LITERARY RESPONSES TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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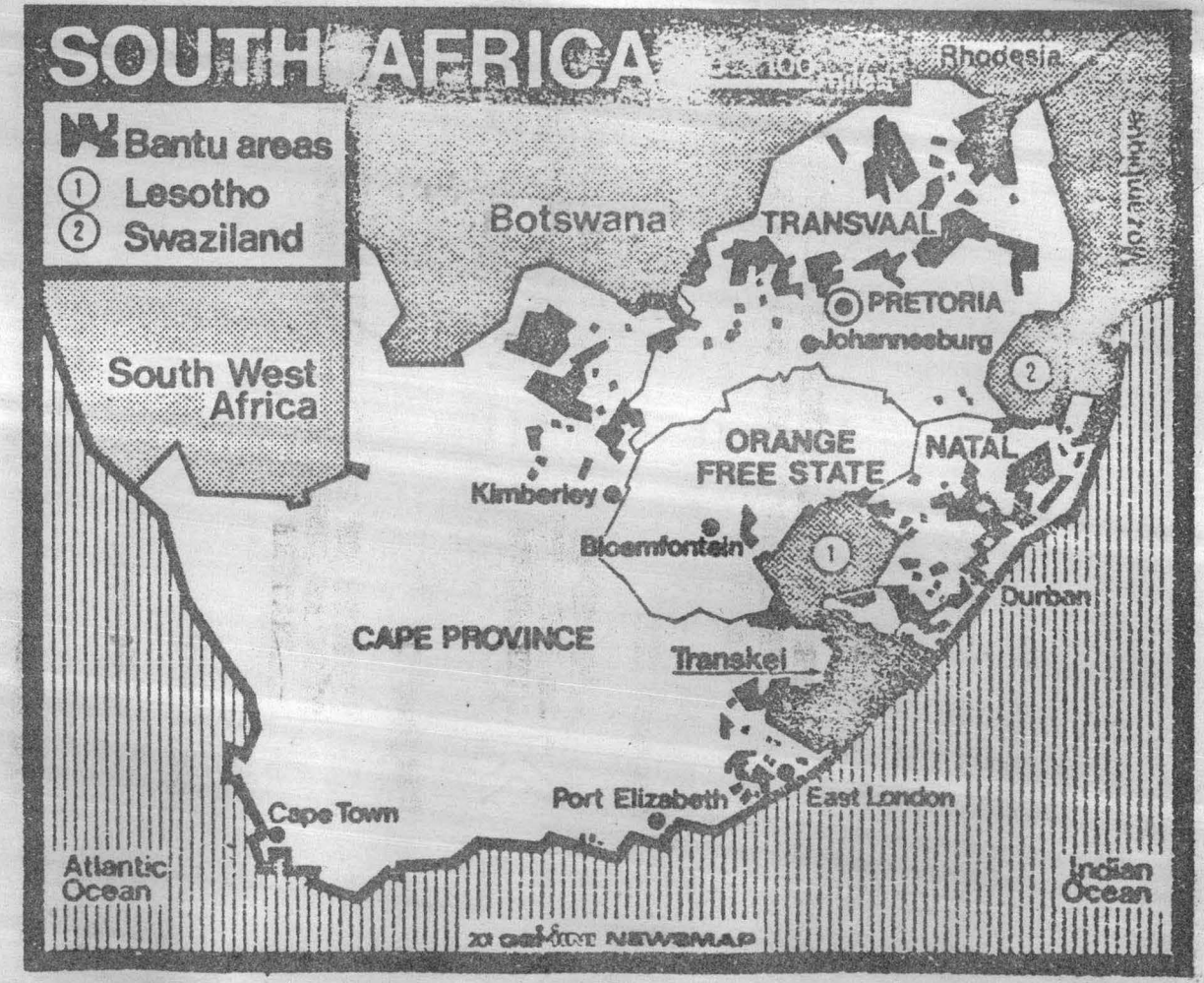
SOUTH AFRICA
Bantu areas
1 Lesotho
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C O N T E N T S

PREFACE

PREFACE

The problem of racism in South Africa has hurt all sensitive souls the world over. The South African writers, like all writers, have expressed, through their works, their anguish about this deadly disease cancering humanity. They have responded with human and artistic sensibility to the various problems of the society arising out of the racist policies of the apartheid regime. These problems have affected all aspects of life and many be divided into three broad groups - economic, political and socio-cultural. This dissertation proposes to deal with the literary responses to the economic, political and social problems, separately, by devoting one full chapter to each one of them. As human problems are inter-related and cannot be understood meaningfully unless viewed in the light of the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted totality of the human experience, the division into groups is done strictly for the sake of clarity and convenience of analysis rather than for any compartmentalization.

The discussion on the above - mentioned groups is preceeded by an introductory chapter of an expository nature presenting the general concept of race down the ages and how the machanics of racism operate in South Africa affecting the art and literature of the land. The last

chapter enunciates the observations and conclusions arrived at during the present study of literary responses to racial discrimination in South Africa.

The actual period intended to be covered is from the year of Apartheid (i.e. 1948), when the Nationalist Party comes to power in South Africa, onwards to the UN Anti-Apartheid year (i.e. 1978). Yet a few relevant writers and works preceeding the year 1948 have also been included in the study to make it more meaningful; for no date or period or individual in history -- however great and significant -- have their complete meaning in isolation.

The dissertation mainly deals with the creative literature written in English language. Yet references have been made to literature written in the other languages of South Africa viz. Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans wherever necessary.

There heve been severe constraints with regard to the availability of the literary material -- both creative and critical. Not much of the published matter on the topic is available in the libraries here. Yet every effort has been made to make the study as comprehensive as possible.

I take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Vijay Gupta, Associate Professor, Centre for West Asian and African Studies for his valuable guidance and encouragement that enabled me to complete

the work. Any shortcomings that may still remain, inspite of my best efforts, are entirely mine. I acknowledge with thanks the assistance provided to me by the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Delhi University Library, Indian Council for World Affairs Library, British Council Library, Central Secretariat Library, Indian Council for Cultural Relations Library, India International Centre Library (all in Delhi), the Kuamaun University Constituent College Library (Almora), the African National Congress of South Africa and the UN Information Centre, New Delhi, in making available the basic material relating to the study. I am also thankful to my friends and typists who had helped me during the study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination in South Africa is a part of the wider problem of racism. To understand the nature and development of racism a clear comprehension of the concept of race is essential. Further, knowledge of the historical development of racism in South Africa is necessary to understand the specificities of the local race relations and the socio-cultural and politico-economic milieu in which the South African writers operate. This chapter aims at providing this background which is basic to any evaluation of the literary responses to racial discrimination in South Africa.

Concept of Race

Biologically speaking, the term 'race' denotes a sub-division of the human species — the Homo Sapiens. Race refers to distinctive physical characteristics that distinguish one from the other sub-divisions of the human species. There are more similarities than dissimilarities amongst the Homo sapiens. The dissimilarities have emerged due to a natural evolutionary process. By grouping similarities in pigmentation, hair texture and head shape it is possible to distinguish three broad divisions of human races — the Mongoloid, the Negroid and the Caucasoid.[1] Since the similiarities in these areas are

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1. The Race Concept : Result of an Inquiry (UNESCO-Paris, 1958), 2nd impression, p.90. The dissimilarities which in any case minor, may be noticed only with regard to marginal variations in the hair, nose, jaws, lips and the complexion of the skin.

greater, the few differences have got, and continue to get further mixed up, blurring the distinguishing individual features. In spite of the hybridisation, these biological differences --- though superficial or peripheral-- do appear. Years of research has proved that these differences do not play any role in deciding the intelligence or the physical capabilities of the three races. This important factor is often missed under the force of irrational racial pride and prejudice.

Scientists are of the opinion that the term race should be used in a purely ethnographical and sociological sense. But it is commonly used not in such scientific overtones but with certain value - loaded connotations which lack rational bases. Very often the biological peculiarities of races are distorted, falsified and misrepresented to suit to the conveniences of different groups and individuals who wish to use the racial differences to achieve political and economic ends. So, to understand the race problem we have to grasp the distorsions and stereotypes that have been created to attribute value-loaded judgements based on thin biological differences among the various racial groups. The existing or continuing differences in technological and industrial development have enabled the European colonialists to propagate concepts and arguments

that they are technologically advanced due to their superior racial stock. They have similarly subsumed backwardness with 'racial inferiority'. The stereotypes and emotive overtones given to race are intended to fortify such irrational ideas. These irrational ideas are the bases of racist thinking. Such distorted ideas are preached and practised by the racists all over the world against the so-called inferior races. The biological dissimilarities, though minor and superficial, are converted into a convenient facade behind which the exploitation of the subjugated or discriminated 'races' (Blacks in case of South Africa) could be conveniently carried out.

Race, when used as a tool to divide and exploit, becomes "a compound of physical and mental personality and cultural traits which determine the behaviour of individuals."[2] So, when race is used as a divisionary tactic it becomes important that the 'purity' of races should be emphasised. Those interested in maintaining these divisions preach that the inter-mixture of races is a 'sin' and against the God-given or Natural law. These racists argue that it was the intention of God that the races must stay apart and develop independently. The contorted logic that these people usually give to support

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2. Vijay Gupta, The Race Concept, (Delhi University Monograph, 1964), p.3.

their claim is that if God's intension was otherwise he would not have created different races at all.

The racists' insistence on 'purity' of race has, in reality, economic reasons. They want to continue the exploitation of the subjugated races by projecting a picture of their own race as 'superior' and the others as 'inferior'. To achieve their economic ends they take such steps which increase the sharpness and effectiveness of 'race' as divisionary tactics. The loss of validity of arguments about race' purity' (by racial intermixture) would mean to them the loss of an easy weapon to divide the people and continue their economic, political and socio-cultural exploitation. The myth of racial superiority is thus sustained and nurtured to perpetuate the perpetration of total exploitation. The racially 'inferior' group, the purists hold is politically incapable and intellectually bankrupt to have an independent existence in the absence of 'good guidance' from the superior race. Existing techno-economic superiority is often cited as unassailable proof of the 'achievement' of the superior race ignoring the fact that a considerable measure of this superiority has come through the appropriation of the labour surplus of the same people who have been labelled as being racially inferior. Techno-economic superiority is sought to be secured and

perpetuated by deliberate imposition of sub-standard education and training to the 'inferior races'. In South Africa such a policy becomes an effective method of continuing the inequality and oppression. The thin biological racial differences which by themselves do not account for the differences in material achievement have been used to build up racism as a divisionary tactic and as a political weapon for exploitation by the so-called superior racial groups.

Historical Development of the Concept of Race

Historically the arguments about differences of calibres among men have been given from time to time by the philosophers. For example the dogma that is central to Plato's argument on this issue is that "God has created men of three kinds, the best made of gold, the second best of silver, and the common herd of brass and iron. Those made of gold are fit to be guardians; those made of silver should be soldiers, the others should do the manual work".[3] Aristotle also held a similar view "From birth some are marked out for subjugation, others for rule; the man who is by nature not his own but another man's is by nature a slave".[4] He further argues that a slave is a partial man who lacks the governing elements of the soul and should be ruled by those who possess it.

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3. Bertrand Russel, History of Western Philosophy (London, 1946), pp.133-34.
4. Ibid., pp.208-209.

Aristotle says, "Tame animals are better off when ruled by man, and so are those who are naturally inferior when ruled by their superiors".[5]

Eventhough these philosophers have argued for the slavery and the rule over the weak by the strong, they did not imply or attribute any inherent elements of inequality among the men based on "racial" features like the colour of the skin, the texture of the hair and prognathism which the modern racists attribute. Racial groups were not discussed as inflexible, non-transgressable, divisionary, watertight compartments but as groups whose only right to be considered superior was the superiority of the martial prowess.

As these philosophers did not consider the racial features as absolute deciding factors determining superiority or inferiority of the racial groups, considerable scope for inter-racial mixing was allowed. For example Plato says "Usually, but by no means always, children will belong to the same grade as their parents; when they do not, they must be promoted or degraded accordingly."[6] So also Aristotle stresses that the only way to know who is "naturally inferior" is through war. To quote Aristotle" ... no nation will

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5. Ibid, p.209.

6. Ibid., p.134, (emphasis added).

admit that it is intended by nature to be governed, and the only evidence as to the nature's intentions must be derived from the outcome of war. In every war, therefore, the victors are in the right and the vanquished in the wrong."[7] Thus when the Greeks glorified Hellenist Culture and Civilization to assert their superiority, they did not assert it by assuming any inherent superiority to their physical features like the colour of the skin. The basis was their supremacy in terms of sheer power and achievement in art and culture. The slaves of Greece and Rome were also not differentiated by their masters on the basis of their race. In fact, Spartacus received the same treatment and faced the same cruelties and dangers as his African counterparts.

In the Middle Ages there were persecutions of various ethnic groups, but all these were impelled by economic, social and religious reasons but seldom was rancour raked up on biological or 'racial' grounds. For example, Christians were persecuted by Saracens and vice-versa; Jews have been persecuted by other religious groups in the name of religious differences; but it was not done on any 'racial' considerations. The people who could not be held as equals or of same stock for various social, political, economic and cultural reasons were distinguished by using terms like 'barbarians', 'aliens', 'non-believers', 'heathens', 'slaves' etc. But these people were never considered genetically inferior and no specific

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7. Ibid., p.209. *Emphasis added.*

rigid barriers were put to the intermixture of people on the basis of race. As Alex La Guma puts it, "Moslems were received into the Christian or Jewish religions in the Middle Ages, and vice-versa without consideration for racial origin, religious differences were the main ideological reasons for over-running alien lands in the epoch of feudalism."[8]

Even when the Europeans indulged in colonialism and started enslaving Africans they defended it on the plea that the people traded were 'lost souls' and 'heathens'. These non-christians had to be 'redeemed' and saved from 'eternal damnation'. The colonizers and slave-traders assumed for themselves the roles of civilizing missions and churches were closely associated with these endeavours. These Europeans argued that they were carrying the whiteman's burden of civilizing the 'heathens'. Initially, thus, "race was not the basis for status differentiation between Europeans and indigenous people. Religion was the important criterion and baptism conferred legal and, to a considerable extent, social equality ..."[9] But as the number of such converts increased it became increasingly difficult for the Europeans to give the convert non-Europeans an equal or near-equal status

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8. Alex La Guma, "Culture and Liberation" Sechaba (Dar-es-Salaam), vol.10, Fourth Quarter, 1976, p. 54.

9. P.L. Van den Berghe "Race and Racism in South Africa" (Excerpt of Race and Racism: A Comparative Persepctive (Wiley, 1967)), anthologised in Andre Betellie, ed., Social Inequality (Harmondsworth, 1969), quoted from 1972 reprint, p. 319.

because such a step would deny cheap, enforced labour the 'heathers' which was extremely useful in their commerce and trade. So another new excuse had to be cooked-up to justify their exploitation. The obvious differences in physical features came very handy and the racial features of the blacks were attributed to be inferior. While the lesser dissimilarities like colour, hair, nose, jaw and lips were made to look more important, the larger and more important similarities among the races were completely overlooked. Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley aptly comment: "At this point occured an inevitable, under the circumstances, but ultimately disastrous change in apologetics. The religious justification of slavery ... gave way to racial justification ".[10]

The Bible itself was mis-interpreted to support the new excuse of racism. Negroes were told to believe that they were descendents of Ham or Canaan on whom Father Naoh had laid the curse : "And he said, cursed be the Canaan, a servant of the servants shall he be unto his brothern".[11] The Church council of Capte Town in 1872 recorded that "neither the law of the land nor the law of the Church ruled that Christian

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10. Daniel P. Mannix in collaboration with Malcolm Cowley Black Cargoes : A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade (1518-1865), (New York, 1972), Quoted from Penguin edn. 1976, p.59-60.

11. The Bible (Genesis IX 25)

Negroes had to be free"[12] Even before this ruling, various states of America had already passed similar laws which declared that Baptism did not confer freedom.[13] The total effect of all such legal measures was that by the close of the 19th century the old excuse of civilizing missions was replaced by the new concept of racism that suited to the needs of the given situations in a better way.

Racism, thus, is a recent phenomenon in the history of mankind. Historically it was developed to justify exploitation of new lands and its people beyond their national boundaries by the European colonialists during the last few centuries. It has been a device for securing legitimacy and acceptance for the colonialists to rule over the subjugated people who have different biological peculiarities. By the repeated indoctrination and distorted propaganda a whole range of racially discriminatory economic relationships, value patterns, social attitudes and political cleavages have been created not only to keep the idea of racism alive but also to strengthen it, to present it in a more subtle and acceptable form. The South African racism is also trying to put on more acceptable masks with the intention to camouflage discrimination under the sweet verbiage of euphemistic terminology.

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12. Quoted by Benedict, Ruth and Weltfixh, Gene, Race, Science and Politics, (New York, the Viking Press), 1950, p.110.

13. The State of Virginia passed such law in 1667, Maryland followed the suit in 1671; New York did it in 1706 and other States followed later.

Brief History of Race Relations in South Africa

The colonisation of South started with the first Dutch East India Company expedition in the 17th Century. Its aim was to the establishment of 'a rendezvous and a strong hold' in Table Bay[14] to serve as a 'refreshment post' for the company vessels on way to the East. For this purpose the early settlers in the area were expected to grow some food and procure cattle from the local inhabitants.

The constant complaint made by the settlers against the Company was that the price being paid to them by the Company for the agricultural goods was uneconomical. So they voiced their demand to the Commander of the Company "let a price be fixed for till that is done we will not cultivate any more ground"[15]. Eventhough this demand led not only to the granting of a minor concesion by way of marginal increase in the price of the grain but also precipitated a far-reaching decision by the company to import slaves for the farm work and menial labour with a two-fold aim to make labour abundant

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14. In 1647 the Haarlem , a vessel belonging to the Dutch East India Company got wrecked in Table Bay, near the present Cape Town. Its crew stayed there for six months at the place and on return home gave a glowing report about the favourable climate and the fertile land at the Table Bay. The expedition of 1652 was led by Jan Van Riebeeck consisting of three ships, and 130 men and women landed at the Table Bay 4th June 1652.

15. Gideon, S. Were, A History of South Africa (Ibadan, 1974), p.23.

as well as cheap.[16]

Apart from the above-mentioned economic reason the introduction of slave labour was also in keeping with the racial attitudes of the European of the the day. The Dutch -- Boers[17]-- considered themselves (incidentally the Europeans or the white-skinned people) as the 'superior race' or 'master race' --- the Herrenvolk. They believed that menial work was the domain of non-Europeans whom they regarded as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Such assumed superiority on the part of Boers was clearly reflected in many of their legal, administrative and social policies which were totally biased against the non-Europeans.

