouted: 'Lies, lies, that's all you told me! I told you one day we'll meet and I'll mess you up. Come out of there!'

" 'What's the matter? What has he done to you? Leave my boy alone!' said the woman.

" 'I'm not talking to you, missus.'

" 'But I'm talking to you! What has my boy done to you?'

" 'I told him one day he'll get hurt'. Tiny made as if to open the door. Unseen, I lifted the bag...

"As we walked back to the busrank Tiny said,

'Serves her right for not letting him sit next to her.'

While Boetie does not accept the world he lives in, he makes use of it to survive in his own way:

"The white man of South Africa suffers from a defect which can easily be termed limited intelligence. The cause of this mental handicap can be safely attributed to a frustrated background of poor beginnings.

"I say this because no man, no matter how dense, will allow himself to be taken in twice by the same trick. They don't learn by mistakes, for the simple reason that they'd rather die than talk about their mistakes. Me, I learn by my mistakes because human beings make mistakes, and I'm a human being. Their pride is based on colour, and it's on this pride that we blacks feed ourselves. Call him 'Baas' and he'll break an arm to help you.

"He takes advantage of his white skin, we take advantage of his crownless kingdom".

The satire itself is never sharp and pointed. The clowning takes place almost behind the reader's back and when he turns round he finds that his foibles have been exposed.

Boetie tells the story of how a white clerk in his place of employment gives him her sandwiches because she is going out to lunch. But he has just eaten a large piece of ox-tongue and so, on his way, he in turn puts the sandwiches on the desk of the company secretary. "Mr. Groenewald,' I said, placing the packet of sandwiches on his desk. 'Here's some sandwiches for you. I don't feel like anything today'. With that, I went out". Taking him to task for such behaviour, the head of the department is infuriated by Dugmore's innocent replies to his attempt to explain why it was wrong for him to give his sandwiches to Mr. Groenewald, when it was not wrong for the White clerk to give them to Dugmore.

"Soothingly the colonel said, 'You should

know, my boy, that it is not correct for a black man to give...'

"Not correct, sir?' I asked aghast.

"All right, damn you, get out of here'.

"God! What a race! Unlike the black man, they are supposed to have had the advantage of a civilised environment, yet their barbarism is as thinly veiled as the prison lash strokes on my buttocks. I should have resigned on the spot, but determinedly I kept on. Then Mr. Groenewald took it upon himself to make my life so miserable that I was forced to resign two weeks after my misplaced kindness".

When posed against an authority which he cannot hope to beat, he appears to be without any scruples. White men and women, the police, officialdom, are fair game: "If you want to get rich quick, take the road that leads to prison. There's a steel door at the end. As you go to it, don't go in, turn sharp right. Then you're on your way", is his way of expressing it.

Yet his philosophy is by no means an amoral one. Dugmore Boetie is the popular rebel who feels that God is dead but has recreated him in his own image. He has no one but himself to whom to render account. It is not the Hegelian law of universal order from which Boetie is estranged but merely the absurd law of the land. Boetie, like his European contemporaries, has discovered the absurdity of existence, but not of existence per se, merely of existence as a member of a society to the principles of which he cannot subscribe. He has a fine sense for the absurd, reminiscent at times of the Afro-American writer Ralph Ellison, whose Invisible Man won the American National Book Award, though unlike Ellison he does not communicate in surrealist terms. In Africa, Dugmore Boetie - the character in the book - is a descendant of Mister

Johnson and of Sylvester Stein's Staffnurse.⁽⁵⁾ All three have unlimited vitality and optimism, and although Boetie shows less compassion than the characters of Carynor Stein, none appear as helpless victims of the circumstances that motivate them. The two Africans could, in fact, sometimes be mistaken as the manipulators of their fate.

Boetie is by no means the sentimentalised bum popular in the fiction of the late nineteenfifties, which involved a loss of morals. The reader is asked to invert, not lose, his moral standards. There is still conflict between good and evil but the values have been reversed.

The anti-hero turned hero is not, of course, a Black man's prerogative and among his White relations are the characters of Beckett, Bellow and Grass.

Dugmore Boetie adheres strictly to the moral standards which he has set himself. The only time he feels ashamed is when he betrays and uses another African in order to further his own aims:

"A pet monkey once followed the aroma of frying peanuts into its master's kitchen. There strewn on the hot stove were the frying nuts. He looked around, to make sure that there was no one around. Then he reached out with his paw. As the tips of his fingers made contact with the hot plate, he screamed, somersaulted and sucked his scorched fingers. He tried again, with the same results. He was still sucking his poor fingers and trying to scratch out an idea from the crown of his head with the fingernails of his left hand, when the cat came in. At the sight of the cat the monkey grinned. In one swift move he snatched the cat up, and with it swiped the strewn nuts from the hot stove. The cat screamed and bolted through the door. Grinning, the

monkey started picking up the nuts leisurely from the floor. I was sorry, but I was going to do to this man what the monkey did to the cat".

What he did was to make fun of an African in a pass office to the amusement of the officials, so that, when his turn came, he was issued with the coveted Coloured identity card instead of an African one:

"Two passport photos. And I was a Coloured. Just like that. I limped out in a daze. My head was spinning, my heart was double-timing and my ears were going ping. I wanted to sing or dance or something. I wanted to fly. I needed my guitar. No more pass! No more pass! No more Influx Control! No more sit here, not there, no more shut up, take your hands out of your pockets...It was now somebody else's s..t - everybody else's - not mine! I wanted to start shaking hands, banging everybody on the back, buying booze for the whole bloody Joburg! I looked around wildly.

"Standing forlornly at the building's entrance was the unfortunate blackman.

"My hand fished into my pocket and came out with a shilling. I went to him and placed the shilling in his hand, then quickly walked away. I was a few hundred yards from him, when something flew with terrific force past my head. It went zinnng, narrowly missing the tip of my ear. It clinked once and fell into the gutter. It was the shilling piece. I bent down, picked it up and walked on without looking back".

The exaggeration and over-emphasis of this scene is doubtlessly intended to underline the outward humour of the incident as well as point to the under-current of deeper meaning.

The writing is staccato but although the novel consists of an apparent chaos of incidents, the narrative progresses steadily and there is a feeling of unity of conception. This is not the rambling autobiography for which it is frequently taken. As such there is very little truth in the story. Except for his last two years, which are described in an epilogue

written after his death, it is impossible to give any indisputable facts about the life of Dugmore Boetie. For instance, he tells the story of how he came to lose a leg during the Second World War, in North Africa. His mother, who never "fried and fried and fried", says that it is quite untrue and that he was never out of the country. Even the origin of his name - if it was his name - is quite incredible. It is one of the incidents which one is inclined to believe because it could not possibly have been invented. As a nameless youngster, he was looking after an elephant in a circus. The elephant's name was Dugmore. When it was called, beast and boy both came forward, and so the name stuck. The "Boetie" comes from "Kafferboetie" which the boys called him during his first spell in a reformatory.

Why, we may ask, if it is a novel, did Boetie choose the method of making author and narrator one? Partly perhaps because autobiographies of Africans already had a ready market. Perhaps this is further evidence of his humour: an attempt - and a successful one - at what in popular contemporary parlance would be called a "send-up" of an autobiography. Unlike other writers who use narrative in the first person, Boetie had no intention of establishing a particular rapport with his readers. There is no approach to the reader. Boetie, the author shrugs him off as a necessary prop in his life, like the people who sponsored him and towards whom he showed no gratitude - his co-author Barney Simon describes his as the mentality of a confidence trickster - and as his fictional namesake shrugs off most of the people with whom he comes into contact.

Like Moneli-Paulus' novels, Familiarity is the

Kingdom of the Lost is the combined effort of an African and a White writer, and again it is difficult to tell what contribution was made by each. Barney Simon, when interviewed, said that the writing was Dugmore Boetie's own. He saw himself in the position of a producer of a play, directing changes here and there but not altering the action or dialogue. Only when writing of genuine feeling did Boetie seem unable to express himself. The writing would deteriorate to sentimentality and thus once or twice Simon changed a paragraph. The title is the only place where an external contribution becomes obvious. "Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost" would seem to pre-suppose a conscious awareness of Boetie's condition over and above the narrative and this destroys the direct narrative technique of the author/narrator.

Dugmore Boetie is the new African of the South African cities and there is perhaps more hope in this than appears on the surface. His attitude of contempt as a ruling passion is a vast change from the attitude of hate and fear begun by the Afro-American writer Richard Wright in Native Son. There is a note of optimism instead of impotent rage. Nadine Gordimer, who was well acquainted with Boetie, describes one of her characters in her novel A World of Strangers as follows:

"The private liver, the selfish shirker... he's a rebel. He's in rebel (sic) against rebellion. On the side, he's got a private revolution of his own. It's waged for himself, but quite a lot of other people may benefit...He won't troop along with your Congress, or get himself arrested in the public library, but in spite of everything the white man does to knock the spirit out of him, he remains very much alive - getting drunk, getting in debt, running his insurance racket. Learning

all the shady tricks so that, in the end, he can beat dear old white civilisation at its own game. He's muscling in; who's to say he won't get there first? While the Congress chaps are pounding fiercely on the front door, he's slipped in through a back window. But, most important of all, he's alive, isn't he? He's alive, in defiance of everything that would attempt to make him half-alive. I don't suppose he's been well fed, but he looks wiry, his schooling hasn't been anything much, but it seems to me he's got himself an education that works, all the same, well-paid jobs are closed to him, so he's invented one for himself. And when the Congress chaps get in at last, perhaps they'll find him there, waiting".

This could be a portrait of Dugmore Boetie, the character in the novel, as well as of Boetie the writer, with the addition that the latter becomes an articulate exponent of his ideas.

SHORT STORIES

"It is impossible for a writer who lives in oppression to organise his whole personality into creating a novel", says Ezekiel Mphahlele.⁽¹⁾ "The short story is used as a short cut (to get) some things off one's chest in quick time". It is not legitimate, however, to regard the short story as the negative side of the novel. Alan Ross, introducing a special short story issue of The London Magazine,⁽²⁾ finds the continual defensiveness about the short story which ought to be an ideal medium for our time...curious, because the facts do not justify it". African authors in South Africa writing in English certainly found it an ideal medium for attempting to express the meaning of their experience.

According to William (Bloke) Modisane, the themes are so strong that they can be contained only in a short story. "Everything is always in a state of such violent change in human relationships...a man is not sure where he will be next month or next week or even for that matter next day - he wants to put all down in a short story. The situation is so vast and the best way to communicate is to pin-point the incidents".⁽³⁾ Modisane told this to Philip Segal when interviewing him on behalf of the magazine Contact on the purposes of the Conference of African Writers of English

(1) "Black and White". The New Statesman, 10th September, 1960.

(2) The London Magazine.

(3) Philip Segal's notes of interview of writers during Conference of African Writers of English Expression, June 11 - 17th, 1962.

Expression held at Makere University, Kampala, Uganda, under auspices of the Mbari Writers and Artists Club of Nigeria. "You think, in short", Segal replied, "that the dramatic nature of South African social and political life needs a certain explosive registry of moments to get it across."

Keeping the above in mind, let us examine the achievements of these two writers, Modisane and Mphahlele, with a concentration on those areas of their writing which demonstrate the representative trends of African short story writing in South Africa in English.

Modisane and Mphahlele are typical of the African short story writer in English in South Africa in that both were leading contributors to or staff members of Drum magazine, both lived in Sophiatown where they formed part of a literary circle, both wrote autobiographies, both have left South Africa and both have been banned under the Amendment to the Suppression of Communism Act.

Blake Modisane's story "The Situation" was published in The New African in October 1952 and in Black Orpheus No. 12. It was also included in Ulli Beier's Anthology of African and Afro-American Prose. The story was written while Modisane was still in South Africa and working for Drum.

The "situation" is that of a lonely man, Caiaphas Seduma. He is "situated" - a word adapted to African usage to mean social standing - "some distance from all that enjoyment (of being black, wallowing in their blackness, working themselves into a frenzy, hand-clapping the down tempo of the blues beat)" which is taking place in a shebeen, because of "his conscious denial of the black in him." His education - a master's degree in applied psychology - and his job with an

advertising firm turn him into an outsider, an intruder. At the beginning of the story he is at peace with himself, "enjoying the emotional truce with South Africa." But not for long. A group of Afrikaner farmers with "rough hands" and "scruffy faces" bait and threaten him. He grovels before them and before the police who arrive on the scene and he now feels that he has lost his manhood. He wants to lose himself among his own people but he has not the acumen of the shebeen queen Battleship, a former teacher, who hides her "situation" from those around her. Once again Caiaphas is made to perform before a crowd. This time, too, his life seems threatened and he recites, at a gang leader's demand, the funeral oration of Mark Antony. The rival gang's protégé, however, "wails the blues" and Caiaphas is unable to join in the joy uniting all the shebeen customers in their "love-hate relationship with the colour black". Caiaphas is alone, "walking back to his little room alone."

There is no doubt that in this story Modisane has pin-pointed the incidents and that the moments have been registered explosively enough. But what of its value as creative fiction?

Although the sociological approach is considered inadequate in evaluating literary content, it is necessary initially to consider the short stories of African writers in South Africa within the confines of their milieu. Only then will their intrinsic value, if any, fall into place. These writers produced, and are still producing today, fiction of social realism at a time when this aspect of literary approach was no longer used elsewhere. They did not do so as the English and Americans did at the beginning of the cen-

ture as a reaction to Victorian hypocrisy, nor, as the African writers further north have done, in order to destroy the romantic Africa of Rider Haggard. They did not consciously follow Zola's injunction to "go to life, see what it is like, and then tell it as honestly as possible". There was no need for them to do this since they were in the midst of the action. They merely followed their instincts, wrote of what they knew and allowed the situations to come through forcefully.

It is, however, just because they were too close to the reality that they could only at best produce a mirror image rather than express and interpret their milieu in terms of great fiction. Only occasionally did they succeed in holding the situation at arm's length long enough to bring it to life for the reader creatively.

"A stock situation documented to death will never bring a real situation to literary life," says Alain Locke, commenting on the sociological realism of Afro-American writers.(4) He continues: "There is no magic in the Harlem setting that will rectify a poor plot or vivify shallow characterisation or evoke a philosophy of life when an author has none."

From the above a return must be made to Modisane's story. In "The Situation" Modisane does to some extent succeed in looking beyond the Sophiatown setting - the equivalent of Harlem of the nineteen-twenties - into the human mind. He has captured the loneliness of his character and described his inner conflict when poised

(4) From "Native Son to Invisible Man." A Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1952. Phylon, Vol. XLV, No. I.

between two worlds to neither of which he belongs. Here the incident of racial conflict is not an end in itself but the vehicle for the story. Modisane has avoided the pitfall of using incidents as mere illustrations for a theme of protest. Instead, he uses them to gain insight into the human emotion which lies beneath the situation. The facts that the prose is uneven and often harsh and the story is neither original nor very imaginative do not detract altogether from this achievement. The vigour and sardonic humour, as well as his capacity to express actual feeling, provide some compensation.

Most of Modisane's other stories are written in a lighter vein, but here too it is the theme of loneliness that interests him, the aloneness of the individual who is not part of the society in which he lives. In stories like "The Dignity of Begging"⁽⁵⁾ and "The Respectable Pickpocket"⁽⁶⁾ Modisane displays the same humour as does Dugmore Boetie, that of the man who follows his own values, and, when he is punished under laws which bear no relationship to his own sense of morality, he shrugs his shoulders and feels that he has lost a round in a game.

Now let us turn to Ezekiel Mphahlele's stories to see what it was that he had to get "off his chest" and whether, in the process, creative fiction could emerge. The difficulties are explained by Mphahlele in The African Image. Coming home after a day's work

(5) Drum September, 1951.

(6) Drum January, 1954.

which inevitably included clashes or near-clashes with police or with a white boss, or foreman or shop assistant or post office clerk. "you felt physically tired and spiritually flat. You tried to settle down to writing. Your whole being quivered with latent anger; words, words, words, spilled on to the pages and you found yourself caught up in the artistic difficulty of making a parochial experience available to the bigger world on terms that may very well be possible. For then you had to give an account of your bitterness. Blinded by it, in addition to other things, you had to grope for the truth. Somewhere in this dark alley, you felt it was a hopeless fight because so much of your energy went into the effort to adjust yourself to the conditions which threaten every moment to crush you..."

His confrontation with his bitterness was not the only difficulty which he had to face. The problems of daily living are explained in Mphahlele's autobiography Down Second Avenue. He describes the period of his studies at St. Peter's School where he had a nervous breakdown for fear that he might fail; if he had done so, his mother would not have been able to afford the fees for a further year: R15 out of her earnings of R3 a month as a domestic servant. He passed easily, however, and continued his studies at Adams College in Natal where he qualified as a teacher. His first stories, published as a collection by the African Bookman in 1946, Man Must Live, were written while he was working as a clerk for an institute for the blind. During this time he was studying privately for the Matriculation certificate and teaching himself shorthand. He was earning £12 a month out of which he had to buy his books, send money to his mother - his

brother and sister were now in high school - and clothe himself. When he first became a high school teacher in Orlando township, he earned £13 a month. Four years after joining the staff he obtained the B.A. degree as an external student of the University of South Africa. He continued his studies "for the sheer love of studying English" and obtained a B.A. Honours degree. In 1956 he submitted a thesis entitled "The Non-European Character in South African Fiction" to the Department of English at the University of South Africa and satisfied, with distinction, the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. It was the first time this Department had awarded distinction for a senior degree.

Shortly afterwards Mphahlele was dismissed from his school for opposing the Bantu Education Act. Then began his wanderings described in the novel The Wanderer for which he won a prize of African Arts/Arts d'Afrique (a publication of the African Studies Centre at the University of California at Los Angeles) and a doctor's degree at the University of Denver.

He first went to Nigeria where he lectured at the University of Ibadan; from there he went to Paris to become head of the African Department of the Congress for Cultural Freedom; then to Nairobi where he headed the Chemchemi Institute, an organisation sponsored by the Fairfield Foundation of New York, which held workshops for writers. 1967 found him lecturing and preparing for a Doctorate degree at the University of Denver and in 1968 he taught at the University of Zambia. After a spell as lecturer at University College, Nairobi, he returned to Denver where he has become Professor of English literature.

I have given a detailed description of Mphahlele's life because it demonstrates the drive for recognition as a civilised man of the African writer against almost insurmountable odds. It is this drive which often gives vitality and power to their fiction in spite of the stock situations and trite characters. To be heard - to cease to be "The Invisible Man" - was an aim in itself.

Ezekiel Mphahlele's education, widespread literary activities and personality have made him spokesman for Black South Africans writing in English. His writing appears in many anthologies but, although he has published more short stories than any of the other writers, it is usually his memoirs and his other full-length non-fiction work, The African Image, from which excerpts are published. In his own anthology, African Writing Today (1967), he chose for inclusion a paper which he had read to a conference, "Remarks on Negritude"⁽⁷⁾

His short stories, with some notable exceptions, are sketches from real life and thus form an extension of his autobiographical writing. Often the two are identical. The incident of the sweet-potato seller in Down Second Avenue appears originally as a short story, "A Winter's Story", in the publication Fighting Talk. Conversely a section of Down Second Avenue appears as a short story in W.H. Whiteley's anthology, A Selection of African Prose (1959), as "The Woman" in The Living and Dead and Other Stories and as "The Woman Walks Out" in The Purple Renoster.⁽⁸⁾ It is not altogether

(7) Conference on African Literature in French and the University Curriculum held at the University of Dakar March, 1963.

(8) No. 2, Spring 1957.

correct, however, to consider Down Second Avenue as an autobiography. As we shall see later, this book, like Peter Abrahams' Tell Freedom and Return to Goli, Alfred Hutchinson's Road to Ghana, Nontando Jabavu's Drawn in Colour, Todd Matshikiza's Chocolates for my Wife and Bloke Modisane's Blame Me on History, represents a genre of its own - a mixture of autobiography, sketches, feuilleton and literary commentary. Mphahlele has gone a step further by extending the sketches into short stories. As a result he is always at ease when describing the background to his stories. We meet familiar characters in fact and fiction. Sello in "Out Brief Candle", for instance, is a messenger in an attorney's office like Mphahlele and "Tomorrow You Shall Reap" gives a good picture of the author's own youth in Pietersburg. "The Leaves were Falling" is based on a personal mental experience.

"When Africans say a person 'is there'," says Mphahlele, introducing the chapter on Ma-Lebona in Down Second Avenue, "they mean you cannot but feel she is alive; she allows you no room to forget she was born and is alive in flesh and spirit." Whether they really lived or not, Mphahlele's characters are certainly "there", such as Ma-Lebona herself, for instance, who was so clean that she often had meat taken out of boiling water to be rewashed, and who used to play tennis and always spoke English when she talked about it later; or Uncle, a former school-inspector and musician whose gambling urge pushed him into grooming a country girl for a beauty competition.

In an article entitled "Black and White"⁽⁹⁾ Mphahlele says that he has lived through three stages in the categories of African short-story writing, which

(9) The New Statesman, 10th September, 1960.

he describes as follows: "Between the outright protest of Richard Rive and James Matthews at the one end and the romantic escapism of Can Themba at the other, is a category in which rejection, revulsion and protest meet acceptance and conciliation." This third stage he defines in Down Second Avenue as "something (I hope) of a higher order, which is the ironic meeting between protest and acceptance in their widest terms."

If his earliest stories, those in the collection Man Must Live and Other Stories, represent escapism, then his brand of escapism is certainly not of the ivory-tower kind. The term "escapism" is used by Mphahlele as the opposite of protest. If your characters do not sit on a bench marked Europeans Only, they are escaping from their responsibility. The people in Man Must Live were often "carried away by wrong trains or the trains carried wrong passengers, whichever way you liked to put it." The stories deal mainly with Africans only so that there is no racial conflict. But the characters are neither passive nor does the author use them as romantically escapist sublimations. "The mad cruel world" drives a young foundling to homicide in "Out, Brief Candle". Zungu, in the title story, finds that the "world of love and plenty was a dream world...whose glories have vanished with the dawn of reality...The twinkle is gone. But there is something in that stolid blankness in those eyes, something of stubbornness. When he looks at you, you cannot help but read the stubborn words: What do you expect me to be - a magician or a superman, or a soft learned genteel animal? My Lord - I must live, man!"

There is a greater artistic concern here with the meaning of the experience than there is in his later

stories. Mphahlele reflects his own restless spirit as well as that of the world in which he moves, and attempts to interpret it.

In "The Leaves were Falling" he grasps the essence of Man's struggle to be true to himself, not to be a leaf among falling leaves on a dry sapless twig destined to decay; in other words not to follow in the wake of a crowd of religious or political opportunists. A subsidiary theme of contrast between country and town life is rendered in analytical terms as "changing the human social self of man into the unfeeling stone-hard interest in self." Unlike the Reverend Kumalo in Cry, the Beloved Country with his stereotyped naiveness, the Reverend Katsane Melato holds our sympathy as a shy and insecure human being who finds the inner strength to be himself. Strangely enough, although this was some ten years before Mphahlele left South Africa, he does this by removing himself from the conflict.

Stylistically Mphahlele adopts the sardonic and colloquial speech of his characters also in narration in these stories, a style which he continues through his work and which rarely appears contrived. The reader must never forget, Mphahlele seems to say, that narrator and characters are always a step ahead of him in their knowledge of the world. He makes no conscious use of symbolism and his metaphors are purely representative. They are used for the purpose of characterisation rather than as a symbolic means of communicating an idea. Zungu in "Man Must Live" is an uncomplicated African, the reader is reminded, and he therefore sees the empty house which his estranged wife has left him as having the yolk and white of an egg taken out and mocking him with the empty shell.

Soon after this one experiment with African fiction The African Bookman closed down and there was no outlet for African short stories until the magazine African Drum appeared on the scene a few years later. By now Mphahlele had a University education and had read voraciously. Dickens, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorky and Faulkner became his models.

Although he says that he developed "in spite of Drum" it is doubtful whether the short-story writers would have developed at all without it. There were no other possibilities for publication during the early nineteen-fifties except for occasional fiction in the leftist newspapers, The Guardian (later New Age and New Era) and Fighting Talk. Many of the writers turned to fiction for the only reason that Drum was publishing it.

In the article mentioned earlier, "Black and White", Mphahlele takes Drum to task for failing to provide a workshop for experimentation and for promoting a "tough superficial prose". In this respect Mphahlele developed in spite of being a contributor and one-time fiction editor of Drum. Some of his best writing appears in this magazine and there is nothing brash or superficial about the prose. His short stories appeared in Drum between 1953 and 1959, some under the pen-name of Bruno Eseki.

