

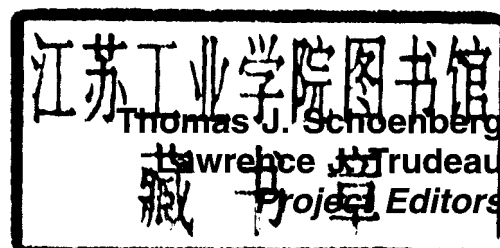
Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 162

TOPICS VOLUME

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the Works of Various Topics
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary,
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys
of National Literatures**



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 162

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN 0-7876-8916-5
ISSN 0276-8178

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Thomson Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Thomson Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Thomson Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *TCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* Yearbook, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." In *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 73-82. New York: Roof Books, 1990. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 127, edited by Janet Witlec, 3-8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*. Ed. Charles Bernstein. New York: Roof Books, 1990. 73-82. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Janet Witlec. Vol. 127. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 3-8.

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Anti-Apartheid Literature

INTRODUCTION

Apartheid, which in the Afrikaans language means “apart-ness” or “separateness,” was the system of racial discrimination and white political domination adopted by the South African National Party when it came to power in 1948. Historically, apartheid had emerged from policies of racial segregation which had been practiced since the first Europeans—the Dutch, followed by the British—settled in South Africa in the seventeenth century. The official justification underlying apartheid was that each race—rigidly divided into “Whites” (all Europeans), Bantus or “Blacks,” “Coloureds” (people of mixed race), and “Asians” (Indians and Pakistanis who had been brought to South Africa as laborers)—would prosper and live in harmony with one another if allowed to develop separately, while tension would result from the races living together and competing for the same resources. What the apartheid system did, of course, was ensure the political and economic supremacy of the white minority, which comprised less than twenty percent of South Africa’s total population in 1948 and less than thirteen percent of the population in 1994, the year that Nelson Mandela was elected president of South Africa and apartheid was finally abolished.

The apartheid system deployed a series of laws to keep nonwhite people disenfranchised, poor, uneducated, and separate. The 1950 Population Registration Act compelled nonwhites to carry a pass to identify their racial group and to authorize their presence in restricted white areas. The Group Areas Act of 1950 assigned racial designations to residential and business sections in urban areas, while the Land Acts of 1954 and 1955 restricted nonwhite residence to specific areas. In 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act designated areas called Bantustans, where Blacks were to required live so that they would not intrude on white neighborhoods. The 1952 Native Law Amendment Act established the close control of the movement of urban Blacks in particular. The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 made every nonwhite South African a citizen of one of the homelands, thereby excluding Blacks from South African politics. These laws, which effectively reserved over eighty percent of South African land for a mere twenty percent of the population, along with the laws that prevented nonwhites from voting or holding office, were called “grand” apartheid, as opposed to “petty” apartheid, which referred to the racist laws affecting daily

routine, including which hospitals, schools, colleges, and theaters people of different races could attend. The 1953 Bantu Education Act gave the state total control over education for Blacks. This petty apartheid law prohibited most social contact between the races, enforced the segregation of public facilities and the separation of educational standards, created race-specific job categories, restricted the powers of nonwhite unions, and curbed nonwhite participation in government.

Although the apartheid government was quick to suppress any opposition, resistance to apartheid within South Africa was ongoing. A number of political groups, such as the African National Congress (ANC) and Steve Biko’s South African Students’ Organization (SASO), opposed apartheid using a variety of tactics—both non-violent and violent—that resulted in activists being severely punished by the government. In 1955 over 150 activists, Nelson Mandela among them, were imprisoned on charges of treason for signing the Freedom Charter, a document that called for civil rights and government “based on the will of the people.” In 1960, in the Sharpeville township, fifty miles south of Johannesburg, police killed 69 people and wounded 180 when 5,000 demonstrators staged a nonviolent protest against the pass laws by flooding the police stations without passes. In 1976 police in the Soweto township opened fire on 15,000 secondary school students who were marching to protest a ruling that they be taught in Afrikaans, a language that neither they nor their teachers knew. Steve Biko, the leader of the protest, was beaten to death in prison, and a period of massive violent protest and increasingly repressive government response ensued. Confronted with economic sanctions and international pressure, in the late 1980s and early 1990s South Africans began to take steps to end apartheid, culminating in the 1994 election of Nelson Mandela as president.

