CHAPTER I

Reflection of Anti-Apartheid Movement in South African English Novels

1.1 Introduction

The evolution of the present-day multiracial South Africa has taken place under conditions of extreme pressures. It has a long history of conflict and oppression. In the beginning, the native communities of South Africa were colonised by the Dutch and then by the British in the seventeenth century. In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station in the Cape of Good Hope. Subsequently the Cape acquired a great significance. And this marked the beginning of a long history of colonial rule and power struggle. Commenting on the strategic significance of the Cape, Brendon Nicholls says, "The strategic usefulness of the Cape made it an object of Imperial envy and the Dutch were eventually forced to relinquish it to the British crown" (16). The increasing administrative and political influence of the British in the Cape Colony created conflicts between the English and the Boers or Afrikaners (the descendants of the Dutch, French and German settlers in South Africa). The Dutch were dissatisfied with the British rule in the Cape Colony. Consequently the Dutch colonists left the Cape and moved to the interior part of South Africa by ox wagon in 1930s and 1940s. The incident came to be known as the Great Trek. The English dominated the Dutch descendants known as the Boers or Afrikaners who settled in the interior of South Africa and established the colonies of Transvaal and Orange Free State. In the meantime, gold and diamond were discovered in these colonies in the late nineteenth century. The British Empire tried to annex these colonies, leading to two Boer wars of 1879 –80 and 1899 – 1902. Years after conflict and warfare, a nation-state called the Union of South Africa was established in 1910 by the Afrikaner and the British. The British formed the South African Party while the Afrikaner founded the National Party. Both the parties shared power, though their relation was uneasy. Since the time of the British occupation both settler groups of Boer and British co-existed in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. But this conflict became secondary to the common cause of military subjugation and economic dispossession of the original inhabitants (Parker 3). However, the Afrikaner National Party won general election in 1948 and formed the government. This white government rapidly adopted a policy of racial segregation known as 'apartheid,' which

means ‘apartness’ in Afrikaans. Every community or group of people considered non-European by the government was governed separately and subordinated at every level to white South Africans. It may be mentioned that policies of racial segregation had existed as laws since the colonisation of South Africa by the European settlers. For example, the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act proclaimed that the cities were ‘whites only’ residential areas. But under apartheid many more similar policies were enacted and implemented. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950) made marriages and sexual relations between black and white South Africans illegal. The Group Areas Act (1950) divided urban areas in a way that designated separate black and white neighbourhoods. The Pass Laws (1952) forced the South Africans to carry a pass-book that allowed them to work or remain in white areas. The so-called Promotion of Black Self-Government Act (1958) created Bantustans or ‘independent homelands’ for black South Africans (Nichols 17). These homelands were, in fact, restricted rural reservations where life was very difficult. The black South Africans were citizens of these homelands only but not of South Africa. It is ironical that they lost their citizenship in their own country. Patrick Wilmot in his book *Apartheid and African Liberation: the Grief and the Hope* has enumerated the multiple significances of apartheid: a system of economic exploitation, a system of racial segregation, a political organisation of a European minority to deny the liberty, rights and dignity of the African majority (xi). In other words, apartheid has affected all aspects of contemporary life in South Africa.

Indeed, the apartheid laws were unjust and dehumanising. Eventually the apartheid regime was resisted inside South Africa by social activists and different organisations like African National Congress (ANC). And it was condemned outside the country by the international community. The African National Congress protested the apartheid policies and made efforts to establish an alliance of races with the objective of overthrowing apartheid and creating a multiracial society. In 1952, the Defiance Campaign was started as the political opposition against apartheid laws under the leadership of African National Congress. Mass rallies were organised all over the country. People came out of their home defying curfew, refused to carry passes and walked in the parks designated for whites only. The increasing levels of black resistance and mass-mobilisation led to violent acts of conflict and oppression by the apartheid government. In 1960, many protestors came out to oppose the pass laws. Many of them

were shot dead in Sharpeville, a southern town of Transvaal. South African police fired at a large crowd of people who were challenging the government's practice of apartheid and segregation. This incident that took the life of 69 black Africans showed the harshness of apartheid regime. In the same year, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned by the government. The African National Congress felt the futility of their peaceful protest and so formed their armed wing 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' meaning 'the Spear of the Nation'. Several important leaders of the African National Congress, including Nelson Mandela, were imprisoned following the Rivonia Treason Trial in 1964. The government declared Afrikaans as medium of education in certain subjects on 16th June, 1976. When the black school children in Soweto protested against it, the police opened fire on them. As many as 600 people were killed in the ensuing uprising that spread to different parts of the country (Visser 69). In the meantime, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) emerged with the formation of the South African Student's Organisation (SASO) under the leadership of Steve Biko, a medical student in Durban. Subsequently Steve Biko was arrested. He died in police custody in 1977. His death sparked a fierce protest throughout the country. On the other hand, apartheid government tried to control the movement with greater force and brutality.

Robert Fatton in his book, *Black Consciousness in South Africa* has observed, "The history of South Africa can be viewed as the history of black resistance to white conquest and white domination" (1). The nature of resistance changes as the nature of white domination and social condition change. Since the 1970s, anti-apartheid campaign had intensified. With the formation of mass movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), civil unrest, trade boycotts, and violence became more frequent. The government declared a state of emergency. Plunged into crisis, the minority white government of South Africa realised the need for a change. It is because of the resistance movements against the apartheid regime and to end the growing violence, Frederick Willem de Klerk, the president of South Africa between 1989 and 1994 unbanned the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress. Thus Klerk made way for universal suffrage in the country. Nelson Mandela was released from the prison after 27 years. The first general election on the basis of adult suffrage was held in 1994 and Mandela was elected the president of South Africa. Apartheid was officially abolished.

