

✓

**THE DISCUSSION OF R.R.R. DHLOMO'S**

**HISTORICAL NOVELS**

By

**FIKILE PATRICIA KHOZA**

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities in fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the degree of

**Masters of Arts**

in the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages  
University of Durban-Westville

**Supervisors:**            **Professor J.P. Wade**  
                                 **Professor A.J. Van Wyk**

**Date Submitted:**        **January 2001**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that **The Discussion of R.R.R. Dhlomo's Historical Novels** is my own work and all the sources used have been indicated by means of complete reference and bibliography.

*FP Khoza*

**Fikile Patricia Khoza**

SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE  
ENGLISH LITERATURE - SOUTH AFRICAN  
AUTATORS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following:

Professor J. Van Wyk for his assistance and guidance which have been of great benefit to me.

Professor J.P. Wade for his support, guidance and encouragement throughout the period of study.

Dr N. Mkhulisi, of Pretoria University, whose guidance and encouragement have enabled me to complete this work.

Mrs Mballi Mkhize, Lecturer at Mangosuthu Technikon for her guidance and support.

My fiancé, E.V. Mthembu for his encouragement.

My colleagues at the Centre for their discussion and moral support.

And finally my mother Antonia Khoza, my family members and friends, who encouraged me not to give up the research.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER ONE

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Research problem	1
1.2	The objectivity of the study	2
1.3	The feasibility of the study	3
1.4	Research and methodology	3
1.5	Hypothesis	3
1.6	Summary and the outline of the dissertation	4
1.7	Bibliography	5

### CHAPTER TWO

2.	Theoretical Background	6
2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	Definition of post-colonialism	11
2.3	Definition of nationalism	17
2.4	The version of a historical novel	21
2.5	Summary	25

### CHAPTER THREE

3.	Contextualisation of R.R.R. Dhlomo's life history	26
3.1	Introduction	26
3.2	Historical biography of R.R.R. Dhlomo	26
3.3	Home	26
3.4	The School Nature of education which moulded R.R.R. Dhlomo creativity	29
3.5	His personality	30
3.6	R.R.R. Dhlomo's literary achievements	30

### CHAPTER FOUR

4.	Discussion of R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels	38
4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	Analysis of R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels	38
4.3	Definition of terms and general background information	45

4.3.1	The term "character"	45
4.3.2	The term "characterization"	46
4.3.3	General background information	47
4.4	Characterization of R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels	48
4.4.1	<i>Shaka</i>	48
4.4.2	Characterization in <i>Dingane</i>	51
4.4.3	Characterization in <i>Cetshwayo</i>	55
4.5	Plot in <i>Shaka</i>	57
4.6	Plot in <i>Dingane</i>	63
4.7	<i>Mpande's</i> plot	65
4.8	Plot in <i>Cetshwayo</i>	67
4.9	Summary	72
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>		<b>73</b>
5.	Conclusion	73
Bibliography		78

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research problem

This dissertation will explore R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels about the Zulu kings viz. uDingane kaSenzangakhona (1936), uShaka (1937), uMpande kaSenzangakhona (1938), and uCetshwayo (1952).

Rolf Dhlomo's novels on the Zulu kings, later introduced as the main source of Zulu history, were based on Stuart's collection of "Izibongo". The "Praise poems" in these works appear to be identical to those collected by Stuart and C.L.S. Nyembezi. "Izibongo Zamakhosi" also relied on Stuart's text heavily.

In 1960 Zulu scholars were still using Stuart's collection to explain the role of tribal poetry both in the past and in the present.

In 1970 Masizi Kunene wrote the Zulu Epic derived from these texts.

As far as Dhlomo's books are concerned, it was easier for him to get them published as schoolbooks. Tim Couzens "Introduction" (1985) declares that during Dhlomo's time, it was difficult for an African writer to publish anything in book form beyond missionary literature. African writers in South Africa were also

faced with the stumbling block of a lack of publication facilities for many years. Since there was no international audience for African literature, the black African writers had to publish their work in newspapers.

In 1928 Rolfes wrote a short sketch which appeared in a local European daily paper, and a long short story was apparently accepted by literary agents from the U.S.A. Other articles appeared in newspapers such as “Ilanga laseNatal”, “Bantu World” and “Sjambok”. These black newspapers in South Africa have been a vital institution in the development of black literature and politics.

## 1.2 The objectivity of the study

By writing about the Zulu kings, Rolfes Dhlomo sought to educate his readers, to give them specific heroes with whom they could identify. His books were studied by thousands of pupils and contributed to their knowledge of and interest in the Zulu past. Dhlomo's “uShaka” became the standard history of the Zulu king and is till regarded as the most reliable source by a majority of educated Zulus. In writing about “Cetshwayo”, Dhlomo wanted to produce an account of the king's life that was only marginally fictionalized. He also wanted to set the record straight about events in Cetshwayo's life. Theories such as post-colonialism and nationalism, as well as the historical novel versions will be important in this regard.

### 1.3 The feasibility of the study

This study will be of great importance and interest in the production of a valid modern African theory of literature. There is a great urgency for this task to be undertaken since very little work has been done at post-graduate level on theoretical writings by African authors in South Africa.

### 1.4 Research and methodology

The research would entail reading all the texts available by and on R.R.R. Dhlomo as well as reading broadly in literary theory. From these readings I wish to comment on the difficult problem of producing a valid modern African theory. I will also point out the disadvantages and shortcomings of R.R.R. Dhlomo's theoretical position in relation to his works.

### 1.5 Hypothesis

This dissertation will discuss Dhlomo's historical novels. For Dhlomo, the decision to write about the Zulu past and the Zulu kings was in itself an ideological choice. The following questions will be answered:

- What is Dhlomo's contribution to literary theory?
- What are the shortcomings of Dhlomo's theory?

## 1.6 Summary and the outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is made up of five chapters. Chapter *One* is an introduction of the thesis. Here I will explain what the dissertation is about, and how the material is divided into different chapters.

Chapter *Two* is the theoretical background. It will look at the definition and the relevance of post-colonialism and nationalism as well as a version of the historical novel. Theories of nationalism and post-colonialism will be explored through the use of writings by various authors such as Ania Loomba (1998), Benedict Anderson (1993), Franz Fanon (1968), Appiah, K. (1992), and Elleke Boehmer (1995), whereas the historical novel will use the book by Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel* (1937).

Chapter *Three* is the presentation of R.R.R. Dhlomo's biography. His life history as a pupil, a student, an editor and a Zulu novelist. This will help in assessing his literary contribution. Dhlomo's home, school, church and his personality also played an important role in his creativity. This chapter will examine how other writers received Dhlomo's works.

Chapter *Four* is the analysis of Dhlomo's historical novels. It will look at the discussion of R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels and his definition of characters and characterization, plot and theme. Here the books such as *Dingane* (1936),

*Shaka* (1937), *Mpande* (1938), *Cetshwayo* (1952), *Alternation Journal of the CSSALL*, Vol. 5, No.2 (1998), Rimmon Kenan (1983), Golan D. (1995) etc. will be used.

Chapter *Five* is the conclusion. In this chapter there is a brief summary on how King Shaka and Dingane took up the throne as well as the description of Cetshwayo's figure as seen by different writers.

## 1.7 **Bibliography**

This chapter details the list of all books and material used.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the importance of nationalism and post-colonial theories in connection with Dhlomo's writings as well as a version of the historical novel. Nationalism is a useful theoretical lens through which to understand Dhlomo's writings. The Dhlomo brothers were very influential because their views reached a wide number of readers through their literature and their newspaper columns. They wrote for many African newspapers and edited for "Ilanga laseNatal" for few years, beginning in 1943. Together they can be credited with the revision of Dingane's image from that of a villain and a cheat to that of a national hero.

According to D. Golan (1994), Jordan Ngubane a young man but a very close friend of the Dhlomo brothers, and an important journalist and a writer in his own right, further developed the shift in the image of Dingane from villain to hero. Throughout his political career, and despite his changing affiliations, Ngubane has always stressed the importance of Zulu history to the contemporary Black Nationalist struggle in South Africa. He has pointed to Dingane as the symbol of this struggle and to Shaka as the father of "Zulu Nationalism".

In the 1940s, while Ngubane was an active member of the ANC Youth League and a prominent ideologist, his pre-occupation with Zulu history was part of the Africanism of that period that called for a revival of the Zulu past.

Ngubane launched the campaign to rehabilitate Dingane's name when he was an editor of "Inkundla". He claimed that his efforts were part of the growing awareness of Dingane's heroism among young Zulu authors. Ngubane's description of the killing of Retief and the trekkers had none of "ILanga's" apologetic tone of the 1920's and 1930's. Instead he praised Dingane saying that:

"He had to choose between independence and slavery, and he chose the former".

Golan in his book *Investigating Shaka* (1994) further argues that Ngubane presented Shaka as the father of black "Nationalism". He was expressing in the later 1940's, the ideas that are still current with today's Inkatha leaders. His article "who are the African Nationalists?" explains the importance of the ANC and its youth league to African nationalism.

"African Nationalism is not a mythical spirit with mythical origins. Nor was the creation of the new African people, a myth nor with roots in superstitious mysteries. It was the logical and deliberate crystallization of an historical tendency that had been going on among the African people from the times of Shaka. Divest of its crudeness, the military intention was to create a great united African Empire extending as far as south and north as possible.

Shaka believed in a complete unification of the African people into one mighty nation which would stand independent and on a footing of equality with every human race" (Golan 1994:79).

The idea that Shaka was not only a Zulu leader, but a black nationalist who envisioned a united African empire in Southern Africa, was first suggested by Jordan Ngubane in the 1960's and was later adopted as Inkatha's official view.

Kunene, a political exile who has been an active member of the ANC, developed this notion into a complex and detailed thesis and used it as a principal force in deriving the hero of his epic. His Shaka is a decisive leader whose life is devoted to fulfilling his vision. Zulu foreign policy, the wars, Shaka's new regimental arrangement of the army, and his personal life are all explained ideologically as consisting of two main components, the need to unite different people into one nation and social equality, or equal distribution of resources within the empire.

According to Kunene, it was Shaka's faith in nationalism that caused him to involve himself in many wars. He was not interested merely in conquest but was determined to integrate the conquered peoples into his empire and into a growing nation. To promote unity, he abolished much of the traditional leaders' authority and appointed new leaders who were loyal to him and to the central government. He also initiated the celebration of a national holiday to promote unity, and he used the army as a melting pot for soldiers from different tribes, who would

dissolve their various ethnic identities into new generations of Zulus through living together in the barracks and fighting together in the field.

