



**The Silencing of Black Intellectuals in Apartheid South Africa: An Historical Study
Drawing from the Lives and Experiences of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje and Bernard
Magubane**

Submitted by

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(Joint Supervisors)

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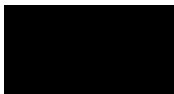
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I was not in solitary confinement when writing this study. I was not detached from my fellow black people, whose support, guidance, and intellectual prowess made the writing of this study possible. Alone, I could not have made it thus far. It took a cohort of people who believed in me and my capabilities to assemble this study. If there is an honour for the completion of this study, it belongs to myself and the following people as well: for contributing to this study in one way or another.

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- The African Gods and my ancestors for their guidance and blessings. Shembe is the way!

Dedication

This study is dedicated to all the black intellectuals who left the country for exile as they suffered under the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. This includes, among others;

- Es'kia Mphahlele
- Bernard Magubane
- Archie Mafeje
- Can Themba
- Lewis Nkosi
- Nat Nakasa
- Mazisi Kunene
- Livingstone Mqotsi
- Bloke Modisane
- Mzala Nxumalo

Glossary

AAC	All African Convention
AARC	Arab African Research Centre
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
AUC	American University of Cairo
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BPC	Black People's Convention
CATA	Cape African Teachers Association
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
MK	Mkhonto Wesizwe
NATA	Natal African Teachers Association
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANNC	South African Natives National Congress
SASM	South African Students Movement
SASO	South African Student Organisation
SOYA	Society of Youth Africa
TATA	Transvaal African Teachers Association
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDW	University of Durban Westville
UMSA	Unity Movement of South Africa

UNISA University of South Africa

UNZA University of Zambia

Abstract

Through studying the lives and experiences of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane, this thesis seeks to bring to light the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa. Drawing from the lens of Social History and Small-Scale Histories: Biography, Microhistory, and Autobiography, this study focuses on the early lives of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane, including their educational backgrounds, and examines the conditions that these intellectuals faced growing up in apartheid South Africa, which influenced their perspectives and ideas. This study also examines the writings and ideas of these black intellectuals who critiqued apartheid and the contributions they made to the country's liberation struggle while living in South Africa. It also focuses on how the apartheid state tried to suppress their ideas and silence them. It further focuses on their decisions to go into exile and the lives of these black intellectuals in exile. Moreover, it considers the focus of their writings during their period living outside South Africa. This thesis also considers the post-apartheid period and these black intellectuals' lives and experiences in South Africa from the 1990s. In addition, it examines their lives and work after their return, up to the point of their deaths. Finally, this study reflects on the intellectual legacies of these three intellectuals.

Chapter One: Introduction

Apartheid was a key feature of South Africa's history. It was a system where a white minority government was established and maintained from 1948 to 1994 through racist laws which subjugated and kept black South Africans outside political, social, and economic power.¹ It also suppressed those who resisted apartheid and agitated for its overthrow, which included laws and physical violence. It was unlawful for various organizations and individuals to openly oppose apartheid. Many activists had to operate underground or go into exile to avoid arrest and detention. Many "non-European" (or black)² South Africans who remained in the country became the targets of police brutality, leading to abuse, harassment, and many deaths.³

This research examines the lives of three black South Africans: Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane. All were African men, born in the early twentieth century, who became intellectuals. In addition, due to their critical ideas against the apartheid regime, which were almost similar, they all went into exile and thus spent decades away from their country of birth. I chose to focus on these three men as although they trained in different institutions and lived in different countries overseas, they lived during roughly the same period and had similar experiences of oppression in South Africa, which drove them overseas. In addition, while there were differences, some of their exile experiences and ideas were analogous. They shared an almost comparable analysis of power, politics, and culture in apartheid South Africa. However, it could be said that the experiences of these intellectuals

¹ Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 37-119.

² During the apartheid period, Africans, Indians, and Coloureds (people of mixed ethnic heritage) when not referred to in terms of their specific racial classification, were referred to more generally as "non-Europeans" or "non-whites", which were derogatory terms. In this dissertation, I have instead chosen to use the term black to refer collectively to people who were not classified as white in South Africa.

³ Leonard M. Thompson. *The History of South Africa*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 31-69.

were not unique and distinctive from other black South African exiles but were similar in many ways to those of other black intellectuals in exile.

According to Edward Said, an intellectual is an individual “endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, and articulating a message, a view, an attitude, etc., to/for a public”.⁴ Using a comparative lens, this research thus seeks to investigate the similarities and differences in the lives and experiences of these three men who tried, for a time, to write and circulate their ideas in South Africa. However, the oppressive apartheid regime sought to silence them. Due to the suppression of their ideas, eventually, all three left the country. In other countries, such as Nigeria, Zambia, the United Kingdom, and U.S.A., they continued to think, write, and produce their ideas, which circulated widely beyond South Africa’s borders. Eventually, all three returned to South Africa and experienced living in post-apartheid South Africa.

Aims and Objectives of this Study

This dissertation focuses on several important research objectives. Firstly, it considers Es’kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane’s early socialisation experiences in South Africa, as well as their educational backgrounds to consider what impact these aspects had on shaping their lives intellectually and as activists. Secondly, it analyses what the apartheid regime found problematic or threatening about their writings, as well as the various attempts it made to silence the ideas of these black intellectuals. Thirdly, it examines various positive and negative impacts that leaving South Africa and going into exile overseas had on their thoughts and intellectual work, and whether a different spatial location influenced their intellectual output. Finally, it investigates their lives after their return from exile and what it was like living and working in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

This dissertation was guided by the following key research questions:

⁴ Edward Said. *Representations of the Intellectual*. (London, UK: Vintage, 1996) 17.

1. How did the early socialisation and education of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane shape their lives intellectually and as activists?
2. What did the apartheid regime find problematic about them and their writings and how did it attempt to silence them?
3. What positive and negative impacts did the move into exile have on their intellectual work, and did their spatial location influence their intellectual output?
4. What were their lives like, and what did they do after their return from exile in the post-apartheid period?

Literature Review

Much literature has been published on intellectuals in different parts of the world. Some of this scholarship has explicitly interrogated the concept of intellectual and considered various types of intellectuals and their social engagements or roles in their societies. For example, Antonio Gramsci in a chapter called, “The Intellectuals” in an edited book entitled, *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukacs and Gramsci to Socialist-Feminism*, deals with different types of intellectuals and their social roles, particularly, “traditional” and “organic” intellectuals. Gramsci defined traditional intellectuals as individuals who regarded themselves as autonomous from the ruling capitalist class or social group, claiming erroneously that they emerged from but stood independent from them, as well as for truth and reason. Gramsci argued that organic intellectuals, on the other hand, emerged from the working class or social group to challenge the traditional intelligentsia through the expression of their subaltern ideology.⁵

Another scholar, Edward Said, also interrogated the concept of the intellectual. This postcolonial scholar wrote a book entitled *Representations of the Intellectual*.⁶ In this book,

⁵ Antonio Gramsci. “The Intellectuals”. *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukacs and Gramsci to Socialist-Feminism*. Roger S. Gottlieb ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Valeriano Ramos Jr. has fleshed out Gramsci’s concepts further. See “The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci’s Marxism”. *Theoretical Review*. (1982, 27), <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/1982301.htm> (Accessed on 26 May 2022).

⁶ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*.

Said argued that intellectuals bore responsibility for speaking up in support of and representing the ideas of the people of their nations. In addition, he contended that there were no private intellectuals. For Said, all intellectuals were public figures. He asserted that any intellectual, whether in academia, journalism, or politics, was a highly specialised professional who ceased to be independent when they entered alliances with powerful institutions or governmental organisations. Said expected political participation from intellectuals, that they should speak truth to power. He also highlighted how they were products of their time and thus needed to respond to the politics of their time and were placed in positions to provide intellectual alternatives to turn the status quo upside down.⁷

Another well-known French philosopher who grappled with the concept of intellectual and differentiated between different types of intellectuals was Jean Paul Sartre. He examined what he called “classic intellectuals”, or people from the bourgeoisie, who had a high level of education and used their intellect to serve the ruling class and to perpetuate the status quo.⁸ He also considered other intellectuals whom he labelled “revolutionary intellectuals”.⁹ These were people with less formal education who were situated within or closer to the proletariat whom he identified as more radical as they committed themselves to changing the societal status quo. According to Azmi Bishara, who also analysed the concept of “revolutionary intellectuals”, these were people who performed a “noble duty” in that they were “experts” who used their expertise to advocate for or were in support of dramatic societal changes.¹⁰

Other scholars have focused on the roles and experiences of black intellectuals in different parts of the world. One important set of works has focused on the roles and

⁷ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 12-43.

⁸ David Drake. “Sartre: Intellectual of the Twentieth Century”. *Sartre Studies International: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Existentialism and Contemporary Culture*. (2003, 9: 2) 29-39 and “The Intellectual According to Sartre”. *Intellectuals and the Media in France: An Online Exhibition from Students at the University of Bristol*, 5 December 2018, <https://intellectualsandthemedial.org/2018/12/05/the-intellectual-according-to-sartre/> (Accessed on 26 May 2022).

⁹ Drake, “Sartre: Intellectual of the Twentieth Century”, 29-39.

¹⁰ Azmi Bishara. “On the Intellectual and Revolution”. *Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies*. (2013, 4) 17-30.

experiences of African American intellectuals. For example, see Daniel Matlin, in *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* and William M. Banks, in *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in American Life*.¹¹ They have focused on the challenges that black intellectuals encountered including racial discrimination. Some of these publications have considered the life and experiences of black intellectuals in different historical periods, such as Brian D. Behnken et al., *Black Intellectual Thought in Modern America: A Historical Perspective*, and Derrick P. Alridge et al., *The Black Intellectual Tradition: African American Thought in the Twentieth Century*.¹² Other literature has focused on the difficulties faced by black intellectuals in America, such as the suppression of their ideas, restriction of their movement and even assassinations to halt their public influence.¹³

Some of this literature has analysed the subject of black intellectuals across generations, for example, Charles Pete Banner-Haley's *From Du Bois to Obama: African American Intellectuals in the Forum*.¹⁴ There are a lot of in-depth biographical studies about the lives and experiences of African American intellectuals. This includes biographies such as *W.E.B. Du Bois: An African American Intellectual and Activist* by Shawn Leigh Alexander and Alain L. Locke, *The Biography of a Philosopher by Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth*.¹⁵ Some of this literature has also examined the experiences of African American women intellectuals, which combined race, class, and gender struggles. *Beyond Respectability: Race Women's*

¹¹ Daniel Matlin. *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) and William M. Banks. *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in American Life*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996).

¹² Brian D. Behnken et al. *Black Intellectual Thought in Modern America: A Historical Perspective*. (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2017) and Derrick P. Alridge et al. in *The Black Intellectual Tradition: African American Thought in the Twentieth Century*. (United States: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

¹³ Cornel West. "The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual". *Critical Quarterly*. (1987, 29: 4), 39-52; Harold Cruse. *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. (New York: Morrow, 1967), 15-33; and Bell Hooks and Cornel West. *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*. (New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁴ Charles Pete Banner-Haley. *From Du Bois to Obama: African American Intellectuals in the Public Forum*. (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Shawn Alexander. *W.E.B. Du Bois: An American Intellectual and Activist*. (United States of America, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2015) and Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth. *Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Intellectual Thought by Brittney C. Cooper, for example, and *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds* by Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway are two key examples.¹⁶

Other scholars have contributed significant insights by writing about the lives and work of Caribbean intellectuals. Denis Benn wrote a book entitled *The Caribbean: An Intellectual History, 1774-2003*, which focuses on how influential intellectuals have contributed to the growth and development of political ideas in the Caribbean since the late eighteenth century.¹⁷ Silvio Torres-Saillant's book *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* published two years later explored works produced by both local and Western authors that analysed the region's experimental and unique cultural characteristics.¹⁸ Selwyn R. Cudjoe kept his focus on the intellectual traditions of two specific islands – Trinidad and Tobago – in the nineteenth century, while C.A.M. Hennessy considered the aspects of the Caribbean's intellectual history in the twentieth century.¹⁹

Another part of this literature has been written by Caribbean black intellectuals themselves. For example, Frantz Fanon, born in Martinique, wrote *The Wretched of the Earth*, which analysed the dehumanising effects of colonialism on the black oppressed and resulted in violence as part of the anti-colonial struggle.²⁰ He also considered in this book the colonised intellectual shortcomings rooted in mimicry and imitation of white men because of colonialism. Another black intellectual, C.L.R. James, who came from Trinidad, wrote *The Black Jacobins*, which considers the history of the revolution led by slaves in San Domingue, a former French

¹⁶ Brittney C. Cooper. *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017) and Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway. *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*. (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2007).

¹⁷ Denis Benn. *The Caribbean: An Intellectual History, 1774-2003*. (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004).

¹⁸ Silvio Torres-Saillant. *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

¹⁹ Selwyn R. Cudjoe. *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century*. (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003) and C.A.M. Hennessy. *Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century Caribbean*. (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992).

²⁰ Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

colony (modern-day Haiti); the first successful slave uprising in history.²¹ In addition, Walter Rodney from Guyana, wrote about his own experiences in his book *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual*.²²

There is also a large body of literature that has focused on black intellectuals in the United Kingdom. Some of this literature focuses on examples of and the contributions of black intellectuals in the educational sphere. For instance, Paul Warmington wrote a book, *Black British Intellectuals and Education: Multiculturalism's Hidden History*, which focuses the intellectual productions of different black British intellectuals production, from the eighteenth century to the “post-multicultural” present, with a particular emphasis on the often neglected contributions of black intellectuals to social justice and education.²³ Furthermore, Marc Matera wrote an article titled “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain”, which considers that the involvement of African and Caribbean intellectuals with the fields of anthropology and history has largely been erased from British colonial studies.²⁴ Ryan Hanley’s book entitled *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing, c.1770-1830*, examines intellectual contributions of black writers to British and Atlantic world history.²⁵ C.L. Innes’s work expanded the focus beyond African intellectuals to consider the contributions of Asian intellectuals living in Britain too.²⁶

²¹ C.L.R. James. *The Black Jacobins*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938).

²² Walter Rodney. *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990).

²³ Paul Warmington. *Black British Intellectuals and Education: Multiculturalism's Hidden History*. (New York: Routledge, 2014).

²⁴ Marc Matera. “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain”. *Journal of British Studies*. (2010, 49: 2) 388-418. See also, Andreas Eckert. “African Intellectuals and Activists in Europe and the Decolonization of Africa”. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. (2011, 37: 2) 244-274 and Robert Fikes Jr. “Confirming Intellectual Capacity: Black Scholars in Europe During the Renaissance and the Enlightenment”. *Presence Africaine*. (1980, 114) 120-131.

²⁵ Ryan Hanley. *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing c.1770-1830*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

²⁶ C.L. Innes. *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Furthermore, other scholars have written about black intellectuals who left their home countries to live and write abroad, that is, part of the diasporic community. A great deal of this literature focuses on Caribbean intellectuals, who left their home countries for a variety of reasons to settle and write in other countries. One group of authors considered the roles played and contributions made by intellectuals who left their island homelands and settled in the wider Atlantic Ocean world and elsewhere.²⁷ Many other examples of this type of literature exist, such as Perry Mars', "Caribbean Influences in African-American Political Struggle"; Tammy L. Brown's, *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York*; Michelle Anne Stephens', *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962*; and Bill Schwarz's, *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*.²⁸

Several scholars have also explored intellectuals' exile experiences. This literature considers the positives but also hardships of people who were forced into exile. According to Edward Said, exile is the situation of being forbidden from living in one's home country, usually for political or disciplinary reasons, such that the person ends up seeking refuge in other countries.²⁹ Exile, however, can also refer to living outside of one's country of origin for a variety of reasons, such as pursuing educational and job opportunities,³⁰ so going into exile is not always for disciplinary or political reasons, though Said's definition holds for my research subjects. Depending on their circumstances, people can also choose to leave their home country on a temporary or permanent basis.

Much of this literature focuses on such people's differing struggles and attempts to make a life away from their homelands. For example, Mark Israel, examines how public

²⁷ Kendahl Radcliff, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner eds. *Anywhere but Here: Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond*. (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

²⁸ Perry Mars. "Caribbean Influences in African American Political Struggles". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. (2004, 27: 4), 565-583; Tammy L. Brown. *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York*. (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2017); Michelle Ann Stephens. *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962*. (London: Duke University Press, 2005) and Bill Schwarz. *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

²⁹ John Barbour. "Edward Said and the space of exile". *Literature and Theology*. (2007, 21: 3) 293-301.

³⁰ Barbour, "Edward Said and the space of exile", 297.

activists who moved to the United Kingdom as exiles from South Africa during the apartheid period developed friendships, political organisations, and social networks, that helped sustain their period in exile.³¹ Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, in their book, *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile, and Place*, discuss how people struggled to make sense of their lives whilst on the move. It asks how people-on-the-move make sense of a new place, and how they rework the memories of places left behind to make a home-away-from-home.³² Some of these books also discuss the issue of having to exist in a state of impermanence, which led to anxiety because of having to deal with an uncertain future.

In his book titled, *Lessons in Exile*, Carlos Pereda, examines exile from the viewpoints of politics, literature, anthropology, and history. He also considers the moral implications of exile and how it relates to the meaning of life.³³ Hilda Bernstein's book, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans*, is an account of people who fled the brutal apartheid regime by necessity and provides autobiographical reflections of various exiles on their country's oppressive political system on their lives and choices. The book also covers the debate amongst exiles on the question of remaining in exile or returning to South Africa as the apartheid regime lost power towards the late twentieth century.³⁴

Edward Said also wrote about his life in exile. As a Palestinian by birth, he spent many years in America. In his book *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, he reflected critically on his own life in exile and argued that a person's personal experiences were a necessary condition to deeply analysing such a condition. Indeed, he found exile a difficult experience because of the dissimilar conditions between his original country and exile country, which became his new home.³⁵

³¹ Mark Israel. *South African Political Exiles in the United Kingdom*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

³² Barbara Bender and Margot Winer. *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place*. (New York: Routledge, 2001).

³³ Carlos Pereda. *Lessons in Exile*. (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2019).

³⁴ Hilda Bernstein. *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

³⁵ Edward Said. *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. (London: Granta Books, 2012).

Sabella Ogbobode Abidde's edited book *African Scholars and Intellectuals in North American Academies: Reflections on Exile and Migration*, investigates the processes and events underlying African intellectuals' migrations, as well as their observations and lived experiences both within and outside of their U.S.A.-based universities where they either studied or found work opportunities. The collection's authors analysed the political, ethnic, or religious upheavals that influenced them to leave their homes, compared the teaching but also research environments in their home countries and North America, and discussed their experiences of racial inequalities on and off campus overseas.³⁶

There is also significant literature that has been written about black intellectuals, their hardships, and their contributions in the struggle for Africa's independence. Some of these authors were born in Africa themselves. For example, Chinua Achebe an African-born intellectual, wrote a book *Home and Exile*, where he explored his desire to rescue African culture from European narratives. In this book, he recounted his initial interactions with European perspectives on Africa in the writings of Joyce Cary and Elspeth Huxley via the lens of his experiences as a student in English-speaking schools in Nigeria.³⁷ Toyin Falola, also Nigeria by birth, wrote a book entitled *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*. In this book, he explored the life and work of Africa-born intellectuals who were influenced by nationalism in achieving their goals of creating a better Africa by connecting nationalism to knowledge.³⁸

Malawian born Thandika Mkandawire in his book, *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*, writes an overview of the history, fate and possible future roles of African intellectuals both within Africa and in the African Diaspora almost half a century after African independence.³⁹ In *Wrestling with the Devil: A Prison*

³⁶ Sabella Ogbobode Abidde. *African Scholars and Intellectuals in North American Academies: Reflections on Exile and Migration*. (New York: Routledge, 2021).

³⁷ Chinua Achebe. *Home and Exile*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁸ Toyin Falola. *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*. (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

³⁹ Thandika Mkandawire. *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender, and Development*. (London: Zed Books, 2005).

Memoir, Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes about his experiences as an intellectual in Kenya, and how he suffered during the Mau Mau period, eventually leading to Kenya's independence. In the book, he shares his experiences of being thrown into a maximum-security prison where he was locked up with 18 other political prisoners for his subversive writings.⁴⁰

Ali A. Mazrui and Amadu Jacky Kaba in their book, *The African Intelligentsia: Domestic Decline and Global Ascent*, investigate the multifaceted (both good and bad) implications of globalisation on Africans and people of African origin. It explains the rise, fall, and rebirth of intellectualism in different parts of the world, as well as the emergence of Pan-Africanism ideas in the twentieth century. It also considers the importance that economic and cultural dependency issues have played on the development of African intellectualism.⁴¹

The subject of black intellectuals has also been covered by those focused on the South African context. In the edited book titled *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th Century South Africa*, several authors examine the lives and works of five black intellectuals from the former Cape Colony in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were Ntsikana, Tiyo Soga, John Tengo Jabavu, Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana and Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi, who contributed their thoughts and intellect in various fields such as literature, poetry, politics, and journalism.⁴²

Chris Broodryk's edited book, *Public Intellectuals in South Africa: Critical Voices from the Past* examines the lives of black intellectuals regarded as silenced or marginalised for large periods of their lives because of racially unequal policies. These intellectuals, who had important insights about the exploited condition of black South Africans, included John Dube, Magera Fuze, Mewa Ramgobin, Mandisi Sindo, and Elijah Makiwane. The book's different

⁴⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Wrestling with the Devil: A Prison Memoir*. (New York: The New Press, 2018).

⁴¹ Ali A. Mazrui and Amadu Jacky Kaba. *The African Intelligentsia: Domestic Decline and Global Ascent*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2016).

⁴² Mcebisi Ndletyana ed. *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th Century South Africa*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008).

chapters capture the ideas and works of these black intellectuals, whom the contributors argue were public intellectuals as they spoke out against different issues, including the corruption of those in power, advocated for a progressive politics that sought to challenge racial inequalities, and encouraged the overthrow of oppressive political regimes.⁴³

In his book *Dilemmas of African Intellectuals in South Africa*, Themba Sono argued that a culture of open intellectual engagement could not survive in apartheid South Africa's hostile environment, and as a result, struggled to take root even in academic institutions before the 1990s. In addition, he also discussed how South African society had many academics of European descent at the time, which limited the opportunities of Africans.⁴⁴

Other scholars have provided biographical studies on black South African intellectuals. For example, Hlonipha Mokoena's book entitled, *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual*, provides an in-depth study on the life and contributions of a black intellectual, Mangema Fuze. Fuze was a good example of how South Africa's first-generation of Christian converts made the transition from their rural homesteads to mission stations, where they learnt to read and write and became *kholwa* intellectuals, who wrote about the experiences and aspirations of black South Africans.⁴⁵ Siphiso Mahala focused his study on Can Themba, a writer, journalist and editor at *Drum* magazine who worked alongside Es'kia Mphahlele and left South Africa to go into exile.⁴⁶ Xolela Mangcu wrote a biography of Steve Biko.⁴⁷ In his book, Mangcu examined Biko's triumphs and struggles as a key leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. In his analysis, he examined his leading activist role, as he mobilised many black South Africans in the 1970s to oppose the apartheid system, but also his

⁴³ Chris Broodryk. *Public Intellectuals in South Africa: Critical Voices from the Past*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁴⁴ Themba Sono. *Dilemmas of African Intellectuals in South Africa: Political and Cultural Constraints*. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994).

⁴⁵ Hlonipha Mokoena. *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Siphiso Mahala. *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Tsotsi*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022).

⁴⁷ Xolela Mangcu. *Biko: A Biography*. (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2017).

intellectual role as he wrote extensively on what Black Consciousness was until his untimely death whilst in custody in the late 1970s.

Black South African intellectuals themselves have written another significant body of literature. For example, Chabani Manganyi, a black psychologist, who worked initially at the University of the Transkei in the 1970s, wrote his autobiography to capture his experiences as one of the country's first black psychologists but also intellectual who critiqued the apartheid system and its effects the black South Africans' psycho-social well-being.⁴⁸ *Freedom in Our Lifetime* and *I Write What I Like* are also examples of books which consist of the ideas of renown black intellectuals, including Anton Lembede and Steve Biko respectively, who lived and wrote during apartheid times.⁴⁹

Regarding the subjects covered in this dissertation, Es'kia Mphahlele has written two autobiographies entitled *Down Second Avenue* and *Africa, My Music* where he reflects on his life and experiences both in apartheid South Africa and in exile.⁵⁰ Many others have written about Mphahlele too.⁵¹ However, almost all the works published on Mphahlele by different people focus on his work and ideas rather than his life and experiences in apartheid South Africa and abroad.

⁴⁸ Chabani Manganyi. *Apartheid and the Making of a Black Psychologist*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016).

⁴⁹ Anton Lembede. *Freedom in our Lifetime*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996) and Steve Biko. *I Write What I Like*. (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2017).

⁵⁰ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Down Second Avenue*. (Johannesburg: Picador, 2004) and Es'kia Mphahlele. *Africa, My Music*. (Cape Town: Kwela, 2014).

⁵¹ See for example Mafika Gwala. "Es'kia Mphahlele: A Divided Self?" *Third World Quarterly*. (1989, 11: 3) 189-202; Luanga Kassanga. "The 'Local' and the 'Global' in Es'kia Mphahlele's Writing: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Two Autobiographical Novels". *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. (2002, 15: 2) 183-201; Jane Starfield. "Es'kia Mphahlele (1919-2008)". *English in Africa*. (2009, 36: 1) 7-11; Catherine Woerber. "Educating the Educator: Es'kia Mphahlele's Schooling as St Peter's". *English Academy Review*. (2010, 21: 1) 78-92; Dan Ojwang. "The World that Es'kia Mphahlele Made: An East African View". *English in Africa*. (2011, 38: 2) 109-20; Kgomotso Masemola. "Of belonging and Becoming: Black Atlantic (Inter-) Cultural Memory in the Early Autobiographies of Peter Abrahams and Es'kia Mphahlele". *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*. (2011, 16: 2) 47-70; Nhlanhla Maake. "The English Academy Commemorative Lecture: The New Post-Colonial Threat: Crossroads of the Metaphor and Reality - In Honour of Es'kia Mphahlele". *English Academy Review*. (2011, 28: 2) 118-128; Kgomotso Masemola. "Reverie qua Worldliness in the Wilderness Texts: The Autobiographical Fiction of Es'kia Mphahlele and N. Chabani Manganyi". *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. (2012, 24: 1) 55-72; and Uhuru Phalafala. "The Matriarchive as Life Knowledge in Es'kia Mphahlele's African Humanism". *Auto/Biography Studies*. (2020, 35: 3) 729-747.

Archie Mafeje never wrote his autobiography. His life experiences in apartheid South Africa were captured in the book *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*, written by Bongani Nyoka.⁵² This book focused exclusively on Mafeje. The book is divided into two parts, with the first part being a biographical account and the second part a consideration of Mafeje's writings. Various articles have also been written on Mafeje.⁵³ However, the articles that have been published on Mafeje focus a lot on his ideas and one event known as "The Mafeje Affair", where the University of Cape Town decided to overturn Mafeje's appointment as a black lecturer at this university due to pressure from the apartheid regime. Little published thus far has focused on Mafeje's life and experiences both in apartheid South Africa and in exile.

Bernard Magubane has written an autobiography entitled *Bernard Magubane: My Life and Times*, which captures his experiences in both apartheid South Africa and in exile.⁵⁴ Several authors have also written articles on Magubane.⁵⁵ A lot of literature that has been published on Magubane focuses on his work and ideas. Other than his book, written from his

⁵² Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019).

⁵³ See for example Fred Hendricks. "A Brief Tribute to Archie Mafeje". *African Sociological Review*. (2007, 11: 1) 1-3; Jimi Adesina. "Archie Mafeje and the Pursuit of Endogeneity: Against Alterity and Extroversion". *Africa Development*. (2008, 33: 4) 33-152; Kwesi Kwa Prah. "Archie Monwabisi Mafeje: A Vignette". *CODESRIA Bulletin*. (2008, 3: 4) 6-7; John Sharp. "Mafeje and Langa: The Start of an Intellectual's Journey". *Africa Development*. (2008, 33: 4) 153-167; Fred Hendricks. "The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid". *African Studies*. (2008, 63: 3) 423-451; Bongani Nyoka. "Points of Correction: Comment on Andrew Bank's 'Archie Mafeje'." *African Sociological Review*. (2011, 15: 1) 137-144; Bongani Nyoka. "Mafeje and 'Authentic Interlocutors': An Appraisal of his Epistemology". *African Sociological Review*. (2012, 16: 1) 2-16; Andrew Bank and Vuyiswa Swana. "'Speaking from Inside': Archie Mafeje, Monica Wilson and the Co-Production of Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township". *Inside African Anthropology*. Andrews Bank and Leslie Bank eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lungisile Ntsebeza. "The Mafeje and UCT Saga: Unfinished Business?" *Social Dynamics*. (2014, 40: 2) 274-288; Leslie Bank. "Engaging Mafeje's Ghost: Fort Hare and the Virtues of 'Homeland' Anthropology". *African Studies*. (2016, 75: 2) 278-295; Sam Moyo. "Debating the African Land Question with Archie Mafeje". *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*. (2018, 7: 2) 211-233; Peter Jacobs. "Mafeje: Scholar-Activist with Noble Convictions". *Review of African Political Economy*. (2020, 47: 165) 494-503.

⁵⁴ Bernard Magubane. *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ Jimi Adesina. "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930-2013): An Intellectual Appreciation". *Southern African Review of Sociology*. (2013, 44: 3), 83-90; Rodney Coates. "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane: African Sociology – Towards a Critical Perspective: The Collected Essays of Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane". *Philosophia Africana*. (2001, 4: 2), 110-114; Bongani Nyoka. "Bernard Magubane's *The Making of a Racist State* Revisited: 20 Years On". *Journal of Black Studies*. (2016, 47: 8), 903-927.

own perspective, very little has been covered about his life and experiences in apartheid South Africa and abroad.

This research examines the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa by analysing the lives and experiences of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane. This research is important because it exposes the deliberate quest to suppress black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa. This does not appear explicitly in the works written before, as they focus more on analysing these men's particular ideas and works than the unfavourable socio-economic and political conditions they found themselves in.

Furthermore, unlike the abovementioned books, which focus on these intellectuals as individuals; some also from an autobiographical lens, this study uses a comparative lens to tease out similarities and differences that these black intellectuals experienced. This research brings to light the histories of these intellectuals who suffered by their virtue of being black and critical towards the apartheid regime in South Africa. This research is also important as it considers the legacy of this silencing, which is still felt today in the underrepresentation of black South Africans in the intelligentsia.

Theoretical Framework

Social History

This theory advocates a more inclusive writing of history and opposes historical writing that focuses solely on elites, the famous, or the powerful. This theory seeks to include analysis of all segments of society, particularly those previously marginalised, neglected or ignored.⁵⁶ One of the leading pioneers of this theory was a British Marxist social historian, E.P. Thompson, who wrote the book, *The Making of the English Working Class in the 1960s*.

⁵⁶ Jim Sharpe. "History from Below". *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Peter Burke ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 26.

Thompson, and social history theory, was influenced by Marxist ideas as they sought to situate individuals and their experiences within broader social-economic contexts and to acknowledge the impact that socio-economic structures had on people's lives.⁵⁷ However, as much as Thompson was a Marxist, he criticised scholars who were structural Marxists, who, according to him, "gave too much power to economic structural forces in determining people's lives".⁵⁸ He criticised them for not focusing enough on people's ability to act, that is, to negotiate, navigate around, or rebel against larger structures that influenced their lives.⁵⁹ Structural Marxists, he argued, overlooked human agency in people's lives. Thompson's quest in writing from a social history lens was to show ordinary people's agency and the contributions they made to history.