Between December 1956 and April 1957 Drum published his series about a family in Newclare Township. It is surprising that no extracts from this series have appeared in anthologies and that Mphahlele has not used it as a basis for a full-length book. Here again we have sketches but they are not autobiographical and the only feeling of which the author wanted to relieve him-

self is the urge to write. Characters, situations and plots come pouring out and the canvas is as vast and varied as that of a Dickens novel. The humour is strong - in fact the editor introduces one instalment as being about that "crazy mixed up family" - but although there is rollicking fun at times the stark grim realism of the life he depicts is clearly perceived. Nadia Street, the "Quiet Street" of the title of the first story, breaks out into violence: A deaf and dumb boy is abandoned by his parents and is choked to death by the strap that ties him to the bed:"

"There were urine pools and stools all over the floor. The sooty walls told a murky story of degenerate backyard lives, a rickety cupboard lay on its side and life-size cockroaches glided merrily in and about as if nothing had happened. The window was shut. There was nothing else, except death."

Mphahlele may have abandoned this style of writing because he felt that it was too derivative. It is a mixture of nineteenth century English tradition and early twentieth century American Negro writing, a style of which the main exponents are found in the West Indies to-day. The series entitled "Lesane", in another setting, could easily have come from the pen of V.S. Naipaul.

An earlier story, "Reef Train", is more compact and the plot becomes more important. Here, as in the Lesane stories, Mphahlele proves that he can elevate personal experience into something of a higher order. As an African living in an outlying township he must have made innumerable train-journeys. This story shows that the time was not wasted. It is the story of an old man's fear, as he rides to his destination. The fear and the story develop to a crescendo, rise to a climax and end in a twist. The lad who has been staring at the old man sitting opposite him in the train

was not, after all, the one who caused this sensation of fear. Those were three boys in the background. The lad opposite is the one who rescues him from the tsotsis. He had recognised the old man as his long-lost uncle coming to visit his sick mother, but he was a mentally backward lad, unable to speak much.

Another story in the classical tradition where the pointe or twist at the end supersedes character and circumstances is "The Suitcase". Few of the Drum stories have been republished or included in anthologies. "The Suitcase", however, appeared in his collection The Living and Dead and Other Stories, in Black Orpheus, in New Writing - recommended to the publishers by Nadine Gordimer - and in a Dutch anthology. The plot of the story is tight, if contrived, the characters plausible. Again a situation is introduced, expectancy rises and leads to the climax. Timi, unemployed and desperate, is waiting "for sheer naked chance", a desperate chance to find a way of bringing home something to his wife on Old Year's Eve. He finds it on a bus, when a woman passenger leaves a suitcase behind. Another passenger denounces him for taking it and at the police station he swears repeatedly that the case is his. But he has gambled with chance and lost. The case contains a dead baby.

In most of the other stories in the collection The Living and Dead racial conflict becomes the main theme. The Drum days were over now and Mphahlele was writing for a wider public. Man must live, it is true, but this was no longer sufficient. Man, the Black man, had to be involved.

The Living and Dead and Other Stories was a special publication of Black Orpheus published by the

Ministry of Education, Ibadan. The characterisation and background of the early sketches and the plot and planning of "The Suitcase" give way to social situations and conflict as the main interest. The characters, especially the Whites, become puppets. A favourite plot is the one of the title story where the White man suddenly becomes aware of his servant as a human being, but decides that he had "better continue treating him as a name, not as another human being". His White characters, like those of many African writers in South Africa, are constantly aware of the Black man. Since this is not a true picture of South African Colour relationships, the tension is an artificial one. It took Nadine Gordimer to portray a far more subtle relationship, one where the Black man or woman obtrudes into the indifference of the White man. The conflict is no less bitter even though it rarely comes into the open:

The "do-gooder" is another stock figure in South African fiction by Black writers, but rarely does she get killed as in "We'll have Dinner at Eight". It seems rather drastic retribution for the crime of condescension. Miss Pringle is introduced in the story as making "a conscious effort to win non-white friends, which she underlined with an eternal smile on her lips". Compare this with a similar character in Richard Rive's "Middle Passage"⁽¹⁰⁾ who is described far more subtly as "the type of white who shook hands with a black too soon". Similarly Harry Bloom's location

(10) Contrast, August, 1969.

manager in Episode, who dispenses justice and establishes welfare centres, is totally unaware of the hatred his charges bear him. Mphahlele seems to have had a clearer conception of the lack of this understanding between Black and White in his earlier stories. In "Lesane" he describes how White people appear to a young African country lad. He is shocked that they never talk to each other in lifts, trains and buses. "They just look straight ahead of them, unfriendly, uncompromising, self-possessed, mysterious, just dumb."

The last story in this collection, "He and the Cat", is an attempt at a different style. The reader is not told what the "burden" is "that would fall off" as soon as the narrator has seen and spoken to the lawyer. The story is merely a moment in time, which dissolves into recognition that the man closing envelope after envelope on a hot afternoon in a lawyer's waiting room and fixedly smiling at the lawyer's client is blind:

"An invincible pair, he and the cat (a picture above him)...scorning our shames and hurts and the heat, seeming to hold the key to the immediate imperceptible and the most remote unforeseeable."

As an impressionist reflection it is perceptively told, even if it lacks any inner significance. This story appeared in The Classic, then a new outlet for South African writers of all sections.

Mphahlele's latest collection of short stories is entitled In Corner B and was published in Nairobi in 1967. Mphahlele was now no longer purely a South African writer who could rely on the Black-White conflict theme for world acclaim. He must write a short story for its own sake. Some of these stories were either

written earlier ("Man Must Live", "The Coffee Cart Girl" - which appeared as "Across Down Stream" in Drum in 1957 -) or they go back to an earlier style such as "Grieg on a Stolen Piano" which is an autobiographical sketch like those in Down Second Avenue.

His writing in the new stories, however, has become more mature. There is an economy of words and a conciseness of imagery lacking before:

"There were the brutal Sundays when he joined the Pietersburg youth, then working in the kitchens, on their wild march to the open ground just outside Bantule location for a sport of bare fisticuffs. They marched in white shorts on broad slabs of feet in tennis shoes and vaseline-smearred legs; now crouching, now straightening up, now wielding their fists wrapped in white handkerchiefs. One handkerchief dangled out of a trouser pocket just for show. The brutal fisticuffs; mouths flushed with blood; then the white mounted police who herded them back to the kitchens; the stampede of horses' hooves as the police chased after them, for fun...

"Those were the days when chance lifted him like a crane out of the kitchens and out of the boxing arena and deposited him in Silver-town location."

Nature enters to a greater extent than before in creating a symbolic atmosphere of menace, for instance, as when the narrator is fleeing through the thick bush and remembers the stories of giant snakes which leaned over sleeping travellers to drink, stories of which "the theme was that of man, helpless as he himself was in the bush or on a tree or in a rock cave on a hill, who was unable to ward off danger, to escape a terrible power that was everywhere around him. Something seemed to be stalking him all the time, waiting for the proper moment to pounce on him." The choice of title of this story, "Grieg on a Stolen Piano", the one about the uncle who tried to make money by grooming a country beauty for a city beauty contest, is an excellent one.

Stories like "Mrs. Plum" show a new sensitivity towards human relationships which transcend the situation. This story fits into the category described in "Black and White" "where rejection, revulsion and protest meet acceptance and conciliation". The bitterness is still there but underlying it is a new compassion which regrets the lack of understanding between man and man. The sophisticated thought expressed in the naive words of a domestic servant is reminiscent of Nadine Gordimer. Mrs. Plum, the Madam, is a liberal and goes to jail for her views. "You know," she says to her servant, "I like your people, Karabo, the Africans." But Karabo wonders whether she likes her and Dick the gardener as individual people. Mphahlele was no longer addressing a chiefly White audience. Even when published in Drum he must have hoped for a readership outside South Africa. Now, probably influenced by some of the Nigerian writers among whom he was living, he was writing for Africans.

Bitterness, says Mphahlele, is not a healthy state of mind and feeling to revel in." Mphahlele's bitterness, says William Plomer,⁽¹¹⁾ "is not the bitterness of despair or fanaticism, but the taste of the life he has known." The taste of the life he has known is the substance of his writing. He does not revel in it; he uses it to create short fiction which is now in the process of fulfilling its early promise. As he says in the story which is his own favourite, "In Corner B":

"In the midst of all these living conditions (the physical and mental violence around them; the privation; police raids; political strikes and attendant clashes between the police and boycotters...) and because of them the people

(11) Review of Down Second Avenue, The New Statesman, 25th April, 1959.

of Corner B alternately clung together desperately and fell away from the centre; like birds that scatter when the tree on which they have gathered is shaken. And yet for each individual life, a new day dawned and set, and each acted out his own drama which the others might never know of or might only get a glimpse of or guess at."

Mphahlele in his short stories follows Peter Abrahams who, in Dark Testament, produced sketches from or based on real life. Abrahams' characters are clearly and simply portrayed and the incidents come sharply into focus. These stories were published in 1942 before his novels. They show that, while he could make an impact by pin-pointing an incident, he was quite incapable of sustaining such writing in a novel. His drunk in "Saturday Night" is psychologically convincing whereas a similar character in Mine Boy described over and over again in the same terms becomes embarrassingly sentimental.

Mphahlele came to terms, not with the world in which he lived - since such a gesture of accommodation or even compromise would have been one-sided to the point of defeatism - but he succeeded in establishing his own vis-a-vis. Few of the other short-story writers have been able to penetrate beneath the realities or stand away from them and find necessary insight into human reaction to the situation or into human relationships.

Nkosi, speaking of the world of Negro writers in South Africa, describes these conditions as a "gargantuan reality and says "it impinges so strongly upon the imagination that the temptation is often compelling to use the ready-made plots of violence, chicanery and racial love tragedies as representing universal truth when, in fact, actual insight into human tragedy may lie beneath this social and political

turbulence." This world, he says, "is a familiar one to those who have lived in race-torn areas: the ugly leer on the claustrophobic face of violence, the sweltering heat of talk about to simmer into social explosion, the senseless arbitrary death, the frenzied quest for emotional release in sex and drink. They are concerned with the phantasies evoked by a black and white world which, though divided, simultaneously seeks and is terrified by social fusion."⁽¹²⁾

Unable to come to terms with their experience, the city dwelling African writer of the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties either had to confront the situation or escape from it. But what form was the escape to take? Romantic literature for the popular market would have to be written under an assumed European name since there was little outlet for much writing in the African press. What Mphahlele calls romantic escape literature, stories which turn their back on the life of oppression, was occasionally published in Drum in the early days. But Drum, too, closed its doors to such stories when it later turned towards popular readership and published very little fiction by Africans. Physical escape - the one-way exit permit - does not affect the issue. In Europe and America the African short-story writer from South Africa still largely continues to write as a South African. Nathaniel Nakaza, one of the writers who left the country, said that he did so because of a desire to avoid perishing in his own bitterness. His death by

(12) "African Fiction: South Africa: Protest Africa Report, October, 1962.

suicide a few years later tragically demonstrates that this was impossible.

Confrontation, as a psychological opposite to both escape and reconciliation, means protest writing and most of the fiction written during this period falls into this category, although rarely is there the extreme revolutionary bitterness which looks upon literature as just another front in a battle for a cause. A great deal has been written on the controversial subject whether writers can turn out creative literature in the process of involving themselves in public affairs, the term "relevance" replacing "commitment" as the current cliché. There is, of course, no answer to this question. Moreover, it is equally impossible to draw a line where protest literature ends and creative writing begins. Shelley, Voltaire and Tolstoi, after all, also made their protest.

"Conflict," says Nadine Gordimer, "can provide a deep and powerful stimulus but a culture as a whole cannot be made out of the groans and sparks that fly... The thirst that comes from the salt of conflict will need some quenching. Africa is a dry land in more ways than one."⁽¹³⁾ And "No artist will ever be content to substitute the noise of war for the music of the soul," says Can Themba.⁽¹⁴⁾ But the noise of war and the sparks that flew were the only raw material at the writers' disposal. "...an artist accomplishes his

(13) "The Novel and the Nation", Times Literary Supplement, 11th September, 1961.

(14) Review of Darkness and Light ed. by Peggy Rutherford. Drum, May, 1959.

best when working at his best with the material he knows best. And up to this time at least 'race' is perforce the thing the American Negro poet knows best." Thus James Weldon Johnson in defending Negro poetry "stimulated by a sense of race".⁽¹⁵⁾ The writer should be free to choose his subject matter as he wishes, but he must interpret and not merely react.

This is not the case in stories such as Arthur Maimane's "A Manner of Speaking",⁽¹⁶⁾ which does little but demonstrate a situation: a Black boy refuses to call a White woman "Missus" and is eventually shot dead. Yet this type of story usually provides exciting reading. The medium in which such stories are published, journals such as Africa South, The New African or Transition, guarantees a sympathetic readership and the reader is carried along by the stark realism of the events.

These events are often described with skill. In Webster Makaza's "Wheels of Justice"⁽¹⁷⁾ the scene is laid effectively:

"The judge was in his chair and old man van Dyk was in the dock, and outside, two banks of storm-clouds in the northern sky moved ominously towards each other.

"The court had grown quite dark as the black clouds massed across the sun, but it took the lightning to show how dark it really was."

Later, outside, the hostile mob turns over van Dyk's

(15) The Book of American Negro Poetry.

(16) Africa South in Exile, Vol. IV, No. 4, July - September, 1960.

(17) The New African, 13th July, 1963.

car because he has been unjustly found not guilty of kicking a Black man. The car bursts into flames:

"A little trickle of liquid began to run from under the side of the car down the camber of the street. It did not run far, for as it flowed it evaporated. The young man had managed to wrench open the door above him and was pushing with his head. He still had that cigarette in his mouth and its smoke was getting into his eyes. His hands were lousy with the door and he spat out the cigarette and it fell into the street and rolled in jerks down the camber towards the little pool of petrol.

"There was a flash, more vivid than lightning, then a shattering roar, then the tearing crackle of hungry flames, and, above all, the old man's screams."

Then comes the storm, dispersing the now bloodthirsty mob.

As in some of Mphahlele's stories, the symbolism does not extend meaning. Black clouds, lightning and man-made fire do not in any way help us to understand the violence, they merely underline it.

The story ends as an African policeman guards the "twisted heap of junk" - all that is left of the car - and "a sodden mass of pulp that had once been two human beings."

The construction of the story is excellent and the tale is told in simple words of stark realism, but even here the excitement lies in the events and not in the drama of interacting characters. The characters are merely types, not in the sense of allegorical symbolism but purely out of the author's inability to motivate them psychologically.

When Makaza does try to enter the mind of a character he fails completely. In "Black Boy"⁽¹⁸⁾ a

(18) The Classic, Vol. 111, No. 3.

simple country lad is faced with a situation where he is able to save a White man pinned under a car, who asks for his help and at the same time swears at him. The boy eventually turns away and runs home, pretending to himself that the incident never happened. Makaza is unable to handle drama which is not carried along by a minute-by-minute account of events and the story therefore lacks conviction. Makaza's story "The Slave"⁽¹⁹⁾ won third prize in a competition held by The Classic judged by William Plomer, James Baldwin and Noni Jabavu. Makaza writes well and the prize is not undeserved but again there is not sufficient suspense in the interplay of characters, a White farmer and diamond digger and his servant. It is interesting to compare this story with the story which was awarded the first prize, written by an African from Portugese East Africa, Luis Bernardo Honwana. Here, too, is protest writing, but the subdued violence unobtrusively symbolised by a black snake attacking a White man's dog activates almost unbearable suspense and is more frightening than the direct violence portrayed by our South African writers. It is reminiscent of the symbolic cornering and killing of a rat in the opening scene of Richard Wright's Native Son.

The South Africans of this period rarely resort to symbolism. When the story does not record a series of violent events it is often pointless. But this pointlessness in itself may have been designed as a form of protest, by illustrating the hopelessness of the

(19) The Classic, Vol. 11, No. 3.

situation. Such a story is Peter Kumalo's "Death in the Sun".⁽²⁰⁾ The theme is not apartheid, for the death is caused by a gang-killing, but the pointless loss of life may well have been intended to symbolise the hopelessness of life itself:

"In his open eyes, unstarving and looking at no one in particular, one could see emotional conflict and horror at the crazy and frightening knowledge that that amazing thing, Death, was so very near and that he was so very alone and that all the while his life's blood was steadily pouring out of his pierced heart. And we, we felt so terribly helpless because we could do nothing to save this young, tender life."

This man was dead, but others, as Alex La Guma puts it, are still "sucking at the disintegrating bitter cigarette-end of life."⁽²¹⁾ "Die here het geskommel en die dice het verkeerd vir ons geval / Dis al." as Adam Small, the Coloured Afrikaans poet, says in his best-known poem. This hopelessness and pointlessness Kumalo succeeds in conveying to us.

The scope for the African protest story is limited because its subject matter is limited. Night raids, lack of understanding between master and servant, conflict between the well-educated African working in a menial position and a poorly educated female office worker or government clerk are the favourite plots and on these one cannot ring too many changes. Most of the writers lived in the African townships around Johannesburg, so that the background was similar too.

(20) An African Treasury ed. Langston Hughes.

(21) "Tattoo Marks and Nails". Black Orpheus, February, 1964.

They thus all fall into a convention which, however ~~is~~ ^{is} monotonous, is accepted by the reader of the medium in which it appears and at whom it is aimed.

At its most direct and violent South African protest writing teeters on the brink of vituperation and hides behind satire. In Lewis Nkosi's story "The Prisoner" his African character has a dream: he is the master and gaoler while George, the man of easy gesture, of the contemptuous voice and mocking eye, George who lost the last vestiges of humour whenever it came to social conventions like being called bwana or baas, this same George becomes the prisoner. There are the "false and unjustified reports in the newspapers", those "garbage cans of rumour and scandal," about torture and unmentionable brutality, when all that ever happens to George is a bit of thumb-screwing and electric shock, and this only when he gets out of hand, for instance when he "got terribly sozzled" on Christmas Eve and "was reduced to a raving maniac":

"He was as you might say, in the clutches of a disgusting nostalgia for the old days when he was master and lord over the place. Completely beside himself with excitement, he marched up and down the place shouting and foaming at the mouth; his whole face was beaded with sweat, the eyes bulged horribly and his emaciated legs clattered like sticks on the floorboard. Never have I seen such an exhibition. The man had quite forgotten the humble station to which he had been reduced by Fate in the latter years..."

The story begins deceptively calmly: "Like their jailers prisoners are the same basically" and works up gradually to the full horror of the imaginary situation in reverse, used to illustrate the real one.

Generally, however, the African writer is too sensitive about his position to indulge even in

Galgenhumor. Casey Motsisi, a natural humorist, used satirical allegory in his early Drum columns as a vehicle for his wit rather than as a means of protest. For example:

"It was the year 1759. Two bugs were sitting and chatting in a hook of the wall in the House of Discussion...A leading official had just remarked that half the members of the Opposition were asses, whereupon someone asked him to withdraw, saying that half the members of the Opposition were not asses, whereupon he was roundly congratulated for being the first person to withdraw a remark instead of stamping out of the house like a bull."

One feels that Motsisi sets out with the idea of fulfilling a satirical purpose but his natural sense of humour takes over and runs wild. His later writing is often reminiscent of O. Henry, such as the story "A Very Important Appointment",⁽²²⁾ in which the action takes place through a haze of liquor. A party of Africans are setting out for a "mixed" party, to meet some Cambridge students, but the driver is drunk and driving without lights. He overturns the car. One of the passengers comes out of a drunken stupor and suggests repeatedly that the car, lying on its side, should be put into second gear. "That will make her go." When they are finally rescued by a White couple, a woman passenger insists that they forgo the party and go home to her baby.

"As the car turned and sped in the direction of Sophiatown, Nat, who was not aware of what was going on, kept shouting:

"Hillbrow here we come.
 "Hillbrow here we come.
 "Meet us at the door with a glass of wine.
 "Hillbrow here we come.
 "Hillbrow, Hillbrow. Hillbrow - the White Sophiatown."

This is the end of the story.

(22) The Classic, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963:

After this story there seems to have been a long period of silence from Casey Motsisi. In 1968 he appears again in The Classic with a story entitled "Boy-Boy",⁽²³⁾ Gone is the sardonic humour and the wildness. It is an unhappy story of a lunatic boy and interesting only for its contrast to Motsisi's earlier writing. A journalist of education and polish, one-time editor of The Classic, Motsisi is the only one of the Sophiatown literary coterie still in South Africa. It is hardly surprising that the laughter has deserted him. He is at present on the editorial staff of World, a newspaper for Africans published by the Argus Group of South African Newspapers.

We note therefore that humour in the African English short story in South Africa either becomes almost vicious as in Nkosi's "Prisoner" or it ends on an alcoholic note as in Motsisi's story. Gentle satire is left to the White and Coloured writers who are able to stand back sufficiently to perceive and portray the finer nuances of the conflict. Richard Rive's story "Middle Passage", for instance, is about a woman who is producing a play about Negro slaves in an African township and appeals to a Coloured man for help because she finds that she cannot "get through" to the African actors. The story ends at the beginning of a rehearsal when the woman says: "...Let's start with Act 11. I want you to make like slaves'."

When the satirist can no longer escape from a reality too stark for portrayal, he becomes a cynic.

(23) The Classic, Vol. 11, No. 4.

Cynicism is evidence of defeat when it is turned inward and if it is turned to face the outside world it can lead to successful writing only if expressed with sufficient wit. The humour need not be kindly, but it must never be a mere sneer. Can Themba, the most interesting personality and the most talented of the writers of the late fifties and early sixties, often turned cynic but he always expressed himself with vigour and wit.

Like that of most of his contemporaries, Themba's output was not large. He was a working journalist, discovered as a writer as a result of his first published short story, "Mob Passion", which won a prize in the first short story contest held by Drum, in 1953.

Themba has been accused of throwing off cheap potboilers. It is true that his early Drum stories are not his best writing and often the style is lifted from American comic-magazine fiction. Yet they already foreshadow the excitement which he is capable of expressing, an excitement inherent not so much in what he has to say as in the vigour, the lack of self-consciousness and the whimsical wit with which he expresses it.

There are already flashes of the unusual verbal twist in these stories which distinguish some of his later writing. "There was no gate to the yard in Gibson Street, because there was no fence to make a gate into," he explains in "Marta". In this story the character of the title, drunk, nearly murdered by her husband who has just gone off to work because "you do anything, but you go to work", "reached out for the child and dragged it across her body. It felt like

trying to hoist yourself up by tugging up your socks." The plot admittedly is highly improbable. A drunken slut takes home a young boy from a shebeen because she wants to explain to him why he must not "go rough". She and the boy become involved in an orgy of dancing. The husband finds them and kills the boy. But Themba's descriptive skill does not falter in the face of such melodrama:

"Suddenly Marta sprang up and jived to the rhythms of the rumbling drums. The others chanted for her. Marta's arms went out before her, her legs spread, her eyes drooped and her mouth opened a little, and she moved forward in a shuffle like a creature drawn irresistibly, half-consciously to its doom...Then just as suddenly she stopped, so suddenly that the shock still shivered through the rest of her body. Infinitely minute tremblings..."

Mphahlele, who considered Themba's writing as pot-boilers and "strictly escapist" and accused him of revelling "in a verbal felicity" to "protect himself against the 'whips and scorns' of oppression", yet included a story in each of his anthologies. Modern African Stories contains "The Dube Train" and African Writing Today "The Urchin". Both are the type of story - the eruption of township violence - upon which Mphahlele frowned. "Dube Train" is written in the first person, yet Themba makes no protest that he, a graduate High School teacher, must travel third class. The fact that the lateness of the trains, the shoving savagery of the crowds and the grey aspect around him - "Dube station with the prospect of congested trains filled with sour-smelling humanity" - gave him an "impression of a hostile life directing its malevolence plumb at me", he ascribes to a "rotten and shivering" Monday morning feeling. The passengers of the train who watch a man being stabbed and the culprit flung out

of the window "were just greedily relishing the thrilling episode of the morning". Yet is it not a silent protest that this was "just an incident in the morning Dube train" and that in this world in which he lived there was no room for sentiment?

The characters are described with startling realism:

"I was sitting across a hulk of a man. His hugeness was obtrusive to the sight when you saw him and to the mind when you looked away. His head tilted to one side in a half-drowsy position, with flaring nostrils and trembling lips. He looked like a kind of genie, pretending to sleep but watching your every nefarious intention. His chin was stubbled with crisp, little black barbs. The neck was corded, and the enormous chest was a live barrel that heaved forth and back. The overall he wore was open almost down to the navel, and he seemed to have nothing else underneath. I stared, fascinated, at his large breasts with their winking, dark nipples."

"The Urchin" appeared earlier (1963) in Drum accompanied by a photographic illustration showing the raising of Sophiatown. In both stories Themba writes about the people and the places he knew so well, not only because he lived there but because it was the raw material out of which he made his living as a Drum journalist. "Requiem for Sophiatown", his best known piece of writing, is not fiction but it comes alive with the same lusty style as the short stories. Like Mphahlele, he seems more at home when writing fact, and here he gives his sense ^{of} ~~for~~ the absurd full play:

"Dwarf, who used to find a joke in everything. He used to walk into Bloke's place, catch us red-handed playing the music of Mozart."

He finds the answer to the old question of whether you would like your sister to marry a Kaffir: "But is it honestly true that we don't want to have affairs with white girls? What kind of white supremacy is this

that cannot stand fair competition?"

