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April 17, 2012

Reading Across the Borders: Comparing novels of the Black Arts Movement and Black
Consciousness Movement

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Abstract

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I explore the intersection of literature and culture of oppressed people by comparing novels from the Black Arts Movement (the aesthetic and literary component of the Black Power Movement in the United States during the late 1960s and 1970s) and the Black Consciousness Movement (a 1970s South African multiracial Apartheid resistance movement). Scholars like George Frederickson and Pierre Van Den Burghe assert that the United States and South Africa in some ways mirror each other, in respect to racist tension in politics, law and general sentiment among citizens, namely during the 1960s and 1970s. Another area of transnational continuity between the United States and South Africa is within the anti-oppression literature derived from social movements that pervaded both countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Literature, and especially fiction, derived from specific movements has the capacity to make social commentaries on the cultural and historical events of political movements. This thesis draws strong parallels between these two protest movements through the historical and literary themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance. I evaluate a total of four novels. They include the Black Consciousness novel *A Night of Their Own* by Peter Abrahams, the Black Arts novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* by Sam Greenlee. I also thematically evaluate Black Consciousness writer Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* and Kristin Lattany's *Lakestown Rebellion*. Understanding how protest impacts the fiction derived from militant Black power movements gives deeper insight to the everyday realities oppressed people face.

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Chapter 1: Power to the People

Based on historical and linguistic¹ research we now know commonalities amongst people of the African Diaspora exist. The connection between African-Americans and Africans continues to persist and has overcome barriers of distance, language and cultural traditions. Scholars like George Fredrickson and Pierre Van Den Burghe assert that the United States and South Africa in some ways mirror each other, in respect to racist tension in politics, law and general sentiment among citizens, namely during the 1960s and 1970s. Another area of transnational continuity between the United States and South Africa is within the anti-oppression literature derived from social movements that pervaded both countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Literature, and especially fiction, derived from specific movements has the capacity to make social commentaries on the cultural and historical events of political movements. In this thesis I explore the continuity among novels from both the Black Arts Movement (BAM), the aesthetic component of the Black Power Movement in the United States, and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), or the redefining of Blackness movement in South Africa. My research serves to strengthen Van Den Burghe and Fredrickson's historical and cultural similarity claims between the United States and South Africa through literature.

¹ In 1949 Darwin D. Turner published his landmark research on linguistic African survivals in *Africanism in the Gullah Dialect* (U of Chicago) and more recently (2001) Sheila S. Walker's research published in *African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas* (Rowman and Littlefield) provides additional evidence of commonalities found throughout the Diaspora.

Although the similarities between Jim Crow United States and Apartheid South Africa are undeniable there exists little work that comparatively analyzes the literature, especially novels, of these two power struggle movements. The poem is the literary genre that forms the cornerstone of both BAM and BCM due to its availability as an art form. Poems are often succinct and easily understood and therefore are widely marketable. In addition, poems are often recited and/or cheaply sold, overcoming the economic barrier that plagued BAM and BCM and their literary audiences. The short story is a trailing second to the poem for similar reasons; short stories could be published in journals and periodicals inexpensively. The novel however, is less often discussed, due in part because it requires a strongly literate readership and more access to dispensable time and income. The average cost of a novel is greatly higher than newspapers, journals and periodicals. Despite the lack of scholarly attention and audience access, the novel is an important canvas that illuminates BAM and BCM in ways that embody the essence and provide critical social analyses of the two movements. Both movements in terms leadership and original audience were elitist because college-educated writers created the art and the movements were philosophically based. Thus, the novels are arguably geared toward the same type of audience that led the movements, which creates a unique space of expression worthy of critical transnational comparison.

All the selected BAM and BCM novels in this thesis are works of social commentary, meaning all four novelists provide their critical opinion of cultural and political events in their respective geographical locations through the guise of fiction. Novels from both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness Movements are

similar, despite their variance in subject matter, through the themes of isolation, violence and self-assurance. Commonalties found in the novels are a basis for which to claim that these transnational cultural movements are deeply connected by the shared experience of oppression.

Exploring relevant themes that embody the history of both South African Apartheid and Jim Crow United States in specific BAM and BCM novels allows for an objective comparative analysis across national literary differences that stem from various cultural experiences, traditional practices and climate of the time. Though both BAM and BCM created literature that dealt with systemic oppression, South African BCM writers had to deal with overcoming dialectic language barriers, governmental censorship, and a racial system that oppressed Coloreds and Blacks at varying degrees. In the United States BAM writers had to decide if Blacks should continue attempting to assimilate into the American mainstream or reject all things that were not deemed Black.

In this thesis I evaluate a total of four novels. They include the Black Consciousness novel *A Night of Their Own* by Peter Abrahams, the Black Arts novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* by Sam Greenlee. I also thematically evaluate Black Consciousness writer Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* and Kristin (Hunter²) Lattany's *Lakestown Rebellion*. Despite gross gender disparities in leadership, authorship and political prominence in the movements, I have chosen one male and one female author from both movements to ensure gender inclusion.³ In order to

² The author's last name at the time of publication was Hunter but her current last name is Lattany and I will refer to her as Lattany for the remainder of the thesis.

³ Both movements were male dominated in leadership, authorship and theorization.

satiate questions about the novels being written in their respective movement traditions I have only chosen novels that prominent literature reviews and publishing houses have deemed BAM and BCM novels. Also, all the selected works grapple with issues of oppression and active resistance⁴.

Each theme I have chosen represents a common aspect of BAM and BCM historically and/or culturally. After attempts at non-violence, the United States Black protest movements of the 1960s turned radical and were labeled violent by mainstream media. The Black Panther Party and SNCC had particularly gruesome, non-provoked interactions with law enforcement. Though violence between law enforcement and Black Power protest organizations ensued, it is worth noting that the organizations simply responded violently when attacked and were not violent attackers. Similarly, the Black Consciousness Movement faced violent occurrences in their fight against Apartheid. Many BAM and BCM participants responded to racist acts of violent cruelty in self-defense, especially in the wake of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and the disbandment of the African National Congress. In the United States Blacks who produce art that is clearly Black have been historically rejected by the American mainstream, and the same holds true for Colored and Black artists in South Africa. I have chosen the theme of isolation in light of Black artists' inability to successfully penetrate the artistic mainstream. The 1960s ushered in a new approach to judging Black art and a blatant rejection of Eurocentric aesthetic standards, called the Black Aesthetic thinking that is applicable to both BAM and BCM. The geographical and cultural isolation also

⁴ Active resistance is the portrayal of active and often dangerous efforts to halt systematic oppression, the concept is discussed more fully in chapter 3.

pervade the lives of people of Color in both movements. Finally, I chose the theme of self-assurance from the creation of a uniquely Black Aesthetic, which validates not only Black Art, but the Black self. Both movements recast the perception of Blackness in a more positive light, which helps ensure Black self-worth.

More specifically, all four novels use the themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance similarly to tell four distinct stories. The four novels depict differing protest measures and opinions on non-violent versus militant protest approaches. All four works use the themes in similar manners of the historical themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance detailed in chapter two. In regards to violence, at least two characters, one minor and one major, in each novel die gruesome and/or sacrificial deaths. The authors use violent deaths to further the historical claim of social change being a personal endeavor; in each novel the main characters loses someone influential in their lives for the good of the protest movement. Race alienates at least one character from the dominant race group in each story, which creates clear instances of isolation. In addition, each novel grapples with intra-racial isolation meaning, one character must confront being multi-racial or tribally different and how to best navigate being on the proverbial fence of not being fully one race or not having a specific tribal affiliation. Finally, at least one female character in each novel gains self-assurance through the assistance of a male character.

I organized the subsequent chapters to highlight the most salient continuities between the historical occurrences that led me to select to the historical themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance in both the Black Arts and Black

Consciousness movements. In addition, I question how the historical themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance manifest in the fiction that was created as social commentaries on the history. Chapter two, "Black Man You Are on Your Own," underscores certain historically relevant political organizations, leaders and literary institutions of both movements but is by no means an all-encompassing historical recasting of the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements. In chapter three, entitled "I Am A Man," I analyze the two works written by men. Chapter four titled, "Say It Loud! I Am A Black Woman And I am Proud!" presents my comparison of the two selected female authors. I deliberately separated the novels by gender and not by movement for two reasons. First, my primary goal is a transnational comparison, and grappling with novels from both movements in a chapter allows for a better discussion across the two continents. Second, gender greatly influenced both movements and subsequently is significant to the character development in all four novels. The final chapter summarizes the findings across all four novels and how the findings are salient to the historical and cultural understanding of both movements.

In chapter 3, I evaluate the Black Consciousness Movement novel, *A Night of Their Own* that was written by Peter Abrahams and published in 1965. *A Night of Their Own*, set in Natal, South Africa, depicts non-White racial groups remaining in solidarity for a common cause, the defeat of one dominant ruling group. For comparison I also deal with *The Spook Who Sat by my Door* by Sam Greenlee, which was published in 1969, towards the beginning of the Black Arts Movement and has become a widely popular example of BAM writing. The plot takes place in Chicago,

Illinois, one of the major sites of the Black Arts Movement. Greenlee's main character articulates how Black people can beat 'The Man' or the United States Federal Government at its own game and uses infiltrating the Central Intelligence Agency and mastering the tools and tactics the agency utilizes then ultimately using the same tools to counter attack the government as an example. Both Greenlee's and Abrahams' novels depict a singular person's attempt to overcome his respective systems of oppression.

Chapter 4 includes my analysis of Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* set in Botswana and not in her native country, South Africa. Similar to Head's personal narrative the main character of the novel, Makhaya Maseko is a South African man who flees to Botswana to escape the cruelty of White supremacist rule in South Africa. While in Botswana, Makhaya learns a new way of life. In Golema Mmidi, a self-sustaining village, the local chief attempts to confine his people to a life of perpetual poverty and hunger but the people of the village are able to thwart their oppressor by finding the courage to change their agricultural practices. I analyze *The Lakestown Rebellion* by Kristin Lattany with *When Rain Clouds Gather*.⁵ My second BAM novel is set in Lakestown, New Jersey, which is fictionally proclaimed as the only all Black city in the United States. When half of the historic town, a site on the Underground Railroad⁶, is threatened by the construction of a new highway the people of Lakestown ban together to halt the plans of the White government.

⁵ Both *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* and *Lakestown Rebellion* are in the Random House Publishing Black Arts collection.

⁶ The Underground Railroad was a secretive series of safe houses and abolitionists who helped Southern United States slaves reach areas in the North, where they could be free.

Though the novels written by women are different in setting and social critique, both detail how people of Color band together to overcome dominant oppression.

Novel Selection

During the late 1960s young radicals defined Black Art in tangible terms that reflected the culture of Blacks in America. According to Ron Karenga, “Black Art” must possess both artistic and social aspects regardless of the genre of artistic expression, which means they must be both entertaining and educational. The novels of both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness Movements are just that – artistic and social (Karenga 32). The fantastical and realist novels of the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements, respectively, are mimetic art, meaning they emulate life but are not mirror images of reality. Each of the four selected novels is a political commentary because it makes clear allusions and references to true events but with varying degrees of historical accuracy.

Peter Abrahams published *A Night of Their Own* in 1965, during the twentieth century African political desolation in South Africa⁷. *A Night of Their Own*, a heavily politically charged piece, is Abrahams’ sixth novel⁸. Abrahams creates a gripping political commentary on multiracial issues within the broad Apartheid resistance movement⁹. In the novel the main character, Richard Nkosi-Richard

⁷ The desolation was due to the legal repression of the African National Congress and Pan African Congress after the Sharpeville Massacre.

⁸ Notably, only Abrahams first novel was partially written in South Africa. His other works were written from other countries including England and Jamaica.

⁹ Abrahams left South Africa in 1939, well before the rise of the Pan African Congress or the repression of it and the African National Congress in the early 1960s.

Dube¹⁰ is an African man who risks his life to help the multiracial underground movement, specifically the Indian population. Throughout the novel Abrahams carefully articulates the bitterness and resentment that emanates from the all-African faction toward the other races, specifically the Indians, of the underground. The Africans in the novel are upset because Indians receive more reverence under White dominant rule. The two factions can be likened to the historical multiracial African National Congress and the exclusionary Pan African Congress, in that the all-African faction, like the Pan African Congress refuses assistance from non-Black South Africans and the other mostly Indian collection is more receptive to racial inclusion like the African National Congress. In addition to fictionalized Indian and African resistance members, Abrahams details a White South African law enforcement authority, Karl Van As. Van As ultimately has to confront his contradicting love for a Colored woman named Mildred Scott and his governmental duty to cause harm to people like her for the sake of Apartheid rule. The novel meets Killiam and Rowe's depiction of Black Consciousness writing by portraying, "The daily suffering of black communities and their resistance to the injustices of apartheid regime, institutionalized subjugation of blacks..." (30). The novel speaks to the tension between two racially divided factions of Apartheid resistance strugglers

The novel fits the philosophical nature of the Black Consciousness Movement, as it begs the characters and subsequently its audience to grapple with dreams in an oppressive system. In one of the final scenes of the novel, a wealthy

¹⁰ Richard Nkosi and Richard Dube is the same person.

Indian father who unquestioningly obeys Apartheid rule confronts his more educated and worldly son, who is a part of the anti-Apartheid Underground. The father, Old Man Nanda, questions his son's willingness to resist an entire system of oppression as an individual, when failure is inevitable. Old Man Nanda likens Apartheid resistance to dreaming the impossible. In Black Consciousness fashion the son, Young Man Nanda, responds by agreeing that he is dreaming but without dreams all hope for a fairer South Africa is dead. The relationship between father and son aptly speaks to the tension between the younger, more educated members of the Black Consciousness Movement and the older masses of people who were unable to grasp the concept, as it is not tangible in daily realities like employment, housing and equality¹¹.

