

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**CONSCIENTISATION: A MOTIVE BEHIND THE SELECTED POEMS  
OF SEPAMLA, SEROTE, GWALA AND MTSHALI**

**ZWELITHINI LEO SIBISI**

**January 2013**

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OF SEPAMLA, SEROTE, GWALA AND MTSHALI**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby declare that: **Conscientisation: A motive behind selected poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali.** Is my own work and it has never been submitted before, to any institution.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Z.L SIBISI

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my father, Bhekumthetho Mathew Sibisi, who passed away on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2007. To him I say: you will always have a special place in my heart and mind.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Last but not least, my younger brother, Mayibongwe Petros Sibisi for ensuring that my computers were always in good working condition during the course of this study.

## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis looks at how the poets Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali (SSGM) make concerted efforts to demonstrate how different forms of social activities have sought to whitewash black people in believing myths about themselves. These myths were perpetuated by the government of apartheid policies and its related bureaucratic organs like the education system. The fallacies were also communicated through biased literature and denigrating terminologies. The study analyses how the selected poems of SSGM set out to conscientize black people to realise how they had unconsciously accepted certain behaviours. This had led them to compare themselves to the “privileged cultures” and to strive to be identified with those who were in power and those who were despised and were therefore powerless.

The main aim of this study is to demonstrate how the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali exposed the extent to which black people had been psychologically subjected to internalising negative views of who they were. From the title of the thesis we note a claim that conscientization was the motive behind the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala, and Mtshali. This claim was discerned from the poetry that was analysed. It was also deemed fit to verify this through structured interviews and questionnaires that were arranged and conducted with the poets. However the interviews did not include the late Sepamla who had been called to higher service by the time the research was conducted. The researcher’s interactions with the poets confirmed the claim that conscientization was indeed the motive behind their poetry.

Aspects of peoples’ lives which had been targeted as tools for disempowering black people were experienced in the form of racism, apartheid policies, Bantustan institutions, and laws, demeaning terminologies, cultural superiority, and prejudiced beliefs, arts, music, literature, theatre and sport.

An analysis of the poetry under review led to the conclusion that the poetry of SSGM was not protest poetry as some scholars had claimed. The aim of the poetry was not to instigate any militancy against oppressors but to make black people aware of their identity and to affirm them in their resistance against cultural hegemony.

The study makes use of Marxist theories and specifically cites those aspects which relate to the tools used to analyse the poetry of SSGM. Georg Lukacs's viewpoint that literature reflects the social reality of its time is applied to some of the selected poetry. Eagleton and Althusser talk about the formalization of literature which makes ideology to become visible to the reader. Gramsci says the task of producing and disseminating ideology is performed by organic intellectuals. Writers are regarded as organic intellectuals. In spite of the limiting circumstances the four black writers whose poetry is being considered, managed to conscientize people around issues that needed to be opposed or rejected.

This study is significant in so far as it exposed how poetry of black selected writers conscientized people and indirectly contributed to the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa. It is suggested that further studies are undertaken to re-assess the role of literature written by the black writers during the apartheid regime. A special attention must be given to those literary works that were banned and reasons for such action by those who were hell bent on subjugating black people. One of the challenges encountered during the research was that some of the books were out of print. However, a thorough and persistent search did result in the final access to those books which were not easily available.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study postulates that the reason behind the writing of the selected poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Matshali (SSGM) is to create critical awareness in the oppressed black people about their socio-political status in South Africa. The study contends that the poets, whose work is being analysed, sought to open discourse which critiqued the different ideologies of the apartheid system in order to conscientise blacks in particular around issues which had to be addressed so that their dignity was not undermined. Karis and Gerhart (1997:112-113) point that within the ranks of Black Consciousness, the function of conscientisation was to:

... transpose mere anger into a more informed political understanding and response to what SASO called "the system." "The system" was more than a damning epithet. The term suggested that apartheid had to be conceptualized as an interconnected web of relationships tying together the psychological and the physical, the economic and the political, the student realm and the perceptions and expectations taught to students regarding adult life. The more deeply one could comprehend the workings of the system, the more astutely one could begin to devise means for its destruction.

Furthermore, Karis and Gerhart note that the organizers of the South African Students' Organisation-SASO leadership seminars were aware that their time for politicizing the youth was brief, and that the main measure of their success would be the ability of their recruits to spread and reproduce the conscientisation process. This suggests that the intention of Black Consciousness was to disseminate the conscientisation process to as many black people as possible. Literature was therefore one of the tools that could be used for spreading and reproducing the conscientisation process.

In this thesis conscientisation is defined as the stimulation of self-awareness in people so that they begin to think and act in a manner that will empower them to change their lives for the better. The poetry of SSGM was revolutionary and sought to revolutionize the way black people thought and looked at themselves and their surroundings. It sought to ignite them to make a dialectical analysis of the nature of their problems.

This study defines dialectic method as a process of making explicit contradictions within an existing form of social consciousness in order to criticize it from within, rather than from an outside. It investigates the nature of the truth by criticism of the initial concepts and hypothesis.

The dialectical analysis was used by Steve Biko in his essays to analyse the South African socio-political context. The same dialectical analysis was used by the poets SSGM to probe various topical issues in their selected poems. This thesis seeks to argue that it was through this process of dialectical probing of topical issues that the poets, SSGM concurrently produced conscientisation effect in their readers.

The poets SSGM used the medium of poetry as a discourse to probe issues of racist attitudes, identity of black people, Christianity, white liberalism, non-white class. The discourse also exposed the exploitation of black workers, Bantustan institutions, as well as black masses' anger. Poetry as discourse enabled the poets SSGM to agitate, incite, polarise and to motivate their readers to react against the racist colonial, capitalist apartheid system.

The conscientisation process was meant to open the eyes of black people so that they could begin to see the nature of their oppression, subjugation, discrimination, and marginalization. It is through the conscientisation process that black people were directly and indirectly informed that they were not free; they were made aware of their inner strength that they could use to set themselves free.

Karis and Gerhart (1997:112) report that there were actual conscientisation gatherings that took place six years before the Soweto uprising. They were conducted by SASO and later on by the Black Consciousness movement facilitators as leadership seminars that were called formation schools. They used church facilities in Wilgespruit, Roodepoort west of Johannesburg or at the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre near Pietermaritzburg.

Karis and Gerhart (1997) state that these leadership seminars provided: political education, offered students the opportunity to engage openly and questioning discussions which did not happen at home or at school. The formation schools were used to drive home the message of self-reliance. Furthermore, in these leadership seminars the students were taught how to conduct meetings, keep minutes, and observe basic rules of procedure, open debate, critical analysis, workshop discussions, leadership accountability, fundraising strategies and ways of dealing with media.

In addition Karis and Gerhart (1997:115) also state that SASO's strategists drew heavily on the idealistic theories of Paulo Freire regarding the potentialities from social mobilization among the poor. According to Paulo Freire's (1972:28) conscientization is the stimulation of self-reflected critical awareness in people of their social reality and their ability to transform that reality by their conscious collective action which sum up the intentions of the Black Consciousness.

Freire suggests that conscientisation is a process by which people are made to understand their present situation in terms of prevailing social, economic, and political relationships. This is the kind

of conscientisation that the poetry of SSGM sought to disseminate to the oppressed black people. Wilson (in Pityana et al 1992:35) and Ramphele (in Pityana et al. 1992:155) reveal that Biko was exposed to the ideas of Paulo Freire. This suggests that the conscientisation that Biko advocated for had its roots in the approaches of Paulo Freire.

The study reveals that the poetry of SSGM was a conscientisation instrument. This poetry needs to be viewed not just as mere poetry but also as an inherently emancipatory discourse. Its goal was to initiate a process of self-reflected critical awareness in those black people whose self-formative capacity was radically truncated by constraints of ideological forms of consciousness. According to Janks and Ivanic (1992:306) the term emancipatory discourse implies people or groups of people who need emancipation from someone or something.

The ideological consciousnesses can be defined as the pre-formed constellation of values and beliefs that inform a person's understanding of self and others through the process of socialisation. This suggests that conscientisation can be a form of psychological empowerment, the feeling that one has some power or control of one's life.

Rappaport (1983:3) defines empowerment as a process by which communities are reminded of their own power and are facilitated in their attempt to claim it. This means that empowerment is a process by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives. The poets SSGM employed a dialectical analysis to probe and reflect on important social and political issues that affected black people. The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2002:320) defines dialectical as a method of discovering the truth of ideas by discussion and logical argument and by considering ideas that are opposed to each other...the way in which two aspects of a situation affect each other.

According to Biko (2007:127) conscientisation referred to the conditions under which the black man lived. He argues that it was aimed at getting blacks to realistically grapple with their problems, to attempt to find solutions to their problems, to develop what one called an awareness of their situation, and to be able to analyse it, and to provide answers for themselves.

This study argues that the Conscientisation that SSGM sought to effect in their black readers the same Conscientisation that B.C wanted to effect in black people. Thus the reason the study uses the B.C ideology to analyse the selected poems of SSGM. The analysis reveals that the selected poems reflect the ideology of the Black Consciousness movement. SSGM address the same issues that Steve Biko addresses in his essays. SSGM use the same dialectical analysis used by Biko.

