

## THE IMPACT OF 1950S BANNING OF SOME SOUTH AFRICAN WRITERS ON TEACHING AFRICAN LITERATURE TODAY

by

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### **Abstract**

*This article argues that credit given to South African writers who were exiled during the fifties when banning by the apartheid government was rife, is sometimes premised on inadequate awareness of the contributions of writers like Es'kia Mphahlele. Mphahlele's uniqueness as one of the black South African authors sometimes called Drum or Sophiatown writers is emphasised as a way of demonstrating what little analytical rigour was applied to writers of this period as a result of the banning of their books in apartheid South Africa. A more serious critique of South African literature produced during this period is exemplified by the way I discuss Mphahlele's and some of his contemporaries' literature within the context of the 1950s. A discussion of Ngugi's literary contribution by two critics is used as a case in point to highlight the aftermath of academia's virtual acquiescence to such chaining of creative freedom. The discussion thus holds the academic fraternity partly responsible in further obliterating traces of black South African writing of the fifties, and suggests that this should be reversed as exemplified by my own discussion of the Drum writers. It is suggested that writings of the fifties should be excavated, studied and analysed afresh in academic circles utilising the approach I propose in this article, alongside other methods that may be deemed equally fruitful. This paper argues that the impact of the harm caused by political incidents of the 1950s and the lethargy that gripped literary and educational circles in subsequent decades is still felt today in the classroom, necessitating conscious efforts to redress this gap in the teaching of black South African literature.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Mzamane (1992:352) sketches how apartheid South Africa's National Party government "responded by banning the two major political organisations" for co-ordinating mass demonstrations following the 21 March 1960 killing of anti-pass protesters. One aftermath of government's highhandedness was the self-exile of most black intellectuals including writers of the 1950s, to which the government reacted by banning "the writings of almost an entire generation of black writers which had emerged out of *Drum* magazine and Sophiatown in the 1950s" (Mzamane 1992:352). For this reason, between the 1960s and 1970s South

African literature on the whole "flourished in exile" (Mzamane 1992:352), resulting in a hiatus even within black South African literature practitioners themselves. For a number of reasons, black South African writing was revived from 1967 with the publication of Dollar Brand's poems, followed in 1968 by the publications of Oswald Mtshali, Mafika Mbuli, and a short while later by the poetry of Wally Serote, Mafika Pascal Gwala, Njabulo Ndebele, Mandienkosi Langa, Sipho Sepamla and others (Mzamane 1992:352). As the post-1967 black writers were not banned like their predecessors of the earlier decade, the gap that had existed within the general readership and teaching of South African literature which hitherto was restricted to white authors was filled by the writings of these latter generation black artists. Contest between state ideological priorities and intellectual freedom motives of academia has thus been evident in South Africa, most notably since the 1950s.

Moja (2004) points out conflicting agendas that brought about a tension between policies of colonial governments and practices of academic freedom on the African continent in the 1950s and 1960s. This was as a result of the distance between the goals of the state and those of academia. Rafapa (2006) observes that because of apartheid, a demarcation should be made between Eurocentric and Afrocentric intellectual life in South Africa. That is why critics of South African literature have to concede to its being characterised by such conflicting consciousnesses which they may name differently. Mashige (2006:141), for instance, premises his discussion of the "worker poetry" of the 1970s on "the contrasting relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed".

A manifestation of the suppressive African state's will to perpetuate the adverse manipulation of the populace's conscience is in the way it has attempted to deny access to self-constituting African literature with which it competed for the mental moulding of the postcolonial African. In his essays published from 1965 to 1987 Achebe (1988) documents efforts by African writers and educationists in the 1960s to force neocolonial African governments of the 1960s to assert the social relevance and artistic adequacy of imaginative writings produced by Africans through policies that would ensure their use in school and university programmes. Mphahlele (1984) and Ngugi (1986) refer to the same 1960s meeting of African intelligentsia in which it was noted that colonial and neo-colonial governments on the African continent used school and university curricula to minimise access to books by African writers – for ideological reasons.