The Spook Who Sat By the Door by Sam Greenlee was published in 1969¹². The novel is a radical charge to Blacks in the United States to regain their neighborhoods from encroaching government and oppressive law enforcement. The novel "is a handbook on how to be a successful revolutionary by beating the system at its own game," according to Charles Peavy. Dan Freeman, the main character, is the first Black man to infiltrate the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which is a decidedly all White federal government operative. Freeman remains with the agency for five years, acquiring knowledge and skills that will help him eventually launch a successful battle against federal law enforcement on the city

¹¹ Another characteristic of Black Consciousness fiction is examining the ordinary as a method of rediscovery. Abrahams often provides full sensory descriptions.

¹² The year after Martin Luther King and two years after Stokely Turé popularized the term "Black Power."

streets of Chicago's south side. Once he leaves the CIA, Freeman trains members of a Black Chicago street gang, named the Cobras, in guerilla war tactics. All the while, Freeman is able to play the unassuming, non-threatening Black man for the White people he works for and a posh playboy for Black people who need proof that he is 'Black enough.'

The novel fits all the characteristics of Black Arts focused work. The general message of the entire novel is both social and artistic; the two components theorist Ron Karenga deems as necessary criteria for Black Art. Dan Freeman toils for close to a decade, if you take the sum total of formal educational training, time with the CIA and working with the Cobras, to enact a strategy for urban space liberation¹³. Though the plot of novel is extremely fantastical, with its glorified martial arts battles and unstoppable young street terrorists, the overall message of empowerment and mass mobilization is very tangible. In addition to the novel's social (or educational) aspect, it is arguably artistic (or entertaining) in the sense that it is rooted in an imaginary world of double agents and rogue vigilantes and is full of ironic and practical jokes¹⁴. The novel also portrays hyper-masculinity through gruesome fights and glorified sex scenes. Dan Freeman, in his private life is unashamed to be Black and loathes all who either stifle Black progress or do not actively combat Black oppression.

¹³ Urban space liberation is the freeing of predominantly Black inner cities of governmental brutality and White supremacy for its Black inhabitants.

¹⁴ In chapter 17 the Cobras capture Chicago's Colonel "Bull" Evans, force him to take LSD and despite his noted racist attitude he repeatedly recants how he met the "most wonderful niggers in the world," - those niggers being his captors.

The novel is situated as Black revolutionary science fiction, similar in some regards to other novels published half a century previous (Bould). Black Revolutionary Science Fiction works aim to shift reality, empower the weak and demand the impossible specifically for Black people. Though Black Revolutionary science fiction is a relatively small literary genre, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* was adapted for a feature film four years after the novel was published. Also, the novel was republished in 1990 by a larger press than its original publishing house, Richard Baron Books, implying that Greenlee's work has enjoyed widespread popularity through the years. The novel is a medley of racial pride and masculine prowess, with a hint of White hatred. This symphony of Greenlee's words creates space for the themes of violence isolation and self-assurance.

When Rain Clouds Gather fits within the South African Black Consciousness literary genre, as it is a realistic depiction of how small changes, like agricultural production, village leadership and gender role re-appropriations lead to a better standard of life, which is the ultimate goal of revolution. Additionally, *When Rain Clouds Gather* was selected by The Heinemann African Writer's Series. The series is discussed in greater detail in chapter two. In the story Gilbert, a White agricultural specialist from England, urges the women of Golema Mmidi to raise small plots of tobacco as a cash crop and use a different type of grass to feed cattle. The entire village is able to create small dams for water reserves and charge more money for their better fed cattle with these small changes, thereby bringing year round water and more money to Golema Mmidi. In an effort to help with the agricultural transition to a different type of cattle feed the entire village enters a co-operative

organization that undercuts chief Matenge's cattle selling business and thus undermines him as the economical authority figure.

Though Head's novel is set in Botswana and not South Africa, the work is still a critical social commentary on South Africa. The main character, Makhaya Maseko trades in South Africa modern city life for the arid, poverty-stricken village of Golema Mmidi in Botswana. In fact, Makhaya rather enjoys his new life despite all the challenges tribal Botswana life presents. Makhaya's willingness to forego the spoils of modernity that exist in South Africa implies that the racial turmoil under Apartheid is unbearable for a Black South African like himself. Head portrays Makhaya as a radically different man from the average tribal male Batswana¹⁵. He willingly works side by side with women and treats them as his equal, which is unheard of in Golema Mmidi. Also, Makhaya understands that he is a Black African man but he attempts to redefine himself outside of tribal culture similar to the Black Consciousness Movement's attempt to redefine Blackness broadly.

Coffee House Press included *Lakestown Rebellion* by Kristin Lattany in their Black Movement Arts Series. The novel is a political commentary on how to bring about change, " Fess both rejoiced and trembled at what he had done. Almost single-handedly he had turned Lakestown's complacent citizens into an angry mob. How to lead that mob and channel its anger in a useful direction was the problem now..." (Lattany 171). Fess, along with the rest of the characters, spends the entire

¹⁵ The people from Botswana are called Batswana in the novel.

novel figuring out how to best channel their anger to thwart the federal highway commission.

The novel is essential to understanding the unique position many Black Arts and Black Consciousness artists held in their respective larger Black Power movements, literary artists of the movements were generally college educated and thus, had the financial means, leisure time and intellectual stamina to appreciate the nuance a novel provides. The novel can be viewed in the same manner as movement leaders, a small minority of the overall movement but nevertheless vital for functionality and understanding. A symbiotic relationship between author and audience develops as the authors from the movements present fiction based on the daily realities of people navigating life under systematic oppression.

The themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance manifest themselves differently within each novel as the story subject, nature of characters and cultural audiences vary across all four novels. In order to account for these differences I only use examples that occur among main characters that are vital to the story's plot line. Finding strong examples of violence, isolation and self-assurance in each novel establishes a case for the literary styles of the Black Arts Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement being similar. By only using prominent examples the strong similarities between BAM and BCM literary styles are highlighted. Literary similarities between *De Facto* segregated United States and Apartheid South Africa furthers the connections historians and cultural theorists like Pierre Van Den Burghe and George Fredrickson have already established.

History of Oppression

Comparative national history, especially with regards to racism, is a small subfield of history. Significantly, two of the most prominent theorists in the field utilize the United States and South Africa as sites of racism. George Fredrickson and Pierre Van De Burghe both detail the historical similarities of race relations in the United States and South Africa spanning from chattel slavery in the southern United States and colonial minority rule in South Africa to the Civil Rights and Anti-Apartheid era of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶ The end of the 1970s did not mark the end of the ripple effects of racism in these two countries but both Fredrickson and Van De Burghe highlight the Black Power era in both countries as a time of great continuity between these two dissimilar nations. Along with great historical similarities there are arguably great affinities within the protest fiction literature of the 1960s and 1970s.

In order to understand the basis of the historical comparison between the United States and South Africa a concrete definition of racism is necessary.

Fredrickson defines racism as,

Not merely an attitude or set of beliefs; it also expresses itself in the practices, institutions, and structures that a sense of deep difference justifies or validates. Racism, therefore, is more than theorizing about human differences or thinking badly of a group over which one has no control. It either directly sustains or proposes to establish *a racial order*, a permanent group hierarchy that is believed to reflect the laws of nature or the decrees of God. Racism in this sense is neither a given of human social existence, a universal 'consciousness of kind,' nor simply a modern theory that biology determines history and culture (*Racism* 5-6).

¹⁶ Frederickson utilizes the United States and South Africa as examples for his definition of racism in *Racism: A Short History*. Frederickson details only United States and South African racial history in *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*. Van Den Burghe selects South Africa and the United States as two of his four examples of racism in his book *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*.

In other words, there is a difference between preferring one's cultural and ethnic traditions to someone else's and allowing that preference to become oppressive to the Other simply because they are Other. Racist societies provide no possible method for assimilation into the dominant culture or ethnicity. Fredrickson summarizes his race definition by stating, "My Theory or conception of racism, therefore, has two components: *difference* and *power*. It originates from a mindset that regards 'them' as different from 'us' in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power" (Fredrickson *Racism* 9). In a newer work on racism Fredrickson uses Apartheid South Africa and the segregated southern United States as two of three examples of his definition of racism.

Through the sordid histories of both the United States and South Africa these two countries, separated by distance, language and culture, are extremely similar through their experience of racism. Racism systematically relegates a group of people to the marginal slums based solely on phenotype with no chance of their being incorporated into the privileged mainstream. United States and South Africa grapples with the stains of racism that have permanently tainted the moral fibers that patch together the quilts of these two great countries. The stains cannot be erased. People of Color in South Africa and the United States historically, have been denied access to quality education, employment and housing. Further, their artistic expressions experienced continual rejection by mainstream aesthetic evaluations. The expressive art produced in the Black Aesthetic tradition was one of the ways the hurt and anger caused by racism found release. Poems, photographs, music and

other art forms allowed the frustrated people of the 1960s and 1970s to express their sentiments while conveying to others that their feelings were valid. In fact Black Power, the protest sister to the Black Arts Movement, and Black Consciousness leaders were often in conversation, sharing protest strategies and stories of oppression by the government, though they had differing ultimate goals (Fattor 74). According to Steve Biko, "Black Power is the preparation of a group for participation in already established society, and Black Power therefore in the States operates like a minority philosophy..." while Black Consciousness attempted to become the dominant South African ideology (Biko *I Write* 69).

Isolation, violence and self-assurance are themes that should be found in any critical commentary pieces on BAM or BCM, as all three themes were commonly prevalent in the everyday lives of BAM and BCM movement members. Utilizing protest experiences as themes within the novels created in the likeness of the movements arguably connects the history and the literature of both the Black Arts Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement respectively. Just as Fredrickson and Van De Burghe assert a connection between the United States and South Africa through history generally, the connection exists within Black protest literature of the 1960s and 1970s specifically.

Violence

Both the Black Arts and the Black Consciousness were considered militant protest movements. In comparison to the actions of the participants in the non-violent Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the characteristically subdued manner of the African National Congress, their spawns were radical and

threatened the current racist regimes. The radical and militant nature of the Black Power struggle and the Black Consciousness Movement increased the daily threat of violence. Both movements had gruesome encounters with law enforcement.¹⁷

The Black Arts Movement, despite being the aesthetic component of the Black Power concept was violent in content, meaning the threat of bodily harm and/or gruesome injury and death are portrayed within all four chosen novels. Most of the literature created from the movement dealt with hyper-masculinity in Black males depicted through graphic literary images of physical violence against law enforcement and grand sexual performance with women (Cole and Guy-Sheftall 79). The Movement was extremely male dominated and like its political sister¹⁸, the Black Power concept, was fueled by anger that often led to violent occurrences¹⁹. Also, the Black Arts Movement promoted an essentialized definition of Blackness, of which anger and aggression was quintessential (Gayle XV). The larger Black Power concept capitalized on the anger and frustration that swept the nation after the non-violent approach was assassinated with the same bullet that claimed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life.²⁰

¹⁷ The Soweto Uprising in Soweto, South Africa left 162 people dead and more injured. Due to police confrontation in less than a year's time nineteen Black Panther Party members suffered violent deaths.

¹⁸ According to Larry Neal the Black Arts and Black Power are sister concepts.

¹⁹ While tension between Black Power radicals and law enforcement sometimes resulted in violence it is important to understand that Black Power radicals simply defended themselves and were not the attackers in most cases.

²⁰ The death of Martin Luther King Jr. marked the symbolic end of non-violent protest as mourners rioted in cities across the United States in the wake of his death and militant Black Power ideology gained popularity.

While the authors may not have physically acted on their anger, their novels can be viewed as an affirmation of violence being necessary at times. The violent occurrences throughout the Black Power Movement often inspired the anger expressed in the novels of the Black Arts tradition. In a way, the anger felt by the fictional characters imitates the emotions felt by people participating in the movements. The violent scenes within Black Arts Movement novels, though fictional, were often similar to occurrences experienced by Black Power militants, Black Panther Party members and other radical protest organizations members.

The violence depicted in Black Consciousness novels is more subdued but nevertheless still present. Similar to the Black Power Movement, the Black Consciousness Movement emerged from a void created by the curtailment of the two leading anti-Apartheid African organizations, the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress. But unlike the Black Power concept, the Black Consciousness Movement welcomed peoples of all races who opposed South African Apartheid rule (Fredrickson *Comparative Imagination* 198). The movement was more intent on masterminding methods to overthrow the government than creating an essentialized Black identity. The Black Consciousness Movement also had to deal with tribulations of language barriers, as there are eleven official languages in South Africa, and censorship laws when creating protest literature.

Black Consciousness literature often sought to rediscover the ordinary, meaning the literature deals with basic daily tribulations the works are overwhelmingly realistic (Killam). Violence waged against the African and Colored

peoples of South Africa was an everyday reality that was often addressed in Black Consciousness writing in a realistic fashion especially in comparison to Black Arts works.

Isolation

The theme of isolation is derived from two distinct historical events within the United States and South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s with respect to Coloreds (people of any interracial heritage) in South Africa and Blacks in both the US and South Africa. In both countries people of a darker hue were relegated to the margins of society and had to endure long-standing abuse due to hierarchal phenotypical differences (Fredrickson *Racism*). The 1960s and 1970s was a pivotal time frame for oppressed Blacks in the United States and the ethnic majority in South Africa due to major events that incited protest. In South Africa the Apartheid government banned and seriously sought to annihilate the longstanding anti-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) and the newer, more militant Pan Africanist Congress, giving rise to the creation of the Black Consciousness Movement (Fatton 7). The 1960s was known as the decade of death in the United States as many of the Civil Rights leaders were assassinated, notably Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, President John F. Kennedy and Medgar Evers among others.