Although South African writers raised their voices in protest against apartheid, censorship precluded most of them from being read in South Africa. Anti-apartheid writers such as Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Mary Benson, Richard Rive, Bessie Head, Peter Abrahams, Dan Jacobson, C. J. Driver, and J. M. Coetzee had their works banned in South Africa. Many writers, such as Rive, Alex La Guma, Dennis Brutus, Breyten Breytenbach, and D. M. Zwelonke were imprisoned on Robben Island for their writing and political activities. Many other writers of anti-apartheid literature, particularly Black and mixed-race writers such as Rive, Abrahams, La Guma, Head, Arthur Nortje, Lewis Nkosi, and Ezek-

iel Es'kia Mphahlele were exiled or went into self-exile to escape political oppression, as did some white South Africans, such as Breytenbach, Brink, and Athol Fugard. Prior to the official establishment of the apartheid regime, South African writers such as Olive Schreiner and Sol Plaatje decried the injustice of racial segregation and unfair economic policies that were in effect before the South African National Party institutionalized such practices. Although anti-apartheid literature is multi-faceted and addresses many aspects of human experience, generally speaking there have been two major traditions—the white, liberal tradition begun by Schreiner and continued, in varying degrees, by Alan Paton, Gordimer, and Coetzee, and a more radicalized, protest tradition that originated in the Black townships, out of which came the fiction of Abrahams, Rive, and LaGuma, and the poetry of Mphahlele, Mongane Wally Serote, and Oswald Mtshali.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Peter Abrahams

Mine Boy (novel) 1946

Mary Benson

At the Still Point (novel) 1970

Nelson Mandela (biography) 1970

Breyten Breytenbach

And Death White as Words: An Anthology of the Poetry of Breyten Breytenbach (poetry) 1978

True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist (memoir) 1984

André Brink

Kennis van die aand [*Looking on Darkness*] (novel) 1973

'n Droe wit seisoen [*A Dry White Season*] (novel) 1979

J. M. Coetzee

Dusklands (novel) 1974

Waiting for the Barbarians (novel) 1980

The Life and Times of Michael K. (novel) 1983

Achmat Dangor

Waiting for Leila (short stories) 1981

Bulldozer (poetry) 1983

The Z-Town Trilogy (novel) 1990

Private Voices (novel) 1992

Athol Fugard

The Cell (play) 1957

The Blood Knot (play) 1961

Boesman and Lena (play) 1965

Sizwe Bansi Is Dead (play) 1973

The Island (play) 1974

Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act (play) 1974

"*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys (play) 1982

Nadine Gordimer

The Lying Days (novel) 1953

A World of Strangers (novel) 1958

Occasion for Loving (short stories) 1963

The Late Bourgeois World (novel) 1966

A Guest of Honour (novel) 1970

The Conservationist (novel) 1974

Burger's Daughter (novel) 1979

July's People (novel) 1981

A Sport of Nature (novel) 1987

Bessie Head

When Rain Clouds Gather (novel) 1969

Maru (novel) 1971

A Question of Power (novel) 1973

The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales (short stories) 1977

Dan Jacobson

The Trap (novel) 1955

A Dance in the Sun (novel) 1956

The Evidence of Love (novel) 1960

The Beginners (novel) 1966

Alex La Guma

A Walk in the Night, and Other Stories (novel and short stories) 1962

And a Threefold Cord (novel) 1964

The Stone Country (novel) 1969

In the Fog of the Season's End (novel) 1972

Time of the Butcherbird (novel) 1979

Doris Lessing

The Grass Is Singing (novel) 1950

This Was the Old Chief's Country (short stories) 1952

The Golden Notebook (novel) 1962

African Stories (short stories) 1964

Ezekiel Es'kia Mphahlele

Man Must Live, and Other Stories (short stories) 1947

Down Second Avenue (autobiography) 1959

The Living and the Dead, and Other Stories (short stories) 1961

In Corner B, and Other Stories (short stories) 1967

The Wanderers (novel) 1971

Chirundu (novel) 1981

Oswald Mtshali

Sounds of a Cowhide Drum (poetry) 1972

Fireflames (poetry) 1980

Lauretta Ngcobo
Cross Of Gold (novel) 1981
And They Didn't Die (novel) 1990

Lewis Nkosi
The Rhythm of Violence (play) 1963
We Can't All Be Martin Luther King (radio play) 1971
Malcolm (play) 1972
Mating Birds (novel) 1983