In an article in The New African he becomes even more explicit on the subject. Here he retells Shakespeare's Julius Caesar "more contemporary", after reading Sol Plaatje's translation into Tswana, which gives it a "kgotla atmosphere". He goes a step further:

"One thing that still reverberates in the Transkei is the magnificent speech said to have been made by a young Xhosa lawyer on the occasion of Kaiser's funeral."

He is quite serious in finding African life akin to that of Shakespeare's stage. He compares a king of jive, Dumizulu, with Falstaff. This, he says, is no accident. Only Shakespeare's London or today's Johannesburg could have produced such a character. When he proceeds to compare Can Themba's love life with that of Othello the essay unfortunately becomes unquotable.

By 1963 Themba had become a more accomplished and polished short story writer although his output was very limited. "The Suit" is a story about adultery and its gruesome punishment, told with mounting tension. The wife's lover leaves his suit behind, and the husband forces her to seat the suit at the table at every meal as an honoured guest. He insists on this even during a party for the members of a Cultural Club which she has joined, and thus drives her to suicide. The violence is no longer in the action, but contained within the characters. He describes the husband's reaction to the woman's death thus:

"Feeling drunk, late that sabbath, he crashed through his kitchen door, onwards to his bedroom. Then he saw her.

"They have a way of saying in the argot of

Sophiatown: 'Cook out of the head!' signifying that someone was impacted with such violent shock that whatever whiffs of alcohol still wandered through his head were instantaneously evaporated and the man stood sober before stark reality."

This story appeared in The Classic Vol. 1, No. 1. Three years later, in Vol. 11, no. 1, Can Themba's tribute to Nathaniel Nakasa was torn out by hand from each copy because the Amendment to the Suppression of Communism Act had just been passed under which a writer's entire output could be banned. By then he had left South Africa and was teaching in Swaziland. He died there in 1968, and The Classic Vol. 11, No. 4, although not allowed to quote from his writing, published tributes to him. Stanley Motjuwadi writes: "The official records have it that Can Themba died of thrombosis in Manzini, but Can Canza, Can Molimo Themba died the day the banning order was served on him. Those who saw the reckless way in which he lived after that regarded his death as a kind of prolonged suicide." Themba, perhaps, like his character in "The Suit", stood sober before a reality he could no longer bear.

By this time very few stories by Africans were appearing in periodicals and when they did they were no longer recognisably by Africans. The subject matter and type of characters began to change. Instead of shebeen queens and messengers who refuse to call typists "missus" we now have University students who attend avant-garde mixed parties.

Lewis Nkosi, more aware of what is happening on the literary scene than any of the others - he once remarked that black South Africans wrote as though Dostoevesky, Kafka and Joyce had never lived, and he might have added Proust, Henry James, Virginia Wolff X and the French post-war writers of the anti-roman -

wrote a story entitled "The Hotel Room" in which there is no Colour or social theme. A typical anti-hero of modern fiction, "empty and world-weary", is looking for "an insincerely pursued love affair, ending quite properly with the parting drink on the terrace of the hotel and half-hearted promise to write soon." He finds a girl equally bored and at the end it is the man who says: "Helen, I love you." The background is a tropical holiday island full of American tourists, not the stereotyped "loud-mouthed and vulgar" but those with "a look of bored elegance, a mannered reticence and a willing deference to others." They all disappear when the rain comes, which makes the setting for the story a "grey monotony" outside and inside the hotel room. There is nothing to stamp this story as African, and it would be interesting to find out why Nkosi, all of whose other writing is committed to the African cause, chose to write a story without overtones of conflict. Perhaps he wished to show that he was capable of writing a story that could stand on its own literary merit and he does indeed succeed. "The Hotel Room" is neatly constructed and the characters well observed and treated with rare insight. There is a well-substantiated development of the main character from self-conscious ennui towards a recognition of truth. Nkosi has dropped the effort to portray a Black man or a White man and the result is a portrait of a human being. The story appeared in Contrast,⁽²⁴⁾ the editorials of which have stressed that the race theme cannot produce great and lasting art. The true artist, writes Philip Segal, must go deeper than merely "tracing the obvious contrast on the surface": "He explores,

(24) Vol. 11, No. 2. Autumn, 1963.

connects, resolves and reconciles at a much deeper level than that of observation."⁽²⁵⁾ Nkosi has gone deeper than sociological recording but he has not really delved beneath the surface of observation of character and of another milieu.

The Classic, like Drum, played an important role in encouraging African literature. Among the contributors to The Classic today are the talented writers who have not been banned, such as Webster Makaza and Casey Motsisi. Competitions have been held and in 1967, as we have seen, Makaza won a third prize. Sometimes the editors uncover unusual talent. Volume 111, No. 3, 1970, contains a story by a young African in Durban who is barely out of his teens. Here, a little late, is South Africa's Palm Wine Drinkard. Meshack Hlongwane's story "A Burden of Sorrow" is a simple, if rambling, and naive story of tragic love. It is written in the second person: "After church I saw you going home with other girls. You were laughing and talking. You glanced at me once..." The Burden of Sorrow is that of a schoolboy who loves a schoolgirl. When the boy leaves for boarding school the girl is seduced by her teacher. She does not tell the boy for fear of losing him. When he finds out that she is pregnant they weep together.

"Then I stopped crying, but you went on. I cast my eyes around as grief attacked me more like marine waves as tall as high buildings, and there wild berries around a willow tree in a shallow dale near us were ripe and happy. In the same shallow dale were trees of light wood which grew tall, were more white than green, and had broad leaves which were green on top and white

underneath...Their broad fresh leaves squeaked as the wind blew and their dry ones still clinging to their other-trees and some of which had fallen covering the marshy dale, rustled like when a broad-leaved newspaper was paged through. These indeed were sounds and sights of happiness but we could not be happy. As the fragile branches of the willow tree swayed in rhythmic patterns you cried. So powerful and strong was your grief that the beauty of nature around us could not erase it to happiness."

When the boy returns from school once more the girl has her baby with her and he tells her that his love for her is dead.

"When I wrote to you that my love for you was dead I thought that I would never be obsessed by your image again but in 1969 I went to your home and stood at the gate several times wanting to see you and apologise. But when I caught glimpses of you, like when you went out with a dish for washing eating utensils or to spill out dirty water, my courage changed to grief and grief, like fear, made me tremble."

This passage with its curious mixture of pure poetry and charming bathos, is typical of the simple flow of the story. There is not a false note in the narrative, as it moves swiftly to its conclusion. The lyrical quality is enhanced by the unusual use of the second person and the repetition of sentences. The mention of the date in the middle of a poignant love scene endears the writer to the reader, as does this little aside: "Oh, how many African teachers have landed schoolgirls to this fate worse than death in this country of ours? As each and every year begins too much is in store for innocent schoolgirls..."

There is a second story by this author in the same issue. The curious turn of phrase is somewhat different here, but again it has the charm of earnest sincerity, even when the sentences sound as though the author has worked with a dictionary and an

English phrase-book by his side: "Against his libidinous wish of chopping down this baby, ripping open its chest, and cutting off portions from its body for purposes of sorcery, he voted, knowing perfectly well that he might be on a no-return ticket to the farmer's house." There is very little Colour consciousness in Hlongwane's writing, except for the unusual comment in the second story that a baby "had not yet been adjusted to a pigmentocratic world of fear and anxiety". The character of the title, "The Man Who Stole a White Kid", is a "migratory charlatan" who steals a baby with "the idea of getting a part of the Whiteman's anatomy for which he would reap a fortune at any land of the isolated". He is converted to Goodness when the baby reminds him of a White childhood friend. Hlongwane's view of childhood is curiously Wordsworthian:

"There the little one lay, dreaming of the planet of reality he had just left, not in terms of black and white, but in terms of Godliness and Evil. On that pillow of feathers rested an infant's fontanelle, enclosing the young brain of fathomless depths of reality, gigantic solutions to all problems and infinite powers of releasing the truth in the midst of falsehood this world had not only told, but had also put into practice, because it had not yet been sullied by this life. It had not yet been tarnished by abstract ideas and conceptions..."

The "migratory charlatan" turns from his evil ways when he returns to these same dreams of childhood. If English had been Hlongwane's mother tongue, it is doubtful whether the finer nuances in the conflict between good and evil could have been conveyed. By coming to his medium of expression without preconceived phrases, he is forced to make his meaning crystal clear. This, too, is the attraction of Amos Tutuola's Falm Wine Drinkard.

These isolated stories are all that remains of African fiction in periodicals today. We have seen how this came about mainly through the banning of the writers.

Except for those of Mphahlele's and Abrahams', no collections of short stories by African writers in English in Southern Africa have appeared. The general reader may come across an occasional story in a periodical, but he must rely mainly on reading stories, either original or reprinted from periodicals, in anthologies. It is an interesting comment on their value to consider which stories have been chosen for inclusion and in what context.

Although the short story is generally recognised as the form of prose literature in which the African writing in English in Southern Africa expresses himself, very few anthologies of African writing include short fiction. In fact, out of nineteen general or prose anthologies of African writing South of the Sahara, only twelve pieces of short fiction by Black South Africans are included, whereas there are twenty-one extracts from autobiographies.

The purpose of any anthology is to preserve the best for its own sake or in a particular context; that is, it may be a collection of literary items chosen for their own value or, regardless of their intrinsic value, as representative of the particular kind of literature collected. Anthologies containing short stories by Africans writing in English in South Africa are mainly of the latter kind.

Many of the contributions were chosen purely for the sake of finding a certain African element in them and, in their over-emphasis on the value of the African's heritage, such ~~are~~ anthologies often show a lack of critical discrimination. Such a collection is Darkness and Light by Peggy Rutherford, which had been commissioned by Jim Bailey as proprietor of Drum.

Themba's "Mob Passion" and Dyke Sentso's "Under the Bluegum Tree" - two South African stories included - are certainly representative of Drum writing of the period in depicting tribal passion, the one in the typical Drum language of American slang occasionally interlaced with Themba's individual satiric style, the other more naively in the Biblical style later used by Paton, but by this time, 1958, better stories had been published in Drum. The emphasis is on the darkness, rather than the light. Miss Rutherford still saw her authors, when she met them, as seemingly "rehearsing for a first night of Othello". Yet one must also regard her work in the same light as the first volume of W.H. Whiteley's A Selection of African Prose in which he states his intention as fulfilling a "great need to bring to bear upon African literature the interest in living traditions and the concern for discovering order and proportion within them which Mr. T.S. Eliot introduced into European literary criticism with his Selected Essays." In this context there is little room in Miss Rutherford's anthology, and none in Whiteley's, for short stories by Black Anglophone South Africans.

The early anthologies of African writing south of the Sahara usually included political, economic and theological writing as well as fiction and poetry in accordance with Claude Wauthier's injunction to "study literature" in the more general context "of the whole African cultural revival."⁽²⁶⁾ This has led to anthologies such as Anne Tibble's African / English Literature which aims to develop "tentative insights" into the

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The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa.

interpretation of another race and culture "by which alone...human understanding can grow" and in which again there is no room for South African short stories - and especially to anthologies in languages other than English such as Jahn's Das Junge Afrika which aims simply to introduce a foreign culture by letting it speak for itself. Jahn, according to his own reasoning regarding the writing of Mphahlele,⁽²⁷⁾ includes his "Master of Doornvlei".

The above is one interpretation of Negritude. Langston Hughes gives another. He sees it as the "expression of the basic beauty of Negro life in Africa." On this basis we would not be able to blame him for excluding short stories by the writers under consideration here in his anthology An African Treasury (1969) which contains a great deal of other Black South African writing. This omission cannot be accidental, since Hughes first became interested in African writing after judging a short story contest for Drum in 1953. Yet he does include some political writing in the anthology.

Following the Sun (1960) was published in Eastern Germany and therefore accents the protest element in stories like Maimane's "The Hungry Boy", about the conditions of township life, and Mphahlele's rather pointless and unsubtle "The Living and Dead".

Later anthologists chose their contributions with a view to their suitability for school or university use, and although they still had to be repre-

(27) See chapter on Review of Related Investigations page 31.

sentative of trends in African writing there was a greater emphasis on intrinsic value. It was no longer sufficient, as Richard Rive put it in the introduction to his anthology Modern African Prose, to claim a reaction from the African reader who saw, with Caliban, "his own reflection and be able to say, or rather assert, 'this island's mine'." In the anthology he includes stories by Coloured writers who do not happen to fall within the confines of this study.

"Black Africa is becoming more and more aware of itself and it is our aim, by limiting the anthology, to reflect this," Mphahlele clearly states when introducing his anthology African Writing Today. His selection is a very carefully chosen one. For short stories he selected Can Themba's "The Urchin" and Nkosi's "The Prisoner". The latter, as we have seen, is a forceful, if sometimes too violent, satire. Mphahlele was not an admirer of Can Themba's, whom he considered as "basic Drum: romantic imagery, theatrical characters, Hollywood with a lace of poetic justice."⁽²⁸⁾ He must have chosen this story because it displayed only a minimum of these characteristics and more of the individuality and sardonic humour for which Themba was admired by others. Similarly he chose "Dube Train" for his other collection, Modern African Stories (with Ayitey Komey). Not only is there no sentimentality in this story but it expressly conveys the attitude that in his world there is no room even for sentiment. The bitterness is expressed in terms of dynamic action, a

(28) "Black and White" The New Statesman, 10th September, 1960.

battle to the death between decency and evil in a train. In his introduction to this collection the editors stress the importance of the Africans' contribution to the English language and cite Themba's dialogue of a tsotsi in this story as an example. He chose for inclusion his own "Griég on a Stolen Piano", which I also consider his best story.

The aim of Nadine Gordimer and Lionel Abrahams, too, was literary rather than sententious. They selected Mphahlele's experimental story "He and the Cat" and Themba's "The Suit", neither of which is representative either of its authors or of South African Black writing today. The choice is thus purely one of preference, which is perfectly legitimate.

Similarly Ulli Beier chose the stories he considered best from the magazine Black Orpheus, the aim of which was ~~purely~~ and simply to provide an outlet for creative writing. He, too, chose "He and the Cat", and Modisane's "The Situation".

I have given what may appear to be undue attention to the media for short stories - periodicals and anthologies - but I have done so because I feel that it has a larger influence on the kind of literature produced than do the outlets ^{for} ~~on~~ other genres of literature. Editors of periodicals and compilers of anthologies tend to state their stand more clearly than publishers of books. Poetry-writing, by its very nature, is not so easily influenced by possible publication and drama depends on a larger number of factors. As the stress on greater depth of thought rather than on a particular aspect increases, so anthologists will widen their search for durable fiction and

other reading matter from Black South Africa.

Short fiction from Rhodesia and the former protectorates is not sufficient to be considered separately. There were a few contributors to Drum, none of them outstanding, as well as to its Rhodesian counterpart, Parade, and to one or two more general journals.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

When Drum ceased to be an outlet, several Africans writing in English in South Africa felt that they were left with a great deal to say and no means of being heard. They therefore turned to the British and American book publishers who were ready to make use of the vogue for African literature. Since, as we have seen, the novel was not a suitable vehicle for these writers, and none except Mphahlele had sufficient publishable short stories for a collection, they put the incidents of their own lives into book form. Peter Abrahams, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane, Todd Matshikiza and a newcomer, Nontandi (Noni) Jabavu published autobiographical works.

By this time the writers were in exile in Britain, most of them for a considerable time, and had adapted themselves to their new surroundings. They were addressing an exclusively European readership and felt that they had to put their case to them. What sort of a creature was the African? their readers were asking, and the writers did their best to supply an answer. Many of the writers were torn between proving their equal status as men and representing the Africans as the exotic, different being their readers were used to reading about, with strange, if interesting, customs. Noni Jabavu, for instance, attempted to explain the apparently unconscious docility and humility of the African by describing the ritual concept of "Akukhonto, it is nothing' which means 'such is life'." She recreates the atmosphere of African tribal life by using literal translations from the Xhosa and a liberal sprinkling of proverbs and metaphors. The following

conversation takes place on a train journey, after her brother had been killed by tsotis in Johannesburg, the reason for her return to South Africa:

"'And who may you be, young-ladies-of ours?'

"'I am of Jili, mama,' I said.

"'Then what about this 'deprivation'? (euphemism for deaths being de rigueur!)

'How close is it to you?'

"'It was my brother.'

"'Your brother? Brother Truly, truly, in-the-house? (Kanye kanye endlini?) Same mother same father?'

(She had to be sure it was not an "extended family" kind of brother.)

"'Yes, mother, truly in the house. He followed-on-the-back of the sister-who-follows-on-my back.' She fell silent, looking at me, and her eyes suddenly filled with compassion. Then she made the little ritual speech and I was moved because this was happening so many hundreds of miles from my own home.

"'It is nothing, my child, it is nothing; the Lord will bind you. Never are shoulders visited with a burden heavier than they can carry' quoting one of our proverbs, and finishing, 'Therefore He will give you the strength you need, Jili.' She went, leaving us to our Western style privacy."(1)

Noni Jabavu, as the British-educated daughter of Professor D.D.T. Jabavu and wife of a member of the prominent British Cadbury family, writes as a Westerner to the point of appreciating the White man's attitude towards the Black as "fear of the unknown," a prejudice which she herself felt when visiting the more primitive Ghanda of the north. As a result she aroused the ire of her fellow-Africans. The reviewer in The New African⁽²⁾ describes her as "the new Un-African." However, we find the same effort to appeal to the

(1) Drawn in Colour by Noni Jabavu.

(2) March, 1962.

European reader by stressing the difference in several of the other books as well, competing with the attempt to show that the African, like Noni Jabavu herself, is not different after all.

In marked contrast to Noni Jabavu was Todd Matshikiza who, in Chocolates for my Wife, portrays the new African in South Africa, the sophisticated town-dweller. Matshikiza was born in Queenstown where his father was a well-known church organist. Music was at the centre of his life and that of his family; a nephew, Sunny Ray Matshikiza, who still lives in Queenstown, is today making a name for himself as a writer of songs and musicals. Todd Matshikiza was educated in Johannesburg and worked there variously as a musician, razor salesman and journalist. Like Motsisi, he wrote a regular column for Drum. He is best-known as the composer of the score for the popular musical King Kong.

Matshikiza's writing-style - the Matshikize referred to by Can Themba - attempted to reproduce the language of the township jazz musicians who were his friends. He handled his typewriter, Tom Hopkinson tells us, "as if it were a cross between a saxophone and a machine gun." and Bernard Levin of the Daily Express describes his music as violent: "Blaring brass, thudding drums, with the tunes weaving around the hypnotic volume of noise". The same applies to his writing and often there is a deliberate syncopated rhythm to the words:

"Then we saw white man loading bricks and making mud and fetching water and building his own house and sitting inside the house and looking through his window smoking a pipe and cleaning his own car on Sunday morning. Then we saw black man digging a trench and white man also digging. Some were digging back to back. Others head to head. But all were digging spade to spade and there was no foreman standing there smoking while the others were digging.

"The only thing they didn't do was singing while they were digging. Singing while you are digging digs the hole deep down."

He continues the rhythm to the point of absurdity and the words keep pace in order to achieve a comic effect:

"White women stood around the notices reading Russian Borzoi. Their leashed pets lashed away at lights coloured conspectus and blue, at fellow Dalmatians, denims and aspirin reading, "'Don't be a dog. An ordinary dog. Come in and have shampoo an' be a poodle. An extraordinary dog. Did your dog shampoo today?"

Often the effort to create a jazzy style becomes self-conscious and forced and tends to irritate the reader. As the book progresses and becomes more serious he switches from Matshikize to straight terse prose, as for instance when he reports the trial of Ezekiel Dhlamini, otherwise known as King Kong:

"Eyes turned in the direction of the dock where the sound of pounding fists and stamping feet came. It was King, hands gripped tight against the handrails, feet stamping a violent vicious beat on the floor, body jumping up and down like a gorilla, an angered giant-sized ape trying to set itself free. Now and again his fists would pound against the rails. His teeth clenched tight to stop him from shrieking out aloud, but in the end he could not resist yelling out loud. 'It's a lie, you lie, you lie!'"

Most of the autobiographies succeeded in their attempt to appeal to the European in that they proved to be very popular. Noni Jabavu's Drawn in Colour was recommended by the Book Society and Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue was translated into German, Hungarian, Czech, Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian, French, Swedish and Japanese, and extracts appeared in anthologies edited by Per Wastberg, Richard Rive, Leonard Sainville, Jacob Drachler and Paul Edwards.

The autobiographies were falling into the

hands of the liberal European who provided an ideal readership for works dealing with conflict between Black and White. Armchair revolutionaries eagerly sought books with titles like Tell Freedom (Peter Abrahams) or Blame Me on History (Bloke Modisane) or the escape story of a man held in a trial for treason (Alfred Hutchinson's Road to Ghana). Although the protest could now be made more directly, we find that it is usually more subtle than in the fiction. Instead of the story's being used to demonstrate the idea of unequal conflict, we now often find that the anecdote comes first and the reader is left to draw his conclusions. Let us look, for example, at the long and bitter story of Mad Sam in Abrahams' novel Path of Thunder, who was almost beaten to death by Whites for consorting with a Coloured girl, and wanders through the rest of the book as a constant and living proof of the effect of evil. Far more effective in its condemnation of cruelty of White to Black are three lines in the same author's reminiscences, Tell Freedom: "Ma worked for them," Maggie said. 'She was washing and the tin of boiling water fell on her. They made her come home by herself...'"

Humour, which is absent in all but a few of the protest stories, is used to advantage in underlining protest in the autobiographies. Todd Matshikiza sardonically describes a visit to South Africa House shortly after he comes to London. He finds himself wandering through London streets down Trafalgar Square and suddenly comes face to face with "the sign of the Springbok, white South Africa's national symbol.":

"A naughty streak in me said:

Eenie meenie mina mo,
Catch a nigger by his toe.
Go inside and then you'll see
If Africa for you or me."

He is directed to the reading room.

"The chairs arranged all around the walls of the room were occupied by faces hidden behind newspapers. I went round the table looking like one searching for something to read. But there was nothing I could find an excuse to pick up and look at. Something inside of me said, lift up your head, and when I did I found numerous eyes, blue, green and fiery red, peering at me from all round the reading-room. I left the table in the centre of the room and found myself crouching pressing against the wall as though someone was pushing me. I found myself in the silent mute company of the 'South African 'Native' Bronze Heads' by a sculptor named van Wouw. They were to me grotesque. The first bore the title 'Native Awaiting Sentence'. The other was called, 'Sleeping Kaffir'.

"I walked out of South Africa House..."

In another incident he tries to obtain seven pounds from his South African superior, the chief reporter, to buy a gun for protection against a gang who had objected to an article. The chief reporter says:

"I'll give you three pounds an' you can add what you like to that'.

"All the time it happens like that. The white man says, 'Tell me nothing 'bout the blacks. I know them. I've got ten of my own.'

"That's when life looked surrounded. You're one of ten of his own."

We have seen in previous chapters how most fiction failed because imaginative writing could not rise out of an impossible situation. When writing his own story the African author could shed all pretence of using his imagination. He was no longer forced to present "journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature"⁽³⁾ Yet all the elements which

(3) Lewis Nkosi: "Fiction by Black South Africans - Introduction to African Literature" edited by Ulli Beier.

made the short stories interesting and readable could be incorporated in the autobiography. I have shown how some of Mphahlele's best stories were taken from Down Second Avenue. Other incidents in the autobiography could be turned into effective short stories, for instance a story he heard from an old man in his youth, the Romeo-and-Juliet tale of a man who falls in love with a Pagan girl. They flee from the girl's angry brothers but the girl is drowned as they cross the river. Mphahlele tells the story simply and with controlled emotion:

"I want to sit down, Thema said. You can cross and you must live. They will kill you if they find you here. And the young man said: It doesn't matter now. It matters, she replied. That put new blood into Thema. She got her hand round him and he felt her strength as he leant almost his whole weight on her. She kept saying, Come, my love, come, my love, as they crossed the river. And the wailing voices swept down to them and passed on, to be picked up by other people below them."

Although Mphahlele himself describes the South African situation as "a crushing cliché...as literary material", he can make a suspense story even out of obtaining a passport.

Noni Jabavu's two accounts of her return to South Africa, Drawn in Colour and The Ochre People, often had the excitement of fiction, and Alfred Hutchinson's escape from South Africa has all the ingredients of an adventure story. If Todd Matshikiza had been writing a novel he might, like Peter Abrahams in A Night of Their Own, have had his characters sit down and endlessly discuss politics and the future of the country, while outside the security police were closing in on them. Instead, in Chocolates for my Wife, when he sees a Black man among builders and decides to

corner him to ask "How's things over here, chum?", the following exchange ensues:

"He wore overalls, and his hands were covered in mud and cement.

"I asked, 'What you doing, I guess you been here quite long?'

"'Oh, I came to study Mechanical Engineering. Got a job with the Nigerian Ministry of Works when I finish.'

"'How's England, nice?'

"He said, 'Well, you know, when you come to study in the white man's land, brother, you take out only the white water, an' you swallow the black blot'.

"I said, 'what do you mean, brother?'