Social history therefore promotes "histories from below", bringing to light the experiences and struggles of ordinary people, who are often distorted or omitted from mainstream histories.⁶⁰ It thus sought to move beyond the political and diplomatic history of previous generations that tended to focus on the history of great men and great ideas, which failed to capture the historical experiences of the majority of the human population.⁶¹ Scholars advocating this theory sought to examine the lives of people who were located in the lower social classes of their societies, such as workers, as well as oppressed or socially ostracised people, such as women, black communities, or people with disabilities etc.⁶² Furthermore, social historians, such as Thompson encouraged historians to use a broader range of sources

⁵⁷ Edward P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 9-10.

⁵⁸ Geoff Eley. "Marxist Historiography". *Writing History Theory & Practice*. Stefan Berger ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 65-75 and William Sewell. *Logistics of History*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) 22-33.

⁵⁹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 11-45.

⁶⁰ Sharpe, "History from Below", 26-27.

⁶¹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 11-45.

⁶² Joan W. Scott. *Women and the Making of the English Working Class*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 68-90 and Peter N. Stearns. "Social History". *Oxford Bibliographies*, 28 July 2021, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0131.xml> (Accessed on 26 May 2022).

and to go beyond official or state archives to try to get at the voices and experiences of ordinary people.⁶³

The social history school of thought spread to different parts of the world in the 1970s and 1980s. *Past and Present*, founded by British historians, became a leading academic journal in the development and spread of social history. The influence of British scholars such as Thompson became international. Social history spread and influenced the writing of history in Europe, North America, Africa, and South Asia.⁶⁴ Social history also influenced the writing of history in South Africa beginning in the 1970s.⁶⁵ Well-known South African scholars, such as Belinda Bozzoli, Charles van Onselen and, more recently, Jacob Dlamini, were influenced by this theoretical approach. For example, Dlamini examined the reasons why, despite the terrible oppressive character of the apartheid regime, some black South Africans, including himself, could still have complex memories and feelings of affection for their lives in the township life, amongst ordinary people, during apartheid times.⁶⁶

While it is essential to evaluate the positive aspects of social history as a theory, it is also important to consider some criticisms. Poststructuralist scholars have criticised social history by focusing on language (its interrogation and critique thereof) as the fundamental element in explaining the social world. They believe that reality is influenced by the language people use, there is nothing absolute about reality in and of itself.⁶⁷ Poststructuralists have also questioned the truthfulness and objectivity of narratives written by historians and believe in relativism, which means one account of the past is as good as another. As a result, people can write different accounts of a past event, leading to multiple versions of that past.

⁶³ Edward P. Thompson. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd". *Past & Present*. (1971, 50: 1) 79-136.

⁶⁴ Eley, "Marxist historiography", 77.

⁶⁵ Jonathan Hyslop. "E.P. Thompson in South Africa: The Practice and Politics of Social History in an Era of Revolt and Transition, 1976-2012". *International Review of Social History*. (*Sociology Department, Colgate University*. (2016, 61: 1) 95-116.

⁶⁶ Jacob Dlamini. *Native Nostalgia*. (Johannesburg: Auckland Park, 2009).

⁶⁷ Hayden White. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 81-89.

Poststructuralists have also criticised social history for treating entities such as class uncritically, and as “immutable realities resistant to change”.⁶⁸ As a result, poststructuralists have argued that historical writing should be viewed by literary critics as a branch of fiction that has to be deconstructed in a similar vein to literature. Poststructuralists advocated for the writing of history that focuses on the representation of facts. As a result, language and writers’ biases or agendas, which influence their writing and interests, are at the centre of poststructuralist approaches.

While some poststructuralists have taken extreme views, others have given social historians a lot to think about in recent decades, which has helped to push them to think more carefully about the terms or categories they use as well as the biases that influence their writings. Despite recognising these social history limitations, in a similar manner as advocated by Geoff Eley in his piece “Is all the World a Text? From Social History to the History of Society Two Decades Later”, I have chosen to use social history theory in this dissertation to help focus attention on the perspectives and experiences of marginalised black intellectuals, who struggled to have their voices heard in the oppressive apartheid context. However, I have done so mindful of valuable insights poststructuralists have given to social history to sharpen its critical, analytical edge.⁶⁹

Small-Scale Histories: Biography, Microhistory and Autobiography

In addition, this dissertation employs a micro-historical lens, which advocates for the writing of histories on a small scale, particularly those of individuals.⁷⁰ For a long time, academic historians were sceptical of biographical forms of writing and did not use it

⁶⁸ Kevin Passmore. “Poststructuralism and History”. *Writing History: Theory & Practice*. Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 118-125.

⁶⁹ Geoff Eley. “Is All the World a Text? From Social History to the History of Society Two Decades Later”. *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*. Gabrielle M. Spiegel ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005) 33-61.

⁷⁰ Sabina Loriga. “The Role of the Individual in History: Biographical and Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century”. *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*. Hans Render and Binne de Haan eds. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 75-94.

themselves as a genre of writing. Indeed, as Sabrina Loriga has summarised it, old school, or traditional biographies, tended to be uncritical or hagiographical in nature, as well as focused on powerful, well-known, or wealthy people (particularly white men). Instead, biographies were primarily a genre used by scholars in English literature and journalist circles, as well as a genre adopted by amateur historians who sought to capture the interest of the public by writing accessible biographical narrative styled accounts of the rich or famous.⁷¹

In more recent decades, literary theory scholars have contributed a great deal to theorising the writing of biographies to reflect on them and use them in a more critical manner. For example, according to Barbara Merrill and Linden West, biographical writing is the “interplay between culture, power and available narrative resources, on the one hand, and individual lives and struggles for voice and story on the other”.⁷² They also make the important point that to understand an individual’s life, one must first firmly grasp the context in which that person lived, that is, “the particular circumstances, influenced by particular social forces and also discourses” both in the past and the time of the writing of the biographies that influenced the narratives produced in these accounts.⁷³ Other literary theorists have highlighted the constructed nature of biographical narratives. These scholars raised questions about the truthfulness of biographies, which they argued employed plots and narrative devices like fictionalised stories, which needed to be considered when reading or writing these works.⁷⁴

Ciraj Rassool and Pierre Bourdieu, amongst others have also sought to criticise what they refer to as the “biographical illusion”.⁷⁵ Like Literary Studies critics, these scholars have

⁷¹ Loriga, “The Role of the Individual in History”, 89.

⁷² Barbara Merrill and Linden West. *Using Biographical Method in Social Research*. (London: Sage, 2009) 16-36.

⁷³ Merrill and West, *Using Biographical Method in Social Research*, 16-36.

⁷⁴ Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders. *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017) 4-8.

⁷⁵ Ciraj Rassool. “Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography”. *South African Review of Sociology*, (2010, 41: 1) 28-55 and Pierre Bourdieu. “The Biographical Illusion”. *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*. Hemecker Wilhelm and Edward Saunders eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007) 210-216.

questioned the writing and presentation of biographies as entities “characterised by an ordered sequence of acts, events and works, with individuals characterised by stability, autonomy, self-determination and rational choice”.⁷⁶ Instead, they argue that individual people’s lives are much more messy and disordered than the lives represented in biographies and that we need to take account of the important role that biographers play in constructing a sense of order, which the public then reads as a “clearly defined and progressive” biographical narrative.⁷⁷

Regarding the historical profession, because of the long history of uncritical and celebratory nature of early biographies, it was only in the 1970s when the Microhistory approach emerged. It was first amongst Italian historians that things began to change, and more academic historians began embracing a focus on the individual in their writings. Microhistorians, such as Carlo Ginzburg, Carlo Poni, and Giovanni Levi, advocated against the writing of histories from the broader macro level, the focus of many historians up till that time, as they felt that this led to problematic generalisations, which meant a loss of in-depth analysis of the complex lives and experiences of particular people.⁷⁸

Influenced by Marxism, which focused on economic inequalities in societies, and social history, which emerged a decade before the work of these historians, they sought to study the hidden histories and experiences of ordinary people or people on the margins of their societies, who encountered oppression and exploitation in their societies and who were not usually the focus of mainstream histories.⁷⁹ Indeed, they critiqued the tendencies towards broader, macro-level social group analyses in Marxist and social history. They wanted to return the human face to history, and to focus on the everyday experiences of the common person as an individual.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Bourdieu, “The Biographical Illusion”, 210-216.

⁷⁸ Tamas Kisantal. “What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice by Istvan M. Szijarto, Sigurour Gylfi Magnusson”. *Hungarian Historical Review*. (2015, 4: 2) 512-517.

⁷⁹ George G. Iggers. *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 101-105.

⁸⁰ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 102.

These theorists also encouraged historians to move beyond the state archives to find a wider variety of sources to write about their subjects so that they could gather information about the experiences of neglected or ordinary individuals whose histories were displayed till that point. They also encouraged historians to read things against the grain, such as reading court testimonies not for what those in power said or did, but to hear the opinions and ideas of those on trial, as was suggested by Carlo Ginzburg in his well-known microhistory, *The Cheese and the Worms*.⁸¹

Furthermore, microhistorians strongly recognised the value of carefully contextualising individuals within their larger social and historical contexts to understand how a person's context influenced their lives and how that person might have influenced their broader society.⁸² In addition, they were very aware of their role as authors in constructing the histories they wrote and often inserted themselves into the text, almost like detectives, piecing together fragments of evidence to produce the histories they wrote.⁸³ This gave the microhistorians a much more critical analytical edge, which historians appreciated.

Finally, because the author has worked with a few autobiographical texts produced by two of the three black intellectuals examined in this dissertation (Mphahlele and Magubane), it has also been influenced by the works of scholars who have theorised the value and problems of autobiographical writings. Like biographies, autobiographies also have a long history, as people wrote their first-hand accounts of their experiences; about the circumstances that influenced their lives and choices made as individuals, but also how they felt they shaped the conditions around them.⁸⁴ Personal narratives were once not trusted as critical documents in the discipline of History due to the possibility of bias, personalised distortion of facts, and

⁸¹ Carlo Ginzburg. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 1-10.

⁸² Kisantal, "What is Microhistory?", 512-517.

⁸³ Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 1-10.

⁸⁴ Jaume Aurell and Rocio G. Davis. "History and Autobiography: The Logics of a Convergence". *Life Writing*. (2019, 16: 4) 503-511.

exaggeration.⁸⁵ But there has been a shift in recent decades as much experimentation and theorisation on forms of life writing has been done.⁸⁶ In recent decades, autobiographies have been increasingly viewed as important narrative tools for an individual's exploration of their identities and contexts.⁸⁷

Despite the problems and criticisms raised for discussion by various theorists against writing histories from the small-scale, use of a micro lens has been important for this research as it has helped conceptualise and critically engage with the problems but also potential of analysing the particular lives and experiences of three specific black South African intellectuals, individuals who lived during the apartheid period, who experienced racial oppression and attempts to silence their ideas, which forced them into exile.

Research Methodology and Methods

For this study, I have used a qualitative research methodology. This entailed analysing non-quantifiable data such as people's ideas, opinions, and experiences. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide in-depth analysis of data to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings people assign to their experiences.⁸⁸ This research has used sources such as interviews with the research subjects (done by other researchers), newspapers sources, online sources, and books and articles written by these black intellectuals.

In terms of analysis, I have used textual analysis, where the corpus of these intellectuals' work is analysed, and narrative analysis to examine the content from the various sources as

⁸⁵ Jaume Aurell. *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians' Autobiographies: From Documentation to Intervention*. (London: Routledge, 2015) 259.

⁸⁶ Aurell and Davis, "History and Autobiography", 503-511.

⁸⁷ Aurell, *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians' Autobiographies*, 259.

⁸⁸ Loraine Busetto, Wolfgang Wick and Christoph Gumbiger. "How to Use and Assess Qualitative Research Methods". *Neurological Research and Practice*. (2020, 2: 14) 433-467 and K. Hammarberg, M. Kirkman and S. de Lacey. "Qualitative Research Methods: When to use Them and How to Judge Them". *Human Production*. (2016, 31: 3) 498-499.

represented in written and oral form, to better understand my individual research subjects' perceptions and experiences in their broader socio-political contexts.⁸⁹

This study was designed as a desktop study (and received ethical clearance) during the Covid-19 period, and so uses a variety of primary and secondary sources accessible in the public domain, such as in libraries and online to write about the lives of my deceased research subjects. All the below-mentioned sources were important for this research because they provided information about various aspects of Mphahlele, Mafeje and Magubane's lives, their experiences and work as black intellectuals.

Autobiographies:

I also used autobiographies written by these black intellectuals. This included Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down 2nd Avenue*, originally published in 1959, which focused on Mphahlele's life in apartheid South Africa, and *Africa My Music*, originally published in 1984, which focused on Mphahlele's return to South Africa after spending decades in exile. Bernard Magubane has also written an autobiography, which I will use, entitled *My Life and Times*, published in 2010, in which he shares his experiences in South Africa and abroad.

Online Interviews

In addition, I have used publicly accessible online interviews conducted by different people with Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane. In these interviews, the research subjects responded to questions they were asked about their lives and experiences in South Africa and abroad. However, most of these interviews focus on their work as scholars and writers, as they were usually conducted later in their lives after they had contributed a lot to academia and literature after their return from exile to South Africa.

⁸⁹ Torill Moen. "Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. (2006, 5: 4) 56-69 and Neil J. Salkind. *Encyclopaedia of Research Design*. (London: Sage, 2010) 221-277.

Newspapers:

Furthermore, I have used old newspaper articles found on Newsbank, a UKZN newspaper database. This included newspaper articles found in the *Sunday Times* Archive, 1906-2019, *The Sowetan* Archive, 1981-2019, as well as other old newspaper articles found on Google searches for online newspapers. These old newspaper articles were useful in this dissertation as they provided additional information about my research subjects.

Books, Chapters in Books, Journal Articles and Dissertations:

Use of different secondary sources: books, chapters in books, journal articles and dissertations have also been used to supplement the abovementioned sources, providing useful background and contextual material needed to write this thesis. Some also provided information on my research subjects.

Critical Reflection on my Sources

While all the sources used in this dissertation were vital to writing it, it is important to reflect on the limitations of the sources used. Autobiographical accounts, used to understand the lives and experiences of Mphahlele and Magubane, have their shortcomings. Although the autobiographies of my research subjects produced significant insights into aspects of their lives that they thought were important, it is impossible to escape bias so these authors' subjectivities would have skewed their perspectives in particular ways when writing about their own lives and experiences. For example, when writing about their contributions to the liberation struggle in South Africa, it is possible that my research subjects sought to exaggerate their input to become part of the celebrated anti-apartheid struggle heroes of South African history. This was likely particularly the case for Magubane who wrote his autobiography in the post-apartheid

period when many autobiographies and biographies were being published by struggle icons. Another shortcoming of these autobiographies is that both authors chose to focus on certain issues or factors but excluded others such as, their shortcomings. However, as is to be expected, it is difficult to critique one's own doings. They thus sought to focus on issues that they regarded as important to them personally and thus omitted mention of factors that others might have regarded as significant, or which portrayed them in a negative light.

Newspapers as sources have shortcomings too. Like any sources, they are written by people, based at newspaper organisations, with agendas. It is thus imperative as a researcher to consider who wrote the news stories used in this dissertation, when they were written to understand their context, and what motivated the authors to produce the stories they wrote. This helps to expose the political and social biases of the authors. Another significant aspect to consider is who owned the newspapers whose sources were used. Newspapers and the media in general, have been argued to be susceptible to political, social, and economic pressures, which in turn can influence the perspectives of the stories captured for their publications.⁹⁰

Interviews have limitations too. For example, oral interviews rely a lot on the memory of an interviewee as he or she is expected to remember the experiences, people, events, and dates from the past, and it is possible for an interviewee not to do so accurately.⁹¹ In addition to forgetting information, an interviewee might also exaggerate their memories to place themselves in a better light.⁹² It is important to also note that there are many other power dynamics that have an effect when interviews are done. This includes race, class, gender, culture, language, etc. For example, if the interviewer and the interviewee come from different cultures, it becomes challenging to conduct an interview with an understanding and compliance

⁹⁰ Paul Thompson. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 118-119.

⁹¹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 118-119.

⁹² Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 119.

to cultural sensitivity.⁹³ Lack of a common language between interviewers and interviews can also skew an interview dynamic requiring the assistance of interpreters, and meaning can get lost in translation.⁹⁴ Therefore, beyond posing and answering questions, both interviewers and interviewees have a lot to consider when doing interviews.⁹⁵ However, while oral interviews can be credible because interviewers provide first-hand evidence from someone who experienced or witnessed something in the past, we cannot disregard the issue of subjectivity since it can result in bias and distortion of information.

Moreover, since this is a desktop study, I did not do my interviews but used several interviews conducted by other interviewers. Therefore, these other interviewers arranged and asked their questions with their own research interests or agendas in mind, not with the interests of this study in mind. For example, there are questions and answers found in some of the interviews that I did not use because they were not relevant to this study. Also, some of the interviews were unbalanced as they focused too much on one aspect, such as the published literature written by the research subjects, and not enough on other aspects, such as discussion about their lives and experiences in exile.

To overcome the abovementioned limitations of the sources, I used various primary sources to overcome the gaps, biases and possible agendas influencing the various sources. I also used a wide variety of secondary sources to supplement the primary sources and to help verify the information mentioned in these sources to help try to overcome some of the limitations of individual sources.⁹⁶ It was important to use different sources critically to produce more balanced and credible analyses.

⁹³ Radikobo Ntsimane. "Why Should I Tell My Story?" *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*. Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane eds. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008) 109-127.

⁹⁴ Belinda Bozzoli. "Interviewing the Women of Phokeng". *The Oral History Reader*. Robert Parks and Alistair Thomson eds. (London: Routledge, 2003) 146.

⁹⁵ Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool. "Orality, Memory, and Social History in South Africa". *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee eds. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998) 89-99.

⁹⁶ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 119.

Structure of dissertation

Chapter One introduces the dissertation topic, discusses the research problem, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, and structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two provides a discussion of the historical background of South Africa's apartheid system, which separated and subjugated black South Africans in the interests of the white minority.

Chapter Three explores Mphahlele, Mafeje, and Magubane's early lives, including their educational backgrounds, and examines the conditions that these intellectuals faced growing up in apartheid South Africa, which influenced their perspectives and ideas.

Chapter Four examines the writings and ideas of Mphahlele, Mafeje, and Magubane who critiqued apartheid and the contributions they made to the country's liberation struggle while living in South Africa. It also focuses on how the apartheid state tried to suppress their ideas and to silence them.

Chapter Five focuses on the decisions of the three intellectuals to go into exile and their lives in exile. Moreover, this chapter considers the focus of their writings during the period of living outside South Africa.

Chapter Six considers the post-apartheid period and these black intellectuals' lives and experiences in South Africa from the 1990s. In addition, it examines their lives and work after their return to the point of their deaths.

Chapter Seven provides a conclusion to this dissertation. It sums up the main findings of the dissertation and reflects on the legacies of our subjects.

Chapter Two:

The Historical Background of Apartheid and Oppression of Black South Africans

This chapter provides some historical background to trace the factors that contributed to the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa. It discusses South Africa's apartheid system, which separated and subjugated black South Africans in the interests of white South Africans. This chapter is not intended to cover all that transpired under apartheid South Africa. Instead, it seeks to bring to light the significant factors that resulted to the emergence and maintenance of the apartheid system, and how black people in general and black intellectuals suffered under this system.

The word “apartheid” became prominent in 1944 when Daniel Francois Malan used it in the then South African parliament, a white-only parliament. He was speaking as the leader of the opposition National Party, an Afrikaner nationalist political party that represented and promoted the interests of the country's white population group, particularly Afrikaners. Malan preferred the term apartheid to segregation as he emphasised his party's desire to allow different so-called “race” groups the opportunity to exist and develop separately.⁹⁷ However, as Keppel Jones has argued, apartheid was eventually revealed to be a stepped-up version of segregation.⁹⁸

The architects of apartheid, such as Dr W.W.M. Eiselen, an anthropologist and linguist who headed the Eiselen Commission on the creation of a separate Bantu Education system during the 1950s, sought to resolve the “race problem” by introducing what he regarded as “effective mechanisms for the peaceful existence of diverse ethnic groupings” in South

⁹⁷ Hermann Giliomee. “The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2003, 29: 2), 373-392. I have inserted the term “race” in inverted commas here to highlight the socially constructed nature of this term. The apartheid system created differences amongst human beings in South Africa that were skin deep, i.e., determined by a person's skin colour. However, going forward, I will not insert this term in quotation marks so as not to overly burden the text with quotation marks for this contentious term.

⁹⁸ Giliomee, “The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948”, 373-374.

Africa.⁹⁹ Similar to Malan, who became the country's Prime Minister when the National Party won the 1948 whites-only national election, he argued that Africans, like Afrikaners, should have their own schools, churches, residential areas, and governing bodies etc., in order to develop separately so that they could maintain their own cultures.¹⁰⁰ However, beyond the separation of people by race, apartheid as a system meant the subjugation of black South Africans by white South Africans and the exclusion of black people from political, social, and economic power.¹⁰¹ Apartheid was maintained through the passage of many racist laws that discriminated against and oppressed black South Africans.

As much as apartheid emerged as a powerful political system in 1948, it is, however, important to take cognisance of the fact that the subjugation of black South Africans did not begin in 1948. Instead, it can be traced back to the Dutch arrival in the Cape from 1652 and its colonisation in the latter 1600s through the 1700s. This marked the beginning of the arrival of white settlers who invaded black people's land and established an economy based on the enslavement of local people, but also people imported from East Africa and Southeast Asia.¹⁰² Even after the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, the subjugation of black people continued as European settlement expanded. Another group of white settlers, who arrived from Britain at this time, used advanced weapons and religion to conquer different groups of black people.¹⁰³ During the colonial period, once a region was colonised, usually through force, that is, wars, the colonisers introduced many racist laws that subjugated and discriminated against black people and to benefit white settler groups.

⁹⁹ Giliomee, "The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948", 385.

¹⁰⁰ Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 3.

¹⁰¹ Steve Biko. *I Write What I Like*. (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2017) 27.

¹⁰² Leonard Thompson. *The History of South Africa*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 31-63.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 51-63.

This situation continued into the post-1910 period when the Union of South Africa was formed. In 1910, white Afrikaners and English settlers, reached a consensus after prior years of warfare between their groups over resources, to form a whites-only government that would govern South Africa and put forward their interests as “Europeans” (or whites) over the country’s majority black population.¹⁰⁴ The Union government advocated for segregation and passed many laws to segregate the country’s race groups and to benefit people of European descent. For example, in 1911, the Mines and Works Act restricted black South Africans to unskilled job categories in the mining sector.¹⁰⁵ Two years later, the government passed the 1913 Natives’ Land Act, which limited African ownership of land to designated areas covering 7% of the country’s total land area. This Act restricted Africans from buying and occupying land except as employees of a white master. This land allotment was increased from 7% to 13% in 1936.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in 1923, the government passed the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, which limited the number of Africans who could stay in cities to serve the needs of white South Africans.¹⁰⁷ Segregation policies impacted Africans’ ability to own land, reside or travel anywhere they wanted, and have job security.¹⁰⁸

The Oppressive Apartheid System (1948-1994)

The apartheid rulers, who came into power in 1948, were able to build upon a long history of racial oppression and inequality in South Africa, extending back to the colonial and segregation eras, with white people located at the top of the socio-economic and political hierarchy and black people at the bottom. Indeed, many apartheid laws were just extensions of

¹⁰⁴ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 3 and Timothy J. Stapleton. *A Military History of South Africa: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid*. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 1967) 106-107.

¹⁰⁵ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ William Beinart and Saul Dubow. “The Historiography of Segregation and Apartheid”. *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth – Century South Africa*. William Beinart and Saul Dubow eds. (London: Routledge, 2003) 4.

¹⁰⁷ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Beinart and Dubow, “The Historiography of Segregation and Apartheid”, 1.

past colonial policies and segregation laws, which under apartheid's "separate development" system, became more systematic and all-encompassing in nature, as well as brutal to protect the privileges of white South Africans.¹⁰⁹

The apartheid regime's many laws aggravated the discriminatory conditions for black South Africans. One of the first laws passed was the Population Registration Act (No. 30) of 1950. This act sought to determine and register all "the races" of South Africans.¹¹⁰ All people of South Africa were to be categorised as "Europeans" (whites), "Indians" (Asians), "Coloureds" (of mixed heritage), or "Bantus" (Africans). The passage of later apartheid laws was based on this foundational act. It did not merely advocate for the segregation of the country's races, but to place this apartheid regime-determined race groups in an unequal hierarchy with Europeans at the top, followed by Indians and Coloureds in the middle, and then African people at the bottom. Resources and opportunities were accessed unequally depending on where one was placed in this racialised hierarchy.¹¹¹

During the apartheid period, Africans were required to carry passes, basically legal documents with their personal information provided by the apartheid administration, to enable them to access so-called white areas, for example, for work. Although the carrying of passes had been around for decades before the apartheid era, the application of pass laws had differed between the provinces in prior years, so in 1952, the Native Laws Amendment Act (No. 67) standardised the issuing and use of passes across the country. This act made African men and women subject to stricter influx control measures. Section 10 of the Act prohibited African

¹⁰⁹ Giliomee, "The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948", 373-392 and Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Hermann Giliomee. "The Growth of Afrikaner Identity". *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth – Century South Africa*. William Beinart and Saul Dubow eds. (London: Routledge, 2003) 201.

¹¹¹ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 186-207 and Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 47.

men and women from being in an urban area for more than 72 hours without a special permit in their pass books certifying that they were lawfully employed.¹¹²

In 1949, the government passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (No. 55), which made marriages between South Africa's various race groups illegal. The government also passed the Immorality Act (No. 21) of 1950, amending the Immorality Act (No. 51) of 1927 to prohibit sexual relations between black and white South Africans.¹¹³ The experiences of Can Themba in his biography written by Siphiso Mahala demonstrate how these acts affected black people. During the apartheid period, Themba, a black intellectual himself, discussed how difficult it was to be in a cross-racial romance with a white woman, Jean Hart. This for Themba meant sleeping with one eye open because whilst involved with her, he was constantly at risk of being arrested for their illegal relationship.¹¹⁴

Other laws followed. The Group Areas Act (No. 41) of 1950 split the whole country into geographical areas based on race. The government could enforce control over property rights throughout the country under this act, requiring permits based on race for land ownership and occupation, thus entrenching limited access to land already provided for black South Africans with the earlier passage of the Natives' Land Act of 1913 and its amendment in 1936, which gave black South Africans access to only 13% of the land.¹¹⁵

In rural areas, the government further fragmented the majority African population by passing the Bantu Authorities Act (No. 68) of 1951. The purpose of the Bantu Authorities Act was to give traditional tribal leaders power inside their tribal homelands in South Africa. This act, which succeeded the Native Affairs Act (No. 23 of 1920), established tribal, regional, and

¹¹² Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 47. Anti-apartheid activist, Steve Biko, provided a good example of how this law affected him in his book *Biko, I Write What I Like*, 12. For more on this, also see Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander, and Nigel C. Gibson. *Biko Lives: Contestation of Steve Biko*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 22-23.

¹¹³ Giliomee, "The Growth of Afrikaner Identity", 201.

¹¹⁴ Siphiso Mahala. *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Tsotsi*. (South Africa: Wits University Press, 2022) 63-68.

¹¹⁵ Giliomee, "The Growth of Afrikaner Identity", 201.

territorial authority as well as the legal framework for self-determination of different ethnic and linguistic groups into traditional homeland reserve territories.¹¹⁶ This resulted in the development of the Bantustan system, which separated African people into different homelands and kept them there by legislative restrictions, which limited their movement. This reinforced the divide-and-rule strategy of the apartheid regime. Over time, the creation of the Bantustans also led to the forced removals of African people from many areas, often in or close to cities, that were designated white urban areas in the grand apartheid separate development scheme.¹¹⁷

Life was not only separate under apartheid, but it was unequal, too. The principle of unequal resource distribution was included in the passage of legislation on public facilities, education, and jobs. The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No. 49) of 1953 declared that all races should have separate facilities such as toilets, parks, and beaches, which did not have to be of equal quality. As a result of this act, apartheid signs were put up throughout the country to specify which amenities were reserved for which specific race groups with punishments meted out for those who violated these separate facilities.¹¹⁸ In 1953, the government also passed the Native Labour Act (No. 48). Under this Act, black workers were not allowed to organise themselves like white workers or have legal union representation or to embark on any strikes.¹¹⁹

In this same year, the apartheid government passed highly discriminatory education legislation, the Bantu Education Act (No. 47) of 1953. A Bantu Education Commission, chaired by anthropologist Dr W.W.M. Eiselen (who had also served prior to this as the Chief Inspector of African Schools in the Transvaal),¹²⁰ had been formed in 1949 by a group of well-educated

¹¹⁶ Beinart et al, “The Historiography of Segregation and Apartheid”, 16.

¹¹⁷ Abel Martin. “Long-Run Effects of Forced Resettlement: Evidence from Apartheid South Africa”. *The Journal of Economic History*, (2019, 79: 4) 915-953 and Laurine Platzky and Cheryl Walker. *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985) 41-67.

¹¹⁸ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 50.

¹¹⁹ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 50.

¹²⁰ Teresa Barnes. *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonization*. (New York: Routledge, 2019) 20.

white male academics (intellectuals of their day) who helped guide the country's racist apartheid-era education policies. The Commission's final report suggested that South Africans be provided with separate education facilities, that African education facilities be taken out of the hands of missionaries (who in the segregation era had run most of the schools for African children), and nationalised and thus placed under the authority of the Ministry of Native Affairs so that the government could control more strictly the content taught to African children.¹²¹

When he first introduced the Bill in Parliament, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, who was the Minister of Native Affairs told those present that the Bill sought to reorganise the education system in a way that would clarify the future job aspirations of Africans in South Africa:

I just want to remind Hon. Members that if the Native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a great mistake ... There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour ... For that reason, it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has its aim absorption in the European community... Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze...¹²²

In addition to mandating thoroughly segregated schooling facilities for black and white South Africans, the Bantu Education Act worked to ensure that black students received an inferior education compared to white students. The content was not the same for all students, with black South Africans portrayed in a derogatory light. As Es'kia Mphahlele, who worked at one point as a teacher in the Bantu Education system, highlighted in one of his books:

"I condemned the textbooks ordered by the Education Department for use in African schools: a history book with several distortions meant to glorify white colonisation, frontier wars, the defeat of African tribes, and white rule; Afrikaans grammar books which abound with examples like: *the Kaffir has stolen a knife; that is a lazy Kaffir*... and a literature that teems with non-white characters who are savages or blundering idiots to be despised and laughed at; characters who are inevitably frustrated creatures of city life and decide to return 'home' – to the Reserves".¹²³

¹²¹ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 50-52.

¹²² A.N. Pelzer. *Verwoerd Speaks: Speeches 1948–1966*. (Johannesburg: APB Publishers, 1966) 9.

¹²³ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Down Second Avenue*. (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2004) 157.

Teachers in black schools were also either poorly trained or too few. Furthermore, the facilities were not the same as the infrastructure and resources were inadequate for black school goers, with overcrowded classrooms, and few libraries and laboratory facilities in black schools.¹²⁴ This meant black South Africans were treated in a discriminatory manner that trained them for subservient jobs and opportunities, which would ensure that the mainstream economy remained in the hands of the white minority.¹²⁵

At the university level, apartheid legislation also negatively affected black South Africans. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, Africans could study at the South African Native College (later the University of Fort Hare), and token numbers of black students (Africans, Indians, and Coloureds) per year were allowed to study at the historically white liberal universities of Natal, Cape Town, and the Witwatersrand. Although black students could attend the same lectures as white students at the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand (their residence facilities, dining and socialisation were segregated), at the University of Natal, students were internally segregated.¹²⁶ This meant that white and black students were taught at different times and even in different facilities, as was the case at the University of Natal, which had a separate “Non-European Section”, and they were housed in racially segregated residences.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Michelle Cucuzza. *The Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 and its Effects: One Attempt to Perpetuate Apartheid*. (New York: Lona College, 1993) 3-44 and Nadine L. Moore. “In a Class of their Own: The Bantu Education Act (1953) Revisited”. (PhD dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2015), 68-81.