Arthur Nortje
Dead Roots (poetry) 1973

Alan Paton
Cry, the Beloved Country (novel) 1948
Too Late the Phalarope (novel) 1953
Tales from a Troubled Land (short stories) 1961
Sponono [with Krishna Shah] (play) 1964
Towards the Mountain (autobiography) 1980
Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful (novel) 1981

Sol Plaatje
Mhudi: An Epic of Native Life a Hundred Years Ago
 (novel) 1930

William Plomer
Turbott Wolfe (novel) 1925

Richard Rive
African Songs (short stories) 1963
Quartet: New Voices from South Africa [editor and contributor] (short stories) 1963
Emergency (novel) 1964
Writing Black (autobiography) 1982
Advance, Retreat (short stories) 1983
"Buckingham Palace," District Six (novel) 1986

Olive Schreiner
The Story of an African Farm (novel) 1883

Sipho Sepamla
Hurry Up to It! (poetry) 1975
The Blues Is You in Me (poetry) 1976
The Soweto I Love (poetry) 1977
The Root Is One (novel) 1979
Children of the Earth (poetry) 1983
A Ride on the Whirlwind (novel) 1984
Third Generation (novel) 1986
From Gore to Soweto (poetry) 1988
Scattered Survival (novel) 1988

Mongane Wally Serote
Yakhal'inkomo, Renoster (poetry) 1972
No Baby Must Weep (poetry) 1975
Tsetlo (poetry) 1975
Behold Mama, Flowers (poetry) 1978

A Tough Tale (poetry) 1987
Third World Express (poetry) 1992

Can Themba
The Will to Die (short stories) 1972

D. M. Zwelonke
Robben Island (novel) 1973

OVERVIEWS

Nadine Gordimer (essay date 1976)

SOURCE: Gordimer, Nadine. "English-Language Literature and Politics in South Africa." In *Aspects of South African Literature*, edited by Christopher Heywood, pp. 99-120. London: Heinemann, 1976.

[Gordimer, who in 1991 received the Nobel Prize in literature, was a seminal literary figure in the anti-apartheid movement. Throughout her career, her novels and short stories have emphasized the dehumanizing effects of the apartheid system. In addition, she is also known for her many polemical and scholarly essays on censorship and the relationship between literature and politics. In the following essay, Gordimer provides an overview of Anglophone South African writing, focusing on literature produced during and in reaction to the apartheid state.]

Speaking of South Africa, the association of politics with literature produces a snap equation: censorship. But is that the beginning and end of my subject? Indeed, it may be the end, in a literal sense, of a book or a writer: the book unread, the writer silenced. But censorship is the most extreme, final, and above all, most obvious effect of politics upon a literature, rather than the sum of the subject. Where and when, in a country such as South Africa, can the influence of politics on literature be said to begin? Politics, in the form of an agent of European Imperialism—the Dutch East India Company—brought the written word to this part of Africa; politics, in the form of European missionaries who spread, along with their Protestantism or Catholicism, the political influence of their countries of origin, led to the very first transposition of the indigenous oral literature to the written word. When the first tribal praise-poem was put down on paper, what a political act that was! What could be communicated only by the mouth of the praise-singer to the ears of those present, was transmogrified into a series of squiggles on paper that could reach far beyond his living physical presence, be-

yond even the chain of memory of those who came after him. With that act a culture took hold upon and was taken hold upon by another.

Doesn't the subject begin quite simply, right there? And doesn't it extend—not simply at all—through the cultural isolation of whites who left their Europe over three centuries ago as the result of political events such as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Napoleonic wars, the pogroms of Eastern Europe; does it not extend through the cultural upheaval of blacks under conquest; and the cultural ambiguity of the children one race fathered upon the other? The relationship of politics to literature in South Africa implies all of this, just as it does the overtly political example of writers forced into exile, and the subsequent development of their writings within the changed consciousness of exile. For some books are banned, and so South Africans never read them. But all that is and has been written by South Africans is profoundly influenced, at the deepest and least controllable level of consciousness, by the politics of race. All writers everywhere—even those like Joyce who can't bear to live in their own countries, or those like Genet who live outside the pale of their country's laws—are shaped by their own particular society reflecting a particular political situation. Yet there is no country in the western world where the daily enactment of the law reflects politics as intimately and blatantly as in South Africa. There is no country in the western world where the creative imagination, whatever it seizes upon, finds the focus of even the most private event set in the overall social determination of racial laws.