"You see we Nigerians got our freedom now. Well, when we finish to study in England we go back to kick them out, all those British stooges, hey, there's quite a few in the Cabinet working for Britain, not for Nigeria. Meanwhile we look nice on the outside. Keep the black thing inside. See what I mean?'

"'No, brother.'

"He said, 'Thanks for match,' and went up the scaffold."

Characters come to life far more vividly than in most of the fiction. We need only compare, for instance, Peter Abrahams' Mabel in Mine Boy, who is characterised over and over again purely by speaking of the laughter in her eyes, with Aunt Liza who lives for us in a brief incident: Abrahams' foster parents are visited by a White man, whose boy young Peter had beaten up:

"I looked at Aunt Liza and something in her lifelessness made me stubborn in spite of my fear.

"'He insulted my father,' I said.

"The white man smiled.

"'See Sam, your hiding couldn't have been good.'

"There was a flicker of life in Aunt Liza's eyes. For a brief moment she saw me, looked at me, warmly, lovingly, then her eyes went dead again."

By the time we meet Noni Jabavu's sister in Drawn in Colour our curiosity about her has been aroused and she is gradually built up into a full-blooded character. The characterisation is never passive or ^{merely} ~~purely~~ descriptive. The reader absorbs the picture through an account of the author's daily activities.

Gone, too, in the autobiographies is the wooden image of the White man of African short fiction. Miss Jabavu makes us see him clearly through African eyes.

"'My,' says an African woman and laughs, 'who would be a European? Folks, these people rise up angry at everything even from their sleep. First thing in the morning, angry, always angry, they were conceived on a twisted mat, those'."

Together with the pretence of creating fiction, the autobiographical writer could also shed some of his inhibitions. Abrahams tells us in Return to Goli that in order to write fiction he had "purged himself of hatred", because "art and beauty come of love, not hate". In his two memoirs, Return to Goli and Tell Freedom, Abrahams feels no need to put brakes on his real feelings. Nowhere in his novels do we find anything as simple and sincere as his account in Tell Freedom of his last days in Cape Town, or of his feelings on first coming across the works of Negro poets in a public library. "A man called Countee Cullen said that to me..."; "Georgia Douglas Johnson stirred me to pride in the darkness of my mother and sister"; and "Jean Toomer...stirred me to the verge of tears."

Abrahams' novels appear to take place in a vacuum. There is no feeling for the vast landscapes in Wild Conquest as there is in Plaatje's Mhudi, and

neither the Coloured people's village in Path of Thunder nor the Durban of A Night of their Own comes to life. Yet in Tell Freedom we live with the boy Abrahams in the slums surrounding Johannesburg.

"And from the streets and houses of Vrededorp, from the back-yards and muddy alleys, a loud babel of shouting, laughing, cursing, voices rise, are swallowed by the limitless sky and rise again in unending tumult. And through, and above, and under, all this is the deep throbbing hum of the city. It is everywhere at once. Without beginning, without end."

Similarly Alfred Hutchinson, who wrote very little before Road to Ghana, and several inferior plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation since, often reveals himself in his autobiography as the most mature of the writers.

The writers welcome the opportunity to write what they feel about their homeland, to confess and purge their conscience of "running away" and to express their dreams for the future. Although all these works are very personal stories of suffering, there is rarely any feeling of self-pity or of embarrassing personal intrusion by the reader. The only one who writes an ungarnished personal account is Bloke Modisane in Blame Me on History which makes this work at times dull reading and is quite unlike his sardonic short stories. Modisane sees himself as the "Invisible Man" of Ralph Ellison. In fact he describes himself as a "hollow man" and it is likely that his choice of a nickname, Bloke, was ^{made} chosen for the same reason. In his somewhat breathless prose and hectic scenes of degradation, too, his debt to Ellison is unmistakable, but in the contents he emulates him only on a literary and not on a visionary level. Ellison uses his figurative invisibility as a symbolic means of working out his destiny as a Black

man. Bloke uses his anonymity merely in self-defence against the mental threat to himself. He developed what he called a bird-of-passage morality and unlike Dugmore Boetie found it necessary to drug his conscience into insensibility in an orgy of reading Henry Miller, De Sade and Omar Khayyam.

Most of the other writers found themselves in a position as Mphahlele says he did, of sitting on the verandah of a shop in the township: "If you were alone you were in a position to view critically what you considered to be the whole world passing down Barber Street, half detached, half-committed."

DRAMA

If it is difficult for Africans writing in English to be read in South Africa, it is almost impossible for them to be heard on the stage. As a result, only a handful of plays have been produced and still fewer published. Writers who chose fiction as a medium to portray or attack the situation as they found it saw no point in turning to drama when they were even less assured of attention in South Africa.

Although only thirty-five years have elapsed between the publication of the first play in English by an African and the most recent dramas, one cannot speak generally of African drama in English in South Africa when it includes plays as diverse as H.I.E. Dhlomo's The Girl Who Killed to Save and Lewis Nkosi's Rhythm of Violence. Yet in the early days there seemed to be every promise of a flourishing English drama among Africans.

In 1940, reporting to the Bulletin of the British Drama League about a visit to South Africa, Mary Kelly wrote that the whites had problems "but these problems have not so much urgency as to force an expression through the drama, and so, for the most part, South Africans are content with secondhand entertainment of the bioscope." She continues:

"If dramatic art among the Europeans lacks background and urgency, the same cannot be said of Bantu dramatic expression. The kraals can provide the white man with a living textbook on the origins of drama; - there one may see the unity and instinctive rhythm of the tribal dance and song, the emergence of the single actor, the echo and comment of chorus and audience, the improvisation and realistic acting of the mimes."

She tells how an improvised drama was put on for her by African interpreters and nurses of the hospital at Holy Cross:

"I was given a short synopsis, but it was hardly necessary, for the acting was so vigorous, the characterisation so clear, and the whole play so gripping that one quite forgot that one did not know the language in which it was played. The only thing that I regretted was that I could not follow the comic dialogue, which flashed from one to another at lightning speed, and obviously got home every time."

She concludes: "...for the educated Native there is a very urgent need for expression in drama."

Some twenty-five years later the white man was making use of this "living text-book" by consciously drawing on all the features Mary Kelly mentions. The rhythm of dance and song, improvisation and audience participation ^{was} were deliberately brought back to Western drama in the late nineteen-sixties, not so much in legitimate drama as in popular presentations such as Hair. However, the present century has also seen the beginning of a breaking down of the divergence between the legitimate and popular stage, as for example the influence of Charlie Chaplin on Samuel Becket in Waiting for Godot. Such divergence did not exist in primitive drama anywhere.

In South Africa one man was aware of some of these possibilities and their importance to drama many years before. In 1936 H.I.E. Dhlomo said that dramatic movements should be started to interest people in African history and tradition. "Drama is the reconstruction, recreation and reproduction of the great experience of a people, and it helps them to live more abundantly."

Writing on "Drama and the African" in
South African Outlook⁽¹⁾ Dhlomo begins:

"Action! Rhythm! Emotion! Gesture!
 Imitation! Desires! That is what drama
 was before it developed into an institu-
 tion for propaganda, for the propagation
 of ideas, or for commercial entertainment."

Action and rhythm and the other histrionic qualities, he says, are not foreign to the African and neither is drama. He explains that the origin of tribal dramatic representation was a combination of religious or magical ritual, rhythmic dances and the song. Of audience participation he says that if the actors did not come up to standard, the rest would cease to join in. "This was good for both sides - and would be good for many modern productions."

Contemporary critics who go back to the roots of African culture - the exponents of Negritude - tend to forget that Western drama grew out of the same roots as traditional African drama: the primitive and emotional urge of men to re-enact sacred and other stories illustrative or symbolic of their lives and the forces that rule them. Dhlomo reminds us of this when he says: "Indeed, there is no race in the world which did not have some kind of tribal dramatic representation." It is merely the fact that traditional African culture is still available to us which makes it unique as a catalyst in instilling new life into Western culture.

Dhlomo recognised, however, that it is impossible to switch back the clock. African drama, he says, cannot be based purely on African roots:

(1) 1st October, 1936.

"It must be grafted in Western drama...It must borrow from, be inspired by, shoot from European dramatic art forms, and be tainted by exotic influences...The African dramatist cannot delve into the past unless he has grasped the present. African art cannot grow and thrive by going back and digging up the bones of the past without dressing them with modern knowledge and craftsmanship...We want African playwrights who will dramatise and expound a philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representation of African Oppression, Emancipation and Evolution. To do this the African dramatist must be an artist before being a propagandist, a philosopher before a reformer; a psychologist before a patriot."

It is interesting to note that he says "before" and not "instead of".

In another article written for the same publication three years later, Dhlomo discusses rhythm as the greatest gift of Africa to the artistic world. The marked sense and love of rhythm of the African he explains by the rigid rule of pattern under which the tribal African lived. "There were rigid patterns of behaviour, rigid patterns even in architecture (the hut) and in the village of kraal planning". This element was marked in movement, dance, music and in tribal plastic art.

Yet Dhlomo does not claim rhythmic beauty as the sole property of the African:

"There is no doubt that Shakespeare, the Greek dramatists and the Hebrew writers used certain ingredients to produce rhythmic beauty in their works. There is a kind of law underlying all great literature, all beauty. One ingredient is poetic expression, but there are others. The very regular appearance of ghosts, clowns, fairies, kings, duels, lovers etc. in Shakespeare, the common use of the device of the chorus of suffering heroes and anthropomorphic gods in Greek writers, help to give rhythmic effect to these literatures. We, too, can use archaic tribal forms to produce a form of poetry and rhythmic effect distinctly African."

"Rhythm", he says, "is more than a physical sensation.

It is inspired uniformity in motion, giving birth to thought and emotion and visions."

I have quoted from Dhlomo's essays on African drama at such great length in order to show the direction which African literature in English could have taken in South Africa if a writer like Dhlomo had been given the attention he deserved. Today he is classed by the few critics who remember him, along with the other early writers, as a negligible puppet of the missionaries. We shall see later that this is by no means the whole picture; that some of his early poetry would be suitable as a theme song for some of the more belligerent Black movements of our times. In his own time, on the other hand, he was bitterly attacked by B.W. Vilakazi,⁽²⁾ the Zulu poet, who refused to consider literature in English as African literature. As a graduate - Master of Arts at the time - of the University of the Witwatersrand, Vilakazi was more likely to find a hearing as a spokesman for African literature than Dhlomo, and it is from this time onward that there is a gap of fifteen years in African literature in English in South Africa, and, encouraged by White critics, a flowering^{of} literature in the vernacular.

Dhlomo's ideas were lost to South Africa, and were taken up again several years later in other African countries. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if these ideas had taken root. Would there have been a South African Black literature and especially drama in South Africa as there is in other

(2) Letter to the editor of South African Outlook, 1st July, 1939.

African countries, quite independent of its White counterpart; a literature which might have extended its educating influence beyond the Universities, Colleges and schools to the townships and which would have shaped as well as expressed African thought? Might it possibly have influenced White thought as well as English literature in South Africa as the Sestigers have begun to influence Afrikaans thinking? Would South Africa lie as far outside the main stream of contemporary thought as she does today?

How far Dhlomo and his ideas on literature have failed to make an impact becomes obvious when we consider a modern play like Lewis Nkosi's The Rhythm of Violence, which was published in England in 1964 and produced in London during that year. The rhythm of the title, which ~~are~~ ^{is} symbolised by the jazz rhythms in the background have, according to stage directions, become "decidedly neurotic", with the beat suggesting "a tenuous quality of insanity and nightmares." We shall return to Nkosi's play presently.

The reason for Dhlomo's failure may have lain partly in the fact that in his own plays he has failed to carry out his theories. He certainly does attempt to reconstruct, recreate and reproduce the great experiences of a people, but unfortunately his inexperience as a playwright prevents him from fulfilling his object successfully.

Only one of his plays, The Girl Who Killed to Save, was published, but some of the others were produced and manuscripts of these have been placed in the Library of the University of Natal by Dhlomo's family. Dingana was first performed by the Medical students Drama Group of the University of Natal on 28th May, 1954 and about

50 copies were printed and bound at the University Library's Xerographic Photo Duplicating Bindery Department.

Dhlomo could not have chosen a better subject for dramatic treatment than the story of the prophetess Nongqause, "The Girl Who Killed to Save", and the first scene of the play of that name is full of dramatic promise.

Dhlomo's aim is to bring out the historical meaning behind the story of the girl Nongqause, whom he describes as a "prophesying medium"⁽³⁾ (*italics his*), daughter of the seer Umhlakaza "who in all likelihood exercised the powers of a ventriloquist". Nongqause declared that she had held converse with the spirits of the ancestors of the Xhosa tribe who had promised to drive the European invader from their land. As a sign of faith, the people were to kill their cattle and destroy their crops.

Dhlomo treats the basic story on three different levels. There is a plot of realistic conflict and action between those who believe in the prophecy and "the doubtful men". In this Dhlomo adheres to accepted history. There is also the beginning of a love-plot, never completed, in which Nongqause's suitor Mazwi, who refuses to believe the prophecy, asks Nongqause to flee with him. He loves Nongqause for herself alone and she returns his love and admires him because he is "strong, wise, brave, and will not kill cattle even to please us". Yet she will

(3) Introductory historical note to the play.

not flee with him, and we never hear of Mazwi again.

Their conflict, however, leads to the second level which concerns Nongqause's psychological conflict: her very real doubts as to whether the sounds she heard near the river were, as her father and the Chief assure her, the voices of her ancestors. Why, she wants to know, did not the spirits speak to her in the language she understood "instead of in the wonderful but meaningless sounds"? Here Dhlomo departs somewhat from the historical tale, in that his Nongqause hears unidentified sounds instead of actual voices. She becomes almost hysterical with fear for her people, in case she was wrong. She understands something the Old Woman who guards her has never considered - that the people will starve to death if she is mistaken. So conditioned is the Old Woman by the traditional ways of the tribe that it has never occurred to her to think independently of the consequences. Yet she is a woman of intelligence and psychological insight. When Nongqause becomes afraid she tells her that her fear is caused by "the fact that since the day the Lion took up this matter you have been confined to your hut, supervised by an old thing like myself, guarded by the Chief's spies, and not allowed to roam about with your young friends."

Just before this dialogue, Nongqause has been asked by the Chief to tell the story of her vision to a number of "doubtful men", and she immediately goes into what the stage directions describe as a "hysteriomanic-like trance" and re-enacts her vision. It is important to note that the stage directions describe her as "feigning to be seized" (*italics mine*) with this trance. Yet it is a known fact of hypnotism that the subject

sometimes thinks he is deliberately cooperating with the experimenter and yet is actually going into an involuntary trance. Dhlomo may have been aware of this, since there is no indication that Nongqause is merely a willing tool in the hands of political intrigue. Such intrigue is indeed hinted at, and remains one of the mysteries of history and of the play: whether the chief and his seer deliberately hatched this plot in order to drive the people to such a state of despair that they could be led into war against the Europeans. At any rate it is unlikely that Dhlomo intended to indicate that Nongqause was knowingly part of such a plot. Rather he wanted to give the impression that although Nongqause was torn between belief and disbelief she felt it her duty to cooperate. In this way the psychological tension of the drama is created and held.

After the incident of doubts expressed to her guardian comes the scene in which her lover asks her to flee and Nongqause, this time without feigning, falls to her knees "rapt in pain" and cries: "The People! The Truth!"

This brings us to the ^{end} of Scene 1 and ends the psychological drama of Nongqause, the Girl Who Killed to Save. Neither Nongqause nor her lover appear again in the remaining four scenes, and she is barely mentioned. We shall go into the possible reason for this later.

On the third and deepest level Dhlomo attempts to bring out the historical meaning of the story of Nongqause. The theme is stated with the introduction of an Old Man in Scene 1. Nongqause's guardian is shocked by his arrival in the hut, since the chief has decreed that men may not visit it. The Old man explains that this does not apply to him, since age has made him a "helpless

babe". He then continues:

"Age, by bringing us near our grave, brings us near our regeneration. Near death shines life. The crumbling dry bones of our autumn herald the spring of our new life. No, woman, I am no man - I am man in the making. My wrinkles show that Life is softening this old human clay in order to remodel it into new forms. Man never dies although men do."

He has come to ask whether, as a result of the killing of the cattle, lobola is to cease. Nongqause then applies the Phoenix theme introduced by the Old Man to her prophecy: "Nothing will be destroyed. Life is only being organised on a higher scale. Like you, the country is near a new birth, a greater day, a happier life."

Dhlomo has introduced his theme, and in order to preserve artistic unity he must carry it through to the end. Yet historically the movement ended in complete failure. The cattle and grain were destroyed and the people starved to death except for those rescued by the Europeans. How did Dhlomo attempt to reconcile historical truth with the theme of his play? The answer is surprising. It comes first from the Native Commissioner's brother-in-law, Hugh, who, like Nongqause, sees the events as a great metamorphosis - an "agony of birth" leading to an acceptance of the European way of life; and then from the mouth of a character introduced in the last ten minutes of the play. Daba, a victim of the famine, reveals a deathbed vision to his wife:

"Ah! This is the host of those who perished in the Great Famine. Do you see these people, surrounding, thanking and laughing with Nongqause. They tell her that hunger and destitution drove them into the paths of life, led them to the missionary and his divine message; put them into the hands of God. So there is triumph in death; there is finding in death; there is beauty in death. Nongqause laughs as she tells them that she was really in earnest but was ignorant. They laugh and sing. They

call her their Liberator from Superstition and from the rule of Ignorance. These people are dressed, not in karosses and blankets as we are, but in Light..."

Thus, while the conflict of action is never resolved and the psychological conflict is only indicated abortively, the thematic unity of the play is brought to a logical conclusion. In the list of contents of the play the scenes have titles like "The Ways of Delusion and Credulity", "The Tyranny of Superstition and Ignorance" and thus explain the moral construction of the play. Unfortunately Scenes 11 to 14 contribute nothing towards the dramatic denouement of the play and are certainly extraneous as far as the external action is concerned.

Whereas the first scene is never static, very little action of dramatic interest takes place on the stage during the remainder of the play. The first scene is almost kaleidoscopic in the series of events in Nonqause's hut. One visitor after the other appears, each playing an important part in furthering the play on all levels. It begins with a song and dance of the maidens, followed by the visit of the Old Man, a messenger announcing the arrival of the chief and a party of "doubting men" for whom Nonqause must perform, and lastly by her lover Mazwi. The second scene is meant to depict "grandeur and emotion" among the warriors ("Everyone is war mad and wild")⁽⁴⁾ and would perhaps have been useful in an intermediate scene for a theatre large enough to present a "big cattle kraal" in which "one or two dead oxen" are "seen lying about". "Quantities of meat" are

(4) Stage directions - end of Scene 11.

served to men and "A group of girls comes in dancing and is joined by some men" while "old women cheer and clap hands".

The scene is followed by Scene 111 in the Commissioner's house which consists mainly of dull and stilted dialogue. This is continued into scene four which, however, is interspersed with the arrival of further impossible props, such as an ox-waggon being outspanned and "a stream of victims coming in, finding food and medical treatment, passing out, and leaving room for others coming in." There are preposterous monologues such as that of Brownlee, the Commissioner, which begins: "What a spectacle of want amid service, of selfishness amid nobleness, of death within salvation. What a picture of humanity devoid of hope. Trouble, misery..." and equally embarrassingly poor dialogue: "Injured Man: 'Phew! Yo. Yo. Hey, its hurts. Let me go!'

"Hugh: 'Steady my man - it will soon be over'

"Missionary: '...of thy Son, Jesus. Ignorance and superstition hurt and hurt deeply...'"

It is only in the first, and to some slight extent in the second scene, in ^{that} which Dhlomo shows any instinct for theatre, and this he demonstrates by a fine feeling for the interaction of characters. Dramatic tension is maintained in Nongqause's dialogue, first with the Old Woman who acts as a foil to her youth and vitality, and then with the Chief and his prophet whom she fears and accepts according to tradition, and yet subtly rebels against by "feigning" the re-enactment of her trance; and lastly with her lover Mazwi, where her moral duty is allowed to triumph over personal happiness.

Only in Nongqause do we have the indications of a rounded character with a variety of human feelings and the suggestion of a past even if of no future. The other characters either act as a foil, such as the Old Woman, or are introduced to express a theme ~~like~~^{Such as} the Old Man, Hugh and Daba, or, like most of the other European characters, they are symbols: the missionary of course of Christianity and Charles Brownlee of White fairness and humanity mixed with complacency. The Whites are not puppets like those of the writers of narrative, since their function is to expose the meaning of the drama rather than express the ideas of the writer.

The African background is of course completely authentic and a production envisaged scenes of singing and dancing, of magic rites and of exciting war fever. Yet Dhlomo, the dreamer who wrote "Valley of a Thousand Hills", did not take advantage of the poetic possibilities of the background, except for the introduction of the Chief in his kraal by a traditional praise song. The poetic theme of rebirth, introduced metaphorically by the Old Man, founders on the prosaic didacticism of the last three scenes of the play.

Nkosi, in his appeal to anti-South African feeling in England, has been accused of pandering to the box-office in Rhythm of Violence. Is it possible that Dhlomo, with the Mission presses and mission-controlled schools as the only suitable outlet, succumbed to a similar temptation in The Girl Who Killed to Save?

In Dingana, on the other hand, there is no pandering to a mission-oriented public. Here he attempts to carry out the rules he laid down in his essays. The play is introduced by a narrator, described by W.R.G. Branford who produced the play with an African

drama group as an old man in a ragged overcoat: "The people there in the darkness are waiting to show you a story, and my work tonight is to tell you what cannot be shown". The actors then proceed to illustrate what he tells, and Dhlomo thus tries to recreate the atmosphere of a tribal drama. As Dhlomo explains in his essays on drama, tribal drama had no scenery, but the place of action was deliberately chosen as a background. "Awe-inspiring mystery, dramatic rituals were staged, not at daytime nor at dead of night (for there is some serenity and peacefulness about the dead of night) but at the 'intoxicating', 'aromatic' hours of twilight when everything looks weird, shadowy, ghostly; when nature perfumes herself; when there is a clash between retiring day creatures and waking night animals; when there is a terrifying symphony of 'ebbing' daylight melodies and rising nocturnal croons."

In his moral attitude as well as in his conception of the royalty of tragedy Dhlomo perhaps comes closest to the medieval dramatists before Marlowe and Shakespeare. Dingaan, for instance, becomes the tragic royal hero who acts within the predestined conclusion of a prophecy.

Both in The Girl Who Killed to Save and Dingana Dhlomo adopts the rhetoric narration and somewhat static qualities of a classical style. He chooses prose rather than the blank verse of his poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills" which might perhaps have been more appropriate to the treatment.

Among the unpublished manuscripts are a few more historical plays, Cetewayo, Moshesh, Ntsikana, as well as a number of modern plays which are devoid of all dramatic skill, while the dialogue is often almost embarrassingly

stilted. A character in The Pass, for instance, soliloquises: "My asthma attack is on. I'll burst if they don't let me out."

In spite of all evidence throughout most of these plays to the contrary, Dhlomo is essentially a poet, and often he discards all attempt at drama for a lyrical passage. In Dingana the servant of Chaka is asked to tell about his master and he says:

"Shaka, the man who set the world on fire! It is right that I should spend my last moments speaking in his praise. O countryside, o hills, o cattle paths and winding streams - how much he loved these things, Shaka, King of Man, the Black One. In the listening hours of night we sought the path, he and I, to the inner mystery of life, the soul of watching mountains and the pregnant darkness. For beauty of bird or woman or evening strangely stabbed him, and in all his wildest acts I believe he sought the blood of beauty, and the heart of it."

Such passages are partly explained by the same character: "In Zululand we run to eloquence; we are all orators and bards," and partly by the fact that once again Dhlomo was demonstrating a theory, that the praise poem, which was often included in tribal drama, forms the basis of the modern monologue. In The Girl Who Killed to Save there is also a simple and effective praise song by the Bard, announcing the arrival of the Chief.

A few attempts have been made to stage Dhlomo's plays, for instance by the African Dramatic and Operatic Society of Johannesburg, and Dhlomo is said to have produced Ruby himself. Dingana was produced by the Natal University Medical Students' Drama Group. They found it a particularly suitable play as there is a great deal of comment about "medicine" in it: "...medicine has its own evils. It is made of insects, lowly creatures and herbs; wild and earthy things. So it has two powers: a power of life and a power of destruction", William

Branford describes the production in 1954:⁽⁵⁾ Few of the students were Zulus, and they were a little uneasy about the songs. One night the students summoned the Zulu kitchen staff from their beds to the stage for rehearsal. "Half asleep they were marshalled on the stage by the night watchman and gradually came to life in a deafeningly effective exhibition. Some of them were there and then recruited for the stage. There was also some difficulty in fitting songs to the play, for example they chose one mournful-sounding dirge as a lament for Shaka's death, only to find later that it was a drinking song."

Throughout the history of world drama there has been interaction between the play and the playhouse. Since Dhlomo's conception of a stage as far as contemporary production was concerned was very vague, such interaction was naturally absent. Yet we know from his essays that production was what he had in mind, rather than a poetic drama meant only to be read.