The British occupation of Cape Colony and its formalisation as a British colony under the Congress of Vienna Agreement in 1815 brought in a new development. The British settlers started arriving around the year 1820. The period that followed the British colonisation is riddled with many British-Boer rivalries which have deep-rooted economic reasons. Eventhough the Britishers controlled the political

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16. The locals (Bushmen and Hottentots) were not preferred as servants because they were at the time fighting against the Europeans. The fear existed that they might join the fellowmen in times of clashes. The imported slaves posed no such danger. The first 12 slaves arrived in the year 1657 from Java and Madagascar; and in 1658, 185 more slaves were imported from West Africa. The number of slaves steadily increased from 12 in the year 1657 to 1258 in the year 1708.

17. The Boers (literary meaning, farmers) are also referred to as Afrikaneers (based on their language - Afrikans).

machinery of the state, the Boers were already well entrenched in South Africa and had a strong hold on its economy. The first step the expanding British imperialism had to take in order to consolidate its hold on the colony was to reduce the economic power the Boers had. It had also to impose its own institutions to assert the British supremacy and to pave the way for furthering its interests. So, the English currency (English Silver) was adopted; old Dutch Judicial System (landrosts) was abolished and the system of English Magistrates was introduced; English was made the official language in the place of Dutch. Apart from the process of Anglicisation, the English also started attacking the Dutch notions about the treatment of non-whites. They even reversed the 1809 Hottentot Proclamation[18] which restricted the movement of Hottentot people. The 50th ordinance of 1828 restored the civil righgs of Hottentots, Bushmen and other non-whites people. To cap it all, in 1833, slavery was abolished.

The apparently 'liberal' attitudes of the British settlers of South Africa and the Metropolitian government which controlled the colony has to be understood in the context of the English-Boer conflict of interests. The above-mentioned liberalising changes have not, as is usually propagated, been impelled by any altruistic humanism

18. Under the Proclamation Hottentots could leave their home districts only if they had written permission, i.e. a pass.

of the British or its Protestant Church. It was rather a part of the strategy of the British to strike at the roots of Boer economic supremacy. As most of the Boers were big land-owners, the emancipatory measures regarding slave labour resulted in their economic ruination. For example, the abolishion of slavery was almost a death blow to the Boers. They were allowed lesser compensation[19] and that also through a cumbersome and expensive process.[20]

The Boer settlers whose position of predominance was undermined by the British felt that their 'way of life' was in danger. They had the only choice either to get embattled with the British or move away from them. They chose the latter and moved up northwards to occupy the vast stretches of land owned by African communities. This great movement of thousands of Boers is known as The Great Trek. Though the real reason for the migration was economic, "Boers' to preserve proper relations between the hardened racial attitudes of master and servant"[21] were also partially responsible as immediate motivation for migration.

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19. The Compensation given was £12,50,000 while the value of the slaves according to the official estimate was £30,00,000.

20. The claims had to be made at London while most of the slave-owners were in the rural areas of South Africa.

21. Speech of Piet Relief, one of the leaders of the Trek. Quoted in Gideon S. Were, n.15, p.50.

Meanwhile there were more and more conflicts between the Africans and the Europeans groups - both the Boer and the British. Unlike the early conflicts where the Europeans very easily over-ran the territories of the militarily loosely organised local groups of Africans like Hottentots and Bushmen, they had now to face well-organised chieftainscies like Xhosa, Thembu, Pondo and Zulu. Yet all these groups were defeated due to the superiority of arms the Europeans had. By the year 1854 two 'British Republics' (Cape Colony and Natal) the two 'Boer Republics' (Transavaal and the Orange Free State) were established[22] in the Southern tip of Africa with large African 'native' population under their control. Frantz Fannon's words, though spoken in a much different context and in much generalized terms aptly summarises the events of the day and the period to follow :

"Thus in the first place the occupying power installs its domination and massively asserts its superiority. The social group which is militarily and economically enslaved is de-humanised by a multi-dimentional method.

"Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidation; systematic oppression, relieve each other at different levels in order to make the autochthone literally a chattel in the hands of the occupying power."[23]

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22. Republic of Natal was founded in 1842; self-government was granted to Boers in the areas north of Vaal river (Transavaal) in 1852 and in 1854 Orange Free State was given self-government.

23. Frantz Fannon, "Racisme and Culture", Presence Africaine (Paris) No.8-9-10, June-Nov. 1956, p.125.

The finding of diamond mines in the year 1869 at Kimberley and the discovery of gold in Witwatersrand brought in far-reaching changes in the South African economy and politics. What was earlier a predominantly pastoral and agricultural economy was transformed into mineral-extracting economy. The prospects of easy gains in dealing with the precious minerals like diamonds and silver brought in a flood of investers.

The opening of the mines also brought in spill-over industrialization in other areas. There was also need to expand the rail and other communication network. There arose, thus, a sudden demand for a large number of workers for mines and industries. This brought into existance an African working class different in character from the rural farm labourers. The farm life was a sort of serf-master relationship with the feudal-type linkages. The capitalist mine-owner needed individuals, whom he could hire and sack at his will. He needed single healthy adults willing to work for (money) wages. Thus,he needed Africans who had been impoverished to such an extent that they could find no existence or survival whithout entering the dark tunnels owned by the white man. Further the industraillist did not wish to retain unproductive sections of the populations near the industrial towns. The solution to this problem ---(beneficial to the white mine-owners--- was based on two ingredients - on one hand it should impoverish the Africans in order to force them

to go for work in the mines and on the other hand must keep out the non-productive sections of the population from the industrial areas.

The plantation economy of Natal which was graudally getting industrialized also had similar requirements. Sir Theophilus Stephstone, a British Officer in Natal, evolved and administrative solution to the problem. Under his system of Native Reserves a portion of land (reserves) was set aside for the Africans and it was only in these areas that Africans were entitled to own property.[24] In the other areas demarcated 'white' the Africans were allowed to stay only at the wish of the whitemen and that too as squatters - i.e. temporary residents. These reserves, the prototypes of the present Bantustans, served as pools of African labour which could be tapped to suit to the needs of the White South African economy. To supplement the labour force Indian indentured labour for Natal sugar plantations and Chinese labour for the Witwatersrand mines were imported from 1860 onwards. Migrant native labour was also imported from nearby areas like Nyasaland, Rhodesia, Basutoland and Bechuanaland.

The clash of interests between the British and Boer states over the labour and the exploitation of the gold and diamond mines led to the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902.

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24. In the Native Reserves the Africans were to be ruled by the local chiefs who had no real power of their own: except those delegated by the Whitemen.

In this clash of interests, Africans, the majority population of the country, did not take sides except as labourers serving both the warring groups. The Africans were not organised and thus could not intervene. The reason was that the Africans were so suppressed, impoverished and weak[25] that they were only further crushed.

After the war in 1910, the Boer and the British 'Republics' united to form the Union of South Africa. There after there was greater consolidation of the white power. Whiteman's consolidation meant an increasing denial of human rights to the Africans. The other non-European communities viz. the Asians and the Coloureds[26] who held powers and privileges midway between Africans and the Whites were also affected. The Land Act of 1913, the Native Urban Areas Act and the ApprenticeshipAct of 1922, The Colour Bar Act of 1925, The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 and many similar discriminatory legislations put the Africans in particular and non-Europeans in general into considerable disadvantageous position. These measures were opposed tooth and nail by the Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The rising political consciousness of the sections found expression in the formation of political parties. Thus in 1912 South African National

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25. Under the 'Peace Preservation Act' of 1878 the Africans were disarmed.

26. The coloureds were those born through the inter-racial mixing between the whites and the Blacks.

Congress was formed and in 1925 the South African Communist Party was set up. Yet due to the overwhelming opposition by racial whites to the granting of political rights to the non-Europeans, no significant rights were conceeded.

The new economic changes required corresponding changes in the political institutions. The European rulers set out to divide the society into water-tight racial compartments and propagated exclusiveness of the racial characteristics. The economic struggle was given the covering of racial struggle i.e., black versus white. In the ensuing period any concessions given to the blacks were due to the contradiction in the white-imposed economic system and not due to humanitarian reasons. The condition of the blacks continued to wrosen. There was mounting tension and the relationship between the whites and the blacks deteriorated into one of hatred.

During the course of Second World War when blacks (45,000 coloureds and 80,000 Africans) were recruited into the army to fight the Axis Powers, they were given only non-combatant roles. Blacks recruited for police services were also not armed with anything more than assegais. The prolonged war gave rise to a sudden demand for skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the war industries and the Africans had to be given some of these jobs naturally not because

of any change in the attitude on the part of whites, but because of the compulsion of the war requirements. Despite these compulsions, the whites were so hardened in their racial attitudes that they were against giving any decisive role to the non-Europeans. They felt that the change in the existing roles might lead to demands for equality and ultimately might threaten their previleged position. Such fears were more pronounced in the case of the Boers, also known as Afrikaaners, because they had no particular European country, unlike their British counterparts, to migrate back if any adverse situation were to arise. As a result their party — the Nationalist Party — envisaged in its programme in 1941 seggregation in residence and work. They proposed that each race-group should be given self-government in its own territory and that non-Europeans should be banned from practising trade and professions among whites. The Nationalist Party also demanded an amendment in the Constitution on the above lines.

In the 1948elections, Dr. Malan and his Nationalist Party capitalized on the fear complex of his Afrikaaner followers (who constitute about 60 percent[27] of the votes) and secured considerable number of seats in the all-white parliament

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27. The other 40 percent were whites of English origin. There were three European respresentatives for Africans and no representation for Asians and Coloureds was given.

and came to power,[28] There after the Nationalist Party gave legal backing to racial seggregation in political, economic and social life. It, thus, furthered the then existing exploitative relationship between the whites and and the non-whites. This was done in the name of 'separate development' called apartheid.[29] The doctrine ie., apartheid declared to be based on the principle that every race has its own distinct individual identity and a separate and specific role to play in the scheme of God. To achieve this, they argued, the races must remain pure and separate. Accordingly, there can be advancement only in terms of the 'separate development' of the races.[30] Therefore implementation of the apartheid doctrine involved forcible racial seggregation to separate different racial groups and maintaining their so-called race "identities". Consequently various legal enactments were introduced not only to implement apartheid but also to root out all opposition to it. These Acts such as Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, Immorality (Amendment) Act of 1950, Population Registration

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28. The Nationalist Party continuously increased in strength and in 1974 elections it secured 72% of the seats (122 out of 169).

29. The literal meaning of the word is "separate development".

30. Apartheid laws have been extended to South West Africa (Namibia) over which Pretoria illegally continues its occupation from 1966 onwards.

Act of 1950, Group Areas Act of 1950; Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act of 1959 help in the process of seggregation. Draconian laws like Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, 90-days Detention Bill of 1963, 180-Days Detention bill of 1965, Improper Interference Bill of 1966, General Laws Amendment Act (Bureau Of State Security Act) of 1969, Internal Security Act of 1970 help the police and military to suppress all opposition to apartheid from within the country.

Apartheid discrimination affects the South Africans in various ways. Economically the non-whites —— particularly the blacks are forced through economic compulsions to take up inferior and lowly-paid jobs; their opportunities for promotions and advancement to higher posts are blocked by legal barriers that reserve supervisory posts exclusively for the whites; and their trade union movements are suppressed and split racially.

Politically Africans are classified as being ~~classified~~ as ~~being~~ citizens of the 'Balck States' or 'Bantustans'. Bantustans are carved out of 13 percent of total land of the country. These are economically non-viable, politically dependent and geographically disconnected fragments truncated out of the most unproductive barren lands. Apparently the Bantustans are permitted their own political institutions. In reality these institutions i.e. the Bantustan Assemblies along with the Coloured Persons' Representative Council (for Coloureds) and the Indian Council (for Indians) are puppet institutions

propped up to create illusions of political participation and to split the upsurge for more rights. Freedom of political organisation on inter-racial basis or organisation against racial discrimination is not allowed. Ideological freedom, particularly relating to socialist ideology are brutally suppressed by the oppressive state machinery. Draconian laws, plethoria of bannings and imprisonments without trial, torture and deaths during detention are all part of the lives of the non-whites and those whites who oppose apartheid.

Socially the non-whites are subjected to various restrictions on their movement and residence through travel permits and pass laws. Inferior and biased education, substandard and seggregated cultural and recreational facilities, crude and inhuman racial classification of coloureds of 'mixed-parentage', insensitive -- rather sadistic -- formulation and implementation of legislations against inter-racial ~~friendship~~ friendship, love marriage etc. Complete the picture of apartheid in its rough and glaring outlines.

"Aparthied is basically...an economic phenomenon... It cannot be considered as a mere outlet for subjective feelings, or as a result of perverted instincts...or a simple political orientation. Its concomitant and superficial manifestations should not mislead us as to the nature of inner economic

structure".[31] It is an attempt to legalise and perpetuate the exploitative relations between the Europeans(whites) and the non-whites. It is rather a superstructural rationalisation to justify the white exploitation of the blacks, which lies at the base of the economic life of South Africa. Total denial of political rights to the non-whites is resorted to with a view to completely control legislature, administration and judiciary of the country. The aim is to perpetuate apartheid discrimination in economic, political, social and cultural lives of the people.

Racism and Literature in South Africa

The racial discrimination penetrates every aspect of life and dominates over all other problems in South Africa. In the lives of people it is the central problem around which all other issues intertwine. The peculiar situation the race problem has created in South Africa affects every person of the country. While the blacks, coloureds and Asians feel its punch through material exploitation, many whites resent the enforced separation which prevents ——————————→

31. Edward Ngaloshi, "Economics and Apartheid", Presence Africaine (Paris), n.80, 4th Quarter 1971, p. 130.

and perverts their human relationship with the non-whites. Thus, racial discrimination, affects both its victims and to some extent its 'beneficiaries'. It has become a central issue which no creative writer can afford to miss unless one wants to be an escapist writer blind to the society and the realities around him. It is for this reason that "Practically every book whether by white or black or by foreign or native writers treats the colour problem in one or more of its aspects."[32]

But then it is the writers' commitment and involvement in the society that influences the direction of his creativity. The depiction of life both in its successes and failures, and the vision of future society are all related to the writer's relationship with the society. The society with which every writer reacts is not an altruistic value-free Utopia. But it is one with definite socio-economic realities and political values. What a writer does in his work is either to conform to or affirm with, propose or oppose certain values and value-patterns. This is the case in South Africa also and the writer's treatment of the race problem is influenced by the socio-economic perspective and the ideological framework. This explains why the racial problem is treated differently by different writers. Their responses vary from the advocacy of

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32. Martin Tucker, ~~Modern~~ African Literature in Modern : A Survey of Contemporary writing in English (N.Y., 1967), p.159.

armed revolution to overthorw the white regime on one hand, and call for 'just' reforms within the existing apartheid system. In between these extremes are the advocates of different levels of gradualism and Christian moralism. As all these approaches are unmistakably twined with the policies and programmes of various political parties and their ideologies, the South African literature blends politics and art in direct and apparent transperancy that is rarely found elsewhere in the other African literatures. George Sampson very aptly points out, "It is impossible to keep politics out of a discussion of twentieth-century South African literature because so many of the best writers deal with questions which have a political bearing.[33]

These general issues of commitment etc. apart, South African writer confronts or rather is forced to confront the racial problem in artistic terms as well. As James Baldwin, the Afro-American novelist, says "One writes out of one thing only, one's own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give".[34] It is this experience or

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33. George Sampson A Concise Cambridge History of English Literature (London, 1972), p. 764.

34. James Baldwin, Notes of Native Son (London, 1949), pp. 4-5. Quoted in Kolawole Ogunbensan "Peter Abrahams' 'Wild Conquest' in the Beginning was Conflict" Lotus (Cairo) 29-3/76, July-Sept. 1976, p. 10.

the touch with all sections of the society that is prevented or perverted under the conditions of South African racism. The South African writer has to confront the racial problem not only as a member of the society whose umbelical cord is artificially split on the basis of race but also as an artist whose range of human experience with his fellow-brings belonging to other races is forcibly constricted. The rigid barriers imposed against inter-racial mixing make the people of different races live as though they were unconnected with each other. The attempt is to erase social commonness through the myth of racial superiority of the Europeans. And the economic intermixing and whiteman's dependence on black labour is minimised to per force an unacceptable political system. Consequently the writer tries to cover the chasm between social commoness, political imposition and economic dependence and inter-mixing. In the process the personal subjectiveness is superlayed with racial background and the characters portrayed from races other than one's own often tend to be cardboard figures cut out of popular stereogtypes.

Another difficulty the South African writer has to face is the hostility of the State machinery. The coercive nature of state in South Africa forces the writer to take an anti-government position. Such writings are perceived as destabilizes of state authority and thus curbed. So the writers have to face various odds like strict censorship, banning from

publishing, banning from being quoted, expulsion from an area, house arrest, imprisonment and gallows. Under the South African oppression regime a writer who can be banned even from writing. In these circumstances the very act of writing, when there is a ban against him, amounts to protest and an affirmation of the writer's refusal to co-operate with injustice and oppression.

CHAPTER II

ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

The main propelling force behind racial discrimination in South Africa is economic. In South Africa the racial discrimination originates from the overwhelming desire on the part of the dominant white settlers to maintain, and if possible, to further their present position of previlage and inequality vis-a-vis the other racial groups of South Africa. This thinking on the part of whites has been theorised in the doctrine of Apartheid which, in practice, means denying equal opportunities to the non-whites.

The practice of racial dsicrimination in the economic activities began as early as 1652 when Van Riebeck landed in South Africa and engaged the indigenous people as menials doing odd jobs for the whites. In the three hundred years that followed the colonizing event, Africans, inspite of tough resistance, were reduced to the lowest economic status through various discriminatory legislations and practices. The practice of discrimination was institutionalized in the form of Apartheid after the World War II. In this chapter an attempt is made at studying the literary response to the Apartheid policy of economic exploitation and impoverishment.

The most conspicuous effect of economic discrimination is the resultant poverty that affects its victims. This

poverty is the cumulative effect of the appropriation of the labour surpluses of the victims through gross under-payment for their labour. The poverty of blacks in South Africa has been enforced through a process of historical underdevelopment and continuing impoverishment through deliberate denial of avenues for betterment like proper education and technical training. Supervisory posts and skilled jobs are reserved exclusively for whites under the industrial colour bar legislations of South Africa. The pathetic condition of the discriminated are depicted forcefully by many of the South African writers in their creative works.