Kunene also argues that Shaka's vision of a just society, based on an equal distribution of goods and social equality led him to begin allocating positions of command based on merit. This caused great discontent within the traditional aristocracy who were thereby displaced. He also undermined the traditional basis of military privilege, when he became a member of the army himself and instituted a system in which both the commander and soldier took similar risks on the front line.

This approach, together with Shaka's distribution of plunder among the soldiers, caused such resentment on the part of aristocracy that his brothers would later conspire to assassinate him in order to regain their former privileges.

In his book *Investigating Shaka Using History* (1994) D. Golan argues that R.R.R. Dhlomo used Shaka's psychological dilemmas to explain the military and political activities of the king, while Kunene sets aside the psychological aspect of his hero and views his policies as a function of ideological interest (1994).

Between the time of Dhlomo's novel and that of Kunene's epic, Shaka's biography, appearance, action and the meaning he represents changed for black South Africans. From a cruel capricious and powerful tyrant, he was transformed

into a political genius who envisioned a united South Africa. From a Zulu leader he became a Black Nationalist.

Post-colonial theory is also useful in the analysis of Dhlomo's work as it deals with the writings in past colonies that are in opposition to empire. Post-colonial theory differs from other anti-colonial literary theories in the sense that they are writings which look at colonial relations and resistance from colonial perspectives. In his writings, Dhlomo was attempting to champion the post-colonial notion of "Hybridity". The term "Hybridity" emphasizes cross-culturality which is the mixing of influences and ways of life.

In Dhlomo's writings there are elements of modernism, such as looking back to the past as more stable and coherent. Dhlomo is not a modernist in the sense that, for a modernist, the present was experienced as a disorder. For Dhlomo, the golden past becomes an imaginary resolution of the reality of present "fragmentation". Dhlomo employed the structure of working backwards and forward over the past. Dhlomo's attention was focused more on contemporary matters, such as the exploitation of black workers as exemplified in his short stories "The Workers", "The Pass" and "Prostitution".

He also declares that:

“The past should be the chief basis of our literary drama. The past should be preserved in a living dynamic form, not by going back to it but by recreating it into a new and lovely form” (Visser and Couzens 1985:XIV).

## 2.2 Definition of post-colonialism

According to Elleke Boehmer (1995:1) post-colonial theory is the writing of or against empire. This means that post-colonial theory is about writings in opposition to empire. He further argues that post-colonial literature is that which critically scrutinizes colonial and post-colonial relationships. It is the writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives (1995:3).

Post-colonial literature is therefore deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and divisions under empire. In stages, it can also be nationalist writing.

In his book *Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature* (1995:3) Boehmer also defines “post-coloniality” as a condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their places as historical subjects. Post-colonial writing in English also goes by the name of new writing in English world fiction under a commonwealth which was a loose cultural and political mixture of nations, which before 1947 formed part of the British Empire (1995:4). The term post-colonial still draws support for its

usefulness as an umbrella term, a way of bracketing together the literatures written in those countries which were once colonies of Britain. In post-colonial criticism, admittedly, the tendency is to stress the similarity of text written in the former colonies of the British Empire, at the expense of recognizing their difference (1995:4).

In the post-colonial period Chinua Achebe declared that:

“Stories define us”.

Nationalist movement relied on literature, on novelist singers and playwrights to have the symbol of the past and self through which dignity might be reasserted (1995:6).

Ania Loomba (1998:xii) declares that post-colonialism has become so heterogeneous and defuse that it is impossible to satisfactorily describe what it's study might entail. This difficulty is due to the inter-disciplinary nature of post-colonial studies, which may range from literary analysis to research in the archives of colonial government, from the critique of a medical text to economic theory and usually a combination of these and other areas.

In the West, the term "Post-colonial" serves to keep at bay more sharply political terms, such as "imperialism" or "geopolitics" (Shohat 1993:99).

Terry Eagleton (1994) makes a related accusation that within 'post-colonial thought' one is allowed to talk about cultural differences, but not about economic exploitation.

Eagleton's own use of the term 'post-colonial thought' to designate an academic trend is unsatisfactory. Many post-colonial writers and academics do write extensively about economic exploitation, although their work is often not included within what is becoming institutionalized as post-colonial studies. It is often seen as something that has to be appended to existing syllabi.

According to Loomba (1998:7) the word post-colonial cannot be used in any single sense. Formal decolonization has spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth century in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique.

Shohat (1993:103) pointed out that these diverse beginnings indicate that people who were not all oppressed in the same way challenged colonialism from a variety of perspectives. Thus the politics of decolonization in parts of Latin America or South Africa where white settlers formed their own independent nations is different from the dynamics of those societies where indigenous populations overthrew their European masters.

Post-colonial theory has been accused of shifting the focus from locations and institutions to individuals and their subjectivity.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) has also criticized the tendency to praise the pre-colonial past or romanticize native culture. Intellectuals within post-colonial societies and some first world critics suggest that such 'Nativism' may be useful and support it only if used with caution and qualification (1998:18). In this it can be compared to the concept of 'Patriarchy' in feminist thought which is applicable to the extent that it indicates male domination over women.

The word, post-colonial, is useful as a generalization to the extent that 'it refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome. The syndrome takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose world has been marked by the 'post-colonial' set of phenomenon, which is a descriptive not an evaluative term' (Hulme 1995:120).

According to Mpalive-Hangson Msiska and Paul Hyland (1997:246) in their book *Writing and Africa*, the term 'post-colonial' is clearly an umbrella term which is meant to cover an enormous and remarkably disparate critical territory. They also argued that the term 'post-colonialism' refers to the period of a specific national history that takes place after direct colonialism has ended (1997:247).

The term 'post-colonialism' (with a hyphen) is being used to denote the historical period in a former colony that comes after the period of direct colonialist control. And the term 'post colonialism' (without the hyphen) is being used to denote the many analytical strategies and interpretive positions which attempt to read exactly what it is that takes place in culture, politics, and history within and between the many varied encounters of Europe with its colonial others (1997:248).

Hyland (1997:249) declares that one mode of post-colonial analysis is a mode called 'colonial discourse' analysis or theory. This analysis takes as its primary object of study, the wide range of literary, figurative and governmental documents that comprises the 'cultural text' of European imperialism with a view to discovering the ways in which various forms of colonialism are promulgated.

One of the most vigorous contemporary voices to apply Fanon's arguments to the level of language use is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer and critic whose book *Decolonising The Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986) considers the ways in which language shapes the political consciousness of its users. Ngũgĩ's argument is that language constitutes a money bank that holds the collective experiences of a people and remakes them by giving them integrity and direction. Ngũgĩ also declares that people without their own language are mere slaves.

According to Appiah, he finds himself rejecting the philosophical position that imagines post-colonial Africa as a state of uncontaminated cultural autonomy. He argues that such a position is a nativist one, 'the claim that African independence requires a literature of one's own' (56).

Appiah rejects the basic cultural binarism of 'nativist' positions such as Ngungi's. He also argues that such positions mystify language and literature, for they require these constructs to stand in for the pure notions of culture and tradition.

Appiah then joins the post-colonial debate over African language and literature by questioning the assumption behind nativism and African cultural autonomy (1997:256). Appiah believes that everywhere, 'language and literature appear to be central to articulation' (p.53). Therefore Appiah's post-colonial Africa – his 'nation' - must strive for a cultural room of its own, but the demand for that cultural room must be cast in comparative and relative tones.

Appiah's critique of pure language is calculated to yield an ethical universal, a post-colonial 'humanism' whose literature is 'post-realist', whose politics are post-nativist, and whose solidarities are 'transnational' rather than 'national;' (p.155). The 'post' in Appiah's post-colonialism, appears as a 'space clearing gesture' (p.149).

Dhlomo's intention was to reflect inward experiences and to describe how reality was. Dhlomo saw that western lifestyles and art might have destroyed African pre-colonial cultures. Dhlomo emphasizes the needs to be revealed in literature, these are tribal cultures, history, customs and our great tribal heroes.

Parker and Starkey (1995:11) pointed out that African literature and theories, like many discourses, are opening innovative ways of responding to European literature and to European traditions or interpretations. Dhlomo's theoretical approaches were ways of responding to imperial culture, by expressing unvoiced stories and interpretations of African conditions before and during colonialism. For example, in his novel on "Cetshwayo", Dhlomo goes back to what he sees as the original policies and indicates the resistance to them.

### 2.3 Definition of nationalism

The study of nationalism has become a minor industry, but remained a curiously under examined phenomenon, in non-European societies.

Benedict Anderson (1991) in his book *Imagined Communities* defines the nation as an "Imagined Community", born with the demise of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. Newspapers, novels and other new forms of communication were the channels for creating shared culture, interests and vocabularies. Such forms of communication were made possible by 'Print Capitalism' which created certain

'mechanically reproduced print languages' by pruning out vernaculars and modifying others thereby creating standardized languages that could be used to reach diverse groups of people. The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the vital diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation (1991:46).

Anderson then traces the forms that this model of nationalism took in Europe, where language was much more fundamental to developing national consciousness (1991:58). Anderson reminds us that such official nationalism was 'an anticipatory strategy', adopting dominant groups who felt they might be excluded from newer communities struggling to be born (1991:101).

The final form of the nation that Anderson considers is that of the 'Nation State', begun after the First World War and cemented after the Second World War. This includes the Nations born of anti-imperialist struggles. Anderson explains this dependency of the European models by the fact that the American and European experiences were now everywhere partly because the European languages of State they employed were the legacy of imperialism and official nationalism (1991:113).

Anderson's argument converges with the standard older understanding of nationalism in the colonized world. English historians have suggested that Indians learnt their ideas of freedom and self-determination from English books, including the plays of Shakespeare. The phrase 'derivative discourse' is the subtitle of Partha Chatterjee's book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986) which challenges Anderson model, suggesting that the relationship between anti-colonial and metropolitan nationalism is structured by an intricate relationship of both borrowing and difference. He does this by defining nationalism as political movement which challenges the colonial state, and which enables the colonized to posit their difference and autonomy (1998:190).

Although Chatterjee's theses is based on the study of Bengal, it helps us in thinking about the centrality of 'cultural', and of gender, to nationalist discourses. In South Africa, for example, the family was central to the making of Afrikaner nationalism (Hofmeyer 1987). Here too 'White men were seen to embody the political and economic agency of the "Volk", while women were the keepers of tradition and the "Volk's" moral and spiritual mission' (Mc Clintock 1995:277). It also helps explain why anti-colonial nationalism so persistently emphasized their "difference" from the imperial masters.

∴

'A nation is a soul, a spiritual principal', Renan says, and of all its cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory ... this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea (1990:19).