1.2 Response of the South African Novelists

During the apartheid regime and subsequent transition to democracy, South African writers responded to the apartheid and the antiapartheid movements. Their works show the impact of apartheid on the life of people in South Africa. They saw through the evil design of the apartheid regime and explored the possibilities of resistance. Most of the writing written in South Africa during the apartheid period "sought primarily to document political oppression and stir the reader into doing something" (Cornwell, et. al. 8). The writers –both black and white –look at the society critically. The society under apartheid has either oppressed them as in the case of blacks writers, or confined them to their skin colour and cut them off from the majority of the people as in the case of whites. Thus South African writing is characterized with colour bar, which marks all aspects of social life in South Africa during the apartheid. The writers share a sense of political engagement and commitment. Of course, they responded to historical context differently because of their unequal social situation under apartheid. They exposed racist policies and practices of the government. Nadine Gordimer states that South African writers, both black and white expose the meaning of South African government's racist nature hidden in such euphemistic terms as 'separate development', 'resettlement', 'national states' and its grammar of a racist legislature with segregated chambers of whites, so-called coloureds and Indians. There was no representation whatever for the majority of South Africans who were classified as black ("The Essential Gesture," 295). It is, indeed, shocking that the majority South Africans were governed by the minority whites.

However, the voices of many South African writers who protested against the apartheid were censored. Many of their books were banned in South Africa. The works of anti-apartheid writers such as Nadine Gordimer, Andre´ Brink, Peter Abrahams and many others were banned in South Africa. Moreover, many South African writers such Alex La Guma were jailed in Robben Island for their writings and political activities. And yet many other writers of anti-apartheid movements such as Lewis Nkosi and Es'Kia Mphahlele were sent to exile or went into self-exile to escape from political oppression.

Anti-apartheid literature is multi-faceted and engages with many aspects of human experiences. But racism and political subjugation of majority by the minority white are central to them. Even before the beginning of the institutionalisation of the segregation policies in 1948, South African writers such as Olive Schreiner, Sol T. Plaatje and William Plomer dealt with issues of racial segregation and unjust economic policies. Thus, Olive Schreiner (1855 –1920), a pioneer of South African fiction in English, has criticised the ideologies of the Union of South Africa that excluded the non-white races from political representation. Her novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) is often considered to anticipate many of the themes which were dealt with by many later novelists. Plaatje (1876 –1932), one of the earliest black writers, examines in his book *Native Life in South Africa,* the effects of the 1913 Natives Land Act, which introduced a radical system of land segregation on the basis of race. The book documents the plight of black South Africans as a result of the Native Land Act. This act led to the eviction of the blacks from their inherited lands in Orange Free State. Plaatje laments that his countrymen and countrywomen had been driven from their home. Their homes were "broken up, with no hopes of redress, on the mandate of a Government to which they had loyally paid taxation without representation" (4). Using his journalistic skill, he could portray the hardships of the black South Africans, which they suffered due to the Land Act. So, the book appears to be a moving protest against the oldest and most devastating apartheid law. In this way the South African writers exposed the unjust policies of racial segregation, which had been in effect even before the National Party came to power in 1948.

However, two traditions had been evident in South African writing by 1950s: the black writing and the white liberal tradition. The latter was begun by Schreiner and continued, in varying degrees, by Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer and others. The *Drum*, a magazine founded in the 1950s provided a significant platform for a new generation of black writers who attempted to change the way black people were represented in the society. It was an important vehicle for voicing the resistance during the 1950s.

1.2.1 The Black Novelists

Resistance or protest tradition in South Africa originated from the emerging black township such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg and District six in Cape Town. The fiction

of many literary figures like Abrahams, Rive, Modisane and La Guma is set in these black townships and portrays the life in these towns. Many of these authors document the harshness of the apartheid policies through their works. The coloured and black people were forcefully removed from Sophiatown and District Six though they considered these places their sweet home. District Six was originally resided by the working class. By 1950, it turned into a slum. It was declared a white area in 1966 and within two years the non-white people were removed to the Cape Flats, a Cape Town township outside the city. Life in District Six has been the subject matter of a number of novels.

Peter Abrahams (1919-2017) was a person of mixed race but he identified himself as a black writer. He wrote some important novels dealing with injustices and complexities of racial politics. Though he left South Africa in 1939, most of his novels and short stories are based on his early life in South Africa. *Mine Boy* (1946) is a notable work of the early period of his career. This novel conveys Abrahams' vision of "a class alliance among workers of different races as offering resistance to the depredations of the exploitative mining houses and their racist white champions" (Cornwell, et. al. 16). It is considered to be the first to portray the dehumanising effect of racism in South Africa on blacks and mixed-race people. The novel tells the story of a young man thrown into the alien and oppressive culture of large industrial society in South Africa. A major theme of the novel is detribalization explored through the relationship of Xuma and Eliza. Xuma is a simple man who has just come to the city from the tribal village. Eliza is attracted to Xuma, but at the same time she is attracted to western ways. This sets the scene of conflict of interests. When they first meet, Eliza is smoking a cigarette like a white woman. This becomes a barrier between them. Leah, Eliza's host and aunt, tells Xuma that she (Eliza) is a kind of fool. This is because, Leah explains, she likes you and at same time wants someone who can read books and dresses like the white folks and can speak the language of the whites and wear the little bit of cloth they call a tie. "Take her by force or you will be a fool" (51). The character of Leah is very significant. She is a woman who brews and sells liquor, a role traditionally assigned to man. The representation of her character is a challenge to the traditional gender roles and assumptions which consider women as weak and submissive. Leah is portrayed as strong and self-reliant, and engaged in economic and social activities.