The most glaring aspects of poverty are lack of proper food, clothing and shelter. Among the blacks who particularly suffer from the endemic poverty, starvation and hunger, malnutrition and under-nourishment are as common as their tattered and insufficient clothes, and as concrete a reality as their leaking roofs and overcrowded shanties. There are many who share Serote's experience when he says :

> " I have tasted, ever so often,
> Hunger like sand on my tongue" [1]

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1. Mongane Wally Serote, I will wait, anthologiced in Robert Royston, ed., Black Poets in South Africa (London, 1973), p.28.

and many whose children as Dennis Brutus sees

> " Along the miles of steel
> that span my land
> threadbare children stand
> knees ostrich-bulbous on their reedy legs,
> their empty hungry hands
> lifted as if in prayer " [2]

The prayer, the constant longing and the begging of 'empty hungry hands' is for food. It is for this stukkie brood (a piece of bread) that the two poverty-stricken piccanins in Jacobson's story wait patiently and follow Michael almost from his school to his house. "At Michael's school the slang term for any African child was just that : stukkie brood. That was what African children were always begging for."[3] As one such needy person yearning for food speaks out

> " This way I salute you;
> .....
> My hand like a starved snake
> rears my pockets
> For my thin, ever lean wallet,
> While my stomach groans a friendly
> smile to hunger
> Jo' burg City.
> My stomach also devours coppers and papers
> Don't you know?
> Jo' burg City, I salute you; "[4]

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2. Dennis Brutus, Train Journey, included in his 'Letters to Martha' and Other Poems from a South African Prison (London, 1968), Quoted from his collection, 'A Simple Lust' (London, 1973), p.49.

3. Dan Jacobson, " Beggar My Neighbour" included in his collection, Inklings, (London, 1973), p.58.

4. Mongane Wally Serote, City Johannesburg, anthologised in R. Royston, ed., n.1, p.20.

It is the constant sight of these hungry stomaches which makes people like Brutus, who are a little better off, feel

> " The plangent wines become acidulous
> Rich foods knotted to revolting clots
> of guilt and hunger in our queasy guts
> remembering the hungry comfortless" 5

South African writers also speek of "hidden hunger"- the hunger of under-nournishment and malnutrition. Can Themba's leading character in Kwashiorkar first cites the disease[6] in innoculous medical terminology and the cold, hard statistics used by his sister Eileen in her report for the social welfare department.

"Child : Sekgamestse Daphne Lorraine Mabiletsa, Maria's child, age 3 years. Father undetermined. Free clinic attendance. Medical Report : Advanced kwashiorkar.

.....

Remarks (Eileen's Verdict) : This family is desparate.

Mother : ineffectual case for child.

Child : Showing malnutritional effects. Overall Quantitative and qualitative nutritional deficiency".7

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5. Dennis Brutus, A Common Hate Enriched Our Love and Us included in his Sirens Knuckles and Boots (Ibadan, 1963) Quoted from the collection of his poems, A Simple Lust (London, 1973), p.22.

6. Kwashiorkar is "nutritional disease of infants and children, occuring chiefly in Africa, associated with a heavy corn diet and the resultant lack of protein, and characterized by edema, potbelly and changes in skin pigmentation" - The Random House Dictonary of the English Language, College edn., (Bombay, 1961), p.746.

7. Can Themba, Kwashiorkar, short story included in his collection The Will to Die (London, 1972), p.15.

But when Dave later describes the condition of the child with the stark facts the reader is shocked to the reality of the situation of the lives of South African black children:

> "There sat a little monkey on the bed. It was a two to three years' old child. The child did not cry or fidget, but bore an unutterably miserable expression on its face, in its whole bearing. It was as if she was the grandmother writ small; pathetically, wretchedly she looked out upon the world.
>
> 'Is it in pain?' I asked in an anxious whisper.
>
> 'No, just wasting away'
> 'But she looks quite fat'.
>
> To be sure, she did. But it was a ghastly kind of fatness, the fatness of the 'hidden hunger' I was to know. The belly was distended and ragged towards the bed. The legs looked bent conversly and there were light-brown patches on them, and on the chest and back. The complexion of the skin was unnaturally light here and there so that the creature looked piebald. The normally curly hair had a rusty tint and had lost much of its whorl. Much of it had fallen out, leaving islets of skull surfacing.
>
> The child looked aside towards me, and the silent reproach, the quiet, listless, abject despair flowed from the large eyes wave upon wave. Not a peep, not a murmer. The child made no sound of complaint except struggling breathing ... Then I thought '<u>So this is kwashiorkor</u>!'. 8

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8. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 20-21, Emphasis in the original.

Poor and insufficient clothing is another aspect of the lives of the impoverished blacks of South Africa which the writers have dealt with. Dan Jacobson who is -- "a masterly teller of the painful truth"[9] - portrays the moving condition of the black poor children, thus:

> "She was wearing a soiled white dress that was so short it barely covered her loins; there seemed to be nothing at all beneath the dress. She wore no socks, no shoes, no cardigan, no cap or hat. She must have been about ten years old. The boy, who was dressed in a torn khaki shirt and a pair of grey shorts much too large for him, was about Michael's age, about twelve, though he was a little smaller than the white boy. Like the girl, he was barefoot. Their limbs were painfully thin; their wrists and ankles stood out in knobs, and the skin over these protruding bones was rougher than elsewhere. The dirt on their skin showed up as a faint greyness against the black." 10

While many writers have talked about people living in poor and dilapidated houses, Dugmore Boetie in his "Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost" speaks of an urchin who has no house whatsoever to stay. His house, if at all it can be called so, is the bus garage; his bed, if at all it can be called so, is the backseat of the last bus. This is revealed to the readers through the police interrogation of the boy:

> "Where do you stay, boy?'
> 'Sophiatown, baas.'
> 'What street, boy?'
> 'Good street, baas.'
> 'What number?'
> 'No number, baas."

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9. Adrian Mitchel, Review of Begger my Neighbour in New Statesman, Quoted in Dan Jacobson, n.3, dust cover.

10. Dan Jacobson, n.3, p.58.

> ' Why?'
> 'It not a house, is a bus garage,baas.'
> ' You mean 'You sleep in bus depot?'
> ' Yes baas, On the back seat of the last bus."[11]

These details apart, the total atmosphere of poverty has been effectively described by the various writers. The pathetic situation is reflected not only through the external features of the material envrionment but is also reinforced through the physiognomic study of the characters. Thus,in Alex La Guma's A Walk in the Night :

> " Joe was short and his face had an ageless quality about it under the grime, like something valuable forgotten in a junk shop. He had the soft brown eyes of a dog, and the smelled of a mixture of sweat, slept - in clothes and seaweed...."[12]

And as the description of Franky Lorenzo goes :

> " In a room down the corridor Franky Lorenze lay lay on his back on the iron bedstead and stared at the ceiling. The ceiling had been painted white once, a very long time ago, but now it was grey and the paint was cracked and peeling and fly-spotted over the grey.
>
> The boards had warped and contracted so that there were dark gaps between them through which dust filtered down into the room whenever anything moved on the roof of the building. There were small cobwebs in the corners of the room, too, against the cornice. But he did not see these things now, because he was tired and irritable and happy and worried, all at the same time.
>
> He wore a singlet and a pair of old corduroys and the singlet was dark with sweat and dust and the corduroys shiny with wear, and there was coal dust in the

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11. Dugmore Boetie "Familiarity is the kingdom of the Lost" anthologised in Nadine Gordimer and Leonel Abrahams, eds., South African Writing Today (Harmondsworth, 1967),pp.25-26.

12. Alex La Guma, A Walk in the Night included in A Walk in the Night and other Stories (London, 1974), p.9

> grooves where the furry cotton had not been worn away. He had an air of harassment about him, of too hard work and unpaid bills and sour babies... The lines in his face, around the mobile mouth and under the dark, deep-socketed, eyes were full of old coal dust which he had never succeeded in washing away... His hands, clasped behind his head now, were hard and horny and calloused from wielding a shovel, and there was a faint odour of stale sweat and tobacco about him".[13]

The description of his wife Grace is no less heartrending:

> "... her body had become worn and thickened with regular child birth. Her face had the boniness and grandeur of an ascetic saint, and her eyes were dark wells of sadness mixed with joy".[14]

Due to extreme poverty life itself becomes burdensome and brings bitterness in the family. The knowledge that there is no shelter, clothing and money to feed his four children makes Lorenzo angry when his wife says she has conceived again. His attitude gets brutalized and he hurts her. She sobs. Later analysing his feelings he finds that his anger has its roots in himself being over-worked and tired. The material conditions of his life complicate his attitude and brings in tension, and as Alex comments :

> " He had hurt her, he felt, ... He was tired, he thought. That made him angry. He was a steve-dore and worked like hell in the docks and he felt angry with himself, too, now".[15]

Poverty of the Blacks is related directly to the avenues for economic advancement that are open to them.

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13. Ibid., p.35.

14. Ibid., p.36.

15. Ibid., p.37.

The Black worker in South Africa is mostly an unskilled labourer working in mines and other industries in the urban areas; in the rural areas he works on the farms owned mostly by white men. The black workers in both the areas areas suffer mainly from the following adverse conditions of employment:

(a) Unchallenged, arbitary power of the White employers to dismiss the workers at their will and pleasure. The labour officers can issue and terminate working permits for Africans.[16] This makes their jobs less secure and places the workers at the mercy of the white man.

(b) Denial of promotion chances to Africans beyond a certain level above which all supervisory posts are reserved for the whites only.[17] In-service and other forms of training are totally blocked except in marginal areas where whites economy finds it expedient.[18] Even if allowed to work on semi-skilled jobs the Africans are treated as unsilled employees and paid lesser emoluments than their white counterparts which amounts to gross discrimination.

(c) Use of repressionary forces to curb any strike that might be organised by blacks or on inter-racial basis,[19] or are

16. Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945.
17. Mines and Works Amendment Act (Colour Bar Act) of 1927.
18. Apprenticeship Act No.37 of 1944.
19. Industrial Concilliation Act of 1956.-prohibits "mixed" trade unions.

denial of right for redressal of grievances through collective action ie. trade unions.[20]

(d) Harsh working conditions and lack of medical and other facilities.

(e) Extracting enforced labour for petty offences committed against unjust laws.

The South African writers who are aware of these discriminations have dealt with all the problems very perceptively in their works. Alex La Guma, for instance, in his novelette A Walk in the Night shows vividly an instance where the white employer, because of the apartheid system, has unchallenged powers to dismiss his non-white employee for no great derilliction of duty than taking a few minutes off duty hours to use toilet. Michael Adonis, who has been dismissed from the job meets his friend Willieboy at a Portuguese restaurant,

"They were not very close friends", comments the writer, "but had been thrown together in the whirlpool world of poverty, petty crime and violence."[21] The conversation that follows helps to understand the position of South African worker and his bitter feeling on receiving the arbitary

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20. Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act No.48 of 1953.

21. Alex La Guma, n.12, p.4.

inhuman treatment.

> " 'Nice, boy, nice... How goes it with you?
> 'Strolling again. Got pushed out of my job
> at the facktry."
> 'How come then?'
> 'Answered back to a effing white rooker.
> 'These whites. What happened?'
> That white bastard ... Everytime a man goes to
> pisshouse he starts meaning. Jesus Christ, the
> way he went on you'd think a man had to wet his
> pants rather than take a minute off. Well,he
> picked on me for going for a leak and I told him
> to go to hell.'
> 'Working for whites. Happens all the time,man'.
> .....
> 'Well, a juba's got to live. Called me a cheeky
> black bastard. Me, I'am not black. Anyway I
> said he was a no-good-pore-white and he calls
> the manager and they gave me my pay and tell me
> to muck about it. White sonofabitch.I'll get him".[22]
> *of out of*

Another typical situation is presented in Modikwe Dikobe's The Marabi Dance where a black worker who has worked for almost a lifetime is summarily dismissed for no greater mistake of staying back at home for a week — that too on the medical advice from a white doctor. Mabongo has been working at the Rooiveldt Dairies, right from the age of fifteen. He becomes later an induna (overseer) to the African staff of the dairy. He gets sick and goes to a white doctor who advises him to take rest for a week. "I will give you a letter to say you were not able to work".[23] After a week Mabongo goes to work and his employee, Tereplasky,

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22. Alex La Guma, n.12, p.34.
23. Modikwe Dikobe, The Marabi Dance (London, 1973), p.48.

Junior, wants to sack him. After reading the doctor's note he says " 'I have seen too many of these. Give me your pass' "

'Bass', Mabongo remonstrated, 'I worked for your father for a very long time. I took you to school every morning and sold milk in the streets afterwards. Sometimes I went without pay for weeks. You asked the old baas to transfer Me from Pretoria and I taught you the business. You are rich now but I am still poor. You buy a new motor car every year and I still have to go on a bicycle... I made you rich and you push me out of your dairy like rubbish."[24]

The writers have also presented the problem of Africans being denied the chances for promotion because of the job reservation policy of the apartheid regime. The policy declares that all supervisory jobs are meant for whites only regardless of their ability and integrity. In Alex La Guma's In the Fog of the Season's End Beukes' friend, the taxi-driver bursts out, "I don't know what this---ing country is coming to.... My goose, she work already in this fa¢ktry twelve years, now she tell me she must give up her place as supervisor of the conveyor belt to some white bitch to take over. You got to have a white person tell you to do this and do that."[25] Similar situation is depicted by

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24. Ibid., p.49
25. Alex La Guma, In the Fog of the Seasons' End (London, 1972), p.25.

Ezekiel Mphahlelé also in his short story grieg on a stolen piano where the uncle of the narrator is denied further promotion because it is only a white man who can be in a supervisory post. "Years later, Uncle was promoted to the post of junior inspector of African schools (the white man being always senior)."[26] When Whitey in La Guma's A Matter of Taste is helped onto a passing train the railway line itself becomes a symbol. "It is a symbol of escape, of progress, of movement to a better situation, open to whites but not to those whose sweat built it."[27]

Under the repressionary apartheid regime no outlet is provided for the redressal of grievances of the African workers through organised and institutional channels. They are denied trade union rights. This apart, informers and are used to break up any non-conformist labour organisation. Blatant use of police and other repressionary forces is often resorted to beat up the stricking African workers. This apart, the regime is adopting a very subtle policy of divide and rule to divide the working class on racial basis. The white labourers are not only allowed to form the unions but also are given various privileges over their black counterparts in an attempt to create a white aristocracy of labour

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26. Ezekiel Mphahlele, "grieg on a stolen piano" included in in corner b (Nairobi, 1972), p.42.

27. Adrian Roscoe, Uhuru's Fire (Cambridge, 1977), p.245.

pampered and greased to such an extent that it would not be willing to forgo its own previleges by demanding an equal status for the blacks. As Berghe comments, "The white worker is in such a pampered, protected and previleged position as to make his class status, in the Marxian sense of relationship to the means of production, nearly irrelevant."[28] The writers have dealt with these problems with due attention in various creative works.

Modikwe Dikobe's hero George, in The Marabi Dance writes a letter to his wife Martha which relates the happenings at the bus company in Durban where he was working.

"He related how the Bus Company had wanted to use him as an informer on other workers. That he would rather walk the streets without work than sell his own people.

' Our men have formed a trade union and have made some demands to the Company for more money and shorter working hours. The Company is dead scared to meet the workers' representatives, so they want to use some of us to say who are the leaders.' " [29]

Among the workers, the working conditions of the mine workers are the worst. The incidence of T.B. is the highest

28. P.L. Van den Berghe, Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective (Wiley, 1967); Excerpt published as "Race and Racism in South Africa" in Andre Beteille, ed, Social Inequality (Harmondsworth, 1969); Quoted from 1972 reprint, p.330.

29. Modikwe Dikobe, n.23, p.114.

among the mine workers. Many of them are drawn from the Bantustans and nereby dependent countries, and are forced to live in bachelor hostels. Conditions of these workers have been the source for many of the incidents and plots depicted by the South African writers. Poet Mafika Mbuli records the feelings of one such miner.

"..... .....
Day and night are one,
But I know each day dawns
And the heated sun licks every shrub dry
While we who burrow the earth
Tame the dust with our lungs.
.....
.....
With weariness
We mine
All our lives
Till the mind is numb
And ceases to ask....."[30]

Before his mind 'ceases to ask' Poet Vilakazi questions the whites :

Just because I smile and smile
And happiness is my coat
And my song tuneful and strong
Though you send me down below
Into unbelievable regions
Of the blue rocks of the earth-
You think then I'm a gatepost
Numb to the stab of pain.[31]

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30. Mafika Mbuli, The Miners, anthologised in Robert Royston, n.1, p.70.

31. Vilakazi, Because, quoted in Adrian Roscoe, n.27, p.154 (Emphasis Added).

As he finds no response from the brutalized whites he thinks it better to ask for the sympathy of the iron machines rather than the whites whose heart is stony :-

> "Not so loud there, you machines;
> Though whiteman may be without pity
> Must you too, made of iron, treat me thus?"[32]

As Adrian Roscoe aptly comments, "This is not merely an African poet investing machinery with an organic life and capacity for response. The 'dialogue's' implications go deeper, suggesting that you might as well plead with machines as with the whites; that the whites now resemble the machines they have invented; that their civilization is steely cold and hard."[33]

Vilakazi sees that machines are also instruments at the mercy of the whites — just as the workers are. He finds comradship with these lifeless cogs and says

> "For these men, your brothers, they must too
> Caught and held fast by the mines.
> Their lungs crumble away diseased
> They cough, they sink down and they die."[34]

More than the physical adverse conditions of work, what affects the blacks is that the wealth they dig out is denied to them. They are alienated as the fruits of their labour is snatched away by the white regime under the

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32. Vilakazi, On the Gold Mines, Quoted in Adrian Roscoe, n.27, p.156.
33. Adrian Roscoe, n.27, pp.155-56.
34. Vilakazi, n.32.

threat of Sten guns and FN Rifles. An awareness of this exploitation on the part of the workers is shown by many characters in South African literary works. As Alan Paton's Stephen Kumalo (a black) points out to his brother John Kumalo:

> "Go to our hospital and see our people lying on the floors ... But it is they who dig the gold. For three shillings a day .... We live in the compounds, we must leave our wives and families behind. And when the new gold is found, it is not we who will get more for our labour. It is the white man's shares that will rise, you will read it in all the papers. They go mad when new gold is found. They bring more of us to live in the compounds, to dig under the ground for three shillings a day. They do not think, here is a chance to pay more for our labour. They think only, here is a chance to build a bigger house and buy a bigger car. It is important to find gold, they say, for all South Africa is built on the mines ....
>
> "But it is not built on the mines, it is built on our backs, on our sweat, on our labour. Every factory, every theatre, every beautiful house, they are all built by us." 35

Vilakazi also points out the same facts of discrimination and exploitation. Revealing his <u>persona's</u> experience, he says :

> "Wealth and the wealthy whom I made rich,
> Climbing to the rooms of plenty, while I stay
> Squeezed of juice like flesh of a dead ox". 36

Echoing the same feeling, Mazisi Kunene, the Zulu Poet says:

> "Wealth piles on the mountains.
> But where are the people?
> We stand by watching the parades
> Walking the deserted halls ..." 37

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35. Alan Paton, <u>Cry, The Beloved Country</u> (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 34-35.