I am not going to devote any time, here, to outlining or discussing how the Publications Control Board, the censorship system, works in South Africa. I take it that anyone interested in South African literature is familiar with the facts. But lest it be thought that I pass over that matter of censorship lightly, let me remark aside that personally, although I myself have continued and shall continue to bang my head in protesting concert against that particular brick in the granite wall, my fundamental attitude is that South Africans cannot expect to rid themselves of the Publications Control Board until they get rid of apartheid. Censorship is an indispensable part of an interlocking system of repressive laws.

There are other forms of censorship in South Africa. Anyone under a political ban may not be published or quoted; which means that the books of a number of white writers in exile, and those of a number of black writers in exile and at home, are automatically banned, no matter what their subject or form. Through this kind of censorship, the lively and important group of black writers who burst into South African literature in the 'fifties and early 'sixties disappeared from it as if through a trap-door. A young black writer, Don Mattera, went the same way in 1973. Only those of us who care

particularly for literature and writers remember; by the time the newspaper has been left behind on the breakfast table, most people have forgotten the banned authors and books listed there—the ultimate triumph of censorship.

I have said that South African literature was founded in an unrecorded political act: the writing down in Roman characters of some tribal praise-song. But the potted histories in academic theses always set its beginning with the writings of a white settler, an Englishman, Thomas Pringle. He was born the year the French Revolution started and came to South Africa in 1820, under the British government scheme of assisted immigration resorted to because of the agricultural depression in England that followed Waterloo. For we white South Africans may somewhat unkindly be called, as Norman Mailer did his fellow Americans, 'a nation of rejects transplanted by the measure of every immigration of the last three hundred and fifty years'. Pringle led a Scottish party to settle on the border of the so-called Neutral Territory of the Cape from which the Xhosa people had been driven. Thus far, he is a classic white frontiersman; but this Scottish scribbler of album verse at once felt the awkward necessity to adapt his late Augustan diction and pastoral sentimentality to the crude events of Africa:

First the brown Herder with his flock
Comes winding round my hermit-rock
His mien and gait and vesture tell,
No shepherd he from Scottish fell;
For crook the guardian gun he bears, . . .
Nor Flute has he, nor merry song . . .
But, born the white man's servile thrall,
Knows that he cannot lower fall.

Pringle was never quite to find the adequate vocabulary for what moved him to write in Africa (Coleridge deplored his archaisms) but he anticipated, astonishingly, themes that were not to be taken up again by any writer in South Africa for a hundred years, and longer. Unlike the majority of his fellow frontiersmen he refused to regard the cattle raids carried out by the Xhosa as proof that they were irredeemable savages. In a poem entitled 'The Caffer' he asks awkward questions of the whites:

He is a robber?—True; it is a strife
Between the black-skinned bandit and the white,
(A Savage?—Yes, though loth to aim at life,
Evil for evil fierce he doth requite.
A heathen?—Teach him, then, thy better creed,
Christian! If thou deserv'st that name indeed.)

He foreshadowed the contemporary South African liberal view—obliquely comforting to the white conscience, but none the less true—that any form of slavery degrades oppressor as well as the oppressed:

The Master, though in luxury's lap he loll
 . . . quakes with secret dread, and shares the hell he
 makes.

Pringle was one of the first and is one of the few whites ever to grant that black men also have their heroes. He wrote a poem about the Xhosa prophet Makana who led an army of 10,000 tribesmen on the British settlement at Grahamstown in 1819:

Wake! Amakosa, wake!
 And arm yourselves for war.
 As coming winds the forest shake,
 I hear a sound from far:
 It is not thunder in the sky,
 Nor lion's roar upon the hill
 But the voice of HIM who sits on high
 And bids me speak his will . . .
 To sweep the White Men from the earth
 And drive them to the sea.