For Anthony Appiah, Nationalism engages in a complex process of contesting as well as appropriating colonialist ideas. Appiah has accused nationalists in Africa of making 'real the imaginary identities to which Europe has subjected us (1991:150). 'Nativists', he says 'are of the West's Party without knowing it' and, in fact, 'few things ... are less native than nativism in its current forms' (1991:145-146).

As an opposition and as a state ideology, nationalism claims to include 'all the people', allowing the ordinary folk to celebrate diversity and speak for the 'entire' imagined community. Thus Benedict Anderson argues that 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (1991:6-7). Several critics have suggested that "Imagined Communities" pays so much attention to who is included in the communities that it fails to consider those who are excluded and marginalised such as women, the lower classes, different races, and castes.

Elleke Boehmer declares that the power of nationalism and its continuous appeal, lies in its ability to successfully speak on behalf of all the people. In this context, it is significant that many nationalist leaders offer their autobiographies as emblematic of and representative of their nation's birth, as in Jawaharlal Nehru's.

Boehmer finally argues that another way of preserving unity or continuity with past nationalist writers, is not to lose connection with the teachings of the generation which had gone before, in particular those nationalist writers of radical inclination, such as Aimé Ce'saire and Jomo Kenyatta.

#### 2.4 The version of a historical novel

The historical novels of the seventeenth century (Scudery, Callpranede etc.) are historical only as regards their purely external choices of theme and costume. The psychology of the characters and the manners depicted are usually those of the writer's own day.

According to Georg Lukács in his book *The Historical Novel* (1937:19), in the most famous "historical novel" of the eighteenth century, Walpole's *Castle of Otrando*, history is likewise treated as mere custom. It is only the curiosities and oddities of the "milieu" that matter, not an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch.

What is lacking in the historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is the derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarities of their age. The great critic, Boileau, who judges the historical novels of his contemporaries with much skepticism, insisted that characters should be socially and psychologically true demanding, for example, that a ruler make love differently from a shepherd etc. The question of historical truth in the artistic reflections of reality, still lies beyond his horizon.

He further argues that even the great realistic social novel of the eighteenth century, which in its portrayal of contemporary morals and psychology, accomplished a revolutionary breakthrough of reality for world literature, is not concerned in showing its characters as belonging to any concrete time. The contemporary world is portrayed with unusual plasticity and is true to life, but it is accepted naively as something given. This abstraction in the portrayal of historical time also affects the portrayal of historical place.

The history writing of the enlightenment was an ideological preparation for the French Revolution, as its trends indicate (1937:20). For Lukacs (1937), in "Sturm" and "Drang", the problem of the artistic mastery of history already appears as a conscious one.

Goethe's *Götz Von Berlichingen* ushers in a new flowering of historical drama, and has a direct and powerful influence on the rise of the historical novel in the work of Sir Walter Scott (1937:20).

This conscious growth of historicism, which receives its first theoretical expression in the writing of Herder, has its roots in the special position of Germany. The discrepancy between Germany's political and economic backwardness and the ideology of the German enlightened who, standing on the shoulders of their English and French predecessors, developed the ideas of the enlightenment to higher levels.

The historical basis upon which Sir Walter Scott's historical novel rose, must not be thought of in terms of his relationship to the idealist "history of the spirit". The new historical concepts of the great historians of the Restoration makes their appearance later than the works of Scott and some of the problems are influenced by them.

The conception of English history, in the novels of Scott, gives a perspective of future developments, according to its author. Scott sticks to the "Middle Way" between the extremes and endeavors to demonstrate artistically, the historical reality by means of his portrayal of the great crises in English history (1937:33). He declares that this basic tendency finds immediate expression in the way he

constructs his plot and selects his central figure. The “hero” of a Scott novel is always a more or less mediocre, average English gentleman.

In later reviews this choice of hero was sharply criticized, for example by Taine. Such later criticism saw here a symptom of Scott’s own mediocrity as an artist. Precisely the opposite is true. That he builds his novels around a “middling”, merely correct and never heroic “hero” is the clearest proof of Scott’s exceptional and revolutionary epic gifts. However, from a psychological-biographical point of view, no doubt his own personal, petty aristocratic and conservative prejudices did play an important part in the choice of these heroes (1937:33).

Lukács (1937:42) declared that what matters in the historical novel is not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. We should re-experience the social and humane motives which led men to think, feel and act as they did in historical reality. In order to bring out these social and human motives of behaviour, the outwardly insignificant events, the smaller relationships are better suited than the great monumental dramas of world history.

For Lukács (1937:43), the historical novel therefore has to *demonstrate* by *artistic* means those historical circumstances and characters which existed in precisely such and such a way. What, in Scott, has been called (very superficially) “authenticity of local colours” is in actual fact the artistic demonstration of

historical reality. It is the portrayal of historical events in all their intricacy and complexity, including their manifold interactions with common individuals.

## 2.5 Summary

Lukács sums up by saying that the historical novel of our time, must negate, radically and sharply, its immediate predecessor and eradicate the latter's traditions from its own work. The necessary approximation of the classical type of historical novel will, as our remarks have shown, by no means take the form of a simple renaissance. An affirmation of these classical traditions, to use a phrase from Hegel's terminology, is a renewal in the form of a negation (1937:350).

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. CONTEXTUALISATION OF R.R.R. DHLOMO'S LIFE HISTORY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore R.R.R. Dhlomo's life history in relation to his literary achievements. To explore this, the chapter will look at his early life: home, school, personality, his literary achievements, and a brief summary

#### 3.2 Historical biography of R.R.R. Dhlomo

Some of the details on R.R.R. Dhlomo are taken from Albert S. Gerard's (1971) works and T. Couzen's research (1985). Tim Couzen's research (1985) was about R.R.R. Dhlomo's brother H.I.E. Dhlomo, though there are some details about R.R.R. Dhlomo. This is about his home and schooling (the nature of his education, which contributed to his creativity).

#### 3.2 Home

Rolfes Reginald Raymond Dhlomo was born in January 1901 at Siyamu near Pietermaritzburg, Natal Province and died in 1971 at Edendale hospital, Pietermaritzburg where he was born. Rolfes was the third son of the preacher Ezra, Sigadiya, kaGcugewa kaLuphoko kaMlozi kaNgongoma Dhlomo. His father

Ezra was a close friend of Bambatha, who led the Rebellion of 1906, and he spoke frequently of Bambatha's death to his children. Rolfes mother was Sardina Caluza, a member of a prominent Edendale family who were to produce the great Zulu composer, R.T. Caluza. He was brother to a prolific writer, Herbert Isaac Ernest Dhlomo. In 1928 Rolfes married S. Victoria Nxaba of Groutville (*The Africa Who's Who*, 1931:143).

On the side of his father, whose name was Ezra, R.R.R. Dhlomo had attachments to the Makhabeleni area north of Kranskop in Natal. To the north of the Greytown/Kranskop main road is the place where the Dhlomo chiefs are all buried. Ophin Dhlomo, a 'cousin' of the Dhlomo brothers, was born in 1910, and had shared quarters with Rolfes, in Durban some years ago, and remembers fragments of the early history of the family.

The Dhlomos were originally part of the eLangeni or Mhlongo people, of which Shaka's mother, Nandi, was a member. These were the people who ill-treated Shaka and his mother, Nandi, and who were repaid when Shaka came to power.

According to Ophin Dhlomo says Couzens (1985:40), the Amakabeleni people had changed their name to Dhlomo to escape the wrath of Shaka. According to him, there were originally three royal brothers, viz. Magedama, Mathela and Sungu. Ophin was related to Sungu via Job, Qholobane and Phungane while

Rolfes and his brother Herbert could be traced back to Mathela (he did not know the names of linking descendants), hence his 'cousin' status with the Dhlomo's.

From there one naturally goes to the Bible of Zulu genealogies, *Olden Times in Zululand* by A.T. Bryant. Bryant says that the Amakabeleni achieved a unique fame for themselves 'as a dwarf among clans'. Their parent-clan remains uncertain and he offers a couple of possibilities, one of which Ophin Dhlomo clearly followed. 'Part of the clan', writes Bryant, 'asserts a connection with the eLangeni'. He continues with 'the fact that a Kabela sporting Dhlomo as their *isiTakazelo* was a courtesy title, usually the personal name of some ancient celebrity, often applied to any clansman, who being called after him, 'felt participatory in his glory'. Shaka's mother was of eLangeni people. Her father was Bebe (Mhlongo) and her grandfather was Ngeshe (Dhlomo). Hence the Amakhabeleni people, by calling themselves Mhlongo or Dhlomo, link themselves to the eLangeni through Nandi's father and grandfather (Couzens 1985:40).

Ezra Dhlomo and his wife moved to Johannesburg where Frank was born, the only child not to be born at Siyamu, Edendale. Johannesburg does not seem to have been permanent for the parents (they kept coming down and up) until about 1912 where the children moved and 'we stayed there for good'. This seemed to explain why Rolfes was educated first at Siyamu (and later Ohlange), while Herbert went initially to a Johannesburg school (Couzens 1985:42).

### 3.4 The School

#### Nature of education which moulded R.R.R. Dhlomo's creativity

R.R.R. Dhlomo was first educated at Siyarnu and later at Ohlange Institute, founded by Dr J.L. Dube (John Langalibalele Dube), well-known all over South Africa. In Johannesburg, Rolfes went to the American Board Mission School in Doornfontein where he was taught by Miss Bertha Mkhize. This was in about 1917 and Miss Bertha Mkhize, who was only there for a term just before the influenza epidemic, remembered the boys, finding Herbert more talkative than Rolfes, reserving the more usual judgement. She taught them how to read and write, how to speak, how to write Zulu and how to write English. She taught them mathematics and a little geography and history. Rolfes proceeded to train as a teacher at the American Board Mission School in Amanzimtoti, Zululand which later became the Adams Teacher Training College. At Adams Mission R.R.R. Dhlomo obtained his teachers certificate and that was where his creative writing began.

### 3.5 His personality

The two brothers, Rolfes and Herbert, were very close to each other. Herbert was quick and first in everything, while Rolfes was very steady (Couzens 1985:46).

His brother H.I.E. Dhlomo described R.R.R. Dhlomo as:

“a modest and a shy man who does not like public speaking. He does not consider himself as an intellectual and a philosopher. He shuns the circle of great men and intellectuals. He hardly goes to meetings or concerts. But he goes to the cricket and football matches. He loves these games. Here no one embarrasses him with formalities and discussions, both of which he dislikes. He spends his free time reading and writing. He is a great reader, his normal reading is a novel everyday. He is political and literary minded” (Upbeat, Vol. 2&3:12).