Eliza shows a kind of tendency to transcend race in her consciousness, which she ultimately fails to do. But it remains in her and cripples her as well. Abrahams has a sympathetic attitude to the plight of Eliza. She is in an unfortunate position. She is caught between two worlds. Her educated, well-dressed young men are unable to fulfil her needs. She is happy with Xuma: "Something hard drives me . . . One minute I know what I want, the next minute I do not know" (87). She explains her situation to Xuma that something is wrong with her because she wants the things of white people. She expresses her desire to be like the white people. She wants to go where the white people go and do the things they do. But she knows she is a black and so cannot materialise her desire. She claims, "*Inside* I am not black and I do not want to be black person. . . It is no good but I cannot help it" (emphasis added, 89). The injustice of apartheid deeply affected Eliza. It is apartheid that denied the right to enjoy books or music though she appreciates them. So she rebels against the system. On the other hand, Xuma fails to understand her plea. He believes, "A white man and a black man cannot be friends. They work together. That's all"(93). Xuma does not like things of the white man. But he gradually feels comfortable with white people. And finally, as result of his association with Paddy, Xuma starts thinking about people independently of their colour. People are people. There is no white or black people. This vision carries him along. He imagines Eliza and Paddy and his woman and himself sitting at a little table in one of those little tea place in the heart of Johannesburg –all drinking tea and laughing and talking. He envisages a world where all are happy and without colour. Xuma's struggle to rise above his colour consciousness is an attempt to invalidate the colour bar in the contemporary society. It may be noted that Xuma's struggle is a reflection of Abrahams' own struggle to conquer colour consciousness.

Among his other works, *The Path of Thunder* (1948) shows a young couple of mixed-race under the fearful shadow of segregation. The love between Lanny Swartz, the coloured school teacher, and Sarie Villier, the white Afrikaner daughter, functions as a 'protest' against a perverse racial segregation that destroys something which is natural between two people. *A Night of Their Own* (1965) depicts the plight of Indians in South Africa. In the apartheid South Africa, the Indians are discriminated against by the whites and the blacks though the Indians feel that their chances of survival rest with the ant-apartheid forces. Richard Nkosi, known as Richard Dube, is a black artist of South

African origin. He returns to his native land as a messenger for underground anti-apartheid movement spearheaded by blacks. Nkosi's mission is discovered by the white security agents who tightened the net surrounding resistance movement. They could arrest Nkosi. But he manages to escapes with the help of a reactionary businessman. The incidental love affair between Nkosi and an Indian woman is intended to intensify the racial complications. In short, Abrahams' works show his impatience with racial categories. As he puts in *Mine Boy*, his vision is man without colour. He envisages a world where every man would be judged as an individual and where colour would be irrelevant. Through his political novels he shows the attempts of black men to regain their manhood and self respect, which alone can help them achieve true freedom in a world dominated by white men.

Es'kia Mphahlele (1919-2008) began his career as a short story writer with the publication of the collection of stories, *Man Must Live and Other Stories* (1946). His early career as a teacher of English and Afrikaans was terminated by the government because of his stiff opposition to the highly discriminatory Bantu Education Act. The story, "Mrs Plum" included in his third collection, *In Corner B and Other Stories* (1967) explores "the emotional relationships between black and white" (Heywood 199). It critically examines white liberalism in South Africa through a black narrator whose steady growth in knowledge and understanding allows her to lay bare the hypocrisy that runs through the white liberalism. His autobiography *Down Second Avenue* (1959) is, perhaps, his best known work. The work is an impressionistic representation of the author's life from childhood up to his departure into voluntary exile in Nigeria in 1957. Often considered as a South African classic, it tells the story of a young man's growth into adulthood with sharp criticism of the conditions forced upon the black South Africans by the apartheid government. The prevailing situation in South African urban life is vividly portrayed by Mphahlele. For their survival, the black people had to condition themselves by the socio-political forces of the day. Though the white man needed them for his work, he hated them. People flowed to Pretoria from the north and the east. But soon they found that their life was insecure in the locations, "putting up tin shacks on the small plots allotted to the residents. Perpetual refugees seeking life and safety"(93). According to Cornwell and others, *Down Second Avenue* shows Mphahlele's growing realisation of bitterness toward the political barriers that come in the way of his

personal freedom and achievement. To be stuck 'down second avenue' becomes a metaphor for the lot of the black man trapped in the township ghettoes of apartheid South Africa (18). They further argue that Mphahlele's experience of race or ethnicity as an artificially imposed and arbitrarily limiting identity helps to explain his and other South Africans' fierce opposition to essentialist African ideologies such as negritude.

Bloke Modisane (1923-1986) is another black South African author who also wrote an autobiography *Blame Me on History* (1963). The book frankly captures the life in Sophiatown of his youth and at the same time exposes the harshness of the apartheid regime. Sophiatown is a suburb of Johannesburg. In the 1950s, it was a centre of multicultural activities and home of black people. As the neighbouring areas were inhabited by the white working-class people, the National Party government planned to relocate the black population. In 1955, 2000 policemen forcefully removed the black people to Meadowlands, Diepkloof and Moroka, which are now part of Soweto. The forced removal of the black families from Sophiatown exemplifies some of the excesses of South Africa under apartheid. Modisane laments in *Blame Me on History* that Sophiatown died not because it was a social embarrassment, but because "it was a political corn inside the apartheid boot" (14). His contention is that the destruction of Sophiatown was the result of discriminatory legislation. The classification of races and the deep rooted apartheid ideology were a painful experience for the blacks in South Africa, and Sophiatown became a site of resistance to this ideology in the late 1950s.