36. Vilakazi, n.32, p. 157.

37. Mazisi Kunene, Quoted in Roscoe, n.27, p. 157.

Peter Abrahams goes a step beyond mere portrayal of workers' lives. He projects a vision and a meaning of progress which involves the exposition of the divisionary tactics used by the various vested interests to split the upsurge of the oppressed. His novel Mine Boy depicts the various facets of the miner's' lives and underlines the need on the part of the workers to unite to fight on a class basis rather than on colour basis. Eventhough Peter Abrahams is not one who claims to be or recognised as a Marxist writer he suggests such a course of action for the colour-divided workers of South Africa. Such a perspective is revealed through the close association that develops between Zuma[38] and Paddy, the 'Red One'. Paddy argues with Xuma and convinces that one should first think as a man and only later as a black man or a white man and that human life is more important than its colour. After the mine accident due to improper maintainenance -- which claimed the lives of two workers - the workers refuse to enter the mine unless the beams are fixed up. When the manager orders them to enter the mine Xuma cries out "Let them fix it up up first then we will go down!"... We are men! It does not matter if our skins are black! We are not cattle to throw away our lives! We are men!"[39] When Paddy takes sides with the striking blacks

38. When Xuma is referred to by Paddy his name is spelled as Zuma by the writer.

39. Peter Abrahams, Mine Boy (London, 1946), 1971 reprint, p.247.

he is exported not to do so to 'show these kaffirs where they belong'. But Paddy walks over to Xuma and takes his hand says "I am a man first Zuma ".[40] He then turns to the mine boys "Zuma is right! They pay you a little! They don't care if you risk your lives! Why is it so? Is not the blood of a black man red like that of a white man? Does not a black man feel too? Does not a black man love life too? I am with you! Let them fix up the place first!".[41] As Paddy is being arrested, Xuma runs to meet his beloved Maisy and then tells her, "The Red One's in Jail. I must go there too. It would be wrong if I do not go. I would not be a man then."[42] As Michael Wade, a critic, points out this novel "Contends that the problems of white workers are fundamentally similar (to that of black workers). The two groups share a common interest; when they recognize this and act together they will overcome their problems.... (and shows) the necessity and effectiveness of concerted action and solidarity between all oppressed people in the face of the oppressor."[43]

The conditions of labour in the agricultural farms is also inhuman and cruel. Ezekiel Mphahlele and Lewis Nkosi have very perceptively dealt with the problem in their literary

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40. Ibid., p.248.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p.250.
43. Michael Wade, Peter Abrahams (London, 1972), pp.27-32.

works. Mphahlele's novel The Wanderers deals with a situation where the magazine Bongo has run three successive stories about the Goshen Potato farms 'where the whites worked blacks to the bone.' Youths who were arrested for not being in the possession of identity pass-books were being transported in truckloads to Goshen and Betheseda farms to work out their sentences digging out potatoes or harvesting maize. Mphahlele adopts the stylistic device of alternate projection and juxtaposed emphasis. The governmental defence of the scheme- given in italics- is juxtaposed with narrations of the victims how they have been arrested and sent to the farms for enforced labour. The official statements serve as a constant reminder of the domineering State apparatus that pursuses, interrupts and puts an end to the revelations. The last passage in this alternating narrations is that of the governmental statement. Yet, Mphahlele does not want to totally agree with the sense of futility of the attempt Timi expresses to Diliza in the same novel - "As you always say. Diliza, and rightly so, as long as the system is rotten, our exposures are of no practical value."[44] So the interposing regime's statements are chosen in a way to show a slight shift from unemotional bureaucratic phraseology to a tacit acceptance by a judge about the illegalities

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44. Ezekiel Mphahlele, The Wanderers (New York, 1971), Quoted from Macmillan-London-edn., p.17.

committed under the scheme. Here are a few excerpts :

> "The scheme is to avoid cluttering the jails with petty offenders. The scheme is for the good of the natives. It is made plain to the men that this is voluntary"...45

> "We handed the men over the Local Commissioner. If there was any irregularity in the contract, his office was to blame....

> "If there is any illegality, it is not by us, but by the police" 46

> "While farm labour is generally unpopular, the Ministry has ample evidence that on many farms conditions are very satisfactory and that on these, labour is normally sufficient and reasonably efficient. When abnormal circumstances arise, the farms on which conditions are satisfactory suffer because of the general unpopularity of farm labour, particularly when distant areas are the sources of supply." 47

> "It is the main function of the regional and district labour bureaux controller by the Ministry to meet the labour requirements of rural employers and especially farmers. Not a single native is working as a farm labour in lieu of prosecution for minor offences. True enough, this scheme begun twelve years ago, but it was never gazetted by the government. We are dealing with ignorant, illeterate people who sell their labour to farmers without knowing what a contract is all about. There are bound, therefore, to be cases like these where the farmers and the police and the Ministry are being charged with nothing less than forced labour. Political agitators, especially the Communists and the English - language press, are busy stirring up trouble among these ignorant and innocent natives...48

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45. Ibid., p.18.
46. Ibid., p.19.
47. Ibid., p.20.
48. Ibid., p.21.

"I am satisfied that this man was employed by the Springfield municipality as a street sweeper; that he was working when the police picked him up. He showed them his badge and the identification number on it. It is true he had left his pass at home, but the police could have done what he asked them to do - check with the office that employed him. They must have been sure he was a municipal worker. He should/have been /not sent to the farms. I suspect that money must be passing from one hand to another in this racket. And as judge of this court, I must reprimand the police very strongly for this kind of conduct. It is happening too often and I am going to write a letter about it to the Minister of Law and Order. Tell this man he is free to return to his family now."[49]

The writer's comments :

"And so the voices of the mighty kept intervening. Some of the shanghaied boys and men did not come back soon, others never come back. The caravan of fire rolled on relentlessly, like a malignant catastrophe, a grendel on the prowl among sleepers..."[50]

Lewis Nkosi excels in his description of the inhuman condition of the black workers on the farms. The description in Potgieter's Castle, a short story, touches poetic effectiveness in portraying the picture of the "brutal atmosphere of arid, intensitive violence and despair which seemed to encompass everything - a form of chaos, of disaster, which connected the brutality of the mind to that of the land".[51]

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49. Ibid., p.22.

50. Ibid.

51. Lewis Nkosi, Potgieter's Castle, anthologised in Herbert L. Shore and Megchelina Shore-Bos eds., Come Back, Africa! Fourteen Short stories from South Africa (New York, 1968) p.135.

The description goes as follows :

> "The workers wore almost no clothes except rough sacking in which neck and sleeve opening had been made by cutting the sack roughly with shears. Sometimes, a white farmer stood among the labourers, shouting incessantly what they could not hear because of the noise of the truck; sometimes they saw only black guards carrying sjamboks or kerries in their hands driving the men like beasts of burden in front of them. Something elemental, not exactly horror, but something more bizzare, like the awakening of a vast deafening turmoil within the depts of a cavernous hell, a kind of shrieking nightmare, seemed to surround these plantations and the silent out-of-the-way farms with their slaves and shouting overseers."52

The white farmer's speech to the labourers huddled into a jail-like room depicits the near - slavery condition of the workers :

> "From now on you're on baas Potgieter's farm ... At four O' clock in the morning you will hear a bell ring. I want all of you to come out of here sharp and shoot... And I want [to queue up for [you harvesting sacks".53 He then shifts his tone into a light scarcastic vein and with a fiendish chackle says "Prove your mettle as the brave sons of Chaka and Moshoeshoe. It's a fine opportunity, for you. Sun comes out shining like a piece of diamond and the mealie stalks stretch on endlessly in front of you like the armies of old. And you fine warriors of Chaka and Moshoeshoe will fall onto them with hand and sickel. I tell you, it's a fine opporunity".54

As Potgieter finds no laughter from the labourers, he shouts :

> ".... You're right not to laugh, it's not funny at all. In fact, I don't mind telling you, it's hell! It's purgatory. Sun out there burns like copper, the air stands still, but you — you won't be able to stand still for one moment. Not one blessed moment!

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52. Ibid., p.135.
53. Ibid., p.139.
54. Ibid., pp.139-140.

> You'll just have to keep on moving. You know why? ... because Jack and me -- Jack is the other guard -- will be behind you with kerries and iron prodders to give you encouragement ... "The sjamboks I told you about - these cowstrape which are dipped into salted water when not in use have a way of biting the skin off. Anyway you don't need me to tell you about that ... Your average wage here will be three pounds a month ... and lots of fresh air!" 55

Any study of economic discrimination of non-whites will not be complete without a study of 'Bantustans' or 'Reserves' or 'Black States'. They are supposed to be the 'homelands' of the blacks in which alone they are entitled to political, social and economic "rights". But the fact is that these are economically non-viable, politically deceptive and socially discriminating units which are intended to place the blackmen totally at the mercy of whites in terms of employment, freedom of movement, wages and service conditions. The 'Black States' constiture disconnected fragments of land totalling to 13 per cent of the area of the country. The land is dry, overgrazed, unirrigated and impoverished. Even with the most fertile imagination one cannot deem that they would satisfy the minimal needs of the 76 per cent of the population (Blacks), they are supposed to cater to. There are no mineral deposits or industries in the area. Thus, the overall result is that poverty is endemic and as Peter Abrahams says, "As I saw how the blacks lived in the

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55. Ibid., p.140.

Reserves, it seemed to me that one did not have to go to hell. This was hell.[56]

The South African writers depicted the lives of the people of the reserve in many of their works. The problems dealt with in the depictions are the paucity of land, the general poverty and dependence on the white economy for the survival and lack of black political awareness. In Ezekiel Mphahlele's the living and the dead, Jackson, the black servant in Stoffel's houses receives a letter from his father running :

"Would Jackson come soon because the government people were telling him to get rid of some his cattle to save the land from washing away ... He had only the strength to tell the government people that it was more land the people wanted and not fewer stock ... But alas, he said, he had only enough strength to swear by the gods his stock wouldn't be thinned down".[57]

Elias and his mother in The Fog of the Season's End "lived on the anaemic ears of corn which the land yielded, on a sineway chicken now and then on the remains of meals

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56. Peter Abrahams, Return Goli, Quoted in Christopher Heywood, "The Novels of Peter Abrahams", in Christopher Heywood, ed., Perspectives on African Literature (London, 1971), p.164.

57. Ezekiel Mphalele, the living and the dead, included in In Corner b (Nairobi, 1972), p.92.

begged in the town, and on the kindness of the village community".[58] T.W. Gwala in his short story "The Thing" comments "Unemployment was a disease gnawing away into the lives of the people"[59] Ma-Ndlovu and Violet, the two women leaders in the story who take a petition to the Native Commissioner about their grievances face only police tear-gas and cane charge. Violet returned "with half a page of twelve-page petition. It was covered with blood. One word stood out as Violet looked at it ... Poverty ..."[60] This one word that stood out glaringly amidst the blood-stained page connotes the gravest problems of the reserves. Here the writer very symbolically hints that this poverty is sustained by and surrounded by blood which represents the crude and brazen violence of the apartheidist regime.

Irony and subtle understatement make Basil Somblaho's poem "Naked They come" one of the most appealing portrayals of the lives of the blacks. These stylistic devices help in bringing home to reader the reality of the discriminated poverty-stricken blacks :

> "I have seen them come,
> At break-neck speed,
> Beheading wild flowers,
> With kicks from serrated edges,
> Of naked black feet,
> As naked they come.

58. Alex La Guma, n.25, p.79.

59. T.H. Gwala, The Thing, anthalogized in Herbert L. Shore and M. Shore-Fos, eds., n.51, p.76.

60. Ibid., p.81.

Pot-bellied, bow-legged,
They jump as they come,
A scourge on my conscience
For poverty is their blanket,
Bought from one common shop,
The shop of inheritance.
Naked they Come,
With complete abandon,
All sizes all ages,
They stand and they gaze,
What a sight!
A tourist attraction.
Their lives insured,
Yes, unquestionably safe,
For soon they will join,
To work on the mines,
To work on the farms,
And soon more will come,
For naked they come,
..... ,61
.....

The South African writers have, thus, depicted the various aspects of economic discrimination with great detail and telling effect. Their portrayal of the situation in the country helps the reader to understand the reality in a better way than what the cold statistics or moot economic jargon might reveal. The re-creation of the situation in artistic mode allows the writer the poetic licence to go beyond the physical details and to transcend the demand for one-to-one correspondence. In short, it helps one to view things with a greater insight that penetrates the surface and shows the reader what lies behind the glamour and glaze of the regime's propaganda of its 'economic stability' and the highest per capital income in Africa'.

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61. Basil Somhlahlo, Naked They Come, anthologised in Robert Royston, ed., n.1, p.91.

"The South African writer is in a very special position with Britain, the United States, Germany, Japan and other countries pouring money and industrial schemes into the country, it takes a strong voice and a skilful hand to unravel the gorgeous South African travel brouchure, shout at the faces of the Great Powers and touch the brutalised nerves beneath it."[62] After hearing the 'strong voice' and seeing the 'skilful hand' of the writers revealing the economic aspects of discrimination, the political, and socio-cultural aspects too need be understood; for these three are related and inter-connected aspects of the same phenomenon - RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

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62. Paul Theroux, "A Study of Six African Poets : Voices from the Skull", Anthologised in Ulli Beier, ed., Introduction to African Literature (London, 1967), p.111.

CHAPTER III

ASPECTS OF POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

ASPECTS OF POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

South Africa's political system violates the very basis of governmental authority as advocated in the Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human ~~Declaration~~ Rights (UDHR). While the UDHR says "the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of the government...", the South African polity is based on racially elected all-white Parliament which is the supreme law-making authority for all people i.e., the whites and the non-whites. The blacks, the coloureds and the Indians constitute about eighty one percent of the population, but they have no political right or any representation in the National Assembly. Local political institutions created under the apartheid policy for non-whites areas are deceptive and are puppet institutions without any real power of their own. The jurisdiction of these nominated-cum-elected institutions (Bantustan) Assemblies of the Blacks, Coloured Persons' Representative Council for Coloureds and the Indian Council for Indians) is limited to marginal areas and they cannot introduce new acts without the approval of the white government. Blatant governmental interference in the constitution and functioning of these bodies makes them totally dependent institutions. Thus, in South Africa there are two sets of governmental bodies —— one dominant and all-powerful exclusively controlled by the white minority existing against the wishes of the majority people; and the other dependent and puppet for

the non-whites set up to deceive the people. It is for this reason the South African regime does not represent the wishes of the majority of the population and thus is illegal.

To continue its illegal rule, the white minority government resorts to police brutality, torture and inhuman conditions in detention rooms and jails. Freedom to orgnize politically either on inter-racial basis or any anti-racist manifesto is meticulously denied and all opposition is mercilessly suppressed to sustain the regime. The writters, being the victims of the political monolith of apartheid, have extensively dealt with these aspects.

The laws in South Africa are enacted by the white parliament in utter disregard of the non-white opinion and are imposed through a repressionary state machinery which includes the police, para-military and the military. In Nelson Mandela's words "The Law as its is applied, the law as it has been developed over a long period of history and especially the law as it is designed by the Nationalist Government is a law which, in our view, is immoral, unjust and intolerable".[1] The discriminatory application of the laws leads to the situation where the worst punishments are being suffered by the blacks and other non-whites. The sweeping powers vested with the police and the Minister for Justice - a misnomer - make the law courts almost subservient organisations. The judiciary is incapable of providing the non-white majority of any security against the illegal or extra-legal excesses committed on them.

1. Nelson Mandela during his self-defence at the Trial for Leadership of the 1961 General Strike(Italics author's)

The two discriminations — lack of political representation and the imposed unjust laws -- constitute an important area of the day-to-day experience of the non-white South Africans. So, the writers dealing with the lives of these discriminated people record, naturally, the anger and frustration that is boiling within the people. Incidents depicting such feelings are found in many of the South African creative works. In Alexa La Guma's In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Beukes, an underground activist is shot in a police raid. He goes to a black doctor to get the bullet surgically removed. And the conversation goes:

> "Mister Beukes, I can tell a gunshot wound, even a flesh wound .... The police?'
> Beukes nodded.
> The doctor said, '... Well, the law says I should report suspicious wounds and so on.'
> 'Will you obey the law?'
> .....
> 'The doctor looked ... at Beukes 'If the community is given the opportunity of participating in making the law, then they have a moral obligation to obey it ... But if the law is made for them, without their consent or participation, then it's a different matter..... However, even under the circumstances prevailing in our country, I must ask myself, what does this law or that law defend, even if I did not help to make it. If the law punishes a crime, murder, rape, then I could bring myself to assist it .... But if the law defends injustice, then I am under no obligation to uphold it. They have actually given us an opportunity to pick and choose. Things happen in our country, Mister Beukes. Injustice prevails, and there are people who have nerve enough to defy it. Perhaps I have been waiting for the opportunity to put my penny in the hat as well." 2

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2. Alex La Guma, In the Fog of the Seasons' End (London, 1972), p. 161.

