

FROM PROTEST TO EXILE -

THE WRITINGS OF

J ARTHUR MAIMAN

Gillian C Yudelman

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An examination of the career of J Arthur Maimane, showing
how his writings reflect the social and political events
of the 1950's and his subsequent exile.

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare

this dissertation to be my own unaided work

that the substance, or any part of it, has
not been submitted in the past, and is not
to be submitted for a degree in any other
university

G C Ludelman

30 March 1983

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ABSTRACT

(iii)

This study concerns itself with the development of J Arthur Maimane's career from a journalist to a playwright and the way in which this writer reflects on socio-political issues. A brief analysis of the relationship between literature, (and drama) sociology, history and ideology and an examination of South African social history during the decade of the 1950's is included in order to place Maimane's work in perspective.

Problems facing the South African writer and a survey of dramatic literature in English follows. The social status of the Black writer and the rise in popularity of "Drum" magazine are considered with reference to the predominant use of English and European forms of literature. A discussion of censorship, writing in exile, and an examination of the lack of constructive dialogue between writers and the opening of new theatres to a predominantly White audience contribute towards an assessment of the social function of theatre in South Africa.

Maimane's journalism, the writing of factual articles and boxing features and the way in which these affected his choice of subject-matter and style relate specifically to his combination of journalism and creative writing, fact and fiction. The romantic photo-essays, short stories and detective serials which appeared in "Drum", "Africa" and "Golden City Post", are regarded as examples of popular literature and are discussed with reference to the literary use of the terms "formula" and "genre".

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Maimane's exile and the way in which it affected his choice of material and presentation of attitude illustrates a relationship (in certain respects) to the theories propounded by Brecht and Piscator. The tone of protest in the novel "Victims" and the short stories produced in exile and Maimane's contribution to South African protest writing in general reinforce this examination.

Elements of change and continuity, evident in Maimane's plays, published and unpublished, the use of situations divorced from a South African context, a subtext which specifically relates to apartheid, and the progression towards a change in tone, a development towards what I have called the drama of acquiescence, completes this study.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is primarily concerned with the works of J Arthur Maimane, and his development from a journalist to a playwright. The purpose of this study is to examine the dramatic content and thematic development of Maimane's work and to assess his writing in terms of his presentation of and relationship to the South African context.

For purposes of analysis, Maimane's work has been divided into two sections - the first consists of the journalism and short stories written prior to Maimane's departure from South Africa in 1958, while the second contains the novel, plays and short stories produced in exile, post 1958.

In this study, the emphasis falls on literature and more specifically, drama as a social institution. Chapter One therefore deals with what is termed a "sociology of literature" and describes the connections between literature, drama, politics, history, sociology and ideology. A survey of South African history 1950 - 1960 follows in order to bring out the main tendencies which characterized South African society and as a means of examining Maimane's approach, his choice of subject-matter and the absence or presence of political currents in his writing.

Chapter Two includes a discussion of the effects of exile and censorship, which affected the production and distribution of literature in South Africa. A survey of South African literary and theatrical history has been inserted into this chapter in order to comment on the nature of the drama and literature being produced during the 1950s. The literary tastes of white readers in general, the building of theatrical venues, few of which were opened to multi-racial audiences and the formation

of Black and White theatrical groups are included in the discussion. The emphasis in Chapter Two is placed on the importance of "Drum" magazine for which Maimane worked, and in turn on Ezekiel Mphahlele's comment that:

"During the last twenty years the political, social climate of South Africa has been growing viciously difficult for a Non-White to write in. It requires tremendous organization of one's mental and emotional faculties before one can write a poem or a novel or a play. This has become all but impossible." (1962, page 186)

This assumption is examined in detail, with specific reference to the autobiographies, poems, and plays produced by Black South African writers in exile. As already mentioned, this dissertation is primarily concerned with literature and drama as social institution. Thus Chapter Two takes cognizance of the social status of the Black South African writer in particular, and the nature and tastes of the audience for whom Maimane was writing.

The first phase of Maimane's writing - his journalism is dealt with in Chapter Three. For critical purposes it has been necessary to include a short discussion on the critical usage of the terms "formula", and "popular literature", and the way in which they may be applied to Maimane's work. In order to evaluate and comment on the journalism, Chapter Three has been divided into four sections.

- 1 Sport
- 2 Romantic Photo-Essays
- 3 Short Stories
- 4 Detective Serials

In each case, the content has been summarized and discussed

according to thematic development, style and where necessary, presentation of fact. The absence of political substance in Maimane's journalism is considered with reference to both "popular literature" and the function which the photo-essays, short stories and detective serials performed.

A general review of protest literature, with specific reference to the theatrical experiments and theories of Brecht and Piscator, is included into Chapter Four. Piscator's notion that:

"We look on the theatre as nothing more than an instrument to disseminate a specific idea... the idea that we represent is a political one,"

(C D Innes, 1972, page 53)

is discussed with reference to Maimane's form of protest in his short stories and novel, and in order to illustrate and emphasize the connection between drama, literature and socio-politics.

Maimane's comment that:

"In South Africa, if you are black there can only be one thing you feel very strongly about: apartheid. And you do not have to be an artist, either. You only have to be aware of what this system is doing to you as an individual and also as a community. So the first thing which those of us who can write want to write about - feel impelled to write about - is the effect of this supremacist ethos on ourselves and on the supremacists themselves." (1971, page 124)

has been taken into account in Chapter Four, in order to comment on his attitude towards South Africa, and as a means of assessing the political implications inherent in his work produced in exile.

Specific and detailed attention has been given to Maimane's

plays (published and unpublished) in Chapter Five. The progression from journalist to playwright is discussed and the way in which Maimane's exile affected the style and content of his dramatic work is considered. Dennis Brutus' statement that:

"I think it is simply true that an artist, a writer, is a man who lives in a particular society and takes his images and ideas from that society," (1969, page 100)

is applied to and examined with reference to the political implication and social critique presented in the plays, while the relationship between the South African socio-political environment and the dramatic development in the plays is more specifically assessed in order to draw attention to what I have called Maimane's "drama of acquiescence".

CHAPTER ONE

A SURVEY OF SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY, 1950 - 1960: THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS WITHIN WHICH MAIMANE WORKED

To apply the words "social" and "political" to literature, is to simplify a great deal, as the relationship between literature and socio-politics and the way in which the writer reflects on these conditions is complex. The study of literature as a social institution is not unique to the twentieth century. Aristotle for example suggested a connection between literature and society, when he declared that:

"Poetry tells rather of universal things, history in particular." (Maurice Bowra, 1965, page 6)

Similarly the Vicomte de Bonald, assessing the effect of the French Revolution concluded that:

"Literature is the expression of society, as speech is the expression of man." (Elizabeth and Tom Burns, 1973, page 56)

Hippolyte Taine, in his formulation of a sociological approach to literature, maintained that there was a definite connection between literary criticism and the social sciences, which is a vital conception if one considers that literature, like sociology, is a critical discipline. Taine, however, failed to recognize the essential difference between Art and Science in general and between literary creation and the social sciences in particular - the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. His belief that there is a one-to-one relationship between a book and its subject-matter and that the literature of an age is a complete and precise representation of the age itself is therefore shortsighted, if one takes cognizance of the author's selection and choice of subject-matter and the subjectivity

involved in literary creation.

Taine's analysis, however, is important from a historical point of view, as it presupposes a definite relationship between literature and society, a connection which Tom and Elizabeth Burns (1973) define as:

"Literature is an attempt to make sense of our lives. Sociology is an attempt to make sense of the ways in which we live our lives." (page 9)

This assumption is, as Elizabeth and Tom Burns point out, an oversimplification which echoes Kermode's statement that:

"It is not expected of critics as it is of poets that they should help us make sense of our lives; they are bound only to attempt the lesser fate of making sense of the ways we try to make sense of our lives." (1967, page 3)

Essentially though, what is important is the implied connection between literary criticism and sociology. In order to fully understand this relationship, however, it is necessary to examine what is meant by the term "sociology". Max Weber defined sociology as:

"...a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effect." (1964, page 88)

This definition implies that the purpose of sociology is to describe and explain human behaviour. What is of vital importance to this explanation is the characteristics of the social groups to which individuals belong and the way in which these individuals interact within them. Consequently, sociology which defines itself as a critical activity,

"...exists to criticize claims about the value of achievement and to question assumptions about the meaning of conduct. It is the business of sociologists to conduct a critical debate with the public about its equipment of social institutions."
(Burns, 1973, p 10)

This assumption leads us to a relevant point, which illustrates the connection between sociology and dramatic literature in particular. In the same way that Burns suggests that sociologists should conduct a "critical debate" with the public about the nature of "social institutions", so Brecht reveals that the purpose of epic theatre was to provoke the audience into a debate with the characters on the stage. Audience participation of this sort, which Brecht termed the "alienation effect" allowed for the audience to critically consider the nature of the subject-matter presented. In this respect, the correlation between dramatic literature and critical activity, and the connection between the purpose of the playwright and the sociologist is evident. Lucien Goldmann describes this relationship in the following way:

"Cultural and artistic works themselves have at one and the same time a highly individual and a highly socialized character. The social group would not have been able, or at any rate would have found it far harder, to become aware of its own aspirations without the intervention of creative individuals; and the same individuals, whether theologians, philosophers, political leaders, artists or writers, would never have been able to carry out their work if they had not already found the fundamental elements and the connections between them in the "conscience collective", if only by way of indication."
(Burns, 1973, page 115)

The idea that the creative writer is trying to "make sense of our lives" by trying to make sense of his own, is a significant one. An extension of this assumption, is Goldmann's belief that central to the discussion of the sociology of literature is the notion that history and sociology are indistinguishable:

"...no sociology can be realistic unless it is historical, just as no historical research can be scientific and realistic unless it is sociological... Thus the need to study human facts both in their essential structure and in their concrete reality requires a method which is simultaneously both sociological and historical."
(Burns, 1973, page 109)

This connection is referred to in a different way by Herbert Spencer, who maintained that:

"The study of sociology (is) the study of Evolution in its most complex form." (Kenneth Thompson and Jeremy Tunstall, 1971, page 33)

Similarly, Karl Marx's theories relating to class and the conflict between workers and owners, reveal a historical orientation:

"If, in considering the course of history, ... we confine ourselves to saying that in a particular age these or those ideas were dominant, without paying attention to the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, ... it is impossible to say, for instance, that during the time that the aristocracy was dominant the concepts honour, loyalty etc., were dominant ..."
(Kenneth Thompson and Jeremy Tunstall, 1971, page 48)

This link between sociology and history results in a fundamental consideration with regard to the study of literature as a social institution, as it connects literary criticism with both disciplines. Georg Lukács stresses the historical elements contained in both the drama and the novel, but draws attention to the way in which the presentation of historical process differs in both forms:

"Drama paints the great historical explosions and eruptions of the historical process. Its hero represents the shining peak of the historical process. The novel portrays more what happens before and after these crises, showing the broad interaction between popular basis and visible peak. This stressing of different, though equally valid, factors of social life has far-reaching consequences for the relation of both genres to historical reality."
(Burns, 1973, page 294)

From Lukács' suggestion it may be deduced that literature contains historical substance, and that although a writer comments on the nature of social institutions, his assumptions and choice of form relates to the context from which they generate. Ian Steadman (1981) mentions this connection between dramatic literature and history when he concludes that:

"Performance studies must have a sense of history. The present, too, must be studied as history. Contemporary performance must be seen as crystallizing contemporary history." (page 4)

The need for literary criticism to take cognizance of social and historical features and the writer's ability to present his response to his social environment within a historical

context, leads us to another important consideration as regards the sociology of literature - politics. In the same way that sociology cannot be divorced from history, there is a close relationship between sociology and politics. The political framework is an important determinant of social conditions, in the same way that social conditions affect political activity and structure. Ian Steadman (1980) reflects on this connection, with specific reference to theatre, when he suggests that:

"If one subscribes to the view that politics is a way of reconciling opposing interests, then most drama contains a political substance in the conflict of characters or values, the deception of dilemmas and uncertainties, and their eventual resolution. After all, the strength of theatre is its very nature: it must be presented in public. The stage, that is, is presented to the State." (page 3)

The German term "Zeitstück", a play which attempts to cope with a problem of the day, may be applied to dramatic literature which deals with conditions and problems in relation to a socio-political context. Socio-political substance within a dramatic work however, does not necessarily imply that theatre and/or literature is capable of political influence. Piscator, for example, who proposed that the Agitprop theatre should provoke or incite the audience into action, nevertheless acknowledged that:

"Naturally, I never imagined that art, in my case theatre-art, could replace political power." (1962, page 4)

A discussion of the relationship between socio-politics and literature must include a consideration of ideology which,

as Kelwyn Sole (1979a) suggests, may be implicitly or explicitly present within a literary work:

"Although all literature need not be overtly political, it cannot be free of ideological and sometimes political implications and will, because literature is usually an individual or group activity, not only express these implications, but also form and reform them anew." (page 74)

Ian Steadman (1981) refers to a similar connection when he points out that, although "art can never be reduced to ideology or to sociological manifestation", the relationship will "always be present in some degree". (page 5) In order to qualify this assertion, Steadman cites Barthes who maintained that:

"... no-one lives without ideology: the absence of ideology is itself ideology ..." (1981, page 5)

Ideology, socio-political and historical features may thus exist simultaneously in a literary work. The writer's ideology and his articulation of his attitude towards socio-political conditions within a historical context are therefore important considerations, central to the discussion of J Arthur Maimane's work. Consequently, Maimane's approach to his subject-matter and his selection of material must be examined from a socio-historical point of view in order to bring out the main tendencies which characterized South African society during the 1950's, and as a means of assessing the extent to which political currents of the day are presented in Maimane's writing.