¹²⁵ Soudien, “Racial Discourse in the Commission on Native Education”, 42-44.

¹²⁶ Bill Guest. *Stella Aurorae: Natal University College (1949 to 1976)*. Volume 2. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2017) 137-171, 286-296; Bill Guest. *Stella Aurorae: The University of Natal (1976 to 2003)*. Volume 3 (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2019) 165-219; Howard Phillips. *UCT Under Apartheid: From Onset to Sit-In: 1948-1968*. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2020) 37-61; Murray Bruce. *Wits: The Early Years: A History of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and its Precursors 1896-1939*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1982); and Bruce Murray. *WITS: The ‘Open’ Years: A History of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1939-1959*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1997).

¹²⁷ Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa*, 64; Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 52; and Bernard Magubane. *My Life and Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 74.

However, once the apartheid government came into power, it sought to segregate university education strictly. In 1959, the apartheid regime passed the Extension of University Education Act (No. 45). With this legislation, black South Africans were prohibited from attending white institutions of higher learning unless permission had been obtained from the Minister of Education.¹²⁸ Instead, the state sought to create, in the Eurocentric image of white universities,¹²⁹ several separate black university colleges, such as the University of Zululand, the University of the Transkei, the University of the North (Turffloop), the University of the Western Cape and the University of Durban-Westville to accommodate students from different black ethnic groups.¹³⁰ This created a system of racially segregated universities, though so-called white universities also had divisions based on language (English and Afrikaans) with the Universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, the Orange Free State, Potchefstroom, and Rand Afrikaans University, for example, being Afrikaans-medium and the earlier abovementioned universities English-medium institutions.¹³¹ In addition to racial segregation, these universities provided different education and facilities for their students. Black universities, in contrast to prestigious white universities, offered inferior education and poor infrastructure.¹³²

According to the Marxist sociologist Louis Althusser, institutions of learning fall under “ideological state apparatuses which serve the interests of the ruling class and reproduce the status quo”.¹³³ Althusser’s argument was well-proven in the apartheid state’s introduction of the Bantu Education Act and Extension of University Education Act as they sought to protect the interests of the apartheid regime and help to reproduce it.¹³⁴ By producing educated and

¹²⁸ Murray, *WITS: The ‘Open’ Years*, Foreword.

¹²⁹ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. (New York: Routledge, 2018) 162.

¹³⁰ Saleem Badat. *Black Student Politics: Higher Education and Apartheid from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 47-75.

¹³¹ Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa*, 64.

¹³² Magubane, *My Life and Times*, 74.

¹³³ Louis Althusser. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. (New York: Verso, 2014) 173.

¹³⁴ Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 14-69.

skilled black elites, these universities wanted to ensure the maintenance of the apartheid regime and its separate development scheme. These elites could then work as professionals or in government. Without a stratum of educated black people to work in the Bantustans and other forms of segregated government, apartheid as a system could not survive.¹³⁵

Another aspect to note about institutions of learning is that they are sites of knowledge production. This meant that if the apartheid regime controlled these sites, the regime was able to use these institutions to spread ideas that justified apartheid. This is what Karl Marx meant when he argued:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production...”¹³⁶

Hermann Giliomee's work titled *The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948*, shows how some academics were influential early architects of apartheid. He argues that the first book propagating a policy of apartheid in social science language in 1943 was written by three academics who trained or worked at Stellenbosch University, including P.J. Coertze, an Anthropology lecturer; F.J. Language, who worked for Native Administration; and B.I.C. van Eeden, who worked in Bantu languages. According to their study, black South Africans, particularly Africans, who formed the country's majority population, had to be taken out of the white economy, and transferred to the homeland territories where it was believed they belonged. Only those “deemed necessary” because of their labour should be permitted to remain in white areas.¹³⁷ These early ideas were later incorporated into the policies that led to the creation of various Bantustan territories and the forced removals of black South Africans. This affirms both Althusser's and Marx's analysis of the role of institutions of higher learning

¹³⁵ John Davies. “The State and the South African University System under Apartheid”. *Comparative Education*. (1996, 32: 3) 319-332.

¹³⁶ Karl Marx. *The German Ideology*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998) 67.

¹³⁷ Giliomee, “The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948”, 385.

in society. It also affirms the argument made earlier that the apartheid system had intellectuals behind it as its key masterminds.¹³⁸

However, as we shall see later in this chapter, as well as later in this dissertation, black universities, although highly problematic racialised and unequal spaces, also importantly helped produce black intellectuals who would go on to play an important role as critics of the apartheid regime. At the same time, some even helped mobilise opposition to this regime.

Black Opposition to Apartheid

Opposition to racial segregation and oppression has a long history too. Indeed, the struggle to end racial discrimination began long before the apartheid years and continued into this period. Extending back to white settler colonialism in the Cape, the Khoi and San people fought wars with the settlers to prevent dispossession of their land and livestock from the late fifteenth century onwards.¹³⁹ As more settlers came to the region and spread east and northeast over the next three centuries, other groups of Africans fought wars of resistance to protect themselves. These included for example, the Xhosa group under King Hintsa kaKhawuta, the Zulu group under the King Cetshwayo kaMpande, the Bapedi group under King Sikhukhune, and the Basotho group under King Moshoeshoe, etc.¹⁴⁰ The last battle of resistance prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, was the 1906 Bhambatha Uprising.¹⁴¹ This battle was stimulated because of the resistance by the Zondi clan, led by Chief Bhambatha

¹³⁸ Of course, not all white intellectuals were apartheid masterminds. Many liberal intellectuals, based at the liberal white universities, such as Eddie Webster, David Webster, Rick Turner, Johannes Degennar, Jack Simons, and Monica Wilson (who was Archie Mafeje's supervisor at UCT), Alan Paton and Helen Suzman criticised apartheid. Though some black intellectuals, such as Steve Biko and Bernard Magubane questioned whether their critiques went far enough since they were beneficiaries of the system they claimed to be against. For more on this, see Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 20-28 and Magubane, *My Life and Times*, 245-249.

¹³⁹ Timothy Stapleton. *A Military History of South Africa: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid*. (Oxford: Praeger, 2010) 1-21.

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 70-109.

¹⁴¹ Bhambatha is in most cases misspelt Bambatha, hence the uprising or rebellion is in most cases incorrectly spelt the Bambatha Uprising/Rebellion.

kaMancinza, who refused to work on the sugar plantations and to pay the Poll Tax to the British administration in Natal. In this battle, like in many battles that preceded it, many people died; especially Africans because the British possessed more advanced weapons technology.¹⁴²

Immediately after the formation of the Union of South Africa, there was a shift in resistance, as it moved from wars to political resistance. The formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in January 1912, then known as the South African Natives National Congress (SANNC), was the first notable form of political resistance. Two of my three research subjects, Mphahlele and Magubane, would join the ANC in its later decades and participate in its different programmes as members. The ANC would come to contribute significantly in the liberation struggle, firstly against the state's segregation policy and, later against apartheid. Initially, this organisation was formed as a national organisation to oppose the formation of the Union of South Africa, which excluded African people from participating in the government and denied them voting rights as full citizens of the country. To show their opposition, the ANC had its members sign petitions, which were taken by delegates to Britain to voice their dissatisfaction and to negotiate against the exclusion of Africans. Other organisations were also founded to resist oppression, including organisations for Indians and Coloureds, such as the South African Indian Congress and South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation.¹⁴³

After the implementation of apartheid, the resistance by black people grew rapidly. This resistance was led mainly, but not only, by the ANC, which had become more radical at this time because of the influence of a younger generation of members who formed the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) in 1944. ANCYL members promoted more radical forms of resistance that influenced the ANC to take a new approach to mass civil disobedience

¹⁴² Tembeka Ngcukaitobi. *The Land is Ours*. (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2018) 97-100.

¹⁴³ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 23-27.

in the years that followed.¹⁴⁴ For example, in 1952, a Defiance Campaign was organised by the ANC, which involved, for the first time, several other racial groups who jointly participated in this campaign, using non-violent means, such as protest marches, public sit-ins, and bus boycotts, etc. to challenge the many apartheid laws that had been passed from 1948.¹⁴⁵ Thousands of people were arrested and many leaders of organisations, including ANC leaders were arrested and banned. However, the membership of the ANC grew from about 7,000 to more than 100,000 by the end of 1952, highlighting a people not demoralised by the government's actions but buoyed by it.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, in 1955, different anti-apartheid organisations came together to create and adopt the Freedom Charter, a document that laid out these combined organisations' aims; primarily to encourage a non-racial united front against the apartheid regime, and a blueprint for a democratic and non-racial future country.¹⁴⁷

In reaction to these resistance activities, the apartheid government rolled out additional measures designed to suppress or control challenges to their rule. In 1953, it passed the Public Safety Act (No. 3), which allowed the government to declare a State of Emergency and to suspend all laws to enable its security forces to operate without restrictions if it felt there was a threat to public safety or the preservation of public order. A State of Emergency could be declared for a period of 12 months and then be renewed if necessary. According to the Criminal Law Amendment Act (No. 8), which was also passed in 1953, anyone accompanying a person found guilty of protest offenses against the government or supporting such persons was deemed guilty, which could lead to imprisonment.¹⁴⁸ It was the measures provided in this act which enabled the government to arrest 156 leaders at the 1955 Congress of the People meeting, where

¹⁴⁴ Rebone Tau. *The Rise and The Fall of the ANCYL*. (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2020) 16-23.

¹⁴⁵ Magubane, *My Life and Times*, 40.

¹⁴⁶ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 208-210.

¹⁴⁸ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 57.

the Freedom Charter was adopted, which included ANC leaders Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and others, leading to their five-year trial for treason.¹⁴⁹

Following these arrests, the government in order to introduce a board of censors to ban publication materials including, books and films the state deemed subversive, it passed laws such as the Customs and Excise Act of 1955 and the Official Secrets Act of 1956.¹⁵⁰ In addition, in 1956, the government also passed the Riotous Assemblies Act (No. 17), which prohibit any public gatherings that would provoke “feelings of hostility between Whites and Blacks”.¹⁵¹ It also forbid any “banned” individuals from participating or addressing public meetings. It was these and other acts passed beyond the 1950s which criminalised African opposition and their voices of protest, which were such a threat to black intellectuals protesting apartheid in South Africa. Nonetheless, Africans continued to organise and participate in strikes, protests, and boycotts.

Another major event of black resistance was the anti-pass campaign of 1960 led by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), an organisation led by Robert Sobukwe, which had broken away from the ANC in 1959 as it sought to promote an African-only nationalist approach. In March 1960, the PAC launched a countrywide campaign against the pass laws and ordered Africans to leave their passes at home and go gather outside police stations in a non-violent form of protest to provoke mass arrests by the police. On the 21st of March, at one of the police stations in Sharpeville, the police responded with violence by firing at the protesters and killed 69 and wounded 186 people. Leaders of the campaign were arrested including Robert Sobukwe, who was sentenced to three years imprisonment.¹⁵² On the 3rd of May 1963, at the

¹⁴⁹ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 211.

¹⁵⁰ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 58 and Mbulelo Mzamane and David Howarth. “Representing Blackness: Steve Biko and Black Consciousness Movement”. *South Africa’s Resistance Press: Alternative Voices in the Last Generation under Apartheid*. Les Switzer and Mohamed Adhikari eds. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000) 176.

¹⁵¹ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 59.

¹⁵² Benjamin Pogrand. *How Can Man Die Better*. (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015) 129-149.

end of his three-year imprisonment, the government passed the General Law Amendment Act (No 37) which allowed the Minister of Justice to extend indefinitely the imprisonment of any political prisoner. Sobukwe's prison sentence was extended by another six years on Robben Island. It also extended the detention period up to 90 days for people suspected of a politically motivated crime.¹⁵³

After the Sharpeville massacre, anti-apartheid protests continued and gained momentum. The government declared a State of Emergency and arrested many people. During the early 1960s, the government also banned several anti-apartheid organisations, including the ANC and the PAC. This led to these organisations having to reorganise in exile.¹⁵⁴ This period saw many anti-apartheid activists going into exile since it was too dangerous to continue with their resistance activities within the borders of South Africa.¹⁵⁵ The level of the suppression of activism through detentions, imprisonment, banning orders and the killing of anti-apartheid activists was very high.¹⁵⁶

These events produced a watershed moment in the history of South Africa's anti-apartheid activism which diverted from peaceful resistance to armed resistance. The armed resistance was centred on the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (also known as MK), the armed wing of the ANC and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), also known as Poqo. The formation of these military wings in 1961 led to the emergence of the armed struggle against the apartheid regime.¹⁵⁷ Although these organisations were formed in exile, they had an impact within the borders of South Africa through underground operations.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, 154-189.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Ellis. *External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960-1990*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 40-216.

¹⁵⁵ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 31-69.

¹⁵⁶ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 62-64.

¹⁵⁷ Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa*, 159-168.

¹⁵⁸ Stephen Davis. *The ANC's War against Apartheid: Umkhonto We Sizwe and the Liberation of South Africa*. (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2018) 2-25.

Another significant moment in the history of resistance in South Africa was that which arose against the Bantu Education system. Although the resistance to this form of inferior, segregated education started in the 1950s, when some black teachers, including Es'kia Mphahlele, were expelled from the profession for taking a stand against the Bantu Education system in its early days, it was really in the 1970s that the resistance became mass based after the emergence of the student-led Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).¹⁵⁹

The BCM began in the black universities where student activists, such as Steve Biko, advocated a Black Consciousness ideology, which promoted resistance against the dehumanisation of black people and their cultures. It challenged ideas about white supremacy and advocated for “Black Pride”, a defiant anti-apartheid attitude, “Black Solidarity” to help South Africa’s unequal socio-political regime.¹⁶⁰ Black Consciousness ideas became prominent in institutions of higher learning through the South African Students Organisation (SASO), as a blacks only students’ organisation that had branches on different black university campuses formed in July 1969. BC ideas also spread more widely through the Black People’s Convention (BPC), which sought to help mobilise a wider segment of the black community, and to black schools in the townships through the South African Students Movement (SASM) which sought to mobilise and conscientise black students.¹⁶¹

Inspired by BC ideology, on the 16th of June 1976, black students organised a large-scale protest march in the township of Soweto to voice their opposition to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in black schools and to the apartheid regime’s oppressive policies more generally. This Soweto Uprising culminated in a brutal police response, which on June 16th and 17th led to the killing of 93 students in Soweto.¹⁶² This

¹⁵⁹ Chabani Manganyi. *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 103.

¹⁶⁰ Mzamane et al, “Representing Blackness”, 176-189. See also Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 66-79.

¹⁶¹ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 212.

¹⁶² Sifiso Ndlovu. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976*. (South Africa: Picador Africa, 2017) 43-59.

angered many black South Africans, who took to the streets in protest, leading to more deaths from police brutality. Many people were arrested and detained in the days, weeks, and months after this uprising. This included Steve Biko, who was arrested and detained in 1977. Biko died a brutal and untimely death because of head injuries sustained whilst detained, after being beaten up by police officers in his prison cell.¹⁶³

The latter 1970s became a turning point in the history of South Africa. The Soweto Uprisings exposed the inhumanity and violence of the white regime both in South Africa and beyond its borders. The United Nations and the US government expressed concern over the circumstances of Biko's death, and the US Congress suggested that an international team investigate South Africa's detention laws and practices, specifically the death of Biko.¹⁶⁴ In 1966 the United Nations had declared apartheid a crime against humanity. It led to an international boycott by many countries of South Africa's apartheid regime. Different international organisations also mobilised in solidarity against apartheid and sanctions were imposed.¹⁶⁵

Resistance against the apartheid regime gained momentum too, and became more violent in the 1980s. Oliver Tambo, the ANC in exile's president, conveyed the message to black South Africans who supported their organisation to work to render the country ungovernable. Black people were encouraged to render apartheid institutions unworkable, and to attack these institutions by going up against the apartheid regime's weakest points, and ultimately confront Pretoria itself, the seat of National Party rule. The underground operations affiliated with *Umkhonto we Sizwe* were the driving force behind this resistance. The United Democratic Front (UDF), which was founded in 1983 and included more than 400 anti-apartheid organisations such as trade unions, students' organisations, women's organisations,

¹⁶³ Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 173-174.

¹⁶⁴ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 79-81.

¹⁶⁵ Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 5.

etc., played a crucial role as well. In many aspects, the UDF seemed like an internal wing of the ANC. This was because the UDF, which operated within South African borders, worked closely with the exiled ANC. Indeed, many ANC underground members who were inside the country joined and participated in the UDF. The UDF organised, for instance, rent and bus boycotts, school protests, and worker stay-aways.¹⁶⁶

Although the apartheid government sought to suppress this growing resistance by implementing more States of Emergencies, bringing in the army to control uprisings in the townships, and arresting and detaining more people, the pressure continued to mount on this government. In addition, because of economic sanctions, the apartheid system in those days became less sustainable. Eventually, towards the late 1980s, negotiations began between apartheid officials and leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle. Compromises were made, and the first democratic elections were held on the 27th of April 1994 to mark the end of apartheid as a legislated system.

Conclusion

Apartheid was a very brutal system of racialised subjugation which negatively affected black South Africans both at an individual and collective level by virtue of their being “non-white”. Due to space constraints, not all that transpired during apartheid in its 46 years of existence is covered here. However, a summary of some key aspects of this history, including resistance that emerged against the apartheid system, has been provided in this chapter to help contextualise the chapters to come. Black people in apartheid South Africa suffered enormously under the apartheid regime, including the subjects of this study, Es’kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane, to which I now turn the focus.

¹⁶⁶ Jeremy Seekings. *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991*. (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2000) 29-48.

Chapter Three:

The Early Lives and Educational Backgrounds of Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje in Segregation and Apartheid South Africa

This chapter explores Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane's early lives. It covers their individual upbringings and locates them within the broader historical contexts of their time. It also examines their educational backgrounds and how this shaped their ideas. The chapter focuses on the conditions that these black intellectuals faced growing up in South Africa during segregation and apartheid, which influenced their perspectives and ideas, leading them to become critics of the apartheid regime.

Es'kia Mphahlele

Ezekiel Mphahlele, or Es'kia Mphahlele as he became commonly known, was born on the 17th of December 1919. Mphahlele was born in Marabastad, a township in Pretoria. His parents were Moses Mphahlele and Eva Mphahlele (*nee* Mogale). Mphahlele had two siblings, Solomon and Tabitha, and he was the oldest. In 1925, when he was 6 years old, together with his siblings they were taken by their parents to Maupaneng, which was at that time a small village populated by the Mphahlele people near the Northern Transvaal town of Pietersburg. In the village, they stayed with their paternal grandmother to enable their parents to go out to find work, but Mphahlele suspected it was also to remove them from a toxic environment as his parents used to quarrel a lot.¹⁶⁷

In Maupaneng, Mphahlele attended Majoanamaswana Primary School. Going to school was not an everyday thing for him as he and his peers would sometimes spend days looking

¹⁶⁷ Chabani Manganyi. *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 30-33 and Thato Mahlangu. "Pretoria literacy giant Mphahlele remembered", *Pretoria Rekord*, 14 December 2017, <https://rekord.co.za/155713/pretoria-literacy-giant-mphahlele-remembered/> (Accessed on 12 December 2022).

after livestock, a common activity for young boys in this community at this time.¹⁶⁸ The school was very far from home for Mphahlele, requiring him to travel about 11 kilometres to and from school.¹⁶⁹ In this autobiography, *Down Second Avenue*, Mphahlele wrote that he hated school.¹⁷⁰ This hate was a result of the situation Ngugi wa Thiong'o has analysed elsewhere about young black pupils who attended school but found it hard to feel at ease because school and home life represented two different worlds for them.¹⁷¹

As a young boy, Mphahlele learned a lot from the communal fireplace, where different educational stories were shared. Men and boys from the village gathered around the fireplace to talk about important issues. This is where Mphahlele learned a great deal about history, traditions and customs, codes of behaviour, and communal responsibility, etc.¹⁷² It was in this setting, during the late 1920s that Mphahlele also came to understand the experiences of many Africans, who had to travel to work in Johannesburg and Pretoria to earn a living, as well as the exploitative and racist treatment they received from white South Africans. As Mphahlele asserted:

“I got to know at that early age and in the most unlikely of circumstances that there were white people in the cities and that it was not always a good thing for men from the village to go and work in the town... The white man could not be trusted. He preached brotherhood on Sundays in the village church and yet he behaved differently in the cities...”¹⁷³

It was sitting around the fireplace that Mphahlele states that his political consciousness was ignited.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 33 and Hein Willemse. “Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature”. *Tydskrif vir letterkunde*. (2004, 41: 2) 169-174.

¹⁶⁹ Isabel Balseiro. “Between Alexandra and Jurassic Park: Interview with Professor Es'kia Mphahlele”. *South African Theatre Journal*. (2003, 17: 1), <https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC110904> (Accessed on 8 November 2022).

¹⁷⁰ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Down Second Avenue*. (Johannesburg: Picador, 2004) 2.

¹⁷¹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. (London: James Currey, 1986) 16-20.

¹⁷² Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 5.

¹⁷³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 35.

¹⁷⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 35.

In 1930, after Mphahlele passed Standard III, his parents moved him and his siblings from the Northern Transvaal to Pretoria. In Pretoria, he stayed with his parents and maternal grandmother in the African section of Marabastad township in a street called Second Avenue.¹⁷⁵ Marabastad also had separate sections for Indians and Coloureds. Second Avenue brought new experiences to Mphahlele and his siblings. In this township, houses were built in straight lines, people were cut off from one another by fences between their houses, and people did not seem to be interested in one another. Mphahlele recalled finding this strange as life had been so different at Maupaneng.¹⁷⁶ At the time, Mphahlele's mother worked as a tailor and a domestic worker for white families, which were common jobs for African women at the time. His mother also sold home-brewed beer to help make ends meet, which was illegal at the time. His father worked as a messenger for a shop.¹⁷⁷

Mphahlele recalled that his parents were not on good terms when he grew up and this continued whilst living Marabastad. He recalled that they quarrelled regularly, especially on weekends, usually over money issues, as his family was always short of money, and his father drank excessively.¹⁷⁸ Eventually, his parents parted ways and the last time he saw his father was in the summer of 1932. Poverty and hunger were not foreign concepts to their family at this time.¹⁷⁹

During the early 1930s, Mphahlele attended an English-medium Methodist school in Marabastad. Unlike in Maupaneng, where he had to walk a great distance to and from school, in Marabastad, the school was much closer to his home. He had to repeat his Standard III because the principal and his teachers felt that the rural education he had received was not up

¹⁷⁵ Ezekiel Mphahlele. "An Interview with Es'kia Mphahlele". *Caliban*. (2002, 11: 1) 319-324.

¹⁷⁶ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 36-39.

¹⁷⁸ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 14.

¹⁷⁹ James Manheim. "Mphahlele, Es'kia (Ezekiel) 1919". *Contemporary Black Biography*, 26 May 2023, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/mpahlele-eskia-ezekiel-1919> (Accessed on 23 November 2022).

to standard. Mphahlele's performance was very poor, especially in English for the first two years, which he had little exposure to in Maupaneng. However, Mphahlele improved along the way and by the time he reached Standard V, he was coming first in his class tests and exams.¹⁸⁰

In 1934, Mphahlele completed his primary education. In 1935, he started at a new school, St. Peter's in Johannesburg, for his secondary education in search of a better education.¹⁸¹ Mphahlele was a boarder at this school, which accommodated about 200 pupils.¹⁸² This mission school, which catered for black children was in Rosettenville, a white suburb south of the city of Johannesburg. The school's history traces back to 1922 and was founded by Reverend Father Alban Winter, who became its first principal, and he was assisted by two black teachers. The school was officially recognised by the Transvaal Education Department just a few years after its opening (1927) as a secondary school. As time went by, the school was joined by a number of both black and white teachers so by the time Mphahlele enrolled in the school, it had several many teachers.¹⁸³

Reflecting on his experiences, Mphahlele remembered this school as a place with far better facilities, such as libraries and laboratories than his previous school in Marabastad. The school also offered its students different sporting activities, such as football, cricket, and hockey. Like missionary schools at the time, the school sought to create "new Africans" who were Christians, spoke fluent English, and were immersed in European culture.¹⁸⁴ Mphahlele states that he and his fellow students had a good relationship with their teachers, including their white teachers at the school. However, it puzzled him that they never said anything about white racism that took place outside the school. There were countless incidents of racial discrimination that Mphahlele and his black contemporaries faced outside school premises. A

¹⁸⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 47.

¹⁸¹ Hein, "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature", 169-174.

¹⁸² Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 114.

¹⁸³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 51-52.

good example was that black students were denied travel on double-decker buses to and from Rosettenville during their holidays, unlike white South Africans who lived in the suburb and used public transport.¹⁸⁵

In 1937, Mphahlele completed his Junior Certificate, and obtained a first-class pass. He studied with several students who would become influential politically after their school years. These included people such as Oliver Tambo, who would go on to become the longest serving President of the African National Congress (ANC). He preceded Mphahlele by a year and obtained his matric at St Peter's with a first-class pass.¹⁸⁶ One of Mphahlele's classmates, Zephania ("Zeph") Mothopeng, would later become the president of the Pan African Congress (PAC).¹⁸⁷

Mphahlele remembers a race related incident whilst studying at St Peter's. He recalled how his friend, Thomas Mogoboea, had his name changed when applying for his Junior Certificate examinations to open more opportunities for him. Because his father was a Pedi and his mother a Coloured woman, they decided to change his surname to Bennet (his mother's maiden name) to register him as Coloured so that he could later enrol in the Coloured and Indian teachers' training courses as he would not have been accepted if he had an African surname. Such teachers were paid four times more than an African teacher with an equivalent qualification.¹⁸⁸

After Mphahlele completed his Junior Certificate, his family did not have the finances to continue supporting his studies further.¹⁸⁹ After completing their Junior Certificate, only a very small number of African students continued to complete their Matric. Those who could matriculate and afford to further their studies usually proceeded to teacher training colleges or

¹⁸⁵ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 116-117.

¹⁸⁶ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 53-55.

¹⁸⁷ Ali Khangela Hlongwane. *The Lion of Azania: A Biography of Zephania Lekoame Mothopeng (1913–1990)*. (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishing, 2021) 248.

¹⁸⁸ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 124-125 and Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 56.

¹⁸⁹ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 126.

the Fort Hare University College.¹⁹⁰ Founded in 1916 this college, which became officially the University of Fort Hare in 1951, educated many leading members of South Africa's black intelligentsia.¹⁹¹ For example, people like Duma Nokwe, Robert Sobukwe, Can Themba, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to mention just a few, were students at Fort Hare at this time. Most of these black students formed part of what became known as the "generation of 1944", a cohort of young black South Africans who formed the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL).¹⁹² The ANCYL, as the youth wing of the ANC, had two roles: firstly, to recruit, mobilise, and prepare young people for the ANC, and secondly, to champion the interests of young people.¹⁹³

After obtaining his Junior Certificate, Mphahlele, who returned to stay with his family in Second Avenue, opted to find a job where he could save money to continue his studies at a later point. As a result, he got a job as a messenger at a lawyer's office in Pretoria. In *Down Second Avenue*, he relayed how bad the conditions were because of white racism. He remembered having to run up and down the stairs of high-rise buildings as a messenger because black South Africans were not allowed to use the lifts. He also recalled having to make tea and run errands for the white women who worked in the law office. Later that year Mphahlele found another job as a messenger in the Department of Native Affairs, where he did almost similar work to what he did before.¹⁹⁴

After spending 1938 working and saving, Mphahlele could continue with his studies. In 1939, he enrolled at Adams College in Amanzimtoti, located about 35 kilometres outside of

¹⁹⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 59.

¹⁹¹ Donovan Williams. *A History of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa, the 1950s: The Waiting Years*. (Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001) 21-67.

¹⁹² Sipiwo Mahala. *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Tsotsi*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022) 21-26.

¹⁹³ Rebone Tau. *The Rise and The Fall of the ANCYL*. (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2020) 16-23.

¹⁹⁴ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 126-133.

Durban as he decided to train as a school teacher.¹⁹⁵ The college had been founded in 1835 by the Rev. David Rood as a Christian mission school that also developed into a teacher training college for African students.¹⁹⁶ Over the years, Adams produced a large number of black teachers and other leaders, such as Mangosuthu Buthelezi, John Dube, Ellen Khuzwayo, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Seretse Khama, Anton Lembede, Albert Luthuli, and Joshua Nkomo.

When Mphahlele attended Adams College, there were about 400 students there. Being in Natal, the student population was Zulu dominated. However, there were also Xhosa speaking students and others from the Transvaal, such as Mphahlele. American Board Missionaries ran the college.¹⁹⁷ Dr Edgar Brookes was the school's principal. He came to the school having been a Professor of Political Science at the University of Pretoria. He was also a senator, representing Africans in the upper house of the Union Parliament.¹⁹⁸

The teachers were racially diverse, with black and white staff. Mphahlele remembers how the white missionaries often told them how “lucky” they were as black students to receive an education. Being at Adams College was a combination of positive and negative experiences for Mphahlele. Although it was a place with better facilities, a better-quality education, and where his writing journey was initiated, Mphahlele was also subjected to racism, such as not being allowed to occupy seats reserved for white people. Racist practices would be the cause of protests at the college during this time.¹⁹⁹

By the late 1930s, oppositional political consciousness and resistance increased amongst black students at Adams College. Mphahlele remembered when students such as Zeph

¹⁹⁵ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 135 and Hein, “Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature”, 169-174.

¹⁹⁶ Susan M. Du Rand. “From Mission School to Bantu Education: A History of Adams College”. (Master’s dissertation, University of Natal, 1990) 3-19.

¹⁹⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 135-136.

¹⁹⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 63.

Mothopeng, whom he had met at St. Peter's and who studied at Adams, were expelled for challenging racial arrogance in the college's culture. In another incident described in his autobiography, Mphahlele remembered when Mothopeng and three other students openly defied authority by occupying the seats that were reserved for white members of staff in the school hall. These four students were expelled from the College, but they would later be readmitted on certain conditions and after accepting punishment.²⁰⁰

There were many protests at the time, not only at Adams College, but black students everywhere in the country were voicing their opposition to their oppressive experiences. One protest during Mphahlele's time in the College led to the burning of buildings at Adams College and the expulsion of the so-called "instigators".²⁰¹ Some of the students at Adams College were members of the All-African Convention (AAC), an anti-apartheid organisation. AAC members spent a lot of their free time engaging in revolutionary literature and were eloquent speakers. At this time, Mphahlele was not associated with the AAC. He sought rather to keep his focus on his studies. In his second year, he got a scholarship from the Natal Provincial Education Department to cover his teaching training fees because of his good academic performance.²⁰²

Mphahlele became immersed in reading during his school years whilst living in Marabastad, as he sought to improve his performance at school, particularly in English. He recalled that he read everything he could get his hands on.²⁰³ In later years, he continued his reading journey at St Peter's and Adams College where he read both academic (in school hours) and political (after school hours) literature which shaped his ideas and thoughts and influenced his critiques and writings.

²⁰⁰ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 137.

²⁰¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 64.

²⁰² Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 137-138.

²⁰³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 64-65.