With the loss of Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent leadership, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States abandoned the principles of non-violent protest for a more militant approach that led to the ejection of White supporters in protest organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and The

Congress of Racial Equality (Joseph 162). Black Power, a militant alternative to non-violence, also demanded that its participants refuse to assimilate into the United States mainstream culture. A new Black Aesthetic or principles to evaluate Black beauty and art and standards of Blackness were created for all those who wanted to be considered “truly Black” in the United States (Gayle XXI). While attempting to establish a unique Black identity, those who ascribed to the Black Aesthetic and the standards of Black identity isolated themselves within their native country. Aspects that made Blacks different from all other Americans and gave Blacks a deep sense of pride for these differences was often times portrayed as Black exclusion in the face of other races in the United States. In the United States Blacks were historically denied rights and privileges by the American mainstream but in the 1960s and 1970s they consciously rejected assimilation into American culture.

In South Africa Coloreds and Blacks were treated as second and third class citizens respectively.²¹ Indigenous Africans and other Colored ethnic peoples were forced to live on the fringes of major cities, in shantytowns and in the bush. In order to travel the non-White majority of South Africa was forced to carry passes that afforded them access to the cities and White areas during the day to work and then were expected to return to the slums by nightfall (Gerhart 24). The South African government systematically isolated the majority of its population on the basis of appearance. Skin color, native tongue, hair texture, eye color and other physical attributes determined race status. This deterministic system left families divided

²¹ Under South African Apartheid there was a three-tiered racial hierarchy. White South Africans were entitled to all rights and privileges, Coloreds were granted more opportunities than Blacks but were not as fortunate as Whites. Blacks were relegated to the social, educational and economic slums of South Africa.

when siblings were considered different races. It was illegal for Whites to consort with Blacks and further it was not socially accepted. In South Africa, the government mainly determined isolation. Similarly, racist laws and practices like redlining and grandfather clauses in the United States limited employment and housing opportunities for Blacks.

Though Whites, Blacks and Coloreds were separated by government policy, there were times when all three groups worked in tandem to resist the racist government. But like the Decade of Death²² in the United States, the 1960s gave way to the rejection of White assistance by Blacks and Coloreds. The Black Consciousness Movement was mainly comprised of college educated Coloreds and Blacks who wanted to instill a sense of racial pride and consciousness in the oppressed majority. In a similar manner to Black Power in the United States, the leaders were often young and college educated; Martin Luther King Jr. led non-violent protests in his twenties and Black Panther Party cofounder, Huey P. Newton attended community college during his twenties. Black Pride led to the rejection of White support.

The isolation felt by Blacks in the United States and Coloreds and Blacks in South Africa manifested itself daily. In South Africa Blacks and Coloreds often fled or were exiled from the country leaving individuals isolated from family and friends. In fact, both Peter Abrahams and Bessie Head fled their native South Africa before writing their novels. Censorship and ban laws limited and silenced the voices of

²² The Decade of death refers to the 1960s when many proponents to Civil Rights equalities were assassinated. Most notably were Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X.

those who opposed the Apartheid regime leaving Apartheid agitators isolated from mainstream discourse. Blacks in the United States were also isolated from the dominant society through *de jure* segregation, which caused a lack of access to opportunities in housing, education and employment. In addition to the imposed isolation, the people of the Black Arts Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement instituted their own forms of isolation by rejecting assistance from Whites.

Self-Assurance

Both movements constructed positive identities for people of Color. The need for a new identity resulted from centuries of hatred toward people of a darker hue by White supremacist. To be Black, before the Black Arts and Black Consciousness Movements in the United States and South Africa, was to be a problem (Du Bois *Souls* 1). The Blacks in the United States and those who were consciously Black in South Africa needed to have better connotations associated with the pigmentation of their skin. Redefining societal norms around race was key to truly improving the quality of life for Blacks and Colored people. The Blacks in the United States and the ethnic majority in South Africa needed to be assured of their self worth.

The Black Arts Movement utilized Black Aesthetic principles. As a “Corrective means of helping Black people out of the polluted mainstream of Americanism...” The Black Power Movement conceived a uniquely Black Aesthetic (Gayle XXII). Blacks in America during the latter of half of the 1960s were not only

frustrated with the stagnation in non-violence Civil Rights initiatives progress and police brutality, they grew weary from attempting unsuccessfully to assimilate into the American mainstream. From the frustration, the Black Power Struggle consciously decided to cease attempting to gain White approval. This decision mainly created the principles of race pride and self-assurance of the Black Arts. According to Black Arts theorist Addison Gayle, "A critical methodology has no relevance to the Black community unless it aids men in becoming better than they are (XXII)," meaning the Black Aesthetic and by extension the Black Arts Movement had to assist in assuring Blacks that their cultural creative expression had merit. The Black Arts Movement attempted to undo centuries of degradation with words, images and music that uplifted Blacks and made them feel important.

The Black Consciousness Movement attempted a similar feat with the Colored and Black people of South Africa. Black Consciousness at its root was based on liberation theology, meaning at the heart of Black Consciousness was a belief and hope that oppressed people, irrespective of race could be in solidarity in combating their oppressor (Fatton 66). The movement called for all members to ascribe to Blackness even if they were not of indigenous African decent. To be Black for the Black Consciousness Movement was to be human and call for a higher ethical order in South Africa. In order to convince the downtrodden Blacks and Colored people of South Africa, the Black Consciousness Movement leaders pushed for an intellectual and psychological emancipation from White supremacy.

Both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements strove to convince its members that they, like James Brown, should, “Say It Loud, I am Black and I am proud” and truly believe the words.²³ The people of the African Diaspora needed more reassurance that they deserved a place at the table of brotherhood.²⁴ Black people needed reassurance that they had the privilege to demand human rights. The participants of the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements received the support they sought by expressing their sights, hearings and feelings. If the root of self-assurance is confidence in one’s self and one’s ideas, then the liberating nature of Black Consciousness and Black Aesthetic tradition of Black Arts were the driving forces behind Blacks in the United States and South Africa gaining more self-assurance.

The similarities in the history of the Black Arts and Black Consciousness Movements are undeniable. There exist more common threads between these two movements besides violence, isolation and self-assurance but for the purpose of this study they will be the focus. While other scholars have explored the historical and cultural connections between Apartheid South Africa and Jim Crow United States I enter the discourse through the literary similarities of these differing nations drawn together by systemic oppression of Black people.²⁵

²³ In 1968 Black American musician James Brown released a song titled, “Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud” which became a Black Power anthem.

²⁴ Derived from Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech from The March on Washington.

²⁵ The Black Consciousness Movement changed a national race paradigm while The Black Arts Movement established Black Power’s importance as one of the racial powers in the United States’ according to Steve Biko (*I Write What I Like*)



Chapter 2: Black Man, You Are On Your Own

Black Arts; “Aesthetic and spiritual sister to the Black Power concept.”

-Larry Neal

“So many things are said so often to us, about us and for us but very seldom by us.”

-Steve Biko

The Black Arts Movement was the creative component of the militant Black Power struggle of the late 1960s and 1970s. The Movement gave voice to the wide array of emotions Black Americans felt during the turbulent second half of the Civil Rights era. In a time where some of the most prominent Civil Rights leaders perished at the hand of White American’s horrendous hatred, Black Americans needed to express their anger and frustration in a positive and constructive manner; the Black Arts Movement provided the platform. Generally the Black Arts Movement has become popularized by the poetry, short stories and visual arts produced. Black Art was created by the likes of the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AFRI-COBRA) and the Umbra Poets Workshop, among others and printing presses like Dudley Randall’s Broadside Press provided artists a space to create art that was for Black people by Black people.

The 1960s and 1970s in Apartheid South Africa was also a turbulent time, especially for Black and Colored people. The suppression of the Pan-African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) led to the establishment of the Black Consciousness Movement. Like the Black Power Struggle, the Black Consciousness Movement sought to improve the overall quality of life for the Black and Colored majority in South Africa. Not only did the movement seek to challenge

Apartheid rule, it sought to change the negative images surrounding the ethnic majority for all of South Africa. The movement utilized protests, literature and music among other mediums of expression. The ultimate goal of BCM was to shift the South African Eurocentric ideology to one that more greatly valued Black and Colored people.

In 1967, United States President Lyndon B. Johnson sought answers to the unrest among African Americans. His answers came from The Kerner Commission who reported that, "Our nation (The United States) is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." The report was in response to the riots that rippled through the entire country during the summer of 1967. Blacks, especially those in urban areas, reached their limit in tolerating unfair practices in housing, unemployment and inferior education. The report advised that Black ghettos, which were highly concentrated areas of Black people with high rates of crime, violence and drug and alcohol abuse, needed to be destroyed. Though the Civil Rights Legislation of 1964 was a huge milestone for the Civil Rights Movement it did not aptly change the hearts and minds of all Americans. White Americans were bitter about sharing schools, workplaces, restaurants, trains, and other public facilities and Black Americans were frustrated that the legal end of segregation did not curtail everyday racism and discrimination.

Before African Americans could genuinely demand equality with White Americans they first had to feel worthy of the demand. Centuries of oppression and degradation rendered many descendents of slaves, in one way or another, ashamed

of their Blackness. The Black Arts Movement created positive images of Blackness through literature, music and visual representation. The majority of Black Arts creations incorporated African traditions through poetic allusions, heavy drum syncopation and positive visual images of Blackness (Collins & Crawford 6-7, Ekwueme 128-135). The Black Arts Movement's goal was to change the hearts and minds of Americans, especially Black Americans while the entire Black Power Movement sought to equalize the American experience for Blacks.

The Black Consciousness Movement was established in 1967 when both the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress were defunct (Fatton 63). The ban was in response to the Sharpeville Massacre, a non-violent protest event that turned volatile when South African police murdered roughly sixty unarmed protesters. The massacre was on March 21st, 1960, seven years before the Black Consciousness Movement was formed. In the interim the ANC and PAC were being suppressed by the Apartheid government, making a political and social space for the Black Consciousness Movement to thrive. The Massacre also was one of the reasons the Black Consciousness Movement used for a more radical approach to protest. The Massacre is similar to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and other prominent Civil Rights leaders, which led to the militant Black Power Struggle in the United States.

Notably, the Black Consciousness Movement leader, Stephen Biko, rejected comparisons between the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements. The Black Consciousness Movement sought to change a national race paradigm while the

Black Arts Movement attempted to establish Black Power's importance as one of the racial powers in the United States. During a judicial testimony Steve Biko detailed the gravest differences between Black Power and Black Consciousness by stating,

I think the end result of the goal of Black Power is fundamentally different from the goal of Black consciousness in this country... Black Power is the preparation of a group for participation in already established society, and Black Power therefore in the States operates like a minority philosophy... (Biko, *Black Consciousness*, 118-119)

Black Consciousness, meaning a superior ethical order that respected and sought to include all cultures, was to be the dominant South African ideology instead of integrated into the fold of South African political and social spheres. In essence Biko believed Black Power's rejection of Whiteness while remaining in a White dominated society intended to simply carve out a space in the American fabric that was distinctly Black. Black Consciousness, to the contrary, wanted to completely alter the fibers that created South Africa's quilt. Specifically, the literary aspect of the Black Consciousness Movement sought to redefine Blackness in a similar manner as Black Aesthetic theorists like Addison Gayle, Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, except the BCM definition of Blackness encompassed all ethnicities that were not White. In contrast, Blackness in the United States was limited to the descendents of the African Diaspora. Both movements gave voice to the atrocities that plagued race relations in the United States and South Africa but in fundamentally different ways.

In addition, BAM and BCM had differing definitions of Blackness. Defining Blackness, Stephen Biko wrote,

1. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.

2. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being (48).

Any person that was Black, Colored, Indian or a member of any other oppressed ethnic group was welcome to exercise the full extent of Black Consciousness. In fact, Whites were also able to participate in the movement as long as they were consciously Black. People belonging to oppressed groups that participated in the perpetuation of Apartheid were derogatorily termed non-white and were subsequently denied access to BCM. On the surface Biko's definition of Blackness is similar to that of the Black Power paradigm, the difference being in implementation of the term. The Black Power Movement strove to exemplify the strength and power of Black people in the United States while the Black Consciousness Movement's efforts were to dismantle the White minority regime for a model government that appreciated Blackness. Simply, the Black Power Movement wanted to make amendments to the United States governing practices, the Black Consciousness Movement wanted a completely different government. Blackness for the Black Consciousness Movement was not limited to those people of the African Diaspora but all people who were willing to ascribe to African-based tradition, while Blackness in the United States, according to Black Power paradigm was limited to a large minority that met arbitrary standards. Despite fundamental ideological differences, BAM and BCM are similar historically, culturally and literarily.

Political Organizations

If the entire Black Power Movement was comprised of private and political aspects only, the Black Arts Movement was the private and the various Black Power

groups like the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were the political. One of the main focuses of the Black Power Movement was to positively redefine how Black Americans connoted their identity by embracing the aspects that distinguishes Blacks from other races like the Afro hairstyle and dark pigmentation. While there was no one specific central Black Power organization, various groups often worked in tandem to promote Black Power ideals. Though the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) differed on ideologies of armed self-defense and Black Spiritual Power, all promoted Black Power and their respective members participated in the Black Arts Movement through prose, music and visual art (Collins and Crawford 3). The Black Panther Part for Self Defense members armed themselves to properly defend Blacks against police brutality and other instances of racial violence. SCLC and CORE promoted Black Spiritual Power, or a Christian interpretation of Black Power.

The Black Consciousness Movement did not have a specific subfield entity to promote creative self-expression like the Black Arts Movement was for the Power Movement. But literature nevertheless played a vital role in promoting the principles of Blackness. In fact, a number of separate organizations with varying purposes comprised the Black Consciousness Movement including, the Azanian People Organization (AZAPO), the South African Student Organization—geared toward university students (SASO), Black Community Programs (BCP), Black Peoples’s Convention (BPC) and the South African Student Movement- mainly for high school students. Though the various organizations had different targets the

ultimate goal was the same, to foster a new South Africa that valued Blackness and allowed the ethnic majority to exercise the same rights and privileges as White South Africans. This is similar to the Black Power Movement in that both movements pooled from many smaller organizations for a greater cause.