In this study the researcher argues that the poetry of SSGM is more than just poetry but a discourse. The term discourse can be defined as a communication in speech or writing. A discourse is a piece of

writing or discussion about a particular serious subject. This means that discourse is the system of meaning, which means that discourse is any combination of words, or visual images that make meaning for the reader, viewer or listener. The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of current English (2002:331) defines discourse as long and serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing...the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning

In this study the poetry of SSGM is regarded as discourse because it addresses itself to nine serious issues that affected the lives of black people. These issues are: (1) racist attitudes (2) culture of black people, (3) Christian religion, (4) capitalist exploitation, (5) non-whites, (6) white liberalism (7) Bantustan institutions, (8) literary criticism, (9) anger of Black masses and the state violence. In the selected poems of SSGM these issues are dialectically discussed and interrogated in a way that makes the reader to begin to view them from the point of view of SSGM. Easthope (1983:41) in his book entitled *Poetry as Discourse* suggests that poetry can be viewed as discourse in some instances. Benveniste (1971:208-209) concurs with Easthope by asserting that:

poetry can operate in every utterance (enunciation) assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way.

The foregoing citation clearly indicates what happens when a reader reads the selected poems of SSGM. In the poems the reader is addressed directly as an individual, the speaker in the poem seems to recognize the reader. The reader is given a subject position. It is this subject position that influences the meaning the reader attaches to the poem. Janks and Ivanic (1992:307) agree with the view that meaning lies not simply in the text but in the social relations in which it is embedded.

For Janks and Ivanic (1992:307) all texts work to anchor some meanings in preference to others. This means that when discourse enters the existing social relations and struggle which affords the readers to understand it. Hall (1980:7) calls this the preferred meaning. Giroux (1983) uses the term accommodation to refer to accepting the preferred meaning, or the subject position.

The researcher argues that any meaning conveyed in a discourse is not neutral, but interested. It conscientizes, it interpellates (hails) because it is filled with ideology. It places its readers in a particular position where they can read and interpret the text in agreement with the aims and objectives of the writer. That is, the text is written in a way that compels the reader to accept the meaning intended by the author.

As discourse, the poetry of SSGM does the same. It is not neutral because it is informed by the ideology of the Black Consciousness. The researcher argues that it is a counter-hegemonic discourse

because it claims to articulate the interests of all black social groups to its own set of meanings, thus dis-articulating these social groups from other hegemonic alliances.

This study argues that the poets SSGM in their attempt to conscientise their readers, colluded with the very concept of ideology they were trying to subvert. In this study the researcher defines ideology as a set of beliefs or principles, meanings and practices in which people think and act. Thompson defines ideology as meanings, ideas, beliefs and values in the service of power. Thompson (1990:58) contends the study of ideology serves to establish and sustain relations of domination.

Thompson extends the classical Marxist term, relations of production, to include other non-class forms of exploitation and oppression. In the case of this study the term relations of domination refers to the oppression of black people by white people. In this study the term relation of domination refers to white racism.

This study employed three research methodologies to investigate whether conscientisation was the motive behind the poetry of SSGM. The set of interview questions were conducted with each individual poet. The researcher used the attitude scale where each individual poet had to complete by ticking next to a response that best describe his poetry. The in-depth analysis of the selected poems was used as a method of discerning deeper meanings hidden in the poems. The in-depth analysis of a poem can be defined as a holistic analysis that looks at the theme, diction and the form. Where possible each poem was considered as whole. The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of current English (2002:608) defines the term in-depth analysis as a kind of discussion that is very thorough and detailed.

Marxist theory of literature was deemed as relevant for the analysis of the poetry of SSGM because it exposes the workings of ideology in literary texts and in literary criticism. Forgacs (in Jefferson and Robey 1995:167) points out that for Marxist theorists, literature can only properly be understood within a larger framework of social reality. It is from this view that this thesis argues that the selected poems of SSGM reflect the reality of the socio-political context in which they were written.

In his interaction with each individual poet, the researcher discovered that each of them subscribed to the Marxist view of literature. Serote pointed out that he was a communist and an active member of Black Consciousness. Gwala stated that he operated from a Marxist rationale when he writes poetry. Sepamla was an active member of Black Consciousness. Mtshali on the other hand believes that art imitates life; a Marxist view of literature.

There were few challenges encountered when this study was conducted. The first was the death of Sepamla in 2007 before the commencement of the study. This denied the researcher a chance to interview him and to request him to complete an attitude scale, the tool for data collection used in this study. As a result the researcher had to rely on other written sources for information on Sepamla.

The second setback was the scarcity of literature on Black Consciousness poetry and the concept of conscientisation. This stems from the fact that there are few dissertations and theses on poetry in both the school of English and isiZulu. This study discovered that upcoming researchers are not keen on pursuing further studies in the field of poetry. The last obstacle was the non-existence of some primary sources, the actual books that contain the poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali (SSGM) in bookshops. For instance it was very difficult to locate Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali's collection called Fire flames in most bookshops and libraries.

## 1.2 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to analyse the extent to which the selected poems of SSGM published in the 1970s and early 1980s sought to conscientize black people to a deeper self-consciousness about their socio-political problems. In an attempt to accomplish this objective, this study theorizes the relationship between the Black consciousness ideologies as articulated by Steve Biko. And on other hand the dominant ideologies of the apartheid government which manifested itself in: (1) racist attitudes, (2) black identity, (3) exploitation of black workers, (4) Bantustan institutions, (5) white liberalism, (6) non-white class, (7) Christian religion, (8) writing of poetry, and (9) anger of black masses. This study contends that the poetry sought to conscientize people by probing and reflecting on both ideologies. This study was limited to a kind of conscientisation aimed at changing the perceptions of black people about themselves in relation to their white oppressors through poetry.

## 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- This study analyses selected poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali (SSGM) with reference to the ideology of Black Consciousness as articulated by Steve Biko.
- The study also examines the role played by black poetry during the apartheid system by looking at how the poets addressed issues of racist attitudes, culture of black people and Christian religion.

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is the connection between the South African literary texts published in the politically turbulent 1970s and early 1980s and its socio-political context. The literary text which is the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali (SSGM) is examined with special reference to the history of Biko and the Black Consciousness movement.

The writers defied intimidation from the violent structures the apartheid system and risked their lives by fearlessly articulating their opinions. The poets and many others were prepared to die in defence of their beliefs. The researcher chose this study because there has been no research study conducted so far to examine the extent to which the poetry of SSGM probes the ideologies of apartheid while concurrently reflecting on the ideology of the Black Consciousness with special reference to the ideas of Biko.

The study reveals that the poets SSGM did not blindly essentialize the cultural identity of black people as they have been criticized by some literary critics. In his interaction with the poets SSGM, the researcher found that the writers dispel the idea that their use of essentialist notions was reverse racism. The poets SSGM argue that their deliberate use of strategic essentialism was intended only to affirm the culture, identity and the pride of black people. The use of essentialist ideas was a strategy to give a voice to the oppressed black people.

This study also reveals that this poetic genre had far greater value than that of entertainment. The poetic genre can be used as a tool to educate people on various social issues. A piece of poem can be written on any immediate issue of serious concern in a short space of time. Its message can be disseminated to large numbers of people quickly through recitations in community halls, public spaces and on radio broadcasts and publications like newspapers and leaflets.

The researcher argues that it is important to re-assess the value of poetry written during the height of apartheid. This is crucial as some of the poetry was banned and never given any assessment. Post-apartheid scholars are now free to examine even those poems that earlier scholars could not examine. This is evident in this study, where poems with sensitive subject matters in particular on white racism are examined. Some of the poems treated in this thesis could be considered as containing hate speech by some sectors of our community which is not the intention of the researcher.

The examination of the selected poems of SSGM in post-apartheid era is crucial because they contain the history of the liberation struggle. This research study points to the need for the re-

assessment of South African literature written during apartheid in order to re-write South African history

### 1.5 HYPOTHESIS

A Marxist analysis of the selected poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali (SSGM) showed that their poems probed and reflected on the issues of racial attitudes, black identity, Christian religion, Bantustan institutions, and the exploitation of black workers, white liberalism, non white classes, and rebellion from the black masses. The poets SSGM colluded with the concept of the ideology they were trying to expose and subvert. The very process of probing the issues, conscientized the readers about the ideology of the Black Consciousness within which they wrote.

### 1.6 METHODOLOGY

Using the phenomenological approach, this study proceeds by presenting a historical description of the socio-political context of South Africa and analysing how this socio-political context shaped and informed the poetry genre of South Africa. This study is based on the Marxist view that art should have a social function and that it should serve society by engaging with its surrounding social reality rather than being an exclusively 'art for art's sake' aestheticism.

The study used a number of research methods. The thematic approach by which various ideas expressed in the poems are identified and the poems are classified in terms of these ideas. The textual method by which the specific meaning of each poem, symbolism, sense, feeling and tone is analysed in great depth has been used in this study. The sociological method that relates the life the writer's life is related to writer's society. The historical method the writer's life and society is linked to the writings of the writer.

The research also used qualitative research methods. These included structured face to face interviews with the poets. The structured interviews were arranged with Mongane Wally Serote, Mafika Pascal Gwala and Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali. In addition to the interviews the writers were requested to fill a questionnaire. The writers were interviewed at different times and places. Sydney Siphon Sepamla could not be interviewed because he passed away a year before the inception of the study. As a result of this tragedy the researcher had to rely only on what has been written for information about Sydney Siphon Sepamla.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Fanon's (1963:223) views in the 50s and 60s on the need to awaken consciousness was also emulated in the 70s South Africa where the people rose against the apartheid forms of oppression. Fanon argues that during the 1950s and 1960s a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now found themselves in exceptional circumstance- in prison... or on the eve of their execution- felt the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expressed the heart of the people, and became the mouth piece of a new reality in action.