The coloureds are all the more angry in this regard as even the rudimentary forms of political representation which they had earlier has been snatched away[3] from them. Alan Paton's character de Villiers bursts out against this discrimination and injustice when his wife wants their daughter Janie to be introduced and received by the Administrator, a white :

> " You want our girls to be received by the Administrator, do you? Received into what? Into a world where they take away your vote and your house ... Who made him the Administrator? The Government, the same bloody Government that took away our votes and houses... I am sick ... of all this belly-creeping to the same people ~~who~~ *that* take away our rights." 4

The writers have also depicted, through their characters, the discriminatory harshness of law against the non-whites. Michael Adonis, in A Walk in the Night questions, "What's the law for? To kick us poor brown bastards around?"[5] He again questions, "What's the bloody law done for them (the non-whites, especially blacks)? Why, they cannot have a little drink and be found on the street without the law smacking them around?"[6] His question rings in the ears of the readers : Cann't a boy have a bloody piss without getting kicked in the backside by a lot of effing law?"[7]

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4. Alan Paton, "Debbie Go Home" collected in Debbie ofGo Home (Harmondsworth, 1961), pp.11-12.
5. Alex La Guma, A Walk in the Night and other Stories (London, 1967), p.44.
6. Ibid., p.46
7. Ibid., p.4 . He was earlier dismissed from his job for going to toilet during his working hours.

It is only through the 'lot of effing law' that the whites maintain the discrimination. But then the white rule itself is based on the power of the gun and so its law is also sustained and enforced at the point of sten guns and armoured cars. La Guma's character Elias says the same in poignant terms when he is being tortured to reveal the information about the underground : "You are going to torture me, may be kill me. But that is the only way you and your people can rule us. You shoot and kill and torture because you cannot rule in any other way a people who reject you."[8]

Organised State violence being the only means of legitimisation, the police - the instrument of such violence — becomes predominant in South Africa. The police interference in the day-to-day lives of the people is very common."... the cops like fleas in our blankets are always with us"[9] When cops become as common as fleas in the blanket they become an inescapable part of the lives of the people who are held down by them. In the literature that portrays these people, Police becomes a constant motif of brutality and insensitivity to human suffering. As Alex La Guma

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8. Alex La Guma, n.2, p.6.

9. Can Themba, Crepuscule, included in the collection The Will to Die (London, 1972), p.6.

depicts the two policemen coming towards Michael Adonis "... They had hard, frozen faces as if carved out of pink ice, and hard, dispassionate eyes, hard and bright as pieces of blue glass. They strolled slowly and determinedly side by side, without moving off their course, cutting a path through the stream on the pavement like "destroyers at Sea"[10] Further "... these men (police) wore their guns like appendages of their bodies and ... (their) faces had the hard metallic look, and ... (their) hearts and guts were merely valves and wires which operated robots."[11]

The white policeman is usually portrayed in South African literature — which is no doubt true — as a bully, as a racist intolrent even of the slightest opposition to apartheid and as one who is brutalized to the extent that he is incapable of even normal human sympathies. "I will shoot whatever hotnot or kaffir I desire, and see me get into trouble over it"[12] says of the white police-man in La Guma's short story 'The Lemon Orchard'. The stupified conscience of the white policeman Raalt does not bother to catch Willieboy, the supposed criminal in A Walk in the Night without using his trigger-happy fingure. The crowed that witnessed this shoting comments "They just know to

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10. Alex La Guma, n.5, p.11.
11. Alex La Guma, n.5, p.58.
12. Alex La Guma, n.5, p.134.

shoot ... That's all they know, shooting us people."[13] For policemen like Raalt shooting the blacks becomes a sadistic amusement. Lewis Nkosi portrays two such policemen in his play "The Rhythm of Violence". To quote the conversation between them,

Piet : Hey, Janies, you ever shot a Native before?

Jan : Yah, it's a kind-a funny, you know, like shooting wild duck!

Piet : The first time is not easy though!

Jan : Telling me! The first time I shot a Native dead ... His skull was ripped apart by the machine-gun! I stood over him and got sick all over his body!

Piet : Ugh, man! ... You're just a sensitive son-a-fa-bitch! ... I'm not. I'm academic.

Jan : What does that mean?

Piet : Means a bloke who is a realist. No emotions. I can shoot any number of Natives without getting sick. No emotions? I shoot them academically.

Jan : Nice word ... academically.

Piet : I got it from a sergeant down at Marshal Square. He used to say, when you get into a fight with Natives, don't let your feelings run away with you. Be academic. Shoot them down academically." 14

The cruelty of these 'academic' shooters becomes all the more glaring when one sees them behave differently to the black and white offenders of law. These contrasting attitudes are well brought out in Alfred Hutchinson's

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13. Alex La Guma, n. 5, p. 87.

14. Lewis Nkosi, The Rhythm of Violence (London, 1964), pp. 7-8.

Road to Ghana where

> "An Indian woman with a small baby whined and pleaded, tears streaming down her face. The young White policeman who had arrested her shouted and cursed here.
>
> "Shut up! Shut that f ---- curry trap!"
>
> " Kolie-meid, shut your trap! You think this is ~~~~~ India. No more of your shit! No more ! Do you hear me!"
>
> The baby brust into a cry. The policeman wrinkled his face with distaste, revulsion. "That f---- child is just a skelm (crook) like you!"
>
> A drunk white hobo waiting to be charged strayed towards us.
>
> "This way, please, asseblief, meneer," said the youn policeman chaperoning the filthy drunken wretch to one side.
>
> "Please maneer, asseblief, maneer, bass" the woman continued her sing-song. "The baby is still very small. It will die in the cell." 15

Commenting on the portrayal of the average black policeman in the South African literature, Wilfred Cartey, a literary ~~th~~ critic, says, "The black policeman or attendant ... is even more brutal than the whites. In his role, where he attempts to cater to the establishment, he carries out his duties with alacrity and brutish force, with an inhumanity to his own kind ... These men .... are goaded by a sense of inferiority to the white world into a brutal action against their brothers .... "[16] The black policeman in "Ten-to-Ten" also feels: " ... God! See these

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15. Alred Hutchinson, The Road to Ghana (London, 1960), pp. 30 - 31.

16. Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from a Continent (London, 1971), p. 111.

chaps in the location on the beat, they surpass themselves. Damn that Ramokgopa! I felt ashamed the other day when he hit a helpless drunk with a baton until Sergeant Du Toit said, "That's enough, now, Ramokgopa" God, I felt ashamed! The blackman strikes, the whiteman says, "That's enough, now"[17] He is also sick of such policemen who "beat up people needlessly, a few actually seem to enjoy the wanton slap, the unprovoked blow, the unreturnable kick for their own selves."[18] He is sick of the very job," It's a bastard of a job. Funny hours, low pay, strange orders that make no sense, violence, ever violence,and the daily spectacle of degradation of my people."[19] In such an atmosphere of cruelty it is natural for the bewildered victims of racial discrimination to ask "Why do you do this brother? Why do you do this to your own people."[20]Equally it is natural for the sensitive coloured attendant in the 'Banket Alleen, Whites Only' park to scream at the coloured boy 'Get off! Go home' with his "voice harsh, his anger directed at the system that drove him against his own."[21]

The domineering and constant — often irritating — presence of police builds up the atmosphere of violence which is enveloping South Africa. There are many who have felt with Alfred Hutchinson when says "The presence of police

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17. Can Themba, "Ten-to-Ten" included in the collection The Will to Die (London, 1972), p.54.
18. Ibid., p.53.
19. Ibid., p.54
Alex La Guma, And a Threefold Cord (Berlin, 1964), p.136.
James Matthews, The Park, anthologised in Rive, Richard, ed., Quartet : new voices from South Africa (London, '63), p.1

beat upon me"[22] and with the bus passenger in In the Fog who says "Blerry law[23] is everwhere"[24]. Describing the police - infested atmosphere Dennis Brutus asks his love to sleep well: 'for this breathing night atleast':

> "Sleep well, my love, sleep well:
> the harbour lights glaze over restless docks,
> police cars cockroach through the tunnel streets;
>
> from the shanties creaking iron-sheets
> violence like a bug-infested rag is tossed
> and fear is immanent as sound in the wind-
> swung bell;
> the long days' anger pants from sand and rocks;
> but for this breathing night at least,
> my land, my love, sleep well." 25

In yet another poem, somehow we survive, he describes South Africa as a land 'scarred with terror'

> "Somehow we survive
> And tenderness, frustrated, does not wither.
>
> Investigating searchlights rake
> Our naked unprotected contours;
>
> Over our heads the monolithic decalogue
> Of fascist prohibition glowers
> and teeters for a catastrophic fall;
>
> boots club the peeling door.
>
> But somehow we survive
> severance, deprivation, loss.
>
> Patrols uncoil among the asphalt dark
> hissing their menace to our lives,
>
> most cruel, all our land is scarred with terror
> rendered unlovely and unlovable.." 26

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22. Alfred Hutchinson, n. 15, p. 63
23. The word 'law' is commonly used, as in the present case, to refer to the police.
24. Alex La Guma, n. 2, p. 70.
25. Dennis, Brutus, Nightson: City, in his collection Sirens, Knuckles, Boots (Ibadan, 1963), Quoted from his collection A Simple Lust (London, 1973). p. 18.
26. Dennis Brutus, Somehow we survive, Ibid., p. 4.

But Brutus also goes beyond portrayal of the violence and terror in mere abstract general terms. He also shows in his poetry how the general atmosphere of terror in the 'unlovely and unloveable' land is affecting him in personal terms as well. Brutus starts his poem the sounds begin again, in general terms but by the time he reaches the last line the general terror becomes his, and his own. "The Sounds" in the first line of the poem becomes "my sounds" in the last. This transition from the third person adjective to the first person 'my' underlines the fact that the writer in South Africa reacts against the terror not only as a sensible intellectuals but also more as a sensitive individual who also bears the brunt of the discrimination.

"The sounds begin again;
the siren in the night
the thunder at the door
the shriek of nerves in pain.

Then the keening crescendo
of faces split by pain
the wordless, endless wail
Only the unfree know.

Importunate as rain
the wraiths exhale their woe
over the sirens, knuckles, boots;
my sounds begin again."27

And a mother, in her incapacity and helplessness to face 'the sounds', 'the sirens in the night' and the 'thunder at the door' absolves herself of the responsibility of

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27. Dennis Brutus, The Sounds begin again, n.25 Ibid., p.19.

protecting her child. In sheer desperation she says :

> " It is not my fault
> .....
> that you did not experience pain
> pleasure voluptuousness and salt
> in the wound
> that your head did not stop
> a police truncheon
> that you are not a permanent resident
> of a prison island.[28] "[29]

South Africa, "is a land that lives constantly on the edge of violence. It is a schizophrenic land".[30] Alex La Guma's depiction of this land of violence in his novel, In the Fog is probably the most symbolic presentation of what South Africa really is. The symbol he presents is a wall-sign which read "You Are Now Entering The Police State"[31] These were "bleeding words on a blank wall facing the harbour, and sandblasting could not obliterate the outlines of the heavy letters."[32] So also South Africa really is a police state and the words that mutely pronounce this are "bleeding" and "heavy". 'Blood' here symbolizes violence and "heavy" symbolizes suffering-physical and psychological - of the victims of the violence. Any amount of "sandblasting" or propanganda could not hide the "heavy" words, for these words are still bleeding and still extracting their huge toll. This

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28. Allusion to Robben Island
29. Mandlenkosi Langa, Mother's Ode to a Stillborn Child, anthologised in Robert Royston, ed., Black Poets in South Africa (London, 1973), p.31.
30. Herbert L. Shore in his introduction to H.L. Shore and M.S. Bos, eds., Come Back Africa (New York, 1968), p.16.
31. Alex La Guma, n.2, p.24. 32. Ibid.

sign represents in symbolic terms the violence, bloodshed and human suffering that South Africa extracts to maintain a rule based on racial discrimination.

In the atmosphere of discrimination and police barbarity the political prisoner in South Africa, as Ruth First comments, "is the most abused victim of an order that nurses a callous contempt for human suffering."[33(a)] The land itself is a vast and terrifying prison where helpless people cry all the time. The conditions of South African prisons are appaling : forced confessions and cruel tortures to extract information from political activists make the situation even worse. The interrogation rooms and police lock-ups which represent a new dimension of terror different from the glaring batoning, hose pipe beating, tear gas and bullets. As Alex in a third person narrative comments on the impending fate of Elias, his character in In the Fog, when he is being led to a torture room :

> " Behind the ugly mask of the regime was an even uglier face which he had not yet looked on. You went through the police charges in the squares, the flailing clubs, the arrogant rejection of all pleas and petitions, blood dried on the street like spilled paint where a shot body had lain, but here, behind the polished windows, the gratings and the government paint work, was another dimension of terror"[33(b)]

As La Guma describes the various indignities and cruelties

33(a). Ruth First in her foreword to Nelson Mandela No Easy Walk to Freedom (London, 1965), p.vii.

33(b). Alex La Guma, n.2, p.3.

inflicted upon Elias in the course of torture:

"The young one (a policeman) and the sportsman (another policeman in sports clothes) dragged him (Elias) to his feet again and rushed him out, giving him little chance to walk. They hustled him along the corridor. A uniformed man opened the door at the top of the steps to a basement room. The two security men let the prisoner go and the young man kicked him so that he rolled over and over down the stone steps, crying out, the handcuffs preventing him from breaking his fall.

He lay groaning at the bottom of the steps. 'Man', the sportsman said to his companion, 'we don't want to kill him yet.' He unzipped his fly and urinated off the steps into the prisoner's face. 'That must wake him up, ja'. The prisoner, dripping, convulsed and retched, unable to hold back his stomach.

The two came down the steps, the sportsman doing up his trousers, and then hauled the chocking prisoner up again. One got out another pair of handcuffs and snapped one end to the pair already holding his wrists. They thrust him, retching, over to a staple in the wall and clicked the other end of the manacles to it. Manacled to the staple, by his wrists, his arms aloft, the prisoner chocked and heaved. He was experiencing an awful sensation of asphyxiation and horrifying doom. Far away, he was suddenly a child again and he had fallen into the dam and was drowning, smelly water filling his nose, while his companions ran up and down the bank in terror.

The two detectives removed their jackets and the sportsman hit him in the stomach and then began to batter him mercilessly with his fists. It was like working at a bag in a gymnasium. When one was tired, the other took over. The prisoner fought for breath and struggled to avoid the blows. He could smell his own vomit and the detective's

> urine on his clothes. Strength drained from his body like water from a burst bottle. The young one drew his revolver and struck at the prisoner's writhing shins with the barrel. Pain sprang through his legs with the slab of shining-knives. His legs went numb and he hung by the manacles while young man smacked him with the pistol barrel. He cried out in pain - pain from his legs, from his battered body, from the manacled [wrists] by which he dangled. 34

Apart from Alex La Guma, the imaginative presentation of torture in prisons and interrogation rooms is attempted by various writers. At some places the torture is overtly hinted at and in some even the minute details are put on the canvas for the reader to see. A writer like D.M. Zwelonke who claims to put down his personal experiences at the Robben Island 'as a work of fiction', takes the later method of details in his depiction of the torture-cum-murder of Bekimpi, an underground leader. To quote Zwelonke,

> "Bikimpi was hanging by the legs, head downward. He had been hung there by Van der Merwe and his special branch men ... in one of the private officers. There he was hanging, naked.
>
> The inspector came into the torture room ... 'Are you still obstinate?" His voice was raw and savage.
>
> The insepctor walked near and nudged his prisoner's head with one knee. I say, are you still being a bloody big fool?' He playfully slapped Bekimpi's sagging bullocks.
>
> 'But what do you want from me? You haven't told me'. Bekimpi's voice was hoarse and painful.

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34. Alex La Guma, n.2, p. 6-7.

You 'will hang here for another two days, or until you die, I tell you'.

Bekimpi tried to follow the eyes of the insepctor, but he couldn't. All he could see properly was the roof and the thin rope which supported his body in extreme tension. His eyes were ~~xx~~ weary of rolling upward to look at the floor. And his neck had strained to breaking point by bending backwards. The floor was two feet below his head.

'I said you are going to play it my way. You are going to work for me.' The inspector said, with a grim smile on his lips.

But that's meaningless. What do you want me to do? cried Bekimpi in pain, a twitching backache cutting across his spinal cord. The inspector brushed the prisoner's shrunken stomach. The stomach had been off duty for three days and three nights. The bowels fell down into the chest. The lungs felt that weight and t their own weight crushed on the throat. The windpipe was air-locked. Air struggled in and out in hard, panting respiration.

The smile widened on the inspector's lips : 'Many things, of course. Like telling me where is the headquarters of the underground.'

'But you know that. It is in Maseru. You raided that place'. Bekimpi whispered.

'Yes, I know that, It was an office in public, not underground, inside the Republic. You know all these things.' Bekimpi could do nothing,

for nothing of the kind existed. His tongue hung out in despair.

That evening, Du Plessis and two others came to have fun with the hanging man. They let him swing like a hunk of meat in a butchery.

No, here's better fun; cut the rope with this knife, and let him come down headlong to crash on the floor,' Du Plessis said, and tested the rope with a pocket-knife.

One of them played with Bekimpi's testicles. 'By God, this bastard has a big penis', he shouted merrily, 'Just like a monkey's.

Another one slapped Bekimpi's buttocks. Then he took a ball-point pen and pushed it slowly down the helpless man's anus. The muscles there shrank inward like a snail into its shell. Bekimpi moaned.

The one playing with the testicles squeezed harder. Bekimpi emitted a long, painful moan. Mucus and saliva came out of his nostrils and mouth and oiled the floor." 35

Dennis Brutus, who had also been a prisoner in the Robben Island, speaks of the 'hammering brutal atmosphere' of the South African prisons in his poetry. His collection Letters to Martha consists entirely of poems written from the prison. Speaking about the abnormalities and the horrors of the prison in South

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35. D.M. Zwelonke, Robben Island (London, 1973), pp. 144-145.

Africa, he says :

> " In the greyness of isolated time
> which shafts down into the echoing mind,
> wraiths appear, and whispers of horrors
> that people the labyrinth of self.
> Coprophilism; necrophilism; fellatio;
> penis - amputation;
> and in this gibbering society
> hooling for recognition as one's other
> selves
> suicide; self-damnation, walks
> if not a companionable ghost
> then a familiar familiar,
> a doppelgänger
> not to be shaken off."[36]

And in another poem 'letter' he says :

> " Perhaps most terrible are those who
> beg for it,
> who beg for sexual assault.
> To what desparate limits are they driven
> and what fierce agonies they have endured
> that this, which they have resisted,
> should seem to them preferable,
> even desirable.
>
> It is regarded as the depths
> of absolute and ludicrous submission.
> And so perhaps it is.
>
> But it has seemed to me
> one of the most terrible
> most rendingly pathetic
> of all a prisoner's predicaments."[37]

It is the world of 'senseless brutality' that the prisoners are constantly reminded. As the jail guard in The Stone Country shouts furiously at the prisoners: "You think this is a blerry hotel? This is a jail, jong. Here you will shit".[38] Dennis Brutus is also reminded, though in

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36. Dennis Brutus, Letters to Martha, Quoted from his Collection A Simple Lust (London, 1973), pp.56-57.