In the United States, Stokely Carmichael or Kwame Turé deviated from the non-violent protest approach during the Meredith March in Greenwood. On Thursday, June 16, 1966 after being arrested, Kwame Turé declared a need for Black Power. Black Power was initially used by the likes of Paul Robeson, Richard Wright and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (Joseph 147). Implicit in Turé's principles of Black Power were God given rights for self-defense, humane treatment and all the guarantees of the United States Constitution. The Meredith March was a joint endeavor with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, The Deacons for Defense and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Though all the varying groups worked together to complete James Meredith's March Against Fear²⁶, there was a clear division in political protest approach. Kwame Turé, who was with SNCC, preferred a more militant Black Power stance to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and SCLC's non-violent protest agenda. Turé's declaration of Black Power at the end of the march solidified the schism from the Nonviolent Civil Rights protest approach, which gave the more militant Black Power side a larger platform to voice their

²⁶ James Meredith was a Black man who integrated the University of Mississippi. In 1966 he organized the March Against Fear to encourage Blacks to register to vote despite the danger. He was shot during the march but recovered and rejoined the march before it was over.

agenda and express their frustration (Joseph 138-146). The Black Power struggle elected to create a subgroup of the movement that focused solely on creative expression, the Black Arts Movement.

The United States' Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was an Oakland based community and civically engaged radical organization. The Party is most noted for patrolling the streets of their neighborhoods while bearing arms as a tactic to reduce police brutality against Blacks. Though BPP gained notoriety for its more radical endeavors, the Party also did great works to improve the quality of life for Black people like breakfast programs for children, free medical clinics, alcohol and other drug abuse rehabilitation facilities, among other things (Joseph 229). After its 1966 initiation in Oakland, the Black Panther Party created other chapters in other prominent cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago (Acoli). The Black Panther Party was often involved in police generated, non-provoked bloody conflicts with law enforcement, namely COINTELPRO- a counter intelligence agency within the Federal Bureau of Investigation (*FBI's War on Black America*).

As for the origin of the Black Consciousness Movement, during the suppression of ANC and PAC, the White middle class liberals and the Bantustan administrative elite both vied for the support of the African majority of which neither party was successful in gaining because both constituted an elitist group that had no meaningful ties to impoverished Black Africans. The void of political allegiance carved out a space for the Black Consciousness ideal to permeate and resonate in the African shantytowns and slums. "Yet, what differentiated the Black

Consciousness Movement from Lembedism or Africanism,” according to historian, Robert Fatton, “Was its originality in elaborating an ideology of hope rooted in the theology of liberation; this in turn led to emphasis on the solidarity of the oppressed irrespective of their race (Fatton 66).”²⁷ The South African Students’ Organization (SASO), a Black student university run group rooted in multi-racialism while simultaneously rejecting White South African hegemony, was the initial breeding ground for Black Consciousness thought.

As the first president of SASO, Stephen Bantu Biko has become widely accepted as the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. Further, Biko became a martyr for the movement when he died in the custody of White supremacist South African police.²⁸ Biko, like Kwame Turé, Huey Newton, and other Black Power leaders in the United States, was a student committed to Black liberation. Biko was ousted from Natal University before attaining a medical degree due to low academic performance, which was the result of his preoccupation with the politics of South Africa’s race relations. Principally, Biko believed that Black African students needed to have a more aggressive role in determining how to lift South Africa from its racially hostile state (Fatton 68). Though SASO was a university organization that was mostly populated by Black elites who were fortunate enough to gain an education, the Black People’s Convention was created to incorporate Black and Colored peoples throughout South Africa despite educational variance.

²⁷ Lembedism was the radical wing of the African National Congress that wanted to exercise more militant action than the non-violent congress would allow, ultimately creating friction in the party and the formation of the Pan-African Congress.

²⁸ "Background: Steve Biko: martyr of the anti-apartheid movement". BBC News. 1997-12-08. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/37448.stm>. Retrieved 2007-04-16.

Leaders

In the United States, Kwame Turé has been deemed the leader of Black Power politics and Amiri Baraka has come to be the Godfather of the Black Arts Movement. Amiri Baraka, or Leroi Jones, is widely known as, “the prime mover and chief architect of what became known as the Black Arts Movement” (Andrews 259). Baraka is a poet, professor and activist among other things. He was very influential in constructing Black Arts standards and ideals, especially in poetry. His work did not only concentrate on the Black Arts Movement, he was also interested in creative expression more broadly during the 1960s and 1970s. He is also well known for his theorization of the Blues era.²⁹ Not only did Baraka help create the tenants of the Black Arts concept, he is one of the most popular Black Arts poets. His *Black Magic: Collected Poetry, 1961-1967* poetry collection contains his most popular Black Arts poetry. The collection is subdivided in three distinct subjects and timeframes, the Black Arts section spans from 1966-1967. In the Black Arts section Baraka devotes the majority of his poems to essentializing Blackness, rejecting Whiteness and urging action from African Americans. These, along with the theory of Ron Karenga, became the distinguishing factors for determining whether a poem was simply created by a Black person or if it was Black Art.

Strini Moodley was an integral part of the literary aspect of the Black Consciousness Movement in a similar capacity as Amiri Baraka in the Black Arts Movement. He helped Steve Biko found SASO, though he never formally held a position

²⁹ Baraka/Jones' *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* details the evolution of Black music in the United States and its historical significance.

in the organization, because he did not meet the university enrollment criteria of SASO (Gastrow 1). In addition, to being a proponent of Black Consciousness, he was a playwright, theorist, journalist and scholar activist. His first play “Black on White” gained prominence in Natal, South Africa and the attention of Steve Biko as it exuded characteristics of Black Conscious thought through satire. According to South African literary scholar Peter McDonald, “Moodley and other key theorists of the new movement set out to develop an affirmative, distinctively Black aesthetic, while also unsettling established ideas of the literary, and, in some cases, specifically affronting with liberal assumptions” (180).

Poetry in the Black Arts Movement tradition purposely ignored traditional style and format. Poems ignored conventional rules on stanzas, punctuation and verse patterns. Often onomatopoeias, non-words, run on sentences and seemingly nonsensical phrases were used. The overall purpose was to clearly delineate Black Aesthetic standards from older, more widely used Eurocentric artistic traditions. This rejection of the norm represented a larger refusal to ascribe to traditional American cultural standards (Fuller 7). BAM novels were held to similar standards of content and form as poetry hence, BAM novels are expected to use expectation of violence, self-assurance and isolation as main themes. Baraka often depicted violent rejections of Whiteness, for example in his poem “Black Art” he blatantly calls for the killing of police officers, Irish people, as well as urging the “Setting fire to and death to whities ass” (Baraka “Black Art” 116). In addition to the rejection of Whiteness there were also multiple sources of isolation for Blacks in America. Not only did Black Americans encounter isolation in the United States due to Jim Crow segregation, isolation for Blacks in America was self-

inflicted. During the Black Power era Whites were ejected from Black organizations like CORE, SNCC and others (Joseph 162). Whites were also portrayed negatively in the works of Black Art Movement artists. Self-assurance manifested itself as essentialized Blackness in BAM. Black Arts theorists compiled a list of basic characteristics that were the “true” essence of Black culture. The pillars of Blackness for the Black Arts era included hyper-sexualized Black male identity, Black women as Nubian queens and goddesses, the rejection of homosexuality, anger and violence (Cole and Sheftall 79-80). The tenants of essentialized Blackness generally served to build the confidence and pride of Black people. The Black Aesthetic model, to which the Black Arts Movement ascribed, sought to reject mainstream American ideals and principles for ones that were more in line with aiding Blacks to feel more assured of themselves. BAM novels were created under like standards and expectations as BAM poetry.

The focus of the South African Black Consciousness Movement literature was generally to rediscover the ordinary, meaning most of the fiction from the movement falls in the realist literary genre (Killam 29-47). In attempting to circumvent stringent censorship laws Black Consciousness authors utilized simplicity as a way to disseminate very political messages in order to not draw attention from the government. The novels of the Black Consciousness Movement depict realistic daily events for Black and Colored South Africans in a manner that straddles the line of being politically charged and passive enough to avoid Apartheid banning. Some novelists like Bessie Head used outside publishers who were not concerned with South African literary bans to dissipate their political novels.

The Black Consciousness Movement, like BAM, was considered elitists as its

leaders, theorists and artists were highly educated. Also, majority of the literature produced from the movement was written in English when the throngs of the oppressed ethnic majority mainly communicated in indigenous South African languages. “Most observers acknowledge that in this period the B.C.M. was for the most part an 'introspective and intellectual movement of educated elite', and that its 'organizational manifestations were not widespread’” (Hirschmann 7). Scholars like Gail Gerhart and Peter McDonald detail the pitfalls that prevented the Black Consciousness Movement from becoming a greatly influential protest movement in the ways that the Black Power Movement was in the United States. The main issue of the movement was a clear divide between the leaders of the BCM and the masses of the oppressed ethnic majority. The leaders and the masses differed greatly in education, class and economics, as majority of the leaders were collegiately involved, considered a Colored or Bantu person, or an African that came from well-to-do families.

One of the most prominent theorists of United States’ BAM was Maulana Ron Karenga. He, like Baraka, had multiple roles in the movement as a scholar-activist. As a professor and a proponent of education he wanted to utilize various mediums to appeal to an array of people. Karenga, with the help of Jamal Hakim, created a radical political group called Us, meaning us Black people (Joseph 116-117). He also was the creator of Kwanzaa in 1966, which is a weeklong celebration honoring African American culture and tradition. Kwanzaa is considered the first specific African American holiday and is highly Afrocentric from the naming of the various components of the celebration in Swahili, an East African language, to the theme

colors of the celebration being red, black and green which are commonly associated with Africa.

Maulana Karenga's theory on Black Art was one of the highlighted articles in Addison Gayle's *The Black Aesthetic*. Karenga postulated that regardless of the genre of artistic expression, "Black Art" must possess both artistic and social aspects. Karenga was invested in art as a teaching tool, especially for Black people. Though his article did not specifically reference the Black Arts novel, the novels of both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness Movements were artistic and social. *A Night of Their Own*, *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Lakestown Rebellion* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* all have tangible messages, all of which are uplifting and encouraging for people of color in the African Diaspora. Also, the principles Karenga promotes in both Black Art and Kwanzaa are the basis to the violence, isolation and self-assurance themes. Karenga urged Black artists to create art that was distinctively Black and separate (isolated) from other artistic styles. The political climate for Blacks in both the United States and South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s was mired by violence, hence the art that was expected to speak to the social aspect of Black life and reflect the violence of the time. Finally, Karenga often encouraged Black Arts artists to incorporate Afrocentric leanings in their works, which could be interpreted as his form of helping Blacks find self-assurance through pride in their heritage.

If Amiri Baraka was the father figure of the Black Arts Movement, Sonia Sanchez was the mother. Sanchez is most noted for her poetry but she also is a

professor, playwright and political activist. She, along with Baraka, Larry Neal and a few others introduced a new style of poetry that was derived from the “free jazz” era (Smethurst 59). She is often credited with helping form the poetic genre of spoken word/slam poetry. Sanchez has continued to write in the Black Arts genre through the movement, which was considered over by the late 1970s. She, like Baraka and Karenga, is considered one of the most influential Black Arts Movement artists and theorists, unfortunately not many other women gained her level of notoriety within the movement, making the movement overtly male dominated.

South Africa’s Nadine Gordimer in contrast was not the pseudo-mother of Black Consciousness literature but she was nevertheless important to understanding the delicate space Black Consciousness occupied in South Africa and how Black Consciousness literature differed from Black Arts literature. Gordimer is considered a White woman by South African standards but her political allegiance during the 1960s and 1970s was with the radical African National Congress. Some of her literary works were banned under South African Apartheid which further solidified Gordimer’s affinity toward Black militant thought. Her works mainly deal with, “moral and psychological tensions of her racially divided home country” (Liukkonen and Pesonen). While her connection to the nexus of the Black Consciousness Movement is faint she, like the literature, is a realistic depiction of Black Consciousness at work. Gordimer fought against Apartheid through prose and she also supported publishers who vehemently opposed censorship. Unfortunately, her work did not embrace the redefining of Blackness that was the crux of Black Consciousness. She was not involved with the Black Consciousness Movement in

the same way that Sonia Sanchez was involved with the Black Arts Movement because Gordimer is consciously White and as a White person she could not assume the role of a defining Black. But, nevertheless, Gordimer's works embodied a politically defiant slant that is associated with more radical anti-Apartheid protest, which includes Black Consciousness.

Literary Organizations

Along with influential leaders of the Black Arts Movement, there were organizations that were specifically created for Black Arts artists. AfriCOBRA or African Commune of Bad Relevant Artist initially began in an effort to bring art and creativity to the South side of Chicago through a project called The Wall of Respect. The Black leaders of Chicago's south side commissioned Black artists to create a mural of relevant Black American leaders under the theme, Black Heroes (Crawford 25). AfriCOBRA was later transplanted to Washington D.C. at Howard University. According to AfriCOBRA's official website, AfriCOBRA artists, "Sought to make art that spoke directly to the needs, aspirations and experiences of black America, and that celebrated what was beautiful and heroic about black culture" (Jeff Donaldson). The Wall of Respect and AfriCOBRA inspired the creation of murals highlighting Black heroes in other major United States cities including Detroit, Boston, St. Louis, and Philadelphia. It also inspired Latino/a and Asian American communities to create their own murals (Social Design Notes). The commune, like Kwanzaa, was heavily invested in Afrocentrism as a method of increasing self-assurance among Blacks by creating art that spoke to their beauty and heroism. The Wall of Respect

on Chicago's south side and Afri-COBRA were geographically and culturally isolated from mainstream America. The mural was created in a virtually all Black neighborhood and majority of the commune's artists were, and still are, Black.