The only other play by an African in English published during this period was an interesting collector's piece entitled Shaka by one S. Goro-X. Unfortunately its origin and the identity of its author are apparently lost. It was published by Juta & Co. in Johannesburg in 1940, and although copies are available in most of the larger South African libraries, there is no reference to the author in the State library. It is listed neither in the catalogue of Preliminary Lists of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Works Relating to Africa nor

(5) Oversea Education, H.M.S.O. April, 1956.

in Halkett and Laing's Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature. The only bibliography which lists it is Silbert's Southern African Drama in English 1960 - 1964. Miss Silbert has no further knowledge of the work and Messrs. Juta & Co. in Cape Town and Johannesburg no longer have their correspondence of that period and can throw no light on the matter.

It is presumed that Goro-X is an African by the English usage and by the fact that he portrays Chaka as a tragic hero. Unlike Dhlomo's historical characters, however, there is little that is African about Goro-X's Shaka. In fact the author more or less adapts Macbeth to the story of Chaka, and the effect is not altogether unpleasing. For example:

"Scene: Beside a mountain. Wind. Lightning and rumbling of thunder...

"Time: Late afternoon.

"(Shaka Witch-doctor, Bopa).

"Shaka: 'Tis Shaka's voice commands you. Goddess fair,
Or Beldam foul, I do command you' speak.

"Voice (From Mountain): Oh Shaka, Shaka, chief of many
men I see your history revealed
in blood

.....

.....Beware
Your kith and kin'

"Shaka: 'Or bleeding die?'

"Voice: 'To live!'

The voice goes on to explain that Shaka will live through his own progeny.

Later in the play there is a scene where a charming little boy faces a councillor:

"Tana: 'I wish I were a great big man.'

"Nongogo: 'To be big
Is great; but to be great is bigger still.'

"Tana: 'Like Shaka?'

"Nongogo: 'He is both.'"

There are even puns and word-tricks:

"Second guard: 'Stand back,
Or I will run you through'

"Mala (a hunter): 'If through we go
We'll run ourselves. What else!
We run in game
And in such sport you cannot run a
tortoise."

Towards the middle of the play he goes to the classics:

".....Then at a glance,
Just like a tawny lion on the prowl,
When favouring winds lasciviously winnow
The savoury smellings from a folded cote,
Prostrate upon its belly, with its tail
Spasmodic'lly it flicks its taunted flanks,
Then with a blare like thunder havoc wrought,
So Shaka..."

There is no record of a performance of this play, but one feels that it might have been quite successfully produced by an amateur or school group.

Shakespeare and the Elizabethan period have always had a tremendous appeal to Africans, and comparisons have often been drawn between the ^{lives of men + power} Elizabethan ^{in the} period and ^{ex} twentieth century Africans in this country. It is not surprising, therefore, that at least one playwright saw the great African historical figures as Shakespearean tragic heroes.

A number of African dramatic groups have existed since the nineteen-thirties but they did not often have an opportunity of performing works by Africans. The Natal medical students' group, as we have seen, performed a Dhlomo play and also an authorised adaptation of Peter Abrahams' Mine Boy. A play-group at Adams College, before the dissolution of the school, was very active, and there are today active groups in the Johannesburg townships as well as other centres. When possible they perform works on African subjects such as plays by Hilda Kuper and Athol Fugard. In Johannesburg today a number of African writers cooperate in writing plays to be

performed by these groups.

In Queenstown Sunny Ray Matshikiza, nephew of Todd Mtshikiza, wrote and produced a musical play entitled Scintilla which deals with the Matshikiza clan. It was presented in Queenstown as well as in East London recently. He attempts to combine tribal and modern themes in the text as well as the music. In the music he uses African folk tunes as well as Beethoven themes, the latter being in connection with the Beethoven festival at the time of composition.

No drama appears to have been published in Rhodesia but a few plays in English by Africans such as Gibson Mandishona, Wilfred Mbanga and Edmund Chipamaunga have been privately produced.

The African writers in exile have also turned to drama as a more lucrative form of writing. The British Broadcasting Corporation has been encouraging African theatre since 1962 when it introduced drama on its African service in order to provide an outlet for African writers and actors in England. These transmissions can be heard all over Africa and thus, as Daniel P. Kunene puts it in another context, it opens up Africa to herself. Alfred Hutchinson, Bloke Modisane and Arthur Maimane have all had plays broadcast.

Alfred Hutchinson, no doubt with an eye on current African and Negro movements, introduces his play Fusane's Trial in The New African as follows: "Today I like to think that my education, far from removing me from my people, has made me more aware of their permanent valuableness. For as the Swazi saying goes 'A person is only a person because of other people'." The play, with a weak plot about a girl who kills the man to whom

she is betrothed by tribal custom, was produced on the African service of the B.B.C. in London on 25th November, 1964.

This play, as well as Arthur Maimane's The Opportunity, was published in Cosmo Pieterse's anthology Ten One Act Plays in 1968. Maimane, who is a current affairs commentator for the B.B.C., has also had several other plays broadcast. The Opportunity is not only poor theatre, but the plot and characters are quite ludicrous. It concerns an African politician who has been asked to divorce his uneducated wife so that he can become a credit to his country as ambassador to the United Nations Organisation. Even the most naive ^{listeners} must have balked at a scene like this:

"Solomon:...

'What would you say if I now told you that I must leave you because of this independence?'

"Emma: 'Leave me? How leave me?'

"Solomon (bitterly): 'I mean divorce you!'

"Emma: 'Solomon! How can you say such things? I am glad the children are sleeping and cannot hear you!'

"Solomon: 'I am serious, Emma. They want me to become an ambassador. To speak at the United Nations.'

"Emma: 'That is a very important job, is it not?'

"Solomon (extremely bitterly): 'Oh, it is, Emma. Very. That is why they say I must divorce you. Because you are not educated.'

"Emma: 'They think I will shame you?'

"Solomon: 'Yes.'

"Emma: 'I would be lost in a place like that. It is somewhere in America, is it not?'

"Solomon: 'In New York.'

"Emma (thoughtfully): 'Yes, in New York. Do you want to go?'

"Solomon: 'It is my big chance. If I refuse it - well I don't know.'

"Emma: 'You have done big things for our country.'

"Solomon: 'I have suffered for my country. Unemployment and even jail.'

"Emma: 'Now it is my time to suffer.'

"Solomon (with relieved surprise): 'You agree then, Emma?'

"Emma: 'No. I do not agree, Solomon. But you want to go. And I cannot go. My father and mother gave me to you as a wife, so you must do for me what you think is right...'"

The plot of Lewis Nkosi's Rhythm of Violence is equally puerile, and it is difficult to conceive that a man of his critical faculties and urbane sophistication could have produced a work of this nature. Even if he had an eye on the box-office, as Anne Tibble in an introduction to her anthology admits - with apologies for criticising a work "on so agonising a subject" - the play could only have been carried by the popularity of the subject matter.

The story concerns an attempt by a racially mixed group of students to blow up Cape Town City Hall. A newcomer to the group is an Afrikaner girl, Sarie Marais, who is attracted to the African leader's young brother, Tula. When Tula finds that Sarie's father is attending a National Party meeting in the City Hall in order to hand in his resignation, he rushes in to save him, getting killed in the attempt when the bomb explodes.

Neither the events recorded, the interaction of the stereotyped characters nor the artificial theatrical devices succeed in creating any dramatic tension. The symbolism of the "curiously nervous" jazz rhythms, which later become wild and blend with the detonations of the bomb, and finally, after we have heard "a few bars of soft fragile melody" as Sarie and Tula fall in love, mount "into a harsh violent, discordant melody" as Sarie is arrested, is naively transparent. The dialogue drags and at times becomes as ludicrous as in Maimane's radio play; for instance: "I feel now a sombre darkness upon life itself." or the final lines, spoken by the policeman:

"Aha, so you know that too! You're going to do a lot of explaining young lady! I wouldn't like to be in your shoes! This is Seditious! You know that? Jan, get the handcuffs on her. She nearly fooled us, too!"

The most interesting parts of the play are the comic interludes of dialogue between the two policemen, because they represent a sincere attempt to delve deeper into theatrical technique. Unfortunately, however, it would appear to be a search for effect rather than meaning.

Nkosi, who criticised the authors of fiction for writing as though the great modern writers had never lived, carefully studied the modern dramatists, especially the French, and attempted to copy the comic dialogue of Eugène Ionescu by turning these two symbols of hate into a pair of buffoons who are scarcely capable of "drawing the line between the dream and the reality" and are involved in a constant effort "to detach themselves from the reality that engages them." Nkosi follows a device popular in contemporary theatre where naturalism and farce are interchanged to emphasise the point the dramatist wishes to make. Yet, while Nkosi uses Ionescu's technique of nightmarish humour, he fails to realise that the purpose of expressing absurdity is to underline the meaningless of life, a nihilistic and pessimistic Weltanschauung beyond logic. Nkosi's play is one of optimism based on accepted moral standards: the concept of the sacrifice of one man for the many. Unlike Genet's, an author whom he also obviously admires, Nkosi's dramatic world is not one in which the standards are reversed. His dramatic canvas is not life in the abstract but the South African political scene. For this reason his two policemen, who, according to stage directions, converse "in a psychopathic fashion" are absurd only in the literal sense of the word and the comic

scenes do not succeed in balancing against the sentimentally serious action of the plot.

As far as the main action is concerned, Nkosi uses the theatre as a social tool, just as the narrative writers used the short story. The action always remains strictly realistic. The burning down of Cape Town City Hall is a fact and not a symbol of change. Nkosi is guilty of the transgression of which he once accused the African fiction writer: of using "the ready-made plots of violence, chicanery and racial love tragedies as representing universal truth when, in fact, actual insight into human tragedy may lie beneath this social and political turbulence."⁽⁶⁾

The death of Nkosi's hero Tula is almost arbitrary. It does not rise out of the inevitable result of mental conflict united with fate. He thus renounces the classical concept of theatre without putting into its place the contemporary existentialist reversal of standards.

(6) Africa Report, October 1962:
African Fiction: South Africa:
Protest by Lewis Nkosi.

POETRY

Since Anglophone African drama in South Africa came to an abrupt end with H.I.E. Dhlomo - with whom it began - to be taken up again later only spasmodically, and fiction too lacked continuity, poetry is the only form of literature in Southern Africa which has led in an almost direct line from oral vernacular to modern poetry by Africans, no matter in what language they express themselves. In introducing a volume of his poetry published in England in 1970 Mazisi Kunene, who obtained an M.A. degree for a thesis on Zulu poetry, says: "These are not English poems but poems directly evolved from a Zulu literary tradition." He then continues:

"This has fundamental stylistic and philosophical implications. The communal organisation in Africa is not just a matter of individuals clinging together to eke out an existence, as some have claimed...It is a communal organisation which has evolved its own ethic, its own philosophical system, its own forms of projecting and interpreting its realities and experiences...It believes, for instance, that the highest virtue is...heroism, that is, self-sacrifice on behalf of the community.(1) Accordingly, it has developed a highly sophisticated heroic epic. Where individualistic societies read 'I', this philosophy requires one to read 'I on behalf of '."

Here lies the crux of the difference between Western poetry of the past two centuries and African poetry, and also the reason for the appeal of African poetry to modern society. Contemporary literary thought

(1) S.M. Guma in his doctoral thesis "The Form Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho", when listing the type of stories handed down by tradition, gives as examples of those depicting "sterling human qualities" stories about "selflessness and self-sacrifice on behalf of others."

is moving more and more away from stressing the importance of the individual, and it is likely that the influence of African ideas has played its part in furthering this trend. Southern African poets are hardly known as yet in the West, but their work increasingly tends to form part of a representative continental African⁽²⁾ school of poetry.

When ^{one} speaking of poetry in Southern Africa, there is no need to separate this area into its component parts since modern African poetry in Rhodesia and the former Protectorates, as well as in the Republic of South Africa, owes a great deal to its vernacular roots, which are similar in these countries.

It is interesting to note that in the Republic the leading poets both in English and in the vernacular are Zulus, the nation among whom the praise poem was most embedded in its social life.

Introducing a collection of translated praise poems,⁽³⁾ Trevor Cope says: "Traditional literature differs from modern literature not only in that it is oral but also in that it is essentially the product of communal activity, whereas a work of modern literature is the result of individual effort and bears the stamp of its author." He is speaking of African literature, but this applies, of course, equally to traditional literature on other continents.

(2) South of the Sahara.

(3) Izibongo collected by James Stuart, translated by Daniel Malcolm, edited and with introduction and annotations by Trevor Cope.

The collectiveness of African poetry is one of the main tenets of Janheinz Jahn's presentation of the African mind in Muntu, though he admits that there are certain periods in European literature which have this in common. Whereas western poetry from Sappho to Gottfried Benn has expressed the poet's relation to nature, his love, his sorrow, his thoughts about God," says Jahn, "the African poet "places 'Nature'...at his service, rouses it into life, steers and manipulates it. In the love poem he does not express his love, but love as such, a force in which he shares. In the same way the poet expresses sorrow as such, and expresses not his own, but the thoughts about God." (italics Jahn's).

Jahn concludes this paragraph by quoting Sédar Senghor: "...for in the last analysis every artistic manifestation is collective, created for all and shared by all." South Africa's most promising young African poet in English, Oswald Mtshali, demonstrates the universality of thought in a poem entitled "Just a Passer By"⁽⁴⁾ where he uses the conception of "I" and "your" clearly in the collective sense. He is walking down the street and sees a man being beaten.

A neighbour says:

"Have you heard. They've killed your brother,"
and he replies:

"Oh! No! I heard nothing. I've been to Church."

African poetry is never intensely personal.

It is here that writing by Africans diverges from that of Coloured writers in South Africa. We cannot, therefore,

(4) South African PEN Centre: New South African Writing: last of five volumes.

include Coloured writers like Dennis Brutus, Arthur Nortje and others in considering African poetry, as we could include Peter Abrahams when writing about African fiction. In fact when Peter Abrahams writes poetry he is far more akin to the early American Negro poets than to his Black compatriots. His poetry was published in 1940 in a volume entitled A Black Man Speaks of Freedom which is unobtainable today, but Miller and Sergeant in A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English quote from a poem, "For Laughter", which demonstrates the personal nature of his feelings:

"I have learned to love
 Burningly
 With the fiercest fire;
 And I have discarded humility
 And the 'Will of God',
 And the stories of my wise teachers,
 Arming myself with the wretchedness
 In every plain man's life,
 And in all the tomorrows of my soldiers
 I battle on behalf of that freedom
 That will restore the laughter of men!

Compare this with the different use of the personal pronoun in Oswald Mtshali's "The Master of the House":⁽⁵⁾

"I am a faceless man
 who lives in the backyard
 of your house.

"I am the nocturnal animal
 that steals through the fenced lair
 to meet my mate
 and flees at the break of dawn
 before the hunger and hound
 run me to ground."

or with the section of H.I.E. Dhlomo's "Valley of a Thousand Hills" in which he demonstrates that the spirit of the ancestors still lives in the African's soul:

"They call me happy while I lie and rot
 Beneath a foreign yoke in my dear strand!
 Midst these sweet hills and dales, under these
 stars,
 To live and to be free, my fathers fought."

(5) Sounds of a Cowhide Drum: Poems.

The difference in poetic attitude towards the establishment is clearly expressed in the following two poems. Dennis Brutus, best known South African expatriate non-white poet, writes of "the white crowd who attacked those who protested on the Johannesburg City Hall steps against the Sabotage Bill"; (6)

"These are the faceless horrors
that people my nightmares
from whom I turn to wakefulness
for comforting"

and asks:

"Oh my people
Oh my people
what have you done
and where shall I find comforting
to smooth awake your mask of fear
restore your face, your faith, feeling, tears."

Mazisi, with greater optimism and less subjectivity, reaffirms the futility of false cultural values: (7)

"Europe, your foundations
Are laid on a rough stone.
Your heart is like cobwebs
That are dry in the desert."

"Your children fill us with fear:
They are like the young of a puffadder
Who devour the flesh of their parent."

The end if inevitable:

"Children have inherited the fire.
They blow its flames to the skies
Burning others in their sleep.

"What will the sun say?
The sun will laugh
Because it burnt out cradles from age to age."

Rarely do we find in the poetry of these Africans a deeply private despair such as we find in the Coloured writers or in the poetry of American Negroes

(6) "The Mob" from Letters to Martha.

(7) "In Europe" from Zulu Poems.

like June Jordan, for instance. This is not because they are incapable or even unwilling to express their inner feeling, or because they feel with Hazlitt that "a man of genius' mind is too full of other things to be much occupied with his own person"; they simply do not believe this to be the purpose of poetry. H.I.E. Dhlomo in "Valley of a Thousand Hills" becomes deeply introspective in the fourth section in which he derides himself as a failure and asks why he should live "If life no rich gifts I can give", but he finds the answer in the beauty of nature and chides himself for being too "encased in self". It is only when he can stand "beyond space and time" that he can create.

Several of the prose writers have turned to poetry occasionally, but they, like the Coloured writers, follow the early Negro writers rather than the African trend. Mphahlele, for instance, writes an articulate and terse account of his experienced in "The Immigrant"⁽⁸⁾. He becomes nostalgic as an exile, remembering when the

"Northern wind blows,
reminding me of things I can't or daren't
~~remember...~~ remember...
and my anger
is a sediment
in the pit of my stomach."

Bessie Head, too, uses poetry as a personal expression of protest in "Things I don't Like":

"Don't want your sympathy, brother;
Keep it. Keep it.
No wait. Give it to my enemies;
They'll need it.
I'm Black so I don't want sympathy."⁽⁹⁾

(8) "The Immigrant" (Black Orpheus, No. 6, November, 1969).

(9) The New African, May, 1962.

Bloke Modisane, in a highly subjective poem, writes of his loneliness:

"it gets awfully lonely,
lonely;
like screaming,
screaming lonely." (10)

In another poem, "Blue Black and Black Blues" (11) he adopts the contemporary Afro-American attitude and, as in "Lonely", plays with words:

"The blues is the black o' the face,
I said; black is the blues face,
it is black in the morning'
beige in the sun,
and blue black all night long."

Casey Motsisi's "The Efficacy of Prayer" is satirical like his prose. (12) Sally's parents have prayed to God to save her, after she had expressed a wish to become just like Dan the Drunk.

"God heard their prayer.
He saved their Sally.
Prayer. It can work miracles.
Sally grew up to become a nanny."

Protest in poetry as such would not appear as an alien element to the traditional African poet, since traditional poems usually had a purpose, often to express a message or glorify war. Vilakazi, it is true, condemns "a reactionary attitude of bitterness" when discussing Dhlomo's poems, and chides the younger writers for producing second-rate and negligible controversial matter on political subjects, thus delaying "the development of purely artistic expression". (13)

(10) "Lonely" from Modern Poetry from Africa edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier.

(11) Poems from Black Africa, edited by Langston Hughes

(12) The Classic, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963.

(13) "The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni".

He has sometimes been accused by Africans of being insufficiently conscious of the sufferings of his people, yet this is disproved by some of his own poems such as "In the Goldmines",⁽¹⁴⁾ which gives a compassionate picture of just such suffering. Dhlomo's early and almost unknown poems published in Ilanga Lase Natal are variations on the theme of "we who believe that human souls, like Art are one in God."⁽¹⁵⁾ In "Not for Me"⁽¹⁶⁾ he gives the African attitude towards the celebration of victory at the end of World War II, which marked the break of political promises made to the Africans during the war:

"Not for me
 Ah! not for me
 the celebrations
 The peace orations.
 Not for me,
 Yes not for me
 The victory
 And liberty!
 Of the liberty I died to bring in need;
 And this betrayal wounds and sears my soul.
 I bleed."

Again we find in these poems, as in Mtshali's "The Master of the House", that the protest is made not on behalf of the poet, but in the name of "the faceless man," the anonymous African. This applies too to the section of "Valley of a Thousand Hills" quoted earlier, which continues:

(14) Originally published in Bantu Treasury Series, No. VIII translated by A.C. Jordan, Africa South, January - March 1957 and by D. McK. Malcolm and Florence Louie Friedman in Zulu Horizons.

(15) "Life is 'Bitter-Sweet'", written to welcome Noel Coward to Bantu Social Centre and published in Ilanga Lase Natal, 1st April, 1944.

(16) Ilanga Lase Natal, 19th May, 1945.

Domndeni are in order to understand the meaning. This type of reference he explains in his collection Zulu Poems. Proper names in Zulu poetry, he says, are often part of a system of ideas or personifications. This is because the names bear meanings expressive of events. Thus the name "Mpindelela" means "recurrent" which in the following lines is the name of a fountain and at the same time describes the action of the fountain and symbolises recurrent yearnings:

"May I when I awake
Take from all men
The yearnings of their souls
And turn them into the fountain of Mpindelela⁽¹⁹⁾
Which will explode into oceans,"

As yet not many contemporary poets writing in English in Southern Africa deliberately use traditional symbolism. A movement back to tradition has come recently from the University of Botswana, Lesotho and ^{Swaziland}~~Bechuanaland~~ at Roma. As co-editor of Expression, a journal of the University's English Society, Njabulo S. Ndebele advocates the use of African imagery and in his poetry he consciously makes use of it to convey his meaning. In "Five Letters to M.M.M."⁽²⁰⁾ he expresses love in terms of "the moon as the Holy Missile of Love rather than the rose", as the editors express it in an editorial of the issue in which this poem appears, thus carrying out the journal's aim of drawing inspiration from African myths, superstitions and moral codes. This means, the editorial continues, recognising to the fullest extent "the interdependence of man and the earth", which Ndebele demonstrates again in

(19) "A Poem" from Zulu Poems.

(20) Expression, 1970, one.

the poem about "Little Dudu"⁽²¹⁾ who "slid off a cheek of God / And was born into the world" where he "...lay on his belly / On the dome of a hippo's mouth."

Keorapetse Kgositsile also goes back to his roots in choosing his symbols but his choice is more stylised. His entire collection My Name is Afrika is based on a system of certain key symbols associated with collective human consciousness. The words "memory", "dream", "rebirth" occur again and again. Words like "mother" and "baobab", for instance, signify Africa. "Fire" represents the fight for freedom and in words like "pulse" and "dance" or in sexual symbolism lies hidden a fiercely passionate protest explicit only to the initiated. These are the militant Afro-Americans with whom he has made common cause and who recognise him as one of their leading poets. He speaks, for example, of Meadowland and Harlem in the same breath. Kgositsile was born in Johannesburg but has lived in New York since 1962. He is attached to the Columbia University Writing Program and is also on the staff of Black Dialogue Magazine. ^{Before} ~~Previous to~~ My Name is Afrika, which appeared in 1971, he published two volumes of poetry: Spirits Unchained and For Melba. His work has appeared in Transition, The New African, in Afro-American publications like ^{Such as} Negro Digest, Guerilla and Black Art and in several anthologies. Except for his imagery, he is an American rather than an African writer, and even as such his symbolism is too deliberate to be regarded as a sensitive response to the ideas of which he is an

(21) The Classic, Vol. 111, No. 3, 1970.

exponent. They become a mere device, a game to which the key must be found, instead of providing a key to the connection between objects and ideas and illustrating or dramatising this relationship. There is often a striving for effect rather than meaning.

The beginnings of African poetry in English in Southern Africa go back to 1937. The previous year James J.R. Jolo6e, a Presbyterian Minister and well-known poet, novelist and translator in Xhosa, won the May Esther Bedford prize for a poem entitled "U-Mthithula". This prize was awarded annually under the auspices of London University for poems in an African language, but a translation into English had to be submitted with the entry. Jolo6e translated the poem himself as "Thuthula", and it was published in London in 1937. Jolo6e continued to write poetry in Xhosa and received many honours for it. In 1957 he won the Margaret Wrong Memorial Medal and Prize for outstanding services to literature in South Africa, which was presented to him at Lovedale in September 1958 at a large gathering. In 1952 he received the Vilakazi Memorial prize and in 1953 the Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel first prize for a collection of poems. In Bantu Literature and Life Shepherd tells us that Jolo6e was convinced of the distinctive contribution Africans would make to literature in the realm of poetry. They would arise, he said, and make known the soul of Africa. It must have become obvious to him that in order to do so they would have to aim at a wider audience through an English medium. Thus, in 1946, Lovedale Press published his Poems of an African. They were translations by the author of his own Xhosa poems which had appeared in a volume of the Bantu Treasury series of

the University of the Witwatersrand. The collection includes "Thuthula", extracts of which have also appeared in several anthologies.

"Thuthula" is founded on a well-known incident in history which led to war between two Xhosa tribes. The chief of one tribe has fallen under the influence of Christianity through the seer Ntsikana, and, in order to discredit Ntsikana and his disciple, the chief of the other tribe, Nqgika, is encouraged by members of his tribe to raid the territory of his rival chief, Ndlambe, and abduct his wife Thuthula. Thuthula, who had known and loved Nqgika in the past and had been forced to marry the much older Ndlambe, makes "...her awful choice/ With sign both deep and sad from troubled soul." She goes to her beloved, thus losing "the crown of womanhood" to become "a husk without a character". Her dreadful deed can perhaps be explained but not excused:

"For marriage vows are precious far beyond
all other pleasures that may win the heart.
Perhaps 'twas love that tempted thee, poor dame,
The pain of being weaned from thy soul twin,
On altar of lobola sacrificed.
Forsooth, that was a death in life, but this
Is death, and yea; a death seven times o'er."