Conscientisation was viewed as an important aspect of the liberation struggle in the 1970s. Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:38) explains that many South African writers opted for poetry in 1970s because experience had taught blacks that prose was a dangerous instrument because it too explicit. He adds that the government tolerated poetry more readily because it reached a smaller audience. But poem is also a hiding place, and a marvellous short cut to saying what is essential with great economy because it expresses the immediacy of emotion in a concentrated form.....it can be shared immediately, either by being recited or by being circulated in cyclostyled form.

Poetry played an important role in the 1970s and the 80s in South Africa. Chapman (1982:11) suggests that there is a close connection between the Black Consciousness and the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali their reaction to apartheid legislation. This reveals that the poets' writing was heavily influenced by the Black Consciousness ideology.

Chapman (1984:183) also points out that the Black Consciousness poetry was instrumental not only in re-establishing a tradition of black South African writing, but in prompting serious, often uncomfortable questioning by writers, and critics alike as the value of, and appropriate response to, literature in a racially turbulent society. According to Watts (1989:37) South African writers began to forge a genuine literature of the people, a literature that was perhaps unprecedented in the history of literature, a literature which reflected back to its readers their struggle for emancipation, and at the same time reinvigorating them for that very struggle, a literature which has abandoned the universities and the comfortable living rooms of the intellectuals in favour of the streets. In addition Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:38) argues that there were a number of writers, amateur as well as professional, who expressed, in poetic terms, the ideas and the aspirations that had been suppressed for a decade or more and that were crying out to be put into words. He suggests that

poetry seemed now to have acquired the double objective of continuing to speak to the whites while addressing a larger black audience.

Mzamane (1981:17) also alludes to the connection between Black Consciousness and the poetry of the poets particularly that of Serote which typified the spirit of the Black Consciousness. Mzamane argues that some of Serote's poems echo certain passages from the writings of Biko, which were published in SASO Newsletter with some of Serote's poems. Mzamane also points out that these writers did not always subscribe to the ideas of Black Consciousness. Gwala confirms this view in an interview with the author of this thesis that he was a poet long before the inception of the Black Consciousness. He began to express himself by using the Black Consciousness ideology after joining the movement. This must have been the case with Sepamla, Serote and Mtshali.

Gordimer (1973:52) alludes to the Black Consciousness' nature of the poetry of SSGM and the new black poets. Gordimer acknowledges the socio-cultural background from which their poetry is born. Gordimer also argues that the medium of poetry allowed SSGM to express political ideas in an implicit form. In this study the researcher defined conscientisation as the expression of political ideas. In this instance Gordimer's argument points to the fact that conscientisation was the motive behind the poetry of the poets under investigation.

Furthermore Chapman (1984:183) acknowledges that Black Consciousness poetry had been instrumental not only in re-establishing a tradition of black South African writing, but in prompting serious, often uncomfortable questioning by writers, and critics alike as the value of, and appropriate response to, literature in a racially turbulent society.

Watts (1989:37) alludes to the connection between conscientisation and South African writing by stating that African began to forge a genuine literature of the people, a literature that was perhaps unprecedented in the history of literature, a literature which reflects back to its readers their struggle for emancipation, and at the same time reinvigorates them for that very struggle, a literature which has abandoned the universities and the comfortable living rooms of the intellectuals in favour of the streets.

Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:179) points out that Mtshali was fundamentally more subversive in his messages. Pereyre affirms the idea that the Black consciousness literature was designed to address the black people and not the white readers as was the case with protest literature. Gwala (1989:69-70) argues that in all his writing he had to strive for a positive negation against the cultural system of the oppressor. Gwala sees his role as one who awakens consciousness.

Narismulu (1998:120) affirms the connection between the writings of the 70's and the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement. She points out that the influence of Black Consciousness was apparent in a range of satirical poems that appeared in the early 1970's.

Govender (1994:15-16) agrees that the SSGM poetry was influenced by the BCM; he argues that Serote's ideological content and general approach suggest that he was influenced to a considerable extent by the ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement. He adds that the basic tenet of the Black Consciousness Movement was the liberation of black from their enslavement by white value system and the existential conditions of poverty and misery.

Meintjies (1989:16) on the other hand affirms that language is not inherently oppressive its role is defined by the people who wield it and social forces which act upon it. In addition he opines that as dominated people become conscious of their power to change their environment and hence change themselves, struggle to transform language into a weapon of liberation. They strive to create a means of communication that becomes a carrier of a new culture of confidence. This was the situation with South African writers.

The researcher believes that these writers helped to propagate Black Consciousness. It is obvious that there is disagreement between scholars about the appropriate term to use when referring to black poetry of the 70s. The title of Chapman's (1982:23) book entitled Soweto Poetry implies that the poetry that this book contains is only about Soweto Township. However Gwala (1989:70) rejects the name protest by stating that:

I refuse to be called a Soweto poet. We all disagreed with the labelling.... a good example of liberal patronizing. I just cannot consider myself in the mould of a Soweto poet. Living constant fear and bitter anger in this country does not revolve around Soweto lone.

In his interview with the author of this thesis Gwala reiterated his rejection of the name Soweto poetry. He argued that he did not even live in Soweto thus he could not understand why he was associated with Soweto.

In addition the term protest has also been used to describe black poetry of the 1970s. Chapman (1982:23) and Mhlubi (1988:201-206) refer the term to describe the poetry of SSGM. Owomoyela (1993:131) argues that some activists, like Dennis Brutus, described themselves as protest in the 1960s. It was before the rise of Black Consciousness. Protest poetry may be thought of as black expression of liberalism-poetry of personal response to oppression based on assumptions of justice, rights and human dignity.

Owomoyela's argument indicates that there is a difference between protest poetry and Black Consciousness poetry regarding the time frame. In fact even Steve Biko (2007:100) rejects the protest method of engaging the apartheid state by referring it to a beggar's tactic which only functioned to embarrass black people.

Rive (1983:22) asserts that all contemporary writers do not fit comfortably into the category of protest literature. Rive argues that protest literature was writing produced by black writers for white consumption. He further offers a sense of the construct protest by stating that Protest literature [addresses] the discrimination implicit in black-white relationships, and...is critical of white racial domination. Its literature is produced by black disenfranchised non-citizens for whites who have the vote and so can effect change (Rive 1983:26).

In addition Cornwell (1980:58) asserts that protest literature was essentially negative writing geared to invoke a sympathetic attitude from a more fortunate readership. The foregoing citations suggest that the black poetry of the 1970s is not protest poetry.

According to Mzamane (1991:60) it had become reductionist to categorize all African literature as protest. Protest literature, he argues was writing by the racially oppressed addressed to readers from the ruling class in an attempt to solicit their sympathy and support against discriminatory laws and practices. He adds that Protest sprung from a feeling of being a ward: It was the activity of apprentices, and the action of subordinates who saw themselves as such. It was both solicitous and moderate. It functioned within the system, often with regard to due process, prescribed channels of communication, and respect for law and order. The end in view of protest Mzamane argues was reform, never revolution. Protest was the quest for accommodation, and not a struggle for empowerment.

Furthermore Mzamane (1991:183) reports that he stopped writing for a predominantly non-black or non-South audience like poets such as Dennis Brutus and Arthur Nortje. Mzamane defines protest writing to be by the underprivileged and exploited and primarily addressed to those who were in power; it attempted to elicit their sympathy and support against discriminatory laws and practices.

The protest culture had imposed on those writers working within its tradition the burden of writing for an essentially white readership. On one hand Mzamane (1991:183) argues that the writings of the Black Consciousness generation were addressed directly and primarily to the downtrodden and oppressed. On the other hand he states that the aim of the Black Consciousness writers was to liberate as much from white oppression as from their own selves, and wanted to liberate their

people from the self-inflicted pain and suffering and the senseless and devastating violence of townships.

Ndebele (1991:45) shares the same view with Mzamane regarding the use of the term protest to refer to black writing of the 70's. He argues that conventional wisdom proclaims that [protest] literature was premised on its supposed appeal to the conscience of the white oppressor. Ndebele further rejects the idea of protest poetry by arguing strongly that none of his poems had been written for people who wanted to hear him complain. He states that they had been written in order to share serious insight, to share perceptions and to alter perceptions in a most profound manner.

Ndebele shows that black poetry of the 1970's was not protest poetry. Ndebele (1988:211) suggests that conscientisation was an important aspect of the liberation struggle but the challenge was to free the entire social imagination of the oppressed from the laws of perception that have characterized apartheid society. In addition he argues that the greatest challenge of the South African revolution was to search for new ways of thinking, ways of perception that would help to break down the closed epistemological structures of South African oppression.

Furthermore Ndebele (1991:55) affirms the idea of conscientisation by arguing that the ordinary daily lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the very content of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions. In this citation, Ndebele alludes to the fact that conscientisation meant making references to the living conditions of black people. Mtshali (in Pereyre 1984: 242) confirms the idea of conscientisation by saying that his mission as a writer in the 1970s was to liberate his people. Pereyre (1984:242) also agrees with the idea by stating that Mtshali, Serote, Mattera, Matthews, Gwala and Sepamla's writing seems more utilitarian, more community-oriented than personal, more local than universal. Horn (1994:18) states that literature is a collective undertaking because the writer does not merely hold up a mirror for the reader to look into, but that they grapple together for the meaning of reality.

Conscientisation poetry was more forceful, more militant and its aim was to make black people take action against their oppression. Horn (1994:59-60) suggests that whatever was said had to be said under conditions of heavy repression and censorship, of a state banning poetry (volume after volume) and leaders of the people, killing, mutilating, burning, using all the means at its disposal to make the production of new insight impossible.

Thus the 1970s poetry was meant to resist the oppressors and revolutionise the oppressed. Owomoyela (1993:131) confirms this view by arguing that resistance poetry is provocative, defiant, and confrontational - a call to..... the oppressed themselves to action.