In 1962 the William Heinemann publishing house realized that there was a large void in the African book trade among the newly independent nations in Africa. From Heinemann's educational department head, Alan Hill, the idea of an African Writers Series (AWS) was born. The series planned to give voice to continental African authors including South Africa's Bessie Head and Peter Abrahams. AWS was one of many outlets South African anti-Apartheid authors had to express their dismay with conditions for Black and Colored South Africans. Other anti-Apartheid literary publishers included Black Review and BLAC to name a few. Notably, Black Consciousness publishers were not limited to Black and Colored South Africans in the way that Black Arts publishers were definitively Black in America.

Dudley Randall's Broadside Press in Detroit, Michigan was created for a similar purpose as AfriCOBRA. Broadside Press, created in 1965, is a publishing house for Black authors to relay a pointedly Black message without influence and pressure to make their works more marketable to the American mainstream. The Press was used "as a vehicle for building communities and promoting cultural critique" (BroadsidePress!org). One of Broadside's most notable authors is Gwendolyn Brooks who actually switched from Harper, a publisher with a much greater readership and more economic support, to Randall's small press. Brooks viewed her shift as transformation from a Negro to a Black Poet (Smith 349). Many

Broadside authors had the ability to attain more lucrative publishing deals but being at Broadside made the political statement that they were in solidarity with both the Black Power and the Black Arts Movements. Broadside Press continues to be a vital influence in Black neighborhoods around Michigan and the larger national Black American community. In addition to Broadside, Third World Press in Chicago is the first and only press operated by a Black woman.

Around the same time that Dudley Randall was founding Broadside Press, Amiri Baraka, or LeRoi Jones, moved from Manhattan's Lower East Side to Harlem as a symbolic beginning of the Black Arts Movement (Salaam). When in Harlem, Jones created the Umbra Workshop; which released a magazine by the same name. Umbra, "was the first post-civil rights Black literary group to make an impact as radical in the sense of establishing their own voice distinct from, and sometimes at odds with, the prevailing white literary establishment" (Salaam). Umbra artists often found themselves embroiled in an internal struggle trying to discern which should be more prominent in their work, activism or aesthetic. In 1974 *Umbra* magazine moved from Harlem to Berkeley, California. The move was symbolized by the release of a poetry anthology focused on Latin Soul. Umbra, like the Black Arts Movement on the whole, influenced other minority groups in the United States to celebrate their identity and heritage.

The Black Community Programmes (BCP) in South Africa sought to take Black Consciousness from the Black and Colored universities to the slums and shantytowns where the majority of Black and Colored people lived and where the

principles of Black Consciousness could really thrive. The BCP attempted to improve the quality of life for Blacks and Coloreds by community run welfare projects. Dr. Mamphela Ramphele states that, "Within the Black Consciousness Movement, BCP became the leader in the field of community development, but relied on the path breaking role of SASO for political direction" (Pityana et al 156). Both SASO and BCP played vital roles in the promoting and disseminating the Black Consciousness agenda.

Selected Novelists

Peter Abrahams is a South African writer who relocated to Jamaica in the 1940s, before the suppression of the ANC and PAC and the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. According to Ogunghesan, Peter Abrahams is a political novelist. Race pride and Black manhood are two themes prevalent throughout all of Abraham's novels. Though Abraham's leaves South Africa almost two decades prior to writing *A Night of Their Own* the novel is set in Natal, South Africa and deals with issues pertinent to Apartheid South Africa. Abrahams has also written an autobiographical work entitled, *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa*.

Sam Greenlee is an African American author and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* is his first novel. Greenlee is a Chicago native and attended the University of Wisconsin and University of Chicago for higher education. He has also served in the United States armed forces. *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* is loosely based on his job as one of the first African American officers in the United States Information Agency (Aldave).

Bessie Head was the first Black South African female author³⁰ to publish a novel. Born in South Africa, Head sought refuge in Botswana in 1964. Head was the result of the illegal union of a Black African manservant and a wealthy White South African woman. Head worked as a journalist for *Drum* magazine before leaving the country. All of her novels are published through the African Writer's Series and she is often considered an influential novelist in both South Africa and Botswana.

Kristin (Hunter) Lattany was an African American female author of nine novels. She was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where she worked for more than two decades. Lattany used race and gender as pervasive themes within her works. One of her novels, *The Landlord*, was adopted as a motion picture.

Conclusion

The literature from both BCM and BAM represented a deviation from the norm of African Diasporic literature in that the authors had much more freedom when publishing their works through consciously Black publishing houses, magazines, collectives and other media forms. In the United States, Black Arts artists were able to creatively express themselves in ways that were not deemed artistic by the Eurocentric standards. South African writers had multiple avenues to circumvent the racist banning and censorship laws that were designed to silence any Black or Colored opposition to Apartheid. Black Consciousness writers could publish with a number of small printing presses in South Africa or seek publishing houses outside of Apartheid South Africa. During the 1960s Miriam Tlali was the

³⁰ By United States standards

first Black South African female writer to publish in South Africa. The Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements were times of great literary autonomous advancement for Blackness.

The Black Arts Movement was not limited to leaders and organizations; it was able to transcend geographical and educational differences to reach a wide array of Black people in the United States. The purpose of the movement was to provide Black people with a platform to creatively express themselves in a positive light without the influence of a White dominated society. The Black Arts Movement was art created for the people by the people for the betterment of the people. While at times the movement promoted violence and isolation it was ultimately able to help Black people foster a sense of self-assurance. BAM portrayed the good and the bad of Black people without shame or reservation, which can be inferred by the subject matter of the poems, short stories and novels of Black Arts artists.

In the same vein, the Black Consciousness Movement was not defined by the various organizations that collectively represented the movement; instead the movement perpetuated Blackness as a new social paradigm in South Africa through various entities. The overall purpose of Black Consciousness was to alter the ways in which all South Africans viewed the ethnic majority. Violence, isolation and self-assurance manifest themselves throughout the history of the movement. The Sharpeville Massacre, which sparked the need for the movement, the Soweto Rebellion– a peaceful Black and Colored run protest that resulted in the gruesome death of roughly one hundred and seventy-five people at the hands of Apartheid

South African police, and the death of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko in police custody were a few examples of everyday violence in South Africa during the BCM. Isolation for Blacks and Coloreds in South Africa was tangible in the forms of zoning laws that relegated Blacks and Coloreds to slums and shantytowns, visa requirements that restricted ethnic and White mixing and censorship through speech and press. The overall purpose of Black Consciousness was to improve the self-assurance of Black and Colored people. Black Consciousness specifically focused on the socio-economic position of Black and Colored people in South Africa by both improving the quality of life and fostering a sense of pride in racial ownership by professing slogans like, "Black Man, You Are On Your Own."

The themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance are prevalent in the history of BAM. Often, the leaders of both the Black Power and Black Arts Movement were arrested or involved in brutal battles with White supremacist law enforcement that ended violently. Both Black Power and Black Arts actively rejected support and participation from White people. At its core, Black Power's aim was to define Blackness outside the confines of the United States Eurocentric paradigm. The movement pursued isolation from mainstream America. While rejecting Whiteness BAM embraced Blackness in a new way that promoted only positive images of Black Americans. The Black Arts Movement not only helped change the image of Blackness in the United States, it also influenced other countries to reevaluate their connotations about Black people.

Chapter 3: I AM A MAN

“But we must leave South Africa to discover the transcendent importance of our South Africanness: ironic and tragic, is it not?”

-Peter Abrahams

“...If we can get that black pride going for us, then nothing is going to stop us until we’re free- nothing and nobody.”

- Sam Greenlee

A Night of Their Own and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* are two political novels written in the 1960s that address the Black Power struggle in South Africa and the United States respectively. The novels vary greatly in literary style, subject matter and character development. *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is a fantastical depiction of one man’s successful infiltration into the CIA and his subsequent ejection law enforcement from Chicago’s south side. The novel includes questionable characters like prostitutes, racist senators and drug using gang members. In contrast, *A Night of Their Own* is a realistic portrayal of one man’s attempt to keep the spiritual symbol of the underground (some ill defined collective) alive. The characters, like the stylistic approach, are realistic. The main characters grapple with identity issues, physical deformities and struggles with racism. Despite the stark differences of these two novels that are separated by distance, culture and time they share the political ideology of active resistance and present violence, isolation and self-assurance as prevalent themes.

Both novels use violence, isolation and self-assurance in similar manners. In regards to violence, two characters- one major and one minor die or are severely injured before the end of the novel. Acts of physical brutality to main characters in these two novels symbolically demonstrate that these two Black Power movements

are personal. Violence against minor characters indicates that all casualties in the battle against systematic oppression matter. The characters in *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* are isolated by race and education. In both novels one character grapples with identity issues stemming from multiracialism and the isolating factors of education. Finally, at least one female character in both novels finds a sense of self-assurance with the help and urging of male characters. These specific uses of violence isolation and self-assurance pervade the *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion* also.

Violence

Violence had great prevalence in both movements on the whole. Black militants in the United States walked around with loaded unconcealed weapons with plans of policing the police³¹. South African majorities spurred rebellions like The Soweto Uprising that resulted in the deaths of nearly two hundred protestors. Violence was one of the ways the two oppressed groups vented their anger to the immovable discriminatory practices of their governments. While the authors may not physically act on their anger, their novels can be viewed as an affirmation of violence being necessary at times; namely in self-defense. The historical violent incidents of the South African and United States Black Power eras are arguably catalysts for the anger and violence expressed in the novels. In a way, the anger felt by the fictional characters mirrors the emotions felt by people participating in the movements. Violence in both novels is the most prevalent of all three themes and

³¹ The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense for example.

rightfully so. Historically, both anti-Apartheid and Civil Rights protests led to a number of horrific, gruesome and violent occurrences. During the reigns of Black Power and Black Consciousness, both countries had reached a place where oppressed peoples were so frustrated that they no longer wanted to present their needs and desires in a diplomatic manner; they in the spirit of Malcolm X believed in achieving equal rights and African domination respectively and if attacked they reserve the right to attain justice by any means necessary³².

Both novels introduce the threat of violence in the first three pages and by the end of chapter two, the death of Westhuizen- Hans Coetzee *A Night of Their Own* and grave bodily harm of Calhoun in *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* have transpired. Westhuizen- Hans Coetzee and Calhoun are both minor characters. Both authors choose to introduce violence on the out set of their novels which implies that violence is important to the novels overall.

In the Black Arts Movement novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* Dan Freeman comes close to blowing his cover at the end of chapter two when he engages in an International Judo battle with supervisor Calhoun. Before the battle begins Calhoun and Freeman exchange harsh words:

(Calhoun) "I don't like your goddamn phony humility and I don't like your style. This is a team for men, not for misplaced cottonpickers. I'm going to give you a chance. You just walk up to the head office and resign and that will be it. Otherwise, we fight until you do. And you will not leave this room until I have whipped you and you walk out of here, or crawl out of here, or are carried out of here and resign. Do I make myself clear?"

³² Malcolm X is famous for saying, "We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence *by any means necessary*," in a 1965 speech.

(Freeman) "Yes, whitey, you make yourself clear. But you ain't running me nowhere. You're not man enough for that." (Greenlee 23)

Freeman is able to violently defeat Calhoun because he is faster, more coordinated and widely trained. Greenlee's calculated choice to explain in great detail Freeman's sheer talent is indicative of the bravado and conceited nature of Black male art from the Black Arts Movement.

Before the second and final round of the fight with Calhoun commences "Freeman wondered if he could keep from killing this white man" (Greenlee 26). Freeman knows the murder of supervisor Calhoun is counterproductive to his ultimate goal, yet he is unable to resist the urge of causing as much harm to Calhoun as possible. Freeman is humble and hard working, yet his instructors still do everything including attempting to fight him to the death to prevent him from gaining access to the agency, which infuriates Freeman. Black Aesthetic theorist, Addison Gayle postulates that the anger exuded in the works from the Black Arts Movement is the separating factor from preceding art created by Blacks. Greenlee's seminal frustration with American racism can be interpreted through Freeman's calculated decision to use violence knowing its potential to reveal his true power and strength, alerting the supervising officers that he is an imminent threat to their all White organization.

According to Johnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Gender Talk* the 1960s in the United States was a decade devoted to reaffirming Black masculinity in the patriarchal Victorian convention (Cole and Guy-Sheftall 79). Therefore, to be a 'real Black man,' one had to be strong, confident, and naturally physically and

mentally witty. Greenlee affirms the essentializing dogma of the movement with his male character, Freeman, who is able to continually earn the highest marks on the written examinations in his class, perform with near perfect physical aptitude and seduce all women in his life. He epitomizes Black masculinity in the 1960s. Anger is his only weakness.

The Black Consciousness Movement literature also conveys frustrations with racial hierarchy but in a subtler manner. In *A Night of Their Own*, one of the supporting characters, Westhuizen-Hans Coetzee, is murdered in chapter two. Abrahams saves the gory details of Westhuizen's death, which is dissimilar and more discreet than Greenlee's descriptive battle between Freeman and Calhoun. Instead of focusing on the how of the murder, Abrahams elects to explain the why. Westhuizen, a not White but not quite Black man has to be sacrificed for the greater good of Indians, Africans and Blacks who all participated in the movement. Before his untimely death, Westhuizen is upset and confused because he feels, acts and believes he is White but his official documentation denies him access to White privilege. The multiple layers of racial difference in South Africa further complicate the system of Apartheid, making it all the more difficult to overcome, especially in comparison to the White/Black dichotomy in the United States.