Alex La Guma (1925-1985) is perhaps one of the most accomplished writers whose work has come to be known as "protest writing" (Cornwell et. al. 19). This is perhaps because of his politically sharp commentary and his focus on episodes of brutality and violence. He wants to raise the consciousness and indignation in the non-white people, and speaks to the international community so as to inform them about the everyday reality of the system of apartheid. The common theme of his work is the suffering of the oppressed and the revolutionary awakening of the black South Africans. La Guma's fiction continuously questions the principles and policies of apartheid. His fiction intersects with the social and political developments that characterised apartheid. This places his fiction within the perspective of historical enquiry into the dynamics of apartheid and its consequences. The history of conflict and violence pervades South Africa under the apartheid regime. *A Walk in the Night* (1962) is probably his best known

work. Set in the ghetto of District Six, the novel focuses on a few fateful hours in the life of Michael Adonis who has been fired from his job because he defied a white foreman. Consequently he vents his frustration on a white old man and killed him. The police suspected an innocent bystander and shot him dead. Toward the end of the story, Adonis joined a gang of violent men and drifted into a life of crime. The novel portrays the inhabitants as little more than a feature of their dilapidated environment. Adonis moved to another street far away from the artificial Hanover. This street is surrounded by stretches of dump and battered houses with broken railings and cracked walls. By the end of the narrative, Adonis agrees to join a group of men and drifts into a life of crime. The characters of the novel lack political insight. They appear to the reader as little better that ghosts "doom'd for a certain term to walk the night" (quoted in Cornwell et. al. 19).

La Guma's second novel *And a Threefold Cord* (1964) deals with slum life. The narrative revolves around the Pauls family at the heart of a rain drenched ghetto in South Africa. The family comprises Charlie, Ronny and Johnny, their sister, Caroline, their mother and their father, aged and ailing. They have to face the harsh and relentless nature, and on the other hand, they are pitted against the brutality of the police. Nature as represented by rain and the police is portrayed as competing to submerge the ghetto and the people living in it. The following lines demonstrate how the police very rudely intrude the dreary and rain drenched life in the ghetto:

> The house was in darkness. Van Den Woud ordered one of his men to knock. The man stepped forward and banged on the door. The whole house seemed to shudder. The man banged on the door again and Van Den Woud shouted, 'Come on, open up. Open the door' (*And a Threefold* 31).

The above passage clearly reminds the reader the dark surrounding and dilapidated condition of the house. However, behind this gloomy and oppressive situation, there is a passionate desire for life and freedom. Through the depiction of the condition of the working class, the novelist seems to suggest that though the situation is unbearable, the condition is not permanent and people can reverse it. He advocates through the main character, Charlie that for personal survival and collective resistance to oppression it is essential to establishing links with other people in similar oppressive circumstances. This central message of solidarity – a threefold cord – is conveyed throughout the novel as

reflected in the dialogue of Charlie: "We all got to stand by each other" (112). As Nahem Yousaf observes, the novel represents La Guma's belief that only as a united community of people the oppressed can fight against the apartheid regime. "Only when the oppressed are politically aware will they come to the realization that they are subjects rather than objects" (Yousaf 60). In short, the novel reveals that La Guma has graphically described the pathetic condition of the blacks in the apartheid South Africa and attempted to awaken the blacks to their suffering.

A member of the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) and a successful defendant in the Treason Trial (1956–61), La Guma was detained and put under house arrest several times for suspected underground activity before he went into exile to London in 1966. As a prisoner he experienced brutality, cruelty and antagonism that permeate the South African society during apartheid. This is nicely captured in his novel *The Stone Country* (1967). The novel is set in a Cape Town jail which may be said to symbolise the imprisoned state of South Africa. Guma has beautifully described the prison. It was very hot. There were over forty prisoners in it in the middle of the summer season. So the smell of sweat of the prisoners was so heavy it seemed to be the smell of death. "The heat seemed packed in between the bodies of the men, like buyers of cotton wool, like a thick sauce which moistened a human salad . . ." (80). The narrative shows how an inmate of the prison succeeds in politicising his fellow prisoners.

La Guma's fourth novel *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) centres around the plight of two resistance fighters who are on the run from the authorities. One smuggles three young men over the border for military training and the other dies at the hands of the security police. The novel is dedicated to Basil February and other resistance fighters who died in Zimbabwe in 1967. The protagonist, Beukes is a leader of the underground forces of the anti-apartheid movement. In the novel there is a combination of 'the separate seasons' from which arises the resolve to make the final political standpoint in view of the relentless and violent apartheid order. The working class, as represented by Beukes, Elias Tekwane and Isaac, have organised themselves into a movement to fight the repressive state. The police force, representing the state, reacted violently. In fact, the central theme of the novel is the destruction of apartheid and to establish a democratic and humane social order. In the delineation of the theme and characters of the novel, La Guma highlights two aspects of the liberation movement:

the prominence of the working class and the necessity of violence in the struggle for liberation. He envisages the working class as the potential force of the resistance movement in South Africa. In this respect, he seems to be informed by the socio-historical realities of his time. As seen in his novels such as *A Walk in the Night*, *The Stone Country* and *And a Threefold Cord*, La Guma depicts the pain and suffering of the working class. The novel *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* gives such a picture in chapter five. Beukes saw the train stopped at the station. The next moment he found the platform was crowded with passengers moving towards the subway. As La Guma describes, "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" (66). La Guma has beautifully described the scene of a railway station.

However, Beukes has been given the task to unify the working class and develop their consciousness and political awareness. This was an uphill task for him as the whole "authoritarian state" was against the movement: "The movement writhed under the terror, bleeding" (48). It had been beaten down though not destroyed. The leaders and cadres were sent to the prison or they had to retreat into exile. In the opening chapter Beukes and Isaac discuss the progress of the movement. Beukes expresses his concern about the factory connections through which the organisation can operate. Later in the novel Abdullah refers to the canteen of the factory where leaflets are to be deposited so that workers can easily access them. References to the workers recur in the novel. These references and the major characters, which are from the working class, point to the fact that the working class plays a pivotal role in the struggle against apartheid. La Guma therefore focuses on the movement and attempts to show how the social and political realities of South Africa necessitate the acceptance of violence as a means of resistance. In brief, La Guma's fiction is informed by his socialist convictions. His fiction depicts the process of increasing radicalisation of the oppressed communities under apartheid.