According to Harber (in Harker, 1994:150) the struggle was foremost a struggle to make the voice of the majority heard... Freedom of expression was at the core of the fight for political change. Harber's comments allude to the fact that conscientisation poetry was addressed to the black communities.

Owomoyela (1993:131) also explains why poetry was often banned by adding that resistance poetry was provocative, defiant, and confrontational - a call to.....the oppressed themselves to action." According to Harber (in Harker, 1994:150) the struggle was foremost a struggle to make the voice of the majority heard... and freedom of expression was at the core of the fight for political change.

Similarly to other African literature the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali is subjected to ill-informed Eurocentric criticism. With regards to the role of literary critics Bourdieu (1993:35) points that all critics declared not only their judgement of work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. He adds that they in short, took part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art".

The English language in black poetry of the seventies in particular was criticized for being poor. Ulliyatt's (1977:51) article titled "Dilemmas in Black Poetry" published in the 1977 issue of Contrast contains a bitter criticism of black poetry. His critique was that the black poet had to determine how he was going to make imaginative and meaningful use of centuries-old, culturally enriched language in a culturally relatively undeveloped environment in which he found himself. The author's comments indicate that he did not think that a black poet had the capacity to use the English language in an imaginative and creative poetic manner.

Ulliyatt quotes examples from Mtshali and Gwala to highlight the flatness and clichéd lines, a result of a lack of familiarity with the second language they wrote in. In the case where good lines were produced, Ulliyatt (1977:52) again quotes example of Mtshali, Serote, and Nortje and suggests that the good lines in their poems were produced by chance not by deliberate artistic intentions.

Ulliyatt (1977:58) criticized black poets for the manner in which they presented their subject matter. He argues that black poets in South Africa persisted on using almost every possible occasion to castigate the prevailing system of government without regard for any of the basic precepts of poetry. He believed that black poets had succumbed to resentment rather than indulging in healthy rebellion. Ulliyatt (1977:61) adds that the black poets had to insist on poetic merit, craftsmanship, discipline and art, as well as imagination.

Ulliyatt's criticism provoked responses from Jos Slabbert, Hedy Davis and Kelwyn Sole: their comments appear in the same issue of *Contrast* (1977). Davis argues that was absurd to doubt the capacity of poets to make creative use of a language to which they had no cultural ties. Davis points out that Ulliyatt lacked a clear understanding of the socio-historical context from which Black poetry stemmed. Slabbert argues that Ulliyatt's criticism were drawn from resentment and healthy rebellion which had to do with dictating to blacks how they should think and feel than telling how them to write good poetry.

Sole has three arguments against Ulliyatt. First, he points out that Ulliyatt's article revealed his ignorance of the existence of oral African literature and its influence on written literature. Second, he points out that Ulliyatt was ignorant of the art in preliterate African societies which had a different position to the one, Western critics were accustomed to. Third, Ulliyatt was ignorant of the history of the early didactic black writing in South Africa. Sole sums up his response by stressing that no critique was free from value judgement. Sole points out that those critics who claimed objectivity or impartiality were highly suspect. He concluded that one needs to look at a wider South African literature not because of intrinsic merits but rather because it emerged from a common socio-economic framework and body politic.

Fanon (1967:166-187) offers a criticism that binds all African writing. Thus the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali was not immune to Fanon's criticism. Fanon states that African writing often exaggerated the glory of the African pre-colonial past. African writing presented African culture as something that was pure and homogenous. Fanon blamed the African writers for their heavy reliance on the essentialist notion of blackness and for trying to revive an irrelevant past. For Fanon the pre-colonial societies were never homogenous, they contained socially prejudicial class and gender formations that stood in need of reform by a radical force.

Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali employed essentialist categories as a means of conscientizing black people about the effects of white racism in their lives. Ashcroft et al. (1998:76) define essentialism as the assumption that groups, categories or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category. Therefore essentialism is the belief that a group of people have one or several essential characteristics that distinguish it from other social groups. If one says that the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali essentializes the identity of black people one means that it presented the identity of black people as something pure, unchangeable, static and exclusive only to those who have a black skin.

The danger of essentialism is that it functions to establish, sustain, and perpetuate the racial hatred and racial discrimination amongst people. If the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali essentializes, it meant that their poetry reinforced racial categories that sought to conscientize black people. The researcher argues that it was necessary for Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali to employ essentialist ideas in order to educate black people.

This study argues that Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali and even the Black Consciousness leaders adopted a form of essentialism that Spivak (1984-5:183-184) calls strategic essentialism. Spivak (1984-5:183-184) argues that in different periods the employment of essentialist ideas may be a necessary part of the process by which the colonized achieve a renewed sense of the value and dignity of their pre-colonial cultures, and through which the newly emergent post-colonial nation asserts itself.

In this study the researcher argues that it was insincere to blame Sepamla, Serote, Gwala, Mtshali and even Black Consciousness leaders for employing essentialist ideas without considering the viewpoint of Spivak. It can be argued that Biko, Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali were aware of the dangers of essentialism. Said (1993) argues that the early National Liberation theorists such as Fanon, Cabral and James were always fully aware of the dangers of essentialism.

It is clear that the call for a national culture and the return to the glorious pre-colonial past did not necessarily mean that Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali wanted black people to destroy all the white man's inventions, boycott the schooling system and education, chase all the foreigners away from their land so that they (blacks) can return to their barbaric primitive lifestyles. This chapter highlighted the importance of the Black Consciousness ideology and its influence in the SSGM poetry. It also discussed the criticisms of the poets' competence in English by Eurocentric writers. The chapter also noted the dangers posed by essentialism which the poets employed in their writing.

## 2.2 THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IDEOLOGY

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:27) the Black Consciousness ideas were developed in America in the nineteenth century. The authors mention among other black American intellectuals, Frederic Douglas (circa 1817-1895), Booker T. Washington (1856-1901), W.E.B. du Bois (1868-1963) and Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) as the core founders of Black Consciousness. All these intellectuals advocated for an investigation of the distinctiveness of the African cultural elements in black American and Caribbean societies.

The Encarta encyclopaedia suggests that the ideas of Black Consciousness were also implicated in the view of the American Black Nationalist thinker and leader. Malcolm X maintained that all whites

are evil, and advocated racial solidarity ("Malcolm X." Microsoft (R) Encarta (R) 2006 [C.D]. Microsoft Corporation, 2005).

Again according to Encarta encyclopaedia Anton Lembede one the most influential Black Nationalist thinkers and theorist of the 1940s had the same view as Steve Biko. Lembede argued that the African Nationalism should be based upon socialism and democracy and that spiritually it should look to the African past. Lembede rejected the idea of foreign leadership and argued that black African must provide their own leadership and rely upon themselves ("Lembede Anton Muziwakhe." Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2006 [C.D]. Microsoft Corporation, 2006).

The Encarta encyclopaedia records that Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the founder of the PAC in 1959 had the same sentiments as Lembede. Sobukwe argued that blacks should not rely on white allies. The PAC appealed to the Black Nationalism and differed from the ANC in that it saw South Africa as a black rather than a multiracial state. The white government was so fearful of his influence that a special amendment to the laws known as the "Sobukwe clause" made it possible to jail him indefinitely without trial, which the government did for the next six years ("Sobukwe, Robert Mangaliso." Microsoft ® Encarta® 2006 [C.D]. Microsoft Corporation, 2005). Pape et al. (1998:327) cite an interview where Sobukwe was responding to the accusation that he was anti-white. This is how Sobukwe responded:

In South Africa then, once the white domination has been overthrown and the white man is no longer 'white-man boos' but an individual member of society, there will be no reason to hate him and he will not be hated by the masses. We are not anti-white, therefore. We do not hate the European because he is white! We hate him because he is an oppressor. And it is plain dishonesty to say I hate the sjambok and not the one who wields it.

Biko and the Black Consciousness had the same view that black people did not hate whites for being white but that they hated the white domination and oppression.

Sono (1993:11) alludes that the time between 1968-1974 constitute the founding years of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The Black Consciousness Movement started as a black student organisation called the South African Student's Organisation (SASO). Biko became its first president in 1969. Sono identifies three social forces that led to the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. These social forces included the white political liberalism, Afro- American Black power, and apartheid.

The fourth force, regarded as the most important was the formation of the Consciousness in South Africa where he likened it to the charismatic personality of Biko. Sono strongly argues that without Biko any discussion of Black Consciousness in South Africa became sterile and ineffectual.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:28) state that the Black Consciousness Movement was influenced by Fanonist thinkers. It sought to redress the negative self-image created in many black people by their long history of enslavement and discriminatory treatment. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:28) point out that according to Fanon (1952:109-140) discrimination was made inescapable by the visibility of their perceived difference. This difference is the blackness of their skin. In other words, Black Consciousness identified white racism as the root cause of the problems faced by black people. This chapter provided the social, political and cultural background from which the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali originated. Forgacs (in Jefferson and Robey1995:167) argue that the Marxist theories of literature, literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality.

The study highlights the connection between the poetry of Serote, Sepamla, Gwala and Mtshali and the Black Consciousness ideology. For instance, Mzamane (1983) refers to his poetry and that of his contemporaries including Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali as Black Consciousness poetry. There is a marked dialectical analysis of the South African socio-political situation in both the essays of Biko and the poetry under study.

The researcher argues that both the Black Consciousness Movement and the poets under study sought to conscientise black people about their socio-political potential. Thus conscientisation was meant to make black people aware of their potential to rally together around the causes of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude (Biko, 2007:101).