What becomes clear is that the discursive pursuits of the Eurocentric apartheid government and Eurocentric intelligentsia in South Africa more or less overlapped within the environment of state conflict with intellectual freedom. Also, South African intellectual life has been such that there has always been a cleavage between black and white academic affinities to government discourse. It follows that apartheid government's and Eurocentric academics' attitude towards what literature books should or should not be exposed to general readership and academic scrutiny has largely converged. Although the scope of his discussion of the contingencies black South African poetry of the 1970s and 1980s respond to does not require him to extend his description to include the use of literature

in the classroom, Mashige (2002:283) is referring to the nature of South African social life I have just described in his remark that "South Africa's political, economic, ideological, social and cultural diversity" is of a "uniquely complex nature". A consciousness of academics and educationists opposed to that which informed the Eurocentric South African regime, such as that of most blacks, could not influence practice in the prescription of books under apartheid because they were politically powerless and professionally repressed in keeping with apartheid's approach.

Mindful of this inevitable distinction of stances between black and white academics within apartheid South Africa, Chapman (1992) analyses the reception of black South African literature beyond the era of the 1950s and 1960s gags. That is why he remarks thus about this literature's reception: "After an initial reluctance by a largely Eurocentric academic establishment to accept the New Black Poetry of the 1970s as 'good', it became clear, among black and white readers and critics, that Mtshali, Serote, Gwala and others were vibrant new voices" (Chapman 1992:515). Chapman refers to "the Black Consciousness movements, which were banned in October 1977" as having heralded "the 'renaissance' of the 1970s" which resulted in evidence that "poems, plays, stories, songs and paintings do matter in the real life of political confrontation" (Chapman 1992:514). Chapman's observations are helpful in indicating that the apartheid government shifted its repressive strategy after the period during which the literary output of the 1950s was denied the spotlight, and started to allow the public and academic consumption of literature by blacks. It is significant that such a shift of strategy continued to obscure writers of the 1950s by superimposing those of the later period of the 1970s, for reasons best known to the Eurocentric rulers of the day.

A significant part of mostly Eurocentric South African academics voiced their "challenge" of Afrocentric writers of the 1970s perhaps to "remain silent" at the height of political bannings (Chapman 1992:522) that were a part of the new wave of repressive government moves in the 1970s and 1980s. This could not be for the reason that artistic flaws plagued such socially committed writings of black writers, because Chapman (1992:530) significantly remarks that the politically confrontational black literature produced during the 1970s and 1980s silencing "expressly or implicitly questioned the adequacy of mimetic relationships between collective action and the creativity of imaginative response". The only reasonable explanation is that at this point in South African history, the influential Eurocentric academic establishment for some reason clung to attitudes that had consolidated at the time when 1950s black writings were marginalised, while their counterparts in government shifted its repressive tactics. It is logical that some influences of the academic attitudes and political harm of the Eurocentric intellectuals demonstrated above are not only extant today, but continue to have a bearing on how Afrocentric literature is analysed against its historical evolution at present. For any analyst who fails to detect the alignment of African literary theory into two opposed camps, one bent more towards Eurocentrism and the other inclined towards Afrocentrism, it will be more difficult to discern an even subtler division within the Afrocentric cluster of writers. A 2005 discussion of two

of Ngugi's classics can be a potent entry into the intricacies of this stylistic separation of Afrocentric writers.

Cloete and Madadze's (2005) observations about African literature betray ignorance of some of the exact origins of Afrocentric assertiveness among African writers. They see the middle of the 1960s as the period in which "a new kind of African novel" emerged. Cloete and Madadze (2005:34) cite Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1982) as some sort of intensification of the Africanising of the novel, which phenomenon they understand to have started in the 1960s. This observation has implications for the group of African writers sometimes referred to as "travel writers", whose artistic inclinations contrast with those of writers such as Ngugi. Onyenini Okunoye (2006:107) classifies Ofeimun's 2000 poetry collection in the category of "the growing tradition of postcolonial *travel writing* (emphasis added)". Okunoye (2006:109) explains this new direction within African writing as resulting from the "mass displacement of writers from the postcolonial world, and their westward migration". In other words, this new breed of African writers no longer go into exile as an escape from the atrocities of colonisation and apartheid. They are lured by the dazzling facilities so far found only in the metropole, in much the same way that they are appalled by what they perceive as disappointing achievements of postcolonial African leaders in advancing the quality of life of Africans remaining back home.