The two brothers chose to write their major works in different languages. Most of Rolfe’s works were in Zulu while Herbert’s were in English although the family spoke Zulu at home (Couzens 1985:46).

### 3.6 R.R.R. Dhlomo’s literary achievements

According to Tim Couzens (1985:57), in 1928 Rolfes Dhlomo took up a job as a mine clerk in the city and suburban mine in Johannesburg. At the same time he kept his Natal links by writing a fairly regular column, sometimes under the pseudonym “Rollie Reggie”, in *iLanga laseNatal*. He was a devout Christian and his early columns were usually didactic exhortations to his readers to embrace that religion. He was a ‘moderate’ amongst the blacks, though not committed

politically. He seemed to support congress. He was often critical of “Coloureds” and Indians for distancing themselves and was eventually abusive to financially poor Whites as well. The following extract from his poem, *My Country* sums up his mood:

“Sorrowful! Aye-sorrowful and dreary.  
Because no longer a black man’s country,  
Natal my country, my heart is weary  
Tears scar my checks because of my country  
I love you well”

(Couzens 1985:58).

On 10 December 1923, a “Special Correspondent” (Rolfes) wrote an article entitled “Towards our Own Literature” in *ILanga LaseNatal*. The article said that “we must have our own literature here in South Africa ‘sooner or later’ and that, with such a movement, ‘the prestige of black culture in general would be increased”.

The author (Rolfes) denied that he wanted to foster “any narrow national or racial spirit but he wanted to identify common aspirations and to establish a brotherhood of the heart through the precision of Zulu and Elasticity of English”. He also wrote the editorial of the following week which took up the same theme of the need for ‘creating a literature of our own’ - a national literature.

Lamenting that ‘one rarely hears pure Zulu spoken’ (thus foreshadowing the argument of the poem by ‘Zulu’ quoted above) and noting that in many

homesteads the only book available was normally the Bible or a religious tract or a medicine pamphlet. He went on to say that 'our folklore and historical records must be preserved from dying out anything of racial pride by means of literature, otherwise these will be lost forever and our connection with the past forgotten (Couzens 1998:59).

In 1928, Rolfes Dhlomo published "*An African Tragedy*" in English. It was the first novel in English by a black South African writer. It is in the context of a strong Christian belief combined with a revulsion against the evils of liquor, dancing, the pass laws, discrimination and city life, that "*An African Tragedy*" must be seen. Its themes of moral corruption in the city were prevalent ones, corresponding to the social and economic pressures of the day. However, it is well to remember that "*An African Tragedy*" documents a stage in the process in the same way as the film, *Jim comes to Johannesburg* and Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* did twenty years later. *An African Tragedy* is the tale of a traveller to the West (in contrast to Thomas Mofolo's *Traveller to the East*) leaving a Christian home, to descend into hell. On his return the traveller brings a little bit of hell back with him which destroys his own son. This allegory, a kind of *Pilgrim's Progress*, adopts a particular stance. On the one hand it is critical of city life, of dancing and liquor, on the other hand, it is condemnatory of certain traditional customs such as consultation with the 'Inyanga' and more particularly, lobola.

*An African Tragedy* was written at a time when a monetary economy was largely replacing the cattle economy, money was replacing cattle as the basis of lobola. Thus Rolfes Dhlomo was caught in a kind of contradiction, condemning lobola and condemning the society which was destroying it (Couzens 1995:60).

In August, 1929, Rolfes began writing for Stephen Black's magazine, *Sjambok*. The *Sjambok* was the "John Bull" of South Africa. Its purpose was to chastise and expose whoever and whatever was inimical to public morals and public welfare. It was a European weekly edited by Stephen Black, the actor, producer and author.

The policy of the Journal was to fight evil and corruption in the life of the community. It recognized neither class, colour, race or rank. High and low, rich and poor, black and white meant nothing to this once famous and much feared journal. Wrong was its enemy, it's red flag for attack, right its guiding principal and ideal.

One of its members was an African. He was R.R.R. Dhlomo. His brother, Herbert, subsequently praised the white editor effusively for his courage in having a black writer on his staff. Even today, despite the progress and proven ability of the African, it is difficult to imagine a European journal employing an African on its regular staff (Inkundla Yabantu – Bantu Forum 1945:4).

During his connection with *Sjambok*, Dhlomo wrote a number of short stories and articles which displays a vigor that is largely lacking in *African Tragedy*. Several of his stories indicate his familiarity with mine life and chronicle the uneasy relationship at the slope face between foremen and workers, with the latter being exemplified by the evil drink, dance, superstitions, lobola and special passes (Couzens 1985:60-61).

Here are examples of 20 short stories collected in the Journal *English in Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1975): Fateful Orders, The Death of Masaba, Skokiaan, The Sins of the Fathers, Bought and Paid for, the Zulu Christian Science, the Dog Killers, Juwawa, The Herbalist, Murder on the Mine Dumps, Special Pass, A Mine Tragedy.

The following stories and articles were all very probably written by R.R.R. Dhlomo: (The only other likely contender seems to be A.D. Tyamzashe). They are included because they give a good idea of how some of the stories originated, and they show that the early black South African writer was less concerned about literary sensibility and more pre-occupied with concrete issues springing directly from his immediate environment. For example, A Saint, The Black Bolshevik Factory, The Compound Induna and Compound Interest, Wholesale Dog Murder, How the "Boys" are Robbed, Jekyll and Hyde Houseboy.

In 1932, Rolfes became an editor of the *Bantu World* under the editorship of Mr R.V. Selope Thema. Thema himself had tried to induce Sol Plaatjie to take the editorial chair. The attempt failed. When he became an editor, Thema was anxious to obtain the services of capable young men for his editorial staff.

Later Thema was able to secure the services of Dhlomo who as a Zulu-Xhosa editor also became assistant Editor. The two men got on well together. This is surprising when one considers their diametrically opposed characters and outlooks (Inkundla yabantu – Bantu Forum 1945:4).

In the *Bantu World* he became famous as a humourist. In a talk to a distinguished audience in Johannesburg, Dr W.B. Vilakazi speaking on who was our (Bantu) leading poet, critic, musician, etc. paid Dhlomo the complement of mentioning him as the foremost humourist of the day. In writing these humourist sketches Dhlomo used two methods. First the pre-classical sketches with no object but to entertain. In this vein he can write on almost any subject. To give few examples, he has written “on Nothing”, “on Flies”, “The July Handicap”, “Cockroaches” etc. Secondly, he used humour and satire like other writers, to expose and correct the follies of his fellow men and of the authorities. These sketches are more feared and produce better results in official quarters than the best-written editorials. More people read them than those who read editorials (Inkundla yaBantu 1945:4).

Rolfes wrote articles collected in *English in Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1975:38) for example, Ukugweba, A Mine Tragedy, End of the Farce, Magic in a Zulu Name, Death of Manembe, Dumela Defies Lightning, Janet and her Past, May Plays with Love, Maggies Married Life.

In 1943 Rolfes Dhlomo became an editor for *ILanga LaseNatal*. To this newspaper he contributed a number of articles under different pen names such as "Randite", "Rollie Reggie" and "The Pessimist". In *ILanga laseNatal* he wrote *Success* under "Rollie Reggie" (1931:15); *Impi Enkulu* "Rollie Reggie" (1932:9), *Usizi emhlabeni* "Rollie Reggie" (1932:2); *Confusion Worse* "R.R.R. Dhlomo" (1932:9); *Amabhuku Amasha endlu emnyama* (1936:12) "Rolling Stone" became his new pseudonym and was equally famous. In both these columns, humour replaced the earlier earnest, didactic Christianity. Rolfes adopted the black characters, Joshua and Jeremiah, but he added some of his own to his sketches such as nurse Jan Maplank and Mr Stockfell Mkhumbane. Their popularity was undoubted (Couzens 1985:61).

For six months Rolfes managed the editorial department of the *Ilanga* alone, writing Zulu and English editorials, running personal features, editing the news and correcting the proofs. Six months after his appointment as an editor of *Ilanga* he made his youngest brother assistant editor. He himself took charge of the Zulu half and Herbert the English half. The divergence of their political views became clear in the late forties but it does not seem to have altered their affection for one

another. It was Rolfes influence that got Herbert, and even Frank, started in the writing business. Rolfes opened the columns of *Ilanga* to all parties and persons (Inkundla yaBantu 1945:4).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DISCUSSION OF R.R.R. DHLOMO'S HISTORICAL NOVELS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels, viz. *Dingane kaSenzangakhona* (1936), *uShaka* (1937), *uMpande kaSenzangakhona* (1938) and *uCetshwayo* (1952). It will look at the discussion of Dhlomo's historical novels, what inspired him to write, characterization, plot and theme.

#### 4.2 Analysis of R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels

R.R.R. Dhlomo's creative writing began at the American Mission Board School, Amanzimtoti, Zululand, which later became Adams Teacher Training College where he was training as a teacher.

As a Zulu historical novelist, R.R.R. Dhlomo was inspired by connections to the royal family on the side of father, whose name was Ezra. Rolfes was related to the royal family of the Dhlomo's who originated from the Makhabeleni areas north of Kranskop in Natal. To the north of the Greytown/Kranskop main road is the place where the Dhlomo chiefs are all buried – a kind of peninsula jutting out and overlooking the Tugela River Valley, with a magnificent view and not far away lived a 'cousin' of the Dhlomo brothers, a distant relative called "Ophin" Dhlomo.

Ophin, Dhlomo, born in 1910, had shared quarters with Rolfes in Durban some years ago, and remembers fragments of the early history of the family (Couzens 1985:40).

He said that the Dhlomo's were originally part of the eLangeni or Mhlongo people, of which Shaka's mother, Nandi, was a member. These were people who ill-treated Shaka and his mother Nandi and who were repaid when Shaka came to power. According to Ophin Dhlomo, the Amakabeleni people had changed their name to Dhlomo to escape the wrath of Shaka. He said, there were originally three royal brothers, Magedama, Mathela and Sungu. He himself was related to Sungu (via Job, Nqolobane and Phungane) while Rolfes could be traced back to Mathela (He did not know the names of linking descendants), hence his 'cousin' status with the brothers Dhlomo.

From there one naturally goes to the Bible of Zulu genealogies, *Olden Times in Zululand* by A.T. Bryant. Bryant says that the Amakabeleni achieved a unique fame for themselves 'as a dwarf among clans'. Their parent-clan remain uncertain and he offers a couple of possibilities, one of which Ophin Dhlomo clearly followed. Part of the clan, writes Bryant, 'asserts a connection with the eLangeni' and he continues with 'the fact that a Kabela sporting Dhlomo as their *isiTakazelo* would tend to confirm the assertion'.