However, it was at Adams College that he started his writing journey. In 1940, the College organised a writing contest for its students to see who could write the best folk story. Mphahlele won first prize for his story, which gave his writing recognition for the first time. Mphahlele remembers that he and another student, Stanley Sikakani, were then selected to represent the College at the elite school of Michael House situated in the Natal Midlands in the broader competition where students from different schools competed against each other in terms of their stories.²⁰⁴

Mphahlele's final year at Adams College was 1940, when he matriculated. Before the end of that year, he received a job offer through the College principal from the Reverend Arthur Blaxall, an Anglican priest, who headed the Institute for the Blind at Ezenzeleni in Roodepoort near Johannesburg. Blaxall had communicated with the principal his desire to find "an intelligent young man" to work as a clerk at the Institute, starting in 1941, and the principal recommended Mphahlele. Mphahlele accepted the offer.²⁰⁵

In 1941, Mphahlele started his job at the Institute, the only institution that cared for blind Africans in the area covered by three provinces: the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Natal. Although he was employed as a clerk, he ended up doing various jobs, including driver-messenger work, administrative work, and teaching, as he worked twice a week to teach blind people how to type.²⁰⁶

Mphahlele's first job experience was marred by racism. While working as a clerk, he used to work in the same reception room and assist a white woman typist, which made white South Africans who entered the building uncomfortable. As a result, Mphahlele was told to take what he needed for his job into his room (he lived onsite) and work from there, removing him from the reception room. During his four years working at Ezenzeleni, Mphahlele also

²⁰⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 64-65 and Mphahlele, "An Interview with Es' kia Mphahlele", 319-324.

²⁰⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 65.

²⁰⁶ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 139.

remembers that while walking on the streets, he was stopped and searched many times and asked to produce his pass, which allowed him to be in the Roodepoort area.²⁰⁷

During his time at Ezenzeleni, Mphahlale met his future wife, Rebecca Nnana Mochedibane, who trained as a teacher and social worker. When they met, Mochedibane was a student teacher, and she and other students had visited the Institute for the Blind to hold reading sessions there. What drew them to each other was their love for literature.²⁰⁸ The couple married in August 1945 and had five children together.

In September 1945, Mphahlele moved with his family to Orlando East, where he took another job working as an English and Afrikaans teacher at Orlando High School.²⁰⁹ Opened in 1939, Orlando High School was established as a township school to accommodate black students living in Soweto.²¹⁰ It was this school that became famous in 1976 when it became one of the epicenters of the Soweto Uprising against the oppressive Bantu Education system. When they moved to Orlando East, they stayed in a small two-roomed apartment provided by the school on its premises. After 10 months, they were able to move into a bigger place, House No. 8280 in Orlando West, a four-roomed house.²¹¹

Mphahlele experienced hardships at the school. In addition to the personnel and resource shortages, which were common hardships experienced by black teachers working at Bantu Education schools at this time, Mphahlele also found it difficult to teach the apartheid state's Bantu Education syllabus that sought to provide an inferior quality education for African students.²¹² As a teacher, he was critical of the curriculum and publicly dismissed it for perpetuating the status quo of colonialism. He also voiced opposition to teaching students in

²⁰⁷ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 160-162.

²⁰⁸ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 150-152.

²⁰⁹ Hein, "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature", 169-174.

²¹⁰ Michael Morapeli. "The Rock: The History of Orlando High School 1939-1984". (Master's Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 1984) 24-61.

²¹¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 81-91.

²¹² For more on the inferior nature of Bantu Education for Africans, see Chapter Two.

Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor.²¹³ This led to tensions with other teachers who supported the Bantu Education system, which made Mphahlele feel that these teachers were spying on him.

While working as a teacher, Mphahlele decided to continue with his studies and enrolled part time in the Bachelor of Arts programme studying for his majors in English, Psychology and Native Administration through the University of South Africa (UNISA). As a correspondence (or distance learning) university, it offered the same syllabi and exams for both black and white students, but its exams and graduations remained racially segregated to conform with the apartheid system.²¹⁴ At this time, he had also started writing short stories.²¹⁵

In 1949, he was awarded his BA degree. A few years later, Mphahlele then enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree at the same university.²¹⁶ He was awarded his BA Honours in 1955.²¹⁷ During this period, he was dismissed from his job because of his repeated statements against Bantu Education and his anti-apartheid political activism. More will be discussed on this in the next chapter.

After his dismissal from Orlando High School, he spent eight months between 1954 and 1955 teaching English and Geography in a school in Basutoland to earn an income.²¹⁸ After his return to South Africa, in 1956, Mphahlele registered for his Master's in English at UNISA, which he undertook part time while working as a journalist and then literary (or fiction) editor of *Drum* magazine in Johannesburg.²¹⁹ Published monthly, *Drum* magazine, which had been launched in 1951, was geared towards an African audience, with stories focused on the

²¹³ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 157-158.

²¹⁴ Mary-Lynn Suttie. "The Formative Years of the University of South Africa Library, 1946 to 1976". *Mousaion*. (2005, 23: 1) 102-103.

²¹⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 81-91 and Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 156.

²¹⁶ Hein, "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature", 169-174.

²¹⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 122.

²¹⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 122.

²¹⁹ David Rabkin. "*Drum* Magazine (1951-1961) and the works of black South African writers associated with it". (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1975), 68.

experiences of black South Africans.²²⁰ Mphahlele served under Anthony Sampson for 3 months and under his successor, Sylvester Stein, the magazine's managing editors, for 27 months.²²¹

Mphahlele eventually completed his dissertation in 1957, which was entitled "The Non-European Character in South Africa Fiction". It was awarded with distinction, the first time in UNISA's history that a black South African was awarded a senior degree distinction.²²² Mphahlele remembered this as a high moment of academic achievement, despite the odds, though this achievement was tarnished by his segregated graduation ceremony.²²³ During this period of study, he continued to remain politically active, as a member of the ANC, a subject to which I will return in Chapter Four.

Shortly after acquiring his masters, Mphahlele left *Drum* magazine to return to the teaching profession. Because he was banned from teaching anywhere in the country, Mphahlele went through the Overseas Employment Bureau, which sent him a list of vacancies in different schools in Africa. Through this avenue, Mphahlele secured employment at the C.M.S. Grammar School in Lagos, Nigeria. Although Mphahlele initially struggled to get a passport, after waiting for five long months, he eventually received his passport and left South Africa towards the end of 1957. His family joined him few months later in Nigeria.²²⁴

Bernard Magubane

Bernard Magubane was born Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane on August 26, 1930. He was born on a farm near the town of Colenso. Colenso is located on the banks of Tugela river in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The town is 20kms south of Ladysmith and 40kms north of

²²⁰ Tom Odhiambo. "Inventing Africa in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Imagination, Politics and Transnationalism in *Drum Magazine*". *African Studies*. (2006, 65: 2) 157-174.

²²¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 146.

²²² Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 146, Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 187 and Hein, "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature", 169-174.

²²³ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 187.

²²⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 148 and Hein, "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African literature", 169-174.

Estcourt. It was named after the British missionary, John William Colenso who came to Natal to convert black people to Christianity.²²⁵ Bernard Magubane's father was Xegwana Magubane, and his mother was Nozibukutho Magubane (née Khumalo). His parents were Catholic converts and thus became known as Elios and Ella Magubane after their baptisms. Magubane was the second eldest of their five children; the others being Mary, Florence, Manti, and Sholo.²²⁶

Magubane was born during the Great Depression, a period that led to the suffering of many South Africans. He recalls that his early consciousness was shaped by the stories he learnt from his parents and grandparents about the experiences of Africans in South Africa.²²⁷ In his autobiography, Magubane highlighted how stories of the First World War (1914-1918) were often discussed in his household when he was young.²²⁸ His father told him and his siblings about the difficult experiences of Africans who had fought in this war. The war involved approximately 83,000 Africans. These Africans, however, faced discrimination, and those who lived to the end of the war were not awarded medals like their white counterparts. He also learnt through this means about the sinking of the S.S. Mendi, a British ship which transported black South Africans to fight in the war.²²⁹ When the ship sank, 646 people died, predominantly black South Africans.²³⁰

The experiences of black South Africans who returned from the war generated doubt about the "higher civilisation" idea linked to Europeans since Europeans killed each other mercilessly in the war and discriminated against those, such as Africans, brought in to assist

²²⁵ Bernard Magubane. *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 1-3.

²²⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 1-11.

²²⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 7.

²²⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 12.

²²⁹ Albert Grundlingh. "Mutating Memories and the Making of a Myth: Remembering the SS Mendi Disaster, 1917–2007". *South African Historical Journal*. (2011, 63: 1) 20-37.

²³⁰ Barend van der Merwe. "We Die like Brothers: The Sinking of the SS Mendi, John Gribble and Graham Scott". *Historia*. (2018, 63: 2) 176-178.

them.²³¹ These experiences of black South African soldiers were almost the same as those of the Martinique revolutionary Frantz Fanon, who left Martinique to fight in the Second World War (1939-1945) on the side of France. During this period, he recalled how he and other black soldiers were racially discriminated against to such an extent that it shocked him.²³²

Magubane's paternal grandmother, MaHlatshwayo, whom he described as "a good story teller", was a traditional woman who never converted to Christianity, and told him other stories around the fireplace.²³³ She also used to tell Magubane stories about earlier times. MaHlatshwayo was a teenager during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, during which the Zulu nation under King Cetshweyo kaMpande defeated British soldiers at the Battle of Isandlwana. She also shared her memories about the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). MaHlatshwayo did all of this in order to impart wisdom, knowledge, and historical information to the younger generation about African people's accomplishments but also to share with them the hardships they had suffered under colonialism and during the segregation era.

In his autobiography, *My Life and Times*, Magubane also discussed other experiences that shaped his early life. Magubane's parents did not own the land they farmed near Colenso. The family lived on a white farmer's land as squatters in exchange for use of their labour, including he and his siblings, for six months of the year. Magubane remembered this time as a difficult one as he and his family were required to work "like slaves" on the farm, and experienced harsh punishments for so-called "laziness" or "failure to obey the laws" of the white farmer.²³⁴ On one occasion, in 1938 a fight broke out between Magubane's father and the white farmer over the farmer's use of a sjambok (a whip) to punish him for something.

²³¹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 8.

²³² Leo Zeilig. *Voices of Liberation: Frantz Fanon*. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016) 30.

²³³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 12.

²³⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 14.

Magubane recalled that the family had to leave the farm in haste to avoid suffering the repercussions of an attack on a white man. As a result, they moved to Durban, never to return.²³⁵

Upon their arrival in Durban, Magubane highlighted how the family struggled to find a place to stay until an Indian landowner, who lived in Cato Manor behind the University of Natal, allowed them to “squat” on his property in exchange for his mother’s service as a domestic worker.²³⁶ When father found employment in the British firm Dorman-Long, which repaired and painted ships docked in the harbour, he was able to stay in a hostel closer to the docks during the week, and only returned on weekends. On weekends, he also found work as a gardener working for an Indian man whom he worked with at Dorman-Long.²³⁷

It was in Durban that Magubane started primary school. He attended Mount Carmel Primary School, a public school for Africans located in Mkhumbane, an area within Cato Manor. Although the school was located some distance from his home, Magubane walked each day to and from school, and in winter, recalled arriving at school wet with dew.²³⁸ He remembered only having one teacher at the school, Mrs Zondi, who taught the children everything from Sub A to Standard II.²³⁹

In 1942, Magubane’s family moved to Chesterville township, which was located about 13 kilometres west of the Durban CBD. Built by the Durban Municipality and opened in 1946, this township was built to accommodate the growing number of Africans settling in Durban for work during the war years, when the city was growing into a major industrial centre.²⁴⁰ Because his parents had bona fide jobs in the city, Magubane’s family qualified to move into this Native

²³⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 15-16.

²³⁶ The University of Natal is today known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

²³⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 15-16.

²³⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 17.

²³⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 17.

²⁴⁰ Mbalenhle Masinga. “Segregation, Desegregation, and Re-segregation and the Return to Black Townships: A Case Study of Chesterville Township, Durban”. (PhD dissertation, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2014) 36.

Administration Department housing, which entailed a five-roomed house, thus a much more spacious living situation for this growing family.

Once the family made the move to Chesterville, Magubane transferred to Mazenod School, a Roman Catholic Church-built school in the area. At this time, Magubane's mother, who lost her job as a domestic worker, started brewing African beer to sell to workers, and she made Vetkoek (fried bread), which she sold to school children at Mazenod and Chesterville High School.²⁴¹ Furthermore, she did laundry for white households in areas neighbouring Chesterville, which Magubane used to go and fetch for her as a teenager. During this period, Magubane's father continued to stay for most of the week at the men's Somtseu hostel, returning on Fridays to stay the weekend with his family.

Magubane recalled that his political consciousness was developed through two primary means. The first was his experiences living and growing up in South Africa. He highlighted many discriminatory experiences in his autobiography. Other than being forced to live in sub-standard segregated housing, he recalled instances of black domestic workers having to walk behind their white employers when carrying their bags.²⁴² A similar situation occurred with black men carrying their white employers' tools. He remembered growing up "knowing" that black and white South Africans lived two separate sets of lives, with whites perceived as superior and blacks as inferior.²⁴³

Other than the abovementioned situations experienced by his family and other African acquaintances in segregation-era South Africa, Magubane's political consciousness was also stimulated by newspapers his father used to bring home on Friday evenings, such as the *Daily News* and *Ilanga lase Natal*. To improve his reading, he would ask Magubane to read the newspapers for him. This developed in Magubane a great love for reading and provided him

²⁴¹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 20.

²⁴² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 22.

²⁴³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 22.

with information about what was happening in the rest of the country and abroad.²⁴⁴ In his autobiography, Magubane remembered learning about the Cold War and leaders such as Winston Churchill, F.D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin. He also learnt about China's 1949 Communist Revolution led by Mao Zedong. In addition, he learned about local political developments, including a change to Afrikaner National Party rule, the role out of apartheid laws, and black protest actions led by people such as Anton Lembede, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, such as the Defiance Campaign.²⁴⁵

Magubane did well at Mazenod School and was always among his grade's top five academic performers.²⁴⁶ Like Mphahlela's memory of a Coloured student, Thomas Mogoboea, Magubane also remembered a race-related incident about another top performer at his school. Anthony Mthalande, who had a white father and black domestic worker mother was able to change his surname to McKenzie and thus got accepted into a better resourced Coloured school, where he then went on to do his Junior Certificate exams. As was the case with Thomas Mogoboea, claiming one's Coloured status in race hierarchical South Africa meant better opportunities for these students.²⁴⁷

In his autobiography, Magubane recalled that his teachers were very dedicated and inspiring. This was a generation of teachers that were influenced by the struggle for black liberation, particularly with the formation of the ANCYL. Some of the teachers were affiliated with the ANCYL and the ANC. The teachers were openly critical of the books they were given to teach with, particularly history textbooks, which denounced African kings, such as Shaka ka Senzangakhona and Dingane ka Senzangakhona as "savages".²⁴⁸ This prompted Magubane and other students to start questioning their education.

²⁴⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 19-21.

²⁴⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 23-24.

²⁴⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 26.

²⁴⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 26, Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 124-125 and Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 56.

²⁴⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 29.

In 1948, Magubane passed his Junior Certificate (Standard VIII) examinations, obtaining a second-class pass. As was the situation with Mphahlele, his family did not have the finances to support his continued studies.²⁴⁹ Fortunately, Magubane obtained assistance from Father Kerotret, a French priest at Mazerod School, who helped him get into the German founded boarding school, St. Francis College, another Catholic missionary school in Mariannhill for black students, where he could study further. In 1949, hoping to become a teacher, one of the few professional options open to black students at the time, Magubane enrolled in the T3 (Third Class) Teacher's Certificate programme (a teacher training programme for African students), and took the following subjects: Arithmetic, Biology, History, Geography, Physiology, and teaching methods.²⁵⁰

Magubane's time at Mariannhill produced good and challenging experiences. The school population consisted of students from South Africa's other provinces, as well as neighbouring countries, such as Swaziland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Basutoland.²⁵¹ At Mariannhill, Magubane studied for the first time with students from more affluent families, some of whose parents were professionals, such as teachers, lawyers, and clerks. Many of these students spoke fluent English too, which Magubane said intimidated him initially, because of his less developed English language skills.²⁵² Magubane recalled the competition between his school, the Ohlange Institute founded by the first ANC president John Dube, and Adams College where Mphahlele studied, in terms of sports and debating. Students debated about burning political issues, including Jan Smut's segregation policies and D.F. Malan's apartheid policies. These debates contributed greatly to the development of Magubane's political consciousness, too.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 27-29.

²⁵⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 34.

²⁵¹ Swaziland is present day eSwatini, Northern Rhodesia is present day Zambia. Southern Rhodesia is present day Zimbabwe, and Basutoland is present day Lesotho. Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 35.

²⁵² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 35.

²⁵³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 37.

In 1950, Magubane completed his teacher training course and was able to secure a job at his alma mater, Mazenod School, in 1951. Like most of the black schools at the time, Mazenod was poorly equipped. There were no facilities, such as laboratories, and pupils had to rely only on the textbooks. Magubane's colleagues at Mazenod were politically conscious, and several of them had studied at Adams College. These are the teachers who condemned inferior quality black education in South Africa and encouraged children at school to be politically active and fight against their oppression.²⁵⁴

In 1953, while continuing to teach, Magubane, keen to continue with his studies, decided to enrol at Sastri College, a well-established black high school and teacher training college in Durban, to study for his National Senior Certificate (NSC). He attended late afternoon or early evening classes which started either at 15:30 or 17:30 to fit in with his teaching work.²⁵⁵ In January 1954, Magubane passed the NSC.

Around this time, he became friends with Mazisi Kunene, an ANC activist and PhD student at the University of Natal, who later went into exile abroad. Kunene introduced Magubane to Dr Mabel Palmer, who was responsible for admitting black students to the University of Natal's "Non-European Section" in Durban, which was established in the 1930s to accommodate black students' wanting to study at the tertiary level. This contact proved influential as Magubane decided to continue with his studies. In late 1953, he applied and was accepted to register as a correspondence student for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Sociology at the University of Natal.²⁵⁶ Since he was still working as a teacher, he could afford to pay his study fees.

Professor Leo Kuper, his Sociology lecturer, became influential in Magubane's life. After graduating with his degree in 1957, Magubane enrolled for an honours degree in

²⁵⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 51-52.

²⁵⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 55.

²⁵⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 56.

Sociology.²⁵⁷ In that same year, Magubane was hired part-time by Kuper as a research assistant for his book, *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa*, which was eventually published in 1965.²⁵⁸ Magubane conducted interviews for Kuper. He recounted that he and another student research assistant, Tony Ngubo, used to meet with Kuper every Friday to discuss the progress of their interviews. However, because racist views existed at the university, Magubane recalled how some of the white staff voiced opposition to the fact that he and Ngubo met Kuper in the Faculty common room.²⁵⁹

After completing his honours, Magubane, whose research interests had been stimulated by working with Kuper, decided to pursue a master's degree in Sociology at this same university in 1958. He had left the teaching profession at this point due to disdain for the unequal and inferior Bantu Education system (to be discussed further in the next chapter), and to focus on his studies full time.²⁶⁰ He eventually completed his master's in 1960. His dissertation was entitled "Sport and Politics in an Urban African Community".²⁶¹ At this time, he explored opportunities to study and work overseas to avoid the oppressive apartheid system.

Archie Mafeje

Archie Mafeje was born Archibald Boyce Monwabisi Mafeje. He was born on the 30th of March 1936 in Gubenxa, Engcobo District in the province known today as the Eastern Cape. His father was Bennett Mafeje and his mother, Frances Lydia Mafeje (*nee* Qambata). Both Mafeje's parents were school teachers.²⁶² This is one of the things that distinguished Mafeje from my other subjects in this research, whose parents were manual labourers and domestic workers. Both Mafeje's parents were Christian converts and part of the Wesleyan Methodist

²⁵⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 76.

²⁵⁸ Leo Kuper. *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

²⁵⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 78-80.

²⁶⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 80-82.

²⁶¹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 80-82.

²⁶² Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) 4 and Lungisile Ntsebeza. "What Can We Learn from Archie Mafeje about the Road to Democracy in South Africa?". *Development and Change*. (2016, 47) 918-936.

Church. As first generation converts, they were given English names when baptised, and their children were given English names at birth.²⁶³

Before he became a teacher, as a young man, Mafeje's father ventured to Cape Town to find work. There, he worked for a wealthy family as a chauffeur. As a result, when the family travelled overseas to places such as Australia, Europe, and North Africa, he became exposed to the world as he sometimes accompanied them on their trips. After high school, Mafeje's mother trained to become a teacher and found a job at a school in King Williams town. After her marriage to Bennett Mafeje, she moved to Langa township, in Cape Town, to join her husband. When Mafeje's father completed his teacher studies, they both taught in Langa. However, they later moved to Gubenxa, Engcobo District where Archie Mafeje was born to explore other teaching opportunities.²⁶⁴

When Mafeje was still young, the Mafeje family decided to leave Gubenxa to settle in another Eastern Cape village, Ncambele in Tsolo. Amongst the reasons that led to the family moving from Gubenxa was that the area was far from good schools, which the family wanted for their children. It was in Ncambele where these facilities could be found, and where Mafeje's parents found work as teachers too, with his father eventually becoming principal of Mditshwa Senior Secondary School.²⁶⁵ Mafeje was the oldest of six siblings: Vuyiswa (1940), Keke (1942), Sikhumbuza (1944), Mlamuli (1947), Thozama (1949), and Nozibele (1954).²⁶⁶

In 1951, when the family was still living in Tsolo, Mafeje went to Nqabara Secondary School in Willowvale, a town in the Amathole District in the Eastern Cape, for part of his secondary schooling. This was regarded as one of the best black secondary schools in South Africa because it attracted outstanding teachers.²⁶⁷ Mafeje met Nathaniel Honono, the principal

²⁶³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 4.

²⁶⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 4.

²⁶⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 6.

²⁶⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 6.

²⁶⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 7.

and one of Mafeje's teachers, who became influential as a politically conscientising person in his life. Honono was the leader of the Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA) and the Non-European Unity Movement (or NEUM), which was renamed the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) in 1964.²⁶⁸ The Unity Movement was a Trotskyist political organisation which put the land question at the heart of the liberation struggle. The movement believed that the success of the South African revolution depended on forging a workers and peasants alliance which was significant in the Pondoland peasant uprising against the apartheid regime, between 1950 and 1961.²⁶⁹ CATA was affiliated to the All-African Convention (AAC), which at the time, served as a Unity Movement front. CATA members were particularly active in the rural Transkei where they conducted campaigns against Bantu Education, Bantu Authorities and Land Rehabilitation.²⁷⁰

As the editor of the CATA monthly magazine, Honono's magazine carried articles that criticised the Bantu Education system and apartheid and highlighted NEUM matters. Mafeje used to assist Honono in putting the CATA magazine in envelopes to send to other black teachers and was encouraged to read this material. Honono also invited his students to debates and discussions around this literature. Because of his influence, as a high school student, Mafeje joined the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), which was formed in December 1951, which later became the youth wing of the AAC in 1953.²⁷¹ SOYA worked closely with the

²⁶⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 7.

²⁶⁹ Z.R. Mahabane and G.H. Gool. "A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement", 1951, <https://jstor.org/stable/al.sff.document.spe19510400.040.044.000> (Accessed on 14 November 2023) and Linda Chisholm. "Education, Politics and Organisation: The Educational Traditions and Legacies Of the Non-European Unity Movement (1943-1986)". *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*. (1991: 15) 1-24.

²⁷⁰ Chrain Soudien. "Racial Discourse in the Commission on Native Education (Eiselen Commission), 1949-1951: The Making of a 'Bantu' Identity". *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*. (2005, 11: 1) 41-57.

²⁷¹ Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz. "The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa". *The Journal of African History*. (1993, 24: 3) 447-468 and John Sharp, René Devisch, and Francis Nyamnjoh. "Mafeje and Langa: The Start of an Intellectual's Journey". *The Postcolonial Turn: Re-Imagining Anthropology and Africa*. R. Devisch and F. Nyamnjoh eds. (Bamenda, Langaa and Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2011) 75.

NEUM. SOYA was established to mobilise university students, high school learners, and young workers, against apartheid. It contradicted the ANCYL's slogan of "Africa for Africans". They were committed to non-racialism.²⁷²

While Mafeje's political education was developing at high school, he also excelled in his school work, even skipping part of his first year at Nqabara Secondary School because he was promoted to the next grade.²⁷³ In 1953, Mafeje's parents decided to pay for him to go to Healdtown College to enable him to get a better education. Healdtown College. Located in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape, Healdtown was a respected Wesleyan Methodist missionary boarding school for black students established in 1855 for parents who could afford to send their children to this school.²⁷⁴ Many who studied there in the 1930s and 1940s went on later to become political activists and leaders, such as Robert Sobukwe Raymond Mhlaba, Nelson Mandela, Victoria Mxenge, and John Jabavu, to mention but a few.²⁷⁵ Healdtown College enrolled students from all over the country, as well as from what was then Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland.²⁷⁶ As Nelson Mandela described this school in his book *Long Walk to Freedom*, which he attended in the latter 1930s:

"Located at the end of a winding road overlooking a verdant valley, Healdtown was far more beautiful and impressive than Clarkebury [another well-known black boarding school]. It was, at the time, the largest African school south of the equator, with more than a thousand learners, both male and female. Its gracefully ivory colonial buildings and tree-shaded courtyards gave it a feeling of a privileged academic oasis, which is exactly what it was".²⁷⁷

²⁷² Ciraj Rassool. "Making and Challenging a Biographic Order: National Longing, Political Belonging and the Politics of Affect in a South African Liberation Movement". *Love and Revolution in the Twentieth-Century Colonial and Postcolonial World: Perspectives from South Asia and Southern Africa*. G. Arunima, Patricia Hayes and Premesh Lalu, eds. (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) 147-153.

²⁷³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 7.

²⁷⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8.

²⁷⁵ Ntsebeza, "What Can We Learn from Archie Mafeje", 919.

²⁷⁶ Nelson Mandela. *The Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. (London: Little, Broun and Company, 1994) 6.

²⁷⁷ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 6.

Mafeje got to Healdtown just a few years before it was nationalised by the apartheid government in 1956. At Healdtown, other than getting an excellent academic education, Mafeje also became a student activist. Mafeje's political education continued when he met other activists, such as Livingston Mqotsi, a leader of the NEUM, who worked as a teacher at Healdtown between 1952 and 1954. He became a strong opponent of the government's Bantu Education Act, which was passed in 1953 and sought to nationalise black missionary schools to bring them into line with the strictly segregated and restricted education the apartheid government sought to provide for black South Africans. Mafeje recalled how Mqotsi became his mentor, and his political consciousness grew through the many debates and discussions he had with him.²⁷⁸

In 1954, Mafeje matriculated, with passes in English, isiXhosa, Latin, Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, and Mathematics.²⁷⁹ Mafeje was one of the privileged black students who could attend university because his parents, both teachers, could afford to send him. In 1955, Mafeje enrolled for a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Fort Hare, with the hope of becoming a chemist or physician.²⁸⁰ Fort Hare, located in the Eastern Cape, was a university established for black – primarily African – students in 1916. Because of South Africa's racially segregated history, during the early twentieth century, it became the major institution of higher learning for black Africans.²⁸¹ Over time, this university produced intellectuals and leaders not only for South Africa but for countries north of its borders, such as Kenneth Kaunda (who became the President of Zambia); Julius Nyerere (who became the President of Tanzania); Seretse Khama (who became the President of Botswana); and Robert Mugabe (who became

²⁷⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8.

²⁷⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8 and Ntsebeza, "What Can We Learn from Archie Mafeje", 919.

²⁸⁰ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8.

²⁸¹ Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare*, 21-67.

the President of Zimbabwe). Locally, it educated, amongst others, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Can Themba, and Robert Sobukwe.²⁸²

However, almost immediately after his arrival, Mafeje and other students' studies were disrupted by student strikes. This was in the mid-1950s, when tensions were high as students at this institution, but also other institutions of higher learning, protested their institution's poor management and maladministration.²⁸³ Mafeje recalled becoming "deeply involved" in the student protests at this time, which he supported wholeheartedly. As a result of these strikes, which became violent and went on for weeks, the university was forced to close. When he returned in mid-1956, he was expelled from Fort Hare for his political activism.²⁸⁴

In 1957, Mafeje went to Cape Town and was able to register for his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Cape Town, and took courses in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, and Zoology.²⁸⁵ At this time UCT, as an "open university", accepted a token number of black students who could attend the same classes as white students, but could not live in this historically white university's residences due to apartheid laws.²⁸⁶ Because he was African he was forced to live in black townships away from Cape Town's segregated white suburbs where UCT was located.²⁸⁷ During his time, he therefore lived for short periods in Langa Township, where his parents had lived some years earlier, then in 1958 in Lincoln Estate, then in 1959 in District Six. He did not stay for long in these areas because of difficulties securing long-term accommodation when the apartheid regime's Group Areas Act forcible relocations became common practice.²⁸⁸

²⁸² Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare*, 33.

²⁸³ Ntsebeza, "What Can We Learn from Archie Mafeje", 919.

²⁸⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8.

²⁸⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 9.

²⁸⁶ Teresa Barnes. *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonization*. (New York: Routledge, 2019) 64.

²⁸⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 9.

²⁸⁸ Deborah Hart. "Political Manipulation of Urban Space: The Razing of District Six, Cape Town". *Urban Geography*. (1988, 9: 6) 603-628.

In 1960, before completing his BSc degree, Mafeje switched to the social sciences from the natural sciences because he had lost interest in the natural sciences. Instead, he enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree with Social Anthropology and Psychology as his majors. Since he was able to carry a few credits over from his previous degree, he was able to complete his degree at the end of the first semester 1961. Immediately thereafter, he registered for his honour's degree in Urban Sociology, which he completed in mid-1962.²⁸⁹

Soon after completing his BA honours, Mafeje registered for a master's in Anthropology in the second semester of 1962. He worked with one of the leading anthropologists of the time, Dr Monica Wilson, who became his supervisor.²⁹⁰ His research required him to conduct fieldwork to collect data for his study on leadership and change in Gubenxa and All Saints, two villages in the Engcobo District, a district he knew well having come from this region.²⁹¹

While working on his dissertation, Mafeje also worked as Wilson's research assistant. When the book was published in 1962 with the title *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township*, Mafeje appeared as a co-author.²⁹² Mafeje provided valuable assistance on this project, especially when interviews were done, because of his in-depth knowledge of the isiXhosa language and culture. It helped launch him in terms of his academic writing career.

During his masters, he also assisted a US political scientist, Gwendolyn M. Carter whose study examined the political processes and elections in the Transkei region in the 1960s. An important experience related to this research, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, would play an important role in influencing his decision to leave South Africa in the hopes of finding a better life overseas.

²⁸⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 9.

²⁹⁰ Ntsebeza, "What Can We Learn from Archie Mafeje", 919.

²⁹¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 10.

²⁹² Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 10 and Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje. *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township*. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the circumstances that help explain how Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje grew to become black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa. It covered the many predicaments they encountered by virtue of being black. This included the difficulties they experienced growing up in African communities and attending education during the segregation and apartheid eras. Lastly, it showed who and what circumstances helped shape their ideas and the development of a critical mentality towards apartheid inequalities. The next chapter continues the examination of the lives and experiences of these three men. However, it focuses particularly on their critiques of the apartheid system, their efforts to contribute to the liberation struggle, and how the apartheid regime tried to suppress their ideas and silence them.

Chapter Four:

Critiquing the Oppressive Apartheid Regime while Living in South Africa

This chapter examines the writings and ideas of Mphahlele, Mafeje, and Magubane. As African men from South Africa who experienced apartheid and its discriminatory and oppressive effects, in addition to becoming politically active to stand against the policies and oppressions of the apartheid government, they also wrote about their experiences. This chapter focuses on their protest and anti-apartheid political activities, as well as their writings which critiqued the apartheid regime. It also examines how the apartheid state tried to suppress their ideas and to silence them.