Justice and morality triumph, however, when "the kind-
lers of the fire" - those who had suggested the plan to
Chief Nqgika - are killed and become "the food of
vultures wild", and Thuthula is returned to Ndlambe's
kraal where "she was pardoned for her lapse".

The other three poems in this collection are a
sonnet, "To Light, An Ode To The Fallen", and an elegy,
"In Memory", with the refrain "Mother mine, beauty of
the Thembu clan".

It is strange that this poet, who wrote mainly
in the language of his forbears and at a time when the
sound of traditional oral literature was still to be

heard around him, should have written poetry which is so utterly derivative in thought, construction and style, in everything in fact except subject matter. One can only conclude that he was so completely under the spell of his missionary surroundings as to make him an indiscriminating admirer of all the literature he absorbed there. How could he speak of the soul of Africa when he was suppressing all genuine sentiment under a conglomeration of all that was artificial and sentimental in English nineteenth century literature? Some of the lines from Thuthula quoted above read like a parody of Tennyson. In the same year in which Thuthula was published H.I.E. Dhlomo was appointed Librarian-organiser of the Transvaal Committee of the Carnegie Library Service for non-Europeans, and at the same time he was on the staff of The Bantu World. Less than ten years, but a great deal more of worldly experience, lie between his poem "Not for Me" quoted earlier and Jolo6e's "To the Fallen". While Dhlomo's soul bleeds for the betrayal of African soldiers, Jolo6e sees them as looking "beyond and seeing the fruit/...vast gains/ To their own race, to mankind and the world." He gives "Sweet comfort, Heaven's gift" to their mourners and exhorts the "Divine Restorer" to "wipe away all tears".

It cannot be denied that Jolo6e is as proficient as Dhlomo in the use of the English language and that he handles the poetic forms he uses with skill. Rhythm is used with competence in lines such as:

"Closed are the eyes to what we can see,
Dull is the ear to sounds of this world.
Still is the mouth and cold are the hands.
Mother mine, beauty of the Thembu clan".

(22) "In Memory", opening lines.

His passage from the particular, in the first eight lines of the sonnet "To Light", to the general in the last six lines shows his understanding of this form of poetry.

Like Jolobe, Dhlomo also considers the question of the contribution of the African to literature and comes to the conclusion that rhythm is the greatest gift the African has brought to it. In the treatise on "African Drama and Poetry", published in South African Outlook in 1939, he carefully lays out his argument in favour of a flexible form in poetry, and arrives at rhythm as a solution, a rhythm which "is more than a physical sensation. It is inspired by uniformity in motion, giving birth to thought and emotion and vision." One suspects, however, that his arguments were chiefly designed to provoke Vilakazi who at the time was experimenting with rhyme in Zulu, and who replied in a letter to the effect that Dhlomo did not understand the forms which he was attempting to discuss. Vilakazi refused, in any case, to consider anything but vernacular writing as a contribution to African literature.

These quarrels, fascinating as they may be to us from a distance of thirty years, are purely theoretical and bear little relationship to Dhlomo's poetry, except for his comment on blank verse as most suitable for African poetry, a form which he used in his best known and longest poem, "Valley of a Thousand Hills". It was published in Durban in 1941 and was so popular that it went into two further printings, in March 1942 and March 1944. In 1962 it was republished and the proceeds of this edition went to the childrens' feeding fund and the Natal Daily News milk fund.

In this poem, as we have already seen, Dhlomo attempts to find himself as an African in an alien

society through God as expressed in the beauty of nature on the one hand and through a pride in his past on the other. At the very beginning both themes combine when he calls upon his ancestral spirits to give him power

"This magic sight to hold, imprison, sing!
This myriad beauty of the Thousand Land."

The Valley becomes "the skipping playing ground of tribal gods", and he sings songs of praise and supplication to some of these gods, such as "sweet Phunga", to whom he appeals:

"Give us the mind
To soar above our present days
Of crippling strife."

He then proceeds to paint a romantic picture of tribal life where "god-like wrinkled men - great sages, hunters, warriors"-are gathered around "The frothing choc'late, warm utshwala pots", discussing philosophy and law.

In the second section the poet becomes more personal and tells how he came back to the country to see "The arum-lily of my native streams", long after "to a foreign devil beast / In female form myself had tied."

He cannot pluck the flower, because he dare not shirk those ties that are strangling him. He and the flower fail to understand each other and when finally understanding dawns, the flower droops and is plucked by a passer-by. Now the poet identifies himself with the flower and sings a song of pain. This continues into the third and fourth section in which he craves for the freedom and beauty of the land to which he feels he no longer belongs. Fate is a whim of the gods and "Not good but power is worshipped everywhere." Death is the consummation and there seems to be no reason why the poet should continue to live. The answer comes in a long section in which he states his belief:

"Awake! Arise! and see the beauty of
The Valley of a Thousand Hills - and live."

Having come to terms with himself and God through beauty, he now sees a vision of past, present and future. The past becomes part of the peacefully beautiful moonlight night, the present is a tortured vision of "twanging tunes of clashing colour themes". The future gives a varying picture of "the broken people of the land", the hopeful calm note of the soul of the past, a blunt voice exhorting the people to rise and fight.

In the final section the Valley fills with a different vision, one in which life begins anew, "Buds burst into a flower of peace", birds "Take to the skies in song! It is our soul!" A new dawn is about to emerge. The epilogue calls upon the creator to let beauty reign supreme.

The theme of the poem expresses his conviction that if we can feel external beauty as representing both God and the individual soul, which are as one, then there is hope for a world of love and truth without pain. It would, in fact, be the prophecy of Nongause come true. The graves have burst agape and the ancestral spirits have arisen. No longer will the African be an outcast in his land, and "lie and rot / Beneath a foreign yoke..."

Now

"All earth is purged and we enthroned
The picture from the Hills is painted full."

In his conception of nature Dhlomo aims at a quiet classical pastoralism but he is often provoked into romantic outpourings full of descriptive vitality and vivid movement, for example:

"Silent a bird floats past, and far away
A drunken whisk of smoke staggers about
This way and that, and wastes itself to naught!"

He is capable of strong commanding lines, such as:

"...The womb
Of life conceives, and life anew
Begins! Worms wind their way to light!
Wild pulsings throb and course and give
New heart and blood into all tired flesh."

But he is also capable of wild rhetoric flights:

"Where mother - angel - romped and laughed
Both young and free, who knew warm love and glee?
Was mother once a childlike, childless girl?"

or pure bathos, when, in the middle of a serious outcry to
God he writes:

"Lord, give me wealth
To gain my health."

His metaphors are taken from contemporary as well as
traditional sources, for example:

"We try to shape
A pain-proof, filter dwelling,
But pains ooze through!
Bacterial filter-passing!"

Although Dhlomo lacked the academic education
of men like Vilakazi and even Jolobe, it is evident that
he was well read and had absorbed the literature of the
classics as well as of the English romantic period.
Shelley, Byron and Keats were obviously his models.
It seems likely that he read Shelley's Defence of Poetry
and possibly Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. At
times there are deliberate attempts to give a Homeric
atmosphere. In the tribal past, just as in the period
of the ancient Greeks, the gods took part in the affairs
of men. Nkosazana, "goddess bright of light" "rose
earthward" to bring justice in the same way as the
heavenly born, his mother, came from heaven to appear to
Achilles. Shaka, too, becomes a god:

"Hymned Shaka, God of war-writ fame
Homeric feats attained."

The poem is carefully constructed. The beauty
of the land introduces the former might of the Zulu
nation and then carries us through the poet's attempts

to find himself. Through the inspiration of the vision of the past we are led to a message of hope. It is a pity that this unity of thought cannot be followed in the only version of the poem readily available today, a long extract in Roy Macnab and Charles Gulston's anthology South African Poetry. It is also unfortunate that the poet did not end with the song of dawn instead of the somewhat banal epilogue.

Dhlomo's shorter poems are even less easily available than "Valley of a Thousand Hills". Most of them were published in Ilanga Lase which does not keep a classified newspaper index. There is one following the style of both Clough and Matthew Arnold, entitled "The Ocean"⁽²³⁾ on the relationship between nature and the emotions which ends:

"My venture and my soul soon came to bench
Where tearing waves of pain my soul did find."

and several such as "The Nile" voicing the agony of the African as an outcast in his land:

"This beauty's not for me! My
home is not
My home! I am an outcast in my land!"

lines which he repeats in "Valley of a Thousand Hills"⁽²⁴⁾

Very little poetry was written in English during the next few years. Vernacular poetry was published by the mission presses, but Drum, almost the only outlet for English writing by Africans in South Africa, was a popular journal and rarely published poetry. In its early

(23) Ilanga Lase Natal, 12th April, 1940.

(24) "The Nile", typescript in anonymous collection in the Killie Campbell Library, Durban, attributed to Trevor Cope or Killie Campbell herself.

days, when tradition was still emphasised, a poem such as Peter N. Raboroko's "To Tshaka" still found its way into its columns. It begins in the grand manner:

"So sung in mournful strains and plaintive tones
The bard of yore and so; dark radiant gem,
Sing I of thee.

and attempts to justify psychologically how Chaka became the "fiend king".

Occasionally the mission journals, such as South African Outlook and Africa, the journal of the International African Institute of African Languages and Cultures, published by the Oxford University Press, would publish a poem. The latter, for instance, published a literal translation of Vilakazi's "Victoria Falls" in its April 1946 issue. (25)

Anthologies contain few poems by African writers from Southern Africa. Peter Clarke, as Peter Kumalo, contributes a lyrical poem entitled "Playsong" to Langston Hughes' anthology An African Treasury which gives an artist's picture of Simonstown in the spring charmingly and sparingly told. The same anthology contains "Weapon", a poem by W.W. Citashe, who wrote mainly in Xhosa. Hughes' Poems from Black Africa includes poems by Abrahams, Modisane, Mphahlele and Clarke.

Roy Macnab's later anthology, Poets in South Africa (1958), also has extracts from "Valley of a Thousand Hills" as well as from Jolege's "Thuthula" which also appears in John Reed and Clive Wake's A Book of African Verse (1964). Peter Abrahams, Bloke Modisane, Mazisi Kunene and Oswald Mtshali make brief

appearances in anthologies edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (Modern Poetry from Africa, 1963), by Ezekiel Mphahlele (African Writing Today, 1967), by Joseph Okpaku (New African Literature and the Arts I ~~Vol. I~~, 1970) and the PEN Centre publications New South African Writing, 1964 - 1968, while Kgositsile is one of the Seven South African Poets in an anthology of that title edited by Cosmo Pieterse.

The nineteen-sixties saw the introduction of a spate of South African literary journals, many of them, such as New Coin, Ophir and Purple Renoster, devoted to the publication of poetry. The Classic, The New African and others also included poetry.

Ophir began publication in May 1967, produced, according to its first editorial, by a small independent group of writers for the publication of their own poetry and poetry which interested them. It is inclined to be more outspoken politically and verbally than New Coin which first appeared in 1965 for the purpose of putting "new poetic currency into circulation". Ophir includes a poem by Wally Mongane Serote entitled "What's this Black S..."⁽²⁶⁾ Contributions in both these journals include the work of Oswald Mtshali. New Coin, which aims at publishing "as much verse of achievement and promise as space will permit" also has occasional contributions by other Africans. Mtshali is also published in The Purple Renoster the aim of which⁽²⁷⁾ was simply to

(26) No. 9, July, 1969.

(27) Editorial, No. 1, September 1956.

"provide a means of publication for some of the writers of South Africa in the shorter literary forms in English" with "the sense of an individual personality behind the writer" as its chief criterion. The Bulletin of the Department of English of the University of South Africa, UNISA and De Arte, published by its Department of Fine Art, also contain poems by Mtshali. He has frequently been presented at private readings in Johannesburg and a volume of his poetry, Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, has just made its appearance.

Oswald Mtshali, who is consequently beginning to receive the critical attention which he deserves, was born in Vryheid in Natal in 1940, and matriculated there. He now lives in Soweto and works as a messenger in Johannesburg. Unlike his contemporaries, the poets Kunene and Kgositsile, he has not been out of South Africa. He is an urban African and his work shows little signs of exposure either to traditional poetry or to popular and militant Afro-American literary movements. He has, in fact, not as yet been discovered outside South Africa, though this may possibly be rectified now by the publication of his collected poems.

In how far, we must ask, does his poetry differ from that of other South African poets published in the same journals, such as Eva Bezwoda, Sheila Fugard, Ruth Harnett, Sydney Clouts. His subject matter is usually, though not always, some area of African life, whether it is urban as in "The Moulting Country Bird",⁽²⁸⁾ the country as in "Reapers in a Mieliefeld"⁽²⁹⁾ or the mines

(28) Ophir, No. 6, September, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

(29) The Classic, Vol. 11 No. 4, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

as in "The Miner".⁽³⁰⁾ On the surface these poems mere represent another aspect of South African life. In this respect a poem like "The Moulting Country Bird" would appear to differ little from the poem by Wilhelm Knobel which precedes it in Ophir, entitled "Dorp". Yet Mtshali does more than present the African in a situation. Only in the final poem of the collection, "Sounds of a Cowhide Drum", is he "the spirit of your ancestors" or the "voice of Mother Africa". More frequently he reveals the urban African experience in all its aspects: the horror of slum life as when a dead abandoned baby is torn at by mongrel dogs,⁽³¹⁾ the tenderness and compassion, the sophistication and learning, the simplicity and country background, and all the overtones between. There is little that escapes him, even where nothing is what it seems. He can be as merciless towards "The Detribalised" African⁽³²⁾ and his wife and their sham sophistication as towards the White "money-laden landlubber" who spends a holiday "At the Seashore"⁽³²⁾ and he can be equally compassionate towards them all.

Mtshali is interested in universal and not just in African values. In "Nightfall in Soweto"⁽³³⁾ we have again the impersonal form of the personal pronouns. In Soweto

"Man has ceased to be man
Man has become . . . beast
Man has become prey."

- (30) New Coin Poetry, Vol. IV, No. 2, ^{June} 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.
- (31) "An Abandoned Bundle" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.
- (32) Titles of poems from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.
- (33) The Classic, Vol. 11, No. 4 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

and the poet, on behalf of all those who suffer, becomes the helpless victim:

"I am the prey;
I am the quarry to be run down
by the marauding beast,
let loose by cruel Nightfall
from his cage of death."

The world's and not just the White man's eyes "are myopic with misery" and a witch-doctor's potion will make the world smile and dandle him - a man, not especially an African - "like a devoted mother". (34)
Colour prejudice, one feels, is just a symptom of a world where "Love and Truth / are sugar-coated words / offered to Sunday school children." (35)

In his poems Mtshali is nearly always explicitly graphic rather than impressionistic and the descriptive picture is presented for its own sake as well as in its metaphoric sense. The following lines are typical of what Nadine Gordimer in the Foreword to his collected poems describes as "almost surgical imagery:"

"The cow cuts
The shiny coat
as a child would
lick a toffee
with a tongue as pink as
the sole of a foot."

The calf sways

"...on legs
filled with jelly and custard
instead of bone and marrow." (36)

These earthy, almost rollicking images create an impact as surely as do the more sophisticated similes which he

(34) "I will Tell it to my Witchdoctor" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

(35) "The Birth of our Daughter 28.2.69." from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

(36) New Coin Poetry, Vol. 1V, No. 1, March, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

handles with equal confidence, as for instance in one of his most striking descriptions:

"The sun spun like
a tossed coin.
It whirled on the azure sky.
It clattered on the horizon.
It clicked in the slot
and neon lights popped
and blinked 'Time Expired'
as on a parking meter." (37)

Mtshali's writing is compact and moves with the rhythm of feeling to provide a particular emotional atmosphere which Dhlomo saw as essentially African. "Boy on a Swing"⁽³⁸⁾ starts on a note of routine living and works up to a climax like the rise and fall of a swing until

"the four cardinal points
meet in his head"

and the very essence of human and African life is questioned:

"Mother!

"Where did I come from?
When will I wear long trousers?
Why was my father jailed?"

His spontaneous bold rhythms combined with an ease of phrasing are often achieved by splitting a sentence into two lines in such a way that the important part - usually the subject of the sentence - is emphasised by standing alone; for example:

"Handcuffs
have steel fangs." (39)

- (37) "Sunset", The Purple Renoster, Winter, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.
- (38) Ophir, No. 7, December, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.
- (39) "Handcuffs" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

or

"The rays of the sun
are like a pair of scissors

...
The young shepherd
drives the master's sheep

...
His bare feet
kick the grass."

Note the slow emphatic rhythm of the first lines in
"Men in Chains":

"The train stopped
at a country station"

which runs concurrent with the meaning, as becomes
evident in the hurried lack of pause in the last line:

"The train went on its way to nowhere."

Mtshali rarely uses rhyme, usually only to
emphasise an irony hidden behind the grace of the pre-
ceding lines, so that it catches one unawares: His
mother-in-law, a washerwoman, for instance who has, on
"frost-freckled mornings / In sun-scorched afternoons",
drudged "murmurless", shouts to God when she collapses
with "weariness one day:

"'My child! Dear child,' she heard,
'Suffer for those who live in gilded sin,
'Toil for these who swim in a bowl of gin.'" (40)

Metre, too, has been discarded but, like many
African poets in English and the vernacular, he finds
assonance and alliteration a method of creating a phonic
pattern; for example:

"The Marble Eye
is an ornament
coldly carved by craftsmen
to fill an empty socket
as a corpse fills a coffin."

The same purpose is achieved at the end of the same poem
by repetition:

(40) "The Washerwoman's Prayer" from Sounds of a
Cowhide Drum.

"Oh the marble eye
if only my eyes
were made of marble!" (41)

In Mtshali's poems, unlike those of Kgositsile¹³, the meaning is never hidden behind the symbol. Even though a few symbols are repeated no key is required before the meaning becomes clear. The rising sun, as "a red eye wiped by a tattered / handkerchief of clouds", represents despair⁽⁴²⁾ whereas when "The setting sun comes peeping through curtained windows / it scratches with talons of an eagle / for consciences." Mtshali's simplicity of expression is by no means due to a simplicity of thought; it is the final result of the clearness of meaning. The sun, frequently mentioned, often sets the mood of the poem.

The Classic also gives a hearing to several other African poets such as Mfaka Mpuli, Joyce Sikakhane and Stanley Motjuwadi who differ from the White South African poets in its pages mainly in the subject matter. Their approach and their sensitivity to the external world are otherwise indistinguishable from those of their contemporaries, though their expression tends to be more precise. Their contribution, not necessarily less important, is individual rather than African. Lionel Abrahams, editor of The Purple Renoster, who has read many unpublished poems by Wally Serote, for instance, finds him "caught perhaps more consciously than any of the others in the struggle to clear his personal being

(41) "The Marble Eye" UNISA Issue, No. 4, 1968 and Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

(42) "Men in Chains" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

from a lethal morass of his Black experience." He speaks of a Black poetry movement in South Africa, which seems a little premature if one judges by the published output.⁽⁴³⁾

It is difficult to decide whether a poet like Mazisi Kunene falls within the scope of this study. His poems have occasionally been included in anthologies. "To the Proud", which also appeared in The New African⁽⁴⁴⁾, is published in Modern Poetry from Africa edited by Ulli Beier and Gerald Moore, who compare it with the work of George Awoonor-Williams in that both have assimilated the "cryptic rather oracular quality" of vernacular poetry. "Universal Love" is a contribution to Mphahlele's anthology African Writing Today. In introducing his collection Zulu Poems, Kunene stresses the fact that they are translations, but in translating them himself he must necessarily recreate them for the English-speaking reader. He is directing himself to an English-speaking readership, whether European or African, whereas Vilakazi, Mado, Dlamini and others, though translations have appeared, are writing essentially for readers of the African languages. Kunene must thus be considered as an African poet in English.

When we consider his work as a contribution to literature, we find that the stress on translation and on the traditional element acts as a hindrance to the reader's enjoyment. A poem such as "Master of Days"

(43) "Black Experience into English Verse"
New Nation, February, 1970.

(44) October, 1968.

may appear quaint in its symbolism, whereas if we knew nothing of the author's background we would accept the symbolism for its own sake:

"In the centre of the centre of the centres
There is an old man
Whose body is one with us,
Who tore the locks of daylight
Unfolding his legs with all hours.
When he releases the day of triumph,
He will release it with fertilising leaves that
are ourselves."

The lines:

"The substance of knowledge
Is a circular pot bursting with abundance
On which many lips are feeding"

can stand by themselves without the long footnote on the significance of the pot.

The stress on the traditional is also reflected in the use of the poet's Zulu name, Mazisi, whereas his Master's dissertation was presented to the University of Natal under the name of Raymond Kunene. Similarly Kgositsile's later writing appears under his African name of Keorapetse, whereas he is known to his friends as William.

If we can overlook this rather contrived aspect of the poems, then we may well accept Kunene's effort as a practical demonstration of Vilakazi's ideals in that he has kept "intact the independence and integrity of a new type of literature which in its conception of the end of human existence and the universal meaning of life may be a substantial contribution to the world's artistic heritage". If Kunene and others can present these concepts as simple truth, rather than as interesting examples of anthropology or as a political or social badge, African literature in English, emanating from South Africans, will have made its contribution to literature.

There is an even greater continuity with the past in the poetry of Rhodesian Africans and most of it is still, in fact, being written in the vernacular. Yet even vernacular poetry in Rhodesia is considered there as part of Rhodesian poetry. For the South African it is almost startling to note that Colin Style, as editor of a gramophone record entitled "Rhodesian Poets", refers to the roots of Rhodesian White poetry as going back much further than the arrival of the European in 1870, not to the poetry of England but to Shona and Ndebele poetry that "lay tangled and hidden in war songs". When he continues to say that the contemporary Rhodesians who appear on this record "are truly integrated" he means that they are of the land to which they belong, and not in the South African meaning of the word that they have lost their roots, both English and African.

Where African poets are not accepted as part of the Rhodesian main stream their contribution is nevertheless considered as "crossfertilisation of influences" and welcomed as such. (45)

A small group of White Rhodesian poets actively encourage African poetry, and works by African poets are included in a collection such as the record mentioned above and a leaflet of the Salisbury Festival of September 1970; also in the literary journals, Two Tone and Chirimo, the latter now defunct. The African contributions are mainly in the vernacular, but translations always accompany them, sometimes by the poet himself, at other times by White translators. Several of the editors

(45) Editorial to first issue of Chirimo, No. 1, June, 1968.

of Two Tone, such as James and Olive Robertson and Phillippa Berlyn, are able to translate such poems themselves.

The best-known poets who write in English or translate their own works are Wilson Chivaura, Henry Pote, Eric Mazani, Edgar Musarira and N.S. Sigogo. They have been widely published in Rhodesia and most of them also in The London Magazine.

Some of their work is distinguished by a refreshing simplicity of thought and style, others are merely inconsequential. One or two, such as Sigogo's "Indalelo/Fate" speak quaintly of African concepts of the meaning of life. As an expression of literary thought in English, whether as a separate form or as part of Rhodesian English literature, poetry by Africans in Rhodesia still lacks coordination and literary and philosophical direction.

Expression, as the medium of a society of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, reflects the multi-racialism of this University. Most of the contributors are, of course, Africans. As a medium of the University's literary circle it bristles with student exuberance. In 1970 the journal took a more serious turn and acknowledged its affinity with Western literature by references to the thoughts of its leading poets. This was due to a change from the literary circle to the University's English society as publishers and perhaps also its new co-editor and most outstanding contributor, twentytwo-year-old Njabulo S. Ndebele who has lived and studied in South Africa and Swaziland and is now at Roma University. He has

contributed to The Classic as well as to Expression. From then on Expression, as well as Ndebele's poetry, aimed at increasing the readers' consciousness of ^{their} his tradition by drawing inspiration from African myths, religion, superstitions and moral codes. Ndebele carried out this ^{aim} injunction, as we have seen, in the symbolism he uses. Like Kunene and Kgositsile he makes common cause with the Negritude writers in Africa and America in lines like:

"Aie - e! I shall gather you
 Into my arms, my love,
 Yea, and anoint myself with the
 Night of your skin." (46)

It will be interesting to see the results of the impact of a poet, whose ideas are akin to those of the rest of Africa and Black America, and whose work is published in South Africa. ^{It} ~~It~~ may, of course, also ^{be a} ~~work~~ ^{effect} in reverse: The effect of publication in other countries should widen Ndebele's intellectual range.