Since its demolition in the late 1960s, District Six of Cape Town has become a symbol of what is evil about apartheid. Poets, novelists, song-writers, and journalists all recorded their anger through their work of art. They were upset with what had been done to the district. Richard Rive (1931-1989) is one such novelist. He joined the growing band of writers protesting against the evil effects of apartheid with his fictional works such as *Emergency* (1964) and *Buckingham Palace, District Six* (1986). The first novel

explores the events during the state of emergency declared by the government after the Sharpeville massacre. *Buckingham Palace, District Six* is about the life in District Six before the town was declared a 'whites only' area. The story focuses on the inhabitants of a row of cottages called 'Buckingham Palace' by the locals. The novel has three parts – "Morning 1955", "Afternoon 1960", and "Night 1970". The last part of the novel documents the destruction of District Six when the first houses were bulldozed. In the first two parts of the book, Rive describes the facts of life in the town. He seems to celebrate the efforts of the community of black and coloured people, whose members stand by each other no matter what may come and no matter that they have no closer binds than living in the same place. The characters in the novel are not respectable or obedient citizens but they have been depicted as likeable men and women who love District Six as their home. As one of the characters, Milton Zoot remarks that it might appear funny but he felt safe only in the District Six. Zoot further says that District Six is an island –an island in the sea of apartheid. He believes that the whole of District Six is "one big apartheid" though it cannot be seen. He and his fellowmen can see it only when the white man comes and forces it on them. When the police come, only then they feel or see apartheid. Zoot is aware that the District is dirty, that it is only a slum. But he has no regret for it because it is a place which is their own. Unlike the whites they never put notices in this place. It is the whites only who put notices, stating "Slegs blankes" or "Whites only" (Tucker 69).

The novel opens with the novelist's own memories of his childhood and then, through different anecdotes, places the characters in their respective cottages. The most colourful and interesting are Mary and her girls at number 201. They keep the Casbah, a "House of Pleasure". Zoot and the Boys live next door, number 203. The Jungles live at 205, the narrator at 207 and Last-Knight barber at 209. This companionable little community is a microcosm of the whole District. This little community's white landlord, Katzen supports and stands by his tenants when District Six is declared as 'white only' area. What emerges is the tolerance that each household learns for the other and their capacity to rally behind each other in times of need. Rive wants the District to enter the history of South Africa as a community of heterogeneous people who have learnt to live together and who thereby challenge the central argument of the apartheid. Rive's first novel *Emergency* (1964) was banned soon after its publication perhaps because of its

subject matter and the author's approach to the subject. The novel focuses on the State of Emergency following Sharpeville massacre, and it traces the process by which Andrew Dreyer, the protagonist decides to commit himself to the cause of liberation from the oppression. He is a young coloured schoolteacher in Cape Town who, as a marked man when the emergency is declared, is faced with a choice between exile and staying in the country and court arrest. And he chooses to stay. Within its socio-political context, the novel initiates a debate about the ways in which legalised oppression should be resisted. The debate is conducted through Dreyer and his friends. Abe is represented as an intellectual, a rigorous thinker but one who is unable to see his way to actions that satisfy his own theoretical position. For example, he is fiercely critical of the PAC organised campaign against the Pass Laws because he believes that the way it is conducted will perpetuate the racial awareness against which they are protesting. On the other hand, Dreyer is dependent on knowing himself through other people. Though a coloured himself, he loves a white girl. He participates in the march to Caledon Square Police Station against the white led by Philip Kgosana for being there made him feel part of it. In 1990 Rive wrote *Emergency Continued* which is obviously a sequel to his first novel *Emergency*. This novel also captures the lives of group of political activists who experience and live through the Sharpeville in 1960. Decades later, they were again caught up in the storm of protest and resistance to the apartheid regime in the 1980s.

After the Sharpeville massacre, the National Party government intensified its repression to control and curb widespread conflict and civil unrest. The government jailed, banned or exiled most of the anti-apartheid leaders. In response to this, intensified struggle against apartheid and a new set of organisations emerged to fill the vacuum created by the banning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress. In this context, the Black Consciousness movement emerged under the leadership of Steve Biko, the leader of the South African Students Organisation. The Black Consciousness movement emphasised cultural revival and assertion of black dignity and identity. The black started believing that they must be conscious of and celebrate their blackness and that they *alone* should fight against the apartheid regime. The white liberals could not genuinely fight against the white government. However, the revolt spread countrywide and made a far reaching impact on the South African society. A

manifestation of the Black Consciousness movement was the Soweto revolt that opposed the use of Afrikaans in black schools as a medium of instruction.

Miriam Tlali (1933-2017) as a novelist was heavily influenced by the Black Consciousness ideology. Her novel *Amandla* (1980) is one of a few Black Consciousness novels that make a fictional rendering of the June 1976 Soweto uprising. Based on Tlali's experience as a Soweto resident in 1976, the novel minutely depicts the uprising and its aftermath. Written from the perspectives of several young revolutionaries of the time, the novel vividly sketches the dynamics of the Black Consciousness ideology in the service of anti-apartheid activism. Through the protagonist of the novel, Pholoso, Tlali speaks to the reader from various points of view that the different communities of black South Africans have been affected by the Soweto uprising when police opened fire on the protestors. Pholoso objectively represents the Soweto events that shaped the uprising. No one in Soweto, he says, will forget the 16th June of 1976. Every household or family suffered in one way or the other. As he puts, it was a disaster that

> had left its indelible mark on everyone. The after-effects of the student demonstration and the resultant widespread riots were similar to the perils suffered during wars and epidemics (*Amandla* 272).

The above passage very effectively records the pain and suffering of the blacks resulting from the revolt. On the hand, while documenting the history of the 1976 Soweto rebellion, Tlali also throws light on the nature of the revolutionary programme in the resistance to apartheid. Pholoso masks his identity as a student leader in order to carry on the revolutionary activities. Pholoso has adopted the Christian name Moses. His survival depends on his becoming Moses. So Pholoso has to disguise himself in a Christian name. But this is not enough. His final disguise, final denial of identity awaits him. He goes into exile. He did not want to flee, he tells Felling. But he has to go because the student leaders thought it was the best thing he could do instead of rotting in the jail. Thus exile has become a necessity in the struggle against apartheid.