The *isiTakazelo* is a courtesy title, which was usually the personal name of some ancient celebrity and was often applied to any clansman, who being called after him, 'felt participatory in his glory'. Shaka's mother was of eLangeni people. Her father was Bebe (Mhlongo) and her grandmother was Ngeshe (Dhlomo). Hence the Amakhabeleni people, by calling themselves Mhlongo or Dhlomo, link themselves to the eLangeni through Nandi's father (Couzens 1985:40).

In Shaka's time the ruler of the eMakabeleni people was Fabase, the son of Kopo maMkulu, who was the regent for the rightful king; his brother Magedama, who was a minor. Magedama soon attained his majority and Fabase retired quickly. About 1821 Shaka having disposed of the Ngcobo's attacked the Kabela's, though they were few. The latter took to their fastness and when Shaka's army arrived it could find only a single man stranded in the open. This lone man became the basis of a saying in the Zulu armies. When debating the size of any vast host opposed to them they would indignantly contend, 'Do you then think it is the case of one sole mortal, as at Fabase? The Makabela's survived and Shaka allowed them to do so as purveyors of blue monkey and genet furs for the royal wardrobe (Couzens 1985:41).

The firm of Shuter and Shooter in Pietermaritzburg began publishing books in Zulu in 1935. Their first title was Rolfes Dhlomo's *Izikhali Zamanuhla* (Modern Weapons), which was followed by a series of semi-biographical narratives about

the Zulu dynasty. The first of these *uDingane kaSenzangakhona* in 1936, was about Dingane, son of Senzangakhona and Shaka's half brother and murderer.

As Dube had made it clear in *Insila kaShaka* that Dingane had acquired the kingship through a series of political murders, he had also desperately tried to prevent the Boers from settling in Zululand. He was killed in 1940 in Swaziland, either while fighting against the Swazi or, as some say, by followers of Mpande, whom the Boers had proclaimed king of the Zulu's (Gerard 1971:223).

In 1937 Dhlomo published *uShaka* which is an attempt to reassess the manifold personality of Shaka. He is described "as tyrant and merciless despot, respectful and loving king, a warrior, a founder of a most aristocratic nation, a prophet, and a man who wanted to solve difficulties".

The publication by Shuter and Shooter of *uShaka*, was a (as the publicity said) 'brilliantly written biography of the great Zulu warrior king from the pen of R.R.R. Dhlomo, (and) places this writer in the forefront of Bantu authors of the day'. *UShaka*, like *Dingane* is a well written story according to Dr C.M. Doke in the foreword. He continues: 'As one reads the book, one is moved, and is amazed by the career of this Zulu warrior'. The biography reads like a novel or even like a play; there is dialogue, action, fine description and philosophical judgement. Dhlomo shows the social, mental and spiritual factors that shaped Shaka's reactions. After this the author displays his narrative and dramatic powers by

telling a gripping story of the Black Napoleon. Indeed, what “The Dynasty” claims for Napoleon, Dhlomo similarly claims for Shaka.

In 1938 Rolfes publish *uMpande kaSenzangakhona* which deals with Shaka’s younger brother who, feeling his life was threatened by Dingane, fled to the Boers with a fairly large section of the Zulu people. The Boers took advantage of this to install him as “Reigning Prince of the Emigrant Zulu” until he succeeded. Dingane on the latter’s death. A peaceful and intelligent man, Mpande signed a treaty with the British in Durban, and Natal experienced a long period of peace. He was the last son of Senzangakhona and the only one of the twelve to reach maturity and die peacefully in his own kraal in 1872.

Dhlomo’s journalistic experience had given him the special skills required for this kind of popular history. His main source was not the native oral chronicles, but *Annual Birds of Natal* (Gerard 1971:224).

In 1952, Rolfes Dhlomo wrote the last of his historical novels, *uCetshwayo*, the story of Mpande’s ambitious oldest son, who was born in 1872 and gained control of royal power in 1856 until he succeeded his father in 1872.

Unlike *Mpande*, Cetshwayo was deeply impressed with the vanished glories of the Shaka era, and bitterly aware of the contrast between the glory the Zulu's had then enjoyed and the sorry pass his father had brought them to because of his subservience to the white man. His attempt to restore full Zulu independence was bound to fail in the face of superior power, and after a crushing military defeat in 1879, he was stripped of most of his authority until he died in 1884, presumably poisoned by agents of one of the clans that were hostile to him (Gerard 1971:224).

While Dube should undoubtedly be considered the founder of the Zulu fiction, Dhlomo brought its two trends – the historical and the social, the reassessment of the past and the analysis of the present, to their fruition (Gerard 1971:225).

As far as Dhlomo's books are concerned, it was easier for him to get them published as school books. African writers in South Africa faced the stumbling block of a lack of publication facilities for many years. They had to rely on mission presses and educational publishers. Some writers had their articles, letters and poems published in black owned newspapers such as *Ilanga* and *Iase Natal*. Dhlomo had many books published but he never made a fortune (New Nation 1987:9).

One of his studies on *Cetshwayo* caused sensation when it was rejected by the Committee of "experts" and "linguists", not on literary grounds but on racial and religious ones (Couzens 1975:11). In the letter below Dhlomo, an assistant editor

of the *Bantu World*, explains why his latest book on Cetshwayo had not been published. R.R.R. Dhlomo was an outstanding Zulu author and among his published works are counted: *Shaka, Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo*

Sir,

I wish to explain to your readers, particularly those who have read my previous books, about my book on "Cetshwayo", which I wrote last year and submitted to my publishers, Messrs Shuter and Shooter of Pietermaritzburg as I always do with all my books. They gave this book to the Zulu Literature Committee, which deals with books that may be accepted as school readers. This Committee is under the Chairmanship of Rev. F. Suter of Dumisa.

After my manuscripts (MSS) on Cetshwayo has been submitted to this Committee for more than four months, I received a report from my publishers with an enclosed note from Rev. F. Suter in which Rev. F. Suter condemned my book for these reasons: It spoke unfavourably of all the Europeans and missionaries. He even went as far as to say he questioned the motive behind the book being written at all. He saw no useful purpose in it at all and might not be good reading to people. He returned the MSS. It might mention that the MSS came back full of corrections in Lala.

I sent the MSS to the government Ethnologist, in Pretoria, and his report was that although the MSS was controversial it was valuable. He offered to buy it, for the Department not for publication. Now that the MSS that was rejected by Natal authorities to which country it particularly owed its existence because it deals with a great Zulu king like “Cetshwayo”, was rejected and even questioned, whereas the government in the Transvaal saw much good in it.

I doubt that the Zulu’s will ever read this book written around historic life of their great king just because it criticizes what its author saw fit to criticize in those who were responsible for the Zulu war. The Rev. Suter even went as far as to insinuate and question my motives in writing it and he wondered where I obtained some of my information. I wrote this life as I wrote that of Shaka, Dingane and Mpande because I longed that the Zulu’s should read in their own tongue.

I now conclude that until in Natal we have a press that can serve its authors just as the ambitious Lovedale Press helps Xhosa authors (ILanga LaseNatal 1938:4).

#### 4.3 Definition of terms and general background information

##### 4.3.1 The term character

The term character describes a figure or personality who appears in a literary work. Although characters need not always be representations of human beings, they are almost invariably anthropomorphic in some respect.

Rimmon-Kenan defines characters as “constructs ... partly modeled on the readers conception of people and in this way they are very person like” (1983). This very person-like notion is the element which enables members of the audience to distinguish between different characters.

Rimmon-Kenan (1983) further makes a distinction between characters by classifying them either as flat or rounded characters. According to him “flat” characters are constructed around a single idea or quality and therefore can be expressed in one sentence. Furthermore such characters do not develop in the course of action. They are easily remembered and recognized by the reader (Kenan 1983:40).

On the other hand rounded characters are “both complex and developing in the course of action” (Kenan 1983:40). The distinction here is that there are many dimensions and qualities compared with the single nature of flat characters.

#### 4.3.2 The term characterization

The term ‘characterization’, this means how the characters are presented or portrayed. Characters are persons presented in a narrative or dramatic work, who are interpreted by the reader as, being endowed with moral qualities and dispositions that are expressed or revealed by their actions, speech, thoughts or physical appearance and what other characters say or think of them.

A broad distinction is made between alternative methods for “characterizing” the person in a narrative - showing and telling. In showing (also called the “dramatic method”) the author merely presents his characters talking and acting and leaves the reader to interpret what motives and dispositions lie behind what they do and say.

In telling the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe and often to evaluate the motives and dispositions of his characters.

Characters may also be presented or portrayed either by “direct” or “indirect” definition (Kenan 1983:60). Direct definition is when a character is described by an adjective, an abstract noun or any part of speech (Kenan 1983:60). Indirect presentation is when, rather than describing a trait as in direct definition, it is displayed and exemplified in various ways via action, speech and external appearance (Kenan 1983:61).

The creation of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative, poetry, novel and short stories is called characterization.

#### 4.3.3 General background information

Of importance in this is the fact that most of the characters in R.R.R. Dhlomo’s historical novels are historical characters. They are historical in the sense that they

do not only resemble ordinary people or human beings but they are actually people living in the historical records, for example, Dingane, Mkabayi and Shaka are known characters in the history of the Zulu nation.

Commenting on Dhlomo's mode of characterization in his historical novels, Ntuli rightly points out that he:

“... makes his characters speak in order to sustain the interest of the reader ... In most of his historical novelettes R.R.R. Dhlomo, by means of psychological analysis, dialogue and depiction in general succeeds in making his characters realistic” (Limi Journal 1966:23).

In simple terms Ntuli meant that R.R.R. Dhlomo's characters in his historical novels are “life-like”. In other words R.R.R. Dhlomo is able to motivate the actions and behaviour of his characters. They are plausible and credible.

#### 4.4 Characterization in R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novels

##### 4.4.1 Shaka

In depicting Shaka, Dhlomo uses the technique of naming. When the people of eLangeni reported Nandi's pregnancy to the Zulu, the Zulu replied that, she is having an intestine disease called “IShaka”. When the boy was born they called him “Shaka” (1937:14).

Shaka is also portrayed as “cruel”. In describing Shaka’s cruelty, Dhlomo relates the story of a man who died of dehydration while attempting to fight the sun. Shaka who enjoyed watching this struggle, laughingly says after his death:

“It is a pity he died but he was lucky to die of natural causes as I had intended to kill him. Throw him away outside the fence of the homestead go and intercept those people who are going along the pathway and kill them. They will accompany and make it bad for this man who had been killed by the sun. I can see the birds ravenous flying above. I notice that they are hungry (Golan 1994:89).