(46) Express, 1970, one.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITING

Many works have been written by Black South Africans in English outside the generally accepted limits of literature. By definition (see the introduction, page 1) the chosen field of this study is the creative writing of the authors in the area under discussion. T.S. Eliot has defined literature as works delightful to read to all those who can enjoy language well written, even if they are unconcerned with the objects which the writer had in view, and gives as examples works by Clarendon, Gibbon, the authorised translation of the Bible, works by Jeremy Taylor and others.⁽¹⁾ Similarly, Lascelles Abercrombie's Principles of Literary Criticism⁽¹⁹³²⁾ permits an examination of applied literature in the light of "an enjoyable exhibition of purpose". Works like S.M. Molema's Montshiwa, Barolong Chief and Patriot (1814-1896), John Henderson Soga's Ama-Xosa Life and Customs and The South Eastern Bantu, D.D.T. Jabavu's The Black Problem and Jordan Ngubane's An African Explains Apartheid certainly provide literary enjoyment as well as valuable historical, sociological and political information, as do Chief Albert Luthuli's works, especially his speech accepting the Nobel prize, entitled "The Dignity of Man". The reader who has no knowledge of the Nguni languages can still read for its own sake the two academic theses of Vilakazi on the subject of vernacular literature, and derive benefit from a knowledge of Vilakazi's ethical and philosophical

(1) "Religion and Literature" from Essays Ancient and Modern.

beliefs. Anthologies and literary periodicals often include political essays, sometimes for political purposes, but even then they do not always appear out of place in literary collections or journals.

I shall, however, refrain from going into detail about these works as otherwise there is no limit to the scope of the subject. Let us rather turn to the critical writing of Africans since this branch of literature should help us more than any other in estimating the contribution which Anglophone African writers in Southern Africa have made to literature. In how far, we want to know, has the African critic succeeded in interpreting Black African literature in Southern Africa and what yardstick does he use in evaluating it? This is our chief concern, although the African critic also deals with works produced by writers outside Southern Africa^{and by White writers.} Mphahlele's Master of Arts thesis, for instance, is about "The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction".

CRITICAL WRITING BY AFRICAN WRITERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Most of the African critics in the Republic of South Africa - there is as yet no critical writing by Africans in the other areas of Southern Africa - employ the sociological approach, since they are largely the same writers as have produced realistic fiction. They are mainly concerned with response of the writer to his environment. This does not mean that their yardstick is the writer's sociological or political achievement; rather that they attempt to evaluate the literary contents according to certain tenets which they see as universal truth. In the case of Ezekiel Mphahlele, who claims that he is a "simple practising writer" and not "a non-African Africanist who is looking for categories and theories for a doctorate thesis", it is the artist's

search for his collective personality, his "African Image" which is important. This process Mphahlele sees as a search for the truth about the writer himself. If a writer's tone is healthy, he says, he is bound to express the African in him. He describes H.I.E. Dhlomo's poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills", for instance, as a soul-searching journey and finds Dhlomo a romanticist who "can pray for a world without pain, where life is not sacrifice - in a scheme of things where life is always pain".⁽²⁾ This romanticism, Mphahlele says, pervades African character: "To this, and to the African's fatalism which enables him to face and carry the tragic moment, add Christianity, and you get a personality that is at once submissive and violent, accommodating and uncompromising, full of laughter and tears - no, we can't define it: we can only search for the African personality." Africa he sees as "an ambivalent continent searching for equilibrium" to form a synthesis of Europe and Africa. In spite of this emphasis on a search for the African personality, Mphahlele sees no need for a writer to turn this into a slogan and feels that if he thinks of it as a "battle cry it's bound to throw him into a stance, an attitude, and his art will suffer." This is the difference between Mphahlele and the exponents of Negritude who, he feels, have made a cult of wanting to recapture the past.

Lewis Nkosi, the other leading African critic of African writing in English in South Africa, sees African writing south of the Sahara as the product of a

(2) The African Image, chapter entitled "Black Man's Image of Himself".

culture conflict, an encounter, not a synthesis, between Europe and Africa, in which Africa is "emerging from the violence done to it".⁽³⁾ This, he says, brings about a certain ambivalence in the African writers' relation to Western culture "for the anguish and the torments which have laid hold of the African intellectuals, the need for the black writer to reach within himself and into his past, arises out of this peculiar, really ironic, and terribly dangerous relation in which the black man stands to the unyieldingly arrogant white world".⁽⁴⁾ It is the lack of imagination in making use of their tradition in creating new African art forms that he deplores. His emphasis is always on the future, since he feels that nothing has as yet been achieved. "What we would like to see in Africa," he says, "is whether our artists can point out an alternative direction from the one provided by a civilisation which has culminated quite ignobly in a heap of broken images."⁽⁵⁾ If this comes about it is to be hoped that Nkosi's sharp wit and powers of intellectual analysis will encourage the efforts of its exponents. Then, perhaps, interpretation as well as definition will be his aim.

- (3) Philip Segal's notes on Conference of African Writers of English Expression, June 1962 at Makerere University College, Uganda.
- (4) "White on Black", Observer, 1958.
- (5) "A Question of Identity", from Home and Exile.

Nkosi, who has absorbed contemporary trends in literature with greater ease than the other African literary figures, approaches criticism more formalistically than Kphahlele. In his concentration on the aesthetic quality of literature he can see only folly in works like Jahn's Muntu and A History of Neo-African Literature in their attempt "forever (to) classify and systematise and then uncover the Zeitgeist of the entire civilisation". (6)

Nkosi measures writing by Black South Africans by European literary standards and finds their fiction lacking in "any significant and complex talent". Their "mere concern with telling (italics his) a story...this lack of self-consciousness...could be supposed to allow for a certain freshness and originative power in the writing; yet these are virtues which would be very difficult to find in fiction by black South Africans. (7)

At the same time Nkosi demands that writing by Black South Africans should respond to the problems posed by conditions there and finds that in fiction this is not the case. The writers, he says, have neither "the vigour of the imagination" nor "sufficient technical resources" for this. Black writing, as opposed to music, "shows the cracks and tension of language working under severe strain." (8)

Nkosi is blunt to the point of critical incivility. He leaves us in no doubt about his views of

(6) "Who are the Africans", Manchester Guardian, 3rd January, 1969.

(7) "Fiction by Black South Africans", from Introduction to African Literature: An anthology of Critical Writing from Black Orpheus edited by Ulli Beier.

(8) (ibid.)

Richard Rive as a novelist when he finds that to read his Emergency "is to gain a minute glimpse into a literary situation which seems to me quite desperate".⁽⁹⁾ He attacks Rive even more strongly when he sees him as living in the insulated and sterile atmosphere of South African criticism "in which it is possible for minor talent to be inflated beyond sensible proportions". He goes a little too far when he objects to the first sentence in a short story about the hard-drinking, hopelessly desperate but very much alive characters of District Six: "The moon was in a recklessly gay mood and, ^{shouted} 'Happy New Year!' to the stars." This Nkosi finds "simply unbelievable" and says that Rive "ought to know that such old-fashioned assertions about nature are not made any more". He does not seem to realise that this is a perfect setting for the story Rive is about to tell.⁽¹⁰⁾

While this may be a personal feud - the South African Black and Coloured writers are still a small enough coterie to be personally acquainted - he does make some allowances and praises Rive for some of his shorter fiction. Some of the comments above come from his collection of essays, Home and Exile, and in these he appears genuinely angry about a state of affairs in his former homeland where "mediocre writing by Black writers is painlessly endured". The only writer in whom he sees any promise, judging as he does from the one extract of Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost, which had appeared at the time, is Dugmore Boetie.⁽¹¹⁾

(9) *ibid.*

(10) Review of Africans' Songs, The Classic, Vol.1, No. 2, 1963.

(11) "Fiction by Black South Africans", see note 7.

Another target of Nkosi's is the "European critics who now find it such profitable enterprise to preside over the rebirth of African art and literature"⁽¹²⁾. Not only the European critics but an Afro-American, Wilfred Cartey, comes under attack for giving no new insights into the subject of African writing. Cartey, he says, referring to his work Whispers from a Continent, might "fill a need in American black studies" but "will not necessarily add anything fresh to the field of African literary criticism"⁽¹³⁾ Jahn's History of Neo-African Literature is described as pretentious-sounding, and the most that can be said about Margaret Laurence's Long Drums and Cannons, he claims, is that "in style and subject matter it is less forbidding than Jahn's work"⁽¹⁴⁾ He shows greater generosity towards Alan Paton. Although he looks upon the hero of Cry, the Beloved Country as an Uncle Tom, "an embodiment of all the pieties, trepidations and humilities we the young had begun to despise with a consuming passion" and sees the nineteen-fifties as a revolt against "the Stephen Kumalo generation", he does not question Paton's "generosity of spirit, his courageous plea for racial justice"⁽¹⁵⁾.

At this time some periodicals were throwing open their pages to literary discussion. The Classic gave Alan Paton an opportunity to answer the African critics "of any white African writer who introduces

(12) "A Question of Identity" from Home and Exile.

(13) "A Question of Literary Stewardship", Africa Report, May - June, 1969.

(14) "Who are the Africans", Manchester Guardian, 3rd January, 1969.

(15) "The Fabulous Decade: The Fifties", from Home and Exile.

Christianity and Christian values into the writing". Christian themes, says Paton, are as much part of our culture as any other. To react with immediate hostility to the introduction of this element he finds a sign of an immature critic.⁽¹⁶⁾ In the next issue⁽¹⁷⁾ Rive answers Nkosi's criticism and sarcastically accuses him not only of being destructively nihilistic but also of not having read the book he reviewed.

Yet Nkosi is never merely vituperative. He substantiates his attacks and arguments in clear and logical prose. He has the ability to extract the essential elements when reviewing a new work, as for instance in an article entitled "White on Black" (parodying the title of an article by Mphahlele, "Black and White") about Mphahlele's The African Image.

"This book reveals, ironically and sometimes painfully, the bottomless confusion which now attends the efforts by African intellectuals to re-create an image of themselves from the disparate elements of their cultures as well as from the debris of their shattered pre-colonial past. For if anything emerges it is not a single coherent image of Africans or a clear projection of who Africans really are; rather is it an affirmation by the author - sometimes too joyous an affirmation it seems to me - that such an image has been fragmented almost beyond recognition."

His pen-sketches of the Drum writers and his description of the background against which they - and he - moved show powers of sharp observation. His skill in summing up meaning is shown repeatedly by apt phrases such as his description of Negritude in French-speaking Africa as a "spurious synthetic form of anguish imported from the

(16) Vol. 1, No. 2, 1963.

(17) Vol. 1, No. 3.

cafes of Paris through cellophane-wrapped paperbacks.⁽¹⁸⁾ South African fiction by Black writers he describes as "journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature".⁽¹⁹⁾ He is, however, often on the verge of breaking into slick journalese and using the felicitous phrase for its own sake, as when he speaks of "the ugly leer on the claustrophobic face of violence".

In spite of his occasional excesses Nkosi performs a necessary function in introducing common sense and clear judgment into criticism of African writing. He obviously agrees with Hazlitt, who felt free to criticise the Lake Poets, because he could see no reason why the liberty of the press ought to be shackled, or freedom of speech controlled, to screen either its revolutionary or its renegade extravagances.

Ezekiel Mphahlele is not always as clear-headed in his thinking as Nkosi. In his Master's thesis "The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction", for example, he appears to lose sight of his argument that the Black man should be depicted as a character irrespective of his colour; instead he seems to demand that he should be depicted as a sympathetic character. He is less concerned with the immediate evaluation of individual works and more prone to catalogue and classify writing, in spite of his statement to the contrary. Consequently his estimates are less rash and more urbane. At the same time there is a buoyancy in his writing which takes it out of the sphere of theoretical arguments and brings his points home forcefully. This and his sense

(18) "A Question of Identity" from Home and Exile.

(19) "Fiction by Black South Africans", see note 7.

of humour - as when he once regretted his position as a fullback in literary arguments - have contributed to his acceptance as the leading spokesman for South African Black writing in English.

African Image, his chief work of non-fiction, is now almost ten years old and it will be interesting to see what critical writing emerges now that he has ceased to be a "Wanderer" and is established as Professor of English at an American University.

The only other serious critics among Africans are the leading African scholars: D.D.T. Jabavu, S.M. Guma, Daniel P. Kunene, C.L.S. Nyembesi and B.W. Vilakazi, who have already been mentioned as having produced studies written in English of African literature but their concern is only with writers in the vernacular and is therefore not ours in this study. Yet Vilakazi is explicit in his conception of what the African writer in any language - in fact the writer anywhere - should be. He feels that Dhlomo's "Valley of a Thousand Hills" does not rise to the heights which poetry should reach "because he has failed to pass from the region of the sensuous to the higher realm of interpretation of life". Dhlomo's shorter poems, says Vilakazi, may yet win greater fame, "for through them penetrates the light of a spiritual lament, a pleading fraught with constancy and hope. His imagination in these poems becomes an instrument of intuitive insight and therefore the most authentic guide to ultimate truth".⁽²⁰⁾ As a scholar of African writing, as a teacher - he was Senior Language Assistant in the Bantu Studies Department of the University of the

(20) "The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni", D. Litt. Thesis in Bantu Studies (Language), October, 1945.

Witwatersrand when he died at the early age of 41 - and as a Zulu poet, Vilakazi exerted an enormous influence over his contemporaries and pupils. It seems likely that future students of African writing, not only in the vernacular but also in English, will go to his writings in their search for literary truth in Southern Africa.

Mazisi Kunene's Master of Arts thesis, used later for the introduction to his Zulu Poems, is relevant to the understanding of his poetry and has been discussed in that context.

A.C. Jordan's articles on the history of African literature in South Africa in Africa South, "Towards an African Literature", are considered as one of his greatest contributions to the writing of his country. His simple love for the literature of his people shines through the pages of a sophisticated and crusading journal like Africa South. The dramatically told folk tales with which he intersperses the history "have survived through the ages," he says, "because of their artistic value, each one of them symbolising something of permanent meaning to Man as Man". Since his novel had not been published in his English translation at the time of writing, I cannot consider him as a novelist, but as a scholar of African writing his departure on a one-way exit visa in 1961 - he was denied a passport to take up a Fellowship in the United States - was a great loss to the University of Cape Town and to South Africa. (21) At the time of his death A.C. Jordan held the position of Professor of African Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin.

(21) And to me personally as he, with the late Prof. ~~Philip Segal~~, was my original supervisor.
R. G. Howarth

Many reviews of books by African critics have appeared in various journals but rarely is their purpose literary. When Jordan Ngubane reviews Alan Paton's For You Departed in Africa Report⁽²²⁾ it becomes a personal and political chat between two former co-presidents of the South African Liberal Party. There are personal reminiscences, starting with H.I.E. Dhlomo's series of articles on "Three Famous African Authors I Knew"⁽²³⁾ and straightforward reports of conferences.

On the whole, however, White critics have a great deal more to say about African writing than do the Africans about themselves, a situation which, if the critical ideas of Negritude - that African writing cannot be judged by European standards - takes hold in Southern Africa, will no doubt be remedied.

TRANSLATIONS

At present the translation of African works into English by African translators in Southern Africa is still very spasmodic. Africans have translated their own poetry for publication in order to extend their readership, such as Jolobe's collection Poems of an African, Mazisi Kunene's Zulu Poems and the works of the Rhodesian African poets published in journals there. A.C. Jordan translated his novel Wrath of the Ancestors but until very recently no publisher for it could be found. Apart from these, stories and poems are translated for the purpose of including representative works

(22) February, 1970.

(23) Inkundla ya Banto, August - September, 1946.

in anthologies or to demonstrate a point in a study, written in English, of vernacular literature. A.C. Jordan thus translated Vilakazi's "In the Goldmines", usually considered the Zulu poet's best poem. Jordan's translation was published in toto in Africa South⁽²⁴⁾ and extracts appeared in Roy Macnab's anthology Poets in South Africa. Macnab's aim in this anthology was to present "within a single volume and a single language a variety of poets nurtured by the same South African soil, but communicating in a different medium".⁽²⁵⁾ Similarly Peggy Rutherford included a translation of another poem by Vilakazi, "Umamima", translated by R.M. Mfeka and adapted by the compiler, in her anthology Darkness and Light.

To illustrate his remark that Zulu poets use mainly private and personal imagery incomprehensible to the general reader, Vilakazi translated the anonymous praise-poem to Dingaan from which I quoted earlier, in his Master's thesis, "Conception and Development of Zulu Poetry". In the same work he translated bird songs to demonstrate rhythm patterns.

While this is the only access we have to vernacular writing, the danger of this type of translation as literature is the emphasis on the anthropological and linguistic, rather than the literary angle. In many cases a free translation and occasional introduction of another idea or observation would interpret a poem for us, provided that it retained the spirit of the original, but this would not help linguistic research

(24) Vol. 1, No. 2, January - March, 1957.

(25) Introduction to anthology.

into vernacular poetry in the same way as a translation following the original line by line and using the same metre.

In prose writing too considerations other than literary come into play. Thus A.C. Jordan, in his series of articles "Towards an African Literature" (26) complains that translators have paid more attention to the myths and animal stories than to those about people of which "there is a much greater variety of character and incident..."

In their endeavour to retain the original attributes, Black translators, and many White translators too, often become literal to the point of destroying all meaning as well as beauty. Literal translation leads to ponderous lines which fail to convey emotional contents, such as:

"In the evening you may hear all the dances
done long ago
In the old deserted village of Mandidzimba;
Or else the cases brought up before the court
To be judged with wisdom and authority.
As of old they still lived according to
their will
Without care or fear of a further hearing."
(27)

The stress of such translators seems to be on the exact meaning of individual phrases rather than on the ideas expressed.

On the other hand, when handled by an expert, research into vernacular poetry, and translations made in the course of it, can be fascinating to the lay reader and

(26) Africa South, July - September, 1957 onwards.

(27) "Dongo Remandidzimba" by Wilson Chivaura, translated by Prof. G. Fortune, Chirimo, Vol. 11, No. 1, September, 1969.

further his enjoyment of a poem to which he would otherwise have no access. Thus Daniel P. Kunene translates a Basotho warsong by A. Sekese originally published in Leselinyana la Lesotho on 1st February, 1891. First he gives a literal translation "approximating as closely as possible the original in the words employed and the sequential order" so as to "facilitate a description of the poem, of its symbolism and imagery". This description, as well as an analysis of the rhythmic patterns, follows and finally there is a free translation. (28)

Far more clumsy are H.I.E. Dhleho's footnotes explaining the terminology used by E.H.A. Mado which accompany his translation of the poem "Ubambatha Kamakhwatha" and which explain the terminology.

Up to now even the students of traditional literature have put very few translations into circulation. This will be remedied by Daniel P. Kunene's project to be entitled "A Digest of African Vernacular Literatures" which is to have translations of works considered worth while. This, Kunene envisages, will open "the flood-gates for African vernacular literature to flow out and join the stream of world literature." (29)

The difficulties of translation are stressed by Vilakazi in his Master's thesis. (30) The African poet treats a poem as a whole, a procedure best expressed

(28) "A War-Song of the Basotho" by Daniel P. Kunene, from New African Literature and the Arts I, edited by Joseph Okpaku.

(29) Research in African Literature, Vol.1, No.2, Fall, 1970.

(30) "Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu".

in terms of the Gestalt theory of psychology which sees a pattern or part of a whole as being characteristic of a given experience. The translator must therefore retain this feature without sacrificing meaning in the process. He succeeds in doing this himself when he translates the song of the bushshrike for example:

"My father died, I was not told
My mother died, I was not told
My heart now is
Paining, paining, paining."

The fact that this charming poem is used in the above thesis to prove that such bird songs are "meant to bring about a theomachy of personification where some ethical qualities are vaguely expressed" does not detract from the reader's enjoyment.

A.C. Jordan conveys meaning without losing sight of the original purpose of the vernacular poet almost instinctively, as shown in his translation of "In the Goldmines" as compared with the far freer, smoother yet less spontaneous translation of the same poem by D. McK. Malcolm and Florence Louie Freedman. (31)

Compare the line of Malcolm and Freedman:

"I shall wake, oh, let me be"

with Jordan's:

"I will get up soon; do not pester me",
for instance. Jordan's chief aim is not to preserve the original language but to render the spirit of the original

Thus:

"Where the furnace made you strong."

becomes

"Where you roasted in the fire till you were strong."

(31) Zulu Horizons: The Vilakazi Poems.

The term "These coneys", used by Malcolm and Freedman, may make the line in which it occurs scan more readily, but "Those black rock-rabbits" as a metaphor for mine-workers is likely to evoke a more immediate response, as does the description of the machines which "...caught and stowed away in holes / To own and milk as yielding cows" as compared with "...you caught them all! / Down in the pit you drained their strength". Admittedly

"We cough, we cannot rest - we die!"

is a better line than

"And they cough and they lie down and they die", yet the latter is more successful in its context as a simpler and clearer rendering of the emotion involved. The same applies to "...mind all wrapped in darkness" as opposed to "A poor dazed thing with clouded mind." Jordan's machines "giggle and snigger" in a very human fashion, whereas those of Malcolm and Freedman more formally "jeer...yes jeer and mock us." Jordan's hands "are throbbing with pain" while Malcolm and Freedman's "are aching, always aching".

CONCLUSION

It now remains for us to draw some conclusions about the contributions Africans writing in English in Southern Africa have made to South African literature, to literature written in English and literature generally. Have they made a contribution as a group or must we bracket together a number of individuals to form a mathematical set where \in , the element, merely represents the collection of individuals under discussion?

The preceding pages have shown, I believe, that writing by Africans in English in Southern Africa is sharply divided into two groups. To the first group belong the older writers, mainly of poetry, drama and literary commentary, whose thoughts are closer to those of the rest of Africa south of the Sahara today. These are men like Sol Plaatje, H.I.E. Dhlomo and B.W. Vilakazi, whose ideas are being taken up again after a gap of fifteen to twenty-five years by poets such as Mazisi Kunene, Ndebele and to some extent, though not as consciously, Oswald Mtshali. Their ideas are based on the contention that African culture runs parallel to European culture and that its literature therefore has its own and independent contribution to make to world literature. The other group consists mainly of writers of fiction who ask, with Ezekiel Mphahlele, not just where are you going to draw the line in defining African writing but why are you going to draw it at all? ⁽¹⁾ The aim of these writers, African and Coloured in the Republic of South Africa - who were at the peak of their performance in the nineteen-fifties - is to prove that White and Black writers are equal exponents of the same Western culture. They therefore protest in their

(1)

See Philip Segal: "We Sing of Africa",
Contrast, Vol. 11, No. 2, Autumn, 1963.

fiction against any force which denies this. Isolated on the one side by choice from tradition and on the other from their physical environment of a White South Africa, these writers, with the exception of Dugmore Boetie and occasionally Lewis Nkosi, have failed to respond to current thinking in the West. Because of the laws under which their works may not appear in South Africa, they have been cut off from a reading public in their homeland, and as a result of their estrangement from contemporary trends the literary outlets of Europe and America are also largely closed to them. As a movement they have therefore failed to survive. Only in Boetie's novel is the angry young man of Africa replaced by the individual existing hopefully outside the accepted moral framework of his surroundings. In this way he forms a bridge between the two groups of African writers in Southern Africa. The belief that the external checks against which to measure Western culture are a variable, a concept to which the return to the roots of African culture has contributed, has been accepted in Europe and America, and Boetie represents a return of the idea to the southern part of Africa. God, says Oswald Mtshali, is "that crippled beggar / sprawling at the street corner" and Hell "the hate flickering in your eye".⁽²⁾ And "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth", says Mtshali's preacher, "his voice fiery with holy fervour". The old African who "hits God's heart with screams as hard as stones / flung from the slingshot of his soul" may believe this, but the poet knows

(2)

"A Voice from the Dead" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

that all the old man achieves is to "recharge his spiritual batteries" so that he can continue as "a machine working at full throttle" in order not to spoil his master's "high profit estimate".⁽³⁾

This search for values and refusal to accept standards for any reason other than their universal truth, to which Black and White writers in Southern Africa, through the pages of the poetry journals, The Classic and Expression, have begun to subscribe, has infused a new element into South African literature, bringing it into line with and contributing to the ideas of the present age.

African writers have thus begun to fulfil Vilakazi's prophecy that the Black man has something to contribute to literature in the interpretation of "his conception of the end of human existence and the meaning of life". He has begun to "resist the temptation to discouragement" when looking "upon the behaviour of contemporary civilisation and Western culture".⁽⁴⁾

The above does not imply that White Southern African writers have had to wait for an impact from Black Africa to produce creatively for readers of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Poets like Guy Butler, Wopko Jensma, Anthony Delius, Sydney Clouts, Charl. J.F. Cilliers, ~~and others~~, and fiction writers like Nadine Gordimer, Dan Jacobson and Lourens van der Post, as well as the Afrikaans writers of the Sestiger group, have been interpreting life in a fresh context. We

(3) "An Old Man in Church" from Sounds of a Cowhide Drum.

(4) "Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu".

must not forget, too, that Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost is the work of two men and we do not know the extent of Barney Simon's contribution. The Black writers, however, with their access to another culture, are in a better position to create a strong current of new ideas. This would apply to those writing in the vernacular as well as in English, if sufficient suitable translations were available to convey their meaning to us.