This article points out that attitudes identifiable with those of "travel writing" have always been manifest, in perhaps subtler ways, starting notably during South African black writings of the 1950s. With ideological differences among black South African writers of the fifties dividing them into those who could be termed travel writers and those who did not see westward migration as a solution closely related to the black experience of hybridity, this idea forms a crucial part of this discussion. It will be shown that the inevitability of postcolonial hybridity has been acknowledged by all black South African writers during the fifties. Hybridity is a natural effect of the historical consequence of European and African sensibilities converging in the consciousness of the colonised, hence Africanist writers' indubitable concurrence on its presence (Rafapa 2006).

For black South African writers of the fifties, awareness of the inevitability of hybridity has its antecedent in the diasporic experience, described by Du Bois (1905:3) as a feeling of "two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keep it from being torn asunder." Du Bois here accentuates the difficulty in resolving such a double consciousness.

This article will demonstrate that great differences arose regarding how such "double consciousness" must be dealt with. This was compounded by the complex, sometimes contradictory social patterns of this period. Chapman (2001:221-22) describes the black township society of the fifties as animated by "Petty-bourgeois contradiction between identification with a specific local reality and desire to find in art a universalising, even a transcending image of experience", especially among the intelligentsia. It is precisely in respect of the

manner in which hybridity should be dealt with where Mphahlele sets himself apart as a writer from his contemporaries of the fifties. He sees the resolution of "double personality as colonized man" and "dialogue of two selves" (Mphahlele 1974:41, 70) as a realisation of the fact that it is ironical to have "the conflict of cultures that need not always clash but are supplementary" (1974:137). His view of white and black cultures as supplementary implies that they are of equal importance and neither can therefore eliminate the other. This differentiated Mphahlele from his contemporaries in much the same way it does today in manifestly dissimilar ways in which this problem of two selves divides postcolonial writers all over the continent and in the diaspora. Okunoye's characterisation of travel writing serves to highlight how one sector of African postcolonial writers have resolved the uneasy challenge of maintaining equilibrium between one's Africanness and westward attraction that is typical of hybridity.

What distinguished Mphahlele from other Sophiatown writers are the features of an aesthetically Africanised novel, which Cloete and Madazde distil as they analyse *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, published much later than the fifties. For a black writer to achieve this, demands an underpinning by a profound theoretical construct on traditionalism versus modernity. The rigorous nature of this requirement prompted the African American writer Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1987:176) to state: "It is the black poet who bridges the gap in tradition, who modifies tradition when experience demands it, who translates experience into meaning and meaning into belief." Among his peers of the fifties, Mphahlele seems to be the only one who could formulate a sound theory from which patterns in Africanising the novel emanate.

In Mphahlele's case it is his concept of Afrikan Humanism that underlies Africanist features of his fiction. Although these stylistic strategies were first implemented by writers such as Mphahlele in the 1950s, Cloete and Madadze (2005:34) seem to be oblivious of this in their remark that the recasting of the novel into a tool for asserting Africanness was a "new kind" in the sixties. It will be argued that, through writers like Mphahlele, African writing of the fifties pioneered the reversal of the normative notion of the novel as a genre that originated in Europe and resultantly propagated the dominant Eurocentric discourse of the time. Apartheid political developments during the fifties led to a hiatus that needs to be filled, now that the era has passed. This article proposes that black South African writing of the fifties should be 'excavated'. One way to return these writings to their place of honour within South African black writing, which they deserve, is its equal analysis and subjection to critical evaluation in much the same way African literatures of other periods are handled. In this way black South African writing of the *Drum* Era will be duly credited with its groundbreaking achievements. In the process, its influence or intensification in later African writing would be put in its right context.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES OF BANNINGS, EXILE AND ACADEMIC BIAS AS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TOWARDS THE MARGINALISATION OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WRITERS OF THE FIFTIES**