Shaka’s cruelty is explained in terms of God’s will as well as in relation to Shaka’s miserable childhood, which left him unsociable and for which he sought revenge throughout his adult life.

In describing Shaka’s unpredictable nature, Dhlomo uses two accounts, one illustrating Shaka’s cruelty and the other his good nature. For example:

“One day as he was sitting leisured in the cattle enclosure, men heard him saying, ‘Zulu my people, have you ever known a man who takes snuff, who when he is asked for a pinch of snuff agrees to give others without first professing the lack or insufficiency of it beforehand?’ The council of men denied knowledge. ‘No Ndabezitha. There is no such person. All men began by declining, then later offer a pinch of snuff if they have enough’” (Shaka 1937:39).

Shaka then laughed saying:

“I am now going to find out whether this wide world does have a man who is capable of offering a pinch of snuff without professing the lack of it before”(Golan 1994:89).

According to this story Shaka then sends his messengers to find such a man, but they look throughout the country in vain. Finally, they meet a man who offers them snuff without first saying that he has too little. He is brought to Shaka who gives him a cow as a reward (Shaka 1937:16).

In his book *Investigating Shaka Using History* (1997) Golan argues that Shaka symbolizes not only power but unity. He was depicted as a “genius” who was also a man of the people, who struggled for the good of the people. He was also depicted as a “romantic figure”, a “symbol of the will” of a united Africa to free itself from the cultural and economical dominance of Europe (1994:5).

T010061

Dhlomo describes Shaka as “capricious and cruel”. He further argues that he is also the legitimate heir and rightful king, a figure to be feared and one worthy of admiration (Golan 1994:91).



#### 4.4.2 Characterization in Dingane

In his book on Dingane (1936) R.R.R. Dhlomo uses a combination of methods of characterization viz. The descriptive method and the dramatic method. R.R.R. Dhlomo uses mostly and successfully the descriptive method of characterization.

In the exposition R.R.R Dhlomo introduces Dingane by subtly describing him, making use of his traditional praises. Though using idiomatic and deep language, to a Zulu speaking reader, Dingane's personality is vividly portrayed. Dhlomo introduces him as:

“Uvezo uNonyanda uMgabadel!i

Owagabadela inkundla yakwaBulawayo ...

UMbomboshe Omnyama

UVemvane lukaPhunga noMaGeba

UVemvane olumabala azibhadu,

Ngabe ngiyaluthinta luyahwaqabala ...

Isiziba esiseMavivane, Dingane,

Isiziba esinzonzo, sizonzobele

Siminzia umuntu ethi uyageza

Waze washana nangesicoco

(Dingane 1936:4-5)

In these praises R.R.R. Dhlomo portrays Dingane as a murderous person who killed Shaka. Bulawayo was one of Shaka's kraals but here it is figuratively used and it literary means that Dingane killed Shaka (first two lines). In the next four lines the physical appearance of Dingane is described. He is dark. He is likened to a butterfly which, when touched, becomes angry. In other words Dingane reacted violently at the slightest provocation (1936:4-5). In the last four lines Dhlomo portrays Dingane literally as still waters which is a sign of danger, deepness in a persons personality and is further shown as the one who killed his half brother Mhlangana.

R.R.R. Dhlomo does not show any physical development in the portrayal of Dingane. Dingane is introduced to the reader when he is already an adult, who is negatively influenced by his aunt, Mkabayi, to take up the Zulu kingship and solve his problems by killing his rivals. Dingane is portrayed as a flat character. He does not show any psychological development and from the day he takes up the throne he commits all sorts of cruel and unnecessary murders.

On one occasion he orders that Mhlangana's and Mphuzulu's eyes be taken out and thereafter uses sarcastic words:

“How are your eyes  
if they see what is not seen by  
other people? Do you have proper eyes?  
Let us take them out may be you can  
See clearly without having them”  
(Dingane 1936:24).

There are a series of cruelties and senseless deeds committed by Dingane. R.R.R. Dhlomo, however, succeeded in showing well motivated action by Dingane in some instances. When Dingane and his accomplices kill Shaka, Shaka curses them.

“Do you kill me because you think you will rule this nation when I’m dead, you will never rule it. I have seen the birds coming, those are the birds which will rule this nation” (Dingane 1936:41).

These are the words and thoughts which haunt Dingane and eventually prompt him to kill the Boers. The Boers pose a threat to his kingdom. What aggravates Dingane’s suspicions about the Boers bona fides is that they are seen at night spying at the king’s kraal.

This is an historical fact, and as such makes the characterization plausible. Dingane is actually an historical character and is portrayed as he behaved. His character portrayal is an attempt at reconstructing his life history (1936).

R.R.R. Dhlomo must be commended for making use of the complex characterization technique viz. the stream of consciousness. In this type of technique the character, when confronted by a problem at a certain time, looks back at what has happened which will determine the method or action to take in order to solve the problem at hand.

Now we find Dingane, after having sent Piet Retief and the other boers to regain his stolen cattle from Sigonyela, chasing everybody away from the house, even Nzobo and remaining alone, torturing himself with thoughts about what Shaka said when they killed him. It is the arrival of the Boers that serve as a springboard for Dingane to think back and causes him to kill all the Boers. Dhlomo says:

“As soon as Piet Retief and other live to take the cows back from Sigonyela, Dingane turned a pure animal. He orders people to leave the house even Nzobo himself. I’m mistaken if I say he was left alone, he was left with all his evil thought” (Dingane 1936:40).

Shaka’s words:

“You kill me because you think you will govern this nation when I die! You won’t. I see the birds coming. Those are the birds which will govern this nation. He immediately remember that the people whom Shaka is speaking about are the Boers (Dingane 1936:41).

It is these factors which lead to the massacre of the Boers by Dingane. The defect in Dhlomo’s use of the stream of consciousness technique is that he uses too much of the descriptive method of characterization instead of dialogue or the dramatic method.

#### 4.4.3 Characterization in Cetshwavo

Naming is one of the conventional techniques, which R.R.R. Dhlomo uses to identify his characters. Dhlomo does not only delineate his characters by having them engaged in dialogue or describing them to the reader but he also gives them names. In his book on "Cetshwayo" R.R.R. Dhlomo declares that: "Mpande himself (Cetshwayo's father), by naming him was the cause of Cetshwayo being reported to England for killing Zulu people. (*Cetshwayo*, 1952:38).

With regard to characterization, R.R.R. Dhlomo presents his characters by means of "direct" presentation. In depicting Cetshwayo's anger he uses action, speech and external appearance. The moment the writer characterizes everything that is oppressive the external appearance becomes that of the white man. For example:

"White man, I am not  
talking to you, I am talking  
to Ngoza" (Dhlomo 1952:18).

"I can die now" (Dhlomo 1952:7)

To the British, 'Cetshwayo' is depicted as a "fearsome monster". They take control of the Transvaal in the fear that Cetshwayo may have ambitions for it. Once they have ensured the Boers loyalty to the British-led confederation, they fear that they could be in danger of being destroyed by Cetshwayo.

Dhlomo however, portrays Cetshwayo as a “peaceful king” who seeks to negotiate before venturing into a fight. For instance, Cetshwayo asks Somtsewu to place British settlers between the Zulu and the Boers, especially in the Zungenu area, because he is afraid that conflict might arise between his people and the Boers. This sounds like a rational plea, which Somtsewu deliberately ignored (1998:83).

The whites further regarded “Cetshwayo” as a “warmonger” who encouraged other black populations to rebel against British sovereignty. According to Dhlomo (1952:37), Somtsewu complains that Sikhukhuni has come to blows with the British because he has been befuddled by Cetshwayo. The king is also held responsible for the endless fights between the British and the Xhosa, which were, however, endemic.

Dhlomo makes “Cetshwayo” appear as a “peace lover” who fights only if war is forced on him and in the aftermath he seeks to establish peace with his opponents.

According to Dhlomo, Cetshwayo believes in a fair fight, and that people should be killed only in battle. Dhlomo’s portrayal is therefore a positive reconstruction of Cetshwayo in Zulu history. He refuses help from a Thonga doctor who offers to supply him with *umuthi* (destructive medicine) to poison the water and thus destroy all the British. Cetshwayo turns down the offer because his intentions are to fight and defeat the British in battle, not to annihilate

Characterization is an essential part of the plot. Character generates or causes plot and plot results from, and is dependent upon character. Without characterization, no thesis, no plot and no setting can develop and generate genuine interest in a reader or cause him to care what happens to whom and why.

#### 4.5 Plot in *Shaka*

By plot we mean the sequence of events. Shaka's plot is summarized as follows: According to R.R.R. Dhlomo, a certain man was sent by Chief Mbengi of eLangeni to pay Mbengi's respects to Jama, king of the Zulus. Before he reaches Jama's royal court, he comes upon some Zulu herd boys at a cattle post. This man is highly impressed by their kindness, particularly the good manners and the politeness of the young prince Senzangakhona, the son of Jama. He also gives a description of the Prince (1979:170).

“Among these boys who were herding he was attracted to one particularly, a very tall young man reaching up to there, who had a handsome face and a beautiful well shaped body” (1979:170).

The man from eLangeni felt that this was not an ordinary man. The young man who was respected by the other boys was Senzangakhona, the son of Jama. Senzangakhona was concerned on his behalf, saying that he should be given meat.

On arriving back at eLangeni, he tells about his journey and his experience with the herd boys (1979:170):

“I have never seen such kindness”.

Said the man giving an account to the chief:

“The cub of the wild beast of the Zulus together with his boys killed us with kindness. We ate until we were unable to walk” (1979:171).

The girls present, among whom is Nandi, an orphaned princess daughter of the late Chief Bhebe, are interested to hear about the young men themselves, in answer to which the man exclaims, addressing himself to Nandi.

As Nandi listens, she begins to have a strange and a powerful longing to see Senzangakhona for no reason and she asks the man to escort her to where the Zulu young men are herding. Nandi asks some of her trusted friends to escort her. When the girls reach the place they tell the young men that they want to see the Cup of a Wild Beast and they are from eLangeni.

Senzangakhona and Nandi went to Senzangakhona's shelter where they made love. After some months Nandi's pregnancy was reported to the Zulus, but Senzangakhona was not told. According to R.R.R. Dhlomo, Senzangakhona was still a bachelor at the time he impregnated Nandi (1979:176).

According to Burnes (1979:176) Shaka was already a young man when Senzangakhona, who had never seen him, received word from Dingiswayo that Shaka and his mother were living at Dingiswayo's. Senzangakhona, now married, came with his four wives and was highly impressed by Shaka even before he knew who he was.