Es'kia Mphahlele

While all Mphahlele's upbringing and schooling experiences in segregation era South Africa played an important part in conscientising him about the racial injustices and discriminations endured by black South Africans, it was during his time, working as a teacher at Orlando High School from the mid-1940s, that he began actively writing about his experiences and views. This was also the time when he became a political activist.

In late 1946, Mphahlele's wrote and released his first collection of short stories, entitled *Man Must Live: And Other Stories*.²⁹³ This fiction was published by African Bookman in Cape Town and focused on the lives of black South Africans living in apartheid South Africa. This book received mixed reviews, with some reviewing it in a positive light for its "interesting contribution" to South African literature while others critiqued his portrayal of Africans as too distance from the reality of their actual lives.²⁹⁴

In early 1949, while still teaching at Orlando High School, Mphahlele who by this time had experienced several years of teaching in the segregated education system, and whose

²⁹³ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Man Must Live: And Other Stories*. (Cape Town: African Bookman, 1946).

²⁹⁴ Chabani Manganyi. *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 47.

dissatisfaction was growing, decided to join the Transvaal African Teachers' Association (TATA). TATA was the first union of teachers established by Africans in South Africa. It was formed in 1907 to represent and champion the interests of African teachers who worked in the Transvaal.²⁹⁵ When Mphahlele joined, Zephania Mothopeng, whom Mphahlele had first met at St Peter's and later studied with at Adams College, was the organisation's president. Not long after joining, Mphahlele was elected TATA's secretary at the provincial level (and was re-elected to this position between 1951 and 1952) because of the name he made for himself soon after joining this organisation for his critiques of unequal education.²⁹⁶

In 1949, TATA organised a well-attended meeting in Witbank, where its members were invited to discuss their concerns about the "Native Education" syllabus promoted by the Transvaal Education Department, which perpetrated white supremacy and the oppression of black South Africans.²⁹⁷ This was in the period leading up to the passage of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, when the Eiselen Commission was appointed to investigate the creation of a segregated education system for the country's different race groups, and an inferior education for black South Africans.²⁹⁸

After the Eiselen Commission's findings were published in 1951, the TATA decided to mobilise a campaign against the proposed Bantu Education system. As part of the leadership of this organisation, during weekends and school holidays, Mphahlele travelled across the Transvaal, to speak on this organisation's oppositional stance against the proposed Bantu Education system at teacher and parent meetings.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Lydia Pienaar. *The History of the Transvaal United African Teachers' Association*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 1986), 11-14.

²⁹⁶ Jonathan Hyslop. "Teachers and trade unions". *South African Labour Bulletin*. (1986, 11: 6) 90-97.

²⁹⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 97.

²⁹⁸ Chrain Soudien. "Racial Discourse in the Commission on Native Education (Eiselen Commission), 1949-1951: The Making of a 'Bantu' Identity". *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*. (2005, 11: 1) 42-44.

²⁹⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 98.

At the time, Mphahlele and other teachers, Khabi Mngomo and Matihare Ngakane, ran an unofficial monthly paper circulated to teachers, called *The Voice*, in which they offered political and social criticism. It sought to critique the Bantu Education system, which brought Mphahlele, Mngomo and Ngakane into the crosshairs of the apartheid state's security police, which sought to crush opposition to the government.³⁰⁰ In 1951, a Sergeant Muller summoned Mphahlele and the others who co-wrote the paper to a police station where they were interrogated about their activities and accused of publishing a paper without following the proper registration channels. Fortunately, when they went to court, Mphahlele and his co-accused were acquitted of this charge.³⁰¹

While engaging in these extra-curricular activities, Mphahlele continued to work as a teacher at Orlando High School. His students got excellent results in the subjects he taught, including English and Afrikaans.³⁰² Indeed, in the years leading up to the 1953 transition to the Bantu Education system, this school had students who produced very good matric results. For example, in 1952, despite the hardships experienced by the teachers and students, the school achieved a 100% pass rate on the Joint Board Matriculation exam.³⁰³

However, in the early 1950s, conditions changed when the principal, Godfrey Nakene, began openly supporting the proposed Bantu Education system. Likely a result of fear that the government would withdraw its financial support, which happened at other schools that opposed the Bantu Education system, it led to the division into two camps amongst the staff, some of whom supported the system, while others opposed it.³⁰⁴ This led to the development of feelings of animosity in this environment.

³⁰⁰ Leonard Thompson. *The History of South Africa*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 31-69.

³⁰¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 101.

³⁰² Owen Seda and Sirayi Mziwoxolo. "Hegemony and Domination in South African Drama in the Mid-20th Century: 1940-1960". *PULA: Botswana Journal of African Studies*. (2015, 29: 2) 203.

³⁰³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 101.

³⁰⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 98-99.

In 1952, Mphahlele and his camp, who opposed it, submitted to the Department of Education a memo expressing strong concerns about the proposed Bantu Education system and how some of the staff, including the principal, supported it. Among other things, they argued that the school was being mismanaged. When the school principal found out about the memo, Mphahlele, as well as two others involved in the writing of the memo, Isaac Matlhane and Zephania Mothopeng (the latter of whom Mphahlele had studied with at Adams College and worked with at TATA) were fired from Orlando High School. Shortly after this, Mphahlele recalled receiving a stern letter from the Department of Education dismissing him from working in the teaching profession. This meant he could not be employed anywhere in the South Africa as a teacher.³⁰⁵

In response to their dismissal, Orlando High students organised a protest to show their support, and their dissatisfaction with regards to what they regarded as an unfair dismissal of their teachers. According to Morori Mphahlele, one of Mphahlele's students, this led to a student boycott of classes, which lasted only about a week until the police were able to find the instigators of the protest and suppress their activities.³⁰⁶ This is because their protest took place at a time when levels of protest in the country were high during the ANC-led civil disobedience Defiance Campaign, and the government was in no mood to withdraw its decision or to allow the continuation of protests at Orlando High School.³⁰⁷

During this period, the police also arrested Mphahlele and the two other dismissed teachers as instigators of the school protest. They were taken to the Johannesburg Prison (aka as The Fort or No. 4), where they were kept for four days until granted bail. They were accused of inciting the students' boycott, which caused "unrest in the school" and public violence.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 102-104.

³⁰⁶ Mofori Mphahlele. "The Professor Es'kia Mphahlele We Know". *Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Stainbank & Associates, 2006) 45.

³⁰⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 101.

³⁰⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 104, 106.

However, Mphahlele and his co-accused were not convicted as there was no evidence directly linking them with the protest, despite the fact that the protest started because of their dismissal. Although these protests were suppressed at this time, Orlando High School students would later go on to become avid opponents of the Bantu Education system, becoming one of the key instigator schools that led to the Soweto Uprising in June 1976 in protest to the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in “Bantu” schools.³⁰⁹

After being expelled from working as a teacher in South Africa, an experience which Mphahlele remembered as “traumatic”, he continued studying for his Bachelor of Arts honours degree through UNISA. However, not having a job at this time meant life became more difficult for him and his family, as he was no longer able to earn a salary in his trained profession.³¹⁰ As a result, he began applying in 1953 for employment outside South Africa’s borders, including in the Bechuanaland protectorate, a British High Commission territory, where his application to a high school, Bangwato College, was rejected on the basis of his dismissal “for subversive activities” by his prior employer.³¹¹ Only in 1954, a year later, Mphahlele eventually found employment at a high school in Basutoland where he taught English and Geography.³¹² Because it involved only a short period of contract work, his family did not accompany him on this trip, remaining in Soweto where his wife worked as a teacher. Mothopeng, who had been dismissed together with Mphahlele, had already been in Basutoland for a few months when Mphahlele arrived, so at least he had someone he knew there.³¹³

Mphahlele only taught in Basutoland for eight months. When he returned home later in 1954 for a visit during his first school holidays, he never returned to Basutoland. This was

³⁰⁹ Clive Glaser. “Soweto's Islands of Learning: Morris Isaacson and Orlando High Schools under Bantu Education, 1958-1975”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2015, 41: 1) 159-171.

³¹⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 103-104.

³¹¹ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Down Second Avenue*. (Johannesburg: Picador, 2004) 159-165.

³¹² Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 161-170.

³¹³ Ali Khangela Hlongwane. *The Lion of Azania: A Biography of Zephania Lekoame Mothopeng (1913–1990)*. (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishing, 2021) 2.

because teachers were poorly paid in Basutoland.³¹⁴ Instead, he accepted the offer from his former mission high school, St. Peter's, to teach Afrikaans and Mathematics, where he was paid by school raised funds, not the government, as a teacher.³¹⁵

This work, too, did not last long due to the apartheid state's nationalisation of black mission schools, which meant he could no longer work at this school. In 1955, he left St. Peter's having found formal employment at *Drum* magazine. As discussed in the previous chapter, he began working as a journalist and studying for his masters. It was in this period that Mphahlele decided to join the ANC.³¹⁶ Mphahlele explained in his autobiography, *Down Second Avenue* that for the longest time, he remained undecided on whether to join the ANC or All-African Convention (AAC). Indeed, he described how he spent almost 10 years attending the meetings of both organisations to learn more about them.³¹⁷ During the early 1950s, the ANC, unlike the AAC, had grown into be a very large organisation as its membership had been boosted by the Defiance Campaign.

However, it was in 1955, when the ANC, together with other anti-apartheid organisations, met to draft and adopt the Freedom Charter; a document that stipulated what the anti-apartheid movement sought to achieve, that he decided to join this organisation.³¹⁸ Mphahlele attended the Congress of the People, a historical gathering in Kliptown, Johannesburg, where the Freedom Charter was adopted. He attended both as a participant and as a journalist. At this gathering, Mphahlele gave an address to the members present on education and culture, where he once again condemned the oppressive and unequal Bantu Education system. In his speech, he told members that the ANC needed to strengthen its policies against Bantu Education, which he felt were too weakly developed at this time.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 159-173.

³¹⁵ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 177.

³¹⁶ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 106.

³¹⁷ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 180.

³¹⁸ Thompson, *The History of South Africa*, 208-210.

³¹⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 145.

Shortly after Mphahlele's address, and following the adoption of the Freedom Charter, the police invaded and disrupted the gathering.³²⁰ The police arrested 156 political leaders who participated in its adoption. The government assumed that the Freedom Charter was a Communist document and that anything related to Communism was prohibited under the Suppression of Communism Act No. 44 of 1950. Fortunately for Mphahlele, a person of interest already on the police's radar for his earlier critiques of the Bantu Education system, he was not arrested as he managed to evade police capture on this occasion.

While working at *Drum* magazine as a journalist and literary editor, Mphahlele recalled finding it difficult working for a magazine with white editors (Anthony Sampson and later Sylvester Stein) who led the team's content production for African audiences. The racially segregated nature of journalism in South Africa angered and frustrated him, as he remembered:

“My whole outlook resisted journalism; my attitude towards the white press; towards the double stream of newspaper policy in South Africa where there is a press for whites and a press for non-whites; towards *Drum*'s arbitrary standard of what the urban African wants to read: sex, crime and love stories, its use of Sophiatown as the yardstick of what the South African non-white should read...”³²¹

However, he needed the income, so had to find a way to come to terms with the work. Whilst working at *Drum*, Mphahlele found that he enjoyed editing short stories for the magazine, including sex and crime stories. He also reported on significant issues that affected black South Africans. This included, for example, the Bantu Education system and the bus boycotts that took place in Johannesburg and Pretoria in 1957. In addition, he reported on the 1956 women's march that drew a crowd of about 20,000 women, mostly black women, who marched towards the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest the carrying of passes.³²²

³²⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 141-143.

³²¹ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 177.

³²² Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 178-184.

During his time at *Drum*, Mphahlele remembered how its white managing editors tried to steer the magazine away from tackling head on the country's political developments.³²³ Although likely a way to preserve its operations in an oppressive apartheid context, Mphahlele shared that he felt disappointed with some of the magazine's black editorial staff as they seemed to be more interested in less serious topics, such as football and dancing. He found that some of his left-wing views were contrary to those of other staff members.

However, at *Drum* he also met some of the great black journalists of the time, such as Can Themba, Henry Nxumalo, Lewis Nkosi, and Nat Nakasa. This cohort of gifted black writers and intellectuals would go on to write many news articles, but also short stories and even books.³²⁴ These talented black writers made *Drum* a magazine that attracted many black readers both in South Africa and internationally.³²⁵ This is because they were black South Africans writing for other black South Africans in a manner that resonated with their black audiences. They were writing about their own lived experiences, including the oppressions they suffered, and about black people as they knew them. Mphahlele noted that there was a kind of "collective consciousness" that bound these writers and their audiences together.³²⁶ Black South Africans had suffered under uncondusive conditions for so long without a voice in the press. These black writers gave black audiences a voice, and so black audiences took a keen interest in their work.³²⁷ Like Mphahlele, many of these black writers at *Drum* also left the magazine to go into exile to escape the oppressive apartheid regime.

Yet, despite the critical work and university qualifications these black writers had, neither Mphahlele nor other black journalists he worked with obtained the accolades, in terms

³²³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 122.

³²⁴ These black intellectuals/writers have contributed significant works to African literature. Can Themba, for example, produced *The Will to Die; Requiem for Sophiatown; The Suit; and Deep Cuts: Graphic Adaptations of Stories*, while Lewis Nkosi wrote *Mating Birds, Underground People, Mandela's Ego, and Home and Exile: and Other Selections*.

³²⁵ Tom Odhiambo. "Inventing Africa in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Imagination, Politics and Transnationalism in *Drum Magazine*". *African Studies*. (2006, 65: 2) 157-174.

³²⁶ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 178.

³²⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 137.

of high salaries that they deserved. Indeed, Sipho Mahala who wrote on Can Themba's life, highlighted in his biography that when Mphahlele, the highest achieving black writer at *Drum* in the 1950s, eventually left the magazine at the end of September 1957, he was still earning the same salary.

Mphahlele resigned from *Drum* shortly before leaving South Africa for Nigeria, to take up a teaching position there. Mphahlele had always wanted to return to the teaching profession; however, it was his dismissal from the profession that kept him away. It was therefore, for this reason, that Mphahlele decided to search for employment abroad.³²⁸

Bernard Magubane

All Magubane's childhood and educational experiences in South Africa during the apartheid era were crucial in educating him about the racial injustices and discrimination that black South Africans confronted. However, it was also his time as a student at Mazenod School between 1942 and 1948, Mariannhill between 1949 and 1950, and University of Natal between 1954 and 1960, and joining the ANC that helped to shape and develop his political ideas and critiques of the apartheid system further.

Magubane recalled that his critical thinking ideas were sharpened when he was still at student at the Catholic Mazenod School in Chesterville, as it was there that he began to critically reflect on the inequalities of racial segregation, and several other things.³²⁹ In his autobiography, Magubane remembered struggling to understand the difference between the saints and the ancestors as taught by his teachers, and why honouring one's ancestors was demonised and forbidden. It was also at this school where he started questioning baptism, particularly the part where a baptised pupil had to assume a saint's name and abandon their

³²⁸ Hein Willemsse. "Es' kia Mphahlele – A Doyen of African Literature". *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* (2004, 41:2) 169-174.

³²⁹ Bernard Magubane. *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 30-32.

African name. Magubane recalled how this led him to start doubting his Christian upbringing and its so-called “civilising mission”, which undermined African values and customs.³³⁰

Magubane’s political consciousness developed even more from 1949 when he went to St Francis College in Mariannhill, after completing his Junior Certificate, to study for his teacher’s training qualification. There, the people he met, and the political climate of the time, also shaped his thinking. St Francis attracted many revolutionary students from all over South Africa, whose thoughts came to influence his, such as Steve Biko, Mosiuoa Lekota, and B.W. Vilakazi who went on to become well-known anti-apartheid political activists in South Africa.³³¹

Magubane also recalled using his spare time while studying at St Francis College to read revolutionary literature, such as ANC-produced literature. In addition, when the ANC’s “Programme of Action” was adopted in 1949, it became a document of heated discussion among Magubane and his contemporaries at Mariannhill. This is because these students belonged to different organisations, and as a result, some supported it whereas others did not, and argued against the ANC’s approach.³³²

Magubane’s political consciousness, like many black people who lived in South Africa during the late 1940s and through the 1950s, was also developed by things that went on in South Africa at the time.³³³ To begin with, apartheid was established in 1948, which defined the legal and systematic oppression and exclusion of all black people. Magubane, as a black South African was subjected to the deplorable conditions that black South Africans were forced to endure in the country. It was also during this time that black opposition to the apartheid regime had risen with the formation of organisations such as the ANCYL and protests actions such as the Defiance Campaign, as well as the Congress of the People, discussed in previous

³³⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 30-32.

³³¹ Xolela Mangcu. *Biko: A Biography*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2017) 109-112.

³³² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 39.

³³³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 46.

chapters, which culminated in the passage of the Freedom Charter. All of this had an impact on black South African people's political consciousness in general, and Magubane in particular.

In 1951, Magubane joined the ANC as its member and became involved in the organisation's political activities. For example, Magubane participated in the mass rally that was organised by the ANC and Natal Indian Congress (NIC), which was held at Red Square in Johannesburg.³³⁴ The rally had an attendance of around ten thousand people and brought people together to discuss the planned Defiance Campaign against apartheid laws. Amongst other speakers at the rally were Chief Albert Luthuli, the president of the ANC and Dr Gangathura Naicker, the president of the NIC. Nelson Mandela, who was Chief Volunteer Designate of the Defiance Campaign, also addressed the rally. Had it not been the fact that the bus he had been travelling on from Durban to Kliptown was stopped near Pinetown in a roadblock, Magubane would have attended the gathering where the Freedom Charter was adopted.³³⁵

A major issue which encouraged Magubane to protest discriminatory policies was the passage of the Bantu Education Act in 1953. When this was passed, he had been working as a teacher for two years at Mazenod School, his Catholic alma mater in Chesterville, Durban.³³⁶ Magubane became one of the critics who voiced opposition against the inferior system of education for Africans promoted by the apartheid government. He was not alone. At this time, the teaching profession already had several prominent political activists. This was a generation of teachers who graduated in the 1940s and included Oliver Tambo, Nathaniel Honono, Livingston Mqotsi, and Es'kia Mphahlele.³³⁷ Magubane became one of the critical voices against this system of education as he argued that Bantu Education meant as a teacher you were willing to prepare your students for subordinate roles in South African society. This generation

³³⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 46.

³³⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 63.

³³⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 47-52.

³³⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 43.

of African critics showed how opposition to Bantu Education occurred much earlier than the 1970s Soweto Uprising generation, which is more widely known to people.³³⁸

Magubane became more politically active in the early 1950s when he joined the Natal African Teachers' Association (NATA). Like the previously mentioned Transvaal African Teachers' Association (TATA), which Mphahlele joined in 1949, the NATA represented African teachers who worked in the province of Natal. And, like TATA, the NATA also mobilised its members to voice their opposition to the Bantu Education Act in the years leading up to its promulgation in 1953. For example, in 1952, Magubane, as a member, participated in the NATA's conference held in Pietermaritzburg, which discussed how teachers could oppose Bantu Education. Indeed, Bantu Education became a major point of debate among Magubane and his teacher contemporaries.³³⁹

Fortunately for Magubane, Mazenod, like some of the country's other missionary schools, also took a stance of rejecting the Bantu Education system when it was introduced in 1953 because of the inferior education it sought to provide for black students.³⁴⁰ As a result, he felt supported in this working environment. However, over time, this school's oppositional stance put it on a collision course with the government, which led to a loss of its subsidies for the school. Although it remained operational in the 1950s as a mission school when Magubane was there, he remembers that he was advised by Father Kerotret that he should consider leaving the school because after its subsidy withdrawal, the future of the school was not guaranteed. Magubane continued working at the school until 1958.³⁴¹

It was during the early 1950s that Magubane met his future wife, Thembelihle Kaula, whom he married in 1953. Kaula had trained as a teacher too and they met while attending the

³³⁸ Bekisizwe Ndimande. "From Bantu Education to the Fight for Socially Just Education". *Equity & Excellence in Education*. (2013, 46: 1) 23.

³³⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 50.

³⁴⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 56.

³⁴¹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 59.

1952 NATA conference where delegates discussed ways to oppose the Bantu Education system.³⁴² In 1953, because of the turmoil in the education sphere, Kaula, decided to leave teaching for nursing, and enrolled to study for a Diploma in Nursing. Their oldest daughter Gugulethu was born in 1953, and they would go on to have four children.³⁴³

As was discussed in the previous chapter, whilst working as a teacher, Magubane started studying part time for his undergraduate degree at the University of Natal in 1954 while his growing opposition against the Bantu Education system grew.³⁴⁴ It was while studying at this university, that Magubane met and interacted with a number of ANC activists, as well as underground activists of the Communist Party, which had been banned in 1950 under the Suppression of Communism Act.³⁴⁵ Magubane states that it was at the University of Natal where his political consciousness and intellectual growth came to maturity.³⁴⁶ This is because this university over the years enrolled political activists who made significant contributions to the struggle for liberation. This included the likes of people such as Steve Biko and Mamphela Ramphele who in generations after Magubane, helped found the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s. Ramphele states that it was at the University of Natal that she was initiated into the anti-apartheid struggle.³⁴⁷ At University of Natal, Magubane met several sharp minds with whom he shared a space. One of these people was Mazisi Kunene, an important ANC organiser at the time.³⁴⁸

As previously stated, the 1950s in South Africa were marked by political developments that led to black resistance. This was the time of bus boycotts in Johannesburg, the women's

³⁴² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 53-54.

³⁴³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 340.

³⁴⁴ Ben Magubane. "Interview with Ben Magubane" by William Minter, Pretoria, 15 March 2004, <https://projects.kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/210-808-947/BenMagubane11-4-11.pdf> (Accessed on 23 November 2022).

³⁴⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 75.

³⁴⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 75.

³⁴⁷ Mamphela Ramphele. *Mamphela Ramphele: A Life*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995) 42-45.

³⁴⁸ Chipasha Luchembe. "An Interview with Mazisi Kunene on African Philosophy". *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*. (1977, 7: 2).

anti-pass campaign in Pretoria, and the Treason Trial, where several political activists were tried for their anti-apartheid activities. These political events resulted in a rise in political consciousness among black South Africans as more people became aware of and engaged in actions aimed at opposing the apartheid state. Magubane became increasingly active in politics as time went on because of his involvement in the ANC and developments in the political environment of the day.

Although it took a few years for the Bantu Education Act to come into full effect, after its introduction, a lot of excellent black teachers began to leave the teaching profession. While some left voluntarily, others were expelled, such as Mphahlele and his ex-teacher training classmate Zeth Mothopeng. In his biography of Can Themba, Siphiwo Mahlala has shown how several teachers who had trained at the University of Fort Hare left South Africa to teach in other countries, such as Swaziland, including Mandla Sithole and Can Themba who later died there.³⁴⁹

Because of his growing anger and frustration towards the Bantu Education system, Magubane made the decision in 1958 to leave the teaching profession. Thus, unlike Mphahlele who left the teaching profession because of his expulsion, Magubane left the profession voluntarily as he wanted nothing to do with the apartheid regime's inferior education system.³⁵⁰ Indeed, he viewed Bantu Education as schooling for subordination as it gave African students limited skills to prepare them for lower level, less well-paying jobs, which led to their exploitation.³⁵¹ For Magubane, Bantu Education was used as an ideological apparatus of the state, as suggested by Althusser in Chapter Two, as it used apartheid education to preserve the existing quo of racial discrimination and social disparities, effectively marginalising black

³⁴⁹ Siphiwo Mahala. *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Tsotsi*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022) 23.

³⁵⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 82.

³⁵¹ Ndimande, "From Bantu education to the fight for socially just education", 23.

South Africans.³⁵² It was unsurprising that black students dropped out of school at a disproportionately high rate during this period and why many educators left the teaching profession like Magubane and Mphahlele.

When Magubane resigned, he used his time to continue making progress on his postgraduate degrees. Fortunately, as discussed in the previous chapter, he was able to get paid work as a research assistant for his Sociology Professor Leo Kuper, which helped bring in some income for his family. In addition, his family could also draw on the financial support of his wife, who worked as a nurse at this time.³⁵³

In 1959, a year into his master's studies, Magubane met an American scholar who visited the University of Natal. As a black postgraduate student, Magubane recalled being very interested to learn about studying and working in the U.S.A. This was because he knew that if he continued with his postgraduate studies, he had little in the way of opportunities to work as an academic in South Africa's segregated higher educational landscape, where at the time, only one black university (the University of Fort Hare) existed.³⁵⁴ This point was captured by Chabani Manganyi in his autobiography, as despite finishing his doctorate at the age of 30, no university in South Africa was willing to employ him as a lecturer in Psychology because he was black.³⁵⁵ It was his discussion with this American academic that put him on the path of going overseas to find more opportunities as a black intellectual.³⁵⁶

³⁵² Ndimande, "From Bantu education to the fight for socially just education", 23.

³⁵³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 53-54.

³⁵⁴ In 1959 the passage of the apartheid state's Extension of University Act resulted in the closure of the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Cape Town, and Natal (excluding Natal's medical school) to black students, who were from then on expected to study at racially segregated tertiary institutions, several of which were built in the 1960s through the 1980s. For more on this, see Saleem Badat. *Black Student Politics: Higher Education and Apartheid*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 1999).

³⁵⁵ Chabani Manganyi. *Apartheid and The Making of a Black Psychologist: A Memoir by N. Chabani Manganyi*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001) 20-38.

³⁵⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 96.

Archie Mafeje

Like Mphahlele and Magubane, Mafeje's political consciousness was developed by the historical context in which he found himself. As the previous chapter highlighted, growing up with all the racialised inequalities of segregation and then apartheid had a huge impact on his life. So did the politically conscious people, including mentors he came to meet at Nqabara Secondary School, at Healdtown College and the Fort Hare University College. At Fort Hare, he also actively participated in student protests which led to the disruption of his and other Fort Hare students' educations when the institution closed for several months to help dissipate the student protests.

When Mafeje left Fort Hare and gained admission to the University of Cape Town in 1957 he continued to engage in frequent interactions and political discourse with his peers. He recalled how he and other students used to meet to discuss various issues in what was then called "the Freedom Square" on the upper campus at UCT.³⁵⁷ UCT has a long history of anti-apartheid protests. Mafeje was a student at UCT in the late 1950s, when the students in this university were opposed to apartheid, particularly the apartheid government's decision to pass the 1957 Separate University Education Bill, which later became, with some revisions, the Extension of University Education Act discussed in Chapter Two. This act, according to the protesters, undermined academic freedom. Teresa Barnes remembers that UCT and Wits engaged in significant demonstrations after the passage of the Extension of University Education Act, which officially segregated universities. Students wrote to petition government ministers, delivered speeches at rallies, boycotted lectures, and marched with placards.³⁵⁸

Mafeje's political activism matured when he was at UCT. Yet, his activism did not only remain within the confines of UCT. As discussed in the previous chapter, he became heavily

³⁵⁷ Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) 11.

³⁵⁸ Teresa Barnes. *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonization*. (New York: Routledge, 2019) 48.

involved as a member of the Society of Young Africa (SOYA) and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), which shared a close relationship. As a member of these organisations, Mafeje attended their meetings, participated in different discussions raised by members, and sometimes delivered speeches. For example, he became a passionate participant in the Cape Town SOYA study group, which met regularly on weekends.³⁵⁹ At the time, SOYA gained notoriety as an intellectual tool for energising high school and university students as well as young workers. The SOYA slogan, “We fight Ideas with Ideas”, was a clear reflection of an organisation that placed a strong focus on the intellectual growth of young people who would participate in the anti-apartheid struggle through debate.³⁶⁰

Through Livingstone Mqotsi, who was at this time the leader of NEUM, and whom Mafeje had met while he was a student at Healdtown, Mafeje was able to rub shoulders with influential people including A.C. Jordan, the well-known isiXhosa author, novelist, and linguist. Jordan was a lecturer in the School of African Studies’ language section at UCT while Mafeje was there. Through his involvement in SOYA, he also met Fikile Bam. Bam would later be sentenced to a 10-year sentence on Robben Island following the Sharpeville and Langa massacres. In the post-apartheid period, he would serve as the Judge-President of the Lands Claim Court.³⁶¹

As a member of the radical Marxist political organisation NEUM, Mafeje was influenced by reading the works of Russian Vladimir Lenin and Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong.³⁶² He was also influenced by the abovementioned Mqotsi, who edited the NEUM journal entitled “Unity”. The journal suggested that all South African liberation movements work together organisationally. Mafeje actively participated in the movement’s

³⁵⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 17-19.

³⁶⁰ Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz. “The 1952 Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa”. *The Journal of African History*. (1993, 24: 3) 447-468.

³⁶¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 11.

³⁶² Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 8-13.

intellectual and ideological discussions. The Unity Movement, which supported the radical idea of “permanent revolution” led by the working class, drew heavily from Russian Communist leader Leon Trotsky’s theories. However, Mafeje had a different idea as he rejected the idea of a permanent revolution, which he voiced as part of ideological discussions within the organisation.³⁶³ He argued that once a revolutionary movement had gained control of the government, it would stop being revolutionary after much potential damage caused from taking an extreme approach, so he felt the approach had to be moderate to serve the interests of all its citizens.³⁶⁴

Bam who was close to Mafeje claims that among his peers in the movement, Mafeje had the most sophisticated theoretical background.³⁶⁵ He read a great deal of political literature, which gave him a strong sense of argument when he entered into ideological discussions with members of the NEUM and Unity Movement. Interestingly, although more of a moderate, in terms of his political ideas than some activists, he was not a liberal as liberal members of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), a predominantly white politically liberal students’ organisation found mainly at the country’s white universities, viewed him as a threat.³⁶⁶

The early 1960s were important years for Mafeje. In addition to his growing political engagements, while still a student at UCT, Mafeje met and married Nomfundo Noruwana. They married in 1961 at Kwazakhele township in Port Elizabeth. Noruwana had trained as a nurse by profession. They also started a family. Indeed, in 1962, they had their first child together, Xolani.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 12-14.

³⁶⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 14.

³⁶⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 15.

³⁶⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 17. For more on the history of NUSAS, see the work of Clare McKay. “A History of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS): 1956-1970”. (PhD dissertation, University of South Africa, 2015), 16-32.

³⁶⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 34.

In terms of his academic developments, as a master's student, Mafeje wrote a paper entitled "A Chief Visits Town". In April 1962, his supervisor at the time, Monica Wilson forwarded his paper to the editor of the *Journal of African Studies*. In his paper, Mafeje criticised the apartheid government for its oppression of black South Africans. The paper's strong anti-apartheid message caused the editor to reject it. Julius Lewin, the editor, told Wilson to forward it instead to the *Race Relations Journal*, which he argued would be a better fit. Wilson did not do this, instead, a shortened version to eliminate sections in which Mafeje criticised the apartheid government was published in 1963 in the *Journal of Local Administration Overseas* after it had been submitted by Wilson on behalf of Mafeje.³⁶⁸

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Mafeje worked as a research assistant for Wilson between November 1960 and September 1962 on the study entitled *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township*. Whilst working on this study, Mafeje recalled advising Wilson not to use the phrase "tribe" in the research since this was an imposed colonial concept, he argued, but rather to use the concepts that black South Africans were using to define themselves and their relations.³⁶⁹ This example illustrates how Mafeje was vehemently opposed to the imposition of words and categories that black people in the townships did not use themselves. Mafeje would later devote time to writing articles about the problematic imposition of colonial concepts, categories, and ideologies. Amongst many others, he wrote a lot about "tribe" and "tribalism".³⁷⁰

As mentioned in the previous chapter, while doing his masters, Mafeje also assisted a US political scientist, Gwendolyn M. Carter whose study examined the political processes and elections in the Transkei region in the 1960s. It was during this period of work on Carter's

³⁶⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 17-32.