Tlali's *Amandla* is one of the four novels considered 'Soweto novels' that make a fictional rendering of the 1976 Soweto uprising. The other three novels are Mongane Wally Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981), Sydney Shipo Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981) and Mbulelo Mzamane's *Children of Soweto* (1982). Poet and novelist,

Mongane Wally Serote was born in Sophiatown in 1944. He was actively involved in political activism and establishing a black identity. He was arrested and imprisoned under Terrorism Act in 1969. After nine months he was released without being charged. Serote wrote *To Every Birth its Blood* at a time when resistance caught hold of a new generation and South Africa witnessed fierce attacks and bombings. The chief character of the novel, Tsi, a black journalist narrates the first part of the novel. Tsi works for a daily newspaper which is owned by a white in Johannesburg. Throughout the early part of the novel he opposes joining the anti-apartheid movement although he is aware that many of his friends have done so. His family is rather badly affected by the apartheid policies which created a fear psychosis and poisoned daily life of people. His brother, Fix is jailed without any trial in Roben Island and none has any news about him. He tries to overcome his frustration and hopelessness growing out of regular killings, brutal treatment and threats from the white police through drinking, sex and aimless roaming. The narrative then focuses on a new group of characters: John whose young wife was shot by police; two young women, Onalenna and Dekeledi; Tuki, another journalist; and Tsi's nephew, Oupa. These people slowly come together. By fits and starts, they join the movement and carry out acts of sabotage.

In this novel, Serote shows in a convincing manner the multifaceted and inexcusable horror of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The government had an overpowering control over the mundane, day to day life of people. Influenced by the events of the Soweto uprising, Serote seems to suggest that there is no other way to change the social conditions of South Africa except putting up a brave fight against the oppressors. Similar thoughts are expressed by Dikeledi whose father is imprisoned in Roben Island. He realises that there is not any way to deal with the present way of life in "this South Africa . . . there was nothing else that could be done to save it; there was only one way left –people had to fight" (132). Hence they resort to acts of violence.

Sydney Shipo Sepamla (1932-2007) was a poet, playwright and novelist. His second novel, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* is a fictional narrative about the 1976 Soweto riots and its aftermath. The novel chronicles daily life in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, distrust and terrorism. Dedicated to the young heroes of the day, the novel gives a rich account of the pivotal moments in the anti-apartheid movement. The action of the narrative covers a brief period in the summer of 1976 when the stability of the white rule

in Soweto was shaken by the violent attacks of the black. The young Mandla and his group of saboteurs took great pride in their ability to challenge the heavily armed police. In such a time and atmosphere, the protagonist Mzi enters Soweto to join the terrorist training. Devoid of past and future, Mzi exists as a point of focus for larger movement of history. A trained guerrilla warrior, his mission is to kill the policeman Batata who in his madness and cruelty symbolises racial oppression.

Lewis Nkosi (1936 - 2010) is a multifaceted personality who tried his hand at almost every literary genre. He spent long 30 years in exile due to the restrictions placed on him and his writing. Though he began his literary career early, he entered the realm of fiction much later than his *Drum* colleagues. He published his first novel, *Mating Birds* in 1986. The novel deals with inter-racial sexual relations. The narrative revolves around a South African black, Ndi Sibiya who tells the story from prison. While awaiting death sentence for his sexual relation with a white girl, Veronica, he narrates how he was found guilty of rape by the white South African court of justice during apartheid regime. The publication of *Mating Birds* received great critical attention. It received positive reaction outside South Africa. It was appreciated well by many reviewers in leading newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Thus, for example, the eminent black literary critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. who in his review of the novel in *The New York Times* describes Nkosi as "a sensitive, articulate and lyrical narrator". He further observes that *Mating Birds* "confronts boldly and imaginatively the strange interplay of bondage, desire and torture inherent in interracial sexual relationships within the South African prison house of apartheid" (3). However, there was mixed reaction to novel in South Africa. Many newspapers such as *The African Communist* praised it but many others condemned it. South African author Andre Brink scathingly criticises it in his review, "An Ornithology of Sexual Politics: Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*". Brink calls the novel "sexist" with "clichés of cheap soft-porn magazines" (8). He argues that Nkosi denies any voice to the white girl, Veronica and thereby revealing that he is not concerned for her. He is rather more interested to establish his own identity through Ndi Sibiya as an arrogant male.

However, as Ndi Sibiya tells the events of his life while waiting for his execution, he reveals the divided South African society. He tells how he becomes obsessed with a white girl in the racially divided Durban beach. He is lying on the non-

white side and she on the border of the 'Whites only'. Though the apartheid laws prevent any interracial sexual relationship, they fall in love with each other through a mode of wordless communication ignoring the invisible barriers of apartheid. Challenging apartheid through sexual discourse also forms the theme of Gordimer's novel, *An Occasion for Loving*.

1.2.2 The White Novelists

The writers of the white liberal tradition such as Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer passed through a peculiar situation during the apartheid regime. Born as whites into a race from which it was impossible for them to separate themselves, they were searching through their writing a suitable position. And in doing so they played a unique role in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. The characters in most of the novels of the liberal tradition are often defeated by social and political conditions. But the values the characters or the novelists assume seem to achieve symbolic vindication. They advocate individual freedom, nonviolent resolution of conflict, justice and fair play, and so on. "In this way the white authors of these novels express their outrage at and opposition to the indignity, disadvantage, and persecution suffered by their black countrymen, and they did so in the name of humanist values shared by enlightened liberals world over" (Cornwell et. al. 10). In this context the important novelists are Alan Paton, Dan Jacobson, Andre Brink, and Nadine Gordimer.