One of his wives, Bhibi, was afraid that Shaka would be a strong rival for the succession for which her son, Sigujana, had already been named by Senzangakhona. She was openly hostile towards Shaka.

Dhlomo attests also to the general hostility and even hatred, which Shaka experienced as a child from his playmates, and the insults hurled at him reminding him of the circumstances of his birth. Dhlomo also states that there was a bitterness and a desire for revenge that began to grow in him, that were later to turn him into a homicidal maniac. Shaka was bitter against individual people, such as Phakathwayo, and whole communities such as the people of eLangeni and of Qwabe's village (1979:176).

Dhlomo concludes categorically that “it was Shaka’s years of boyhood that made him into ‘Shaka, who destroyed the entire world’” (1979:176).

In another incident, Ngowane offered a herd of cattle to anyone who killed a madman (uhlanya) which was very problematic. Shaka took the offer and killed the madman. He was honoured for this (1937:16).

Shaka loved his mother, Nandi, very much and he had much respect for her but he did not want to be associated with children. This is demonstrated by the following incident: One day when Shaka passes Nandi’s kraal he saw Nandi literally gambolling with a young child in the early morning sunshine, with Mbuzikazi in close attendance. He greets his mother and asks who the child is, that Nandi was playing with. Nandi declares that it was his grandchild. Shaka becomes very angry but admits inwardly that at least his son appeared to have courage.

King Shaka ordered the execution of any women who became pregnant by him. In some versions, a woman in Shaka’s harem succeeds in concealing her pregnancy and gives birth to a child who is then hidden out of fear of Shaka’s rage but Shaka finds him and kills him. Shaka is told that a child of his by “Mbuzikazi” is being hidden from him by his own mother, Nandi. He then travelled to his mother’s royal city and says to her”

“Mother, many times I have endured great pains.  
But never have I faced to great challenge.  
The one closest to me has betrayed me!  
Mbopha tells me you harbour what shall  
be the death of our house.  
A child, supposedly mine, has been kept  
away from me;  
Yet I am still convinced never could my  
parent act against me.  
What example would I be setting  
for the army?  
What wise general would ask of his  
men what he himself would not do” (Shaka 1937:108).

Nandi replies:

“Shaka my son, no one is gifted in  
all things.  
You have many types of knowledge  
and experiences. But only one  
aspect still remain obscure to you.  
The heart that yearns to fulfill  
it dreams and fantasies.  
It is not out of evil that people  
act against others.  
But love sometimes obscures itself  
in act of cruelty.  
The older I get the greater are  
my concerns.  
By my own love I am weakened”  
(Shaka 1937:109).

Rejecting Nandi’s loving arguments, Shaka explains the importance of laws  
“beyond the circumstances of self” and tells her again that he must set an example  
to his soldiers.

The death of Nandi took place in October 1827. One evening, messengers arrived to state that Nandi lay critically ill. Shaka set out to bring what comfort he could to his stricken mother and whatever medical aid could be provided. Shaka sat silently with several of the chiefs around him. He was silent for two hours without a word from his lips. The news was brought to him that Nandi was dead.

Shaka was killed in 1828 by persons close to him, among them Dingane, who succeeded him as ruler of the Zulu kingdom. Shaka uttered some meaningful words as he was being killed:

“What wrong have I done Dingane?  
What have I done Mhlangana?  
Why do you kill me?  
Do you hope to rule this land when I am dead?  
You are very much mistaken,  
there are the birds of heaven hovering  
over the land.  
You shall never rule it when  
I am dead.  
The Europeans have arrived (Golan 1994:90).

Shaka’s prophecy about the swallows that would rule has been explained as a prediction of the coming of the Europeans.

King Shaka left a permanent mark on the history of the world. Shaka's era witnessed the emergency of kingdoms which entailed a degree of militarization of political units, and also comprehensive changes relating to the nature of political, social and the economic relations between rulers and ruled (1996:25).

#### 4.6 Plot in Dingane

After Shaka was assassinated Dingane took the throne. Dingane was allowed rule because he had not used an assegai, he caught hold of his brother whilst the others stabbed him. Mkabayi comes with a plan to kill Mhlangana and his councillor Mbopha.

By the middle of 1837 the Great Trek had reached the Drakensburg. Piet Retief and his followers proceeded to uMgungundlovu to obtain land from Dingane. Dingane stipulated that Retief should recover some cattle which had been stolen by Sigonyela. Retief agreed and succeeded in recovering the cattle from Sigonyela, chief of the Mantatise in northern Basutoland who was the culprit (Dingane 1936:36).

On the third of February, 1838, Retief with his companions returned to Mgungundlovu with the cattle.

After Retief had spent a few days at the kraal Dingane drew up the Treaty under which the Voortrekkers received the land between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu and from the sea to the north as far as the land may be useful. This document dated 4<sup>th</sup> February, was signed on the 6<sup>th</sup> at the time of the final interview.

On that morning the Voortrekkers and all their servants entered the kraal unarmed for the final entertainment and the farewell. During the course of the dancing Dingane ordered his soldiers to kill the Voortrekkers (Dhlomo 1936:44). The white men fought heroically but were overpowered and dragged to the hill of execution, KwaMatiwane where they were clubbed to death.

The missionary, Owen and his household whose camp faced this hill, witnessed the scene (Dhlomo 1936:46). After this, Dingane engaged in a regular war with the Voortrekkers which culminated in the Battle of "Income" (Blood River) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838 (1936:48).

Dingane went off to Swaziland after Mpande had left. When Mpande entered into a military alliance with the Voortrekkers against King Dingane, Mpande amabutho, led by Nongalaza KaNondela Mnyandu, fought Dingane's army led by Ndlela kaSompisi. Dingane's army was finally defeated on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1840 at the Battle of Maqongqo Hills (1936:85).

According to Dhlomo (1936:85), King Dingane sent two unarmed emissaries, viz. Dambuza (Nzobo) and Sikhombazana to Andries Pretorius. Their mission was to conclude a peace treaty with the Voortrekkers. The Voortrekkers did what was queer in the European world by killing unarmed emissaries whose mission was to conclude a truce.

After his defeat at Maqongqi, Dingane killed Ndlela kaSompisi at the Place of the People of Ngqengelele. Dingane destroyed his “uMgungundlovu Palace” and fled towards the uBombo Hills. The Nyawo people spotted him and informed the Swazis. The Swazi’s surrounded him at night and stabbed him by throwing assegais at him. The blood was flowing and he died (Dhlomo 1936:108).

#### 4.7 Mpande’s plot

The source of Mpande’s strength could be traced to his name, “Mpande”. His name comes from a Zulu word “Impande” meaning “root”. A root could be of a plant or nation. A symbolic meaning of a root is that it can be a source of life. The growth of a plant or nation is dependent on the root. It could be said that in Senzangakhona’s calculations, Mpande was to be the source of the nation (1938:20).

Mpande was then code-named “Prince of the Emigrant Zulu”. Mpande was stationed between the Mhlali and Mvoti Rivers. The Zulu nation installed Mpande

as king on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1840. Dancing was performed. King Mpande enjoyed the support of the strong Amakhosi, like “kIwana” of the Buthelezi and “Maphitha” ka”Sojiyisa”.

After 1853 Mpande began to fall under the amorous spell of “Monase” a wife given to him by Shaka, who was believed to be pregnant with Shaka’s child, Mbuyazi. Mpande favoured Mbuyazi for the kingship, against the advice of his councillors, who upheld the traditions regarding succession and began to slander Cetshwayo’s character (1938:60).

Mpande lays several traps to place Cetshwayo in disfavour with the people. Eventually there is open war between the two princes that culminates in the bloody 1856 battle of Ndongakusuka, where the whole army of Mbuyazi is destroyed and Mbuyazi, with his five brothers, are killed (Dhlomo 1938:63).

Mpande grudgingly accepts Cetshwayo as his heir, and the prince begins to rule the kingdom because Mpande can no longer move about. In 1872 Mpande dies cursing Cetshwayo:

“Your kingdom will be very brief because of your lack of respect for your father!”(Alternation Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2:1998).

Theophilus Shepstone (Somtsewu) crowns “Cetshwayo” king of the Zulus in 1873 and imposes the coronation laws, according to which Cetshwayo must respect the borders with Natal and must avoid bloodshed.

When Mpande was on the verge of death he spoke thus to his councillors:

“My time is finished, I am going.  
Send me Maphitha, and tell him to  
pick out an old white ox.  
Let him select four men,  
and let them drive this ox  
which is old like me, to go and  
Fetch a cloak for men” (1996:54).

According to M.Z. Shamase (1996:54) by these words he meant the skin of a lion, an old one, one which was now chief among the lions, one which no longer hunted game but had its prey caught for it by others (1996:54).

#### 4.8 Plot in *Cetshwayo*

From the very beginning Dhloro (1952:1), highlights the reasons for the conflicting views about Cetshwayo. We should not be surprised that he suffered the way he did because he was made regent in 1857 when Mpande was unable to move as he had grown too fat, and then ascended the throne after his father's death (1872) during a difficult historical time. The problems were the result of Mpande's policies, but he was also faced with problems stemming from the

unlawful occupation of land by whites. Dhlomo may have believed that Mpande's curse contributed to Cetshwayo's flaws, although he maintained that Mpande was completely irrational in this. The only fault that the author attributes to Cetshwayo, is the appointment of John Dunn, a former fervent friend of Mbuyazi, as a chief with direct consequences during the Anglo Zulu War.

Dhlomo is however, adamant that many of the criticisms cast at Cetshwayo are unfair and irrational since they are just sweeping and unsubstantiated assumptions.

“Kepha kukho konke lokhu  
kasilizwa nelilodwa izwi nesenzo  
esenziwa uCetshwayo esikhomba  
ububi bakhe nokukhohlakala  
kwakhe” (Dhlomo 1952:13)

(But out of all this, we do not  
hear any word or action  
done by Cetshwayo which shows  
his perversity and corruption).

Dhlomo (1952:10) also pointed out that Cetshwayo ascended the throne while Mpande, who had bitterly opposed him, was still alive and that his fathers hostility was caused by the jealousy of a father who feared that his own son would demonstrate greater leadership qualities than himself.

Dhlomo fights the perception of Cetshwayo being a cruel killer. Whites have maintained that no Zulu king ever killed on legal grounds, and they have used minor incidents to discredit Cetshwayo on the sensitive point of the “iNgcuce” regiment. Before Mpande’s death, many regiments had been given permission to marry, and Cetshwayo was simply continuing the tradition. Dhlomo denies the allegations that Cetshwayo killed a large number of “iNgcuce” girls for defying his directive. He states that, according to eye witnesses, not more than ten girls died during the operation. What shocked the nation was not the number of girls that died, but the young women’s defiance of the king’s order, because they thought he would not be able to take strong action against them as a result of the coronation laws laid down by Somtsewu.