The election into power in 1948 of the Nationalist Government, headed by D F Malan, has been described as the "turning-point" in South African history (Tom Lodge, 1981, page 2). The term "apartheid" replaced the former term "segregation", and the new Government introduced a legislative system, which was:

"... more thoroughgoing, more grotesque perhaps, than anything the country or the world had yet seen." (Edward Roux, 1978, page 366)

During the 1950s, the actions of the Nationalist Government and the implications of the new laws, which were in effect legislation for apartheid, became increasingly evident. The stringent measures which the new Government was prepared to resort to in order to uphold the ideals of apartheid, emphasized the oppressive nature of the nationalist régime which sought to silence, incriminate, or ban any person or official organ, whatever its function, which threatened to destroy or disturb the safety of the state and, by implication, the institution of apartheid.

In 1949, Parliament passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and in 1950 the Immorality Amendment Act. The former asserted that marriage between Whites and Blacks was illegal; the latter declared that carnal intercourse between Whites and Blacks was legally prohibited.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 provided for the physical partition of all racial groups by the establishment of separate areas for each individual racial sector of the population. The Government was further empowered to remove persons from areas not designated for members of that group.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 divided the population up into various racial or colour sectors, and described a White as a person who:

- a In appearance obviously is a White person and who is not generally accepted as a Coloured person; or
- b Is generally accepted as a White person and is not in appearance obviously not a White person.
(Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, as amended by Section I of Act 61 of 1962)

The Act also provided for the implementation of a system of registration cards indicating to which population category the holder belonged.

It is of value to note, that when the Nationalist Government assumed power it did so with a minority of voters and an active, strong opposition. One of these opposition parties which made its influence felt, was the Communist Party. It had secured a seat in Parliament, and maintained a relative degree of influence over the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress.

Together, these parties planned to demonstrate against the Government on May Day, 1950, an event which resulted in the killing of thirteen Africans (who defied the ban imposed on public meetings) in Benoni, Sophiatown and Orlando.

The outcome was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, and the dissolution of the Communist Party announced in Parliament by Sam Khan. Subsequently, a list of all former Communist supporters was compiled; a Communist being described as:

"A person who professes to be communist or who, after having been given a reasonable opportunity of making such representations as he considers necessary, is deemed by the Governor-General ... to be a Communist on

the ground that he is advocating ... any of the objects of Communism." (Edward Roux, 1978, pages 379 & 380)

In 1951, a Bill was introduced which attempted to remove the Coloureds from the Common Voter's Roll. The idea was to place the Coloureds on a Separate Voter's Roll, allowing them to elect four representatives to Parliament, all of them White.

Coupled with this was the passing of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which provided for the establishment of local, regional and territorial Bantu Authorities which would restore power to the tribal chiefs, and eventually bring about a process of self-government.

Opposition to Governmental apartheid continued throughout 1951 with voices of protest emerging from both the White and the Black areas of the population. In May of that year, a protest of Coloured people took place in response to the intended removal of Coloureds from the Common Voter's Roll. It was supported by both Africans and Indians in Port Elizabeth and the South-Western Cape, and achieved a certain amount of success. A new organization, the Torch Commando, which emerged from the White sector of the community, staged protest marches in both Johannesburg and Cape Town during 1951. Composed almost entirely of ex-servicemen, The Torch Commando was established from the belief that the Government was suppressing the civil liberties for which they had fought in the Second World War.

Perhaps the most significant event of 1952 was the Defiance Campaign which, according to Drum Magazine (October 1952), was born on the 29th July, 1951, when various Black leaders assembled together to form a Joint Planning Council.

The Organization's purpose was the co-ordination of a mass

campaign of passive resistance against the Government's oppressive system. The six laws to be opposed were:

- 1 Pass Laws - The Native's Act of 1952 had consolidated the Pass Laws for the entire country
- 2 Stock Limitation
- 3 Group Areas Act (1950)
- 4 Separate Voter's Representation Act (1951)
- 5 Bantu Authorities Act (1951)
- 6 Suppression of Communism Act (1950)

Although the first mass demonstration was planned for 6th April, 1952, (the day which would celebrate the tricentenary of Van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape), nothing of consequence occurred until the 26th June, 1952. On that day, protesters entered locations without permits, passed through "European Only" entrances in railway stations, defied curfew regulations and travelled in European train coaches.

Banners and clothing bearing the Colours of Congress (black representing the people, green indicative of the land, and yellow the symbol of gold) were displayed everywhere, and protesters deliberately had themselves arrested.

The Government reacted to this situation by declaring that new laws were to be passed to deal with the protesters. Despite these warnings resistance continued, and by October the number of arrests had surpassed 5000 and the number of paid-up members of Congress rose from 7 000 to 100 000. (Mary Benson, 1966, p 151)

In the same month, however, riots broke out in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth which together with disturbances in Kimberley and East London, caused the death of at least thirty-six people. As a result, the Government and a large majority of the White population came to identify the Defiance Campaign with the riots - an attitude which reduced the image and objectives of Congress to that of an organization devoted to violence.

Some sections of the White population, however, sympathize with the plight of the protesters. On December 18th 1952, for example, a group led by Patrick Duncan walked into Germiston location in support of resistance, and earlier on in the campaign a White organization dedicated to the fight for equal rights for all races emerged, known as the Congress of Democrats.

Although defiance continued until December 1952, the consequences of the campaign were clearly visible. On the one hand, passive resistance was successful in that it represented to a certain degree the strength of the African National Congress. On the other hand, the trial of Dr Moroko, President-General of the ANC, and nineteen other leaders (both African and Indian) of the Defiance Campaign (during which Dr Moroko dissociated himself from his fellow accused) pointed towards an important flaw in the African National Congress and the Defiance Campaign - the inability to mobilize and maintain sufficient support in the passive attack on Government policy.

1952 has been described as a year which "changed the political complexion of South Africa." (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 117) The Defiance Campaign, the single most important event of 1952 was responsible for this transformation as, in response to

passive resistance, the Government passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act and Public Safety Act in 1953.

The former made it an offence to break any law by way of protest or resistance. These offenders, together with anyone who incited a Black to protest against the law, would be severely penalized. The latter empowered the Minister of Justice to suspend almost any legislation, should the country's safety be threatened.

The Nationalist Government added to their system of apartheid and totalitarianism by passing the Native Labour Act, the Separate Amenities Act, and the Bantu Education Act.

The Native Labour Act forbade strikes and lock-outs by Black workers and made provision for the establishment of Regional Labour Committees, under the auspices of White appointees, who would be responsible for, and attend to, problems relating to Black labour. The Separate Amenities Act declared that separate facilities:

"... need not be substantially similar to or of the same character, standard, extent or quality as those set aside for the other race". (Edward Roux, 1978, page 389)

The Bantu Education Act entrusted the education of Blacks, previously handled by the Department of Education, to the Department of Native Affairs. The nature of this educational structure was explained by the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd when he said in the Senate:

"The school must equip him (the native) to meet the demands which the economic life of South Africa will impose upon him ... there is no place for the native in

European society above the level of certain forms of labour." (Trevor Huddleston, 1981, page 119)

Further provision was made for the punishment by fine or imprisonment of any person or institution who conducted or provided unregistered classes and educational facilities for Blacks. Ultimately, the legislation aimed at the complete elimination of the mission schools.

The Government tried through the proclamation of these laws to both reinforce the policy of apartheid and to close any loop-holes within the legislative system. Although returned to power in 1953, the Nationalists had to withstand the formation of several political oppositions. One of these, the Liberal Party, came into existence during 1953, and included among its members people such as Alan Paton, Patrick Duncan and Margaret Ballinger.

The Liberal Party called for equality of political rights and opened its membership to all races which, to a certain extent, contradicted the party's objective as members were equal within the organization, but externally only the Whites had electoral power.

In 1954, Malan retired and was succeeded by J G Strijdom who was intent on maintaining the policy of apartheid and, by direct association, White hegemony. In his maiden speech he declared:

"Call it paramountcy, baaskap or what you will, it is still domination ... the only way the Whites can maintain domination is by withholding the vote from the Blacks ... To suggest that the White man can maintain leadership purely on the grounds of his greater competency is unrealistic ... We are not hostile ... Separation is in the interest of both." (Robert Lacour-Gayet, 1977, pages 301 and 302)

Segregation of South Africans, which extended into all areas of daily living, was not necessarily accepted by all areas of the population, as was vividly revealed in the Defiance Campaign of 1952, and yet again in 1954, when the African National Congress called for a boycott of African Schools in response to the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The boycott began in April 1954, and in areas such as Brakpan, Western Native Township, Germiston, Alexandra Township and Benoni the effect was considerable. Several thousand children stayed away from school in protest and by April 21st, 10 000 pupils were reported absent from school.

In response, Verwoerd declared that all children, not returning to school within a specified period, would be expelled permanently from any school. Some 7 000 pupils failed to comply with these regulations and were struck off the rolls. Schools affected by the boycotts lost their teachers' salary grants and members of staff lost their jobs.

In July, Verwoerd withdrew his statement and disclosed that those students who had been expelled could return to school, providing no further boycotts took place.

The ANC assisted by numerous White supporters set about establishing independent schools, which they called "cultural clubs", in an endeavour to legalize the existence of these institutions. The attempt to provide an alternative form of Bantu education was affected by police intervention and raids, and teachers were charged for infringement of the law if pupils were found reading, writing or being taught in an environment where a blackboard and chalk were being used.

Under these conditions in which educational facilities and equipment were forbidden, it was impossible for the clubs to survive. Boycotts and alternative forms of education

were met with force which served to reinforce the Government's determination to maintain and dominate all aspects of a Black's life, including education.

In 1955, Parliament passed the Departure from the Union Regulation Act which made it a punishable offence to leave the Union of South Africa without a passport. In the same year, widespread opposition to the new Coloured Franchise Bill resulted in the introduction of two laws which were to finally settle the Coloured dispute. A two-thirds majority was necessary to ensure that the Bill be legalized, a majority which the Nationalists failed to secure. Determined to get the Bill passed, the Government endorsed the High Court of Parliament Act, which permitted Parliament to settle any constitutional question by a simple majority. When the Supreme Court ruled that this measure was illegal, the Nationalists passed the Senate Act (1955) which changed the structure of the Senate, doubling the number of senators in order to ascertain a vast majority in both the Senate and in a joint sitting.

As a result of these Bills, Parliament passed the South African Amendment Act in 1956, which finally removed the Cape Coloured from the Common Voter's Roll.

The ANC remained active during 1955, and on the 26th June a Congress of the People took place at Kliptown near Johannesburg under the auspices of the Congress Alliance, a coalition of the African National Congress, the Congress of Democrats, the South African Indian Congress and a Coloured organization which had been formed in Cape Town.

Delegates of every South African race attended the two day meeting, held on a private football field, and Father Huddleston, Chief Luthuli and Dr Dadoo were awarded:

"... the supreme honour of the Congress, 'the'Isitwalandwe, an ancient Xhosa dignity, and presented with a medal" (Anthony Sampson, 1958, page 107)

At this meeting, the Freedom Charter was read and unanimously accepted. According to Chief Luthuli, the Freedom Charter is "a practical and relevant document," which "attempted to give a flesh and blood meaning, in the South African setting, to words such as democracy, freedom, liberty". (1978, page 142)

Chief Luthuli continues, by suggesting that on examination of the Charter, "... it will be seen that freedom means the opening up of the opportunity to all South Africans to live full and abundant lives in terms of country, community and individual." (1978, page 142).

The Charter opens with the words:

"We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:
that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people."

and concludes with:

"Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: 'THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY.'" (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 212 - 216)

What is being declared and finally reinforced in the Freedom

Charter is that all people in South Africa will be entitled to rule and share in the country's wealth. The Constitution provides for the equality of all individuals in terms of legislation and education. The securing of human rights is reinforced, as is the notion that the land shall be divided equally among those who work it. Added to this, the Charter declares that "There shall be work and security!" and that "There shall be houses, security and comfort!" Finally it calls for "Peace and Friendship!" among all South Africans, and between South Africans, the protectorates and the outside world.

Earlier on, in 1955, an event took place which reinforced the Government's policy of segregation as set out in the Group Areas Act (1950). In 1951, the Minister of Native Affairs had announced that numerous "Black Spots" in the Western Areas were to be cleared, and in 1952 a joint City Council / Government Committee reported the removal of all Africans from Martindale, Newclare and Sophiatown to Meadowlands, an area of land next to Orlando.

Despite opposition from both the ANC and residents, the Government removals began on the 9th and 10th February, 1955, with two thousand armed police moving into Sophiatown to ensure that no resistance to the scheme took place, and as lorries began to move off for Meadowlands, so the demolition squads moved in.

Sophiatown was one of several areas in the Transvaal "where Africans had succeeded in buying land before the prohibitive 1923 Urban Areas Act was passed". (Tom Lodge, 1981, page 3) Situated four miles from Johannesburg's centre, Sophiatown has been described as the place of:

"Sophisticated gangsters, brave politicians and intellectuals". (Essop Patel, 1975, page 70)

It has also been referred to as:

"Sophiatown. That beloved Sophiatown. Our Sophiatown. As students we used to refer to it proudly as "the centre of the metropolis". And who would dispute it? The most talented African men and women from all walks of life - in spite of the hardships they had to encounter - came from Sophiatown. The best musicians, scholars, educationists, singers, artists, doctors, lawyers, clergymen". (Miriam Tlali, 1975, page 70)

Living conditions in Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale were certainly not glamorous. Houses were crowded and sanitary facilities were inadequate. The point, however, which made this removal so significant was that:

"... the Western Areas were not locations, they were suburbs. Admittedly they had many features of the ghetto: poor inhabitants, external ownership of most businesses, little local investment, high birth rate, indebtedness, and a socially heterodox population with members of different classes forced to live in close proximity with each other. But there were also two cinemas, twenty churches, seventeen schools, many shops, craftsmen, herbalists, shebeens and jazz clubs. Unlike locations, these townships were not fenced off, there was no superintendent, nobody had to ask permission to live there, and compared to the geometrically planned municipal location, these densely packed suburbs were very difficult to police." (Tom Lodge, 1981, page 4)

In this respect, the removal of the Western Areas, particularly Sophiatown, meant not only upheaval and the dislocation of several thousands of people, but the termination of a specific

and unique way of life.