Biko (2007:127) argues that conscientisation meant enabling the black people to grapple realistically with their problems, to develop awareness, a physical awareness of their situation, to be able to analyse it, and to provide answers for themselves. This means that conscientisation was designed to fight against the sense of defeat in black people's lives.

For Biko (2007:127) it was important to educate black people because they often looked as if they had given up the struggle. Black Consciousness, an inward looking process, therefore sought to inspire them so that they did not give in to the hardships of life, so that they develop some kind of hope, so that they develop some form of security to be together to look at their problems, so that they are able to build up their humanity. The following section briefly discusses the ideas of Biko.

This discussion is based on a selection of Biko's writings edited as a book titled "I write what I like" (2007) by Aelred Stubbs.

### 2.3 THE IDEAS OF STEVE BIKO

Biko employed a Marxist dialectical approach to analyse the social, political, cultural and economic situation in South Africa. The researcher defines the Marxist dialectical approach as the way of discovering what is true by considering opposite theories. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English (2000:320) defines dialectics as a method of discovering the truth of ideas by discussion and logical argument and by considering ideas that are opposed to each other. In this dictionary the dialectical approach is a formal discussion of the way in which two aspects of a situation affect each other.

Hayes (2004:173) on the other hand defines the dialectical approach as the formal method of argument in which new positions are reached by testing opposing views against one another. For Hayes, dialectical thought is concerned with reversals, with contrary notions, with identity located in non-identity, being located in non-being. It is a methodology for looking at how things, ideas and social relations are constituted, maintained and changed. Biko (2007:55) employs the Hegelian theory of dialectic materialism to analyse the socio-political situation in South Africa when he argued that:

Since the thesis is white racism there can be one valid antithesis i.e. a solid black unity to counterbalance the scale. If South Africa is to be a land where black and white live together in harmony without fear of group exploitation, it is only when these two opposites have interplayed and produced a viable synthesis of ideas and the *modus vivendi*.

Biko (2007:99) blames the white liberals for the deliberate misinterpretation of the root cause of the problems faced by the black people. He argues that:

The basic problem in South Africa has been analysed by liberal whites as being apartheid. They argue that in order to oppose it we have to form non-racial groups. Between these two extremes, they claim, lies the land of milk and honey for which we are working..... For the liberals, the thesis is apartheid, the antithesis is non-racialism, but the synthesis is very feebly defined. They want to tell the blacks that they see integration as the ideal solution. Black Consciousness defines the situation differently. The thesis is in fact a strong white racism and therefore, the antithesis must, *ipso facto*, be a strong solidarity among the blacks on whom this white racism seeks to prey.

Biko wanted to inform black people that the root cause of their problem was white racism not apartheid. Biko implies that the solidarity of all black people was the solution because it could help to balance the scale between the white and the black groups.

Biko regarded conscientisation as a very important aspect of the liberation struggle. He states that blacks had to learn from their past experience and not just respond in predictable ways which would expose them to a ruthless repressive system. Biko (2007:127) defines conscientisation as a way of making references 'through speeches, dialogues, literature', to the conditions of black people and conditions in which they lived.

It is through the process of conscientisation that Black Consciousness sought to enable black people to grapple realistically with their problems, to develop awareness, a physical awareness of their situation, to be able to analyse it, and to provide answers for themselves. Conscientisation was thus designed to fight against the sense of defeat in black people's lives.

Biko argues that black people looked as if they had given up the struggle. The Black Consciousness Movement used conscientisation as a tool to inspire blacks so that they did not give in to the hardships of life, develop some kind of hope, so that they develop some form of security to be together to look at their problems, and be able to build up their humanity.

Freire (1972:28) defines conscientisation as the stimulation of self-reflected critical awareness in people about their social reality and their ability to transform that reality through a conscious collective action. It was a process by which people were made to understand their situation in terms of prevailing social, economic, and political relationships.

The definition of conscientisation fits in well with Black Consciousness. Wilson (in Pityana et al. 1992:27) argues that some practices of Black Consciousness were confirmed and strengthened through the methods of Paulo Freire's pedagogy. Ramphele (1992:155) also adds that Paulo Freire's conscientisation approach in Latin America was found to have great relevance for the problems BC leaders identified amongst black people in South Africa.

The Black Consciousness used the conscientisation process as a tool for empowerment to empower the black communities. Hook (2004:472) defines empowerment as the process by which communities are reminded of their own power and are facilitated in their attempts to claim it. Rappaport (1981:3) defines empowerment as:

A process by which communities are reminded of their own power and are facilitated in their attempts to claim it, empowerment is about obtaining and producing enabling power.

This can happen at an individual, group or community or social level. Rappaport defines empowerment as a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives. Psychological empowerment happens when one gains a sense of control over his/her life whereas political empowerment means an actual control and access to resources.

In this instance empowerment is an intentional on-going process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of value resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. Biko (2007:107) adds that there was need to evolve a strategy towards blacks' economic situation. And that people had to seriously examine the possibilities of establishing business co-operatives whose interests will be ploughed back into community development programmes. He also states that people had to think along such lines as buy black campaign and establish black people's banks for the benefits of the community.

Biko alludes to the need for political empowerment. This indicates that not only psychological empowerment was important to the Black Consciousness, but that political empowerment was also important. As Rappaport (1981:3) has pointed out that political empowerment meant having access to resources.

Rappaport (1981:3) defines psychological empowerment as when an individual or a social group gains a mastery over their own lives. It is a feeling that an individual has some power or sense of control of his/her life. Biko (2007:31) confirms that conscientisation was a form of psychological empowerment by stating that:

The first step therefore is to make a black come to himself, to pump back life into his empty shell, to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of Black Consciousness.

Biko implies that conscientisation leads to psychological empowerment. It was psychological empowerment in that it was essentially an inward-looking process. In addition Biko (2007:102) argues that Black Consciousness made the black man see himself as being complete in himself. It made him less dependent and free to express his manhood. At the end of it all he could not tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood. Biko (2007:74) suggests that

conscientisation was an effective method to change the attitudes of black people by commenting on how they could be changed:

Gradually, the various black groups are becoming more and more conscious of the self. They are beginning to rid their minds of imprisoning notions which are the legacy of the control of their attitude by whites. Slowly, they have cast aside the 'morality argument' which prevented them from going it alone and are now learning that a lot of good can be derived from specific exclusion of whites from black institutions.

Biko also alludes to what Sibisi (in Pityana et al. 1992:130-136) calls a psychology of liberation. This formed the central focus of Black Consciousness. Black Consciousness wanted to liberate the oppressed black people from their own attitudes, attitudes that perpetuated their very own oppression. Sibisi (in Pityana et al. 1992:135-136) states that black people in South Africa perceived themselves through the eyes of their white oppressors.

Black people internalized the negative self-image ascribed to them by the oppressors. They believed that their culture and religion was not good enough when compared to the Western culture. It is this factor that compelled Black Consciousness to conscientise black people to a deeper self-consciousness. Black Consciousness sought to liberate the minds of Black people from the hands of the white oppressors. Thus Biko (2007:102) agrees with the psychological liberation by stating that:

At the heart of this thinking is the realisation by blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. If one is free at heart, no man-made chains can bind one to servitude, but if one's mind is manipulated and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the white man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do to scare his powerful masters.

Black Consciousness was built on the idea that blacks were oppressed mentally therefore the true liberation meant setting their minds free from the hands of the white oppressors. The conscientisation process was very important to Black Consciousness because through conscientisation it sought to liberate the minds of the black people. According Biko (2007:53) liberation was of paramount importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, because they could not be conscious of themselves and yet remain in bondage. He states that they wanted to attain the envisioned self which was a free self.

For Steve Biko there was an urgent need to set the mind of black people free from the hands of the white oppressors. Black Consciousness sought to effect this change in the personal attitudes of black people through conscientisation. Conscientisation meant making black people see that their

minds were controlled by white oppressors. Biko (2007:29) argues that all the black organisations which were fighting against apartheid missed this important point, that the problem was not apartheid but white racism and its effects on the lives of black people.

The researcher argues that in order to conscientise black people to a deeper self-consciousness, Biko deliberately employed strategic essentialism. Fus (1989:9) defines essentialism as a belief in the real, true essence of things, in the variable and fixed properties. He further argues that it is a mode of thought that purports that individual's identities are somehow fixed and unchangeable.

Essentialism can be defined as a belief in the real, true essence of things, in the variable and fixed properties which define the 'whiteness' of a given identity (Fus 1989:9). It is the mode of thought that purports that individuals' identities are somehow fixed and unchangeable. The problem with essentialism is that it hinders any real and worthwhile social change. It does this by constructing oppressive social relations of domination as natural. In other words essentialism teaches that if it is 'natural' people cannot change it.

Ashcroft et al. (1998:76) define essentialism as the assumption that groups, categories or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category. In other words essentialism is the belief that a group of people have one or several essential characteristics that distinguish it from the other social groups. The danger of essentialism is that it functions to establish, sustain, and perpetuate the racial hatred and racial discrimination amongst people.

On the contrary, Spivak (1996:183-184) points to the importance of strategic essentialism. She argues that at different periods the employment of essentialist ideas may be a necessary part of the process by which the colonized achieved a renewed sense of the value and dignity of their pre-colonial cultures, and through which the newly emergent post-colonial nation asserts itself.

Hook (2004:152) confirms the importance of strategic essentialism when he defines it as an approach which takes seriously the ascribing of qualities of experience to categories of a person by the dominant ideology, so that it would seem to know exactly what the members of different cultural groups are really like, but only to turn negative qualities into positive ones and to dissolve or transform them once it has done its critical work.