There is now an exchange of ideas between the different groups in South Africa, and also in Rhodesia, and thus the "intellectual apartheid", due to the "difference of belief and aspiration", to which Guy Butler refers in the introduction to his collection A Book of South African Verse in 1959, is beginning to break down. Joseph J. Firebaugh of the University of Michigan who, in 1956, at the Conference of Writers Publishers and University Teachers of English held at the University of the Witwatersrand,⁽⁵⁾ heard Uys Krige say in his address that "Unfortunately we (the South African writers) cannot give the whole of South African life for the simple reason that we do not know it..." may soon no longer have to regret the "tragedy of a failure of cultural enrichment". Firebaugh claimed that to bring this about was the concern and obligation of Universities. Many of the Universities of Southern Africa today include in their courses of South African writing works by African authors. At the University of Cape Town, where Professor R.G. Howarth pioneered the introduction of South African literature within a year of his arrival in South Africa in 1955, prescribed works

(5) Official Proceedings, published by Witwatersrand University Press, 1957.

^{such as}
~~are~~ A.G. Hooper's collection of Short Stories from Southern Africa and R. Macnab's anthology Poets in South Africa. Recommended reading matter includes Seary's Bibliography, the South African P.E.N. Yearbook, with A.C. Partridge's article "The Novel of Social Purpose in South Africa" listed separately, Miller and Sergeant's survey, Snyman's work on the novel and the periodicals Contrast and New Coin among others so that undergraduates have every opportunity to study African writing. They are especially encouraged to do so if they continue their studies after completing the Bachelor of Arts degree. At Rhodes University a special course for 1971 includes West African writing and Ten One Act Plays edited by Cosmo Pieterse. Short stories in The Classic are included under recommended reading matter. At the University of the Witwatersrand a course in African literature was introduced in 1970 as one of four papers for the African Studies Honours course. It includes African writing of English expression, of French expression, and South African writing.

University journals could still devote more space to African writing from all sections and it is unfortunate that at the most recent conference of the English Academy of Southern Africa, held at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, in July 1969, the section devoted to African writing dealt only with the West African novel and not with African writing in Southern Africa. However, a conference with emphasis on teaching English to Africans in Southern Africa has been proposed for 1973.

Pressure by Universities to study African writing freely would surely have an influence on lifting the ban on writers, and on writing academically considered as creative literature. This in turn could create an

atmosphere leading to the return of South Africa's chief writers, both Black and White.

The Black writers in South Africa have the advantage of being part of Africa, whereas the White writer belongs neither to Europe nor to Africa. Africans, at least those who by voluntary exile are free to do so, exchange ideas at conferences. Even in South Africa, Africans are ceasing to be negatively non-white and becoming positively Black, and as such are included in anthologies. Thus Mphahlele and Kgositsile have contributions in New African Literature and the Arts 1 edited by Joseph Okpaku, who believes that African art must first be valid by African and not foreign critical and cultural standards. John Powey, too, agrees that some African writers require different responses from those given to English literature and this, he says, demands a retraining of critical attitudes.⁽⁶⁾ What these African standards are and what responses the reader must make are still left vague. Until these standards have been defined the Graeco-Roman tradition must continue to serve as a basis, in the same way as it has allowed the West to enjoy Chinese Art, Indian music and the Psalms of David. When we strip Okpaku's contention of its harsh condemnation of Western critics, we find that his main objection is their search for the exotic in African art, a fault of which South Africans have not been guilty. Shakespeare, Okpaku also implies, is meaningless to the African, unless he studies the background of the

(6) "African Literature's Widening Range", Africa Report, May, June, 1969.

period. Similarly the Western critic may only approach African writing if he has acquainted himself with African background. Yet here again his contention is not supported by fact as far as South Africa is concerned. Shakespeare, after the Bible, was always the first to be translated into the vernacular by South African Black writers. Okpaku thus distorts the stream of new ideas into a cataract of destruction of the old. This is where African writers from Southern Africa could help to bridge the gap. So far no Africans in Southern Africa have infused "new blood into the weary limbs of the older dramatic forms of Europe", for instance, although Dhlomo was pleading for "great original African drama" as early as 1939.⁽⁷⁾ In 1965 Lewis Nkosi was still waiting for "the very African conception of theatre which gives it unique form and quality".⁽⁸⁾

So far there has also been little attempt by Africans writing in English in Southern Africa to rescue traditional literature from oblivion for the English-speaking reader. The early writers began to do so by interpreting history, ^{for instance} such as Dhlomo in his plays, S.M. Molema in Bantu Past and Present, and Plaatje in his novel, Mhudi,^{Plaatje} preserved African proverbs by listing them with their literary translations and then with their "European equivalents", the latter often taken from Shakespeare and the Bible. Subsequently interest was suspended in opposition to what the writers considered an attempt by the South African Government to legislate them back their roots, mainly through the forced use of

(7) "Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama" 1, Bantu Studies, Vol. XIII, 1939).

(8) "A Question of Identity" from Home and Exile.

the vernacular in the schools. Mphahlele, for instance, in an article⁽⁹⁾ replying to Dan Jacobson who had spoken of the fiction writers' "willed severance from the past" immediately concluded that only the use of English was under attack. The positive side of apartheid was the negative side of the writers' free choice of culture. Jung notwithstanding, the African writers in English of the nineteen-fifties heard no subconscious echo of tradition.

The recent return to a search for the roots of African culture is perfectly conscious. As one of its results the use of a new and fresh series of symbols and metaphors is one of the happiest contributions of the African poet in Southern Africa, even if it is still in its beginnings and sometimes as contrived as that of the integrated Black Frenchmen of twenty years ago. The French Africans made a cult of it and this is a danger in all African countries. We have had a taste of it in a book purportedly based on tribal literature, Indaba My Children by Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, which makes its appeal on the exotic level. In French-speaking Africa it was Senghor who brought his fellow poets back to reality by stressing current relevance when digging up the past. This is something that South Africans do not need to be told. It was also Senghor who explained that in African writing the image was not an equation but super-reality. It does not mean what it represents but what it suggests or creates. In South Africa this is demonstrated today in some of the poetry of Mtshali, notably "Sounds of a Cowhide Drum", "The Marble Eye" and

(9) Encounter, April, 1960.

"If You Should Know Me", and even more in the deliberate symbolism of Mazisi Kunene and Kgositsile. A.C. Jordan, in his series of articles "Towards an African Literature",⁽¹⁰⁾ suggests that the myths of oral literature of which he gives us a typical example, and the songs which he translates, should serve as an inspiring theme for poets. This the young poet Ndebele has been trying to do. We also have a small example of the spread of influence of such images in a poem by the White South African poet, Anthony Delius, entitled "Emerald Dove"⁽¹¹⁾ which is very similar to the illustrating example of birds' songs translated by Vilakazi in his Master's thesis where the cry of the bird represents an idea (see page 221).

Rhythm, which Dhlomo considered the greatest gift of Africa to the artistic world, is closely allied to symbolism, since it is a rhythm of thought and tone, rather than a mere physical expression. It works not so much through metre as through repetition and imagery.⁽¹²⁾

The fact that Jordan in his translation of Vilakazi's "In the Goldmines" did not write flowing lines of verse, as did the other translators of this poem, Malcolm and Freedman, is surely not due to his inability to do so, but rather to the fact that with him rhythm of meaning took precedence, and often demanded a broken beat.

Dhlomo was speaking of drama rather than of

(10) Africa South, July, September, 1957 onward.

(11) Contrast, Summer, 1960.

(12) see H.I.E. Dhlomo: "African Drama and Poetry", South African Outlook, 1st April, 1939.

poetry when he referred to rhythm. He saw drama as a total involvement of ritual, rhythmic dances and song. In tribal performances, he said, there was no strict line between actor and audience. This holds true for all early theatre and there is a move today back towards audience participation in drama. This is closely allied to the breaking down of barriers between art reserved for an intellectual elite and popular art which today still largely appeals, as A.C. Partridge put it in 1956⁽¹³⁾ to "a secular public whose educational pabulum is predominantly factual, and whose daily study is the news, the Blue Book or the White Paper and who "seems content to take its busman's holiday in A Streetcar Named Desire." Such a barrier did not exist in tribal communal art. These ideas, foreshadowed by Dhlomo and commented on by Nkosi, have not as yet been put into practice by African writers in English in Southern Africa where drama is concerned, but collective expression can be found, as we have seen, in their poetry

In estimating the contribution made to literature we cannot cast aside the large section of African fiction writers even though, except for regular broadcasts in England and publication in Sweden, their voice is more rarely heard today, and they have found little following in the younger generation. Their general lack of emphasis on philosophical depth has narrowed the influence of their work to a sociological one. Yet,

(13) "The Novel of Social Purpose in South Africa", South African P.E.N. Yearbook, 1956.

even though out of fashion today, the sociological approach to literature cannot simply be ignored. Future ages will go to the fiction pages of Drum for a picture of South Africa in our times, in order to define the relationship of the writing to the social atmosphere and ^{thus to} find the meaning of the writers' experience, in the same way as not only ^{just} sociologists but ^{also} literary critics go to the works of G.B. Shaw, for instance.

Arthur Maimane defined African writing as writing from an African viewpoint. In all other respects the fiction writers consider themselves as part of a Western tradition, and expect to be judged as such. What we owe to them, at their best, is an interpretation of the spirit of their age and a certain balance of perspective, a picture of South Africa unlike that both of the White writers and of those featuring a romantic view of pure primitiveness. Had most of them not been silenced they, with the Coloured writers to whom they are closely allied, might have led South African literature to a synthesis of Europe and Africa.

Stylistically considered, the terse prose of the Drum writers probably made some mark on South African English in the same way, though not to the same extent, as early Negro writing made an impact on American writing. The colloquial speech of Mphahlele and others should help those writers not ^{sufficiently} acquainted with the characters they describe.

In an age when Black nationalism was beginning to become a virtue the town-reared African despised the culture of his race in the same way as the German Jews, for instance, before Hitler, looked down on the ancient culture of the Hebrews. There, as here, opposition finally led to nationalism. Black nationalism today

must of course be expressed outside South Africa as in the poetry of Kgositsile. The future of African literature in South Africa and Rhodesia is inextricably interwoven with politics. On the fate of apartheid will depend the physical freedom of the writers and their freedom to write what they please and in whichever language they wish. On the outcome of politics will depend whether an independent Black African literature either in English or in the vernacular or both will grow out of its beginnings, or whether a South African English literature, indistinguishable by the Colour of its exponents, will emerge from its early stages. The indications are that, if apartheid disappears and a multi-racial South Africa - or a South Africa divided into politically integrated and Black areas - remains, both lines will continue to develop. There will then be a close interchange between them, so that a true and healthy South African literature will emerge.

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vide anthologies.)

Mphahlele, Ezekiel. (pseud. Esekie, Bruno.)
Man Must Live. (collection.) (Cape Town, African
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vide below.)

The Leaves Were Falling.
Out Brief Candle.
Unwritten Episodes.
Tomorrow You Shall Reap.

Blind Alley. (Drum, Sept., 1953.)
Reef Train. (Drum, Aug., 1954.)
Across Down Stream. (Drum, Aug., 1955.)
Lesane and Down the Quiet Street. (Drum, Dec.,
1956, Jan., Feb., March, April,
1957)

The Living and the Dead. and Other Stories.
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March, 1958.)

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anthologies.)

He and the Cat. (also in The
Classic, Vol. I, No. 1,
1963,

Beier: Black Orpheus, vide
anthologies,

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South African Writing
Today, vide anthologies

We'll Have Dinner at Eight.

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Black Orpheus, Oct., 1958)

The Woman Walks Out. (also in
Standpunte, Vol. VIII, No. 4
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In Fighting Talk.)

The Woman. (also in Purple Renou-
ter, No. 2, Spring, 1967.)

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A Distant of Identity.

In Corner B. (also in The Classic
Vol. I, No. 3.)

The Coffee-Cart Girl. (also in
Drum as Across Down Street
April, 1957.)

A Ballad of Oyo. (also in
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Man Must Live.

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- Ndebele, Njabulo S.: Sarah Rings and I. (Expression, 1970.)
- Ngubane, Jordan: The Answer he Wanted. (African Drum, Nov., 1951.)
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- Nkosi, Lewis: The Hotel Room. (Contrast, Summer, 1963-64.)
The Prisoner. (Mphahlele: African Writing Today, vide anthologies.)
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- Sentso, Dyke H.: The Harvest's Waiting. (African Drum, June, 1951.)
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Pay Back. (African Drum, May, 1952.)
Other People's Goods. (Drum, Feb., 1954.)
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Under the Bluegum Tree. (Drum, April, 1954,
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- Sinxo, Guybon: The Faithless Woman. (African Drum, April, 1951.)
The Grasshopper and the Beetle. (African Drum, April, 1951.)
- Sithole, Ndabaningi: Busi. (Parade, Dec., 1959.)
- Themba, Can: Passionate Stranger. (Drum, March, 1953.)
Mob Passion. (Drum short story competition, 1953.*
Rutherford: Darkness and Light, vide anthologies.)
Forbidden Love. (Drum, Nov., 1955.)
Requiem for Sophiatown. (Africa South, June, 1959,
Hughes: An African Treasury, vide anthologies.)
Nice Time Girl. (Drum, May, 1954.)
Marta. (Drum, 1956.)
The Suit. (The Classic, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963.*)
The Urchin. (Drum, April, 1963,
Mphahlele: African Writing Today, vide anthologies.)
The Dube Train. (Mphahlele and Komey: Modern African Stories, vide anthologies.)

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- Goro-X, S.: Shaka. (Johannesburg, Juta & Co., 1940.)
- Hutchinson, Alfred: The Rainkillers. (Litto: Plays from Black Africans, vide anthologies.)
- Fusane's Trial. (The New African, June, 1965.)
Cosmo Pieterse. Ten One Act Plays, vide anthologies.)
- Maimane, Arthur: The Opportunity. (Cosmo Pieterse: Ten One Act Plays, vide anthologies.)
- Nkosi, Lewis: Rhythm of Violence. (Oxford University Press, 1964.)
Litto, Plays from Black Africans, vide anthologies.)

(2) Acting Scripts.

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- Dingana (produced by Natal University Medical Students Drama Group and Dramatic and Operatic Society of Johannesburg.
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- Cetewayo
Ntsikana
Men and Women.
The Living Dead.
Ruby.
Malaria.
The Expert.
The Bazaar.
The Pass.
Umhlola Wasensimini.
The Workers Part I.
Moshesh.

Matshikiza, Sunny Ray: Scintilla (produced in Queenstown and East London, 1969.)

(3) Plays produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, African Service.

- Hutchinson, Alfred: Doctor's Wife, 23rd Jan., 1963 and 2nd Sept., 1967.
Pirate Taxi, 19th Jan., 1964.
Fusane's Trial, 29th Nov., 1964 (vide published plays above.)
A Spot of Bother, 19th March, 1967.
The Wallet. (4th Aug., 1968.)
- Maimane, Arthur: The Opportunity, 18th April, 1965 (vide published plays above.)

Where the Sun Shines, 23rd January, 1966.

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- Clarke, Peter. (pseud. Kumalo, Peter): Play Song. (Africa South,
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- Chingono, Julius: My Old Shoe. (Chirimo, No. 2, Oct., 1968.)
My Pipe. (" " " " " ")
- Chivaura, Wilson: Dreams. (Rhodesian Poets, vide anthologies.)
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- Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, M.A. (Ilanga Lase,
15th Jan., 1944.)
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- Jolo6e, J.Q.R.: Poems of an African, (Alice, C.P., Lovedale
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Shotgun. (Transition, No. 27, 1966.)
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N.Y., Doubleday, 1971.)
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- Mtshali, Oswald: Just a Passerby. (P.E.N. South African Centre: New South African Writing, vide anthologies.)
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I Will Tell it to My Witchdoctor. (New Coin, June, 1968.)
The Miner. (New Coin, June, 1968.)
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- The Moulting Country-Bird. (Ophir, No. 7, Dec., 1968.)
- Ride Upon the Death Chariot. (Ophir, No. 10, Dec., 1969.)
- A Brazier in the Street. (Purple Renoster, Winter 1968.)
- Sunset. (Purple Renoster, Winter, 1968.)
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- A Corpse in my Street. (Purple Renoster, Winter, 1968.)
- Keep off the Grass. (De Arte, May, 1970.)
- The Marble Eye. (UNISA, No. 4, 1968.)
- Sounds of a Cowhide Drum. (collection - containing most of the above and others.) (Johannesburg, Renoster Books 1971.)

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- Ndebele, Njabulo Simakahle: Looking at the Girl I Love. (The Classic, Vol.III, No. 2, 1969.)
- Little Dudu. (The Classic, Vol.III, No. 3, 1970.)
- The Carol. (The Classic, Vol.III, No. 3, 1970.)
- Five Letters to M.M.M. (Expression, 1970.)

- Nhlapo, Walter M.B.: To H.I.E. Dhlomo. (Ilanga Lase, 30th March, 1946.)
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Samhlahle, Basil: Who Wants to be Mothered. (New Coin, June, 1967.)

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Sikakane, Joyce Nomafa: An Agony. (The Classic, Vol.III, No. 1, 1968.)

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- Mphahlele, Ezekiel: Down Second Avenue. (London, Faber & Faber,
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Afrika Berettar vide
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Sainville: Anthologie de la
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- Mphahlele, Ezekiel: The African Image. (London, Faber & Faber, 1962.)
- Nhlapo, Jacob: Bantu Babel. (Cape Town, The African Bookman, The Sixpenny Library, No. 4, 1944.)
- Nkosi, Lewis: Home and Exile. (London and Ibadan, Longmans, 1965, extracts in The New African April, 1962 - Encounter with New York. Gordimer and Abrahams: South African Writing Today, vide anthologies.)
- Nyembezi, C.L.S.: A Review of Zulu Literature. (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1961.)

(2) Theses.

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The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni. (Doctor of Philosophy Thesis in Bantu Studies presented at the University of the Witwatersrand, October, 1945.)

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- Critics' Time for the Novel. (Paper read to the Conference of African Writers of English Expression, Kampala, 1962.)
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- Remarks on Negritude. (Mphahlele: African Writing Today, vide anthologies.)
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- A Survey of African-English Literature. (Discussion paper presented at the Conference of African and Scandinavian Writers, Stockholm, 1967.)
- Nakasa, Nathaniel: Writing in South Africa. (Talk given at the University of the Witwatersrand under auspices of The English Academy and reported in The Classic, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963.)
- Ngubane, Jordan K.: Review of Alan Paton's For You Departed. (Africa Report, Feb., 1970.)
- Examination of Zulu tribal Poetry. (African Drum, July-Aug., 1951, Native Teachers' Journal, Oct.1951.)
- Nkosi, Lewis: White on Black. (Observer, 1958.)
- African Fiction, South Africa: Protest. (Africa Report, Oct., 1962.)
- Review of Richard Rive's African Songs. (The Classic, Vol. I, No. 2, 1963.)
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- Review of Africa Report. (Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol.III, No.2, 1965.)
- Against the Tribe. (The New African, May, 1965.)
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- A Question of Literary Stewardship. (Africa Report, May/June, 1969.)
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- Bokwe, John Knox: The Story of an African Convert. (Alice, C.P. Lovedale, 1914.)
- Damane, Mosebi: The Mother of Nations. (no indication of publisher, 1947.)
- Luthuli, Albert: Let My People Go. (Johannesburg, Collins, 1962.)
- Mutwa, Vusamazulu Credo: Indaba My Children. (Johannesburg, Blue Crane Publisher, 1964.)
Africa is My Witness. (Johannesburg, Blue Crane Publisher, 1966.)
- Ngubane, Jordan: An African Explains Apartheid: (New York, Praeger, 1963.)
- Nkosi, Lewis: Home and Exile. (vide Critical Writing.)
- Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho (Sol T.): Native Life in South Africa. (London, P.S. King and Son, 1916.)
Sechuana Proverbs and their European Equivalents. (London, Kegan Paul, 1916.)
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- Kgofitsile, Keorapetse William: Whistle for Pennies. (Okpaku: New African Literature and the Arts I, vide anthologies.)
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G. TRANSLATIONS FROM THE VERNACULAR BY AFRICAN TRANSLATORS,
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(Listed under names of translators.)

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Mqhayi, S.E.K.: Intaba ka Ndoda
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Dhlomo, H.I.E.: extracts from
Valley of a Thousand Hills.
Vilakazi, B.W. extracts from
In The Goldmines, translated
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1958.)
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Vilakazi, B.W.: Umamina, translated
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- Following the Sun : 17 Tales from Australia, India and
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Seven Seas Books, 1960.)
Maimane, J. Arthur: The Hungry Boy.
Mphahlele, Ezekiel: The Living and the
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- Hughes, Langston, ed., An African Treasury. (New York,
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Themba, Can: Requiem for Sophiatown,
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F. TRANSLATIONS

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Dexter Taylor, J.: B.W. Vilakazi: Victoria Falls. (Africa,
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Dutton, F.H.: Thomas Kofolo: Chaka. (London, Oxford
University Press, 1931.)

Friedman, Florence Louie: A. Sid. Mopeli-Paulus: Girl's Song.
(South African Outlook,
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, and Malcolm, D. McK.: Zulu
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Malcolm, D. McK and Friedman, Florence Louie: Zulu Horizons,
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Schapera, I.: Praise Poems of a Tswana Chief. (Commonwealth
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G. GENERAL ANTHOLOGIES

Beier, Ulli, ed.: Political Spider. (London, Heinemann, 1969.)

Cartey, Wilfred, ed.: Palaver: Modern African Writing.
(New York, Nelson, 1970.)

Hill, Herbert, ed.: Anger and Beyond: The Negro in the United
States. (Harper and Row, 1966.)
Black Voices. (Elek, 1964,
Knopf, 1963.)

Hooper, A.G. ed.: Short Stories from Southern Africa.
Oxford University Press, 1963.

Pieterse, Cosmo and Munro, Donald, ed.: Protest and Conflict
in African Literature.
(London, Heinemann,
1969.)

Rive, Richard: Quartet - New Voices from South Africa.
(London, Heinemann, 1965.)

Shelton, Austin J.: The African Assertion. (New York, ^{Oliver Press} 1968.)

SECTION THREE: PERIODICALS CONTAINING FAIRLY FREQUENT CONTRIBUTIONS BY OR ABOUT AFRICANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WRITING IN ENGLISH.

A. Southern African

- African Studies. Formerly Bantu Studies. (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand Press.)
- Bantu Teachers' Journal. Formerly Native Teachers' Journal. Pietermaritzburg, Natal Education Department.)
- Bolt. (Durban.)
- Central African Examiner. Ceased publication. (Salisbury.)
- Chirimo. Ceased Publication. (Salisbury.)
- The Classic. (Johannesburg, The Classic Trust Fund.)
- Contact. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- Contrast. (Cape Town, S.A. Literary Journal Ltd.)
- De Arte. (Johannesburg.)
- Drum. Formerly African Drum. (Johannesburg, Post Newspapers.)
- English Studies in Africa. (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand Press.)
- Expression. (Roma, University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.)
- Fighting Talk. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- The Guardian. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- Ilanga. Formerly Ilanga Lase Natal. (Durban, World Publishing and Printing Co.)
- New Age. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- New Coin. (Grahamstown, South African Poetry Society, Rhodes University.)
- New Era. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- New Nation. (Pretoria.)
- Ophir. (Pretoria.)
- The Purple Renoster. (Johannesburg.)
- South African Outlook. (Cape Town.)
- Standpunte. (Cape Town, Nasionale Pers.)
- Trek. Ceased publication. (Cape Town.)
- The UNISA English Studies. (Pretoria, University of South Africa.)
- The World. Formerly Bantu World. (Johannesburg, World Printing and Publishing Co.)

B. Outside Southern Africa

- Africa. Journal of the International Institute of Languages and Cultures.
(~~Oxford~~, Oxford University Press.)
- Africa Report. (Washington D.C.)
- Africa South in Exile. Formerly Africa South. Ceased publication. (London, formerly Cape Town.)
- Africa Today. (Denver, Graduate School of International Studies University of Denver.)
- African Affairs. (London, Royal African Society.)
- African Arts / Arts D'Afrique. (Los Angeles, African Studies Centre, University of California.)
- African Literature Today. (London, Heinemann Educational Books and New York, Africana Publishing Corporation.)
- Black Orpheus. (Ibadan, Mbari Publications.)
- Books Abroad. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.)
- Bulletin of the Association for African Literature in English. (Freetown, Department of English, Fourah Bay College.)
- Journal of Commonwealth Literature. (London, Heinemann Educational Books.)
- Journal of Modern African Studies. (Cambridge.)
- The Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts.
(Palo Alto, Calif., Stanford University.)
- The New African. (London.)
- Phylon. (Atlanta, Atlanta University.)
- Présence Africaine. (Paris.)
- Research in African Literatures. (Austin, Texas, English Department, University of Texas.)
- South Africa: Information and Analysis. (Paris.)
- Transition. Ceased publication. (Kampala.)
- World Literature Written in English. (Austin, Texas, Department of English, University of Texas.)