"The truth is that Sophiatown is a community: a living organism which has grown up through the years, and which has struck its roots deep in this particular place and in this special soil. And because it is an African community, living in a city of South Africa, it has to grow together in a unique way. Xhosa, Mosotho, Shangaan and Motswana, Indian and Chinese, coloured and white have all contributed something to it. And, in my opinion, they have all something of value to contribute ... It is in that sense, unique." (Trevor Huddleston, 1981, pages 101 and 102)

In 1956, the electoral status of the Cape Coloureds was re-defined, and the Secretary of Native Affairs announced the removal of African traders from all areas other than their own townships and locations. The Tomlinson Report was delivered, which described the consolidation of the "Black areas". It was suggested that those areas, which had been historically settled or inhabited by the African tribes, be consolidated into some seven African Homelands in direct relation to the major African ethnic groups. Each state or bantustan would be entitled to have whatever form of government they desired.

The major concern of the Tomlinson Report was the separation and segregation of the African people. Complications set in when it was revealed that at least two thirds of the African population lived within the areas set aside for Whites, making total segregation impossible.

In the closing stages of the meeting of the Congress of the

People in June, 1955, police intervened and cordoned off the 2 800 delegates, claiming to be investigating charges of high treason. Raids on the homes of almost 400 people suspected of treasonable activity took place in September, 1955, followed on 5th December, 1956, by the arrest and subsequent trial of 156 people, including the President General of the ANC, Chief Luthuli and a selection of men and women from all racial groups.

The preparatory examination lasted twelve months and was held in the Johannesburg Drill Hall. The first sessions were punctuated by mass demonstrations which were met with intervention from the police who fired on the crowds.

At the end of the initial examination, the accused were committed for trial, although subsequently the trial proceeded against only thirty of the original accused, comprising twenty four Africans, one Coloured, three Indians and two Whites. They were:

- 1 Farid Ahmed Adams
- 2 Helen Joseph
- 3 Ahmed Mahomed Kathrada
- 4 Leon Levy
- 5 Stanley Lollan
- 6 Nelson Mandela
- 7 Leslie Massina
- 8 Philemon Mathole
- 9 Patrick Molaoa
- 10 Moosa Moola
- 11 Joseph Molefi
- 12 Elias Moretsele
- 13 Mangisi Nene
- 14 Lillian Ngoyi
- 15 John K Nkadimeng

- 16 Philemon Nokwe
- 17 Robert Resha
- 18 Peter Selepe
- 19 Walter Sisulu
- 20 G. t Sibande
- 21 Simon Tyeki
- 22 C J Mayekiso
- 23 B Ndimba
- 24 Wilton Mkwazi
- 25 Simon Mkalipe
- 26 J Kampeni
- 27 Milner Ntsangani
- 28 Tansanga Tshume
- 29 Thembekile Tshunungwa
- 30 Dr W Z Conco.

(Helen Joseph, 1963, pages 146 - 184)

It is significant to note that two of the prominent heads of the ANC, Professor Z K Matthews and Chief Luthuli were among those discharged, while four of those committed for trial were eventually (in other circumstances) sentenced to life imprisonment; namely Ahmed Kathrada, Nelson Mandela, Robert Resha and Walter Sisulu.

The accused were assisted by the Defence Campaign which had collected large sums of money in South Africa and abroad for the payment of lawyers, and for financial support and sustenance of the treason trialists during the months and years that the trial lasted.

The treason trial eventually came to an end in 1961, when the court found that there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that the ANC had been infiltrated by Communistic influences. In the final judgement it was declared that:

"On all the evidence presented to this court, it is

impossible for this court to come to the conclusion that the African National Congress had acquired or adopted a policy to overthrow the State by violence, that is in the sense that the masses had to be prepared or conditioned to commit direct acts of violence against the State." (Helen Joseph, 1963, page 16)

In response to this conclusion, all the accused were found not guilty and were released.

The start of the treason trial in 1957 was not the only significant event which took place during that year. In 1945, a subsidized bus company, known as the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO) had taken over the bus service which served Alexandra, Johannesburg's Western locations and Pretoria, maintaining the old one way journey fare of 4d. During the first week of 1957, PUTCO announced an increase in fares by 1d, raising the cost of a single journey to 5d. In response to this action, the local residents of Alexandra formed an organization known as the "Alexandra People's Transport Action Committee," and decided to walk rather than support the raise instituted by the bus company. Essentially the boycott was a movement of the local people, but soon it spread to the Western locations and Pretoria.

The boycott was characterized by the persistence of the marchers particularly in Alexandra;

"The unanimity with which the people declared their refusal to surrender to exploitation any longer made a tremendous impact. Walking twenty miles and more each day, they chose to suffer rather than be a party to decreasing the amount of food they could give to their children." (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 155)

This perseverance and the determination to make a success of the boycott, did not go unnoticed. White sympathizers organized or provided lifts for numerous marchers, while police, adamant that the strike should be broken (although it was not illegal to walk rather than ride) applied the harshest possible measures to the boycotters.

"As the thousands of African boycotters walked their 360th mile last night, the police applied a new policy of firmness towards the marchers and to motorists who gave them lifts. At about six check points along the route they stopped all vehicles in which Natives were travelling, questioned the drivers, searched the passengers for passes, took some passengers to police stations, took the names of all drivers and passengers and arrested many passengers." (Rand Daily Mail, 1 February 1957)

In response to the cries of "Asikwelwa!" "We will not ride!" and in an effort to settle the conflict, the Chamber of Commerce intervened and suggested that employers pay their staff an additional one shilling per week in lieu of transport costs. The Government determined to break the boycott, refused to negotiate or investigate the cause of the problem, which lay in the poverty of the African people on the Rand.

PUTCO replied by threatening to discontinue its services, and gave its employees a week's notice. Despite these warnings, the "Alexandra People's Transport Action Committee" announced that the boycott would continue. In March, the Chamber of Commerce announced that it would subsidize the buses, provided the users paid the extra penny and then queued up to gain a refund.

Although the fare was now back to 4d, the boycotters nevertheless

refused to queue. By the end of March, after three months of walking, a settlement and solution to the problem was finally arrived at. The Chamber of Commerce together with the Johannesburg Municipality agreed to reimburse the transport company for losses incurred over a period of three to six months. The fare returned to 4d. PUTCO reinstituted its services, and the people were willing to ride.

In reaction to this demonstration of passive resistance, the Minister of Transport B J Schoeman introduced a Bill into Parliament known as the Native Services Transport Bill, which made it possible for him to increase the rate paid by employers for the transport of their African staff. Thus the endurance and positive determination of the people resulted in a complete victory for the boycotters.

In 1958, another general election took place and the Nationalist Party was returned to power. It is important to note that (just) prior the election, Dr Verwoerd, the Minister for Native Affairs, issued a proclamation which empowered him to ban the ANC in any area under his jurisdiction, which in practice meant any rural area. After immediately applying the ban to three areas, he proceeded to call upon other Cabinet Ministers to follow his example. The Minister of Justice complied, and subsequently banned

"... meetings of more than nine Africans in cities and towns." (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 163)

In August 1958, Strijdom died and was succeeded by Dr Verwoerd as Prime Minister. As Minister for Native Affairs he had emphasized that:

"... if the native in South Africa to-day, in any kind of school of existence, is being taught to expect that

he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake." (Trevor Huddleston, 1981, pages 119 and 120)

And as Prime Minister, determined to withhold the policy of apartheid, and by association segregation of the population, he declared that:

"Perhaps it was meant for us to have been planted here at the Southern point of Africa within the crisis area, so that from this resistance group might emanate the victory whereby all that has been built since the days of Christ may be maintained for the good of all mankind." (Robert Lacour-Gayet, 1977, page 303)

In 1958, more demonstrations took place in opposition to the apartheid Government and the legislative measures it imposed, particularly on the African people. The Government's threat to subject women to the provisions of the pass system, had already incited action in 1956 in the form of a mass demonstration of women in Pretoria.

Following this, extensive demonstrations by women took place all over the Union, culminating in October, 1958 with a mass demonstration of women in Johannesburg. Police patrolled the area and arrested two thousand women, most of them mothers, creating for a time, an upheaval of Black family life.

In 1957, the Government introduced a Bill known as the Separate Universities Education Bill, which proposed that no Black be allowed entrance to the "open" universities which previously had admitted them. By 1959 apartheid in Universities had been legalized, and it was envisaged that Africans proceed to ethnic colleges on completion of their secondary

education. These "Bantu Colleges" would be established on the basis of tribal lines, and were to be administered by Government departments and their associated officials.

Government authorities were also responsible for the appointment and dismissal of staff, and cultural contact between colleges and universities was prohibited. The areas chosen for the establishment of these colleges isolated the students considerably, while strict regulations made academic freedom an impossibility.

Recalling, the issue later, Chief Luthuli pointed out that the University College of Fort Hare for example had the following regulations:

"All students must live in hostels. No student is allowed to have any visitor whatever without the prior consent of the Principal himself. No student is allowed to possess any vehicle without official approval. All women students must be in their hostel by 7 p.m. There is a general curfew at 10 p.m. Students are permitted to make no statements to the Press and are allowed to produce no magazine, pamphlet or news-sheet without official approval. Only Xhosa students need apply for admission. Others can go to their "own" colleges elsewhere.

Students must apply yearly for "permission to report for registration". The normal understanding that, unless they are expelled, they will be allowed to finish their courses is removed. And if a student complies with every condition laid down, still the Minister may debar him if he so chooses. No reason need be given." (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 47)

All these measures which reinforced the restrictive nature of university education offered to the African, point towards the main objective of the Department of Bantu Education. Mr Maree, Minister of this department when speaking about the Act, stated that the aim of this kind of segregated education was:

"to produce native leaders who will accept and propagate apartheid." (Albert Luthuli, 1978, page 47)

The Tomlinson Commission's report of 1956, which proposed that the African people be separated into homelands or bantustans, became legalized in 1959, with the passing of the Bantustan and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Acts. In terms of these Acts, each separate state would be controlled by a Governor-General, who would promote and guide the inhabitants of each area towards self-government. Further, provision was made for the establishment of "border industries" which would be in close proximity to the homelands, allowing for commuting between home and work, while simultaneously "enriching" the Reserve population. In practice though, this process of de-centralization merely offered the African a right to a limited kind of self-determination in those areas set aside for him by the South African Government, as an alternative to and completely apart from South Africa and its electoral system.

1959, saw the formation of two new organizations or parties - the Pan-African Congress and the Progressive Party. In April, a conference took place in Orlando, under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe and Josias Madzunya, and it was decided to establish an organization known as the Pan-African Congress. Some 300 delegates proclaimed their support of the United Nation's Charter of equal rights, but decided that the

Africans were responsible for their own welfare. They proposed that other racial groups be included into their scheme, and be allowed the right to vote. In the pursuit of a free Africa, and equal rights however, these racial groups would enjoy no special privileges and would be considered as Africans like everybody else.

The formation of the Progressive Party took place in August, when a split in the United Party occurred. The break away of eleven members of Parliament came about at a time when Government opposition appeared to be a moderate version of the Nationlist Party's policy of segregation. Led by Jan Steytler and Harry Lawrence and financed by Harry Oppenheimer, the Progressive Party defined their policy as one which favoured a non-racial franchise, based on criteria of education, literacy, financial status and land ownership. In certain respects, the new party's policy was similar to that of the Liberal Party, as membership was made available to any person, regardless of colour, who qualified as a voter in terms of those stipulations laid down by the Progressive Party.

The banning and banishment of Chief Luthuli to Groutville in Natal took place during the early months of 1959, while the year ended with a boycott of South African goods, led by Patrick van Rensburg in London, making it clear that external forces would adopt economic measures in an endeavour to protest against the Government's policy of segregation.

On the 24th January 1960, the residents of a shanty-town in Natal, Cato Manor, responded to continual police raids and intervention by killing four White, and five African policeman.

On the 21st March, in response to the Pan African Congress' request that people leave their passes at home and surrender

to the police, several thousands gathered in the locations of Langa in Cape Town and Sharpeville in the Transvaal, surrounding those police stations and demanding to be arrested.

Conscious of what had happened to their colleagues in Cato Manor, the police reacted to the mass demonstration in Sharpeville by opening fire on the crowds. An eyewitness report describes the succession of events in the following way:

"The crowd seemed to be loosely gathered around the Saracens (armoured cars) and on the fringes people were walking in and out. The kids were playing. In all there were about 3 000 people. They seemed amiable. Suddenly there was a sharp report from the direction of the police station. There were shrill cries of "Izwe lethu" (our land) - women's voices, I thought. The cries came from the police station and I could see a small section of the crowd swirl around the Saracens. Hands went up in the Africanist salute. Then the shooting started. We heard the chatter of a machine gun, then another, then another. There were hundreds of women, some of them laughing. They must have thought the police were firing blanks ..."

"Hundreds of kids were running, too. One little boy had an old blanket coat, which he held up behind his head, thinking, perhaps, that it might save him from the bullets. Some of the children, hardly as tall as grass, were leaping like rabbits. Some were shot, too. Still the shooting went on ..."