Es'kia Mphahlele belongs to the category of writers who fled from pre-independence South African to the metropolitan cities of the motherlands of colonised African countries. It was thus not the 'sophistication' of western cities like London and Paris that attracted them. Rather, they found themselves without the luxury to plan and choose where to land after their flight. For reasons of his own, Mphahlele returned to South African in 1977. He chose to come home, knowing that he was still coming back into apartheid South Africa. The summative motivation for this 'premature' return is that "as a humanist" he clung to hope and optimism "in spite of the darkness of our times" (in Manganyi 1981:39), with their true African identity based on what he has refined as his own concept of Afrikan Humanism. Mphahlele and some of the black writers of the fifties were faced with this problem of reconnecting urbanised Africans with their truer African selves. As the fifties were a complex situation for the blacks uprooted from their rural setting to satisfy the whiteman's need of cheap labour, some of Mphahlele's contemporaries scorned their own rural roots and even attempted by means of their fiction to encourage the masses to do the same.

In his short story of the fifties reproduced in a publication of the eighties, "The Will to Die", Can Themba (1985:50), for instance, makes folklore the scapegoat when a teacher named Foxy seduces a woman, as if any unbecoming behaviour in the urban townships could be blamed on clinging to tradition. Chapman (2001:191) remarks about some *Drum* writers like Can Themba and Arthur Maimane claiming in a manner indicative of their cultural self-deprecation that they "could speak no African language". While Mphahlele saw the strengthening of traditional ways among township residents as the right path, some of his contemporaries contemptuously equated his attempts to what Chapman (2001:201) has phrased as a "retribalizing mentality". For this other group of black writers, the African had to strive to reach the 'sophistication' and socio-economic status that was then the monopoly of whites, by turning his/her back on African traditions.

### **TRAVEL WRITING MENTALITY AND ITS MANIFESTATION BACK IN THE FIFTIES**

From the fact of heterogeneity or even ambiguity among the writers of the *Drum* Decade about what liberation meant, it is understandable that some of Mphahlele's contemporaries chose to become permanent residents of the major cities of the "centre" after the dawn of democracy in South African. The selfsame challenge to African writers that manifested itself in South African black writing of the fifties, of choosing whether to remain African or turn one's back on Africanism, ties up with the existence of writers Okunoye (2006) describes as travel writers.

It is clearly the same lure of European metropolises that has led to former freedom fighters, including writers of the fifties, assuming the status of citizenship in countries that formerly colonised Africa. While Mphahlele came back to engage directly with the psychic side of his people's liberation struggle seventeen years before the apartheid system crumbled, quite a number of his compatriots and fellow writers of the fifties today still reside permanently in the big cities of their former colonisers. In this way they belong to what could be seen as a group of "travel writers". The reasons leading to these African writers being "travel writers" significantly coincide with Mphahlele's differences with his contemporaries of the fifties in relation to what should be done about the emancipation of African and the Africans. Okunoye (2006:112) remarks about "Lagos – represent[ing] the homeland and all her imperfections" for travel writers, "while London is the colonial motherland to which [they] cannot deny a tie". What becomes evident here is that, while earlier postcolonial writers such as those cited above as Mphahlele's contemporaries and later ones who Okunoye describes as travel writers do acknowledge hybridity, they differ from the likes of Mphahlele in the way they believe it should be managed by the formerly oppressed. It should be explicitly stated that the aforementioned chasm between Mphahlele and his contemporaries started showing up as far back as the fifties.

Writers during the fifties acceded to an inevitable hybridity in the consciousness of an African who has had an encounter with western imperialism. In the short story "Man Must Live", Mphahlele (1947:23) pits Zungu's swing towards Eurocentrism in trying to balance hybridity, against that of masses of black commuters entering and leaving eh railway station where he is a guard. Some commuters comment: "Isn't he fine in that uniform" (Mphahlele 1947:23). The hordes of African expressing this public opinion emanating from the workings of communalism reveal that they are not against Africans adapting to times and discarding skins that were the dress of their forebears. But Mphahlele (1947:26) juxtaposes such remarks with a conflicting communal murmur among black commuters as Zungu shouts orders to them, complaining that he is "driving them like oxen". This public censure of the very same Zungu who looks "fine in that uniform" as someone "driving them like oxen" is significant. Through such use of dialogue Mphahlele wants to remind the reader that pursuit of monetary income should not overshadow the Afrikan Humanist value of a sacred regard for human life. In other words, the treatment of human beings like township workers travelling to and from work should not be the same as they way animals, symbolised by the word "oxen", are to be treated.