³⁶⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 19.

³⁷⁰ See for example, Archie Mafeje. "The Ideology of 'Tribalism'". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1971, 9:2) 253-261 and Archie Mafeje. "Africanity: A Combative Ontology". *The Postcolonial Turn*. (2011, 12: 1) 31-44.

project that Mafeje was arrested in Cape Town on 16 August 1963 because the Transkei police had put out a warrant for his arrest for organising what they regarded as an illegal political gathering in the Transkei while he was doing his research there.³⁷¹ This was a period of heightened security a few years after the Sharpeville massacre where the state sought to increase its suppression of anti-apartheid political organisations and activists it perceived as a threat to its authority.³⁷² After his arrest and detention for several days in Roeland Street jail in Cape Town, on 25 August, Mafeje was taken by train to Flagstaff in the Transkei where his case was eventually heard.³⁷³ He was found guilty and required to pay a fine of R200-00, which Wilson paid to secure his release. All of this happened in the months leading up to the completion of his master's dissertation in December 1963, entitled "Leadership and Change: A Study of Two South African Peasant Communities".³⁷⁴

Mafeje's arrest was a pivotal moment in his life. Arrests were one of the most commonly used mechanisms to suppress and silence black South Africans and their ideas in apartheid South Africa. As discussed in Chapter Two, many different laws had been put in place to legitimise these arrests and prosecutions. Fortunately, Mafeje's arrest in 1963 only led to a fine but it helped influence his decision to leave South Africa to escape the oppressive context of the apartheid regime and to build a new life in another country. During 1963, he explored options and sent off applications to study further overseas.

After completing his master's degree at UCT in 1963, Mafeje got the opportunity to pursue his doctoral studies abroad. Likely influenced by his supervisor Monica Wilson, who did her PhD in Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, Mafeje was able to obtain a

³⁷¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 32.

³⁷² Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 62-64.

³⁷³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 32.

³⁷⁴ Archie Mafeje. "Leadership and Change: A Study of Two South African Peasant Communities". (Master's dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1963).

scholarship to study Anthropology at this British university because of his good academic results. Mafeje left South Africa at the beginning of 1964.³⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the writings and the ideas of Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje. As black South Africans who experienced apartheid and its discrimination and oppression, they wrote and shared their ideas and experiences. Some of their works were highly critical of the apartheid regime. This chapter also focused on their contributions to the country's liberation movement. Moreover, this chapter focused on how the apartheid regime tried to suppress their ideas and silence them. The next chapter will focus on the decisions made by Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje to leave South Africa and go into exile.

³⁷⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 32-33.

Chapter Five:

The Lives and Writings of Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje in Exile

While the previous two chapters considered the early lives of the three men, their oppressive experiences in segregation and apartheid South Africa, their political conscientisation and activism, and early writings which sought to critique racism and discrimination, this chapter focuses primarily on the three men's lives and experiences once in exile in the overseas countries where they lived and built new lives for themselves. Furthermore, it explores their writings and other contributions during this period living outside South Africa.

Es'kia Mphahlele

1957 was a pivotal year for Es'kia Mphahlele. In addition to resigning from *Drum* magazine, he completed his master's degree in English. Despite earning his degree with distinction, despite the hardships he had endured, his advanced degree did not help his employment situation. Because he was banned from teaching in South Africa, he was not allowed to teach in any of the public institutions in South Africa, which made finding a job difficult. As a result, Mphahlele decided to explore the option of going abroad, where he hoped he would find employment, and be able to live a life not subject to racial restrictions as he had experienced in South Africa.

Mphahlele left South Africa in September 1957 to become an exile; a person who felt the necessity to leave his country because of the politically oppressive circumstances of his home country.³⁷⁶ He chose to go to Nigeria because that is where he first got a job offer. Although he left initially on his own, his wife and children followed him to this country in

³⁷⁶ Es'kia Mphahlele. "From the Archive: In search of Es'kia Mphahlele" by Chabani Mangayi. *New Frame*, 27 March 2003, <https://www.newframe.com/from-the-archive-in-search-of-eskia-mphahlele-2/> (Accessed on 23 November 2022).

December 1957. Mphahlele was among the first cohort of black teachers and ANC members to go into exile. Many South Africans went into exile in from the early- to mid-1960s, to organise outside the borders of South Africa after several anti-apartheid political organisations, including the ANC and PAC, were banned in 1960 following the Sharpeville massacre, which posed a threat to the apartheid regime.³⁷⁷

In Nigeria, Mphahlele stayed in this country's capital city, Lagos.³⁷⁸ There, he obtained employment as an English teacher at the C.M.S. Grammar School. This was a public boys' secondary school, which had about 350 students.³⁷⁹ The school was established in 1859, which made it the oldest secondary school in Nigeria. Mphahlele arrived in Nigeria three years before the country gained its independence from Britain. He defined the feeling of being in Nigeria as one where he could "retrieve his humanity".³⁸⁰ This was because the "great wave of independence" was already sweeping countries north of South Africa's borders, and although Nigeria had not obtained full independence yet, it had made significant strides towards self-government, with Britain eventually agreeing on 27 October 1958 to give Nigeria its independence, which came into effect on October 1, 1960.³⁸¹

Mphahlele was passionate about teaching, something he was denied in his home country. He stated that it was fascinating for him to teach in Nigeria, as he had more freedom to teach on subjects not allowed in the Bantu Education system and was impressed by the emotional and intellectual prowess among the Nigerian children.³⁸²

³⁷⁷ Chabani Manganyi. *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 177.

³⁷⁸ Lagos was replaced by Ikeja in 1975 as the state capital and replaced by Abuja in 1991 as the federal capital. Es'kia Mphahlele. *Africa, My Music*. (Cape Town: Kwela, 2014) 26.

³⁷⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 169.

³⁸⁰ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 20.

³⁸¹ Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 139-142.

³⁸² Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 167-169.

After a few months, in addition to his C.M.S. Grammar School day job, Mphahlele also got a job teaching adults English at a night school.³⁸³ In 1959, Mphahlele was invited by Ayo Ogunshye, Director of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Ibadan, a prestigious university in Nigeria at the time, to teach English to individuals who were preparing for examinations in the High School Certificates of the External Division of London University. Mphahlele left the Grammar School to take up this position working for the university's extension programme.³⁸⁴

Being in Nigeria was an exciting time for Mphahlele. He witnessed the country's transition from a British colony to an independent country. This offered Mphahlele a firsthand experience of what it was like to live in a post-colonial state. He was exposed to the freedom experiences that black people in apartheid South Africa were still denied.³⁸⁵

Although in exile, Mphahlele did not cut ties with the ANC, and he did not forsake his commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. Mphahlele continued to work as an ANC activist. For example, while staying in Nigeria, Mphahlele led the delegation of the ANC at the All-African People's Conference, which was held in Accra, Ghana, between 8 and 13 December 1958.³⁸⁶ At this time, Ghana had been the only country to gain its independence, which it had achieved in March 1957. The conference focused on the road towards the independence of the African continent. It was attended by two hundred delegates who represented political parties and trade unions from across the African continent, except Libya and Sudan. The ANC delegates were Mphahlele, Alfred Hutchinson, and Mary-Louise Hooper. Present at the conference from other countries were leaders and intellectuals, including Frantz Fanon, who

³⁸³ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 22-26.

³⁸⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 171-173.

³⁸⁵ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 26.

³⁸⁶ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 23.

led the delegation from Algeria. He delivered what Mphahlele referred to as the best speech of the day.³⁸⁷

A couple of days prior to the conference, a meeting was convened by the new Ghanaian Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, in his offices at the Ministry of External Affairs for some of the delegates. Mphahlele attended the meeting as the leader of the South African delegation. After the meeting, committees were formed in preparation of the conference to brainstorm and discuss concepts such as Imperialism, Colonialism, and Pan Africanism, amongst others. Mphahlele was made convener of the Committee on Racism and Discriminatory Laws and Practices. In this committee he was placed with people, such as Kenneth Kaunda, who would later go on to become the president of independent Zambia.³⁸⁸ At the actual conference itself, Mphahlele delivered a speech on behalf of the ANC, sharing this national liberation movement's experiences and efforts to fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The conference produced lots of tense discussions. In addition to many speeches and discussions highlighting strong anti-colonial sentiment, robust discussions also took place around whether nationalist movements should use violent or non-violent approaches.³⁸⁹

While in Nigeria, Mphahlele continued with his writing career in less restrictive circumstances.³⁹⁰ When he and his family moved to Ibadan for his teaching work, he was able to meet and work with other writers and helped establish the Mbali Writers and Artists Club. Writers he worked with included Chinua Achebe, J.P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, and Wole Soyinka, the latter of whom became his closest friend. These writers, through this club, trained and sought to promote the work of local writers and artists.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 175.

³⁸⁸ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 23.

³⁸⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 175-176.

³⁹⁰ Mphahlele. "From the Archive: In search of Es'kia Mphahlele".

³⁹¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 179-181.

It was during his time in Ibadan, in 1959, that he was able to complete two writing projects. This included an article entitled “The Dilemma of the African Elite”, which was published in an international journal called *The Twentieth Century*. The article focused on the issue of poverty and its consequences for a developing black elitism, as well as the survival of African lifestyles amidst other cultures.³⁹²

He also managed to complete his autobiography, *Down Second Avenue*, which was published by Faber and Faber in April 1959.³⁹³ This book shared Mphahlele’s life experiences while living in apartheid South Africa. It was reviewed by many people living in Nigeria, South Africa, and Britain. Among them were Can Themba, Lewis Nkosi, and Sylvester Stein, ex-colleagues from *Drum* magazine, and Dr Olumbe Bassir, an academic from the University College of Ibadan,³⁹⁴ who gave positive reviews of his book. Over time, this book was also translated into several different languages, including French, German, Swedish, Czech, Hebrew, Japanese, and Portuguese.³⁹⁵

Between July and October 1959, Mphahlele went to Britain for a four-month vacation with his family. While in Britain Mphahlele was able to obtain British subject status (today known as a citizenship).³⁹⁶ He knew that possessing a British passport would enable him to travel and work just about anywhere in the world, though not apartheid South Africa.³⁹⁷

Travelling to Britain came with new experiences for Mphahlele. It was his first encounter with a non-African country. He expressed sometimes feeling a bit alienated in

³⁹² Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 181-182.

³⁹³ Ezekiel Mphahlele. *Down Second Avenue*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1959).

³⁹⁴ After Nigeria obtained its independence, this institution became the University of Ibadan in 1962.

³⁹⁵ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 45.

³⁹⁶ For more on this, see Sable International. “Types of British Nationality”, <https://www.sableinternational.com/british-citizenship/different-types-of-british-nationals#:~:text=A%20citizen%20of%20the%20UK,referred%20to%20as%20British%20citizens>. (Assessed on 17 September 2023).

³⁹⁷ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 79.

Britain, which was dominated by Europeans and their cultures, but also had wonderful times because he was not subjected to the constraints that he had faced in apartheid South Africa.³⁹⁸

While in London, Mphahlele continued with his writing. For example, he wrote two short stories entitled “The Living and the Dead” and “The Suitcase”, which were published in *Black Orpheus*, which was, at the time, a Nigeria-based literary journal that focused on African and Afro-American literature.³⁹⁹ These short stories focused on the oppressive experiences of black South Africans in apartheid South Africa. At this time, he also wrote a poem entitled “The Immigrant”, which was also published in *Black Orpheus*. The poem told the story of his early years in exile.⁴⁰⁰

Once he returned to Nigeria, he continued with this University of Ibadan academic duties. During this period, he also became a founding member of the Mbari Artists and Writers Club. Formed in Ibadan in 1961, Mbari was a cultural centre for African writers, artists, and musicians. This included people such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, and others. Its members chose Mphahlele to be Mbari's first president.⁴⁰¹

In August 1961, Mphahlele moved to Paris, France within his family to spend two years doing work outside the classroom. During this time, he worked as the Director of African Programmes with the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an anti-Communist propaganda organisation established on June 26, 1950, in West Berlin and supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its supporters. At the time, the CCF was active in 35 countries and sought to enlist intellectuals in an intellectual struggle against Communism.⁴⁰² During his term, he administered a writing contest for this programme for black Africans in an attempt

³⁹⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 185-186.

³⁹⁹ Es'kia Mphahlele. *The Living and Dead, and Other Stories*. (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ministry of Education, 1961).

⁴⁰⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 187-189.

⁴⁰¹ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 54.

⁴⁰² Sarah Harris. *The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the Early Cold War: The Limits of Making Common Cause*. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 26-30.

stimulate the writing and exposure of such writers, though this raised objections amongst some white liberals to it being reserved for black Africans.⁴⁰³ It was also during this time that he became the co-editor of *Black Orpheus*. In Paris, Mphahlele's apartment became a centre where writers and artists would meet to exchange ideas. This included Skunder Borghossian from Ethiopia, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Emmanuel Omasola from Nigeria, and Mazisi Kunene and Gerard Sekoto from South Africa.⁴⁰⁴

Mphahlele recalled how he lived as an "alien" in France. He noted how French society kept those from other nations, such as himself, out of the cultural and intellectual mainstream. As a result, unlike in Nigeria, where Mphahlele lived a "complete human existence", as an African in France, he was unable to fully participate in French culture and the intelligentsia.⁴⁰⁵

While living in Paris, Mphahlele was able to travel to many parts of the world, where he participated in conferences and workshops, and gave speeches and lectures.⁴⁰⁶ For example, between April and June 1962, Mphahlele participated in two important gatherings. The first was a meeting in London at the Transcription Centre. The centre was known for being a meeting point for writers and artists. It was also a place where the preparation of programmes of African art and literature for broadcasting to the whole world was done.⁴⁰⁷ The second was the first international African writers conference held at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda. Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane, Lewis Nkosi, Alex La Gama, and Bob Leshoi were invited to represent South African writers.⁴⁰⁸

Another two important writers' conferences were organised by Mphahlele and the French writer, Françoise Robinet in Dakar, Senegal and Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1963.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰³ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 31-33.

⁴⁰⁴ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 202.

⁴⁰⁶ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 81.

⁴⁰⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 209.

⁴⁰⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 209-213.

⁴⁰⁹ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 3

These conferences sought to debate the place, for example, of African literature in university curricula. The intention was to argue for the inclusion of African literature as a substantive area of study in universities instead of pushing it into extra-mural departments and institutes.⁴¹⁰ In 1963, Mphahlele also visited Israel. He travelled to Jerusalem at the invitation of the anti-apartheid African Students' Association in Israel and the National Union of Israel Students. He addressed the meeting in the Wise Auditorium of the Hebrew University. In the meeting, he condemned apartheid for its racial discriminatory policies.⁴¹¹

Other opportunities brought further travel and study opportunities for Mphahlele in the mid- to late-1960s. A teaching opportunity encouraged Mphahlele to leave Paris and move to Kenya in August 1965, to take up a two-year contract teaching position in the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi.⁴¹² There, he worked with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a renowned Kenyan scholar and writer who was the head of department and taught him a love for African literature.⁴¹³

It was whilst in Kenya when Mphahlele heard about the passage in 1966 of apartheid South Africa's Internal Security Act, which banned the work of many South Africans, including his own. This meant that his work could not be circulated, read, or quoted in public in South Africa. This Act gave the apartheid government powers to ban organisations, publications, people, and public gatherings and to detain people without trial.⁴¹⁴ Of course, although this made reading his work more difficult in South Africa (it had to reach them through underground means), people around the world benefited from access to and reading his work while he was in exile.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 40

⁴¹¹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 227-229.

⁴¹² Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 229.

⁴¹³ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 41.

⁴¹⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 260.

⁴¹⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 255.

After his contract ended, Mphahlele travelled with his family to Denver in the U.S.A. where he started his PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Denver. This brought an intensive period of research for Mphahlele, but also writing for his PhD thesis chapters, which was later (in 1971) converted into a book entitled *The Wonderers*. His PhD and book, *The Wonderers*, were about the experiences of black exiles who travelled across the African continent searching for new homes. The book was awarded first prize for the best African novel from 1968–69 by the African Arts magazine (published by the University of California in Los Angeles), and it was banned by the South African government. He also did some teaching at the university while he was there. He completed his PhD in 1968.⁴¹⁶

After finishing his doctoral degree, Mphahlele, accompanied by his family, moved to Lusaka, Zambia, where he had obtained a five-year contract position as a senior lecturer in the Department of English at the newly established University of Zambia.⁴¹⁷ Zambia, formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, obtained its independence in 1964 after 76 years of British rule. This resulted in a change in the country's governance, as Kenneth Kaunda became the country's first president. The University of Zambia, founded in 1965, was one of the country's post-independence developments. After its founding, it sought to hire black intellectuals to come and lecture there.⁴¹⁸ Thus, Mphahlele started working at the University of Zambia (UNZA) at a time when other black South African intellectuals had the same idea. Even Bernard Magubane, whom the researcher will discuss in the next section, was living and working in Zambia at this time.

Mphahlele was in Zambia during the period when the country was welcoming people from different liberation movements from different countries too. This included political exiles

⁴¹⁶ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 247-248.

⁴¹⁷ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 95.

⁴¹⁸ John Stabler. "The University of Zambia: Its Origin and First Year". *The Journal of Higher Education*. (1968, 39: 1) 32-38.

from South Africa, such as those who belonged to the ANC, who moved its headquarters from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to Lusaka.⁴¹⁹ At this time, Mphahlele remained an ANC member but was not active in the ANC in exile. During this period, he expressed scepticism of ANC politics in exile, believing that there had been little development in the struggle against apartheid. He claimed that one of the difficulties that afflicted the organisation was the “lack of leadership renewal” and the “compromising of democratic practices” that had characterised the organisation in South Africa.⁴²⁰ Mphahlele's views were similar to those expressed in the document known as the “Hani Memorandum”, which was prepared by Chris Hani in 1969 who was at the time a member of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. Among the criticisms expressed in his memorandum was the problem of what he saw as the ANC leadership’s elitism.⁴²¹

Working in Zambia offered opportunities for people like Mphahlele, but it was not without problems. In terms of his work experiences at the UNZA, he and other black South Africans faced certain restrictions, which he argued highlighted the continuing racialised treatment of black and white people in post-colonial Zambia during this period.⁴²² For example, black foreigners tended to be employed under contract and were not appointed into permanent positions. As a result, black foreigners having to renew their residence permits every year, which sometimes led to loss of jobs when these permits could not be renewed in time, whereas whites were not expected to go through the same time-consuming and stressful bureaucratic process.

Indeed, as we shall see in the next sub-section of this chapter, Bernard Magubane actually lost his job at this University and was forced to leave Zambia in 1970 because of this

⁴¹⁹ Hugh Macmillan. *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994*. (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2013) 43-47.

⁴²⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 252.

⁴²¹ Janet Smith and Tromp Beauregard. *Hani: A Live too Short*. (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2023) 79-103.

⁴²² Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 99.

permit system.⁴²³ In this same year, Mphahlele wrote a memorandum of complaint to the University Council to express his dissatisfaction with the discriminatory tenure and permit system for black expatriates in Zambia and to ask them to improve the situation. Although he was called to a meeting a few days after submitting the memorandum to discuss the matter further with the President Kenneth Kaunda, who was closely associated with the University, neither the president nor the University Council resolved these problems. This led Mphahlele to resign in protest from the University in 1970.⁴²⁴

After leaving Zambia, Mphahlele, with his family, returned to the U.S.A, where he obtained work as an academic. In 1970 he worked for a year as an Associate Professor of African Literature at the University of Denver, Colorado,⁴²⁵ before moving on to take up a position teaching African Literature at the University of Pennsylvania.⁴²⁶ In 1975, he returned to the University of Denver to teach again, as they offered him a better salary package.⁴²⁷ In the nine years he spent between Denver and Philadelphia, Mphahlele was able to visit several universities in the United States and Canada where he taught many students and delivered guest lectures on African and Afro-American literature at several universities.⁴²⁸ During this period, he concentrated on his academic career. Although he remained loyal to the liberation movement and spoke up against the apartheid regime every opportunity he could, he did not involve himself actively in ANC political activities at this time.⁴²⁹

In July 1976, Mphahlele was granted a visa to return to South Africa to attend the inaugural conference of the Black Studies Institute in Johannesburg. Although he only remained for a few days, it was the first time he had returned after leaving South Africa in

⁴²³ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 253.

⁴²⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 252-253.

⁴²⁵ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 100.

⁴²⁶ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 281.

⁴²⁷ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 284.

⁴²⁸ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 119.

⁴²⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 185-186.

1957. Mphahlele remembered this return as a deeply emotional experience as he was able to reconnect with family and friends, he had not seen in decades.⁴³⁰ After he returned to Denver, he received a reply to an application he had made while he was still in exile for the vacant professorship of English at the University of the North, now renamed University of Limpopo.⁴³¹ Making the decision to return with his family to South Africa, after spending 20 years in exile, would bring enormous changes to his life, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Bernard Magubane

Bernard Magubane's journey into exile began in 1959. Like Mphahlele, who encountered limited work opportunities in the racially restrictive apartheid South African context, Magubane also explored the option of going overseas. As mentioned in a previous chapter, this came through meeting overseas visitors at the University of Natal, who opened his mind to the possibilities of study and work opportunities abroad. In 1959, having discussed such issues with a visiting U.S. scholar, and nearing the end of his master's studies, Magubane decided to apply for a fellowship to study in the U.S.A., which he discovered had a long history of welcoming overseas students for study purposes.⁴³²

Because of his good academic record, Magubane managed to obtain a fellowship to study Sociology at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1961.⁴³³ Because of the different education system to South Africa, this opportunity required him to register for, complete several courses, and complete master's level examinations before proceeding to study for his PhD.⁴³⁴ However, he struggled to get a passport to leave South Africa. It was only

⁴³⁰ Mphahlele, *Africa My Music*, 171-172.

⁴³¹ Today, this university is known as the University of Limpopo.

⁴³² Mcebisi Ndletyana. *African Intellectuals in 19th and Early 20th Century South Africa*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008) 80-87.

⁴³³ Magubane, "Interview with Ben Magubane".

⁴³⁴ Bernard Magubane. *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 96.

eventually granted to him in December 1961 because of an intervention made on his behalf by Alan Paton who was in South Africa.

While awaiting his passport, Magubane lived through a period in South African history that reached a watershed in 1960 and 1961. This was the time of the Sharpeville massacre, after which anti-apartheid organisations such as the PAC and the ANC were banned by the government. This was also a time when the apartheid government sought to crush black resistance by declaring states of emergency and arresting anti-apartheid activists. This period saw many anti-apartheid activists flee into exile because of the level of activism suppression through incarcerations, banning orders, and the killing of anti-apartheid activists etc.⁴³⁵ This also influenced Magubane's decision to leave the country for the United States. Being black and an activist was dangerous in those days and many anti-apartheid activists fled the country, either to reestablish political organisations in exile or to pursue education opportunities or jobs abroad.

Magubane arrived in the U.S.A in December 1961, and began his studies at the start of 1962.⁴³⁶ His wife Thembelihle and their children did not accompany him at this stage, because, as a student, he could not afford to bring them over with him. Instead, they remained in Mthatha, where Thembelihle was studying to obtain her Nursing Diploma. She had worked as a teacher before studying and had saved enough to support the family while Magubane was away.⁴³⁷

When he arrived at UCLA, he found a politically conscious group of students who met regularly to discuss controversial issues, such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the Bay of Pigs fiasco. This occurred after the J.F. Kennedy administration launched a failed counter-

⁴³⁵ Leonard Thompson. *The History of South Africa*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 210-116.

⁴³⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 101.

⁴³⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 130.

revolution supported by United States-based Cuban exiles supported by the Central Intelligence Agency, to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. Magubane was in the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, during which U.S. deployments of nuclear missiles to Italy and Turkey were matched with those of the Soviet Union in Cuba.⁴³⁸ He also learnt a lot about U.S. foreign policy, particularly this country's hostility towards Communist-leaning post-colonial regimes.⁴³⁹

Magubane was in the United States too during the time when the struggle of African Americans for civil rights and desegregation was at its peak. This struggle influenced other struggles throughout the world, including South Africa. Among the other notable incidents during this time in the U.S. was the assassination of Malcolm X, who was one of the leading African American activist intellectuals in the 1960s.⁴⁴⁰ Malcolm X was a member of the broad Black Power Movement, which promoted black pride, unity, and a militant approach to gain civil rights. This was also a period when African Americans were experiencing violent attacks from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) group, a far right-wing, racist, white supremacist group.⁴⁴¹

As a student in the United States, Magubane met other Africans who had travelled there to study. They included Tony Asika, a Nigerian, who studied Political Science in the United States between 1961 and 1965. He met other black South Africans at UCLA, including Albert Masilela, who was doing his PhD in Education.⁴⁴² Studying at UCLA was very interesting for Magubane. He met Professor Leo Kuper, who had supervised him at the University of Natal. Kuper had moved to California to take up an academic position at UCLA. What was also interesting for Magubane is that he arrived in America at a time when many students were

⁴³⁸ Jutta Weldes. *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 29-31.

⁴³⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 106.

⁴⁴⁰ Louis DeCaro. *On the Side of my People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X*. (New York: NYU Press, 1996) 47-49.

⁴⁴¹ Wyn Craig Wade. *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 9-16.

⁴⁴² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 121.

interested in meeting and conversing with students who came from South Africa to hear about the terrible conditions in South Africa, including more about the Sharpeville massacre and its aftermath.⁴⁴³

For Magubane, living in a big city like Los Angeles was alienating for the first few months. He missed a lot about South Africa, the political activities, and family and friends. Magubane made friends with different people across the racial divide. In addition to the abovementioned people, he became friends with Tass Weiner, who was doing a PhD in Sociology at UCLA, and he also made friends with Melissa Wade-Killer, a student from a wealthy family, who was the daughter of a former president of the National Bank and Trust in Los Angeles.⁴⁴⁴

It was Wade-Killer who eventually assisted Magubane financially to bring his family over to Los Angeles a few years after his arrival. The necessary processes for their movement to Los Angeles, including passports and visas for his family, were done with the help of Alan Paton and Peter Brown. These are the same people who had earlier helped Magubane get his passport and visa. In 1965, Thembelihle and their three daughters arrived in Los Angeles. This was an excellent experience for Magubane as he had spent the period between 1961 and 1965 away from his family. As a qualified nurse, Thembelihle found part-time employment in a hospital in Los Angeles, which helped support their family financially, and their children went to school in this city.⁴⁴⁵

However, it was not all smooth sailing for Magubane during his time as a master's student in the U.S.A. Firstly, he struggled financially as his stipend did not cover the university's summer holiday months. As a result, Magubane had to find temporary employment to tide him over during these months. Although his visa did not allow him to work, Magubane

⁴⁴³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 111.

⁴⁴⁴ Magubane, "Interview with Ben Magubane".

⁴⁴⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 132-134.

recalled being forced to work illegally at a carwash service, where he earned the minimum wage at the time.⁴⁴⁶ He also worked illegally at Kaiser Permanente, a health maintenance organisation headed by a friend of Tass Weiner. This part-time work was a private arrangement between the hospital and Magubane.⁴⁴⁷ Secondly, he almost needed to return to South Africa in 1964 as he experienced delays from the South African Embassy in renewing his passport.⁴⁴⁸

In 1964, Magubane completed his second master's and qualified to begin his PhD studies. In his autobiography, he recalled how most of the African students who were doing their PhDs at the same time as him went back to their home countries to do their fieldwork. Unfortunately, because of the difficult circumstances in apartheid South Africa, Magubane could not.⁴⁴⁹ Instead, his PhD thesis was entitled: "African-American Consciousness of Africa: A Study of the Ideology of Pride and Prejudice". His study focused on the "Negro identity crisis", where African Americans had rejected their African past. He sought to answer why this was the case. He did not conduct interviews, instead he interrogated the literature of African American scholars who had written a great deal about African American experiences such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter Woodson, and Charles E. Silberman. In his study, Magubane found that many African Americans at the time had a problem with the fact that they were descendants of the enslaved. In contrast, other hyphenated-Americans, such as Polish-Americans, Irish-Americans, and Italian-Americans did not suffer from the same problem. The study also discovered that the problem was not the rejection of Africa but the rejection of how Africa was portrayed in books by European and American scholars as a "backward and uncivilised continent".⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 112-115.

⁴⁴⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 131.

⁴⁴⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 113-114.

⁴⁴⁹ Magubane, "Interview with Ben Magubane".

⁴⁵⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 137-138.

Magubane completed his doctoral dissertation in record time, completing it in October 1966. He was awarded his PhD in 1967.⁴⁵¹ His dissertation would later be converted into a book entitled *Ties that Bind*, published in 1987.⁴⁵² After completing this degree, Magubane received a letter from the University of Zambia offering him a job as a lecturer in the Department of Sociology. As mentioned in the Mphahlele section, this letter formed part of this newly established post-independence university to recruit lecturers in its various departments. Magubane was offered a three-year contract to teach Urban Sociology, Sociological Theory, and Sociology of Race Relations.⁴⁵³

Like Mphahlele, Magubane and his family arrived in Zambia in 1967, at a time when the banned ANC was organising in exile and more anti-apartheid academics left South Africa to teach overseas. At the University of Zambia, Magubane met up with several other South Africans, such as Jack Simons, who had been banned from teaching at the University of Cape Town and was then the head of the Department of Political Science; Benedict Mtshali, who was a fellow ANC member and was teaching Political Science; Paseka Khabela, who taught in the Department of Education; and Es'kia Mphahlele, who was a lecturer in the Department of English.⁴⁵⁴

There was a very close relationship between ANC activists and South African black intellectuals in Zambia during this time, which was different to his experience in the United States, where there was little interaction. Magubane recalled in his autobiography how he provided a room in his house as an informal office for the exiled ANC president, Oliver Tambo to work in during his visits to Lusaka.⁴⁵⁵ As a result, Magubane became very close not only to

⁴⁵¹ Magubane, "Interview with Ben Magubane".

⁴⁵² Bernard Magubane. *The Ties that Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987).

⁴⁵³ Jimi Adesina. "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013): An Intellectual Appreciation". *South African Review of Sociology*. (2013, 44: 3) 86.

⁴⁵⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 144-145.

⁴⁵⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 154-155

Tambo but also to other ANC activists who visited the city, including Moses Kotane, Duma Nokwe, Joe Matthews, J.B. Marks, and Joe Modise, to mention but a few. Magubane also met regularly with Chris Hani, who led *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. At this time, Hani was living in a house with Livingstone Mqotsi, a good friend of Magubane's, and they would visit each other regularly as Mqotsi was teaching in one of the high schools in Zambia.⁴⁵⁶

While in Zambia, Magubane was an active ANC member and attended several ANC conferences. For example, in 1968, Magubane attended a youth congress in Bulgaria, where the ANC delegation consisted of Barbara Masekela, Johnny Makhathini, and Thabo Mbeki.⁴⁵⁷ In 1969, Magubane attended the ANC Morogoro Conference in Tanzania. At this conference, Magubane contributed to the drafting of a memorandum, which discussed the relationship of the ANC with other organisations, such as the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation, and the South African Communist Party. The discussion in the conference culminated with the opening of the ANC membership to other congress organisations. This is where, constitutionally, the ANC began to have white membership for the first time.⁴⁵⁸

In exile, Magubane was a passionate reader of anti-colonial and Marxist literature, which included the following journals: *Fighting Talk*, *Sechaba*, *African Communist*, and *Mayibuye*. He also read many influential books, such as *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* by Walter Rodney, which he reviewed for *Ufahamu*, a journal of the African Archivist Association, based at UCLA. Indeed, Magubane was one of the founding editors of *Mayibuye*, which was a monthly ANC underground

⁴⁵⁶ Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years*, 116-118.

⁴⁵⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 156.