"Most of the bodies were strewn on the road running through the field in which we were. One man who had been lying still, dazedly got to his feet, staggered a few yards, then fell in a heap. A woman sat with

her head cupped in her hands. One by one the guns stopped. Before the shooting, I heard no warning to the crowd to disperse. There was no warning volley. When the shooting started it did not stop until there was no living thing in the huge compound in front of the police station. The police have claimed they were in desperate danger because the crowd was stoning them. Yet only three policemen were reported to have been hit by stones - and more than 200 Africans were shot down. The police also said that the crowd was armed with "ferocious weapons" which littered the compound after they fled."

"I saw no weapons, although I looked very carefully, and afterwards studied the photographs of the death scene. While I was there I saw only shoes, hats and a few bicycles left among the bodies. The crowd gave me no reason to feel scared, though I moved among them without any distinguishing mark to protect me, quite obvious with my white skin. I think the police were scared though, and I think the crowd knew it."
(Africa Today, May 1960)

In Langa, protesters were at first unsuccessful, as the district commandant of police failed to arrest the leaders for not carrying their reference books. The leaders reacted to this by declaring that a meeting would take place that evening, when it was claimed, an official reply or answer to grievances would be given.

By 5:00 pm, a huge crowd had gathered at the meeting place. The district commandant, aware of the increase in tension, asked his superiors to ban the meeting and this was subsequently announced to the people in Langa. This restriction did not deter the people from attending the meeting.

Police ordered the crowd to disperse, but the people were determined that they should hear the official answer to grievances they had been promised. Police reacted to this by charging the crowd with batons, and subsequently by opening fire. The police justified this measure by claiming that the crowd had first attacked the police, who were outnumbered and in grave danger. Unlike Sharpeville though, the firing did not carry on for long and two people were killed and forty nine injured.

Following the events at Sharpeville and Langa, a temporary suspension of the pass laws was announced on the 26th March. On the 28th March, riots and shooting occurred in Johannesburg locations when a day of mourning was called by the ANC and on the 30th March, the Government declared a "state of emergency". On 31st March, a demonstration of some 25 000 Africans took place in Cape Town in response to the mass arrests of over a hundred people considered to be radicals or liberals. Similar demonstrations were staged at Simons-town, Stellenbosch, Pretoria and at Durban, where three Africans were killed.

Sporadic outbreaks of riots, arrests and demonstrations occurred for a week or two after these events, culminating in the banning of the ANC and the PAC on 8th April, in terms of the newly-passed Unlawful Organizations Act. On 9th April, Dr Verwoerd while addressing a crowd in Johannesburg was fired at by David Pratt, whose motives appeared to be apolitical. Although the bullet passed through the Prime Minister's face, it did not touch his brain, and Verwoerd survived. "Die Burger" (11th April, 1960) reported the incident as follows:

"In this miraculous escape all the faithful will see the hand of God and thank him that our country, which

is already passing through troubled times, has been spared the greater horror of assassination of its head of state."

David Pratt, whose actions had nothing to do with racial problems was declared to be of unsound mind, and was committed to a mental hospital, where he later committed suicide.

The arrest and detention in March of over 100 Whites and almost 2 000 Blacks resulted in a situation whereby numerous people, expecting to be arrested, fled the country as political refugees determined not to re-enter South Africa. By August, detainees began to be released in groups and by 31st August, the state of emergency was lifted and the last of the prisoners were granted their freedom. Leaders of the PAC, and ANC, together with several proletarians were sentenced to imprisonment and fines. Robert Sobukwe was sentenced to three years imprisonment, while Chief Luthuli was fined £100 for burning his pass.

In October, a referendum was held to decide whether South Africa should maintain its ties with Britain, or become a Republic. Only Whites in South Africa and South West Africa were consulted, and in spite of the Nationalist Party's stronghold in Parliament, only 52 per cent voted in favour of a Republic.

In its closing stages, 1960 saw reactions to the Bantustan and Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Acts. The Transkei was chosen as the first "homeland" to be controlled by a Commissioner General, whose first task was to restrain the revolt which broke out among the Pondo, one of the largest tribes in the Transkei. Hut burning and fighting was quelled by internal security, and several Pondo were killed

and many arrested, as a local state of emergency was enforced in the area.

The mass demonstrations and acts of passive resistance which characterized the 1950s, came to fruition in 1960 with the Sharpeville affair, which resulted in severe external criticism and drastic cessation of overseas investment in South Africa. The Nationalist Government, however, remained unshaken by these events, and replied to revolts and disturbances by enforcing arrests, detentions, violence and harsh legal restrictions, in an endeavour to maintain the policy of apartheid and the physical segregation of each racial group.

"The fifties were important to us as a decade because finally they spelled out the end of one kind of South Africa and foreshadowed the beginning of another. Sharpeville was the culmination of a political turmoil during a decade in which it was still possible in South Africa to pretend to the viability of extra-parliamentary opposition. While there was a fantastic array of laws controlling our lives it was still possible to organise marches to police stations, to parliament, to the very prisons holding our political leaders. It was possible to go to the same universities as white students; there were racially mixed parties enjoyed with the gusto of a drowning people; it seemed at the least obligatory to assume an air of defiance against Government and authority and though the penalty was high even then, there was nothing as vicious as the 90 Day Detention Law; no torture on the scale which is now assumed in the Government's deliberate program of suppressing all effective opposition.

(Lewis Nkosi. 1965, page 8)

Lewis Nkosi illustrates a relevant point when he suggests that "the fifties were important to us as a decade," as "us" in this context refers to both the Black population in general and the Black South African writer in particular. The idea that the fundamental change in the structure of the State affected the Black South African writer, suggests a connection between South African literature, and South African social history, or more specifically between the majority of Black South African literature and the main issues which characterized South African society during the 1950s and early 1960s.

As suggested, the study of literature as a social institution includes a discussion of the relationship between literature, politics, history, ideology and sociology. Within a South African context this implies a consideration of social history, political activity and apartheid, an issue which Lewis Nkosi reflects on when he points out that:

"The decade of the fifties was the most shaping influence of our young adulthood and Johannesburg, at the time I went to work for Drum Publications, seemed to be the buzzing centre of all national activity. It seemed to be the place to be in for any young man trying to write." (1965, page 9)

This interaction between writer and environment resulted in most cases in the selection of themes directly related to the subject of race and the system of apartheid.

"... a writer ... is going to write about things which directly affect him, and in South Africa he can never escape the colour issue." (Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, 1978, page 162)

The writer's position in South African society during the 1950s, the legislation controlling the writing and publication of literature, and the literary tastes of the audience for whom the majority of Black South African writers were writing, nevertheless affected the writer's criticism and articulation of these themes. (These perceptions are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.) As Albert S Gérard points out:

"It stands to reason that the modern writer in the Republic of South Africa can hardly deal with the obsessional themes of African experience except in a cautiously descriptive way. Discussion of causes and remedies is severely restricted by censorship." (1971, page 268)

The Black South African writer's presentation of ideology and criticism of the socio-political situation derives from this context. The nature of the restrictions which affected the interaction with, and response to environment, nevertheless failed to deter the Black South African writer from the consistent desire to create a literature relevant to the experiences of the majority of South Africans:

"I believe it is important for our writers to illuminate all aspects of our life from a central point in the social structure. That is whatever their colour or views may be, they must accept their presence in the country as members of one community, the South African community." (Essop Patel, 1975, page 82)

The idea that writers bear not only their personal burdens but also those of the wider society, suggests that the Black South African writer is capable of assuming the role of spokesman for the people. Richard Rive comments on this

idea, when he suggests that:

"My idea of the writer within the social context, this is going to sound like a truism but we have to say this so often because people so often miss the point and cloud the issue: we are the synthesis of all our experience, arising out of this, his particular experience, the writer is going to create so that much of what he does will be autobiographical. Very many of the views expressed will be his, and certainly I feel that the writer, to a certain extent, is an interpreter of the society in which he finds himself." (Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, 1976, page 161)

Rive's notion that the writer acts as "interpreter of the synthesis of his individual experience" (Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, 1978, pages 161 and 162) reinforces the close connection between Black South African literature, sociology and politics, and emphasizes the central concern of the study of literature as a social institution - the idea that the creative writer tries "to make sense of our lives" by trying to make sense of his own.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEMS FACING THE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WRITER: A SURVEY OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE IN ENGLISH AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE THEATRE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In "Literature As Rhetoric", Roland Barthes points out that literary criticism involves a dual perspective and that literature may be assessed as both social institution and work of art.

"Literature confronts us both as social institution and as work of art. As social institution, it is a set of all those practices and customs governing the circulation of writings in a given society: the social status of the writer, his ideology, the forms of diffusion, the conditions of utilization and "consumption" and critical sanctions. As a work of art, it consists essentially of a species of written verbal communication." (1967, page 31)

The critic or scholar is therefore confronted with two objectives.

- 1 To analyze literature as a social institution, which includes a discussion of the social status of the writer, his attitude towards the socio-political environment, and those institutions which affect the production and consumption of his writing.
- 2 To analyze literature according to artistic merit, which includes, for example, an assessment of form, thematic development, choice of language and characterization.

This progression from an examination of a writer's socio-political context to an assessment of his artistic merit is an important consideration when analyzing the works of J Arthur Maimane, who acknowledged the interaction between writer and environment when he stated that:

"... when an artist is born under a certain set of conditions, he cannot-or does not - want to write about anything else." (1971, page 124)

Maimane, however, remained relatively uninvolved in politics and refrained from commenting (in literary form) on the specific political issues mentioned in Chapter One. Instead, he chose to reflect on the ideology which resulted from these political events, to write about and comment on the effects of apartheid in general.

"... the first thing which those of us who can write want to write about - feel impelled to write about - is the effect of this supremacist ethos on ourselves and on the supremacists themselves." (J Arthur Maimane, 1971, pages 124 and 125)

This approach does not imply that Maimane was unaffected by the political environment. Instead, it draws attention to the manner in which he chose to comment on the "supremacist ethos", to the way in which he made use of specific situations which reflected on social existence and by implication political circumstance.

In order to understand Maimane's South African context, however, it is necessary to focus attention on various aspects, other than specific socio-political issues. These include his social status as a writer, the legislation controlling the writing and publication of literature in South Africa,

the newspapers and magazines which provided an outlet for the creative skills of Black writers, and the dominant use of the short story form.

In order to discuss Maimane's social status, I have made use of Kelwyn Sole's suggestion that the majority of Black South Africans writing during the 1950s, belonged to the "black petty bourgeoisie", (1979, page 145) a class whose ranks were filled by civil servants, journalists, teachers and intellectuals. Generally speaking what differentiated the urban Black petty bourgeoisie of the 1950s from the other classes was education and the "resultant ideology of liberal connections" (Kelwyn Sole, 1979, page 159). Many writers and journalists for example received their education at schools such as St Peter's (Rosettenville), Adam's College and Fort Hare. Similarly, several of these writers and journalists recall instances of liberal connections:

"... meeting whites on intimate terms at gay mixed parties or even on the job, even having whites as lovers." (Lewis Nkosi, 1965, page 31)

Meeting Whites on terms other than master and servant, possibly influenced the Black South African writer's approach and attitude, and yet relationships across the colour bar often resulted in a certain amount of disillusionment:

"... These same whites whom we looked upon as poised on a great height, untouchable and slightly larger than life, became suddenly embarrassingly ordinary, even hopelessly undersized. Improbably we discovered some disconcerting, if banal, truths about white South Africans: certainly a great number of them were no more intelligent, a great many were less talented, and no more deserving of the wealth and privilege they were

enjoying than a vast number of the people they had deprived of them." (Lewis Nkosi, 1965, page 32)

As a result, the Black petty bourgeoisie existed "between two worlds". On the one hand they were rejected by the working class Blacks due to their connection with White Society:

"The educated African is resented equally by the blacks because he speaks English, which is one of the symbols of white supremacy, he is resentfully called a Situation, something not belonging to either, but tactfully situated between white oppression and black rebellion." (Bloke Modisane, 1963, page 94)

On the other hand the majority of White South Africans regarded this class as:

"... the class most casually dismissed by white officialdom as "unrepresentative", so long as they confine themselves to private interests, or more ruthlessly harried as "troublemakers", if they apply themselves to the problems of their people." (Tom Hopkinson, 1962, page 366)

The mediating position of the Black petty bourgeoisie is reflected on by Bloke Modisane who concludes that:

"I found myself a displaced person, caught between and rejected by the two worlds with which I presumed a mental level ..." (1963, page 88)

This ambiguous social status made it increasingly difficult for the Black South African writer to act as a mouthpiece for the people or to reach a wider audience. Similarly, by

attempting to create a literature which reflected on conditions and experiences under an apartheid régime, the writer was frustrated by what Lewis Nkosi called a "moral chaos". (1965, page 8)

In acknowledging their ambivalent position in South African society, the Black petty bourgeoisie, and in particular the Black South African writers retained certain attitudes and opinions of the Black élite which had existed a century before. Kelwyn Sole suggests that these include similar responses "to politics, to European literature, to education and to white society" (1979, page 166). What distinguished the Black petty bourgeoisie of the 1950s from their precursor's however, was urbanization, the awareness and acceptance of the writer's position in society and the desire to articulate and present the grievances of their people:

"In the moral chaos through which we were living we longed to find a work of literature, a drama or film, home-grown and about us, which would contain a significant amount of our experience and in which we could find our own attitudes and feelings." (Lewis Nkosi, 1965, page 8)

Maimane's work and the emergence of his literary style derives from this context. Another probable influence on Maimane's writing was the magazine "Drum", which provided an outlet for the creative talents of educated Blacks. As Tim Couzens points out:

"... journalism gave them (the educated Blacks) a reasonably stimulating occupation with status ... Newspapers probably also directly influenced their imaginative work - for good or bad. For instance, writers often

wrote in the essay form. The short story, also, for obvious reasons of space, was encouraged ... Further, the creative writers came to follow fairly closely the kinds of observation and main preoccupations of the newspapers." (1974, page 13)

Maimane's career as a journalist needs to be evaluated according to the rise in popularity and importance of "Drum" magazine, which began publication in Cape Town in 1951, under the name "African Drum", and with the sponsorship of millionaire Jim Bailey. The magazine appeared monthly at the cost of a sixpenny and was written in English. Printed on cheap yellow paper, it sported a cover which showed:

"... two Africans facing each other, symbolically, across the continent: one in a Western hat and suit, the other with African skins and assegai."
(Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 15)

The objective of the editorial staff was contained in the March 1951 edition, and reads as follows:

"... 150 000 000 Bantu and Negro inhabitants of this continent whom we will attempt to reach for the first time in history, words that will express their thoughts, their impulses, their endeavours, and ultimately their souls."