Spivak and Hook concur that strategic essentialism is a useful method of showing how forms of identity have been historically linked to certain forms of oppression. The strategic essentialism can be achieved either by speaking or writing from a position of being an oppressed black person, because that is the way one is already positioned by others. The word 'strategy' suggests that essentialism refuses to take for granted the categories used by others. Strategic essentialism plays

with those categories in order to free the subject from those categories as fixed. The researcher argues that Biko, Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali were aware of this view. The Black Consciousness writers were not blind to the dangers of essentialism.

This study therefore; argues that, Biko and the poets under study used a strategic essentialism as a conscientisation method to enable black people to understand the nature of their subject position in the broader South African society. The researcher's position is that strategic essentialism as a conscientisation method gives back to the black people the power to exercise their right to speak in order to dismantle the oppressive apartheid, racist, capitalist system.

According to Biko (2007:101) black people realised the need to rally together with other black people around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.

Biko indicates that strategic essentialism was a means of conscientisation. Conscientisation through the use of strategic essentialism was designed to stimulate critical self- awareness in black people. Biko (2007:101) affirms this view by pointing out that the Black Consciousness was:

... based on a self-examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black.

The blatant use of strategic essentialism was not necessarily a means to reverse racism. It was important to explain that within the ranks of Black Consciousness the term, 'black' was used to refer to all those who were by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspiration. Biko (2007:101) argues that being black was not a matter of pigmentation, but it was a reflection of a mental attitude.

The term 'black' came into prominence when blacks rejected the term 'non-white' and took upon themselves the right to call themselves what they thought they were, they chose the term 'black' because they felt it was the most accommodating term (Biko 2007:116). The term 'black' also included Coloureds and Indians. But since, Black Consciousness was defined as a reflection of a mental attitude, for Biko, the road to one's emancipation begins when one starts to describe one's self as black.

This meant that if one describes one's self as 'black' one had to commit one's self to fighting all forces that seek to use one's blackness as a stamp that marks one out as a subservient person.

Therefore, it became obvious that the term black was not necessarily all-inclusive. This meant that all those blacks who collaborated with the system of oppression were deemed to have excluded themselves from this new definition (black), and were automatically viewed as non-whites (Biko 2007:52).

Biko gives a clear definition of non-whites. He states that if a black person's aspiration is whiteness but his skin pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that black person was not a 'black' person but a non-white. Specifically Biko points out that all those black people who called a white man 'Baas' and those blacks who served in the police force or security branch were in fact non-whites. He argues that, black people - real black people - were those who could manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender their souls to white domination (Biko 2007:52).

Biko and the Black Consciousness were aware of the possible criticism of their method of analysis of the situation. Biko points out that some black people were not keen to club together because they were told that doing this was a kind of racism. Biko argues that lack of keenness was dangerous to blacks because while blacks were losing themselves in the world of colourlessness and amorphous common humanity, whites were deriving pleasure and security in entrenching white racism and further exploiting the minds and bodies of the unsuspecting masses of black people (Biko 2007:55).

In response to those who criticized the Black Consciousness of reverse racism, Biko argues that the critics were basing their accusations on the very values that the Black Consciousness was rejecting. For Biko blacks had no power to subjugate the whites. Therefore, through the Black Consciousness kind of thinking, blacks were merely responding to white people's provocation in the most realistic possible way.

Despite the fact that Biko states categorically that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realizing the aspirations of black people, whites had to be excluded (Biko 2007:138). Biko succinctly argues that racism did not only imply exclusion of one race by another, but it always pre-supposed that the exclusion was for the purpose of subjugation. He further adds that, blacks had had enough experience as objects of racism to reverse it (Biko 2007:108).

In fact, for Biko the very attempt of the white critics in trying to accuse the Black Consciousness Movement of reverse racism, demonstrated that white power presented itself as a totality, whites did not only provoke blacks but also wanted to control black people's response to that provocation. This was one of the issues that necessitated an urgent need for conscientisation as this point was

missed by those black people who believed that there were a few good white people (Biko 2007: 55).

According to Biko the main concern of Black Consciousness was group attitude and group politics. As mentioned earlier, he sees the Hegelian theory of dialectic materialism useful in the analysis of the South African situation and through the Black Consciousness and appealed to black people to adopt it. The logic he puts forward which was more likely than not to make sense to blacks was since the thesis of the South African situation is white racism, therefore there can be only one valid antithesis, which was a solid black unity to counterbalance the scale. He argues that in order for both blacks and whites to live together in harmony it was necessary to have these two opposite theories interplayed in order to produce a viable synthesis (Biko 2007:55).

The Black Consciousness Movement was clear about the kind of synthesis it was fighting for, it was an open society achieved through a one person one vote with no reference to skin colour (Biko 2007:138). Biko points out that the critics of Black Consciousness had to cast away the wrong conception that Black Consciousness was a methodology or a means towards an end. He argues that Black Consciousness sought to produce at the output end of the process, the real black people who did not regard themselves as appendages to white people (Biko 2007:55-56).

For him the truth could not be reversed and black people did need not be apologetic about it, because the white systems had produced black people who were not aware that they too were human beings. This necessitated an urgent need for the conscientisation process, Black Consciousness hoped that through conscientisation someone somewhere along the line would be forced to accept the truth and for Biko, Black Consciousness articulated the truth about the South African situation (Biko 2007:56).

The above section gave a brief account of what the Black Consciousness was all about while concurrently trying to show the dialectic nature of the Black Consciousness discourse. The section below discusses how Steve Biko through his strident voice of dissent applied a dialectical approach to the South African problem. It reviews of the ideas of Biko and Black Consciousness regarding the nature of problems faced by black people in South Africa, These views constituted the Black Consciousness philosophy.

The Black Consciousness Movement held a very different view about the situation in South Africa. It argued that the organisations that were fighting against apartheid missed the point. For Biko these organisations were working on an oversimplified premise. Biko adds that they diagnosed the South

African political problems incorrectly because they forgot about the side effects of apartheid and did not consider the root cause of the problems faced by black people in South Africa (Biko 2007:29-34).

These political organisations failed to see that black people were completely disempowered, alienated and dehumanized and these were the direct side effects of the apartheid policy on black people. Black people were suffering from spiritual poverty coupled with material needs and blamed themselves for being unable to have the same standards as the white people. Biko argues that black people were like empty shells, shadow of humanity; completely defeated, drowning in their own misery and that they were slaves, oxen bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.

Biko argued that it was necessary for the black people to acknowledge the truth first, bitter as it may seem, before they could start on any programme designed to change the status quo. Thus the first and most important step towards the liberation of black people according to Biko was to make the black people come to themselves, to pump up black life into their empty shell, to infuse them with pride and dignity, to remind them of their complicity in the crime of allowing themselves to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of their birth.

The Black Consciousness Movement sought to achieve this by facilitating an inward-looking process within the hearts of black people. This study argues that it is this inward-looking process that constituted the conscientisation process, and more specifically the process that constituted the core of the Black Consciousness movement.

It is through the process of conscientisation that Black Consciousness sought to show black people the value of their own standards and outlook. It urged black people to judge themselves according to these standards and not to be fooled by the white society who had white-washed themselves and made white standards the yardstick by which even black people judge one another. The main aim of the Black Consciousness Movement was to ensure a singularity of purpose in the minds of black people and make possible total involvement of the masses in a struggle (Biko 2007:33).

The Black Consciousness Movement took a decisive stand against the fragmentation of black resistance which became more apparent in the early 1960s shortly after the banning and the harassment of black political parties (Biko 2007:36-42). There was no clear representative of black opinion in South Africa. This indicated an urgent need for the formation of an organized black body that was going to coordinate the opinion from the black people. This was the most important role the Black Consciousness played in its conscientisation process.

According to Biko (2007:36-42) there was an urgent need to instil some amount of positive action by stating categorically what blacks felt on political questions in the land of their forefathers. This was

even more urgent because according to Biko blacks were afraid of anything to do with politics. Black people were filled with a slave-like apathy. He states that their anger was visible on their faces and actions but it was not verbalized. The anger and frustration according to Biko manifested itself through the violence and vandalism that took place amongst black people in the townships.

Biko (2007:36-42) argues that the vacuum created after the banning of black political parties was dangerous because it opened channels for the liberals to speak for the black people. It was soon after this that black people began to adopt a dangerous theory, that of working within the apartheid system.

Biko states that the theory was exploited by the National Party to fragment black people. Biko further states that black people and parties who adopted this dangerous 'working within the system theory' were Mathanzima, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, and the Coloured Labour Party. Biko points out that the 'working within system theory' was built on a faulty belief that something good could be gained from the apartheid institutions (Bantustan governments). Biko opines that this was a twisted logic and it amounted to a gross over-simplification of the problems faced by the black people (Biko 2007:38-39).

Unless black people were conscientised about the danger of 'working the system blacks were going to believe that their political rights were in fact in their own areas (13%) of the land, as a result of this they were no longer going to demand any right to the main land owned by the whites. Biko states that the danger that faced the black community was that, as a community, it was conditioned to the system to an extent that even their resistance fitted within the system both in terms of the means and of the goals.

Another reason that fuelled the development of the Black Consciousness Movement was the fact that, the white community and the international community were beginning to regard the 'work within the system theorists as representatives of the black voice. Those according to Biko working within the system theorists did not represent the voice of black people. Black people in general looked at those who were either at Robben Island or in banishment or in exile - voluntary or otherwise - as their leaders.

Biko counts amongst these people Mandela, Sobukwe, Kathrada, M.D. Naidoo and many others. These prisoners were concerned about the pain that the black people were going through and this gained them the natural support of the people. According to Biko what made these people popular was that they spoke the language of the people.