⁴⁵⁸ Adesina, "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013)", 86.

newsletter founded while he was in Zambia. The editors met every Sunday while he was in Zambia to discuss developments in South Africa, which he continued to follow from abroad.⁴⁵⁹

In terms of his academic work, while living in Zambia, Magubane got the opportunity to present papers at different conferences. For example, in 1967, he presented a paper titled “Prescriptive Vocabularies of Social Change and their Implications” at a conference held in Dakar, Senegal. He also presented a paper entitled “Some Methodological and Ideological Issues in Social Change in Africa as Exemplified in Studies of Migrant Labour” at a conference held in Makerere, Uganda, in 1968. Interestingly, Magubane noted in his autobiography that this paper had been edited by Mphahlele, who gave him constructive criticism before he presented it.⁴⁶⁰

Despite having a productive academic and political life in Zambia, his time in this country was cut short, however. In 1970, Magubane was forced to leave Zambia. This came about because in 1969, he had received a letter from the Chief Immigration Officer stating that unless his passport was renewed by the South African government, which as mentioned earlier, foreign residents needed to renew annually, his teaching contract would be terminated. He would be required to leave Zambia. When the South African government did not renew his passport, Magubane was forced to leave Zambia even though his teaching contract was only supposed to end officially in 1971. Magubane was not alone. All South Africans teaching at the university were ordered to leave the country except Mphahlele and Benedict Mtshali, who were dual citizens and had British passports.⁴⁶¹

According to Magubane, being forced to leave Zambia was one of the saddest moments for him and his family, as he believed that Zambia would be their home until South Africa gained independence. Magubane’s family had joined him in Zambia, and their fourth daughter,

⁴⁵⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 169.

⁴⁶⁰ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 170-180.

⁴⁶¹ Adesina, “Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013)”, 89.

Zine, was born in Zambia in 1969. He remembered Tambo expressing sadness when he heard he was leaving and told him:

“Ben, our struggle is like a train, there are open flat lands where you see the train above you; then there are times when it seems to enter a tunnel, and if you are looking, especially with an electric train, there is no smoke, so you only know there is a train when it emerges on the other side”.⁴⁶²

Because of his American qualifications, Magubane applied for academic jobs in that country. He obtained employment as a lecturer at the University of Connecticut, where he taught Urban Anthropology and Sociology at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.⁴⁶³ His family, once again uprooted, accompanied him. While based at the University of Connecticut, Magubane was able to travel to different universities in the U.S.A. to deliver lectures that covered political developments in South Africa. He also wrote articles for journals such as *African Marxist* and *Sechaba*. A collection of some of these articles was published in 1982 by African World Press in a book entitled *From Soweto to Uitenhage: The Political Economy of the South African Revolution*.⁴⁶⁴ They were a collection of Magubane’s political writings. In addition, he also became an editorial board member of the journal *Dialectical Anthropology*.⁴⁶⁵

While based at the University of Connecticut, Magubane continued with his ANC activist work. Magubane remembers that Tambo said to him, “We are going to make a lot of demands on you to represent the movement in various countries”.⁴⁶⁶ Most of the work he did while living in the United States was conscientising work, where he sought to bring to his

⁴⁶² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 188.

⁴⁶³ Bernard Magubane. “No Easy Victories Interview: Ben Magubane” by William Minter, *Africa World Press*, (2004, 16: 2), http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int06_magubane.php (Accessed on 26 November 2022).

⁴⁶⁴ Bernard Magubane. *South Africa: From Soweto to Uitenhage: The Political Economy of the South African Revolution*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1989).

⁴⁶⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 207-208.

⁴⁶⁶ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 236.

audience's attention the oppressive conditions in South Africa and to gain support for the anti-apartheid work of the ANC.

For example, in 1974, Magubane was invited by Leonard Thompson, a professor of History Emeritus at Yale and director of the former Yale Southern African Research Programme, to attend a Ford Foundation-funded conference in New York. Magubane presented a paper entitled "The Continuing Class Struggle in South Africa" at this conference.⁴⁶⁷ In 1982, he attended an anti-apartheid conference held at the University of Jos in Nigeria, where he presented on the oppressions experienced by black South Africans under the apartheid regime. He also attended another anti-apartheid conference held in Mona, Jamaica the following year where he presented on a similar theme.⁴⁶⁸

In 1985, Magubane attended the ANC conference held in Kabwe, Zambia. He found himself back in Zambia after 15 years since his departure in 1970. This ANC organised conference was themed "From the Venue of the Conference to Victory". In this conference, the delegates met to discuss political developments going on in South Africa since the Morogoro Conference, which was held in 1969.⁴⁶⁹ In 1987, Magubane formed part of an ANC delegation to attend a three-day workshop in Dakar, which was then one of the ANC's headquarters. The theme of the workshop was "Towards a Democratic Alternative". Thabo Mbeki and Pallo Jordan led the delegation.⁴⁷⁰ In 1988, Magubane travelled to Venezuela to receive an honorary degree from the University of Carabobo on Nelson Mandela's behalf as Mandela was in prison at the time.⁴⁷¹

The 1990s era would bring huge changes to South Africa with the decline of apartheid and the unbanning of anti-apartheid organisations, such as the ANC. This new era, which will

⁴⁶⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 257.

⁴⁶⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 230-234.

⁴⁶⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 303.

⁴⁷⁰ Adesina, "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013)", 88.

⁴⁷¹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 335.

be discussed in the next chapter, provided new opportunities for political exiles, such as Magubane, to return safely to his home country to visit or to consider permanent relocation.

Archie Mafeje

After completing his master's degree at the University of Cape Town in 1963, for various reasons, including few opportunities for black academics in South Africa and the increasingly oppressive apartheid context of the 1960s, Mafeje, like Magubane before him, decided to explore opportunities abroad. Indeed, like Mphahlele and Magubane, Mafeje enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of academic studies and sought to study further before making a career in the academic world.

At the beginning of 1964, Mafeje left for the University of Cambridge to begin his doctorate. His wife Nomfundo and children did not follow him. As a student, he could not afford to bring them over or support them in the UK. Instead, they continued living in South Africa, and Nomfundo continued working as a nurse to help support their family when Mafeje left for his studies. Going the UK study route meant that because the UK recognised South Africa's postgraduate qualifications, Mafeje, unlike Magubane, could go straight into the Cambridge PhD programme. He enrolled for an interdisciplinary PhD, which combined a focus on Anthropology with Sociology and Agriculture. He did his studies under the supervision of prominent British anthropologist Audrey Richards, an acquaintance of Wilson, whom she used to communicate through letters to keep abreast of Mafeje's progress.⁴⁷²

Mafeje's PhD programme was divided into course work and field work. His course work included completing modules on Urbanisation, Social Mobility, Leadership in Modern Africa, and Rural Surveys in Africa. He devoted most of his time to his studies.⁴⁷³ However, while doing his coursework, to earn extra money, Mafeje also worked as a tutor to assist

⁴⁷² Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) 35.

⁴⁷³ Dani Nabudere. *Archie Mafeje: Scholar, Activist and Thinker*. (Oxford: African Books Collective, 2011) 19.

undergraduates in the Department of Anthropology. Furthermore, he worked as a research assistant at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cambridge.⁴⁷⁴

Mafeje's life in Cambridge was different from his life in South Africa. Although he missed his family and friends, he enjoyed not being subjected to the onerous restrictions that black people faced in apartheid South Africa. He also enjoyed not being harassed by the police in South Africa or arrested, as he had been before departing South Africa for the United Kingdom.⁴⁷⁵

As part of the requirements for his PhD, he had to choose a fieldwork site where he could conduct research for his thesis. Unlike Magubane, who wanted to do his fieldwork in South Africa but was unable to do so due to obstacles in returning to the country, Mafeje had no intentions to do his fieldwork in South Africa whose highly discriminatory context he sought to avoid. Initially, Mafeje wanted to work on a West African fieldwork site, such as in Ghana, but this did not pan out as his supervisor was not familiar with West African social formations, and his application for a permit to do research in Ghana was unsuccessful.⁴⁷⁶

As a result, he eventually settled on doing his fieldwork in Uganda. However, relations with his supervisor deteriorated over time as the two came to differ on several issues. One of the major differences was with the conceptualisation of his thesis, which Mafeje wanted to make more political in focus.⁴⁷⁷ In one of her later letters to Wilson, Richards wrote disparagingly that "In spite of his quickness and ability, I know for certain now that Archie has no academic gifts, although I think he will do well in an organising job at a university because of his charm of manner, quickness, and enthusiasm".⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ Nabudere, *Archie Mafeje*, 19.

⁴⁷⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 35-36.

⁴⁷⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 34-36.

⁴⁷⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 35-36.

⁴⁷⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 35.

⁴⁷⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 35-36.

In December 1965, Mafeje left Cambridge to do his fieldwork in Uganda, where he sought to investigate factors facilitating the emergence of large-scale farming in Uganda. He began his research in January 1966 and finished it in March 1967. While conducting his fieldwork, he managed to get a visiting lecturer position, teaching Anthropology at Makerere University College.⁴⁷⁹ He then returned to Cambridge where he wrote up his thesis. In June 1968, Mafeje submitted his doctorate thesis for examination. It was entitled: “Social and Economic Mobility in a Peasant Society: A Study of Commercial Farmers in Buganda”.⁴⁸⁰ Three of his chapters from this thesis would later be reworked and published as part of an edited collection, edited by Audrey Richards, Ford Sturrock and Jean Fortt, published by the Cambridge University Press, entitled *Subsistence to Commercial Farming in Present-Day Buganda: An Economic and Anthropological Survey*.⁴⁸¹

In late 1967, while completing his PhD, Mafeje applied for a Senior Lecturer position in the Anthropology Department at his alma mater, UCT. Even though South Africa was still under apartheid control at this point, Mafeje missed his family and friends there and expressed an interest in returning to the country to help the liberation movement by educating and training South Africa’s future revolutionary intellectuals. Mafeje got through the shortlisting processes and was selected, based on merit, as the best candidate for the job in March 1968, to begin work in July of that year. However, in a sudden turn of events leading up to July, UCT’s Council, under pressure from the Minister of Education in the apartheid government, retracted its offer.⁴⁸² Fred Hendricks, who wrote about this “Mafeje Affair” argued that while the appointment of a black academic was not prohibited according to UCT’s recruitment and

⁴⁷⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 36.

⁴⁸⁰ Nabudere, *Archie Mafeje*, 19.

⁴⁸¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 35.

⁴⁸² Lungisile Ntsebeza. “The Mafeje and the UCT Saga: Unfinished Business?” *Social Dynamics*. (2014, 40: 2) 276.

selection rules in 1968, this publicly funded university likely felt pressure to toe the apartheid line so as not to jeopardise its state subsidy.⁴⁸³

When UCT notified Mafeje that they had decided not to hire him, he remembered feeling betrayed, especially by Wilson, his ex-supervisor, who was head of the Anthropology Department at the time. In a letter to Wilson, he wrote that he felt “bewildered”, frustrated, and hurt about “being treated as a stranger” by his alma mater, and having been kept in the dark for so long that it made it difficult for him “to make meaningful decisions” about his life.⁴⁸⁴

As a result of this racially discriminatory experience, Mafeje vowed never to teach at UCT again. Instead, when he heard the news, he was forced to rethink his plans. In 1968, he applied for other academic jobs. He applied for a lecturing post in Sociology at the University of Zambia, where both Mphahlele and Magubane worked. However, he was not offered the job. Instead, he took up a one-year contract position as a senior lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), a university level institution, in The Hague, Netherlands.⁴⁸⁵

In 1969, Mafeje managed to acquire a four-year contract position as the Head of Department of Sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.⁴⁸⁶ After Tanzania obtained independence in 1961, like Zambia, Tanzania’s main public university, the University of Dar es Salaam (which was established in 1961), began recruiting numerous African intellectuals to teach and head various departments, and Mafeje became one of those African intellectuals.

While teaching at Dar es Salaam, Mafeje gained the opportunity to travel to different parts of the world to deliver lectures and to attend conferences. Thandika Mkandawiri, a Malawian economist and social science scholar, remembered that he met Mafeje for the first

⁴⁸³ Fred Hendricks. “The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid”. *African Studies*. (2008, 67: 3) 428.

⁴⁸⁴ Hendricks, “The Mafeje Affair”, 434-435.

⁴⁸⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 38.

⁴⁸⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 39.

time at the University of Stockholm during this period. According to Mkandawiri, Mafeje delivered a brilliant lecture, where he spoke passionately on the situation in South Africa, which he did without any notes.⁴⁸⁷

Unfortunately, for Mafeje, at this time, his relationship with his wife, Nomfundo, deteriorated leading to their divorce in the early 1970s. Discussing the cause of the divorce, Mafeje states that their long periods of living apart from each other led to a situation where communication was poor and they found that there was little in common between them.⁴⁸⁸

However, Mafeje only worked at Dar es Salaam until 1971, as he had to leave Tanzania for Europe to undergo a complicated surgery after he was involved in a car accident in January 1971. While recovering from his injuries, he decided not to return to Dar es Salaam. In the months leading up to his accident, he felt unsupported by this university's principal who had refused to sanction an undergraduate interdisciplinary programme on Anthropology and Sociology that Mafeje had designed, despite him having widespread support from other colleagues at this institution.⁴⁸⁹

After he recovered, Mafeje sought to return to the ISS in The Hague. Between 1971 and 1972, he managed to obtain a visiting lecturer position at this institute, where he taught Anthropology and Sociology. In 1973, while still at ISS, Mafeje became a founding member of CODESRIA. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa was established in Dakar, Senegal in 1973. CODESRIA sought to raise funds for and cover all stages of research for scholars from master's up to post-doctoral stages, assisted in the establishment of research training for students, and organised conferences and programmes that concentrated on themes related to the Social Sciences and Humanities.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 53.

⁴⁸⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 34.

⁴⁸⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 39.

⁴⁹⁰ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 44.

This same year, Mafeje was appointed as a permanent staff member and promoted to Professor of Social Anthropology and Sociology at ISS at 36. During this time, he lectured undergraduates, supervised postgraduate students, and did research on several topics including the ideology of tribalism. During his time in The Hague, he started to speak about “non-disciplinary” instead of “interdisciplinary” when referring to the combination of various academic subjects into a single focus area. For Mafeje, “non-disciplinary” meant incorporating knowledge from a wide range of disciplines, including Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Economics. He also published an article on this issue in 1976 entitled: “The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective”.⁴⁹¹

During this period, Mafeje also wrote a critique of the book he had co-written with Wilson called *Langa: The Study of Social Groups in an African Township*. The article he published in 1975 was entitled “Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa”.⁴⁹² Immersed in radical Marxist ideologies at the time, he wrote this as a critical interrogation of their earlier approach, which focused on liberal functionalist theoretical and ideological conclusions. This highlighted how this intellectual’s ideas changed over time.⁴⁹³

Mafeje also did a lot of work with radical movements and organisations. He served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Third World Forum, a worldwide network of research institutes established by the Egyptian economist and politician Ismail Sabri Abdullah in 1975.⁴⁹⁴ He participated too at this time in forming the Forum on the New International Economic Order, a set of proposals made by developing countries to overcome economic colonialism and dependency by creating a new interdependent economy.⁴⁹⁵ In addition, Mafeje

⁴⁹¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 40.

⁴⁹² Archie Mafeje. “Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa”. *Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa: Anthropological Essays in Honour of Monica Wilson*. (1975, 16: 2) 165-184.

⁴⁹³ Mafeje, “Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa”, 165-184.

⁴⁹⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 49-51.

⁴⁹⁵ Nabudere, *Archie Mafeje*, 47.

served as a consultant to the Mexican Government in 1976 to advise on the establishment of a Third World University in Mexico,⁴⁹⁶ and to the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).⁴⁹⁷

Although Mafeje spent almost six years at the ISS, he never felt that The Hague was his permanent residence. Another researcher on Mafeje's life argued that he was anxious about returning to live and work in Africa. His choice of furniture in his apartment, which was sparse and cheap, highlighted his view of his stay in The Hague as temporary.⁴⁹⁸

In 1978, Mafeje, who had been looking out for academic positions in Africa, left The Hague to take up a position as Professor of Sociology at the American University of Cairo (AUC) in Egypt, which had been advertised the previous year. He had been made aware of this university when he had attended the 5th Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference in Cairo in January 1972.⁴⁹⁹ It had impressed him because it allowed him to come back to Africa after he left in 1971 following his car accident in Tanzania, and it was here that he would remain until 1990.

As a teacher at this university, some students viewed him as intimidating, though he also claimed he established good relationships with many of his brightest students. Indeed, he encouraged them to visit him at his home, where they could engage beyond the lecture time in intellectual and political discussions.⁵⁰⁰ Mafeje preferred his students to engage in critical debates in his classes rather than listen to him talk. He taught them to think critically and independently without imitating him. He never set exams for his students as he felt that exams

⁴⁹⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 42.

⁴⁹⁷ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 43.

⁴⁹⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 41.

⁴⁹⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 49.

⁵⁰⁰ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 52.

encouraged rote learning and memory rather than comprehension of a subject matter. Mafeje preferred that they wrote essays on which he provided considerable feedback.⁵⁰¹

As a foreigner residing in Egypt, Mafeje did not publicly involve himself in Egypt's politics. However, he was a keen follower of Egyptian socio-political and economic developments and, in private, voiced opposition to Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat, the Egyptian president during his period in Cairo, who persecuted dissenting intellectuals. When he was assassinated in October 1981, Mafeje remembered celebrating, as did many other opponents of Sadet's regime.⁵⁰²

Before coming to Egypt, while still at the ISS, Mafeje met and started a relationship with Shahida El-Baz, an Egyptian feminist scholar and activist who wrote numerous books about Arab women's struggles. They married in 1977 and had a daughter named Dana together. Because El-Baz was Muslim, Mafeje had to convert to Islam before their wedding. El-Baz had been in Europe pursuing her PhD studies when they first met.⁵⁰³

During his time in Egypt, Mafeje continued with his CODESRIA work and became its secretary. In this position, he was tasked with many responsibilities, such as writing proposals, reviewing manuscripts, and submitting articles and reports. He also organised conferences, including a conference of South African scholars in exile in the 1980s to discuss the possible ways to dismantle the apartheid regime. The conference was held in Dakar, Senegal. Different South African scholars in exile, including Sam Nolutshungu, a professor in Politics at Manchester University, and Bernard Magubane, amongst others, attended the conference.⁵⁰⁴

As mentioned, the early 1990s and 2000s were critical years for Mafeje. The transition to democracy provided opportunities for many South African exiles who had fled the nation

⁵⁰¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 52.

⁵⁰² Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 50.

⁵⁰³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 41-42.

⁵⁰⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 53-54.

due to apartheid restrictions. Many could return because of a change in the political dispensation. This transition would have an important effect on Mafeje's life too, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the conditions that led to Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje's decisions to leave South Africa to go into exile. In addition, it examined their lives and experiences overseas. Moreover, this chapter focused on their writings and other contributions as South African exiles. The next chapter focuses on the lives, experiences, and contributions of Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje in the 1990s, particularly the early 1990s transition to democracy in South Africa, but also the democratic era after 1994.

Chapter Six:

Return to South Africa, Experiences after Exile, and the Writings and Contributions of Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje in Post-Apartheid South Africa

The last three chapters focused on Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje's lives, experiences, and contributions before and during their exile days. These chapters discussed how these three African men emerged to become black intellectuals and how they travelled across the world in pursuit of their academic careers. This chapter focuses on the lives, experiences, and contributions of Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje in South Africa after their return from exile. It also focuses on their roles as black intellectuals in South African universities after spending decades in exile studying and working in international universities.

Es'kia Mphahlele

Mphahlele was among the first South Africans to go into exile, and he was also among the first to return with his family on 17 August 1977. He returned to South Africa having spent 20 years in exile living in countries such as Nigeria, Britain, France, Kenya, Zambia, and the U.S.A. It is also important to note that he returned 17 years before apartheid ended, so his experience was slightly different from Magubane and Mafeje's, as he returned earlier.⁵⁰⁵ His return took place at a time when international opposition to apartheid was growing. This was a year following the students' uprisings in Soweto in June 1976. It was not an ideal time to return to South Africa, still suffering under the shackles of apartheid. Still, he had always wanted to return to South Africa, the country of his birth, and felt it was time, hoping to get a position at a South African university.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ Es'kia Mphahlele. "Es'kia Mphahlele's Last Interview" by Thepa Madala, *Sunday Times Books LIVE*, 2008, <http://wordsetc.bookslive.co.za/blog/2008/10/28/eskia-mphahleles-last-interview/> (Accessed on 22 November 2022).

⁵⁰⁶ Chabani Manganyi. *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 196-197.

When Mphahlele returned, he was welcomed by many people at Jan Smuts International Airport. Some were admirers who held him in high regard as they read his work, and some were his relatives and friends. Despite the unsavoury apartheid circumstances, Mphahlele expressed happiness at being back in his country or origin, as he always believed he would return to South Africa.⁵⁰⁷

When Mphahlele returned, he decided to live in Lebowa in what is today's Limpopo province.⁵⁰⁸ At the time, this was one of the apartheid state's Bantustan "homelands" in the northern Transvaal, where Africans, under the apartheid system, were allowed to live. He opted to settle there because that is where most of his extended family lived. In 1976, he had hoped to get employment as an English professor at the University of the North (Turfloop), for which he had applied. However, the application for the vacant post did not materialise, as he was not offered the job even though he had excellent credentials.⁵⁰⁹

Other than the difficulty of finding a job, another hardship faced by Mphahlele were accusations levelled at him by other black South Africans who accused him of intellectual dishonesty as he sought to teach at one of the country's Bantustan universities, which he had vehemently opposed before and during his exile.⁵¹⁰ However, he argued that the apartheid system could be fought from within. Indeed, he asserted in his autobiography that there was nothing that said a person could not work in a system he or she abhorred to try to institute change from within.⁵¹¹ Due to these tensions, Mphahlele did not actively involve himself in political activities when he returned, as he had done before he left the country.

It took Mphahlele a while to find a job after he had returned to South Africa. Fortunately, he and his wife had saved enough money while working abroad to support their

⁵⁰⁷ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Africa, My Music*. (Cape Town: Kwela, 2014) 192.

⁵⁰⁸ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 196-197.

⁵⁰⁹ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 196.

⁵¹⁰ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 212.

⁵¹¹ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 212.

family during this period of unemployment. Eventually, in early 1978, Mphahlele obtained employment for a period of 10 months as an inspector of schools for English teaching for the Lebowa.⁵¹² This work involved visiting schools to demonstrate aspects of teaching English to assist the teachers improve their standards in the classroom. In his autobiography, Mphahlele stated that while doing this work, he realised how the Bantu Education system, which had been operational for 25 years, had damaged the education of Africans.⁵¹³ Indeed, he found many English teachers whose language skills were very poor and who could not express themselves fluently in the classroom.⁵¹⁴

Mphahlele maintained his academic interests. In November 1978, after his contract work as inspector had ended, Mphahlele travelled to the National University of Lesotho where he delivered a lecture entitled “Exile, the Tyranny of Place, and the Literary Compromised”. Mphahlele used his comparative experiences and observations in South Africa and in exile to discuss the unpleasant conditions that black South Africans were subjected to in apartheid South Africa.⁵¹⁵

In February 1979, Mphahlele and his family relocated to Johannesburg when he joined the University of Witwatersrand as a senior research fellow at the African Studies Institute.⁵¹⁶ This was a research position which entailed developing and undertaking research projects. In this position, he founded the Council for Black Education and Research, a research project exploring possibilities for alternative education in opposition to Bantu Education. The project involved both youth and adults.⁵¹⁷ In 1983, in a decade of much flux and turmoil at Wits, which started slowly appointing more black academics and accepting more black students, Mphahlele

⁵¹² Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 198-199.

⁵¹³ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 199.

⁵¹⁴ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 199.

⁵¹⁵ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 211.

⁵¹⁶ Mphahlele, *Africa, My Music*, 296-298.

⁵¹⁷ Mphahlele, “Es`kia Mphahlele’s Last Interview”.

founded the Department of African Literature and became the first black professor at Wits.⁵¹⁸ The department sought to develop, one of the first of its kind in South Africa, a cohort of African scholars who would write and publish African literature.⁵¹⁹

During this same year, Mphahlele took up a two-month research fellowship, which had been offered to him by Professor Andre de Villiers, the Director of the Institute for the Study of English in Africa at Rhodes University.⁵²⁰ During this time, Mphahlele finished his autobiography titled *Africa, My Music*, which he had started writing years earlier while living in Philadelphia. The book was published in 1984. In this book, Mphahlele focused on his life and experiences in exile. He focused on his journey from one university to another and the contributions he made to these universities and the world of literature through his published books.⁵²¹

In 1987, at 68, Mphahlele retired from Wits University. However, in the very same year, he was appointed the Executive Chairperson of the Board of Directors at the Funda Centre for Community Education. Funda Centre was established in Diepkloof, Soweto in 1984. In the aftermath of the 1976 student uprising, it was created to provide a source of arts education for young people, some of whom were activists who refused to participate or had dropped out from the Bantu Education system.⁵²² These young people could attend workshop sessions every Sunday. Mphahlele had gotten involved with the centre while still working at Wits, which helped establish linkages between the two and helped create opportunities for ambitious artists to obtain recognised qualifications by the latter 1980s.⁵²³

⁵¹⁸ Es'kia Mphahlele. "Looking in: Interviews with Es'kia Mphahlele". *The English Academy Review*. (1987, 4: 1) 115-141.

⁵¹⁹ Isabel Balseiro. "Between Alexandra and Jurassic Park: Interview with Professor Es'kia Mphahlele". *South African Theatre Journal*. (2003, 17: 1), <https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC110904> (Accessed on 16 November 2022).

⁵²⁰ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 208.

⁵²¹ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Africa, My Music*. (Cape Town: Kwela, 2014)

⁵²² Nhlanhla Maake. "The English Academy Commemorative Lecture: The New Post-Colonial Threat: Crossroads of the Metaphor and Reality – In Honour of Es'kia Mphahlele". *English Academy Review*. (2011, 28: 2) 126.

⁵²³ Maake, "The English Academy Commemorative Lecture", 126.

The early 1990s were momentous years for Mphahlele, as well as for, as we shall see below, the other two men in this study. This was a period when South Africa was under increasing pressure from international boycotts and internal anti-apartheid protests to change the apartheid status quo.⁵²⁴ These anti-apartheid organisations together with the organisations that had supported and presided over apartheid entered into negotiations with each other to bring to an end the apartheid system. Eventually, this led to the unbanning of anti-apartheid organisations, such as the ANC and PAC and the release of some of the political prisoners who had been sentenced for fighting against the apartheid regime, such as Nelson R. Mandela.⁵²⁵ The unbanning of these organisations also meant the end of exile for many anti-apartheid activists who had left the country to join the different anti-apartheid organisations in exile.

After retiring from Wits, and in a period that saw the increasing opening up of travel opportunities for black South Africans, Mphahlele was able to travel to different universities in the country and abroad to give talks as a visiting professor of African literature. For example, as a guest lecturer, he travelled to the University of Transkei, now Walter Sisulu University in Umtata, to deliver a talk on students and staff on his experiences whilst living and travelling abroad. He shared his experiences in Nigeria and the United States, where he said these societies had helped develop his sense of self-pride and African consciousness.⁵²⁶

In his travels to different universities, including Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, Mphahlele spoke mainly about transforming African education based on African Humanism, the philosophy he believed in and worked tirelessly to promote.⁵²⁷ According to Mphahlele, African Humanism was the idea that Africans should express their distinctive outlook on education and develop an education system where the focal point was knowledge

⁵²⁴ Adrian Guelke. *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid: South Africa and World Politics*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017) 188-193.

⁵²⁵ Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 79-81.

⁵²⁶ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 209.

⁵²⁷ Maake, "The English Academy Commemorative Lecture", 111-113.

about Africans themselves and their continent through the study of their history, religion, cosmology, literature, and arts before moving on to other areas of world knowledge. He suggested that if the South African education system were based on this philosophy, it would contribute significantly to the struggle to “decolonise minds”.⁵²⁸ The focal point of his talk was the role of ideology in African universities, including black intellectuals' role in decolonising education.⁵²⁹

Late in his life, whilst in his early 80s, Mphahlele spent much of his time writing. He published another book entitled *Es'kia* in 2001. This book focused on what different scholars (all former students of Mphahlele) thought about Mphahlele's key public speeches and written work. The purpose of the book was to introduce readers to Mphahlele's position and contributions as a literary scholar, teacher, philosopher, and social and cultural activist and covered over four decades of his life, spanning from his years living in apartheid South Africa to his exiled period, and then return to South Africa.⁵³⁰ In 2004, just four years before Mphahlele's death, which is discussed in the next chapter, he published another book entitled *Es'kia Continued* which focused on Mphahlele's writings covering education, social consciousness, and African culture.⁵³¹

Bernard Magubane

Bernard Magubane made his first return visit to South Africa in July 1990, after spending almost 30 years abroad.⁵³² As discussed earlier, the few years leading up to the end of apartheid in 1994 was a momentous period. Magubane recalled it being a “glorious

⁵²⁸ Maake, “The English Academy Commemorative Lecture”, 126.

⁵²⁹ Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings*, 210.

⁵³⁰ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Es'kia*. (Johannesburg: Stainbank & Associates, 2006).

⁵³¹ Es'kia Mphahlele. *Es'kia Continued*. (Johannesburg: Stainbank & Associates, 2004).

⁵³² Bernard Magubane. *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 340.

moment”, an important time for many in exile, who could now choose to end their exile period to return to the country of their birth, sometimes having spent decades abroad.⁵³³

In 1990, Magubane took leave from his U.S. university to return to South Africa for a few weeks. It had been a long time since he was last there, and he took the opportunity to visit, an opportunity he had been denied previously. Among other reasons, Magubane returned to South Africa with his wife and children to visit with family members who had remained in the country.⁵³⁴

As much as being back in the country was glorious, in his autobiography, Magubane also suggested that it was a very emotional experience since many of the people he had known in South Africa before leaving had died or left the country. He was one of the people who experienced a profound sense of loss as while in exile, he had lost family members who had died. For example, Magubane had lost both his parents in 1971 when he was overseas, so he had never had the chance to bid a proper farewell to them.⁵³⁵ On this return visit, he also visited his parents’ graveyards where they had been buried.

After his short stay in South Africa, Magubane returned to his academic job in Connecticut. Unlike other exiles who returned to South Africa in the early 1990s, or even earlier in Mphahlele’s case, Magubane chose not to do this. He chose to continue working as an academic at the University of Connecticut.⁵³⁶ In addition to his work commitments, he made this decision to ensure continuity for his family, who had been living there for years, and because there was still much uncertainty about the transition to democracy in South Africa.⁵³⁷

⁵³³ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 340.

⁵³⁴ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 342.

⁵³⁵ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 141.

⁵³⁶ Bernard Magubane. “Interview with Bernard Magubane” by Sean Field, African Activist Archive, 53:16, 12 October 2004, <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/video.php?objectid=210-807-98> (Accessed on 16 November 2022).

⁵³⁷ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 353-257.

However, during the early 1990s, while working in the United States, Magubane managed to organise several trips back to South Africa. For example, in 1991 he attended the 48th Conference of the ANC held at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), present day University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus. The conference was held between 2 and 7 July 1991. All the stalwarts of the organisation, who had survived prison and exile, were there. This was the first ANC Conference held back in South Africa after 30 years.⁵³⁸ It was organised to discuss the ANC's approach and role in the negotiations for a democratic South Africa and how to become a functioning political organisation in South Africa after spending so many years in exile.