Pringle even wrote of love across the colour-line, long before miscegenation laws made it a statutory crime and the Immorality Act provided the theme of so many South African novels and stories. A young Boer speaks:

Our Father bade each of us choose a mate
 Of Fatherland blood, from the *black* taint free
 As became a Dutch Burgher's proud degree.
 My brothers they rode to the Bovenland,
 And each came with a fair bride back in his hand;
 But *I* brought the handsomest bride of them all—
 Brown Dinah, the bondmaid who sat in our hall.
 My Father's displeasure was stern and still;
 My Brothers' flamed forth like a fire on the hill;
 And they said that my spirit was mean and base,
 To lower myself to the servile race.

The young Boer asks:

Dear Stranger, from England the free,
 What good tidings bring'st thou for Arend Plessie?
 Shall the Edict of Mercy be sent forth at last,
 To break the harsh fetters of Colour and Caste?

Pringle himself was back in England after only six years in South Africa, hounded out of the Cape Colony by the English Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, for his fight against press censorship. This had been introduced to protect the British colonial regime against any mention of those controversial issues of the time, slavery, the condition of the black, and the anti-British feelings of the Boers.

After Pringle had been packed off 'home' in 1826, a long colonial silence fell. Diaries were kept, chronicles were written by white missionaries and settlers, but no soundings were put down to the depths reached only in imaginative writing until Olive Schreiner wrote *The Story of an African Farm* in the 1880s. It is a very famous book and one that, as a South African remembering it as a mind-opening discovery of adolescence, one

tends to think of as all-encompassing: that is to say, that final accomplishment, the central themes of South African life given unafraid and yet non-exhibitionist expression by a writer whose skill is equal to them. But reading it again—and it is a book that stands up to re-reading—one finds that of course it isn't that at all. It is one of those open-ended works whose strength lies at the level where human lives—our own and the book's characters'—plunge out of grasp. The freedom that Lyndall, one of the two extraordinary main characters, burns for, is not the black man's freedom but essentially spiritual freedom in the context of the oppression of women through their sexual role; yet the passion of revolt is so deeply understood that it seems to hold good for all sufferings of oppression. The society Lyndall rejects is the shallow white frontier society; yet the rejection questions societal values that gave rise to it and will endure beyond it. It is a book whites in South Africa like to think of, also as transcending politics; I have never met a black who has read it, with—ironically—the important exception of Richard Rive, who has just completed a book about Olive Schreiner's life and work. Certainly no black could ever have written *African Farm*. The alienation of Lyndall's longing to 'realize forms of life utterly unlike mine' is attempted transcendence of the isolation and lack of identity in a white frontier society; in the final analysis, this is a book that expresses the wonder and horror of the wilderness, and for the indigenous inhabitant that wilderness is home. The novel exists squarely within the political context of colonialism. Olive Schreiner's conscience was to reject colonialism, and her creative imagination to disappear in the sands of liberal pamphleteering, many years later. Perhaps she would have written no more imaginative work, anyway. But perhaps she took the conscious decision that Jean-Paul Sartre, in the context of the Pan-African struggle, has said any writer should make—to stop writing if he is needed to do any other task that, as he sees it, his country requires of him. It is certain that political pressures, in the form of a deep sense of injustice and inhumanity existing within their society, can cause certain writers to question the luxury value of writing at all, within a country like South Africa.

The establishment of South African literature in English and (so far as it existed) in African languages as a literature of dissent came in the 1920s and early 'thirties. The white man's military conquest of the blacks was over. The war between the whites, Boer and Briton, was over; the white man's other war, in which Boer and black had fought under the British flag along with the Briton, was over. In the State of Union of the four South African countries, the British Cape Colony and Natal, the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, blacks had been deprived of such rights as they had held at the pleasure of the more liberal of the separate governments. The black man's trusting willingness to identify his destiny with the white man's is ex-

pressed in the victory praise-song-cum-poem of Samuel Mqhayi, a Xhosa poet of the time, who assumed a common black-white patriotism after the 1914-18 war: 'Go catch the Kaiser, Let the Kaiser come and talk with us / We'll tell him how the Zulus won at Sandlwana / Of Thaba Ntsu where the Boers were baffled . . .' The assumption was met with rebuff and betrayal; only white men could be heroes, at home or in Valhalla.