37. Ibid., p.58.

38. Alex La Guma, The Stone Country (Berlin, 1967), Heinemann Reprint, 1974, p.23.

milder terms :

> " Mister,
> this is prison;
> just get used to the idea"
> You're a convict now".[39]

George Adams in The Stone Country was a convict among thousands imprisoned in "the country behind the coastline of laws and regulations and labyrinthine legislation; a jungle of stone and iron, inhabited by jackals and hyenas, snarling wolves and trembling sheep, entrapped lions fighting off shambling monsters with stunted brains and bodies armoured with the hide of ignorance and brutality, trampling underfoot those who tried to claw their way from the clutches of the swamp".[40]

The political discrimination uhder aparatheid affects the whites too — of course in a different way. They may have an electoral system to choose their representatives, but they do not have right to form any political platform along with the non-white brothern of their country. Nor are they permitted to form any party based on leftist ideology. These two discriminations - denial of right to inter-racial political action and ideological freedom - are depicted prominently in the South African literature.

Apartheid prohibits not only inter-racial political action but also inter-racial love and personal relationship.

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39. Dennis Brutus, Letters to Martha, n.36, p.65.
40. Alex La Guma, n.38, p.81.

So in most places where inter-racial political action -- underground meetings and organisation - is shown the situation leads to inter-racial love between the characters. The inter-racial love and understanding between the characters strengthens the ideological commitments and political beliefs of the characters who, in the first instance are prepared to co-operate with each other due to common ideas and convictions. But as the situation unfolds the characters find Diana's arrows more powerful than the inbred sterotypes about the race of the other partner. Human love triumps over the artificial political divisions of colour. The intertwining of these two aspects -- though natural in itself -- has a much more deeper significance in the resistance to apartheid. The combination of inter-racial political action and the inter-racial love defy two obnoxious pillars of apartheid. On one hand it defies the Political Interferences Act (prohibiting inter-racial political action) and on the other the Immorality Act (prohibiting inter-racial love).

The inter-racial political action forms the main theme of Lewis Nkosi's play The Rhythm of Violence and Peter Abrahams' A Night of their Own. In The Rhythm the whole play revolves round the activities of the members of an underground organization which is multi-racial in character. The dingy basement club room

serves as the headquarters of the organization. "The walls are plastered with pictures of student riots, marches, and protest slogans. The peeling walls are inscribed with huge letters shouting: VERWOERD MUST GO! FREEDOM IN OUR LIFETIME! INTERRACIAL SEX IS A HISTORICAL FACT!"[41] As the play proceeds one sees various pairs who cut across the colour bar imposed by The South African regime. Gama Zulu (an African) and Mary (a white); Jimmy (a white) and Kitty (a black); Jijozi (an African) and Lili (an Indian); Tula Zulu (an African) and Sarie Marais (an Afrikaner); Chris (a Jew) and his girl friend Julie (race not indicated) are all in love with each other. Gama and Jimmy arrange for planting the city hall with bombs in order to blast it when the Nationalist Party members are about to conclude their meeting there. "... The stage is set! At twelve midnight, when those fools wind up conference .. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The bomb will go off! Twelve O'clock midnight! ... when the City Hall goes up in flames!"[42] Sarie, a newcomer does not know of the plan. Her father Mr. Marais had gone to the City hall, ironically, to 'tender his resignation' from the Nationalist Party and for 'making a break with the government regime'. When Tula

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41. Lewis Nkosi, The Rhythm of Violence (London, 1964), in Litto, ed., in Plays from Black Africa (London, 1968), p. 23.

42. ~~Lewis Nkosi~~, Ibid ~~n.41~~, p. 27.

comes to know of it he pleads with his brother, Gama to stop the plan for blasting. They try to make annonymous call to the City Hall to warn Marais of the impending danger. Nobody attends to the phone at the City Hall. Finally Tula slips out and rushes to the City Hall. He also dies in the explosion along with Marais. Hens becomes a symbol of inter-racial polical action which transcends the artificial barriers of pigmentation and the divisionary tactics of the white regime. Tula's sacrifice represents that the present stage of struggle for equality is heading towards a point of no return where the only solution appears to be a violent end to the white supremacy. The violence, as the writer shows, would take the toll not only of the hard core racist Nationalists, but also people like Mr. Marais who want to make a break with the regime. The snowball once set in motion would also crush people like Tula whose "only crime ... his one crime ... is that he tried to stop time ... he tried to block history ... for me .. . for my father ... for you and for all of us! ... so that we might have time to think ... to reconsider ... He never knew how late it was ... so he .. tried, and trying got ground to pieces."[43]

Peter Abrahams' A Night of their Own has a similar theme. Richard Dube and Dee Nunkhoo — a black man and an

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43. Sarie speaking to Jan and Piet, the Two policemen at the City Hall after the explosion. n.41, p.71.

Indian women are in love with each other while working together,

on an underground network against the racist regime. Abrahams also shows the blossoming of love between Van As (an African), the Deputy Head, Natal Bureau of Internal Security and Mildred Scott (a coloured), Headmistress of Coloured Girls' school. Thus, the theme of the novel shows the inter-racial love as a normal human phenomenon which affects not only those who oppose the artificial, racist barriers against it, but also who constitute, like Van As, the machinary to perpectuate the regime. A Night goes beyond the The Rhythm in depicting the struggle against racist tyranny in a more comprehensive manner. The discussions between the characters deal with a variety of problems like the ends and means controversy in the struggle; precarious position of Indians, their peculiar problems being a middle race between the whites and the blacks, liberation strategy to match the manoevers of the racist regime, inter-racial prejudice within the movement etc. All these problems arise out of the discriminations against non-whites in the political system of South Africa.

Another important political discrimination to which all South Africans are subjected to is the denial of ideological freedom. Extremely harsh laws against Communists have been formulated capitalizing on the fear or revulsion an average South

African white has for communism or even for political equality expressed through the one-man, one-vote principle. Freedom of opinion and expression are severely curtailed under the garb of suppressing communism. Any speech or action aiming at the change in the set up of discrimination and oppression is equated with communism,[44] and the Communists are accused of extra-territorial loyalties and equated with 'Russians.' This general anti-communist attitude is depicted by the writers in the various literary works. The characters repeat these stereotypeic notions and display an almost pathalogical avertion to anything even remotedly connected with Communism or Russia.

When in Alex La Guma's A Walk the taxi driver says he had heard "some johns on the Parade[45] say 'Colour bar was because of the Capitalist System', Greene, another character sitting in the car comments 'Cut out politics ... Those bastards all come from Russia."[46] So also in The Stone Country when George Adams is being arrested, a member of the Police Party says "Georgeovski. Why isn't your name Georgeovski. You buggers should be in —— Russia. Not here".[47]

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44. According to the law of South Africa "Communism is among the other things, any doctrine or scheme which aims at the encouragement of feelings of hostility between the Europeans and non-Europeans races of the Republic, the consequences of which are calculated to further the achievement of the object of bringing about any social change in the Republic by the threat of unlawful acts or omissions. Suppression of Communism Act No.44 of 1950, as amended Sec.1) Apartheid in Practice (UNO, New York, 1970), p.37.
45. Political Meeting.
46. Alex La Guma, n.5, p.17.
47. Alex La Guma, n.38, p.49.

In Harold Kimmel's The Cell Levin says to Paters, a co-prisner that the sort of interrogation where the black prisoner in his next cell was kept standing all the time without allowing him even to go to the lavotory, did not sound decent to him. Paters remarks "If you don't think our system in South Africa is so good, why don't you go live in Russia or somewhere".[48] The conversation between the two ~~wangers~~ warders in The Robben Island is also very typical of the Communist-phobia attitude : Commenting about the prisoners, their conversation starts :

> 'These baboons are cheeky'
> 'Beasts ... Uncivilized barbarians...'
> 'I'll end up taking their tickets. Hei, damn you, donIt you hear? I'will take their tickets, all of them.'
> 'Bloody Nkrumah, where's Nkrumah now?'
> .....
> 'Rotten Communists. Yes, rotten stinking Communists. They're Communists, these things.'
> 'They're not communists, they're Poqos'.
> 'Man, stupid, what difference does it make?'
> 'They're not Christians, Have you ever seen them going to Church?'
> 'Bloddy Ben Bella'
> 'Bloddy Nasser'
> .....
> .....
> 'What about the Kaffir of Bechuanaland?'
> 'You mean that one that married a white woman, then thinks he's civilized?'
> 'Oh, Khama's a good kaffir, but I don't like his marrying a white woman'
> .....

48. Harold Kimmel, The Cell, Anthologised in Cosmo Pieterse, ed., Five African Plays (London, 1972), p.141.

> He 's not so much to blame.It's these white whose Communist women. They're a bloody evil, ought to be sentenced to death.'
> 'What about Swaziland?'
> 'I don't trust those fools. I think they're Pogos. Communists...' 49

Richard Rive's short story, "No Room at Solitaire" also has a situation which depicts the Communist - phobia attitude particularly in the far-flung rural areas. Oom Sarel, over a drink at Fanie's bar insists that Kaffirs cannotbe educated beyond Standard II. Fanie who refuses to accept such ridiculous argument quoted the case of the cousin of his Kaffir worker who had reached Standard Six at a school in Cape Town. Fanuie also said that the boy could read and write in Afrikaans even better than some of the white bywoners. Oom Sarel becomes angry and says he "would not drink in a bar owned by a Communist."[50] and then he walked out. This incident, thus, is yet another illustration of the Communist-phobia attitude.

Denial of representation in the political institutions, lack of control over the law-making machinary, state oppression to enforce an illegitimate rule, denial of freedom of expression and association etc. constitute the framework of apartheid discrimination in the political life of the people of South Africa. These discriminations affect the different races in different forms, eventhough the brunt of the

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49. ~~Ibid.,~~ ~~pp.140-41.~~ D.M. Zwelonke, n.35, p.140-41.

50. Richard Rive, No Room at Solitaire, anthologised in Richard Rive, ed., Quartet (London, 1963), 1974 reprint, p.82

exploitation that such discrimination leads to is suffered mostly by the blacks. The various aspects of discrimination have been well-depicted by the writers with commendable clarity and fidelity to the realities of the South African situation.

CHAPTER IV

ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION AS DEPICTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Apartheid policies of South African white rulers have time and again been criticised for their obnoxious and torturous discriminatory practices against the non-whites. These policies pursued for economic ends, establishing discriminatory and exploitative relationship between the whites and non-whites, reflect themselves in the socio-cultural aspects of the society also. This discriminatory relationship is strengthened through various stereotypic reactions, dominating every walk of the everyday life of the people. In this chapter it is proposed to analyse the creative writers' response to various aspects of socio-cultural discriminations like restrictions and social interaction and mobility; segregated and inequal facilities for different races; colour bar and consequential value patterns; legal prohibitions on inter-racial friendship, love and sex.

Enforced total segregation of the people on the basis of biological or 'racial' dissimilarties is one of the characteristics of apartheid. This segregation is followed at three levels - 'macro-segregation', 'meso-segregation' and 'micro-segregation'. The 'macro-segregation'is achieved by reserving certain areas for mono-racial population.

This is done by creating 'Bantustans' ('Native Reserves' or 'Black States') for Africans and by removing African colonies i.e., 'Black spots'[1] from the white areas. Coloureds and Asians are also allotted areas separately under the Group Areas Act and kept away from the white and the African areas. The non-whites do not have any rights (political, social and economic) in the areas declared white, while the whites enjoy their rights in the non-white areas as well. Meso segregation is practised in white areas where the presence of Africans is an imperative necessity for whites' privileged existence. The Africans who live in these areas e.g., urban slums and servants' colonies which fall within the larger area, demarcated for whites - are considered 'aliens'[2] living in white areas for a temporary period. The Africans have to necessarily carry permits or passes[3] with them to produce a proof, when demanded, that they are in service of white man. These passes are valid for a particular duration and thus are a constant reminder of the checks on African

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1. Areas inhabited by blacks which fall within the territorial boundaries of the areas categorised 'white'. They were 'eliminated' by enforced resettlement of blacks elsewhere.

2. The Blacks are deemed to be citizens of their respective 'independent' black states.

3. Under the euphemistically named "Abolition of Passes and Consolidation of Documents Act" of 1952 'passes' have been replaced by 'Reference Books'.

presence in white areas. The Africans are also subjected to various restrictions including night curfew, violation of which is severely punishable. 'Micro-segregation' is followed in places like work-spots, post offices, railway platforms and other areas where the physical proximity between the white and non-white cannot be avoided. Here the segregation reaches the extreme limits of provisions for separate service windows, separate entrances and exists, separate dormitaries, separate toilets etc.

The control of inter-racial mobility forms the central core of the segregation policy. The Pass (Reference Book) becomes the most essential document, 'the everything' in the lives of the blacks. The complications are enlarged with Pass-raids, hold-ups, fines and detentions. The Pass and police become a part of their lives. Herbert L. Shore, a literary critic aptly points out that the blacks in South Africa have to constantly face "the haunting pursuit by that simple fear-filled question, ready to send you off to prison - "Waar's you pass, jang? Where's your pass, boy?"[4] Pass is not just a necessary document in the lives of the blacks, it becomes the licence to exist or the permission to live in South Africa. Without

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4. Herbert L. Shore "A Note on South African Life and Letters" in Herbert L. Shore and M.S. Bos, eds., Come Back, Africa! : 14 Stories from South Africa (New York, 1968), p. 21.

it a black can be arrested, fined, imprisoned, put in convict camp, sent to potato farms in far off interior village to work life a slave or even under worse conditions. He may also be deported to a 'black state' which is virtually parched and leads to conditions of starvation. It is for this reason the narrator in Seretê's poem says:

> "My hand pulses to my back trouser pocket
> Or into my inner jacket pocket
> For my pass, my life ..."5

and it is to produce the Pass, when the policeman of Kwela-Kwela[6] demands it in Motjuwadi's poem, the narrator says:

> "I pull away from Mono (lady love)
> and hug myself in desparation
> Up, down, back, front, sides,
> like a crased tribal dancer.
> I have to find it.
>
> Without it I'm lost, with it I'm lost
> a Cipher in Albert Street
> I hate it, I nurse it,
> my pass, my everything.[7]

Alex La Guma, in his novel <u>In the Fog of the Season's End</u>, depicts a Kwela-Kwela raid in a realistic way and tries to capture for the reader the tension, humiliation and insult heaped upon the blacks :

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5. Mongane Wally Serote, <u>City Johannesburg</u> anthologised in Robert Royston, ed., <u>Black Poets in South Africa</u> (London, 1974), p. 20.

6. Pick-up van usually used to pick up Pass Law offenders.

7. Stanley Motjuwadi, <u>Taken for a Ride</u>, anthologised in Robert Royston, n. 5, p. 13.

"Crossing the motor bridge, Beukes saw the train pull into the station and the next moment the platform was crowded with passengers streaming towards the subway. Around the police block the stream swirled against the dam of blue uniforms and the jerking flashlights, then slowly trickled through accompanied by shouts and curses. Lunchboxes bundles, bags were being searched, papers examined."

"I say, sarge I'm in a hurry, let me through.'

'F--- you. Who in the blerry hell do you think you are? Let me see what you got in that parcel.'

'Just my overalls, meneer, just my overalls. Taking them home to be washed.'

'Open up you hell, before I donder you'.

'Hey, what the hell, goes on there in front? A man must mos get home for supper.'

'Jong, waar's you pas? Where's your pass?'

Pale white fingers like maggots flicked over the pages, identifying the bearer against the photograph. 'Lord, all you bliksems look the blerry same. Where did your mother get you from, hey?' The pages rustled one over the other. 'Hey, hey, you did not pay your tax this year, hey?'

'I paid the poll tax months ago.'

'Like blerry hell you did. Come along, boy, come along.'

'I paid.'

'F--- you. You think I'm a bloody baboon? And don't give me your bloody cheek either. Here, constable, take this one to the van.'

'But if you look you will see the stamp'.

'Listen to me, bliksem, do you think I have got time to waste? Think you I have got all night to listen to you? You can tell it all to the magistrage, bass?'.

'Jong, come along, jump, jump.'

'Jong, kom, kom, kom, pas, man, pas'.

'What the f---ing hell you got in that pocket. Dagga, hey? You hastards live on that f---ing weed, I reckon.'

'It's only my tobacco.'

'Jong, let me see. Shake out those pockets.'

'F--- the law.'

'Who said that? You bastards there at the back, I'll get you. Stop that verdomde pushing there.'

'Listen, you baboon, this pass book is no good, you should have been out of this city a long time ago already. You reckon you can cheat the government, hey?'

'But I am working here, sir.'

'Oh, yes? And who gave you permission to work in this city? It is trouble for you, you black baboon. Here's another one, sergeant.'

'Into that van, jump, jump, jump, man.' [8]

Dehumanised under the Pass Laws millions of blacks are forced to lead life of insuit and degradation. A black goes to the pass office and is trans - nomenclatured into a number. He then is just a numerical whose fate is written in those few pieces of paper innoculously named "Pass". He becomes one of the many "numbers" like the one described by Sydney Sepamla:

"Bearer
Bare of everything but particulars
Is a Bantu
The language of a people in Southern Africa
He seeks to proceed from here to there

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8. Alexa La Guma, In the Fog of the Season's End (London, 1972), pp. 66-68.