A year later, Magubane was invited to be a guest speaker at an academic conference in Cape Town organised by Dr Ibbo Mandaza from Zambia and held between 18-20 August 1992. The objective of this conference was to establish an Institute for Social Research involving universities in Southern Africa in general and all the black universities in South Africa in particular. The conference's theme was "The Origin of the White Minority State: Reform or Revolution".⁵³⁹

Whilst in the U.S.A., Magubane completed and published his fourth book in 1996 entitled *The Making of a Racist State: British Imperialism and the Union of South Africa, 1875-1910*. It examined the coming of white minority rule and the important role the British imperialism played in the formation of South Africa's first "racist state" in 1910.⁵⁴⁰

Magubane's final homecoming eventually occurred in 1997, during South Africa's democratic dispensation.⁵⁴¹ In his late 60s, Magubane had decided to retire from his job in the U.S.A. Following his retirement, he chose to return permanently to South Africa together with

⁵³⁸ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 348.

⁵³⁹ Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 350.

⁵⁴⁰ Bernard Magubane. *The Making of a Racist State: British Imperialism and the Union of South Africa, 1875-1910*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1996).

⁵⁴¹ Jimi Adesina. "Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013): An Intellectual Appreciation". *South African Review of Sociology*. (2013, 44: 3) 86.

his family. However, his excellent academic credentials and experience meant he was recruited for other jobs in South Africa.

Soon after his return, he was approached by the University of Fort Hare to become its new Vice-Chancellor. Although Magubane was flattered by the offer, he was not keen to take on the many administrative duties that this role would have entailed, so declined the offer, and instead scouted around for more research-related positions where he could continue with his research and writing.⁵⁴²

Instead, in 1998, he joined the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) as a senior research fellow. The primary responsibility for Magubane at the HSRC was to research and monitor the dramatic transition from apartheid to democracy and research the democratic system of government following South Africa's negotiated settlement of 1994. During this period, Magubane published another book entitled *African Sociology: Towards a Critical Perspective: The Selected Essays of Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane*. This book consisted of his writings on African history, political economy, and political philosophy.⁵⁴³

In September 2000, at age 70, Magubane was appointed project leader and director of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), established by former President Thabo Mbeki to research South Africa's political history from 1960. The Trust published *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* series, a detailed history of the country, with chapters written by different scholars, in ten volumes. Magubane contributed several chapters to these volumes, highlighting his busy research and writing schedule for several years in the early 2000s. In Volume One he wrote chapter one, the introduction chapter, and chapter two entitled, "The Turn to Armed Struggle".⁵⁴⁴ In Volume Two, he wrote chapter one, an introduction

⁵⁴² Magubane, *My Life & Times*, 343.

⁵⁴³ Bernard Magubane. *African Sociology: Towards a Critical Perspective: The Collected Essays of Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999).

⁵⁴⁴ South African Democracy Education Trust. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1960-1970*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2004).

chapter, chapter two entitled, “From Détente to the Rise of the Garrison State”, chapter nine entitled, “The ANC’s Armed Struggle in the 1970s”, and chapter 15 entitled, “Resistance and Repression in the Bantustans”.⁵⁴⁵ In Volume Four he wrote chapter one entitled “The Crisis of the Garrison State”, chapter thirty entitled “The Rise and Fall of Constructive Engagement”, and chapter thirty two entitled “The Collapse of the Garrison State”.⁵⁴⁶ And, finally, in Volume Six, he wrote chapter thirty two entitled “The Beginning of the End: The Garrison State is Finally Dismantled”.⁵⁴⁷

During this period, Magubane also served as Chair of the Luthuli Museum in Groutville.⁵⁴⁸ This museum, located in the small town of Groutville outside Stanger in KwaZulu-Natal, focuses on the history of the life and times of ex-ANC political activist and president, and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert Luthuli.⁵⁴⁹ He also assisted the Ministry of Arts and Culture in producing a documentary about Luthuli.⁵⁵⁰ In addition, Magubane served as a trustee for the Rivonia heritage site Liliesleaf Farm, which served as the secret headquarters of the ANC, Umkhonto, and the SACP between 1961 and 1963.⁵⁵¹ Magubane also served on the Freedom Park Advisory Council, which led to the building of the Freedom Park in Pretoria, a historical site memorialising people who died during the world wars and the apartheid era.⁵⁵²

In 2007, Magubane published *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other*. In this book, he used many primary sources to explain his account of the origins and spread of

⁵⁴⁵ South African Democracy Education Trust. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1970-1980*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2007).

⁵⁴⁶ South African Democracy Education Trust. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1980-1990*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2010).

⁵⁴⁷ South African Democracy Education Trust. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa. Part 2*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2013).

⁵⁴⁸ Logan Naidoo. *In the Shadow of Chief Albert Luthuli: Reflections of Goolam Suleman*. (Groutville, KwaDukuza: Luthuli Museum, 2010) 42.

⁵⁴⁹ Albert Luthuli. *Let My People Go: An Autobiography*. (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2018) 16-19.

⁵⁵⁰ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 199.

⁵⁵¹ Gary Baines. “The Politics of Commemoration in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of Liliesleaf Museum”. *South African Journal of Cultural History*. (2019, 33: 1) 90.

⁵⁵² Duane Jethro. “An African Story of Creation: Heritage Formation at Freedom Park, South Africa”. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief*. (2013, 9: 3) 381.

racism in the world, including South Africa. He examined how Africans became enslaved, denigrated, compared to wild animals, and seen as an inferior, expendable “other” over time and in different contexts by different people.⁵⁵³ He also reflected on why philosophers, political theorists, and intellectuals loyal to so-called enlightened values were so encouraged by settler colonialism that they closed their eyes to its destructive effects on indigenous people.⁵⁵⁴ In 2010, Magubane published his memoir. Unlike his scholarly works, it provides a more personal account of his life and experiences in South Africa and in exile.⁵⁵⁵

Archie Mafeje

Of the three intellectuals studied in this dissertation, Archie Mafeje was the last to return to South Africa from exile. Indeed, in the 1990s until his eventual return in 2002, he remained committed to his academic work abroad.

In 1991, during South Africa’s transition years, Mafeje worked at the Helmi Sharawy and Arab African Research Centre (AARC) in Cairo. At this time, he had left the American University of Cairo, where he worked as a Sociology Professor. At the AARC, he was commissioned by its directors to write a comparative paper on the liberation movements in Palestine and South Africa. His paper was published in Arabic in 1992 in the edited book entitled *Mantiq al-amal al watani: havakat al-taharru*.⁵⁵⁶

Interestingly, Mafeje did have a moment when he rethought his position about applying for a position at UCT. In 1991, some 23 years after the “Mafeje Affair”, in a new context of the transition to democracy, Mafeje applied for the position of the A.C. Jordan Professional Chair in African Studies at UCT. However, he did not get the position. Mafeje, according to

⁵⁵³ Bernard Magubane. *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2007)

⁵⁵⁴ Magubane, *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other*; 79-88.

⁵⁵⁵ Magubane, *Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times*.

⁵⁵⁶ Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) 51.

the chairperson of the committee responsible for the appointment of the staff, was not what they were looking for. According to Lungisile Ntsebeza, an academic, who wrote an article about Mafeje entitled “The Mafeje and the UCT Saga: Unfinished Business?”, the chairperson played a significant role in ruining Mafeje's image to ensure that he was not appointed as the A.C. Jordan Professional Chair in African Studies.⁵⁵⁷

In 1992, Mafeje was awarded a one-year visiting fellowship in the African Studies programme at Northwestern University, Evanston, in the United States, where he could continue researching and writing.⁵⁵⁸ In 1993 and 1994, Mafeje moved with his family to Windhoek where he took up a position as a Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Namibia, also becoming Director of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at this same university. This was just a few years after Namibia had gained its independence from South Africa in March 1990. According to Mafeje, Namibia was a reflection of South Africa. The racist treatment that he received from white academics and senior administrators of the university led him to conclude that white settlers were all the same in Southern Africa.⁵⁵⁹ White Namibian racists made Mafeje’s life so difficult both inside and outside the university that he even felt forced to hire a bodyguard to protect himself from potential threats levelled at him by some of its white staff members.⁵⁶⁰

The Namibian experience made Mafeje pay closer attention to race and racism issues in his writings. Before his experiences in Namibia, which included time spent in the UK, Netherlands, Tanzania, and Egypt, Mafeje had not focused on writing about race and racism in his work as it had not come up as a significant issue in his exiled life. His Namibian experiences

⁵⁵⁷ Lungisile Ntsebeza. “The Mafeje and the UCT Saga: Unfinished Business?” *Social Dynamics*. (2014, 40: 2) 181-182.

⁵⁵⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 55.

⁵⁵⁹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 56.

⁵⁶⁰ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 56.

of racism led Mafeje to write a 69-page extended piece entitled “Mafeje and the Boers”. Here he reflected on his experiences with white racism.⁵⁶¹

In the mid-1990s, Mafeje left Namibia with his family and returned to Cairo. He took up a position in his former Sociology department at the American University of Cairo as a visiting professor. This time around, he did not stay for too long in Cairo.⁵⁶² He found another enticing visiting fellowship opportunity at the Southern African Political and Economic Series Trust in Harare, which he decided to apply for. However, it did not last long once he got this fellowship. He did not finish a year working there. This is because he quarrelled with the Executive Director of the Institute, Ibbo Mandaza, who wanted Mafeje to be in his office between 09:00 and 17:00. Mafeje did not like being compelled to work too restrictive office hours. All he wanted was to be given work and deadlines, and so long as he completed this work, he did not see the logic of forcing him to sit in his office to do it.⁵⁶³

During the 1990s, Mafeje continued his CODESRIA work, which included writing proposals, reviewing manuscripts, and submitting articles and reports. In 2003, his work led to him being awarded an honorary life membership of this organisation, while in 2005, he became its distinguished fellow.⁵⁶⁴

In terms of his activism overseas, interestingly, despite his involvement in progressive organisations such as the Unity Movement, the Third World Forum, and CODERSIA, Mafeje remembered feelings of hostility directed towards him in the writings by members of certain South African liberation movements, such as the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP).⁵⁶⁵ They believed his views were anti-ANC due to his criticism of the ANC and SACP

⁵⁶¹ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 56.

⁵⁶² Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 56.

⁵⁶³ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 55.

⁵⁶⁴ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 55.

⁵⁶⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 14.

in his writings. Unlike Mphahlele and Magubane, Mafeje did not spend time interacting with South African political exiles.⁵⁶⁶

In 2002 Mafeje finally returned to South Africa, some eight years after the creation of the country's democratic dispensation. Likely propelled by his lack of ability to find a firm foothold somewhere else and his long desire to return to South Africa, Mafeje decided to return from exile and seek employment in his country of origin. Mafeje returned to South Africa with the family he had started in exile. However, as mentioned earlier, his wife, Shahiba El-Baz, a renowned feminist scholar and activist in her own right, used South Africa as a base from which she travelled to different parts of the world to do her work.⁵⁶⁷

A few months after his return, at the age 66, Mafeje obtained a position as a Senior Research Professor at the Centre for African Renaissance Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA).⁵⁶⁸ As part of his work there, he was tasked with developing and mentoring a new generation of South African social scientists, particularly from historically black universities such as the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo (previously Turfloop), and the University of Zululand. He was also tasked with leading summer and winter schools, providing a series of public lectures on his research, and supervising a cohort of doctoral students.

Mafeje published his last work in 2003, a monograph entitled *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Mafeje considered the contentious issue of land tenure in Africa, how African producers have organised production

⁵⁶⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 46-47.

⁵⁶⁷ CODESRIA. "Shahida Ahmed Khalil Elbaz (1938–2021): Saluting a Life of Unflinching Commitment to Justice, Equality and Freedom". *CODESRIA Bulletin*. (2021, 5). (Accessed on 14 September 2023).

⁵⁶⁸ Fred Hendricks. "The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid". *African Studies*. (2008, 67: 3) 281.

and responded to shifting economic situations, as well as challenged Eurocentric assumptions and concepts about land tenure in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁶⁹

In the years that followed, up to his death in 2007, Mafeje was also involved in researching and writing for another project. He had been tasked by Brigalia Hlophe Bam, then chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), to edit a collection of essays on the history of elections in South Africa. However, a lost computer and deteriorating health meant he was not able to finish the project. The book entitled *The Disenfranchised: Perspectives on the History of Elections in South Africa* was published posthumously by UNISA Press in 2008.⁵⁷⁰

Conclusion

This chapter examined Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje's lives, experiences, and contributions in South Africa in the 1990s period and thereafter, a key period when many exiled South Africans returned to their country of birth after spending many years, if not decades in exile. In addition to examining when these three men returned and their reasons for doing so, it also examines their efforts to fit back into life in South Africa. An important aspect of this was their roles as intellectuals at South African universities and other institutions after spending decades studying and working abroad.

⁵⁶⁹ Archie Mafeje. *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2003).

⁵⁷⁰ Archie Mafeje. *The Disenfranchised: Perspectives on the History of Elections in South Africa*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

All three black intellectuals used as research subjects in this study – Es’kia Mphahlele, Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje – are deceased. Unlike some exiles who never returned to South Africa, these three black intellectuals did return from exile. All three also died and were buried in South Africa, the country of their birth.

Archie Mafeje

Mafeje died in Pretoria on March 28, 2007, just two days before his 71st birthday. After his return from exile, his health slowly deteriorated though public sources do not make evident the cause of his death.⁵⁷¹ At the time of his death, the *Mail & Guardian* published an article on the passing of Mafeje whom they referred to as a “pioneering intellectual powerhouse”.⁵⁷² The *Cape Times* also published an article that argued that “Africa was robbed” of its “intellectual giant Dr Archie Mafeje” who had such a big impact, in terms of his scholarship, not only in South Africa but in Africa and the rest of the world.⁵⁷³ Even UCT, which had denied Mafeje an appointment to their staff provided a glowing summary of his achievements and provided a posthumous apology for their past treatment of him.⁵⁷⁴ He left behind his family, including his wife, Shahiba El-Baz and their daughter, Dana. He also left behind his literary work including many books and articles that became his contribution to South African literature. Moreover, he

⁵⁷¹ Bongani Nyoka. *Voices of Liberation: Archie Mafeje*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) 61.

⁵⁷² Staff Reporter. “Mafeje was ‘pioneering intellectual powerhouse’”, *Mail & Guardian*, 5 April 2007, <https://mg.co.za/article/2007-04-05-mafeje-was-pioneering-intellectual-powerhouse/> (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

⁵⁷³ Ganief Hendrics. “Africa was robbed of emerging intellectual giant Dr Archie Mafeje”, *Cape Times*, 6 August 2018, <https://www.pressreader.com/search?query=Archie%20Mafeje&orderBy=Relevance&searchFor=Articles>. (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

⁵⁷⁴ Leila Samodian. “UCT apology honours Mafeje’s academic legacy”, *IOL*, 19 August 2008, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/uct-apology-honours-mafejes-academic-legacy-413027> (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

left behind many students whom he supervised, who would go on to influence others because of his scholarship.⁵⁷⁵

After his death, Mafeje was honoured by different institutions because of his work and contributions. For example, in 2010, Walter Sisulu University awarded him a posthumous honorary doctorate in Literature and Philosophy.⁵⁷⁶ In 2012, UNISA named a new research institute after him: The Archie Mafeje Research Institute.⁵⁷⁷ Since his death, the Africa Institute of South Africa, an institute within the Human Sciences Research Council, has hosted an annual memorial lecture in his honour.⁵⁷⁸ The Archie Mafeje Scholarship for Advanced Study was also established in 2014 by the TISO Foundation to fund doctoral studies for emerging scholars.⁵⁷⁹ UCT also honoured Mafeje, awarding him, after his death, an honorary doctorate in social science. This institution also created a scholarship and named a Council meeting room after him. The Archie Mafeje Professional Chair in Critical and Decolonial Humanities was established by the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology, and Linguistics at UCT, too.⁵⁸⁰

Es'kia Mphahlele

Mphahlele died a natural death, at the age of 88, on October 27, 2008, in Lebowa, Limpopo.⁵⁸¹ This is the place where Mphahlele grew up as a young man. This came as a great loss for South Africa. A day after his death, the *Mail & Guardian* published an article entitled “Mphahlele, first black professor at Wits, dead at 88”. This news report mentioned that when

⁵⁷⁵ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 61.

⁵⁷⁶ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 61.

⁵⁷⁷ “Prospectus: Archie Mafeje Research Institute”, UNISA, https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate_web/Content/Colleges/CGS/schools,%20institutes%20%26%20research%20chairs/institutes/amri/documents/amri_brochure.pdf (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

⁵⁷⁸ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 61.

⁵⁷⁹ “Archie Mafeje PhD Scholarship”, TISO Foundation, <https://tisofoundation.co.za/our-programmes/archie-mafeje-phd-scholarship/> (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

⁵⁸⁰ Nyoka, *Archie Mafeje*, 61.

⁵⁸¹ “Iconic writer Es'kia Mphahlele dies”, *IOL*, 29 October 2008, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/iconic-writer-eskia-mphahlele-dies-422200> (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

Mphahlele died the loss became that of the whole nation.⁵⁸² Four days after Mphahlele's death, *The New York Times* published an article titled "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88". The article celebrated Mphahlele as "the father of modern black South African writing".⁵⁸³ When he died, Mphahlele left behind his family, including his wife, Rebecca and their children.⁵⁸⁴ Moreover, Mphahlele left behind his large collection of literary and critical works, which students, and scholars from all parts of the world continue to read and engage with.⁵⁸⁵ Importantly, he also left a cohort of emerging scholars and writers he had mentored.

Like Mafeje, Mphahlele was honoured for his work and contributions. Both during his life and after he died, Mphahlele was lauded for his many achievements. For example, in 1998, he was awarded the Order of the Southern Cross by Nelson R. Mandela, the highest honour awarded by the South African government for a citizen who had performed an exceptional task, in this case his contribution to South African literature.⁵⁸⁶ In 2002 the Es'kia Institute was established in Pretoria and named after him. In addition, in 2004 the public library in Pretoria was named the Es'kia Mphahlele Community Library, and he had a number of streets in different towns named after him.⁵⁸⁷ It focuses on distributing literary works to South African schools, with the purpose of promoting creative writing. This innovative programme also seeks to inform, educate, and develop skills, participation and appreciation of African heritage. Furthermore, in his honour, the University of Venda established the Es'kia Mphahlele Centre for African Studies.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸² Staff Reporter. "Mphahlele, first black professor at Wits, dead at 88", *Mail & Guardian*, 28 October 2008, <https://mg.co.za/article/2008-10-28-mpahlele-first-black-professor-at-wits-dead-88/> (Accessed on 22 September 2023).

⁵⁸³ William Grimes. "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88", *The New York Times*, 31 October 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/world/africa/01mpahlele.html> (Accessed on 22 September 2023).

⁵⁸⁴ Grimes, "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88".

⁵⁸⁵ Grimes, "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88".

⁵⁸⁶ Grimes, "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88".

⁵⁸⁷ Grimes, "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88".

⁵⁸⁸ Grimes, "Es'kia Mphahlele, Chronicler of apartheid, dies at 88".

Magubane also died of natural causes on 12 April 2013, at his home in Fourways, Johannesburg. He was 83 years old. Two days after his passing, the *Times Live* published an obituary entitled “Magubane Death a Loss – Zuma”. It showed how Magubane had become a renowned scholar and intellectual at the time of his death because even the then President Jacob Zuma referred to his death as a great loss to the country, which had lost one of “its best historians and an outstanding academic”.⁵⁸⁹ Magubane left behind his family, including his wife, Thembelihle and their four children. Magubane also left behind, many books and articles that he had written on issues as diverse as race and class, as well as South African history. Lastly, he also left several students he mentored to become black intellectuals.

As a result of his work and commitment, he was awarded national honours by the South African government in 1999 for his contributions to the Social Sciences.⁵⁹⁰ Among his many awards, like Mphahlele, former President Nelson R. Mandela awarded him the Order of the Star for his contribution in the struggle for freedom in South Africa.⁵⁹¹ In addition, Magubane received honorary doctorates from Fort Hare and Walter Sisulu universities, both in 2006. In July 2007, he was named a founding Fellow of the African Sociological Association. To commemorate his 80th birthday and to honour his intellectual contributions, an international conference was held for him in Tshwane in 2010.⁵⁹²

This dissertation, focusing on Mphahlele, Magubane and Mafeje, sought to understand the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa. It also sought to understand them within a broader decolonial discourse. During and after the 2015/16 Rhodes Must Fall (RMF)

⁵⁸⁹ SAPA. “Magubane death a loss – Zuma”, *Times Live*, 14 April 2013, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2013-04-14-magubanes-death-a-loss-zuma/> (Accessed on 23 September 2023).

⁵⁹⁰ Bernard Magubane. *My Life & Times*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010) 363.

⁵⁹¹ Jimi Adesina. “Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013): An Intellectual Appreciation”. *South African Review of Sociology*. (2013, 44: 3) 86.

⁵⁹² Adesina, “Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930–2013), 93.

protests, the question of black intellectuals in South Africa was discussed at length. RMF was a movement comprised of both students and staff members against the South African colonial education system. Although protests began on March 9th, 2015, for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a notorious British colonial settler, from the premises of the University of Cape Town, the movement expanded its scope to include different universities, and shifted its focus from removing colonial structures, such as statues, to decolonising universities' curricula.⁵⁹³ Among the discussions of the day was the Eurocentrism of South African universities, with the suppression and exclusion of African literature and black intellectuals.⁵⁹⁴

The question of black intellectuals in South Africa became a focal point in the discussions. Questions such as why do South African black intellectuals not reflect the country's demographics? How can a country that has black people constituting more than 80% of the population have a shortage of black intellectuals? These are some of the questions that necessitated the writing of this dissertation. This dissertation is written as an attempt to contribute to this decolonial discourse by tracing this underrepresentation of black people in South Africa's intelligentsia. It provides a historical analysis of the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa by providing an in-depth study of the experiences of three black intellectuals who lived during this period.

The writings of Es'kia Mphahlele, Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje became part of decolonial literature. Their names and writings, amongst others, were very popular among the RMF activists, who referenced their works and ideas as crucial examples of black intellectuals.⁵⁹⁵ In addition, the RMF activists discussed these intellectuals' experiences, including how they were forced into exile to enable them to think, research and write freely in

⁵⁹³ Gillian Godsell, Rekgotsofetse Chikane, and Sizwe Mpofo-Walsh. *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*. (New York: New York University Press, 2016) 16-26.

⁵⁹⁴ Musawenkosi Ndlovu. *FeesMustFall and Youth Mobilisation in South Africa: Reform or Revolution?* (London: Routledge, 2017) 34-35.

⁵⁹⁵ Ndlovu, *FeesMustFall and Youth Mobilisation in South Africa*, 52-53.

other countries. Many students during this period heard the names of, as well as about the ideas and works of these three men for the first time.⁵⁹⁶ This illustrated how Eurocentric the education system in this country was that it was possible to study up to the university level. Yet, students did not know African literature or about these black intellectuals.

Using social history and a micro-historical lens, this study discussed the lives and experiences of black intellectuals in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. These theoretical lenses made it possible to analyse and contextualise the lives and experiences of the research subjects. The lives and experiences of Mphahlele, Mafeje and Magubane, reflect the conditions that black intellectuals were subjected to in apartheid South Africa. Their ideas and writings were suppressed in South Africa. These were intellectuals who felt compelled to leave South Africa because of the racist apartheid regime, having to seek refuge in exile, where they spent decades away from their country of birth. It is, therefore, essential to understand this dark side of South African history whenever there is a discussion about the shortage of South African black intellectuals today. It is not natural or because black South Africans lack intellectual prowess that there is a shortage of black intellectuals today. The answer one finds in historical reasons, as this dissertation has shown the systematic measures that the apartheid state put in place to undermine and silence the work of black intellectuals.

Chapter One, which served as an introductory chapter, outlined the research topic, key questions, and objectives. It also provided a literature review that discussed the works written by different scholars and touched upon similar themes to those covered in this study. The theoretical framework, methodology and methods employed to conduct this research were also discussed in this opening chapter.

To identify the circumstances that contributed to the marginalisation of black intellectuals in South Africa under apartheid, Chapter Two provided some historical context.

⁵⁹⁶ Ndlovu, *FeesMustFall and Youth Mobilisation in South Africa*, 53.

The apartheid regime in South Africa, which divided and subjugated black South Africans to serve the interests of white South Africans, was covered in this chapter. This chapter did not aim to provide an exhaustive account of what happened in South Africa during the apartheid era. Instead, it aimed to shed light on the important causes that contributed to the development, upkeep, and final fall of the apartheid system in 1994, as well as the hardships that black people in general and black intellectuals experienced under it.

The early lives of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane were discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter discussed each person's upbringing and situated them within the larger historical frameworks of their period, which produced hardships in their lives. It also looked at their educational backgrounds and how they influenced their viewpoints. The chapter focused on the challenges these black intellectuals encountered as young South Africans during the eras of segregation and apartheid, which shaped their perspectives and ideas and inspired them to oppose the apartheid state.

Mphahlele, Mafeje and Magubane's writings and ideas were discussed in Chapter Four. In addition to becoming politically involved to oppose the oppressive and discriminatory practices of the apartheid government, they also wrote about their experiences as African men from South Africa who were subjected to apartheid and its consequences. Their political activism against apartheid, including involvement in protest actions, and publications critical of the system were the main topics of this chapter. Additionally, it looked at how the apartheid regime attempted to suppress their ideas.

While the three men's early lives in apartheid South Africa, including their oppressive experiences within this historical context, their political conscientisation and activism, and their early writings that attempted to criticise this oppressive regime were examined in Chapter Three and Four, Chapter Five focused on a few different topics. The decision to go into exile by these three men was the first thing considered. Secondly, it looked at how they lived and

experienced life in exile where they settled and started new lives. This included analysis of the work they engaged in. It also examined their writings and other contributions from this time when they lived outside South Africa.

Chapters Three, Four and Five were devoted to the lives, encounters, and contributions of Mphahlele, Mafeje and Magubane, both before and during their exile. The three research subjects' development into black intellectuals was extensively discussed in these chapters. Chapter Five also focused on their global travels to pursue their academic careers. Chapter Six focused on Mphahlele, Mafeje and Magubane's lives, experiences, and contributions in South Africa upon their return from exile. After spending decades abroad studying and working at other institutions of higher learning, this chapter focuses on the roles played by black intellectuals in South African universities.

Significance of this Study

As highlighted earlier, this study intended to contribute to the decolonial discourse by studying the silencing of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa by drawing from the lives and experiences of three black intellectuals who lived and experienced apartheid oppression. Guided by the social history theory, which allows researchers to examine the lives and experiences of ordinary or lesser-known people, these people were given a chance to express their voices and agency in writing their histories. This study, which drew on social history, attempted to understand the history of Es'kia Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane, who are lesser known in the South African intelligentsia because of their being black. Unlike their white contemporaries, these black intellectuals have suffered a lot as they were put under harsh conditions in South Africa and then spent decades living in exile. Their ideas and works have not been given the attention they deserve. This study used a social history

lens to help understand the lives and experiences of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa.

This study also drew on scholars who have theorised small-scale histories, such as those focusing on biographies, Microhistory, and autobiographies. Some biographical writings of history have been criticised for being uncritical or hagiographical in nature and focused on powerful, well-known, or wealthy people. However, this study, unlike older school forms of biographical writings, focused on oppressed and suppressed black intellectuals whose lives, experiences, and contributions were shaped by the apartheid regime, which was very brutal towards black people. It sought to contextualise the subjects in their historical contexts.

Using the comparative lens, this study also sought out similarities and differences that Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje experienced as black intellectuals. On the one hand, this study found similar experiences for these black intellectuals. Indeed, as black African men, they were suppressed in apartheid South Africa. All three men excelled in their schooling and managed to get into overseas universities, despite the odds stacked against them. As a result, all three chose to go into exile. There, they all benefitted from unique opportunities to study in the highest quality institutions and meet, socialise and learn from people of different races that most African people in South Africa could not experience. All became prolifically published academics and esteemed scholars in various universities abroad. All three eventually returned to South Africa from exile. They worked and died in the land of their birth.

On the other hand, this study found that there were also critical differences among Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje's experiences. The differences were that they had different reasons to leave the country. For example, Mphahlele left the country because he was banned from teaching, Magubane left the teaching profession voluntarily as a form of resistance to Bantu Education and to pursue his master's and then PhD. In contrast, Mafeje left the country

to pursue his PhD abroad. In addition, they chose to go to different parts of the world. Mphahlele went to Nigeria first, and then France, Kenya, Zambia and the U.S.A., Magubane went to the U.S.A., then Zambia, and back to the U.S.A., and Mafeje went to the United Kingdom and thereafter Tanzania, Egypt, Namibia and Zimbabwe. They returned from exile at different times with different motivations, such as searching for employment at a South African university in the case of Mphahlele and Mafeje, and retirement was the hope of Magubane, though he continued to work in South Africa long after his so-called retirement.

Limitations of this Dissertation

Different scholars have exposed the limitations of biographical writings. Individual experiences are not always reflective of the experiences of all people. For instance, this dissertation focused on the lives and experiences of three black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa: Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje. However, it is possible that their lives and experiences do not reflect the lives and experiences of every black intellectual who lived and experienced apartheid in South Africa. Perhaps at a structural level, it is easy to conclude that black intellectuals suffered the same conditions in apartheid South Africa. However, this does not take away the fact that, as individuals, black intellectuals did not experience the same conditions daily. It is possible that at the individual level, there are black intellectuals who were not subjected to the exact conditions experienced by Mphahlele, Magubane, and Mafeje, as they were not subjected to the same conditions daily. There are similarities and differences in their experiences at the individual level.

All the research subjects in this dissertation are deceased when the researcher started this research project. As a result, it was not possible to conduct interviews with them. Instead, this study used other publicly accessible sources, such as autobiographies, where they wrote about their lives and experiences. It also used significant biographical writings that other

scholars wrote on these black intellectuals. The fact that the research subjects are deceased denied me the opportunity to interview them and pose questions of my choice for this study. The online interviews were conducted by other interviewers and this study relied on information obtained through questions posed by other researchers. Although both autobiographies and interviews can be reliable because they provide firsthand information from people who experienced or witnessed something, subjectivity may result in bias and distortion. Autobiographies and interviews rely on the memory of an interviewee to remember past experiences and emotions, and may be prone to incorrect recounting of the past or they may exaggerate their memories.⁵⁹⁷

This study also used past newspaper articles from several online sources. Achille Mbembe argued that sources, including archives where they are housed, are not neutral. These entities are influenced by several variables, including who owns them, whose authority they depend on, who constructs them, and the political environment in which they were founded.⁵⁹⁸ There are omissions and distortions in the material presented in newspapers and other archival documents and it was not easy to locate pertinent newspapers and other documents.⁵⁹⁹ The suppression of black intellectuals and knowledge of them and their works, is the subject of this dissertation. It was clear during this research that there were not many historical newspaper articles or other documentation about them.

Suggestions for Future Research

⁵⁹⁷ Ciraj Rassool. "Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography". *South African Review of Sociology*. (2010, 41:1) 28-55 and Pierre Bourdieu. "The Biographical Illusion". *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*. Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007) 210-216.

⁵⁹⁸ Achille Mbembe. "The Power of the Archive and its Limits". *Refiguring the Archive*. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh and Jane Taylor eds. (Cape Town: David Philip and Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002) 19-27.

⁵⁹⁹ Paul Thompson. "The Voice of the Past: Oral History". *The Oral History Reader*. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson eds. (London: Routledge, 2002) 35-42.

In terms of research suggestions, those interested in researching a similar topic of black intellectuals in apartheid South Africa in the future should consider researching people who did not go into exile. Not all black intellectuals left the country when the apartheid regime silenced them. Some remained in the country and continued to resist within its borders. It would be interesting to learn more about their lives and experiences, too. Another significant thing to consider would be to interview the research subjects (if they are still alive) or those who knew them, either as family members, friends, colleagues, or ex-students to get a more rounded understanding of their lives, struggles and contributions.

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