Then William Plomer, aged 19, published in 1925 a work of genius, a forced flower fertilized upon an immature talent by reaction against the racialism which had by then become entrenched under the name of a union of the best interests of all people in South Africa. *Turbott Wolfe* (Plomer's hero as well as the title of the novel) trails the torn umbilical cord of colonialism; Wolfe is not a born South African but an Englishman who plunges into Africa from without. But he understands at once: 'There would be the unavoidable question of colour. It is a question to which every man in Africa, black, white or yellow, must provide his answer.' The colonial cord is ruptured, early on and for ever, for South African literature, because Plomer's novel does not measure Africa against the white man, but the white man against Africa. With it, a new literary consciousness was born: that no writer could go deeply into the life around him and avoid some sort of answer. Laurens van der Post's *In a Province* is awake to it, concerned with modern Africans in conflict with white-imposed values rather than Africans as exotic scenic props in the white man's story. So, fighting against it all the way, is Sarah Gertrude Millin's *God's Stepchildren*. This extraordinarily talented novel begs the question, as a kind of answer, by revealing the morality South Africa has built on colour and the suffering this brings to people of mixed blood, but nowhere suggesting that the sense of sin suffered by Barry Lindsell, play-white grandson of a white missionary and a Hottentot woman, is tragically, ludicrously, and wastefully misplaced, until Barry Lindsell confesses to his young English wife that he has black blood and she says in surprised relief: 'Is that all?'

Meanwhile, the novel has shown that it is, indeed, everything, in the life around her from which the author drew her substance.

Roy Campbell was the third of the famous triumvirate—Plomer, Van der Post, Campbell—who began in the 'twenties the tradition of exile, often self-imposed, that has afflicted South African literature ever since. Although accepted and anthologized as one of those who (in his words about William Plomer) 'dared alone to thrash a craven race / And hold a mirror to its dirty face', Campbell provides a fascinating example of the strange and complex mutations brought about by the effect of politics upon writers and literature in South Africa.

Campbell was a writer whose work may be lifted like a transparency to show against the light certain dark and tangled motivations where politics and the psyche struggle to accommodate one another in the South African personality. It is there that South African defence mechanisms are made. We shall see them reflected in the work of other writers, too, subconsciously producing work in answer to the need for various justificatory myths of political origin. It is believed, certainly Campbell believed, he left South Africa because the colour bar was abhorrent to him. In his poetry, he made biting and elegant attacks on white complacency. He wrote sensuously incomparable poems about blacks. But he dismissed political and social aspirations with indiscriminate contempt as 'the spoor and droppings of . . . the crowd emotions'. The attributes of the brave black hunter with which he identified were elitist rather than humanitarian, let alone egalitarian. In the context of a white man's life the hunting spirit is employed only for play, in blood-sports which are not dictated by hunger; for tribal Africans themselves, hunting is a means of existence.

I would say that Campbell left South Africa out of vanity—he did not think the whites capable of appreciating his genius. It was true; they were not. But his work did not ally itself in any way with the destiny of the blacks, either, in whose hands the culture of South Africa must ultimately become definitive. The brilliant satirical poet South Africa has never replaced ended as the last colonial, romanticizing himself as 'African' abroad, and irrevocably cut off from all but the white minority he rejected at home.

Campbell's justificatory myth was tailored to an individual need. But Pauline Smith, living in the 'twenties in the isolation of the Karoo as Schreiner did before her, created a justificatory myth of the Afrikaner people that continues to answer, in literature, to certain political pressures to this day. (I use the word 'myth' not in its primary dictionary sense of a purely fictitious narrative, but in the sense the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss does, as a psychologically defensive and protective device. A myth is an extra-logical explanation of events according to the way a people wishes to interpret them.)

Pauline Smith, a writer of Chekhovian delicacy, was not an Afrikaner and she wrote in English. She wrote of rural Afrikaners, in whom her stories see poverty as a kind of grace rather than a limiting circumstance. Why? I believe that she was faithfully reflecting not a fundamental Christian view, but the guilt of the victor (British) over the vanquished (Boer), and also the curious shame that sophistication feels confronted by naivety, thus interpreting it as 'goodness'. One of the main points represented by her characters is their total unfitness to deal with the industrial society that came