Working within the system was going to result in political castration; there was an urgent need to conscientise the black people in order to make them resist all attempts at the fragmentation of their resistance. The conscientisation was aimed at making black people recognize the various apartheid institutions for what they were. Biko argues that these institutions were designed to get black people fighting separately for certain 'freedoms' and 'gains' which were prescribed for them long ago by their white masters. Biko encouraged black people to see the need to refuse to accept that it was inevitable that the only political action they could take was through apartheid institutions (Biko 2007:42).

In their move to reject and resist the apartheid institution black people were also conscientised to crack and reject collaboration with the liberals. The Black Consciousness Movement sought to conscientise black people about the fact that not anyone who opposed apartheid was their ally. This was urgent because the liberals were arguing that they were not responsible for white racism and the country's inhumanity to the black people. The liberals claimed that they too felt the oppression just as the black people and therefore should be jointly involved in the black people's struggle for freedom (Biko 2007:69-79).

The Black Consciousness Movement pointed out several problems that were brought about by the involvement of the liberals in the black people's struggle. The liberals wanted to make it a principle that all groups opposing the status quo had to be non-racial in structure. They argued that if one stands for non-racialism one could not in any way adopt racialist policies. In other words the liberals defined for the black people what they were supposed to fight for. For Biko, this caused the black leaders to rely too much on the advice of liberals. As a result black leaders ended up playing the role of calming the masses while they engaged themselves in fruitless negotiations with the oppressors.

Biko argued that an integration based on liberal ideology had to be cracked and killed because it made people believe that something was being done when in reality, it served to salvage the consciences of the guilt-stricken white people. Integration according to Biko was misleading because it was based on a false premise that it was difficult to mobilise in South Africa.

The Black Consciousness Movement held the view that the liberals identified themselves with black people in order to appease their own conscience they could do this insofar as it did not break all their ties with their fellow whites in their communities. The liberals were actually the beneficiaries of the status quo; as a result the Black Consciousness Movement hardly believed that the liberals could fight for genuine changes in South Africa.

Biko argued that the limitation brought by the involvement of the liberals in black people's struggle was responsible for the arrest of progress. The problem was that (as mentioned earlier) due to their inferiority complex blacks tended to listen seriously to what the liberals had to say. Biko argues that the liberals were arrogant and assumed a monopoly on intelligence and moral judgment. They appointed themselves as the trustees of the black interest so they set the pattern and pace for the realisation of the black people's aspirations. For Biko, total identification with an oppressed group in a system that forces one group to enjoy privilege and to live on the sweat of another, was impossible.

Another important fact was that the Black Consciousness Movement sought to educate black people that the white society offended black people and through some skilful manoeuvre by controlling the responses of the black people to a point of provocation. Biko argues that the liberals forgot that it was the right of black people to respond to provocation in the way they wanted to, as oppressed people.

Biko argues that the wounds that were inflicted on black people and the insult of oppression over the years were bound to provoke reaction from black people. On this note, he adds that Black Consciousness was more than a reactionary rejection of whites by black people but more importantly, it was the realisation by black people that, in order to feature well in this game of power politics, they had to use the concept of group power and build a strong foundation. Being a historically, politically, socially, and economically disinherited and dispossessed group, they had the strongest foundation from which to operate.

The Black Consciousness philosophy, therefore, expressed group pride and the determination of black people to rise and attain the envisaged self. In the core of this kind of thinking, Biko argues that there was a realisation by black people that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor was the mind of the oppressed. This means that, if the mind of the oppressed is effectively manipulated and controlled by the oppressor with the aim of making the oppressed believe that they were a liability to the white oppressors, according to Biko, there was nothing black people could really scare their powerful white oppressors (Biko 2007:74).

The conscientisation process was meant to conscientize black people to think along the lines of Black Consciousness whose intention was to make people see themselves as human beings, entirely in themselves, and not as the appendages of the white society. Black Consciousness Movement hoped that at the end, this would empower black people and push them to resist attempts by white people to dwarf the significance of their humanity.

Biko points to the very basic reason why the integration was impossible. Whites according to Biko were to be collectively blamed or condemned because all of them were born into privilege and were nourished by and nurtured in the system of ruthless exploitation of the black people.

Biko argues that no matter how genuine the liberals' motivations might have been, they had to accept that, though they did not choose to be born into privilege, thus black people were suspicious of their motives. Biko proposed that if instead of the liberals trying to interfere with black people's struggle for emancipation, the liberals must fight on their own and for themselves. He argues that, if they were true liberals they had to realise that they themselves are oppressed, and they had to fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous 'they' with whom they could hardly claim identification.

According to Biko white people knew what they were doing to black people, and logically knew the reason for the black people being angry. But their state of insecurity however, did not outweigh their greed for power and wealth; as a result they braced themselves to react against rage rather than to dispel it with open mindedness and fair play. Biko points out that this interaction between fear and reaction initiated a vicious cycle that multiplied both fear and reaction.

He argued that this created meaningful coalitions between the blacks and whites totally impossible. Biko argues that if whites in general did not like what was happening to black people, they had the power in them to stop. Therefore, black people on the other hand were justified for blaming all whites (Biko 2007:85).

The issue of fear was important to Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement, in fact Biko argued that fear was an important determinant in South African politics. He states that white people created and reserved for themselves a special position of privilege. This position was created and preserved by the use of violence and fear, but Biko also observed that the use of these methods was a result of white people's fear of black people (Biko 2007:80-81).

The life of black people in the townships was marked by fear and poverty. Blacks had to struggle for survival. There was a situation of absolute want in order for blacks to survive in the black townships. Biko argues that this was the basis of vandalism, murder, rape and plunder in the township while the real sources of the evil was the white people sun tanning on exclusive beaches or relaxing in their upper-class homes.

Biko states that the apartheid system deliberately created the fear that eroded the soul of the black people through a myriad of civil agents, be they post office attendance, police, soldiers in uniform, security police or even the occasional trigger-happy white farmer or shop owner. Biko argues that intimidation was the order of the day. The black people who dared to open their mouths in protest against what was going on were intimidated with security visits and occasional banning orders and house arrests as a result the rest of the black community lived in absolute fear of the police. For Biko, fear made it impossible for black people to behave like human beings (Biko 2007: 82-83).

Despite the hardships that were faced by blacks, Biko argues that they also were to blame for allowing the situation to exist. In fact for Biko, there was no such thing as a black policeman. Any black person, who propped up the system, actively lost his right to being considered part of the black world (Biko 2007:86).

The Black Consciousness Movement took a clear and decisive position on the issue of Bantustans. It sought to conscientise black people to condemn and reject the idea of Bantustans. Biko argues that it was necessary for black people to reject the Bantustan approach because, it was the solution given to them by the same people who had created the problem. It was strange that in a land rightfully theirs they found people coming to tell them where to stay and what powers they should have, without even consulting them.

Biko raises a very critical question: how could the same people (whites) who were guilty of the subjugation of and oppression of the black people hope that the black people could believe that they (whites) could design for blacks the means of escaping from that situation (Biko 2007:92). Biko states that the people who took part in the Bantustans were condemned by everybody as sell-outs and nobody took them seriously. They were clearly seen as people who deliberately allowed themselves into an unholy collusion with the enemy. In fact the Bantustan idea was rejected by the entire population: liberals, progressive Afrikaner camp and black people.

The idea of Bantustan divided the country into eight Bantustans or homelands which were autonomous states to cater for various 'nations' that made up the South African native population. In land distribution Bantustans presented a gigantic fraud that could find no moral support from any quarters since 20% of the population were in control of 87% of the land while 80% of the population controlled only 13% of the land (Biko 2007:90).

Biko identified four reasons behind the establishment of the Bantustan or homelands. First, the Bantustan approach was to create a false sense of hope amongst the black people so that attempts by blacks to collectively enunciate their aspirations should be dampened.

Second, Biko argues that Bantustans were designed to offer a new but false direction in the struggle of the black people; it separated black people's struggle into eight different struggles for eight false freedoms that were prescribed long ago. Third, Bantustans were designed to cheat the outside world into believing that there was some validity in multinational theory so that South Africa could be allowed to participate in international sports, trade, politics etc. Fourth, the Bantustan approach was designed to boost inter-tribal competition and hostility that was bound to come up so that the collective strength and resistance of the black people could be fragmented (Biko 2007:92).

Biko observes that those who agreed with the apartheid government were viewed by the government as exemplary natives, who saw the value in being led by the whites. When they accepted the Bantustan platforms and used them to attack the apartheid government, they created an illusionary picture of a militant black leader who in South Africa was freely allowed to speak and oppose the system.

The problem was that this exonerated the country from the blame that it was a police state. As a result the South African information bureaux throughout the world carried long coverage of activities and pronouncements by Bantustan leaders to highlight the degree of open-mindedness and fair play to be found in South Africa (Biko 2007:95).

The major task of the Black Consciousness Movement was to inform black people and encourage them to refuse to be pawns in the white people's game. It did this by calling upon black people to provide their own initiatives and to act at their own pace and not at the pace created for them by their masters. Biko further argues that, since Bantustans were nothing but sophisticated concentration camps where black people were allowed to suffer 'peacefully', it was necessary for the black people to constantly pressurise the Bantustan leaders to pull out of the political cul-de-sac that was created for them by the apartheid system (Biko 2007:95).

The Black Consciousness Movement as a socio-political and cultural movement became popular in the 1970s, at the time when Africans were not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture, so it was difficult for them to talk about their culture with authority. This opened the way for the liberals to become authorities on all aspects of the African life (Biko 2007:44-50).