Such representation of Afrikan Humanist values in Mphahlele's fiction continues in another short story of the fifties, reproduced in 1967. The characterisation of a policeman named Tefo in "Down the Quiet Street" contrasts with that of Zungu in the 1947 short story cited above. In this short story (Mphahlele 1967) people comment that Tefo is fine, except for his uniform. Stationed at Newclare township, this constable is supposed to harass the residents and lead to the arrest of those regarded in apartheid's draconian legislation as criminals, especially those who sell liquor without a license. Instead, this character Tefo always sits on the stoep of the Indian's shop overlooking the main street of the

township, drinking liquor. This signifies the black policeman's commitment to understanding the daily life of the inhabitants, especially as Nadia Street that he always watches is the concourse of Newclare socialites.

Rather than hate the inhabitants for their 'criminal activities, the main character in Mphahlele's short story falls in love with the people. This culminates in his romance and eventual marriage with a widowed shebeen queen. Instead of Tefo allowing his hybridity to tilt westwards, he hearkens to the township residents' public voice that their means of economic survival are not as illicit as the whiteman prefers to call them. He then goes by communal opinion, thereby revealing his Afrikan Humanism that configures one's consciousness to perceive normal life as the ability to exist as an organic part of the community. The obverse is living individualistically or atomistically as in western societies (see Kudadjie and Osei 1988).

From grappling with the theme of Afrikan Humanism as the toolkit with which to balance hybridity and remain African in consciousness and in behaviour in the examples above, in *Renewal Time* Mphahlele (1988) portrays a character who typically counterpoints "Chopin's nocturne" with "Mohapeloa's Chuchu-makhala" on his piano. Significantly, the character called Uncle always performs these wonders when high on whisky. His drinking of western spirits and not traditional beer betrays his metropolitan sophistication. Yet his playing this counterpointing of the symbols of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism on his piano only when he is intoxicated signifies that he is still dazed with attempts to resolve hybridity. As this is one of the short stories Mphahlele first published in the fifties, this character should be understood to represent the confused state in which the black intelligentsia of the fifties were, regarding proper management of hybridity. Yet Uncle keeps on trying as the author foregrounds his piano playing as a tireless routine. Sanguinity and resilience in facing empirical challenges are some of the central aspects of what has come to be known as Mphahlele's concept of Afrikan Humanism (Rafapa 2006).

From these few examples, it can be seen that Mphahlele differs from his fifties contemporaries on how hybridity can best be handled. He states in *The African Image* that "we are fighting against the Calvinistic doctrine that a certain nation was specially chosen by God to lead, guide and protect other nations (Mphahlele 1974:54). This contrasts with what Chapman (2001:191) observes to be the cultural disowning writers such as Themba and Maimane's stances reflected in their writings. They believed western culture is superior and traditional culture is backward. Psychologically, Mphahlele's fellow writers of the fifties were travel writers, to borrow Okunoye's phrase, although physically living in townships like Sophiatown, Newclare, Lady Selborne, Marabastad, etc.

Whether one interpreted freedom to mean cultural assimilation by whites or reconstruction of self-pride among Africans who must remain distinctively African beyond apartheid, it boiled down to the one fact that they demanded freedom and equal treatment with whites. So, whatever school the writer of the fifties affiliated to, the pursuit of freedom and equality was disconcerting for the



apartheid government. When the apartheid government detected links between the different categories of black writers and the political struggle in demanding to be treated equally with whites, the black writers of the fifties were banned at the same time as black political movements were outlawed in a series of resistant voices that led to well-known struggle milestones including the Rivonia Trial. This meant that reading of the banned authors' fiction was forbidden. This led to Mphahlele (in Manganyi 1981:43) lamenting: "Our people have been cut off from the literature of their own people and knowledge about their own people, by white people, by white scholars."