Another incident blown out of all proportion is Cetshwayo’s unsuccessful attempt to stop the fight between *Amamboza* and *iNgobamakhosi*, which resulted in the death of about seventy men from the two regiments. According to the British, these incidents proved Cetshwayo was an incapable leader. They accused him of deliberately provoking the fight because he enjoyed seeing his people kill one another (Dhlomo, 1952:11).

From the Battle of Sandlwana to the return of Cetshwayo from exile, about eleven thousand Zulu soldiers lost their lives. After the kingdom was dismembered, the Zulu suffered horribly under the authority of the thirteen appointed chiefs. Even the Boers demanded the return of Cetshwayo because there was less bloodshed

during the king's rule. This proved that the British were wrong in their assumption that people were unhappy under Cetshwayo's reign.

As a matter of fact, Cetshwayo also established the Ekubazeni homestead to shelter people who had been smelled out by *izangoma* as dangerous witches. This means that "Cetshwayo" was not a bloodthirsty tyrant who killed on barbaric grounds. The Zulus know that Cetshwayo had tried to re-establish the might of the kingdom, something they were longing for. Cetshwayo was loved and supported throughout his life. When the king went into hiding after the destruction of his uLundi homestead many people were tortured and even killed, but no one revealed his whereabouts.

He held no grudge when he was in exile in Cape Town. When he was visited by Sobantu (Colenso) and his daughter, he asked about many people in Zululand, both friends and enemies, such as Hhamu, Zibhebhu and John Dunn. In England, Cetshwayo explained that he would not be able to live with John Dunn as a neighbour since all respect for him had been destroyed. Cetshwayo sustained both physical and spiritual wounds after the destruction of the people by Zibhubhu in 1883 (Dhlomo 1952).

MaNembe, Cetshwayo's inyana contributed to Cetshwayo's victory at Indondakusuka through his powerful magic by stealing Mbuyazi's shield for Cetshwayo to kneel on. Later MaNembe and Cetshwayo quarrelled. Seemingly

the king's advisers called for MaNembe's death fearing that he would kill Cetshwayo through his magic. Before MaNembe died, he cursed Cetshwayo saying that his rule would not last for killing the person who had put him on the throne. Dhlomo argues that although Manembe's accusations angered the king, it was the people around him who thought the king was in danger and disposed of Manembe.

Cetshwayo (1952) follows Dhlomo's journalistic method of telling a separate story in each chapter, without following a strict chronological order. But, with regard to his sources, he clearly collected information from Zulu people who had known Cetshwayo in person. He is thus able to follow an independent approach to the events and to forcefully take issue with several misconceptions, regarding Cetshwayo, disseminated by colonial officials and other writers. The criticism levelled at earlier historical novels on the Zulu kings made him distrust stereotyped sources about the history of black people. Cetshwayo (1952) is a national figure, able to summon powerful arguments against the slanderous interpretations of the king by the British, who had betrayed him in order to pursue their expansionist schemes.

In his biographies of the Zulu kings Shaka, Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo, Dhlomo has made a significant contribution to Zulu history. He has shown that we too have had great men in the past.

#### 4.9 Summary

Characterization in Zulu novels has gone through different stages of development viz. the pre-historical novels, the historical novels and the social novels. Characterization in Zulu novels is a developing process. This development in the art of characterization has been achieved by the use of various literary techniques.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this dissertation gives a brief summary on how King Shaka and Dingane took up the throne as well as the description of Cetshwayo's figure as seen by different writers.

King Shaka left a permanent mark on the history of the world. Shaka's era witnessed the emergence of kingdoms, which entailed an increase in size and in the degree of militarization of political units and also comprehensive changes to the nature of political, social and to some extent, economic relations between rulers and ruled.

Senzangakhona had nominated Bhakuza as heir apparent. Bhakuza was killed by Dingiswayo. Senzangakhona next nominated Sigujana as his heir. Sigujana actually succeeded Senzangakhona, but was killed almost immediately by Shaka in 1816. Shaka's successful plot to kill Sigujana whilst swimming at the river was recorded in his praises:

"The raging stream  
That drowns a person washing  
He drowns even with a heading" (1996:19).

When Shaka was killed Mhlangana was jumped over for the kingship, even though he looked on himself as successor. Dingane was not responsible. A discussion arose as to who should succeed, Dingane or Mhlangano. This discussion took place before Ngqengelele Buthelezi, the first man of the Zulu country, Nomcoba, Shaka's sister and also Mkabayi another sister of Shaka were present. The result of this discussion was that Mhlangano was not allowed to reign on the grounds stated by Nomcoba and Mkabayi that a man may not rule with a red assegai, which has stabbed a king. Dingane was declared king, for it was found that, though participating in the assassination, he had not used a lethal weapon but laid hold of Shaka (Shamase, 1996:25).

There is a large body of literature that could be regarded as 'marginal' in South African terms, because it is not accessible to the majority of readers, being written in African languages. This is not a healthy situation for a country that professes multilingualism as one of its greatest assets. In an effort to break the barriers erected by language limitations, this paper presents one of the most popular figures in Zulu literature, namely King Cetshwayo kaMpande, the last independent Zulu monarch.

According to Harold Scheub (1985:493), modern Zulu literature has developed in two directions, reflecting two great concerns, which are: The glories of the historical past and the problems caused by the infiltration of western religion, education and way of life.

These two broad areas of concern were combined in the 1930's in early literary activity, mainly imaginative literature, thereby raising the questions which have profoundly concerned Southern African writers for decades. The urban, Christian, westernized milieu versus the traditional African past.

According to N.N. Canonici and T.T. Cele, the historical figure of king Cetshwayo can be seen as the ideal personification of such a dichotomy as he lived in the same way as the people he ruled. Pushed by events and the inexorable tide of history and subjected to revolutionary innovations over which he had scant control, he felt power slipping through his fingers, and made a determined effort to barricade himself in the fortress of tradition, which he tried to revitalize.

The Oral poet (Dhlomo:1936) describes him as "obstinate and self assured", as follows:

"UNdondelakuyalwa" (He who reluctant to take advice),

"USalakutshelwa" (who refuses to be told)

USalakunyenyezela" (who refuses to be warned).

While many of his subjects went along with him and his ideals, several felt the futility of his efforts, while the colonial government considered him an anachronism to be ruthlessly disposed of and moved out of the way. His resistance gave rise to strategies that culminated in two separate, but linked actions. The

1856 Battle of “Ndondakusuka” where he fearlessly fought for his right of succession and decimated the Zulu army in the process, mortally weakening the nation; and the 1879 “Anglo Zulu War” which, after alternating fortunes, saw the complete destruction of his kingdom.

This paper shows clearly that Cetshwayo’s figure is very popular in Zulu literature, especially in that section of it that reflects on past history in order to shed light on the present situation. The last independent king’s memory is enshrined in the “Izibongo”, published by James Stuart in the 1920’s. Dhlomo’s anecdotal narrative should be considered more popular history than a reference work.

R.R.R. Dhlomo felt there was a need to forcefully reconstruct the history of “Cetshwayo” as he believed many people, including academic writers, were hopelessly misled. According to him, the two incidents in Cetshwayo’s life (the iNdondakusuka and Sandlwana battles) reveal the king’s commitment to improve society as he was a hero who only fought to defend his people.

Dhlomo also wrote about the need to preserve Zulu history and the Zulu language. He stated in *ILanga laseNatal* that “our folklore and historical records must be preserved from dying out, as well as anything of racial pride, by means of literature, otherwise these will be lost and our connection with the past forgotten.” (Couzens: 1985).

By writing novels he contributed to the Zulu cultural heritage. He believed in art being no small weapon in our struggle for national liberation. Sadly, this gifted writer died in poverty in 1971, away from his family. He left them behind in Johannesburg in 1943 when he went to work for *Ilanga*. He died in Siyamu where he had been born. In his last years he was involved in community work there. He is still remembered for this as well as for his writings.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Alternation Journal of the CSSALL, 1998. Vol. 5, No. 2.  
University of Durban-Westville.
2. Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagine Communities. Reflection of the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism.*  
Verso: London
3. Appiah, K. 1992. *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture.*  
Oxford University Press: New York.
4. Ashcroft, B., Griffith, G. and Tiffin, H. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back.*  
Routledge : London and New York.
5. *Bantu World*, 1932.  
Johannesburg.
6. Boehmer, E. 1995. *Colonial and Post-colonial Literature.*  
Oxford University Press: New York.
7. Burnes, C.M. 1979. *Shaka the King of the Zulu's in African Literature.*  
Washington D.C.
8. Couzens, T. 1985. *New African. A Study of Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo.*  
Ravan Press: Johannesburg.
9. Couzens, T.J. 1975. *English in Africa. Vol. 2., No.1, Vol.1: Vol.1, No.2, 1974.*
10. Dhlomo, R.R.R., *uDingane 1936, uShaka 1937, uMpande 1938 and Cetshwayo 1952.*  
Shuter & Shooter: Pietermaritzburg.
11. Eagleton, T., Jameson, F. and Said, E. 1983. *Nationalism, Colonialism, Colonialism and Literature.*  
University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.
12. Fanon, F. 1986. *The Black Skin, White Mask.*  
Pluto Press: London.

13. Gerard, A. 1971. *Four African Literature*.  
University of California Press: London.
14. Golan, D. 1994. *Investigating Shaka: Using History in the life story of King Shaka and Gender Tention*.  
Hebrew University: Jerusalem.
15. Horst Erdmand Verlag: 1972. *Who's Who in Africa, Germany*.
16. Hyland P. 1997. *Writing and Africa*.  
Longman: London & New York.
17. ILanga LaseNatal: 11 July 1929, 22 November 1929.
18. ILanga LaseNatal: 1938:4
19. Inkundla yaBantu (Bantu Forum): 1945:4.  
Johannesburg
20. Loomba, A. 1998. *Colonialism / Post-Colonialism*.  
Routledge: London and New York.
21. Lukacs, G. 1937. *The Historical Novel*.  
Merlin Press: London
22. Nguni Wa Thiongo. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind*  
James Currey: London
23. Parker, M. and Starkey, R. 1995. *New Casebook: Post-Colonial Literature*.  
MacMillan Press: London.
24. Shamase, M.Z. 1996. *Zulu Pontates*.  
S.M. Publication: Durban
25. Shlomith, R.K. 1983. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*.  
London and New York.