Chapter two also engages issues of male identity and its linkages to anger and violence in a similar manner to *The Spook Who Sat the my Door*. Richard Nkosi finds himself defending not only his masculinity, but also his racial identity to the female character Dee Nunkhoo. Nkosi is African and therefore should automatically

be revered according to Dee Nunkhoo's logic. The novel explains that in the past many Indian South Africans are slaughtered at the hands of Africans, which creates a deep-seated distrust between the two majority groups. Nkosi must convince Dee that he is non-threatening, something he is unable to achieve by the end of chapter two. Dicky, a supporting character, details the struggle between Nkosi and Dee by saying,

No. He tries to tell her he's sorry [referring to Nkosi attempting to apologize to Dee for the harm Africans caused Indians], but she don't let him. And she tell him how we feel about them. And then she show him her gun and it sound like she telling him how she want to kill him and don't do it. And he take the gun and give it back to her. (Abrahams, *A Night*, 36)

In addition to being African, Nkosi is male and has the potential to take advantage of Dee sexually because he is the only male in the house.

In the final chapter of *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* Freeman elects to kill Dawson, a Black police sergeant, for the sake of the Freedom Fighter Movement. Freeman believes that violence is the only way for Black people to attain liberation in the United States. Freeman does not survive the fight unscathed, he is shot in his side and it is unclear if the wound is fatal. Arguably, Dawson's death and Freeman's injury are the symbolic death of non-violence and a warning to the dangers of militant protest. Dawson seeks to peacefully integrate the Chicago police force, though he knows it is racist while Freeman strives to completely destroy law enforcement to 'get the system off his back.'

Before Freeman kills Dawson the men exchange words:

(Dawson) "And you think you're going to change the system, one man? There's no changing this system, not in our lifetime and maybe never and the only way to make it is get in the best spot you can find."

(Freeman) "I don't want to change this system, just get it off my back. I'm no fucking integrationist..." (Greenlee 243)

Dawson's words of persuasion to Freeman can be likened to the conversation Old Man Nanda has with his son Young Man Nanda about dreaming the impossible in *A Night of Their Own*. In both the dreaming conversation between Old Man Nanda and Young Man Nanda and the exchange between Freeman and Dawson the integrationist characters attempt to use belittlement as a tool to deter the more militant character. Old Man Nanda all but calls his son a fool for dreaming and Dawson attempts to convince Freeman that the system of oppression will not change through Freeman's actions. Militancy and non-violence are constantly in tension historically and literarily for both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements. The grave violence in the beginning and end of the novel suggests how significant violence as a theme is to both Black Arts literature and the Black Power concept.

The untimely and gruesome nature of Sammy Naidoo's death in the last chapter of *A Night of Their Own's* second section titled "When the Bough Breaks" has similar connotations as Dawson's death in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. Naidoo's death is more dramatic than Westhuizen-Hans Coetzee's because he is a rounder character with whom the audience can better empathize. After learning that Naidoo has lost the woman he loves, Dee Nunkoo, to an African man he must decide if he will die just to keep the possibility of an African ruled South Africa to alive. It seems at every turn this little Indian man loses to Africans. He like, Dan Freeman who spends over a decade preparing for war against the United States racist law

enforcement and is willing to fight Calhoun and Dawson to the death if necessary, is completely dedicated to the perpetuation of freedom struggle, no matter the cost.

Naidoo's death causes Karl Van As to think introspectively about his place in Apartheid and confront his personal emotional and political conflicts in regards to South Africa's racial hierarchy. Karl Van As loves a colored woman, Milred Scott, but he never marries her because his love for her is in stark contrast to his occupational duties. Van As' character embodies Martin Luther King Jr.'s stance on the White moderate. In King's "A Letter From Birmingham City Jail" he pens,

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's³³ great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice...

Van As, like the White moderate in the United States, believes that he as an individual can have very little effect on changing the tide of Apartheid if he tries. Therefore, he unquestioningly carries out the law enforcement orders from his superiors. In the end he loses the love of his life because he does not take a stance for what is right, he instead does what is easy; ignore the blatant problems that racial supremacy present.

Isolation

The stock characters and their personal problems present the most poignant manifestations of isolation in both novels. The characters grapple with real societal issues stemming from racial separation. The issue of colorism plagues both the

³³ In this case the Colored and Black African people.

ethnic minorities in the United States and the darker hued majorities in South Africa. Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi, Westhuizen, Dan Freeman and Pretty Willie Du Bois, among other characters must ultimately decide if they want to overcome self-imposed and systemic isolation or keep the walls of separation around themselves that prevent them from being an integral part of society.

Greenlee creates the feeling of isolation through the main characters in the novel in various ways, which creates a sense of lonely desperation that results in the Cobras and other urban street gangs using violence to reclaim the streets that comprise the ghettos where they live. In the novel Dan Freeman, Chicago police officer - Pete Dawson and White Senator Hennington's Minorities and Civil Rights Special Assistant - Summerfield are all the only Black men employed in their respective agencies. The isolation of stock characters is further exacerbated through the containment of Black characters in the ghettos and slums of the inner cities that are mostly homogeneously Black.

While with the CIA, Freeman grows accustomed to living a double life as the unassuming, non-threatening helpful Black man at work and during his leisure time he is a womanizing, economically secure, mysterious playboy. Throughout the entire novel the main character is isolated from the entire world through personality concealment; from the CIA training, being a CIA agent and a social worker on Chicago's south side. Dan Freeman is also isolated by his education because it separated him from all the other Black CIA agent candidates and allowed him aptly conceal his true identity from both White and Blacks.

After leaving the CIA Freeman goes back to Chicago and begins working as a social worker with gangs on the south. The Cobras only operate on Chicago's south side, which in effect isolates them from the rest of the city and other races³⁴. In addition, "The Cobras had already been an underground organization, visible only in their moments of violence, closed off to the outside world otherwise" (Greenlee 106). One of the Cobra members, originally named Pretty Willie Du Bois³⁵ deals with identity issues stemming from his complexion. According to Freeman, Willie, "Was potentially one of the leaders of the underground; one who might be trusted to command an underground unit in another city." But first Du Bois had to confront his deep inner-racial isolation and identity issues. The Cobras often mock Willie for looking different and taunt him for being pretty by Eurocentric aesthetic standards. In many ways Willie suffers in a similar manner to the not White but not quite Black Westhuizen-Hans-Coetzee in *A Night of Their Own*³⁶.

Richard Dube is arguably isolated in a similar manner as Dan Freeman, as both men are able to successfully infiltrate and coexist in a different racial group. Dube must navigate the treacherous race relations between Africans and Indians in

³⁴ The Cobras, the gang Freeman chose to train for his covert plan to overtake the city, is a street group comprised of all Black young men who do drugs, commit petty crimes and are considered pests to the city.

³⁵ Greenlee's choice to name him Willie Du Bois is a subliminal highlight of the famous sociologist and historian W. E. B. Du Bois, Du Bois' light complexion and how his color and his Black leadership at times where in tension. How could a light-skinned man lead a dark people when he could pass a White if necessary?

³⁶ Westhuizen's issues around identity can be better understood in the section on violence.

South Africa to ensure the spirit of Richard Nkosi lives on³⁷. Throughout the entire novel Dube-Nkosi does not encounter any other Africans. In fact, Dube-Nkosi must manipulate, with the help of makeup and wardrobe, his physical features to mask his Africanness when he retreats to a safe house in Indian inhabited lands. His presence amidst Indians is problematic, just as Freeman's successful infiltration of the CIA is met with discontent.

Abraham's creative choice to deal more with Indian and African relations rather than African and White relations is salient to understanding the great divide among the multiracial oppressed people in South Africa. Not only does Richard Dube/Nkosi have to deal with White rejection he must confront mental isolation with Indians. One way Dube/Nkosi is able to overcome his great sense of isolation is to begin a romantic relationship with Dee Nunkoo, an Indian crippled woman³⁸. Though their relationship is questioned by people like Dee's brother and Sammy Naidoo, the pair withstand because they dream of a South Africa where skin color does not determine who one can love. Their dream is similar to Young Man Nanda's impossible dream. The concept of dreaming throughout the novel embodies the theoretical nature of Black Consciousness thought because dreams can change hearts and minds but not the daily realities of unemployment, housing shortages and educational denial.

³⁷ Richard Nkosi is not a real person but an assumed identity that is a spiritual rallying point used to boost the moral of the underground that is under constant siege of the South African Government. Richard Dube is the latest man to assume the identity of Richard Nkosi.

³⁸ Dee Nunkoo's issues around body ability are further discussed in the self-assurance section of this chapter.

Dube/Nkosi is able to overcome isolation in a manner that Freeman cannot. Freeman has created so many isolating barriers that it is impossible for anyone to know the real Dan Freeman, not even his love interest Joy. This difference of overcoming isolation can be equated to the differing views on overcoming White supremacy for the two movements. The Black Arts/Black Power Movement simply sought to carve out its own space in White America, which is shown by Dan Freeman's attempt to build impenetrable isolation barriers to deal with the hatred that comes with White supremacy. The Black Consciousness Movement strove to change the entire governmental system to majority rule, like Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi's audacity to dream of a time when he would not be isolated from Indians or Coloreds or Whites.

Self-Assurance

The most salient examples of self-assurance from both *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* come in the form of women characters. In both stories the most prominent female has a great character flaw that the male protagonist helps her overcome. The necessitation of male approval to gain self-assurance exemplifies the gender bias of both movements. In the two novels women do not play integral roles in the freedom struggle, they are only presented as sexual beings and trophies for the male protagonists. Nevertheless, the women in both novels aptly depict instances of self-assurance despite great character flaws.

While working as a CIA agent Freeman indulges a prostitute that he calls a Dahomey Queen. Greenlee details her discovery of self-assurance through omniscient narration:

“She had never worn red before, she had been told all her life that she could not, because she was too black, but Freeman had told her that she should wear it because she was a Dahomey queen. She had gone to the library to find out what he had meant because he wouldn’t explain, and asked for the he had written down for her. She had found that he was talking about Africa and at first had been angry. But there was the picture of a woman in the book that had looked enough like herself to startle her, hair kinky and short-cropped, with big earrings in her ears. She had taken the book out of the library and painfully read it in its entirety. Then she bought a red dress and, later, several others when she found the tricks liked it, but mostly because Freeman liked her in red and said so. She wore big round and oval earrings like the queen in the picture, but she could not bring herself to wear her hair short and kinky; but sometimes she would look at the picture and see herself there and *for the first time in her life, she began to think that she might be beautiful* [emphasis added], as he said.”

Although the prostitute successfully gains self-assurance by being confident enough to wear red and seeing the beauty in her dark skin and viewing herself in the likeness of a queen, Greenlee asserts her newfound assurance through Freeman. The Dahomey Queen only sees herself as beautiful because Freeman, the hyper-masculine Freedom Fighter, believes her physical appearance has merit. Arguably, her new confidence is not assurance of self but it is important to underscore Freeman as a catalyst that sparks her transformation not the chemicals that combine in her mind that trigger assurance. The prostitute does all the work of going to the library, reading the entire book and purchasing the red dresses, not Freeman.

More broadly, this passage highlights a few major points of the Black Arts Movement. Greenlee uses the prostitute’s narrative as a teaching moment for his audience by urging his uneducated Black character to pick up a book. Arguably, the

people reading his novel during the Black Arts era were probably educated but one of the purposes of the movement was to socialize Blacks to be more intellectually driven. Another major point of Black Arts Movement was to give back the confidence that was striped away from Black men through centuries of emasculation by exaggerating Black masculine authority. The image of kinky hair and large afros became associated with both the Black Power and Black Arts movements and the Dahomey's refusal to wear her natural hair points her continued struggle with her Black identity or her self determination to wear her hair however she wants.

Dee Nunkhoo by grave contrast to the Dahomey Queen's psychological flaws, is physically flawed by a birth defect; she has a clubfoot. A new red dress or a pair big hoop earrings cannot eliminate the stigma that accompanies her physical disability. Abrahams deals with Dee's flaws by providing her with someone who will love her despite her physical difference. Notably, Sammy Naidoo, the young Indian man who ultimately dies for the prosperity of the movement, also is interested in Dee but she dismisses his attraction. Interestingly, Abrahams elects to have an African man (not a White man-the highest race group under Apartheid or a man of her own race, an Indian man) help Dee overcome her personal affliction toward her deformed foot through a love scene, implying not only that African men have healing powers other races do not³⁹ but also that emotional wounds derived

³⁹ Dee's first love was a White man in London, who expects her to fund his lavish lifestyle because he deals with her despite her clubfoot and she does not desire Sammy Naidoo.

from physical difference can be handled through sex. Abraham's narrates after Dee and Dube's first love encounter:

He felt her withdraw, both physically and spiritually, so he forced his foot back onto the clubfoot feeling it. Her withdrawal, now, complete. He wondered why. There had to be a reason for this deformed foot to mess her up so; there had to be a reason for this defensive foisting of her crippledness on people.... She thought: We've crossed the first hurdle; next time will be all passion, and more than a little wild perhaps. And then she thought: God how I would love to have his children! (Abrahams 58)

Richard Dube helps Dee Nunkhoo overcome her reservations about her physical appearance by directly confronting the issue rather than a roundabout way like the Dahomey Queen does by reading a book. After the awkward moment between Dee and Richard she able let down the emotional walls she builds and be confident in her abilities and view her self as worthy to have Richard's children.

Conclusion

The characters, plot lines, major political themes among other stylistic differences separate *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* and *A Night of Their Own*, but the both books use the themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance to tell the stories. The authors use the characters to present the themes but just as the characters vary greatly between the two novels so does the purpose of the themes. Despite the plethora of difference separating these two novels they at their core are similar political commentaries on the systematic racial oppression that plagued both the United States and South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 4: Say It Loud! I Am A Black Woman and I'm Proud!

"...There was a quiet and desperate revolution going on..."