In the sixties, the only African English works of fiction available for those South Africans who strove to acquire them were those by African writers from outside South Africa as these were not banned. While it is important to probe what African literature during the silencing of the sixties was allowed entry in South African schools, one possibility is that writers such as Ngugi, Soyinka and Achebe could even be prescribed for use by literature students in some black South African universities. With the nature of tertiary education having had always to bend to a certain degree to global trends of academic freedom (Moja 2004), African literature had to be a component of literature studies despite black South African literature of the time being anathema as far as apartheid rulers were concerned. Use of literature by African writers from outside South Africa must have been easier on the conscience of apartheid rulers, as understandably the fiction of such writers exposed the damage done by colonialism in their own countries rather than focus on that done by apartheid at home in South Africa in the way black South African writers of the fifties did. This continued through to the seventies when a minority of black South African youths could only read the banned South African writers secretly and this after much difficulty to get hold of the fiction using 'illegal' means. Such clandestine access to literature occurred alongside the apparently *laissez-faire* consumption of black resistant literature that Chapman (1992) rightly observes, as far as black South African writing of the seventies was concerned. To the consciousness of most of the black youth including those who pioneered the kind of writing of the seventies and eighties often called protest literature (Chapman 1992, Mashige 2006), the contribution of the banned writers of the fifties was unknown (Mzamane 1992).

### **MPHAHLELE'S MAIN DIFFERENCES WITH HIS CONTEMPORARIES OF THE FIFTIES**

While some black writers of the fifties saw liberation as not only equality with whites but as including cultural assimilation into white ways, Mphahlele equated liberation with the blacks' equal treatment with whites while the former engaged in self-definition. Self-definition, for Mphahlele, meant the renaissance of an African consciousness and lifestyles that existed before the ravages of imperialism. The fifties is the time when Mphahlele wrote fiction that championed the revival of an African identity, exemplifying in his fiction what he later defined as Afrikan Humanism in expository writing.

Interestingly, a distinctly African mode of literary innovation Cloete and Madadze regard as having started around the sixties started with Mphahlele in his short story writing of the 1950s. His theoretical construct of Afrikan Humanism informed his fiction. This concept of Afrikan Humanism was given an even more comprehensive exposé in Mphahlele's first full-length work, *Down Second Avenue*. Published in 1959 while Mphahlele had left for exile and his literature banned in South Africa, the autobiography saw the light of day only a year after Chinua Achebe's publication of *Things Fall Apart*. Yet relative academic support in exposing the latter's work to black South African students could mislead one that no other worthy fiction by a black African writer existed. Amazingly, this tendency within apartheid South Africa caught fire internationally wherever western hegemony was the filter through which reality was shaped. This resulted in many European critics excluding writers like Mphahlele in their overviews of Pan Africanist or Black Consciousness writing. Even respected African American writers such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. proudly make mention of the existence of African writers such as Wole Soyinka without a hint at the existence of Mphahlele and the other writers of the fifties such as Casey Mtsisi, Can Themba, Bloke Modisane and Nat Nakasa who were banned along with him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Given the background outlined above, it comes as not surprise, when what Mphahlele pioneered in his fifties' fiction is attributed to works by African writers he could rightly be recognised to have influenced, that reached readership only in the sixties. The criteria qualifying Ngugi's two novels discussed by Cloete and Madadze (2005) as Africanist actually emerged notably for the first time in Mphahlele's writings a decade earlier. For this reason, theoretical features displayed by the two critics are more a congruous part of what has mistakenly been established as a coherent literary-theoretical framework that captures the reality of African literary evolution.

That Mphahlele and Ngugi both being African should exhibit parallels in their depiction of Africanism is expected. Each will still have room to exhibit his idiosyncracies as a writer. But to ignore the true origins and evolution of typically Africanist modes of asserting an African identity is misleading. Oblivion to the legacy of black South African writing of the fifties is explicable, given the apartheid government's efforts to efface such writers' memories from younger black generations. This should be ascribed to the background of bannings of these black writers of the fifties, connivance by educationist counterparts of the dominant discourse that obscured them, and the consequent inaccessibility of their works.