The first issues included articles on tribal history, religion, African poems and stories, excerpts from "Cry the Beloved Country", tribal music, farming, a cartoon strip, sport and portraits of famous men. The content appears to be indicative of two things. Firstly, the White editor's notion of what the African reader would enjoy and secondly what would best epitomize that reader's thoughts and attitudes.

These early editions of "African Drum" failed to capture the market it had originally envisaged. According to Anthony Sampson (1956, p 20) circulation only reached 20 000, making it clear that subject-matter was not appealing to the reading public. As one reader intimated:

"Ag, why do you dish out that stuff, man? ... Tribal music! Tribal history! Chiefs! We don't care about Chiefs! Give us jazz and film stars, man! We want Duke Ellington, Satchmo, and hot dames! Yes, brother, anything American. You can cut out this junk about kraals and folk-tales, and Basutos in blankets - forget it! You're just trying to keep us backward, that's what! Tell us what's happening right here, man, on the Reef." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 20)

By this stage, the magazine had moved to Johannesburg, changed its name to "Drum" and gained the editorial skills of the British journalist, Anthony Sampson. Low sales figures, and readers' responses made it clear that the magazine had to be drastically changed and that the potential reading public lay in the urbanized areas, rather than in the reserves and rural regions.

"Drum was at cross-purposes with its readers. While we were preaching tribal culture and folk-tales they were clamouring to be let in to the Western world." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 21)

What became evident, too, was that the Africans wanted a magazine which "belonged" to them rather than to the White man. In an endeavour to compensate for the White editorial "hand", Jim Bailey and Anthony Sampson appointed an African editorial

board. The board met once a month to discuss and advise them on policy and it was decided that the magazine was to be written entirely by Africans. The aim was now:

"... to be human. We had to approach our readers not as a preacher, or teacher, but as a colleague. We needed the common touch, which would show readers that "Drum" was one of them." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 30)

With the inclusion of jazz, girls, crime stories and picture features, "Drum's" circulation rose to 35 000 which although representing an increase in readership, provided no substantial rival to the picture magazine "Zonk" (Anthony Sampson, 1956, p 37). The situation improved with the publication of an eight-page article entitled "Bethal Today", which came into print for "Drum's" first birthday in March, 1952. Written by Henry Nxumalo, under the name "Mr Drum", the article described the contract system and conditions relating to farm labour and torture. Within a year, "Drum's" sales in South Africa rose to 60 000, and copies of "Drum" were circulated in East and West Africa. (Anthony Sampson, 1956, p 52)

Following "Mr Drum's" exposure of conditions in Bethal, "Drum" published several articles relating to labour conditions, most notably the use of Indian child labour on sugar farms in Natal and the use of the "tot" system in the vineyards of the Cape. The disclosure of conditions such as these, succeeded in capturing the attention and support of a larger African readership, and revealed "Drum's" ability for social comment.

"Drum" has ... become the leading spokesman for South Africa's 9 000 000 negro and Coloured population. In South Africa, torn by racial strife, "Drum's" popularity is easily explained. "We air the views

and grievances of the Blacks," says the publisher, "and make them feel that Communism isn't the solution to their problems." Summed up one White: "Drum makes South Africa as segregated, despised non-Whites feel like people." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 53)

"Drum's rise in popularity among a significant number of Africans placed the editor of the magazine, Anthony Sampson in a difficult position, and although he acknowledged that:

"... without exposing scandals of such importance to our readers' lives, the paper would be incomplete and meaningless." (1956, page 52)

he nevertheless concluded that:

"We did not want "Drum" to become involved in political agitation or to develop into a narrow paper of protest." (1956, page 52)

With this objective in mind, "Drum" continued its investigations, which extended into areas such as prison brutality and oppression, the closure of mission schools as a result of the Bantu Education Act, the existence of organized crime and gang warfare in the townships and the removal of people from Sophiatown.

In October 1952, "Drum" published a substantial photographic history of the Defiance Campaign, which increased readership to 67 000 and led the editor to conclude that despite "Drum's" policy vis-a-vis politics, the readers favoured the inclusion of political material.

"Politics began to rival boxing in popularity with

our readers." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 134)

Anthony Sampson nevertheless ensured that political report and social critique was counterbalanced by articles on jazz and sport together with serialized fiction and short stories. Ezekiel Mphahlele, however, negates the value of the fiction which appeared in "Drum", suggesting that the White editor had a preconceived view of what urban Africans would enjoy reading, hence the inclusion of stories relating to crime, sex and love:

"Drum" had plunged into a reading world which hadn't developed any definite magazine taste (the non-European readership); ... it should produce healthy material in an original style wherever possible, and in a sense, dictate what the public should read, without necessarily being snobbish and intellectual." (1959, page 138)

Although the literary value of the fiction in "Drum" is questionable as Mphahlele suggests, the writers were responding to the needs and diverse literary tastes of the readers:

"You are dealing with masses of people who left school after Standard IV, i.e., who spent five to six years in primary school. On their own, while working, they cultivated a reading habit. Newspapers and periodicals, detective fiction are lapped up in enormous quantities. You also have masses of people who did three years of secondary schooling and dropped out while others were climbing up. Their tastes cover detective fiction, adventure with a love interest, pure love stories and plenty of Dickens and fiction that is set in South Africa. The pyramid tapers up quite gradually into the clerical and professional occupations where interest in fiction and non-fiction evens up, and fiction reading

is more wholesomely selective." (Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1962, pages 38 and 39)

Mphahlele's assumptions are notable - particularly as regards the relationship between the reader's education, his social status and his literary tastes. The "Drum" writer was placed in a difficult position, as his desire to create a literature relevant to the African experience conflicted with the majority of readers' demands for detective fiction and love stories. The diverse literary tastes of the reader therefore determined the choice and selection of short stories and serials, and in order to satisfy the majority of readers it was necessary to include literature which dealt with contemporary and immediate issues with which the reading public could possibly identify. The multi-faceted nature of township living for example provided many of the "Drum" writers with material for their short stories. Can Themba wrote about shebeens, immoral women and thugs, while J Arthur Maimane placed his detective serials and romantic short stories within an urbanized context.

The popularity of these short stories and serials indicates that the readers were content with the subject-matter presented, possibly not desiring more intellectual or sophisticated material. Similarly, the "Drum" writers concerned themselves with social matters rather than intellectual pursuits:

"Perhaps most importantly, because newspapers are involved in public writing, public concerns and social critique, the creative writers who sprang from them tended to be concerned with public matters rather than the private wrangles of individual psychologies and characterization ..." (Tim Couzens, 1974, page 13)

Several reasons may be attributed to the writer's choice and decision to concentrate on "public matters" rather than on "individual psychologies".

First of all, those readers who occupied professional positions, and whose literary tastes varied between a selection of fiction and non-fiction, were outnumbered by those who were interested in adventure, love stories and detective fiction. In order to satisfy the majority of readers therefore, it was necessary to concentrate on social matters rather than on abstract concerns.

Secondly, while "Drum" readers were distinguished between according to their social status and literary tastes, the majority of readers were urbanized, hence the emphasis in the short stories and serials on aspects of township living, and by implication social matters.

The success of "Drum" magazine during the decade of the fifties, may therefore be attributed to the fact that it appealed to and reflected popular taste.

"... it performed as a popular interpreter of trends and events, which is something it might not have achieved had its writers been less talented and - yes - had they taken a less detached line. The essence of "Drum" was to be found in its relative isolation from the battles that were fought in the streets, the courts and the political columns of newspapers like the Communist Party's "Inkululeko". Being part of the pattern of township life and giving its attention as much to boxing and gangland crimes as to the Defiance Campaign ... it was, in effect, an advocate of causes ..." (Graeme Addison, 1978, page 6)

By paying equal attention to political events, social problems, sport and entertainment, "Drum" provided its readers with a commentary on a variety of topics, and in this respect functioned as an informative and educative magazine. Similarly, "Drum's" importance may be assigned to its encouragement of creative writing, as it provided a training ground and an outlet for several aspirant writers and journalists. It is significant to note that many journalists who worked for "Drum" during the 1950's, emerged as the authors of numerous publications, many of which were written and published in exile.

The ability of these writers, coupled with the way in which "Drum" presented its readers with immediate situations with which they could identify, had much to do with the popularity and success of the magazine. As Lewis Nkosi maintained:

"It wasn't so much a magazine as it was a symbol of the new African cut adrift from the tribal reserve - urbanised, eager, fast-talking and brash. Anthony Sampson, a young Englishman who had come out to edit "Drum" in the beginning of the fifties, had gathered around him an exciting bunch of young writers who considered it, or at least gave the impression of considering it, a mark of great honour to get into trouble with the authorities as often as possible while in pursuit of fact and photograph. In their work they were alive, go-getting, full of nervous energy, very wry, ironic, and they brought to South African journalism a new vitality which none of the white writers had seemed capable of achieving." (1965, page 10)

Lewis Nkosi's claim that "Drum" brought a "new vitality" to South African journalism is a fundamental consideration

particularly as regards Ezekiel Mphahlele's statement that "Drum" "should produce healthy material in an original style wherever possible, and in a sense dictate what the public should read". (1959, page 188). The public in fact dictated what the writers should write and although the material and subject-matter of the fiction might not have been "healthy" in the sense that Mphahlele uses the term, the writers added a "new vitality" to South African journalism through the use of an original style.

In theory, left-wing publications such as "New Age", "Africa South" and "Fighting Talk", provided an outlet for the type of fiction which Mphahlele refers to, and yet in practice the reading public (which consisted almost entirely of White Liberals and the Black Intellegensia) appears to have affected the selection and production of the majority of literature included into these journals. The political attitudes of the readers in particular affected the choice of subject-matter and the nature of the socio-political comment made in the fiction. In this instance, these writers, who as it has been suggested belonged almost entirely to the Black petty bourgeoisie, have been criticized for attempting to:

"...arouse white consciousness to the plight of those racially dominated". (Kelwyn Sole, 1979, page 160)

Similarly, the method and style employed by the majority of these writers has been criticized:

"Many of the stories in South African liberal publications are too loud to be eloquent, too heavy-handed to be finely drawn." (Bernth Lindfors, 1966, page 59)

Criticism of this sort placed the Black South African writer in a difficult position, one which Ezekiel Mphahlele reflects

on when he concludes that:

"... the urges to preach, protest, hand out propaganda, to escape, sentimentalize, romanticize, to make a startling discovery in the field of race relations, to write thrillers and other urges, all jostle for predominance in the writer." (1962, page 121)

Socially and professionally then the Black South African writer existed "between two worlds"; one in which consideration of the readers' demands was of utmost importance, the other in which the desire to create a literature which was relevant to and commented on the environment was of primary significance.

Writers of this period have also been criticized for their choice of literary forms and standards associated with European culture. In most cases, however, the reasons for the use of English and European forms of literature may be justified according to the following considerations.

First of all, the love of European literature was stimulated to an extent by the education the majority of these writers received. Todd Matshikiza, J Arthur Maimane and Ezekiel Mphahlele for example were educated at St Peter's in Rosettenville, where Mphahlele recalls having found:

"... a large quantity of books to burrow into in the school library. For the first time in my life since I met Cervantes, a vigorous figure in tattered garments, during my primary school years, I shook hands with notable men. Men like Robert Lynd, Alpha of the Plough, Addison, Steele, Goldsmith. And then Shakespeare, Dickens, "Q", R.L. Stevenson. A poem I specially liked to read and commit to memory was Robert Herrick's "To Daffodils". (1959, page 129)

Another possible reason for the choice of English relates to the Black South African writer's desire to create a literature relevant to the experiences of the African people. As Nat Nakasa suggested:

"... black men have chosen English as a means for the expression of their national aspirations; they have chosen English as the most powerful single instrument of communication with the world and themselves ... 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." (Essop Patel, 1975, page 79)

This need to comment on the socio-political environment and to be read and published both in South Africa and abroad corresponds to the Black South African writer's choice of English, which is an international language:

"We have to wrench the tools of power from the white man's hand: One of these is literacy and the sophistication that goes with it. We have got to speak the language that all can understand - English." (Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1962, page 193)

The social status of the Black petty bourgeoisie possibly contributed towards the choice of European forms of literature. Several Black South African writers interested themselves in literature for social reasons:

"On several occasions I found myself caught in situations where I was talking about the subjects which were being discussed and it meant inheriting yet more interests for which I would do more reading; but it was difficult to be cultured when all the cultural

institutions were closed to me. When a new play opened in Johannesburg all conversation would close around it, and they spoke of the performance of William Sylvester in "Street Car Named Desire", and the Old Vic season at the His Majesty's. This was an area in which there was nothing I could do, except perhaps read the plays and all the reviews." (Bloke Modisane, 1963, pages 251 and 252)

In certain instances, European literature provided these writers with an alternative to the realities of their social existence. Lewis Nkosi for example, suggests that his interest in literature came about as a result of:

"In those days I had two sets of reality; one was the ugly world in which I lived my trapped life and the other, the more powerful one, was the world of the books I read. My sense of honour was propounded out of the romantic novels of Dumas, Kingsley and Marryat, and the love I knew best was the love of knights and ladies in the drawing rooms of fifteenth century Europe. What was happening under my eye was filtered through the moral sieve provided by this foreign literature. It was clear I was using literature as a form of escape; I was using it as a shield against a life of grime and social deprivation." (1965, page 10)

As Modisane and Nkosi suggest, the South African socio-political environment had a significant effect on the writer's interest in and choice of European forms of literature and English as a medium of expression. The predominant use of the short story form may therefore be discussed, as Ezekiel Mphahlele points out, in this context:

"During the last twenty years the political, social climate of South Africa has been growing viciously difficult for a non-white to write in. It requires tremendous organization of one's mental and emotional faculties before one can write a poem or a novel or a play. This has become all but impossible ... Although the short story is very demanding, it is often used as a short-cut to prose meaning. And so it has become the most common medium in African literary activity." (1962, page 186)

During the 1950s, the majority of Black South African writers wrote for publications such as "Drum", "Golden City Post" "New Age" and "African South". Technical considerations such as layout and lack of space were therefore largely responsible for the writing and selection of the short story. Similarly, low standards of selection and sloth contributed towards the choice of this form:

"Part of the reason (for the absence of lengthier works) is sheer sloth. Also, some magazines have employed such low standards of selection that beginning writers began to get the idea that one could detour from the long and dreary labor of good writing by bashing out a short story in a matter of a day or two and getting it published immediately." (Lewis Nkosi, 1962, page 6)

In the years following the 1950s however, several writers began producing longer works in literary forms other than the short story. Autobiographical works include Ezekiel Mphahlele's "Down Second Avenue" (1959), Todd Matshikiza's "Chocolates For My Wife" (1961), Alfred Hutchinson's "Road To Ghana" (1960) and Bloke Modisane's "Blame Me On History". (1963)

Lewis Nkosi's play "Rhythm of Violence" and Alfred Hutchinson's "The Rain Killers" appeared in 1964, followed by J Arthur Maimane's play "The Opportunity" in 1968 and Richard Rive's "Resurrection" (1972) and award winning drama "Make Like Slaves" (1973).

Novels include Alex La Guma's "A Walk In The Night" (1962) and "A Three-Fold Cord" (1964), Richard Rive's "Emergency" (1964) and J Arthur Maimane's "Victims", eventually published in 1976. In the sphere of critical essays, Ezekiel Mphahlele published "The African Image" in 1962 and Lewis Nkosi's "Home and Exile" came into print in 1965. A collection of poetry by Dennis Brutus appeared in 1963 entitled "Sirens, Knuckles, Boots," and Mazisi Kunene's "Zulu Poems" was published in 1970.

With a few exceptions, most of these writers were in voluntary or involuntary exile when their works were written and published, which supports Ezekiel Mphahlele's claim that the South African socio-political atmosphere affected the writer's choice of literary form. Exile it would seem was conducive to the writing of longer works in various literary forms, and although political oppression was responsible for the departure of many Black South African writers, personal and professional considerations played a significant part in their decision to leave South Africa.

"I was suddenly seized by a desire to leave South Africa for more sky to soar. I had been banned from teaching, and conditions were crushing me and I was shrivelling in the acid of my bitterness; I was suffocating. We were operating our house budget on a miserable income of £40 a month - "Drum" had raised my salary, but it had been pegged at that figure. I couldn't settle down to high-powered writing." (Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1959, page 200)

J Arthur Maimane has suggested that exile provided the writer with a unique opportunity - the chance to comment objectively on the South African situation:

"I also knew that I would never be able to write it ("The Great African Novel") - or any other thing longer than a short story, for that matter - while I still lived in South Africa. The subject-matter, I knew, would be too close to me for me to be able to look at it objectively for all the many months it would take to write a novel ... So my hope was that one day I would leave South Africa for some other country where I could gather my thoughts and views in tranquil patience to be able to write a novel ..."
(1971, page 123)

The desire to stand apart from one's subject-matter in order to comment objectively on it, nevertheless resulted in the articulation and repetition of a single theme - in most cases the theme of apartheid. Ezekiel Mphahlele commenting on this situation, has drawn attention to the way in which the variation on a single theme gave rise to subjectivity rather than objective criticism:

"There is the danger, even in a short story, of creating situations in which the chief character is pathetic rather than tragic. Although, in a segregated society, the African does not know the white man beyond the point of a boot, he must, as a writer, try to see behind the visible crudities of human behaviour. The writer has to face up to a large number of disparate elements in his experience and come to terms with the antitheses they pose: hate and love; anger and sympathy; rejection and surrender; Christianity and savage politics, and so on." (1962a, page 9)

The Black South African writers in exile, who had been criticized for their predominant use of the short story form, were subsequently criticized for their one-dimensional approach. Nadine Gordimer maintained that the majority of exiles wrote as though South African history froze after Sharpeville, (1976, page 114) while W. Cartey suggested that:

"It must be stressed, however, that in these novels, the characters are uniformly of the professional, intellectual, middle class, with enough standing in the community to take part in reasonable associations, to have as their friends and associates professional people of all races, to move with a certain amount of ease through the controlling legal forces. Yet in spite of it all, the hold that South African social forces exerts on them is again and again demonstrated and becomes a variation on a single motif." (1969, page 133)

The desire for objectivity, the use of characters and situations with which the writers were familiar (for example, the character of the Black petty bourgeoisie, which as Cartey points out occurred repeatedly in the works produced in exile) and the opportunity to produce and publish longer works in various literary forms, nevertheless resulted to a certain extent in a loss of vitality and a lack of closeness to the subject-matter.

Similarly, the opportunity to dictate what the public should read, resulted in several problems. The Black South African writer in exile was eager to establish a literature which reflected on the South African situation, and which could be read both in South Africa and abroad. The South African authorities, however, regarded these writers with suspicion and in an endeavour to prevent their writings from being

available in South Africa, banned both the authors and their works.

In the Government Gazette of 1966 (No 1414), the names of forty-six persons appeared and were listed as banned in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act (1950). They included writers such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Mazisi Kunene, Lewis Nkosi, Todd Matshikiza, Can Themba, and Bloke Modisane. Dennis Brutus, Alfred Hutchinson and Alex La Guma had earlier been banned under the same Act. Although only Brutus, La Guma, Kunene, and Hutchinson were active politicians, the Government nevertheless refused to distinguish between Black creative writers and Black political activists.

"With the possible exception of Kunene, none of the other writers, to my knowledge, had been actively involved in politics either here or abroad. Their banning was obviously to prevent their utterances and writings from being available in South Africa. Political machinery was being used for the exercise of literary censorship. This meant in essence that any future works by these writers (as well as those who had been banned as political activists before them) were totally circumscribed." (Richard Rive, 1978, page 12)

South African readers were therefore denied access to a whole range of South African literature. The banning of writers, not of writings and the Government's belief that writing in exile represented an attack on the State, reinforced the repressive nature of apartheid. (It is interesting to note that Can Themba's "The Will To Die" and Todd Matshikiza's "Chocolates For My Wife" were unbanned in South Africa in 1982).

Those writers who remained in South Africa were subjected to similar restrictions. Richard Rive's novel "Emergency" and his collection of short stories "African Songs" and

"Quartet" were banned during the same period that writers in exile were banned. Alan Paton and Athol Fugard were refused passports to travel abroad, and Nadine Gordimer's "The Late Bourgeois World" and "A World of Strangers", together with Harry Bloom's novel "Transvaal Episode" and Sylvester Stein's "Second Class Taxi" were circumscribed.

Nadine Gordimer has explained that in South Africa there are "97 definitions of what is officially 'undesirable' in literature" (1973, page 52) and that several reasons may influence the banning of a work. One of the most obvious reasons for the banning of literature by White South African writers, however, was the close approximation in subject-matter between writers such as Bloom and Gordimer and Black South African writers in exile such as Nkosi and Maimane for example. Similarly, White South African writers chose exile for the same reasons that Black South African writers chose exile, making them as suspect in their intentions as their Black counterparts. Political and professional considerations as Nadine Gordimer explains were the motivating factors:

"During the past ten years, South Africa has lost many English speaking writers and intellectuals generally, including the entire nucleus of the newly emergent black African writers ... If I, or any other English-speaking white South African, should leave my homeland, it would be for the same reason that those others (i.e. the whites) have already done; not because they fear the black man, but because they grow sick at heart with the lies, the cheatings, the intellectual sophistry ... sick of the brutalities penetrated by whites in their name."
(Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1972, pages 213 and 214)

Considering the close relationship between literature, politics, sociology and history, and the idea that an artist's work derives from a socio-political context, it would seem that the works of these writers characterize South African

literature as a whole. This argument is negated, however, when one examines some of the dramatic literature written and produced in South Africa during the 1950s. Plays such as James Ambrose Brown's "Governor of the Black Rock", produced in 1951, Guy Butler's "The Dam" presented in 1953 and Winifred Dashwood's "Make Me Immortal", written and produced in 1956, illustrate a disregard in both tone and subject-matter of contemporary South African social conditions.

Athol Fugard's "No Good Friday" and Lewis Sowden's "The Kimberley Train", both of which appeared in 1958, together with Basil Warner's "Try For White" produced in 1959, nevertheless reveal a certain amount of social critique - Fugard for example comments on the Black man's state of existence, while Sowden and Warner reflect on the problems encountered by the Coloureds in South African society.

Generally, these plays represent the choice of subject-matter and type of material being produced by the White South African playwrights during the 1950s. Apart from Fugard, Sowden and Warner, the majority of these dramatists fit suitably into what Lewis Nkosi has called;

"... the Lower Houghton and Parktown establishment."
(1958, page 11)

This establishment, who as Nkosi pointed out favoured "British comedies and importations from abroad", (1958, page 11) influenced the playwright's choice and treatment of his subject-matter. This is interesting, particularly with regard to the sociology of drama, as these playwrights instead of commenting on the socio-political environment, appear to have accepted the status quo, offering no critique or alternative image. The term "social", which E. Bentley

suggests is reserved for plays which are "in their main emphasis, political, sociological" (1968, page 153) is therefore not applicable to the plays derived from the "Lower Houghton and Parktown establishment."

To a certain extent, the nature of South African drama written and produced during the 1950s, contradicts the function of theatre in a social and political environment such as South Africa. As George Gurvitch points out:

"In the society defined as organized capitalism, which, with slight differences, characterises Western societies today, the social functions of the theatre are varied. For there is "organized" theatre, organized for the benefit of all-powerful trusts and cartels acting as accomplices of the State which barely manages at best to keep some semblance of neutrality; just as there is theatre similarly organized for the benefit of oppressed classes who become interested in the theatre through the mediation of their cultural, occupational or even political organization." (Elizabeth and Tom Burns, 1973, pages 78 and 79)

In a sense, the plays of Athol Fugard, Basil Warner and Lewis Sowden correspond to what Gurvitch terms "theatre similarly organized for the benefit of oppressed classes." In South Africa, however, it is extremely difficult to organize theatre for the benefit of the oppressed class, as the Black population who makes up this class is denied access to the majority of theatres. The connection between the plays of James Ambrose Brown, Winifred Dashwood and what Gurvitch calls theatre which maintains "some semblance of neutrality", represents to a large extent the purpose of theatre in South Africa. In turn the absence of political and social comment

negates the value of theatre in society, resulting in a South African theatre which:

"... has never got beyond being an anaemic little stream diverted to the local shores from the main current of European theatre. Cut off from the life of a nation as a whole, it is deprived of the means of developing an independent South African contribution to world culture." (Maurice Hommel, 1962, page 13)

The nature of the audience for whom the majority of White South African playwrights wrote, the regulations affecting the publication and presentation of dramatic literature and the legislative measures which prohibited racially mixed audiences in the majority of theatres, significantly hindered the development of a theatre relevant to the South African socio-political situation.

Theatre activities organized for, or presented by, Blacks nevertheless existed on a small scale in South Africa. Ezekiel Mphahlele for example was a keen actor and introduced dramatics to Orlando High School:

"I loved my extra-mural activities, boxing and dramatics which I introduced in the school. I produced and acted in several one-act plays; parts of Shakespeare; folk tales and scenes from Charles Dickens which I adapted for the stage." (Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1959, page 166)

Mphahlele and the musician Mngoma also established an organization known as the "Syndicate of African Artists" and a magazine "Voice of Africa" which began publication in 1950. The Syndicate was based in Orlando and was responsible for the

promotion of plays and classical music concerts in the townships. According to Mphahlele (1959, page 180) the Syndicate's acting company consisted of nurses, teachers, messengers and factory workers, who rehearsed almost entirely on a Sunday afternoon. The group staged several charity concerts, such as those in aid of the African School Feeding Scheme, and performed in the townships, where folk-tales and excerpts from Shakespeare and Dickens proved to be popular with the audience.