Bessie Head

"Oh no, my friend. This town is *owned* by us, not loaned to us."

-Kristin Lattany

The novels, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion*, are two fictitious depictions of everyday life in small tight-knit communities. The novels vary greatly in geography, style and literary message. *When Rain Clouds Gather* is set in a village called Golema Mmidi in Botswana and *The Lakestown Rebellion* is set in Lakestown, New Jersey, both are locations are fictive and portrayed as almost utopias despite great troubles of poverty, governmental oppression and lack of educational infrastructure. Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* is a realistic depiction of gradual agriculture progress for the people of eastern Botswana while Kristin Lattany's *The Lakestown Rebellion* is a relatively fantastic tale of an all Black-town's triumph over the government's attempt to destroy their town to build a new highway. Overall Head asserts that progress is often a series of small changes that produce large results and Lattany portrays how stereotypes of ignorance and apathy can thwart oppression use non-violence tactics. Both novels give their readers alternatives to the more radical Black Power concepts that pervaded the authors' respective home nations during the late 1960s and 1970s when both novels were published.

Although these two novels written by women vary greatly from the Black Arts and Black Consciousness novels discussed in chapter 3, all four novels use violence, isolation and self-assurance as themes that progress the novel to their

respective climaxes. More significantly, all four authors use the three aforementioned themes in the same manner to aid them in telling starkly different stories. In all four novels one major and one minor character dies. Further, majority of the deaths in all four novels are gruesome sacrifices for progression or revolution. All four novels use race and/or ethnicity as a form of isolation and present issues of colorism within races through supporting characters. Also, main characters in all four novels are isolated by race or ethnicity because they must navigate the culture and tradition of another racial group to promote civil rights progress. Finally, the women in each story grapple with self-assurance and ultimately find a heightened sense of confidence through the main male characters. While these findings transcend all four novels, the works written by women nuance the issues of violence, isolation and self-assurance in a unique manner. The main differences are the prevalence of well-developed female characters that are independent and male characters that depend on women significantly more than the male characters in *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*.

In *When Rain Clouds Gather* Bessie Head presents three very emotionally strong, intelligent and independent women; Mma-Millipede, Maria and Paulina Sebeso. Mma-Millipede is the symbolic mother figure of the entire village as she is always consulted before major decisions are made, including the marriage of Maria and Gilbert, the growing of tobacco as a cash crop and Paulina's romantic pursuit of Makhaya. Maria, the daughter of an elderly and influential village man, does not conform to the expectations of Golema Mmidi women by marrying a White foreigner and being aloof around other village women when they gossip. Paulina, like Mme-

Millipede and Maria, is independent of the other village women and is emotionally aloof. She is a single mother of two and must manage all of the finances and responsibilities of her family. The other women in the village acknowledge Paulina's natural leadership skills and select her as their unspoken leader because she refuses to submit to any man and makes sound decisions in regards to her own family and subsequently will make the best decisions for the entire village.

Kristin Lattany presents Mame Porritt, Vinnie Coddums and Bella Lakes in *The Lakestown Rebellion*, as strong independent characters. Mame Porritt runs the Blue Moon Tavern and Rest⁴⁰, a "ramshackle building with a row of six scabby tourist cabins out back" (Lattany 72), by herself and demands respect and reverence from all Lakestown citizens. Vinnie Coddums like *When Rain Clouds Gather's* Paulina is a single mother who works hard to provide for her mute child, Cindy. When Vinnie realizes the highway will destroy her home and church she insists the people of Lakestown fight to keep the highway away from her beloved home. Bella Lakes is by far the strongest female character in this story as she refuses to hide her overtly Black characteristics though her husband requests her to 'act White'. Bella also refuses bail when she is wrongfully imprisoned for prostitution and openly engages her husband's brother in a romantic affair.

All six women, Mma Millipede, Maria, Paulina and Mame Porrit, Vinnie Coddumes, Bella Lakes are strong and are able to help overcome systematic

⁴⁰ The tavern was once called Blue Moon tavern and Restaurant but the lights for letters 'aurant' went out before the cabins outback are complete and the owner never gets them fixed.

oppression in ways that the female characters of *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* do not. In *A Night of Their Own* Anna De Wit, Mildred Scott and Dee Nunkhoo, are all portrayed as love interests to the male characters and do little to actively defeat systematic oppression. Anna De Wit is Karl Van As' secretary who secretly is romantically interested in Van As but she is never able to win his affection. Mildred Scott, in contrast, is the only woman Van As ever loves but they never wed nor remain together because she is a Colored woman and it is Van As' job to suppress the socio-economic progress of people like her. Dee Nunkhoo is an Indian woman who gets romantically involved with Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi. By the end of the novel Nunkhoo must helplessly watch the love of her life sneak out of South Africa to avoid governmental persecution. None of these women make decisions pertinent to the Apartheid government or the anti-Apartheid underground movement. Joy and the Dahomey Queen in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* are just as passive in regards to overcoming the systematic oppression that pervaded Dan Freeman's America. Joy, the woman Dan Freeman loves and trusts most, settles for working within the system of oppression by gaining a college education to marrying a well to do man. Freeman desires for Joy to remain as radical as she is in college and help him combat the system of oppression that prevents Black people in the United States from succeeding in large numbers, but she refuses. The Dahomey Queen in Harlem only discovers her worth with the help of Dan Freeman, which is better detailed in the Self-assurance section of chapter three. Joy and the Dahomey Queen, like the female characters in *A Night Of Their Own*, do very little to impact the outcome of systematic oppression protest.

The male characters depend more on women in both *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Lakestown Rebellion* than vice versa. The men are not the masterminds behind the methods of progress in either story discussed in this chapter. In fact, the men of Golema Mmidi in Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, in comparison to the might of male characters like Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi from *A Night of Their Own* and Dan Freeman from *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* are docile and depend more on the strength of women. Head writes, "The women were the backbone of agriculture while the men on the whole were cattle drivers" (29). Aside from Dinorego, an elder of the village and the village's sub-chief Matenge all men indigenous to Golema Mmidi spend the majority of the year on the outskirts of the village herding cattle, which leaves the women to make the major decisions pertaining to crops, finances and children. Under the leadership of Paulina Sebeso the women of Golema Mmidi elect to begin growing tobacco as a cash crop, which eventually saves the entire village from starvation when the majority of the village's cattle suddenly die. The women are responsible for progressing Golema Mmidi from a subsisting village to a thriving agricultural co-operative. Arguably, the women thrived because Gilbert Balfour, an agricultural expert from England, urged them to try alternative crops that will prosper in the arid conditions of Botswana. But the women as Head says are the backbone of the whole operation, which means the women are responsible for the work that ensured the entire village was not wiped out due to poverty and hunger. Head also asserts that, "It was as though a whole society had connived at producing a race of degenerate men by stressing their superiority in the law and overlooking how it affected them as individuals"

(Head 89), meaning the men of Golema Mmidi were in charge in law but not in practice.

Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi and Dan Freeman by contrast are the driving force behind the success of their respective protest initiatives. Richard Dube/Richard Nkosi single handedly revitalized the anti-Apartheid underground by delivering a large sum of money and assuming the identity of Richard Nkosi, the symbolic identity of the resistance movement that never dies. Dan Freeman is the only Black person to successfully infiltrate the CIA and his knowledge of guerilla warfare tactics is essential for the Cobras, a gang, to oust racist federal law enforcement from Chicago's south side. While Head and Lattany may be refuting stereotypes of women in literature that have existed for centuries, it is clear that there is gender differentiation between the male-authored and female-authored novels. These biases suggest that all four writers have clear gender bias.

The women of Lakestown, New Jersey, like the women of Golema Mmidi are responsible for ensuring the preservation of the only all Black city in the United States. Lakestown women are the first to discover the plans to level the city, incite all the people in the city to defend their hometown and mastermind the best approach to thwart the construction workers. Lavinia "Vinnie" Coddums, Senator Grafton's house-maid, overhears the Senator and some other government officials discussing plans to bypass their city, Edgehill and railroad through the heart of Lakestown. Vinnie steals the highway blueprints as proof to present to the

inhabitants of Lakestown. Bella Lakes, the wife of Lakestown's mayor, when brainstorming highway resistance tactics says,

The way of the Book is no good. Preaching, marching, praying. All that depresses me, somehow. But the way of the sword won't work either. Ikie's right—they'd simply kill us all. But there's another way black people have always used in tight situations... Black people... Have to work together as a tribe. We're surrounded and outnumbered. We can't afford to let the men take all the risks alone. And this is something that could involve every man, woman and child in town. (Lattany 89-90)

Though Bella is subtle in what she is saying, she suggests that Lakestown emulate Black folklore like Brer Rabbit and Anansi the spider and use clever and witty measures to defeat the stronger and larger federal highway commission.

Eventually, Lakestown takes Bella's suggestion and they cause the commission to lose federal funding and therefore cannot finish the highway project. Ultimately no buildings in Lakestown are destroyed. Despite the difference in character portrayal between the male and female authors, all four novels share the common themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance.

Violence

In *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion* like in *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, there are at least two character deaths. Isaac, Paulina Sebeso's son and chief Matenge both are dead by the end of *When Rain Clouds Gather*. Ronald "Fess" P. Roaney in *The Lakestown Rebellion* elects to die and Lou Adams is the victim of a tragic accident. Both novels portray a major character who makes the decision to take his own lives, the difference being one is a blatantly guilt induced suicide and the other is to cease a life of suffering after ensuring the prosperity of his homeland. In addition, both novels depict the death

of a youth minor character as tragic accidents. Paulina Sebeso's son Isaac from *When Rain Clouds Gather* dies from tuberculosis and Lou Adams, a teenaged boy from *The Lakestown Rebellion* drowns to death. There are many other violent scenes in both novels like Vinnie Coddum holding someone at gunpoint twice and the chiefs of Golema Mmidi plotting to assassinate each other despite being brothers. For the purposes of this thesis I will focus solely on the violent act of death because it is the strongest and most salient point of continuity across all four novels and has particular similarities within the selected works written by women.

Chief Matenge in *When Rain Clouds Gather* is a one-dimensional character that allows Head to make a pointed commentary on tribal life in Southern Africa. Matenge represents all the bad aspects Head associates with tribal culture in this novel. He is a selfish, gluttonous dictator who is not remotely concerned with the prosperity of his village. Head does not provide Matenge with any redeeming characteristics so when he commits suicide at the end of the novel no one, not even his brother genuinely grieves his death. Matenge attempts to prosecute Paulina once he realizes that the people of Golema Mmidi, under the leadership of Paulina, are thriving in agriculture. But in the end he decides to hang himself. His thoughts being, "The end of it was that Matenge had to barricade himself up, not because the villagers were about to rise up and tear him to shreds, but because he was an evil pervert and he knew it" (Head 174). Matenge is similar to Westhuizen Hans-Coetzee and Pete Dawson because his death is necessary for progress and revolution. In Golema Mmidi Matenge has the authority to halt any progress and he, like his brother, perversely enjoys saying no to the people of Eastern Botswana.

Similarly, the Underground eliminates Westhuizen Hans-Coetzee because he knows too much information and could be tortured into relinquishing vital Underground secrets. If the proponents of Apartheid attain the information Westhuizen Hans Coetzee knows the Underground will be ruined. Pete Dawson in *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* refuses to join Dan Freeman and the Cobras in their active resistance of systematic oppression and he knows they are behind all the menacing and violent terrorist attacks on law enforcement, which prompts Freeman to kill him. Arguably, a man is sacrificed for the greater good of revolution and/or forward progression in all three novels; *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *A Night of Their Own* and *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*.

In contrast to the other three major character's deaths, Ronald "Fess" P. Roaney in *The Lakestown Rebellion* chooses death once the city successfully triumphs against the federal highway commission. Fess is similar to chief Matenge in that they both determine when their lives end but Fess' death is significantly more positive, martyr like almost. Through the entire novel, Fess' ultimate desire is to ensure that Lakestown will sustain itself and continue be a historical site for Black people. Death, in Fess' case, is almost a welcomed friend, as Fess dies with a smile on his face. And before he perishes he witnesses Lakestown defeat the highway commission, which is the happiest time of his life, according to his best friend Doc. Thompson (Lattany 299-300). Though Fess's death is eminent throughout the entire novel and he ultimately chooses when to die, his death can still be considered a violent act because of its impact on the other characters. Doc. Thompson is greatly saddened by the loss of his best friend, Isaac Lakes feels guilty

for operating the machine that released the water that drowned Fess and the other men present are also deeply disturbed by Fess' death. Lattany employs acts of violence like death by drowning to make political statements about protest being personal and thereby meeting Addison Gayle's requirement of Black Art being social, or politically charged, as discussed in chapter one.

Both novels present a young male character that dies in a tragic accident. Arguably, both Head and Lattany present their audiences with a sacrifice of innocence for the greater good of progress. Neither Isaac nor Lou Adams are developed enough for the reader to know of any character flaws. We simply know that both boys were young in age and loved by their respective families. Unfortunately, both young men do not heed good advice/judgment, which leads to their death. Isaac is instructed to return home to his mother from his cattle post but does not (Head 147) and Antonio "Tonio" Farmer warns the Young Warriors against breaking into the forbidden pool where Lou is subsequently drowned. Nevertheless, Isaac's death is more due to his family's economic situation than to his refusing to go home. The ten-year-old boy remains on the outskirts of Golema Mmidi majority for the year because Paulina Sebeso cannot financially support him and his younger sister Lerato without Isaac raising cattle. He chooses to remain with the cattle despite his illness because he knows his family needs the money the cattle provide. In this particular situation the blame of his death needs to be placed squarely on the institution of oppression that prohibits agricultural advancement in Golema Mmidi and the implementers of the system- or chiefs Sekoto and Matenge. Similarly, the Young Warriors are less at fault for violating a segregation law than is

the law itself. Notwithstanding the boys' personal choices not to heed warnings, both tragic deaths present evidence of the status quo being oppressive and dangerous. For the people of Golema Mmidi and Lakestown, the death of a young man further solidifies the need for change.