Please pass him on
Subject to these particulars
He lives
Subject to the provisions
Of the Urban Natives Act of 1925.
Amended often
To update it to his sophistication
Subject to the provisions of the said Act
He may roam freely within a prescribed area
Free only from the anxiety of conscription
In terms of the Abolition of Passes Act
A latter day amendment
In keeping with the moon-age naming
Bearer's designation its reference number 417181
And (he) acquires a niche in the said area
As a temporary sojourner
To which he must betake himself
At all times
When his services are dispensed with for the day
As a permanent measure of law and order
Please note
The remains of R/N 417181
Will be laid to rest in peace
On a plot
Set aside for Medthodist Xhosas
A measure also adopted
At the express request of the Bantu
In anticipation of any faction fight
Before the Day of Judgement".9

To enforce meso-segregation the 'black-spots" and other black locations within the city are removed to far off outskirts. The threat of removal becomes a Damascus sword hanging over the blacks living in those areas. The Bulhoek incident is a constant reminder of the cruelty and brute force used to clear the black population from the white area by the oppressive apartheid regime. As Nelson Mandela, an African leader puts it, "almost every African household in South Africa knows about the massacre

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9. Sydney Sepamla, To whom it may Concern, anthologised in R. Royston, ed., n.5,p. 96.

of our people at Bulhoek in the Queenstown district where detachments of the army and police, armed with artillery, machine - guns, and rifles, opened fire on unarmed Africans, killing 163 persons, wounding 129, and during which 95 people were arrested simply because they refused to move from a piece of land on which they lived."[10] The miseries to which the displaced population is put is often touched upon by the writers in their works. In Modikwe Dikobe's The Marabi Dance one such forced displacement of African population to a far-removed suburb is shown. The writer's description goes as follows:

> "When the men had began to stream out of the yards for work that monring there was much murmuring: We shall never see this place again'.
>
> 'How are we going to find our new houses?'
>
> 'They walked as if their feet were heavy and lowered their heads as if in mourning: 'The white people are chasing us far from the town. How are we going to pay for the train? Here in town we don't pay anything for going to work, we just walk and at lunch time we get back and eat at home." 11

Once the demblishion is ordered Africans' houses are razed to ground and the place is converted into a whiteman's area. In Peter Abrahams' Mine Boy Malay Camp (a coloureds' location) and Vrededorp (a blacks' location) face a similar

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10. Speech as the leader of African National Congress at the Pan-Africanist Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa held at Addis Ababa in January 1962. Quoted from the speech published as "A Land Ruled by the Gun" in the collection of his articles, speeches and trial address published as No. Easy walk to Freedom (London, 1965), 1973 reprint, p. 172.

11. Modikwe Dikobe, The Manabi Dance (London, 1973)p.112.

situation when Hoopvlei, a new location is built near Johannesburg. As Peter Abrahams comments:

"Hoopvlei was another of the white man's ventures to get the natives and coloureds out of the towns. The natives did not like the locations, and besides, they were all full, so the white man had started townships in the outlying district of Johannesburg in the hope of killing Vrededorp and Malay camp. Many other places had been killed thus.

"Perhaps in five or ten years Malay Camp would only be a name. And perhaps even Vrededorp the heart-throb of the dark people of the city would be like a dream told to a child who was sleepy and who on waking would remember only vague snatches of it. Perhaps it would be so in five years time."[12]

Bulldozing and elimination of the residential areas altogether has a heart-breaking impact on the black writers who are then cut off from the areas where their childhood and manhood were spent and which no longer remained on the face of earth in the same way throbing with life. Thus "its (area's) destruction is a destruction of an essential element of the author's psyche."[13] Bloke Modisane, as one of the writers so affected, rightly says about the bulldozing

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12. Peter Abrahams, Mine Boy (London, 1946), 1971 AWS reprint, p. 136.

13. Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from a Continent (New York, 1969), Heinemann 1971 ed., p. 139.

of Sophiatown : "Something in me died, a piece of me died, with the dying of Sophiatown."[14]

The micro-segregation followed through separate and inferior civil amenities for non-whites is very humiliating and insulting. The non-whites are forced to use separate entrances and exists,served through separate windows, permitted to use only segregated and inferior parks and benches, trains and platforms, and buses and trams. Their entertainment facilities like cinema houses and drama threatres are separate; or within these houses seats are segregated in order of the colour heirarchy of the country i.e., the best reserved for whites. South African literature abounds in the depictions of the instances of these humiliations and degradations to which the people are put to. Dennis Brutus narrates his experience in the poem as follows:

Waiting (South African Style) 'Non-Whites Only'

'At the counter an ordinary girl
With unemphatic features and
a surreptitious novelette
surveys with Stanislav disdain
my verminous existence and consents
with longorous reluctance --
the dumpling nose acquiring chiselled charm
through puckering distaste --
to sell me postage stamps : ..."[15]

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14. Bloke Modisane, Blame Me on History (London, 1963), p. 5.

15. Dennis Brutus, A Simple Lust (London, 1963), 1973 reprint, p. 11.

In Mphahlele's short story "Grieg on a Stolen Piano" also a similar situation is presented. As the narrator says:

"A new white clerk is busy arranging postal orders, and recording them. The queue stretches out, out of the post office building. The people are making a number of clicking noises to indicate their impatience. They crane their necks or step out of the queue in order to see what is happening at the counter.

Uncle is at the head of the queue.

"Excuse me," he ventures, "playtime will soon be over and my class will be waiting for me, can you serve us, please?"

.....

Uncle looks at him steadily. The clerk goes back to his postal orders. After about fifteen minutes he leaves them. He goes to a cupboard and all the eyes in the queue follow each movement of his. When he comes back to the counter, he looks at the man at the head of the queue, who in turn fixes his stare on him. The white man seems to recoil at the sight of Uncle's face. Then, as if to fall back on the last mode of defence, he shouts "What are you? What are you? -- just a black kaffir, a kaffir monkey, black as tar. Now any more from you and I'll bloody well refuse to serve the whole bloody lot of you. Teacher, teacher, teacher to hell! Irritation and impatience can be heard to hiss and sigh down the queue." 16

The inferior and segregated amenities are thrust on the non-whites not only through the legal machinery but also through the group attitudes of the whites who fear that any mixing through common civil facilities would mean an end to their previleges. Like Stoffel Visser in Mphahlele's

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16. Ezekiel Mphahlele, Grieg On a Stolen Piano, anthologised in Ellis Ayiotey Komey and Ezekiel Mphahlele, eds., Modern African Stories (London, 1964), p.132.

the living and the dead they are afraid of "kaffirs swarming suburbs",[17] and suffer pathalogically from the apprehension "what's to happened to white civilization?"[18] The South African government may treat, for the sake of business, the yellow-skinned Japanese as 'honorary whites' but at lower levels of South African society, more so in interior areas, it is the laager tribal mentality that governs the attitudes of the whites. These whites, as Herbert L. Shore says, "have become victims of brutal and brutalizing group complexes, reflexes and attitudes ...to preserve a colour identity that adds to the myth of race."[19]

Alex La Guma in his short story Coffee for the Road has depicted well the instinctive group behaviour of the South African whites. The Indian woman in the story who has been driving her car to Cape Town finds "there had been nowhere to put up for the night: the hotels were for whites only".[20] Further when she goes to a cafe to fetch coffee for her children she finds "in the wall facing the vacant space was a foot-square hole where non-whites were served, and a group of ragged coloured and African people stood in the dust and tried to peer into it, their heads together, waiting with forced patience."[21] Moving into the

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17. Ezekiel Mphahlele, the living and the dead, included in the collection in corner b (Dar-es-salaam, 1967), p. 82.
18. Ibid.
19. Herbert L. Shore, in the introduction to H.L. Shore and M.S. Bos, eds., n.4, p. 24.
20. Alex La Guma, Coffee for the Road, anthologised in E.A. Komey and E. Mphahlele, eds., n.16, p. 86.
21. Ibid., p. 89.

empty cafe where "the only other customer was a small shabby white boy ..."[22] She asks politely "Can you fill this flask with coffee for me please?"[23] The woman at the counter almost in a Povlovian reflex screetched" Coffee? My Lord Jesus Christ! ... A bedamned coolie girl in here! ... Coolies, Kaffirs and Hottentots outside."[24] For the Indian women, not all her politeness, nor all her riches - "car, smart sunglasses and the city cut of the tan suit" — could enable her to overcome the handicap of colour in South Africa. She was turned out of the white counter, even when there were no white customers except the small shabby boy, just because she was not white.

Micro-segregation is practised even with regard to the entertainment facilities. There are either segregated theatres or segregated performances or segregated seats. In all there provisions the whites get the best, the coloureds and Indians the second best, and the blacks the worst. Alex La Guma portrays in In the Fog of the Seasons' End such discrimination through the childhood experiences of his character, Beukes who tells Francis:

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22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 90.

24. Ibid.

"My aunty took me to a circus once when I was a lighty ... I didn't like it. The actors kept their backs to us all the time and you couldn't see anything they were doing. When I asked my aunty why, she told me it was because we were sitting in the segregated coloured seats and the actors performed mostly for the Whites, even if we paid the same money." 25

But the same colour-conscious whites who do not allow blacks and other non-whites to enter "Whites only" areas, engage them to perform subordinate roles. Almost all their domestic helpers and servants are blacks, and as servants they touch everything, they visit every room, they cook their food, milk their cows etc. But as black lawyers or doctors or others employed in independant professions they are not allowed to enter white residences or use reserved facilities. In depicting such distinctions and disciminations the South African writer juxtaposes two aspects - the immediate victim of the segregation policy and the person of the same race who is allowed to stay in an all-white area because of the servile role he or she plays. For example in James Matthews' story The Park the young coloured boy who wants to play in the park had to be turned out because of the colour-bar. But at the same time the attendant at the park (who is also coloured) and the nurse girls pushing prams were allowed to stay. For the attendant it was his role as the guardian of white rule that gave him the right to stay there. Symbolically putting, it was "the uniform he wore

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25. Alex La Guma, n.8, p.40.

that gave him the right to be in the park"[26]. So also it was the uniforms of the nurse girls -- "their badges of indemnity"[27] -- that gave them the right t o be in the 'Blankes Aleen, Whites Only' park. But the poor washerman boy who was not playing any such role had to go out painfully questioning within himself "What harm would I be doing if I were to use the swings? Would it stop the swings from swinging? Would the chute collapse?"[28]

To be born white in South Africa means being born into a world of material wealth. Further the power being in the hands of white, the whites command better services. The coloureds have intermediary previleges. But it is the blacks who are at the lowest level of socio-economic and political pyramid. There is a strong, constant and persistent desire amongst the people at the lower levels of this pyramid to end their difficulties. Unable to find a social solution they look for individual solutions. Angry and jeolous of the g freedom and privileges of the whites they wait to be accepted as whites; dress like whites and possess the goods generally used by the whites. To have white complexion, straight hair and corset-contained posterior becomes desirable for no logical reason but for the social prestige attached to the white skin. These individual personality distortions and perversions are seen in many characters in the South African literature.

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26. James Matthews, The Park, anthologised in Richard Rive, ed., Quartet : New Voices from South Africa (London, 1963), 1974 reprint, p. 130.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 131.

Eliza in Abraham's novel Mine Boy says to her lover "... I want the things of the white people. I want to be like the white people and go where they go and do the things they do and I am black. I cannot help it. Inside I am not black and I do not want to be a black person. I want to be like they are, you understand Xuma. It is no good but I cannot help it. It is just so. And it is that that makes me hurt you ... please understand".[29] As Maizy comments on Eliza, "She wants people who smoke cigars like the white folk and have motor cars and wears suits every day."[30] It is this craze for white things that makes Eliza run away from Xuma and her aunt Leah, who points out that it was rather dislike for the black that makes Eliza run away from the house. In fact it was these two things --- craze for 'white' and dislike for the 'black' --- coincide and "she (Eliza)has gone because she is sick of this place, sick of us and because she wants things that we (black family) cannot give her. Things that she cannot get here."[31]

In this atmosphere of discriminations non-whites develop white-complex. While some hate every action of whites the others identify all good or pleasant happenings with the whites. When Xuma is leaving Dr. Mini's house his wife holds out her hand to thank him for the help he

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29. Peter Abrahams, n.12, p. 89.

30. Ibid., p. 81

31. Peter Abrahams, n.12, p. 213.

had done to her husband's patient. As Abrahams explores the feelings of his character, "Xuma took her hand. It was soft and small like the white woman's ..."[32]. So also in Mphahlele's short story a point of identity, Karel Almedhea, the coloured who is sober and who considers purity of blood lunatic nonsense loses his reasoning when T. addresses him as a Boesman. Subconsciously he is so conditioned to the prevailing value pattern that he immediately starts boasting about his European blood. Karel says: I'm not a Hottentot or a Bushman, I have got European blood straight from de balls no zigzag business about it."[33]

Most non-whites who possess whites' features take pride in them and boast about their being near-white. Tony Williams in Alf Wannenburg's Debut is proud of the fact that his grandfather "was a European ... was white."[34] He brags that he himself, is "mostly white" and tells Anderson, the European who came to the party, "You see, a lot of coloured people have native blood... you can tell by their hair. Now there is nothing like that in my family."[35] Williams further feels that having 'native' hair is undesirable 'because those who haven't got straight hair are mostly

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32. Ibid., p. 110, Emphasis added.

33. Ezekiel Mphahlele, a point of identity, included in the collection in corner b, n.17, p.65.

34. Alf Wannenburg "Debut", anthologised in Richard Rive, ed., Quartet (London, 1963), Heinemann African Writers Series 1974 reprint, p. 122.

35. Ibid.

the skollies."[36] He is glad to receive a European gentleman (like Anderson) at the coloureds' parties, "because then you (Anderson) see that some of us (coloureds) are respectable and that all coloured people aren't like that. You know, sometimes I feel ashmed that I'm coloured."[37] Similarly Kenny in Alex La Guma's The Gladiators was "sorry he wasn't white and glad he wasn't black ... the nose... almost like a black boy's nose, but not exactly."[38]

Discrimination against blacks and the coloured is so oppressive that many coloureds prefer to face the dangers of being discovered and punished than accept segregation. This feeling is prominent amongst those who have no apparent trace of blackness. Many of them with an almost white skin, find it possible to slip across the colour line and be accepted as whites. In this attempt i.e., "passing for white"[39] they maintain the secrecy about their slipping across the colour line. These 'pass-whites' face great dangers and take considerable risks. Some members of their families might not be as white as they themselves individually are; some evidence of mixed parentage of the past might have to be suppressed; all their children may not be near-white or

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36. Ibid., p. 123.
37. Ibid.
38. Alexa La Guma, The Gladiators, included in the collection A Walk in the Night and other stories (London, 1967), 1974 reprint, p. 114.
39. "Those who at some stage of their lives have been coloured but who by subterfuge, have subsequently succeeded in being accepted as whites are known as pass whites." Quoted from Graham Watson, A Study of Racial Assimilation in a South African School (Tavistock, 1970). Excerpt published as "passing for white in South Africa" in Baxter and B.Sansom, eds., Race and Social Difference (Harmondsworth 1972), p.458.

white in colour; or some of the other non-white characters like thick lip or curly hair may be prominent. It is these uncertainities and the risk of being punished by law if found out that put the coloured 'pass whites' in peculiar human situations. Exploring this problem intensively, the South African writers -- coloureds in particular -- have succeeded in underlining the humilation, tension, and human misery that such pretences lead to.

In Alex La Guma's short story Out of Darkness Ou Kakkelak who was serving a ten-year sentence for culpable homicide narrates his pathetic story to his prison - mate as to how he had landed up in prison. His lady love Cora started 'playing white' as her skin was soft and smooth and of the colour of rich cream. She was almost white and hence could easily pass for white. As Ou Kakkelak narrates his pathetic story:

"We were going to be married and I worked hard because I wanted her to have everything that would make her happy once we were married...

Then she began to find that she could pass for white ... and I was black. She began to go out to white places, bioscopes, cafes. Places where I couldn't take her. She met white people who thought she was really white, and they invited her out to their homes. She went to parties and dances. She drifted away from me, but I kept on loving her.

I talked to her, pleaded with her. But she wouldn't take any notice of what I said. I became angry. I wept. I raved. Can you imagine how much I loved her? I grovelled.

I was prepared to lose my entire self-respect just to keep her. But it wasn't of any use. She said I was selfish and trying to deny her the good things of life. The good things of life. I would have given her anything I could. And she said I was denying her the good things of life.

In the end she turned on me. She told me to go to hell. She slapped my face and called me a black nigger. A black nigger." 40

Ou Kakkelak gets irritated when his friend Joey says he was "a damn fool for going off over a damn play - white bitch"[41] and hits him and Joey dies. Ou Kakkelak is later served with a ten-year sentence.

Passing for white leads to much more pathetic situations in family relationships. When some member or members of a family manage to pass for white they usually disown or at least keep away from the other darker members of the same family. This is because the 'pass whites' consider them a constant threat to their social status, for any revelation of their 'mixed' blood would throw them back into the same coloured world from which they managed to escape. Then the 'black' or 'coloured' member of the family becomes" ... an embarrassment .. A two-legged embarrassment".[42]

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40. Alex La Guma, Out of Darkness, anthologised in Richard Rive, ed., Quartet (London, 1963), 1974 reprint, p. 38.

41. Ibid.

42. Athol Fugand, The Blood Knot, Quoted from excerpt published in N. Gordimer and L. Abrahams, eds., South African Writing Today (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 217.

Very few want to show, like Morris in The Blood Knot, that they and their 'non-white' family members are 'tied together ... (through) the blood knot ... the bond between brothers."[43]

In Richard Rive's Resurrection, Jim, Rosie and Sonny who manage to pass for white almost disown their mother, Ma, and their youngest sister, Mavis, just because they two are of darker complexion. Ma and Mavis are forced to confine themselves to the kitchen room and are not allowed to come to the drawing room lest the white visitors should find their coloured mother or sister. The poor mother keeps on asking her daughter : "Mavis, why do they (Jim, Rosie and Sonny) treat me so? ... Please Mavis, why do they treat me so?"[44] The reason, as Mavis explains : "you're no longer useful, Ma. You're a nuisance, a bloody black nuisance. You might come out of your bitchen and shock the white scum they bring here ... you're a bloody nuisance, Ma."[45] But still the old woman does not understand why her own children should treat her so cruelly. She pleads: "But I don't want to go in the dining room. It's true Mavis, I don't want to go into the dining room."[46] While she speaks these heart-rending words "tears flooded her eyes and she whispered like a child who had lost a toy."[47]

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43. Ibid., p. 221.
44. Richard Rive, Ressurrection, anthologised in Richard Rive, ed., Quartet : New Voices from South Africa (London, 1963), 1974 reprint, p. 43.
45. Ibid., p. 44
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.

Ma had to face the scron not only of her pass white children but also of her black daughter, Mavis. Mavis was angry with Ma for having made her black, while Jim, Rosie and Sonny were born white. She screemed hysterically at Ma: "You're black and your bloody children's white. Jim and Rosie and Sonny are white, white and white. And you made me. You made me black!"[48] Even as Mavis says these words, she breaks down exhausted and cries like a baby "Ma, why did you make me black?"[49]

Ma had no answer for Mavis' question. Nor could she suggest any solution to the fate of her unfortunate daughter whose only fault, if it can be called so, was to features are the positive standards and where to 'pass for white' means opening up of higher material standards of life, and to climb a step higher in the socio-cultural heirarchy. So Ma, with a vague understanding straying into her milky eyes" had taken her youngest into her arms and rocked and soothed her. And crooned to her in a cracked, borken voice the songs she had sung years before ...".[50]

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48. Ibid., p. 44
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., p. 44-45.