upon them after their defeat by the British. Her story 'The Pain' shows an old man and his dying wife terrified even by the workings of a hospital; the husband's humbleness is emphasized almost to the point of imbecility. This virtue in helplessness, in the situation of being overwhelmed by poverty, drought, economic depression, was to become a justificatory myth, in literature, of the Afrikaner in relation to the development of his part in the politics of domination. Based on it, at least in part, is the claim of Afrikaners to be a white African tribe. From Pauline Smith's stories in *The Little Karoo* through the long series of stoic novels in Afrikaans that André Brink has called 'a literature of drought and poor whites', to the tender and witty stories of an Afrikaner writing in English, Herman Charles Bosman, are Afrikaners not shown living as close to the earth and natural disasters as any black man? The measure of poverty as a *positive value* and the romanticizing of pre-industrialism into a moral virtue are important aspects of Athol Fugard's plays, when these are about whites. His white characters are the children of Pauline Smith's rural Afrikaners, forced to the towns by drought and economic depression, and their virtues lie in their helplessness, their clinging to the past, and their defeat by an 'English'-dominated industrial society. The myth poses the question: how can such people be held responsible for the degradation that racialism imposes upon the blacks? And also they themselves represent victims within the white supremacist society; are they then not in the same boat as blacks? But we know that these are the people who (like English-speaking South African whites) conquered the blacks; who built a national pride out of their defeat by the British; these are the people whose votes gained political power and legitimated, once and for all, the white man's will to overlordship.

It is an ironic illustration of the effect of South African politics upon literature to remark that while, in the 'twenties, Plomer and Van der Post were writing novels exposing the colour-bar, they probably were not so much as aware of the existence of two remarkable fellow novelists of the time. The novelists were black. Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, written in Sesuto about 1910, was published in English in 1931, and is as extraordinary an achievement in terms of the writer's background, if not his age, as Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe*. It is, of course, a very different novel, in a way that was to be significant of the difference between white liberal or radical writings and the work of black writers themselves. It is written not *about* blacks, but reflects the identity of a black man. It is both an historical and political novel, based on fact and legend about the King Chaka, and its theme is dealt with in accordance with the author's own sense of the innate conflict in invoking Christian values to interpret an African power struggle. Mofolo, writing for original publication in a missionary journal, tried to approach the life of Chaka,

the great despot, the Black Napoleon, as whites have called him, in the light of the Christian text: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* But although Mofolo presents Chaka's brutal conquering excesses against his own people as sinful blood-lust, they also represent the neurotic paroxysm of a dying nation, turning to rend itself before colonial conquest. When the spears of fratricidal assassins are meeting in Chaka's body, Mofolo has him cry: 'It is your hope that by killing me ye will become chiefs when I am dead. But ye are deluded; it will not be so, for uMlungu [the white man] will come and it is he who will rule and ye will be his bondmen.'

The guns of white conquest are cocked over Mofolo's novel, but there are no white characters in it. In Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*, also based on historical events, and set slightly later in the nineteenth century, uMlungu makes his entry for the first time in South African black literature. The Boers appear, trekking north: 'travelling with their families in hooded wagons and driving with their caravan their wealth of livestock into the hinterland in search of some unoccupied territory to colonize and to worship God in peace'. 'But', asked Chief Moroka, 'could you not worship God on the South of the Orange River?'

'We could', replied Cillier, 'but oppression is not conducive to piety. We are after freedom. The English laws of the Cape are not fair to us.'

'We Barolong have always heard that, since David and Solomon, no king has ruled so justly as King George of England!'

'It may be so', replied the Boer leader, 'but there are always two points of view. The point of view of the ruler is not always the viewpoint of the ruled.'

Despite its stylistic crudities, the novel skilfully explores the white man's double standard slyly posited here. Barolong and Boer find a temporary identity of interest in military alliance against the armies of another African tribe, Mzilikazi's Matabele; but once the battle is won, the white man expects to dictate the sharing of spoils, that is, keeping the land for the Boers and handing over the captured cattle to the Barolong. 'What an absurd bargain', says the Chief, 'will cattle run on clouds, and their grass grow on air?' Similarly, although the white men will fight alongside the blacks, they want no personal relation with them. Juxtaposed with the power struggle between white and black there is in this book the sort of dream of its resolution in non-military, non-revolutionary, non-political terms that was to become the particular justificatory myth given expression by white liberal writers thirty years after Plaatje: a friendship between a young black and a young white. It is the literary wish-fulfilment of what South African so-