Alan Paton (1903 –1988) occupied a distinctive position in the literary history of South Africa. He attempted to draw the attention of the world to the condition of the black in South Africa. His famous novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* had been published four months before the National Party came to power. Paton along with some of friends formed the Liberal Party of South African in 1953, which fought against the apartheid legislation introduced by the National Party government. However, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is considered as the best known and most enduring novel in South Africa. The novel puts South Africa in the map of world by attracting western attention to the effects of racial discrimination. Throughout the novel pervades a poignant lament for the decline of rural life and social order. It warns about the "dire consequences for South African society if harmony between races –and between humankind and nature –was not

established (Cornwell et. al., 152). The central character, Stephen Kumalo is a priest who travels from rural South Africa to Johannesburg in search of his son, Absalom. The father discovers his son in the prison for the son has killed a white man –a man who ironically felt deeply the plight of the native South African population. The novel captures the deep complexities in the European and African experiences, cultures and their relations. Kumalo speaks of such a relation when he says that a white man taught him a number of things. "It was he also who taught me that we do not work for men, that we work for land and the people. We do not even work for money, he said" (229). Paton seems to suggest and as the title indicates, the ordinary citizens of South Africa cry for their beloved country under the pressure of racism and brutality of apartheid. Despite its vivid portrayal of darkness and despair, the novel still offers hope for a better future. It begins a fictional discourse which sought a cordial relationship between people across colour bar. Stephen Watson observes that Paton wants to solve the sociological problems through the mouthpieces of Kumalo and Msimangu. The novelist suggests to solve through love the problems caused by detribalisation and urbanisation (quoted in Cornwell et. al. 9). It may be argued that subsequent historical events bore witness to Kumalo's, or for that matter Paton's faith in the power of love. F. W. de Klerk in 1990 unbanned African National Congress and released Nelson Mandela unconditionally. Mandela came out of the prison after twenty seven years. But he did not, surprisingly, bore any bitterness against any one. He advocated reconciliation and brotherhood. Thus the belief that love can conquer fear becomes true. Thus, the novel anticipated correctly the future much ahead.

Paton's next novel, *Too Late the Phalarope* (1953) explores the traditional theme of miscegenation through an interracial sexual relationship between a young Afrikaner and a coloured girl. The protagonist, Pieter van Vlaanderen is a police lieutenant. He falls in love and sleep with a coloured girl named Stephanie. Thus he violates the apartheid law, the Immorality Act (1949) which declares sexual relations between whites and non-whites illegal. The novel records how the police lieutenant struggles all alone against the cruel apartheid society and his family. Paton adds to the familiar theme an analysis of the psychosis of racial prejudice and highlights the plight of the young police torn between his sexual desires and the repressive rules of his society. John O. Jordan describes the novel as a "personal tragedy" and also "a prelude to larger cultural tragedy" which is a threat to the Afrikaner community unless they change their ways (682). Pieter is

handsome and a devout Afrikaner. He is admired for his leadership qualities and for his talent as a rugby player. In other words, he may be said to epitomise the cultural ideals of his community. So his interracial sexual relationship is a disgrace to himself and to his community as well. Such is the view of the narrator, Sophie who is the aunt of Pieter. She considers his 'misconduct' as self-destructive and seems to promote a sympathetic attitude in contrast to the stern Puritan standpoint that condemns him.

The events of the story are not shown against any specific dates. But the text of *Too Late the Phalarope* reveals the pressure of the events of the period immediately preceding the National Party coming to power in 1948. After the Second World War, Pieter and other South African soldiers who fought for the British returned home. The United Party led by General Smuts controlled the government. The Afrikaner National Party, however, was rising. Pieter's father was a chairman of National Party at Cape Town and enjoyed considerable influence. Paton has been criticised by critics for dating the action of novel in the pre-1948 period and yet not dealing with the events directly. This criticism is untenable. The novel is concerned with period when apartheid was not yet institutionalised. In this sense the novel can be described as "a prehistory rather than a history of apartheid" (Jordan 683). However, *Too Late the Phalarope* displays forces of opposition at different level. Thus, Stephanie is a character of potential resistance. Her act of going against the interracial marriage shows her transgressive energy that gives her a freedom of movement.

Paton's last novel, *Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful* (1981) narrates the events of the 1950s in a semi fictionalised style. There are in the novel real political events and leading figures which are recorded faithfully. At the same time, the novel contains many fictional characters who resemble real figures of the time. It is particularly an account of the Liberal Party, of which Paton himself was a key figure. The novel examines the liberals of the 1950s. The Liberal Party, the novel suggests, remained only a marginal force in the titanic struggle between the Afrikaners and the native Africans. Paton seems to argue that the party nevertheless plays an honourable role in the resistance history of the country. However, to Jean-Philppe Wade the interesting point of the novel is "its *form*, a *heteroglossia* of voices across the political spectrum" (97). Besides the third person narrator, the narrative is developed through a series of letters. This allows the novel to represent the different political perspectives of the time.

Andre´ Brink (1935 –2015) is another significant novelist and academic, who was an anti-apartheid campaigner. He was a great sympathiser of the African National Congress (ANC). He joined a group of liberal Afrikaner intellectuals who met the exiled ANC leadership. He wrote many novels characterised by their unequivocal stance towards racial injustice. His work in Afrikaans was banned. He switched to English to escape censorship and was shortlisted twice for Booker Prize. Through his fiction Brink provides an interpretation of events in the apartheid South Africa. As Brink strongly opposed the apartheid policies, his novel in Afrikaans *Kennis van die aand* (translated into English by himself as *Looking on Darkness*) was the first Afrikaans book to be banned by the South African government. His novels are mostly concerned with the historical realities in his milieu during the apartheid regime though his recent works deal with new issues faced by life in post-apartheid South Africa. His early novels such as *Looking on Darkness* (1973) and *Rumours of Rain* (1978) attract world attention and made him famous. *Looking on Darkness* was his first novel to be banned in South Africa. It narrates the tale of a coloured actor, Joseph Malan who has been tortured and sentenced to death for the murder of his white lover. He recalls the past, half-history and half-fantasy, a chronicle of subjugation through the generations. *Rumours of Rain*, like Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* brings out the evil effects of apartheid through the consciousness of a white businessman. He is best known for his 1979 novel *A Dry White Season*. It tells the story how a white schoolteacher Ben du Toit gets involved in search of justice for the killing of the son of his black gardener and ends up taking the entire apartheid system. The boy, who was arrested after the Soweto uprising, mysteriously disappeared. "Du Toit's investigation begins innocuously enough –he merely seeks an official explanation for the mysterious disappearance –but his discovery of the brutality at the heart of the apartheid order draws him further and further into open rebellion" (Cornwell et al. 62). In his quest, he learns the truth of his privileged position as a white, the poverty of black society and the corrupt system that has kept them apart. Du Toit loses family, friends, his job and all he has to follow his heart and get justice.