But the old woman is herself to some extent responsible for the treatment she receives at the hands of her white children. As Mavis vents her spleen on her helpless mother, "you sent them (Jim, Rosie and Sonny) to a white school. You were proud of your white brats and hated me, didn't you? ... You encouraged them to bring their friends to the house, to your house, and told me to stay in the kitchen. And you had a black skin youself. You hated me, Ma hated me! And now they've pushed you also in the kitchen. There's no one to blame but you, You're the cause of all this."[51] Hence the whole tragedy of Ma is a cycle of value patterns of the coloured society. The mother wants her children to be white, looks upon with contempt at her children who are black in colour. Ma, as a member of the coloureds' society shares its prevailing value pattern and takes pride in her white children. The events then take a full cycle and the mother becomes the victim of the same value pattern of which she was a willing perpetrater - though unthinkingly. Richard Rive, thus had analysed the root cause of the human sympathy. Eventhough the old woman evokes the natural sympathies of the readers, she is equally to blame for the values. She becomes an unthinking victim of the prevailing values which have their roots in the previleged position of whites in the South African society.

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51. Ibid., p. 47.

Similar white-dominated value-pattern has penetrated the Indian community also. But, unlike the 'pass-whites' they do not have chances of being accepted as whites because their physical features and cultural traits differ considerably from the whites. The Indians form an almost an exclusive group easily identifiable by their language, dress, food habits and religious practices. Denied a chance to move up the socio-political heirarchy they fall back on their 'racial' features, particularly their lighter complexion and their position as an intermediate group of the South African segregated society. In doing so they assert their racial superiority' over the blacks, sometimes over the coloureds as well, obscurantly clinging to their historical cultural exclusiveness.

Peter Abrahams has excellently portrayed this attitude of Indians and their superiority complex vis-a-vis Africans. His novel, A Night of Their Own revolves around the Indian members of an underground liberation movement. Richard Nkosi comes as a messenger carrying money for the movement. In an attempt to help him move out of the country the Movement decided that he should be dressed as an Indian and a phoney procession of Hindus going for a holy bath to be taken out so that he could join the procession and escape the eyes of police. The Indian processionists, on seeing the two police detectives at a distance, come

closer and keep pressing to the centre so that Nkosi's identity is not noticed. But, after the procession passes the detectives, they move away from Nkosi as though he was someone undesirable in their company. As Peter Abraham comments:

> "He (Nkosi) was not aware of the exact moment when they passed the group of plain-clothes Indian detectives watching them by the car. But he was aware of the exact moment when the danger was past, because the warm bodies that had pressed against him and held him suddenly withdraw ... The women to his left who had pressed too closely against him, now gave off the feeling of wanting to withdraw into non-existence. And the men too more subtly, moved away from him till he walked in an isolated little circle hemmed in by the others and cut off from them. He knew this withdrawl was instinctive ... But still their instinctive withdrawl sent a wave of utter depression through him and he wished he were far, far away from this land." 52

The writer also presents Dicky Naicker, a 'flat' character - in the Forsterian sense - to depict the attitude of Indians towards accepting Africans as partners in wedlock. Naicker, in spite of being in the liberation movement fighting against <u>apartheid</u> regime, is not in a psychological position to tolerate Dee Nunkhoo's idea of marrying Richard Nkosi, an African. As Peter Abraham explores the feelings of this "stupid, rotten, filthy-minded little collie ... sick with prejudice."[53]

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52. Peter Abraham, <u>A Night of Their Own</u>, (London, 1965), p. 103 - 104.

53. Ibid., p. 127.

"The doc's kid sister, pretty high-class thing even with bad leg, giving it to the black man like she hungry ... Shem on all of us .. come running to give it to him... why not Sammy? ... Why not Sammy... And then he admitted the frightening thought... Why not me? ... I'm not black... And then he wept like a little child loud and long."[54]

In an atmosphere where all other groups look down upon them the Africans, like a cat chased too long and too far, turn back aggressively to oppose the degarding value system. The very features degraded by others become sources of strength and rallying points to assert their right to live with dignity and equality. But the process, in practice, degenerates into obscurantism and group hatred resulting in violent ethnic conflicts and race riots. In such a tense situation the Indians - predominently businessmen - politically powerless and economically better off than the Africans become an easy target.

Mphahlele who deals with the African - Indian relationship in his a point of identity and The Wanderers tries to capture this anti-Indian feelings in his works. Pauline in a point of identity is angry with Indians for their cultural exclusiveness. She says, "They (Indians) like their curry and rice and roti and money and mosques

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54. Ibid., p. 125.

and temples too much to pretend they want us for next-door neighbours ... They want nothing more than keep their business sites and help us about from the platform. Ach, they all make me sick these pinks."[55]

In The Wanderers, Mphahlele goes a step further and shows an all-black violent organisation- Chesa-Chesa (Burn, Burn) - at work. Its targets are Indians and their shops; and its slogans are thoroughly anti-Indian:

> "Indians are Crooks! Burn them Out! Bloodsuckers! Separate and independent! Indians back to the suger plantations inthe Eastern Province! The Day of Revolution! Black Freedom! ... Give us our own lands! Let us live our own culture! Up African religion!" 56

Peter Abraham's A Night of their Own also deals with the strained African-Indian race relationship. The writer vividly recreates the happenings of the Natal race riots and presents it through Dee Nunkhoo who had lost her brother in the week-long murder, aroson and loot. She speaks with anguish to Nkosi, an African, about "the week of rioting when your people (Africans) hunted down my people like rats and forces of law and order stood by while scores of Indians were slaughtered."[57]

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55. Ezkiel Mphahlele, n.33,p. 70.

56. Ezkiel Mphahlele, The Wanderers (New York, 1979), p.27, Emphasis in the Original.

57. Peter Abrahams, n. 52, p. 48.

Eventhough the writers depict the feelings of hostility between the races against each other, they do not show any sympathy with the individuals or organisations helping consciously or unconsciously the divisionary tactics of the apartheid regime. For example, Mphahlele in his The Wanderers criticises the Link Organisation of coloureds (which demands separate residential areas) in the same tone as he criticises the African Chesa-Chesa. Equally censuring is his treatment of Munshi Ram the Indian businessman who blindly accuses Africans as a group - "you peepel ... put our shops on pire."[58] The writers particularly black and coloured constantly keep pointing out to their people as Mphahlele does in his a point of identity:

> "But Hotnottes, Boesmans and Kaffirs and coolies are all frying in the same pan, boy, and we're going to sink or swim together, you watch." 59

Or as Alex La Guma, keep reminding the non-whites:

> "But we all get kicked in the arse the same."[60]

Apartheid laws are harsh particularly on inter-racial sex and marriage. The reason is that the racists want to preserve the sharpness of race as a divisionary

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58. Ezekiel Mphahlele, n. 56, p. 29.

59. Ezkiel Mphahlele, n.33, p.

60. Alex La Guma, n.38, p. 115.

tactics. So any sex or marriage relationship between the races, which is normal to mankind, is punished severely. The human aspect of such prohibitions is dealt with by many writers in their works. The Immorality Act and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act have been opposed by most writers because they are not only inhuman but also anti-human. While some writers have respond to the laws by exposing its ridiculousness, others have shown defiance of the law by their characters.

Harold Kimmel in his play The Cell exposes the ridiculousness of the two laws through the conversation of his characters Levin and Peters who share the prison cell:

Levin	:	Do you have a pet?
Peters	:	What sort of question is that?
Levin	:	Did you have a dog or a cat before you came here?
Peters	:	Why?
Levin	:	Did you like him?
Peters	:	What do you want to know that for?
Levin	:	Well, you might be concerned about a certain law going through the parliament.
Peters	:	What law?
Levin	:	Do you have a pet?
Leters	:	Yes, a cat. What law?
Levin	:	Well, they're introducing legislation, you see. Dogs and cats owned by white people will not be allowed to go to bed with dogs and cats owned by coloured people.
Peters	:	You are a crook! And cats and dogs don't do it... I mean, they don't go to bed.
Levin	:	I will admit that." 61

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61. Harrold Kimmel, The Cell, anthologised in Cosmo Pieterse, ed., Five African Plays (London, 1972), pp. 155-156.

Many South African writers have shown through their works that the inhumanity of the two laws have to be defied on an inter-racial basis. Their characters are shown to be opposing the laws not only on a socio-cultural plane but also on a political plane. The plot, in these works, usually revolves round an illegal underground organisation busy fighting the regime. The members of these organisations fall in love with each other defying the regime's policy of preserving the purity of race. For example, in Peter Abraham's A Night of their Own the plot revolves round an underground movement fighting the regime. The leading characters Richard Nkosi (African) and Dee Nunkhoo (Indian) fall in love, have sex and decide to marry with each other. Similarly, in Richard Nkosi's The Rhythm of Violence the plot is wound round the activities of a liberation organisation. One of the slogans found on the walls of the dingy-room that served as its headquarters is "Interracial Sex is a Historical Fact". The play shows intimacy and love between races which, in the present conditions of South Africa, meet in no other roles except as masters and servants or as deadly enemies. In the play Jimmy (White-English) is in love with Mary (White-English); Tula Zulu (black) is in love with Sarie (Whites-Africaneer); Jijozi (black in love with Lili (Indian). Similarly in

Shanti, a play by Mthuli Shezi the theme is "a love affair between an African boy and an Indian girl, partly set in a guerrilla camp."[62]

Thus, the South African writers have dealt with the various socio-cultural problems in great detail and have described the socially tense society under apartheid regime. They bring to light the tragedy of South Africa, the tragedy wrought by anachronic 'Christian Nationalism' and the institutionalized barbarism perpetrated in the name of preserving 'white civilization' . In doing this the writers have tried to portray the situation as realistically as possible without any exaggeration or sentimental outbursts.

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62. Dennis Herbstein, White Man, We want to Talk to You, (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 77.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The South African society is divided on racial basis. As a natural corollary South African literature exhibits an intense concern with the problem of racism in general and apartheid in particular. In this society which is socially, economically and politically pregnated with racism, biological differences have been over-emphasised to deny the Coloureds, Indians and Africans their human rights, their equal social status and equal economic opportunities. Every individual is looked upon as a part of an inferior or superior racial stock, his own qualities and social standing are viewed accordingly. This inhuman division does not run on any rational basis as it makes a white imbecile superior to a coloured or black genius.

The most obvious impact of racism and racial discrimination on the South African literature has been its dominance as a theme. Almost all writers show an active concern with the problem in one way or the other. Their perspectives may vary but their concern with the problem is apparent from the fact that most of the characters are shown as victims - direct as well as indirect - of racism. Even those writers, who feel that there is no need for drastic changes in the apartheid system but only slightly more doses of liberalism, express in their own way their concern with the problem. The racial theme has been the most dominant of the themes. This special emphasis on race has led to

criticism that racial theme has become an "obcession" with the South African writers. These critics ask the writer 'can't you write about anything else?'[1] They also feel that the preoccupation with race problem accounts for much of "bad writing"[2] from South Africa.

The above criticism is unfounded and is based on faulty understanding of the realities of the South African situation. The writer, in a society like South Africa, has a responsibility towards his people. He, as an intellectual has a duty to depict and discuss the problems present in his society. He has all the freedom and "luxurious autonomy"[3] in dealing with the problems but he cannot overlook the realities. In the given situation of South Africa any writing that does not come face to face with the problem of racism represents deliberate escapism and an ivory tower dreaming. 'Arts for arts sake' literature is not relevant in the present day South Africa for such literature is devoid of roots in the society which is the nourishing soil for all genuine literature. Thus, racism as a theme in the literary responses to racial discrimination, as long as the present system of injustice and human degradation

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1. Arthur Maimane, "Can't you Write About Anything Else?" Presence Africaine (Paris), n.80, 4th Quarterly 1971, p. 124.

2. Anthony Sampson in his introduction to Nadine Gordimer and Lionel Abrahams, eds., South African Writing Today (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.12.

3. Robert J. Green "The Drama of Athol Fugard" in Christopher Heywood, ed.,Aspects of South African Literature (London, 1976), p. 164.

continues, is not only desirable but also inescapable.

Concern with the problem, or even opposition to apartheid does not mean there is any uniformity of approach and concensus of opinion among the writers about the race problem. The responses to the problem differ from writer to writer and is rooted in the political or ideological commitment of the writers. As seen earlier, Alex La Guma shows that nothing short of an armed overthrow of the white regime would solve the problem. Beukes, his hero in In the Fog of the Season's End is a member of the underground movement organising an armed rebellion; George, his hero in The Stone Country is behind the bars for his political activities against the racist regime. This is sharply in contrast to the approach of Alan Paton whose non-white characters plead for more mercy from his ideal liberal white characters like Jarvis in the Cry, The Beloved Country. Even his militant trade union leader, Stephen Kumalo (a black) does not envisage the overthrow of the white domination but only complains that the white mine owners, when new gold is found, "do not think here is a chance to pay more for our labour"[4]. These political overtones and their like in the literary responses make the mixing of literature and politics very trasparent in the South

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4. Alan Paton, Cry, the Beloved Country (London, 1948), 1973 Penguin edn., p. 35.

African literature. As Dan Jacobson, a South African writer rightly says, "It seems obvious that the position of writer in Africa is going to be one in which politics will be the constant factor."[5]

The writers express their responses through various literary techniques like depicting plots involving race conflicts, depicting through dialogues of characters and interposing direct commentary by the writer. The plots of many South African novels revolve around the situations arising out of racial conflict in the country. The enforced poverty, coerced evictions, broken families, inter-racial love cutting across the bureaucratic race classifications, undergound political movements fighting apartheid regime are all situations around which the writers weave their plots. The dialogues between the characters are frequently used to depict the racial situation. The characters are used as mouth-pieces to voice the point of view of the writer. These apart, many writers take to the technique of third person narration in which the writer can express his response not only through the plot and characters but also through his direct comments on them. Most of the works of South African literature are thus either in the third person narration or autobiographical in nature.

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5. Dan Jacobson in the discussion on Wole Soyinka's paper on "The Writer in a modern African state". Per Wastberg, ed., The Writer in Modern Africa (Uppasala, 1968), p. 29.

Another technique used by the South African writers to express their response and commitment is dedication of their books to various people involved in the struggle against racial discrimination. To quote a few examples : Alex La Guma's novel The Stone Country is "Dedicated to the daily average of 70, 351 prisoners in the South African goals in 1964". His another novel In the Fog of the Season's End has been written "In Memory of Basil February and others killed in action, Zimbabwe, 1967".

While Peter Abrahams, the novelist, dedicates his A Night of their Own

" For
my friends
WALTER SISULU
and
NELSON MANDELA
and all the others
the captured and the still free
who are at war against the evils
of this night of their own."

Ezekiel Mphahlele dedicates his novel, The Wanderers to

"They wait for those who never return
for those who come to die;
they wait for those who flee
the arch tormentor
to wander under alien skies.
They know each time
the sweat - fine fear despair
of birth
and cry 'who will atone, who will atone?'
each time
the orge thunders down the throughfares
of freedom lovers:
Others of the South
who like Nabdi
stand and wait and give and pray -
I offer up my tale
for you to sanctify."

Modikwe Dikobe dedicates his novel. The Marabi Dance to

"... Some one like Martha may still be alive and her son may be one of those young men now being harrassed by the pass laws, endorsed out of the cities and made strangers in the land of their birth."

And Alan Paton has dedicates his famous novel Cry, the Beloved Country to "my wife and to my friend of many years Jan Hendrick Hofmeyr". Hofmeyr was a liberal politician of South Africa with whose ideology Paton largely agrees to.

The literary responses of writers to racial discrimination in economic, political and socio-cultural aspects show that they suffer from the segregation inherant in the policy of apartheid. The writers cannot disentangle themselves from their everyday experiences of differening economic relationships with other races, varying political rights and inequal socio-cultural positions. It is almost impossible to break the straight - jacket race classification of the Group Areas Act and other segregation policies for the regime meticulously forces division leaving no chance for the writers to have involvement and experience with the whole society covering all races. In the absence of across - the - colour - line understanding the writer is usually forced to fall back on inerited misconceptions about the races other than his own. What is more important is that the writers are dealing essentially with a race - divided society. These reasons explain why the characters from other races than that of the writer become an anonymous group "they". As Wilfred Cartey points out in his Whispers from

a Continent, "all members of the opposing group become faceless and become 'they'; the 'they' who persecute or become the 'they' who fear"[6]. For example, as seen in Alex La Guma's novel A Walk in the Night the crowd that witnesses Willieboy being shot by white policeman Raalt says "They just know to shoot ... That's all they kno shooting us people."[7]

A significant aspect of responses to racial discrimination has been the almost complete absence of race hatred in the South African writings. In a situation where inter-racial understanding is forcibly constricted and where commonness of society and South Africanness as national ethos is destroyed by institutionalized ghetto life, the writers have done well not to fall a prey to retalliatory cries for hatred and revenge. In a country where to quote Dennis Brutus:

> "We have no heroes and no wars
> only victims of a sickly state
> succumbing to the variegated sores
> that flower under lashing rains of hate" [8]

these writers have tried to transcend beyond the immediate situation or to see through the very divisions at something more fundamental, something more universal

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6. Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from a Continent (London, 1971), p. 110.

7. Alex La Guma, A Walk in the Night and Other Stories (London, 1967), p.87 .

8. Dennis Brutus, A Simple Lust (London, 1973), p. 34.

and something human in essence. They have also rejected, mostly, any negative negation of the negative value system where black is degraded. They have, to put it briefly, rejected both racism and 'anti-racist racism' that swept the other African countries.

To conclude, the South African literature carefully blends different politico-economic viewpoints on one hand and the artistic presentation of the situation on the other. Eventhough the plots revolve around recial discrimination and indignities heaped on the people, it is much to the credit of the writers that they have achieved a skilful portrayal of the issues without undue demagogic exaggeration or rhetoric. The writers - by and large - do not talk in terms of racial hatred towards other races for what they are in the midst of is a crusade against rabid racism of the apartheid regime and they cannot afford to be racists themselves. The central core of literary responses has been, and continues to be one against discrimination and deprivation; injustice and inhumanity; and degradation and destruction of the tender human spirit.

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