"A folk-tale that captivated the people more than any other was one I had selected from a collection of Venda tales - from the Northern Transvaal - ... I improvised a pantomime scene where the maiden plants a tree in an earthen pot and waters it with her tears, while there is African folk music in the background. We always used tree branches for our stage scenery."
(Ezekiel Mphahlele, 1959, page 180)

Continual police harassment, however, resulted in the material the group presented becoming far more politically orientated. Prompted by the desire to use drama in order to comment on the socio-political situation, Mngoma appealed to urban Africans: "We are beginning to create a cultural front in our struggle towards self-determination and we rely on you to help." (David Coplan, 1979, page 7). The Government interpreted this change in subject-matter and approach as indicative of the political affiliations of the Syndicate, and subsequently banned "Voice of Africa" in 1952. Although these problems and lack of funds caused the organization to close down, the "Syndicate of African Artists" nevertheless functioned as an important cultural organization:

"... the organization was perhaps the first organized urban cultural movement to actively promote the cultural

identity and socio-political aspirations of Johannesburg's blacks." (David Coplan, 1979, page 7)

In 1953, two events took place which significantly influenced the development of Black South African drama and theatre organizations. Father Huddleston, in an endeavour to raise funds for the building of a swimming pool in Orlando, organized a concert to be held at the Bantu Men's Social Centre featuring prominent township entertainers such as "The Manhattan Brothers", Dolly Rathebe and Todd Matshikiza. At about the same time a royalty cheque arrived from New York for Solomon Linda, whose composition "Wimoweh" had become a huge success in America. It was decided to present the money to Linda at a special ceremony, at which it was suggested a union should be formed to protect the rights of the African artist. Thus the "Union of Southern African Artists" was born under the chairmanship of Dr Guy Routh, a trade-unionist, economist and folk singer. Initially the "Union of Southern African Artists" was a trade union with entertainment and organizational facilities, providing lectures, members' evenings and free legal advice to performers. With poor financial support it existed on a shilling-a-month subscriptions from its members.

When Dr Guy Routh, departed from South Africa the chairmanship of the Union was taken over by Ian Bernhardt. Before joining the Union, Bernhardt had established the "Bareti Players" and a White amateur theatre group known as "The Dramateers". His most notable production was his presentation of "The Comedy of Errors" with PUTCO workers. It featured an all-Black cast and was based on PUTCO resources. It toured extensively and featured as part of the Arts Festival at the University of the Witwatersrand. With "The Dramateers", Bernhardt produced M C Hutton's "Power Without Glory" in aid of the Alexandra anti-TB Association, as well as a series of one-act plays which toured the townships. (Personal interview with Ian Bernhardt, 13 March 1982).

Bernhardt was a talented theatrical promoter. Under his auspices, the Union promoted the African farewell concert for Father Huddleston who was recalled to England in 1956. Entitled "The Stars are Weeping", the concert (which was held at the Bantu Men's Social Centre) proved to be a tremendous success, despite disorganization and the spontaneous arrival of performers not listed on the programme.

"The carefully arranged programme became somewhat disorganized when a sixty-voice choir arrived in the middle to pay tribute to Father Huddleston. Throughout the evening artists who had heard of the concert kept arriving and the programme became longer and longer, finally grinding to a halt at 2 a.m."
(Mona Glasser, 1960, page 8)

A considerable amount of money was raised from this function enabling the U.S.A.A. to rent premises and rehearsal rooms. Eventually they were evicted from these premises by the owner of the chicken farm, which was in the same building. From here the U.S.A.A. moved to the first floor of Dorkay House, and started running classes, talent contents and small festivals. Credited for the formation of the first "all-African performance school" (David Coplan, 1979, page 8) the U.S.A.A. went on to promote the extremely popular musical play "King Kong" in 1959. Although written and directed by Whites, the music for "King Kong" was composed by the talented Todd Matshikiza, and the production featured an entirely African cast. Initially the play was presented to a multi-racial audience at the Great Hall, but went on to tour the country, each venue being chosen for its multi-racial facilities, in order to ensure that all groups of the population were given the opportunity to see the production.

Although not overtly political in content, "King Kong" nevertheless presented its audience with some of the vitality,

hardships and violence associated with township life. For the first time Whites queued from 5 o' clock in the morning to obtain tickets for an all-African production, and the members of the cast were hero-worshipped by all sectors of the South African population. "King Kong" reached London in 1960, and toured Great Britain where it achieved considerable success.

Following "King Kong", the U.S.A.A. continued to promote theatrical activities. In 1961, the Indian director Krishna Shah visited South Africa to direct "King of the Dark Chamber" for the U.S.A.A., and in the same year Bob Leshoai's association with the Union culminated in the organization of a school's theatre project. The first program consisted of three plays - one by Leshoai, the second written by students who attended the Union's drama school and the third an adaptation in mime of an African folk tale. In 1962, African schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Vereeniging were presented with James Ambrose Brown's "Angel Feathers on the Roof" and in 1963 "Christmas in the Market Place". By 1964, the success and educational value of this scheme had become evident.

"In 1964, with our performance circuit spread beyond its original bounds and now also embracing white, Indian and coloured schools, Union artists was taking Langston Hughes' "Prodigal Son" to the schools. Something like forty thousand school children each year see theatre at their own schools. Where there are no school halls, performances are held in the school yard. As a result of this activity, drama groups have sprung up in many schools and teachers assign short critical compositions." (Bob Leshoai, 1965, page 44)

A group similar to that of Mphahlele's "Syndicate of African Artists" was formed in 1963 by Athol Fugard in Port Elizabeth.

Known as the "Serpent Players", the company consisted of school teachers, clerks and factory workers. Founded in response to what Fugard called "a hunger for experience in the realm of ideas", (Mary Benson, 1965, page 5) the company rehearsed whenever possible and presented plays such as Brecht's "Caucasian Chalk Circle", Sophocles' "Antigone" and Machiavelli's "Mandragola".

In each play the setting was localized in order to comment on the South African situation. Despite lack of funds and proper rehearsal facilities, coupled with complications (such as the refusal of permits for the actors to perform in Port Elizabeth and Fugard being denied access to his production of "Antigone" in New Brighton in 1965), "The Serpent Players" functioned as an important organization due to their consistency in township theatrical presentations.

Despite the establishment of organizations oriented towards the development of Black South African drama, not much dramatic writing by Black South Africans emerged during the 1950s. Part of the reason for this lack of dramatic writing relates to insufficient experimentation and discussion between writers, many of whom lived in Sophiatown, a community which Nat Nakasa compared to Greenwich Village:

"Sophiatown is the only place I know where African writers and aspirant writers ever lived in close proximity, almost as a community ... Sophiatown had a heart like Greenwich Village or Harlem. Writers wrote, yes, very little, and when they talked, as I have suggested, less and less was said about South African writing." (Essop Patel, 1975, page 80)

Although these writers and journalists "lived in close proximity", they refrained from involving themselves in workshops,

and instead of discussing the development of a literature relevant to the South African situation, they chose to comment on European forms of literature.

"During the last days of Sophiatown, nearly ten years ago, you were more likely to walk into a conversation centered around James Joyce or John Osborne or Langston Hughes instead of local names like Gertrude Millin or Olive Schreiner." (Essop Patel, 1975, page 80)

In certain respects this situation impaired the development of Black South African literature and drama in particular. As Margaret Mead points out:

"If you look back through history your great periods of writing, your writers have clustered, they've known each other, they've lived in the same spot... and they see each other all the time, they talk about each other's work, they stimulate each other, and they are continually straining after something that is beyond where they are." (Lewis Nkosi, 1959, page II)

The importance of constructive communication between writers cannot be underestimated, because as Mead suggests, the development of a creative literature depends on the writer's interaction with both his contemporaries and his environment. Within a South African context, this implies that workshops, experimentation and dialogue between writers may contribute towards the emergence and development of a literature and a theatre relevant to and stimulated by the social environment. The theatrical tastes of the majority of the theatre-going public and the lack of theatrical venues possibly affected

the development of dramatic writing by Black South Africans as well. Most of the theatres built and opened to the public during the 1950s were owned and controlled by White commercial interest, making it exceptionally difficult for the Black playwright to gain access to the major theatrical outlets. Further restrictions were imposed on the playwright due to the fact that few theatrical venues were opened to multi-racial audiences. Similarly, the tastes of the South African theatre-going public (the majority of whom were White) conflicted with the Black writer's desire to create a literature relevant to the experiences of the majority of South Africans.

In order to illustrate how limited theatrical venues and literary tastes of the audience affected the writing of dramatic literature by Black South Africans, it is necessary to discuss the opening of theatres and the presentation of productions during the 1950s. In 1951, the Johannesburg Repertory Players (Reps) opened their 510 seat theatre with a production of "Much Ado About Nothing". Founded by Muriel Alexander, Reps was a non-profit making organization, whose funds were obtained from a significant number of subscribing members. The policy of presenting some eight plays a year proved to be popular with the members, and presentations included, "My Three Angels", "The Wooden Dish", "Dear Charles", and "Spider's Web" among others. In 1951, Elizabeth Sneedon began the Natal Theatre Workshop Company and the East Rand Theatre Club produced James Ambrose Brown's "Governor of the Black Rock".

In 1952, the Alhambra Theatre with a seating capacity of almost 2 000 opened in Durban and in 1953 Guy Butler's play "The Dam", which won the Van Riebeeck Festival Prize, was produced by the National Theatre Organization, a bilingual theatre company based in Pretoria.

Early in 1955, Ruth Oppenheim leased a small hall in downtown Johannesburg and converted it into an intimate theatre of 250 seats. Heading a company known as "Windmill Productions", Oppenheim called the theatre the "Windmill Theatre", and went on to produce plays such as "Six Characters in Search of an Author", "Nina", "I Am A Camera" and "Grand Guignol". In October 1955, Brian Brooke, owner of the Hofmeyer Theatre in Cape Town opened the Brooke Theatre in Johannesburg, which seated 656 people. The opening production was "The Deep Blue Sea", followed by plays such as "The Seven Year Itch" and "The Teahouse of the August Moon." 1955 also saw the opening of the YMCA Intimate Theatre in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, which seated approximately 235.

In 1956, "The Dove Returns" was produced by the National Theatre Organization, while Winifred Dashwood's play "Make Me Immortal" was presented for two nights by the Krugersdorp Amateur Dramatic Society at the Town Hall. The South African Association of Theatrical Management was founded in this year and to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Children's Theatre, an open air performance of "The Taming of the Shrew" was presented by this group in Cape Town. The first civic theatre with a seating capacity of 800 opened in Belville, Cape Town in 1957, the same year that the Musicians Union imposed a ban on appearances by its members in South Africa.

Although six new theatres, with a seating capacity ranging from 235 to almost 2 000 opened in South Africa between 1951 and 1957, few theatrical venues for Blacks were established during this period. Despite productions by White South African playwrights, the majority of plays presented were "British Comedies and importations from abroad" (Lewis Nkosi 1958, page 11). This selection and presentation of plays reflects on the tastes of the majority of White South African theatre-goers, who it would seem were content with productions

removed from the South African socio-political situation.

One of the first plays by a White South African playwright, to comment on the South African situation appeared in 1958 - Athol Fugard's "No - Good Friday". Bloke Modisane who played the part of "Shark" in this production recalls that:

"The play was given two nights in a hall in Johannesburg - the first before an all-white audience - and attracted the interest of a white impresario who booked the play for four nights in the white Brian Brooke Theatre." (1963, page 290)

The decision to present the play to an all-White audience at the Brooke Theatre resulted in several complications. Athol Fugard, who played the part of the priest was not allowed to appear on the same stage as the Black actors. Anxious for the play to be commercially produced, Fugard accepted this restriction without consulting with his actors. Disappointed by Fugard's decision, and in protest against the legislation which forbade Fugard from appearing in the cast, the actors initially refused to perform at the Brooke Theatre:

"The actors confronted Athol with this betrayal, protesting that there was an agreement not to pander to the bigotry of white South Africa; the actors refused to perform without him in the cast, but he argued that it was a big break for the play, and we became sentimental and relented because it seemed to be his whole life, the disappointment on his face was too heavy for us to ignore and Lewis Nkosi was recruited to play a white priest who had to be discoloured because of the attitudes of our country." (Bloke Modisane, 1963, pages 290 and 291)

The production of "No-Good Friday" contributed towards the development of a theatre relevant to the South African situation and despite problems, the play received a certain amount of critical acclaim.

"Despite some weaknesses, this is decidedly a play to be seen-preferably by whites as part of a mixed audience." (Jack Halpern, 1958, page 14)

Commercially Lewis Sowden's play "The Kimberley Train" which opened at the Library Theatre in September 1958, was more successful than Athol Fugard's production of "No-Good Friday". The play ran for a month at the Library Theatre before being transferred to the Reps and was presented at the Opera House in Pretoria and in Springs. In 1959 the play was produced in Cape Town and at the Alhambra Theatre in Durban.

Despite Lewis Sowden's claim that:

"The Kimberley Train" demonstrated that South African audiences were willing to see the Colour theme frankly on the stage." (1960, page 55)

Lewis Nkosi suggested that the importance of the play was negated by the playwright's approach and attitude towards his subject-matter.

"To say that the kind of playwright that Mr Sowden represents is a conservative one is not to minimise his importance in a theatre so cowed by the fear of the controversial as ours. It is merely saying that the kind of problems that preoccupy Mr Sowden have no special relevance to the youth beyond a certain point; and that the manner in which he comments upon these problems is certainly that of a conservative." (1959, page 11)

1958, however, was an important year for the development of South African drama, as:

"It brought firstly a new boldness in the handling of contemporary South African themes, and secondly a break in the wall of prejudice that confined and still to some extent confines South African writing."
(Lewis Sowden, 1960, page 55)

Similarly, in 1959, Basil Warner's play "Try For White" was produced by Leonard Schach in Cape Town, and Athol Fugard's "Nongogo" was presented at the Darragh Hall in Johannesburg. Perhaps the most significant theatrical event of the year was the Union Artist's production of "King Kong" at the University Great Hall, Johannesburg. Written by Harry Bloom with music by Todd Matshikiza and lyrics by Pat Williams, the musical was directed by Leon Gluckman and featured an all-African cast. Described by "Drum" as a "smash-hit", by the "Vaderland" as a "masterpiece" and by Oliver Walker of "The Star" as "the greatest thrill in twenty years of theatre-going in South Africa", "King Kong" enjoyed considerable critical acclaim and commercial success. In Johannesburg alone, almost 50 000 people saw the production which toured throughout the country, before its West End debut in 1960.