Isolation

Akin to the highlighted examples of isolation from chapter 3, race and identity issues greatly impact the characters in *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion*. Gilbert Balfour from *When Rain Clouds Gather* and Bella Lakes from *The Lakestown Rebellion* are both isolated from the dominant group in their respective stories based on their phenotypes. But despite their difference, both characters are indispensable to the progress and success of Golema Mmidi and Lakestown. In addition, education isolates Makhaya Maseko and Abe Lakes from the average person in their respective homelands. Head and Lattany use education as a tool to overcome systematic oppression. Isolation in these novels is a negative aspect of race, i.e. educational ignorance and identity stigmatization that are used to catapult characters into a better life.

Gilbert Balfour is an Englishman who is agriculturally educated and has access to resources to help Golema Mmidi become a self-sustaining and even prosperous village. The villagers often are apprehensive and distrustful of Gilbert because he is foreign. There are inflammatory pamphlets claiming that British volunteers are cheating the people of Botswana circulating that add to the sentiments of distrust.

In addition, Gilbert “Had not felt free in England either, at least not in the upper middle class background into which he had been born” (Head 98). Despite the isolation of being the only White man in Golema Mmidi and not being White enough to fit upper middle class English society, Gilbert is able to create a cattle co-operative, which helps the families in Golema Mmidi recuperate from grave losses when six-hundred thousand cattle are suddenly lost (Head 155). He, with the help of Paulina Sebeso, convince the women to grow tobacco co-operatively so that the village can produce enough crops to make a profit.

The connotations of an Englishman instead of an indigenous Batswana⁴¹ raising Golema Mmidi from unending poverty has historical issues of upholding the stereotypes of African people being backwards, uncivilized and needing the assistance of Europeans. I contend that Gilbert does not perpetuate these stereotypes because Golema Mmidi is as much of a refuge for him as he helps the village prosper. He, like the people of Golema Mmidi, is deemed different by European standards and thus is arguably more closely associated with the Batswana people he lives with than the English people he looks like. Further, Golema Mmidi, “Was not a village in the usual meaning of being composed of large tribal or family groupings. Golema Mmidi consisted of individuals who fled there to escape the tragedies of life” (Head 16). Gilbert fits within the description of Golema Mmidi people as he escapes to Botswana after being tragically rejected by his own people. Questions of his right to help Golema Mmidi aside, Gilbert is the main reason the

⁴¹ The people from Botswana are called Batswana in the novel.

village is not destroyed by famine and is therefore indispensable to the prosperity of the village.

Bella Lakes in *The Lakestown Rebellion*, like Gilbert Balfour is visibly different from the people of Lakestown and she is not indigenous to Lakestown. Bella, "Was all the more isolated because she and her parents were products of Claypool, a little ghetto pocket of Low Point where everyone was almost white but not quite, and people of either distinct racial heritage were unwelcome" (Lattany 48). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Bella Lakes is the mastermind behind the tactics of deception that eventually halts the highway that is supposed to destroy Lakestown. Bella in some respects is not completely loyal to the Lakestown insurrection because her husband, Mayor Abraham Lincoln Lakes, who she vows to help, desperately wants the highway to come through Lakestown. Abe Lakes, in the hopes of becoming a highway commissioner one day, grants the current commissioner permission to destroy Lakestown (Lattany 198-199). In fact, Bella barely participates in the schemes that delay the highway construction; she instead refuses to be bailed out from her wrongful imprisonment while the plans of sabotage are in motion. Nevertheless, Bella helps her husband realize he is Black man and therefore will never get high ranking governmental positions like state highway commissioner. By the end of the novel Abe Lakes helps stop the highway from leveling Lakestown. She is a pivotal character that greatly impacts the battle between Lakestown and the state highway commission.

Education in both *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion* is an isolating factor as a majority of the characters are not highly educated. And the characters that are educated often have differing ideals and values than the majority. Thus, the educated people in both novels are isolated by their ideals and values but in both stories the educated characters eventually aid the less educated characters achieve a better quality of life. The concept of socio-economic uplift through education is salient to both Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements as it encourages the readership to become educated and it demonstrates how education is necessary for revolution and change.

We can conclude that Makaya Makeso is more educated than the average person in Golema Mmidi, though Head never definitively articulates this point by Dinorego saying, "It's because of education,' the old man said, nodding his head wisely. "They should not have given you the education. Take away the little bit of education and you will be only too happy... It's only the education that turns a man away from his tribe" (Head 3). Makhaya is able to convince the women of Golema Mmidi to change their agricultural practices in less than a year of being in the village. He also interacts with the village women in an unconventional manner by working side by side, eating and casually conversing with them. Makhaya actively resists the traditional tribal life of gender work assignment and individual agricultural cultivation that has relegated Golema Mmidi and many other tribal villages in Southern Africa, according to Bessie Head, to a lowly socio-economic space. Though Makhaya is an educated man, it can be argued that Gilbert Balfour is more important to the changes that happen in Golema Mmidi. Even still, Makhaya is

able to gain the trust of the villagers in ways that Gilbert will never be able to simply because Gilbert is White. Makhaya and his different perspective on tribal life are necessary for change to come to Golema Mmidi.

Abraham Lincoln Lakes from *The Lakestown Rebellion* is one of three characters in the novel to receive a post-secondary education. Mayor Lakes is different from Professor Ronald "Fess" P. Rooney and Doctor Thompson because he does not know he is a Black man (Lattany 110). Abe Lakes never has the crushing moment of realization that is often associated with being Black. Therefore he believes he is a special type of Black person that can transcend race through employment and socio-economic status to ultimately be accepted by White people. Before the novel is over Abe Lakes has a moment of racial realization and subsequently joins the Lakestown resistance movement. Abe Lakes is able to use his educated mind to outsmart the highway state commission and ultimately overcome his emotional isolation from Lakestown.

Self-Assurance

Paulina Sebeso and Bella Lakes both make the difficult decision to non-conformity to their respective societal pressures, meaning they decide not to ascribe to particular gender characteristics for the sake of societal norms. Both women find the standards they are expected to uphold stifling and outside of their natural character. The other women in both *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion* are willing to play the roles society expects of them but Paulina and Bella are self-assured and confident enough in who they are to resist conformity. Further,

the male characters that are romantically involved with Paulina and Bella provide these two women with more assurance that they are worthy of being who they are despite what society says.

In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, Paulina Sebeso is not the typical Golema Mmidi woman. She is a single mother of two and a strong-willed woman. Head carefully articulates that Paulina desires a man to be part of her life but not her main focus, which is significant because most women in the village live their lives around their husbands. Head, when describing Paulina writes, "One might go so far as to say that it is strong, dominating personalities who might play a decisive role when things are changing," which implies that Paulina plays a vital role in the progress of Golema Mmidi. Gilbert Balfour enlists the assistance of Mma-Millipede, a village mother figure, in convincing the women to grow tobacco as a cash crop. Mma-Millipede believes "The only woman who would have the courage to persuade the other women to attend lessons at the farm was Paulina Sebeso" (Head 96). Before helping bring change to Golema Mmidi Paulina is a strong woman but she gains a deeper sense of self-assurance when she wins the love and affection of Makhaya Maseko.

As Paulina and Makhaya work side by side doing things like creating a mud shed to cure the tobacco Makhaya realizes that Paulina is beautiful (Head 113). He demands that Paulina sells her cattle so that Isaac, Paulina's son, can leave the cattle post and go to school. He also makes grass and trees for Lerato's small mud village. Though Makhaya does not show Paulina outright romantic affection he clearly has a vested interest in her and her children, which means he accepts all of Paulina as she

is in a society that expects her to be more docile. He arguably supports the woman she has the strength to be.

Bella Lakes in *The Lakestown Rebellion* is also an unapologetically confident and self-assured woman. Bella plays cards and sings at less than reputable establishments, commits adultery openly and refuses to forsake her Black culture for her husband. In fact, Bella amplifies her distinctly Black cultural habits solely to enrage her husband by cultivating her own garden though she can more than afford grocery store food, always cooking neck-bones, collard greens and other foods associated with Black culture and Bella refuses to properly receive and entertain her husband's White house guests. In Bella's efforts to upset her husband with being culturally Black, she compromises who she really is. But once she helps Abe Lakes discover his Blackness, the couple lives a life where neither man or wife attempt to be anything but themselves. Abe Lakes helps Bella become the true essence of who she is not what someone expects of her nor who she has to be to upset someone else.

Conclusion

In this thesis strong parallels were drawn between the history and literature of both the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements. Although this study is by no means all encompassing of all novels derived from the two movements, it does serve to strengthen the arguments for continuity between the United States and South Africa that George Fredrickson and Pierre Van Den Burghe assert through history and culture. Fredrickson and Van Den Burghe both consider the United States and South Africa countries with full-blown racism, which is essentially the combination of two lethal elements, prejudice and power. In both countries people are categorized by phenotype and this variance in appearance is subsequently stratified with White people having more privilege. The selected novels written in the spirit of opposition to systematic oppression serve to highlight how prejudice and power impact the daily realities of oppressed people.

All four novels, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, *A Night of Their Own*, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *The Lakestown Rebellion* are loosely based on the lives of their respective authors. Further, each novel attempts to present various forms of active resistance to systematic oppression. *A Night of Their Own* details how the myth of an infallible man keeps the moral of the Underground high despite constant government suppression. This novel points to the use of dreams as a weapon against oppression; in order for revolutionary change to happen the change must first be a thought or dream. *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* alludes to how one person can make monumental changes if they she or he is are patient and dedicated.

Dan Freeman is able to help Chicago's south side gangs defend and take back their community from racist and abusive law enforcement. *When Rain Clouds Gather* depicts how small lifestyle changes can eventually lead to a better standard of life. The people of Golema Mmidi make small changes like growing a different kind of crop and building small dams from natural materials to collect rainwater. These small changes prevents the entire village from starving and being economically annihilated when a majority of the village's cattle die suddenly. *The Lakestown Rebellion* uses folklore and selective ignorance to derail the federal government commissioned highway construction that is slated to destroy Lakestown. All four novels end with the underdog succeeding.

Though each novel details victories for oppressed people, the struggle to win the battle for all of the characters is not easy. The characters in all four novels are confronted with violent situations, which often result in death. The characters are often alienated due to problems of racial identity and education. In each novel one female character must struggle to find self-assurance. The themes of violence, isolation and self-assurance that pervade all four novels are also themes that are prevalent in both movements. Often oppressed people in the United States and South Africa were harassed and attacked by racist law enforcement during the 1960s and 1970s. Also, Jim Crow followed by black militant and cultural nationalism in the United States and Apartheid laws in South Africa isolated people of color, solely based on race. Finally, the movements themselves strove to help people of color redefine Blackness and appreciate the Black-self. The historical,

cultural, political and now literary ties between the United States and South Africa, especially during the 1960s and 1970s are astounding.

Appendix A

***A Night of Their Own* by Peter Abrahams** (As found in the novel on page IX)

Richard Nkosi- an identity used by many men in the service of the underground.

Richard Dube- an artist, the latest Richard Nkosi

Westhuizen- a man who was white till the law declared him colored, and who then became Hans Coetzee.

Sammy Naidoo- a leader of the Indian resistance in Natal

Dee Nunkhoo- his [Dawood Nunkhoo, an Indian doctor's] crippled sister

Karl Van As- deputy head, Natal Bureau of Internal Security

Mildred Scott- headmistress of the Colored Girl's School and mistress of Van As

Anna De Wet- secretary of Van As

Old Man Nanda- a wealthy Indian merchant

Young Man Nanda- otherwise Joe, his [Old Man Nanda]

Appendix B

***The Spook Who Sat By the Door* by Sam Greenlee**

Calhoun- A CIA supervisor from North Carolina

Dan Freeman- a south side Chicago, Illinois native who successfully infiltrates the Central Intelligence Agency and subsequently teaches gang members on Chicago's south side guerilla warfare tactics to oust racist

Dahomey Queen- A Harlem, New York prostitute

Joy- Dan Freeman's love interest

Pretty Willie Du Bois- a member of the Cobras gang, who has issues of identity and colorism.

Senator Gilbert Hennington- A White senator

Sergeant Pete Dawson- a Chicago Black police sergeant

Summerfield- Senator Hennington's Minorities and Civil Rights Special Assistant

Appendix C

***When Rain Clouds Gather* by Bessie Head**

Chief Sekoto- the paramount chief of Golema Mmidi

Dinorego- a village elderly man who befriends Makhaya

Gilbert Balfour- an English agriculture specialist

Makhaya Maseko- A South African man who moves to Golema Mmidi (main character)

Maria- Dinorego's daughter

Mma-Millipede- a mother like figure of Golema Mmidi

Paulina Sebeso- a single mother of two and Makhaya's wife

Sub-chief Matenge- Chief Sekoto's brother and is in charge of Golema Mmidi

Appendix D***The Lakestown Rebellion by Kristin Lattany***

Abraham "Abe" Lincoln Lakes- The mayor of Lakestown, New Jersey.

Antonio "Tonio" (Daoud) Farmer- The oldest member of the Young Warriors and succeeds Lukey Hawkins as the Young Warriors president.

Bella Lakes- Abe Lakes' wife and she is a-not-quite White woman from Claypool, New Jersey.

Doc. Thompson- The only primary physician in Lakestown.

Isaac "Ikie" Lakes- He is Abe Lake's brother and Bella Lakes' paramour.

Lavinia "Vinnie" Coddums- Senator Grafton's house servant and Cindy's mother

Lucinda "Cindy" Coddums- She is Vinnie and Abe Lake's illegitimate fifteen year old, mute daughter.

Mame Porritt- The owner of Blue Moon Tavern and Rest.

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