However, it is high time Black South African writers of the fifties are credited with what is due to them. Now that dominant discourse in post-apartheid South Africa is no longer an exponent of Eurocentric hegemony, it is time to study writers of the fifties more properly to enable us to credit them with the contribution they made. Stylistic differences pointed out in this article identify Mphahlele on the one hand as a writer who remains attached to Africa in the face of psychological

exile caused by the alienation afflicted on his Afrocentric consciousness by Eurocentric tendencies of apartheid ruling. During physical exile, Mphahlele's incorporation of his trademark theory of Afrikan Humanism in his fiction enabled his literature still to identify him as an Africanist who clings to Africanism that he sees as equal to western and other lifestyles in worth. All in all, his crafting of the philosophy of Afrikan Humanism impels us to credit him to a greater degree than the other group of South African black writers of the fifties, with domestication the form of the novel, transforming the imperial language (English) into a tool of empowerment by infusing it with an African philosophical outlook, strengthening the formerly crushed ego of the African by excavating an African identity cleansed of imperial discourse, restoring self-pride among the oppressed, and demonstrating the dynamism of African cultures in adopting to various times and circumstances without being disfigured beyond repair. Examples of characters such as Zungu and Tefo in his stories testify to these. On the other hand, writers such as Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsisi, Can Themba and Nat Nakasa broadly belong to one category in which they in varying degrees show some affinity with "travel writing", a least at the psychological level. This means that their fictive characters' management of postcolonial cultural hybridity tilts them towards some degree of emulating western cultures, as shown by examples from their writings discussed above. Of the fifties' writers to be credited with the seminal achievement of bequeathing a legacy now taken to further heights by writers such as Ngugi, Mphahlele is the foremost.

Okunye's (2006) analysis of the reasoning of travel poets as they still continue to grapple with hybridity reveals gulfs among African writers reminiscent of the way Mphahlele and his contemporaries can be categorised as I do in this discussion using literary output. Under the circumstances during and after the *Drum* era explained by the critics Ngugi (1986), Achebe (1988), Chapman (1992; 2001) and Mzamane (1992) as discussed earlier, such forerunner tendencies that were to characterise the tapestry of African writing ever after, could not be publicised. Travel writers existed back then in much the same way they still do today. Mphahlele, through his short stories, reveals a firm position that suggests that by defining his concept of Afrikan Humanism he had dealt with questions of how to resist hybridity becoming synonymous with the denial of the reality of Africans existing as a distinctive cluster of cultural groups. As hopefulness is one of the aspects of his concept, his writings point to a belief that it is not impossible for the African continent and the diaspora eventually to enjoy living in Lagos or Lebowakgomo in much the same way as living in London or Paris. This is the moral of the romantic ecstasy the character Uncle in "Grieg on a Stolen Piano" (cited earlier) symbolises. By gaily imbibing western liquor without abandoning his Afrikan Humanist consciousness that attaches him to the aesthetics of the folkloric song *Leba* arranged by the vernacular composer Mohapeloa, Uncle can be said to posit a transcendence of geo-cultural boundaries such as those separating the European metropole from the African city. The challenge remains how competently African leadership leads, so that stumbling blocks along the route to this ideal can be eradicated. Evidence for such socio-political pursuit hinges on the symbolism of whether real-life African leaders lead with the Afrikan Humanist outlook of the character Tefo (in the story "Down the Quiet Street"), or

with the mimicking shallowness of the other constable, Zungu (in "Man Must Live"), devoid of Afrikan Humanist interpersonal relations.

In order to avoid a fragmented teaching of African literature leading to some factually untrue deductions by some scholars in this field, South African writing of the 1950s should be re-read and re-taught in a manner that does not falsify or show superficiality regarding the evolution of African literature in the South African context. This can only be achieved by acknowledging that the 1950s were a formative matrix of most of African literary features studied and taught today in a manner that erroneously disregards the contribution of such victimised pioneers as Es'kia Mphahlele.

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