Another important novel of Brink is *The Wall of the Plague* (1984). In this novel, Brink represents a broader depiction of the issue of apartheid. The novel takes an allegorical resonance for contemporary South Africa. With his mastery on narrative techniques, specially, allegory, Brink captures his countrymen's predicaments in terms

that speak more directly to the outside world. 'The wall of the plague' as allegorically rendered in the novel, is not only an attack on the plague of apartheid but also on all that come in the way of racial harmony and peaceful human relationship. The setting of the novel is far away from South Africa. It is set in the rural Provence, France. The characters have universal significance. The protagonist, Andrea Malgas is a young coloured South African woman who runs away from Cape Town with her white lover, Paul. She spends eight long years in Europe trying to distance herself from her past until she confronts Mandla Mqayisa, a black South African militant. Andrea intends to highlight the plight of apartheid by writing on the film about Black Death in Europe and by giving indirect aid to the opposition. At this point of her life, Mandla intervenes in her life. In Europe he raises money for the anti-apartheid cause. He inspires Andrea to go back and join the anti-apartheid movement. Indeed, *The Wall of the Plague* is a compelling depiction of the agonising effects of apartheid in South Africa. The gory and dehumanising situation of the South African society is vividly represented through Mandla:

> The point is, I got the impression that a country like South Africa has no place for people who simply want to carry on living, indulge in their sins, have good meal from time to time, enjoy a bit of music or a good painting or a good book. You're forced to walk right into the fire. Otherwise, the only choices you have are to go man or to die (*The Wall* 37).

Racism with its wall of apartheid is the worst plague of all. It is the source of pain, death and impossibility of relationship even among people who love each other. However, a great visionary as he is, Brink is optimistic and provides solutions for the draconian policy of apartheid. He suggests that one cannot overcome racism by treating it like the plague. The only way to cure it is to treat it the way sick people are healed with patience. It is not possible to overcome racism until people change their medieval mindset. That is the way to a civilized future.

Brink suggests that the interracial conflict and violence in apartheid South Africa can be overcome through reaching out beyond the boundaries of race for human contact. This is artistically conveyed through the metaphor of ineffective walls against the plague. Andrea's visits to Provence, the Luberon and Vaucluse are described in detail. The two-

metre high, dry stone wall, built in 1721 over 26 kilometres of terrain was intended to block northbound travellers during the dreadful plague that visited Marseille. But before the wall was completed, the plague had already appeared in places beyond.

An acclaimed critic and novelist, John Maxwell Coetzee, popularly known as J. M. Coetzee was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1940. He taught English literature at the University of Cape Town from 1972 till his retirement. He immigrated to Australia in 2002 and won Nobel Prize in 2003. His fiction is innovative and highly self-conscious. While creating fictional landscapes, his work probes the philosophical foundation of fiction. In his first novel, *Dusklands* (1974) juxtaposes two narratives –one with the setting of contemporary Vietnam war and the other an eighteenth century South African frontier story. Both the stories expose and condemn colonial violence. Coetzee's next novel, *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) is concerned with the spinster Magda's search for a language to end her isolation in a deserted Karoo farm. The novel is an extended monologue of Magda who murders her father. She is not a reliable narrator. In fact, whole narrative becomes metafictional subverting the notion of psychological realism. The navel may also be said to be a subversion of the conventions of the plaasroman (the pastoral novel). It is clear from Magda's narration that the farm is not a quiet rural retreat where one can lead a simple life. It appears to be a disturbing world of patriarchal and racial domination. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is considered to be most widely read novel of Coetzee. It tells the story of a liberal magistrate who has been serving a remote village of an unnamed empire. He is disturbed at the arrival of the dangerous Colonel Joll who was sent to put down a rumoured rebellion. The magistrate experiences a crisis of conscience as he has to choose between loyalty to his masters and protection of their alleged barbarian enemies. The setting of the novel in terms of time and place is obscure. This is, perhaps, done deliberately to explore the mindset of colonial repression. However, *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) is considered to be the most memorable creation of Coetzee. The novel is set in a future South Africa entangled in civil war. Through the protagonist, Michael K, the narrative shows how the troubled state has taken to confining the poor and unemployed to fenced camps with a view to controlling the movement of people in the country.

In these and subsequent narratives, Coetzee clearly refers to the situation in South Africa. He does not restrict his fiction to the realist form demanded by the discourse of

history. A recurrent theme of his fiction is the failure of love, relations corrupted by the abuse of power between the coloniser and the colonised. However, day by day his work becomes increasingly metafictional.

Nadine Gordimer's fiction can be discussed in the context of the above developments in fiction in South Africa. Gordimer has responded to the impact of apartheid in a more subtle way. She begins to explore the effects of apartheid in South Africa through liberal whites in her early fiction such as *The Lying Days* and *Occasion for Loving*. Her later novels like *Burger's Daughter* capture the rigid race relations and the deepening divisions in the society of South Africa under apartheid. She has shown a strong commitment to a multiracial South Africa through the anti-apartheid nature of her fiction. This forms the subject matter of the next chapter.

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