"King Kong" was succeeded by numerous musicals of varying quality, namely Bill Brewer's "Shebeen", Alan Paton and Krishna Shah's "Sponono" and Alan Paton's "Mkumbane". None of these productions achieved the success of "King Kong", although "Sponono" toured the country extensively, before its New York debut in 1964.

To a certain extent, these plays are representative of the South African drama written and produced during the 1950's.

Government censorship, banning of writers and newspapers and the repressive socio-political situation determined the playwright's choice of material and approach towards his subject-matter to a large extent, and in certain instances hindered the development of a South African drama which commented on the social situation. Similarly, limited theatrical venues, the lack of workshops and experimentation, and the absence of discussion between writers affected the scope and development of Black South African drama as a whole.

Despite these drawbacks, the Black South African writers in particular were responsible for what Ezekiel Mphahlele has termed "a real literary renaissance". (Michael Chapman, 1982, page 42)

"People were really writing furiously in a lively, vibrant style. It was quite a style of its own, an English of its own." (Michael Chapman, 1982, page 42)

Although this style characterized the majority of material produced by these writers both within the confines of South Africa and in exile, elements of continuity with the previous Black literature are apparent. Kelwyn Sole suggests that these include similar attitudes "to politics, to European literature, to education and to white society". (1979, page 166) It is interesting to note that during the 1950's the majority of Black South African writers combined a career in both journalism and creative writing. Similarly the writers who preceded them such as the Dhlomo brothers and B W Vilakazi were both journalists and creative writers.

The changing socio-political environment, the Black writer's acceptance of his social position and his consistent desire to create a literature relevant to the South African situation,

stimulated the introduction of new trends, which although unique to the Black literature of the 1950's, had a significant effect on the development of Black South African writing during the 1960's and 1970's.

CHAPTER THREE

J ARTHUR MAIMANE: JOURNALIST AND CREATIVE WRITER

John Arthur Maimane was born in 1932 in Pietersburg, Northern Transvaal. One of five children, he was the son of a minister of the Church of England and a school teacher. His paternal grandfather was a member of the royal family of the Bakgatla (a tribe located around Phokeng). He was the first in the family line to come face to face with a White person and was particularly impressed by the religion and the education of the Voortrekkers and the missionaries.

This contact with White civilization influenced his decision to send his children to school, all of whom became school teachers, except for one daughter who became a nurse and another who chose marriage and a domestic life. Maimane's father, Hazael Moshite Maimane received his early schooling in the Cape before studying to be a school teacher at the African College in Alice. Hazael Maimane underwent great hardship during his training, having for instance to walk from the Transvaal to Alice at the beginning of each term. While studying, he met and courted a fellow student from the Transkei, Mabel Nondzaba, who he subsequently married.

Although both Maimane's parents graduated as school teachers, his father gave up the profession to become a minister of the Church of England. The professional status of his parents placed the family in what Maimane calls a "very middle-class" position, and as far back as Maimane can remember he was surrounded by White missionaries who treated him as a person rather than a subservient member of the African race.

In keeping with the duties of a Black minister, Hazael Moshite

Maimane moved about considerably. When Arthur was three the family moved to Marabastad, followed a few years later by a move to Lady Selbourne near Pretoria, where Maimane received his initial education. At the age of ten, Maimane's mother died after a long illness.

At the age of eleven, Maimane recalls having been given "The Iliad" as a Christmas present from a missionary, which sparked off an interest in literature and a life-long fascination with Greek mythology. Maimane proudly recollects that he was able to name every god on Mount Olympus from an early age.

While studying at Lady Selbourne, Maimane wrote the entrance exam to St Peter's school in Rosettenville, and once accepted moved to Johannesburg. As a student at St Peter's, his interest in literature and creative writing was encouraged. He remembers having been taken to a production of "Oedipus Rex" at the Great Hall in Johannesburg by a missionary from St Peter's school. The play overwhelmed him and inspired him in the writing of dramatic material. A further source of creative stimulation was provided by Maimane's English teacher at St Peter's - Mrs Lindsay. He relates the story of how students were asked by Mrs Lindsay to write English essays on "What I did in my holidays". Having read numerous books in the "Tom Brown Schooldays" vein, Maimane initially retold these stories in his own words, as Mrs Lindsay knew very little about South Africa and could identify with these tales. Despite this, Mrs Lindsay realised that Maimane had talent and encouraged him to write essays and stories on subjects which were familiar to him.

The value of the education and creative encouragement given to the pupils by the staff of St Peter's is acknowledged by

J Arthur Maimane, who believes that the success of the school and its students may be attributed to the methods of selection and the manner in which pupils were treated. Black students met their teachers (the majority of whom were White) on terms other than that of master and servant, to which many of them were accustomed. For Maimane, this situation was not unique, as he had grown up among White missionaries, one of whom was his godfather. St Peter's was therefore a broadening and continuation of the same experience which Maimane had encountered at an early age.

While Arthur was at St Peter's, his father moved to De Wildt, near Britz, which was to be his last mission. Maimane visited his father during the school holidays and recalls that:

"... every school holiday I had quarrels with the (White) postmistress and stationmaster because I refused to call them Baas and Missus -- they'd complain to my father who'd sympathise with them (they thought) and tell them that was Education and Progress which they of course interpreted into Cheeky Kaffers."
(Personal interview with J Arthur Maimane 12 June, 1982)

Maimane's attitude and approach to these situations is referred to by Anthony Sampson, when he says that :

"He (Maimane) said what he thought, or more, in his determination not to be servile to white men.

"It makes me boil having to say "Ya, baas" to a white man who's inferior to me," he said. "God, I feel sick when I see an educated African grovelling in front of a white Man."

Arthur was completely detribalised. Johannesburg was his universe, and tribal life disgusted him: he hated being mistaken for an "ordinary native" by whites. He was determined to be Western and cosmopolitan, and spent his time with Indian, Coloured and European friends ... (1956, pages 31 - 32)

This attitude, interpreted by several Whites as defiant coupled with childhood memories of school holidays spent fighting with, and in turn provoking, the White postmistress were to become the subject-matter of one of Maimane's short stories published in 1960 in "Africa South" entitled "A Manner of Speaking".

After matriculating from St Peter's, Maimane acquired a job with "Drum" magazine. Father Huddleston was partially responsible for the acquisition of this post, as he personally approached the magazine's editor, Anthony Sampson:

"... One day Father Huddleston, the Superintendent of St Peter's school, asked if we had a job for a schoolboy, Arthur Maimane who had a passion for journalism. Arthur was bumptious and outspoken, with a quick wit; he showed me a short story he had written, in slack American dialogue, about American fighter pilots. He was the white man's "cheeky kaffir" - what happens when you start educating them; but good kaffirs made bad journalists. We took him on as a cub reporter." (Anthony Sampson, 1956, page 31)

The instrumental role played by Huddleston is acknowledged by Maimane, when he states that:

"It was with his help that, straight from school, I received an appointment with "Drum", while it was still

young and it was possible for those joining it to work themselves up into positions that had never before been held by Non-Europeans in this country. (Golden City Post - 30 October, 1955)

Initially the post with "Drum" was a temporary one, as Maimane hoped to study law at Fort Hare. His interest in journalism, however, outweighed his desire to study further and he maintained his position with "Drum" for several years.

The first article to bear Maimane's name, appeared in the April 1952 edition of "Drum" and was entitled "The Gen". Previously written by Henry Nxumalo, the article dealt with boxing, table tennis, golf and basketball. Later on in the year, "The Gen" was replaced by "The Ring" which focussed entirely on the boxing world. In an assessment of Maimane's work for "Drum" during 1952, it may be concluded that the majority of his journalism was confined to the factual and the informative. The predominant focus of energy was on boxing, although articles on the Olympic Games, written by Maimane, appeared during 1952.

From the start of his career in journalism, Maimane signed his name J Arthur Maimane, deciding to drop his first name John not only because it was too common, but because it was the first name that came to mind when a White addressed a Black. By 1953, Maimane was writing under two names for "Drum" magazine. The boxing articles continued to bear the name J Arthur Maimane, while the detective serials were signed Arthur Mogale. Maimane chose this pseudonym, (Mogale being his family name) and made use of it for two reasons. Firstly, the editor Anthony Sampson and himself agreed that a pseudonym was appropriate and necessary, in order to ensure that Maimane did not have too many by-lines in any one

issue. Secondly, so as not to confuse the readers, it was decided that Maimane should assume an alternative name for the writing of fiction.

Maimane's detective serial "Crime For Sale - Drum's thrilling new story of the Golden City's Underworld", appeared in January 1953. Initially a monthly story complete in itself, it was converted into serial format in April 1953 and continued to appear in "Drum" until the end of that year. The first in this series was called "Hot Diamonds", and the second entitled "You Can't Buy Me". "The Ring", Maimane's article on boxing, continued throughout 1953, and included information, ratings and titbits relevant to the sport.

In 1954, the detective serial was transferred to Drum's sister magazine "Africa", where it met with the same popularity and success that it had enjoyed when it appeared in "Drum". Although Maimane continued his boxing feature for "Drum", he extended the scope of his writing to include short stories and picture romances. In 1954 a factual account of the new Bantu Education Act and the closing of St Peter's School appeared in "Drum", written by Maimane and entitled "The Death of a School". In the same year, Maimane began writing short articles on boxing for the "Golden City Post", a weekly Sunday newspaper.

By 1955, Maimane was writing for three publications. These were "Drum" which continued to include his features on boxing, together with an article entitled "Boxing goes to the Dance" which contained Maimane's impressions of the contrast and similarity between dancing and boxing; "Africa", for whom he wrote short stories, boxing articles and serialized detective stories; and "Golden City Post" which included factual material relating to boxing and, in the second half of 1955, "The Chief meets the Blackmailers".

By 1956, Maimane began to concentrate his energy almost entirely on the "Golden City Post", and wrote a two-part article entitled "Secrets of the Death Cell" which told of life in the condemned cell of Pretoria Central Prison. In November of that year, Maimane began writing the editorial "Lowdown" for the "Golden City Post", and in 1957 he became news editor of the publication, following the murder of the previous editor, Henry Nxumalo. The editorial comment appeared each week on page four of the newspaper and included Maimane's opinions and thoughts on topical matters, ranging from cinema, social scandal, and pay-roll robberies to the bus boycotts, African education and ANC activities. The last of these editorials appeared on 14th September, 1958.

"... This is go ... salang hantle, au revoir, totiens, auf wiedersehn, salani kahle, arriverdecide - or whatever way you want it - from me. This is the last time I pipe up in this column."

Shortly after this, Maimane obtained a transfer to "Drum" in Accra, a post which was short-lived. Unlike several of the Black writers who went into exile in the late 50's and early 60's, Maimane's reasons for departure from South Africa were not exclusively political. Professionally, Maimane felt frustrated and although he had risen from a cub reporter for "Drum" to the news editor of "Golden City Post", he felt that he was inadequately paid for his services. Similarly, Maimane was dissatisfied with the treatment he received from Whites who occupied inferior positions to his own.

Maimane's decision to leave South Africa nevertheless extended beyond professional frustration and ambition to a more immediate and serious issue. The detective serials he wrote centered almost entirely around the gangsters of Johannesburg, and as news editor he published several articles relating to

organized crime. This placed Maimane in a vulnerable situation and his life was threatened several times by members of gangs who were discontented with the stories appearing in print. In fear of his life, Maimane began carrying a gun but was arrested for illegal possession of a fire-arm. Realising that without protection, his life was in danger, and yet refusing to go to prison for an offence which would bring him into direct contact with the criminals and gangsters he was writing about, Maimane's only alternative was to leave the country.

After working for "Drum" in Accra, Maimane accepted a job with Radio Ghana, for whom he started a magazine programme. During this period, he considered the writing of a novel for the first time and collected his thoughts for his play "The Opportunity", which was based on a story he had heard while in Ghana.

Uncertain whether he would be able to renew his South African passport and aware of the fact that South Africa was going to withdraw from the Commonwealth, Maimane left Ghana for London in 1960, where he acquired a British passport. Although his sights were set on eventually settling in the United States of America, Maimane acquired a job with Reuters in London.

In 1962 he attended a conference at Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda. Convened by the Mbari Writers' Club and sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the conference delegates included the South Africans, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane, the Nigerians Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clarke and the Black American Langston Hughes among others. Maimane's paper was entitled "Can't You Write About Anything Else?" and dealt with the problems of writing a novel in a socio-political environment dominated by apartheid.

In 1963, Maimane went to work for Reuters in East Africa, but was expelled and deported from "Zimbabwe" when that Government decided that his work was too critical of the ruling régime. Back in London after a year abroad, Maimane left Reuters and joined the overseas service of the BBC. During this period, Maimane began writing radio plays for the African service of the BBC, "African Theatre", which produced and broadcast his plays "The Opportunity" and "Where the Sun Shines".

Maimane's first stage play "The Dung Heap Flower" was produced and performed non-commercially in the form of a play-reading by the Institute of Cultural Affairs in London. It dealt with the complex situation of a girl whose father is white and whose mother is Coloured. It remains unpublished.

In 1973, Lewis Nkosi and Arthur Maimane collaborated in the formation of an ad hoc company and presented a double bill at the Bush Theatre in London. Nkosi's play "Malcolm" and Maimane's play "The Prosecution" were well received by both audience and critics and ran for two weeks.

Following the success of the Bush Theatre venture, Maimane and Nkosi were approached by several West End producers with a view to producing a world premiere of new plays by them. Negotiations, however, proved to be fruitless, as producers and playwrights were unable to agree on subject-matter and the production never materialized.

Maimane remained undeterred by this incident and wrote a three-act play entitled "The Man Trap" and a television play "The Hammer and the Nail" during the second half of the 1970's. By the time he published his novel "Victims" in 1976, Maimane had already had several short stories and a play printed. "Just A Tsotsi" appeared in "Africa South"

Author Yudelma G C

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