Biko argues that there was confusion concerning African culture among non-African leaders and even amongst Africans themselves. This pointed to an urgent need to make a sincere attempt at emphasizing the authentic cultural aspects of the African people by Africans themselves. He identified and analysed two different cultures that were fused in South Africa; the African culture and the Anglo-Boer culture.

Biko argues that the fusion of the two cultures was extremely one sided. The African culture was unsophisticated and simple while the Anglo-Boer culture had all the trappings of a colonialist culture (heavily equipped for conquest). Whites conquered by persuasion, using a highly exclusive religion that denounced all other Gods and demanded a strict code of behaviour with respect to clothing, education, ritual and custom. If they failed to convert black people through persuasion, they were keen to use coercion as an alternative form of subjugating the natives (Biko 2007:44).

The African Culture should not necessarily be viewed to imply the pre-Van Riebeeck time. In fact Biko had never argued that the African culture was time bound. He admits that the African culture had sustained severe blows and had been battered nearly out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with. Therefore there were still traceable fundamental aspects of the pure African way of life that forms what he calls a modern African culture.

He argues that one of the fundamental aspects of the African culture was the importance that black people attach to man. Black people's culture had always been a man-centered society. A black person according to Biko enjoys communication for communication's sake, not necessarily because there is a conclusion to be reached. He adds that black people were not a suspicious race, they believe in the inherent goodness of man. In all that they do, black people place Man first, all their actions are jointly community oriented action rather than the individualism which is the hallmark of the capitalistic approach.

Music in the African culture features in all emotional states. It is a means of sharing the burdens and the pleasures of life. He points out that the major issue about African songs is that they were never songs for individuals, but group songs. In war, songs reassured those who were scared, highlighted the determination of the regiment to win a particular encounter and made much more urgent the need to settle the score. In suffering, as in the case of the Black slaves, they derived sustenance and a feeling of togetherness at work; the binding rhythm makes everybody brush off the burden (Biko 2007:47).

The attitude of the black people towards property is completely different from that of white people who are very individualistic in nature. African society had village-community as its basis. Villages

were a suitable requirement for the needs of a community-based and Man-centred society. This was essential because most things were jointly owned by the group: for instance there was no such thing as individual land ownership. The land belonged to the people living in villages and was under the control of the local chief on behalf of these people. The land was viewed as an open veld and not someone else's farm. Biko states that farming and agriculture, though on individual family basis, had many characteristics of joint efforts. As a result poverty was a foreign concept amongst the black communities; it could only be really brought about to the entire community by an adverse climate during a particular season.

Another distinctive feature of the African culture was that black people's mental attitude to problems presented by life in general. Biko points out that whereas the Westerner is geared to use a problem-solving approach following a very trenchant analysis, black people's approach is that of situation-experience. This means that black people experience a situation rather than face a problem. Thus Black people as a community are prepared to accept that nature will have its enigmas which are beyond their powers to work out (Biko 2007:48).

In addition Biko argues that it was not necessarily true that Africans were heathens; for Biko Africans were deeply religious. They believed in the existence of a God. They had their own community of saints, this constituted all people who died, and it was believed that these people had a special place next to God. Black people knew nothing about hell; they did not believe that God could create people only to punish them eternally after a short period on earth.

Black people did not believe that religion could be featured as a separate part of their existence on earth, but that it was manifest in their daily lives. Biko asserts that black people thanked God through their ancestors before they drank beer, married and worked etc. It was illogical for Africans to have a particular building in which all worship would be conducted. African people held that God was always in communication with them and therefore merited attention everywhere and anywhere. Biko argued that the missionaries were to blame because they confused the Africans with their new religion, by claiming that theirs was a scientific religion and African religion was a superstition.

Biko further argues that it was difficult to kill the African heritage; he says that in spite of the superficial cultural similarities between the detribalised and the Westerner, a number of cultural characteristics that mark out the detribalised as African. He states that he was not necessarily proposing a separation on basis of cultural differences. For Biko, under a normal circumstances, Africans could comfortably live with people of other cultures and be able to contribute to the joint

cultures of the communities they have joined. But, what he was arguing about was that even in a pluralist society like South Africa there were still some cultural traits that black people could boast of which had withstood the process of deliberate bastardisation (Biko 2007:50).

Another central issue to Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement was the role played by religion in the South African socio-political situation. Biko took a very critical stand point against Christianity. He argued that the problem with Christianity was that it was far removed from the cultural makeup of the black people. As a result, the people to whom Christianity was first preached were forced to cast away their indigenous clothing, their customs, their beliefs, which were all described as being pagan and barbaric (Biko 2007:60-65). Thus black people had to be conscientised that Christianity divided black people into two camps, the converted (amagqobhoka or amakholwa) and the pagans (amaqaba). For Biko, it stripped them of their being and estranged them from each other because of their differences; the African people became a playground for colonialists.

According to Biko the missionaries were the vanguard of the colonization movement to civilize and educate the savages and introduce the Christian messages to them. Thus the religion they brought was foreign to the black indigenous people (Biko 2007:102-103).

The missionaries confused people with their new religion. They scared the indigenous people with stories of hell. They painted their God as a demanding God who wanted worship or 'else'. Contrary to this, amongst the indigenous people worship was not a specialised function that found experience once a week in a secluded building, but it featured in their wars, their beer drinking, their dances, and their customs in general. There was no hell in black people's religion. Black people believed in the inherent goodness of man, as a result black people believed that all people at death joined the community of saints and therefore had to be respected (Biko 2007:103).

Biko argued that black church ministers had to stop standing on pulpits every Sunday to heap loads of blame on black people in township for their thieving, house-breaking, stabbing, murdering, and adultery. Even though Christianity was disseminated by black ministers it was irrelevant as it carried no messages for black people, because the ministers were pre-occupied with moral trivialities (Biko 2007:33). He points out that black church ministers needed to relate all these vices to poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, and lack of schooling and migratory labour.

According to Biko there was an urgent need for black people to analyse situations a little bit deeper than the surface suggests. This was going to enable the black people to see that Christianity operated as an ideal religion for the colonization of people, and during the apartheid period it was used as an ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of the black people (Biko 2007:61).

The church manifests in its structures a tacit acceptance of the system. The following factors limit its operations: too much specialization, bureaucracy and institutionalization. Biko argued that this made Christianity to be a 'turn the other cheek' religion while addressing itself to a destitute black people. For Biko, Christianity had to stop being abstract and removed from the people's problems. In order for it to be applicable to the black people, it had to have meaning for them in their given situation. In order for it to be relevant it had to say something about the oppression of the black people.

In its rejection of Christianity, the Black Consciousness advocated a Black Theology, which could be defined as a situational interpretation of Christianity. Black Theology sought to relate the black people to God within the given context of black people's suffering and his attempts to get out of it. Unlike the orthodox Christianity, Black Theology shifted the emphasis from petty sins to major sins in a society, thereby ceasing to teach people to suffer peacefully (Biko 2007:64).

Biko argues that it was necessary for black people to have faith, he pointed that no nation can win a battle without faith. He argued that if black people's faith in their God was spoilt by their having to see God through the eyes of their enemy, there was going to be something wrong in their relationship with that God (Biko 2007:64). Black Theology sought to relate God and Christ once more to black people and their daily problems. It wanted to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God who allows a lie to rest unchallenged (Biko 2007:104).

The Black Consciousness Movement and Biko pointed to an urgent need for the black people to redefine the message in the Bible and make it relevant to the struggling masses. Biko argued that the Bible should not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. For him it had to preach that it was a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. The scriptures had to be shown to have something to say to black people to keep them going in their long journey towards realisation of self (Biko 2007:34).

The quest for a true humanity was a central motive behind the activities of the Black Consciousness Movement. The phrase 'true humanity' was not used in a generic form necessarily to imply kindness or the ideology of 'ubuntu'. Instead the quest for a true humanity pointed to an urgent need for conscientising black people, in order to make them verify whether their subject position was a deliberate creation of God or an artificial fabrication of the truth by white people. Steve Biko argued that those who criticized the Black Consciousness approach had to understand that the approach could be irrelevant in a colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society. But it was relevant in

South Africa because the subject position of black people was a deliberate creation of white people (Biko 2007:96).

Biko states that the question of power in South African politics was introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of white people created some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of black people and still feel free to give moral justification for their exploitation of the black people (Biko 2007:96-97).

The Black Consciousness Movement in the quest for a true humanity sought to conscientise black people to the fact that the racism that they faced did not exist on an individual basis, but it was an institutionalized racism and this made it look like the South Africa way of life. For Biko white people despised the black people not necessarily because they needed to reinforce their attitude and to justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believed that black people were inferior and bad. He argued that, this was what made South African society racist.

Biko states that in order for the white society to make their lie sustainable, that black people were inferior and bad, black people had to be denied any chance of proving their equality with white people. This explains why there were job reservations, lack of training in skilled work, and a tight orbit around professional possibilities for blacks.

For Biko, it was strange that the apartheid system turned back to say that black people were inferior because they had no economists, no engineers etc., despite the fact that it was deliberately made impossible for them to acquire these important skills. Another method that the apartheid system employed to give authenticity to their lie and to show the righteousness of their claim was the creation of the pseudo-parliament for Coloureds and Bantustan states (Biko 2007:97-98).

Biko argues that whites were so immersed with prejudice, that they did not believe that black people could formulate their thoughts without white guidance and trusteeship. He points out that the problem with the liberals, despite their concern with the oppression of the black people, is that they made it their business to control the response of the blacks to provocation.

It is from this position that the Black Consciousness Movement spells out the role of the liberals in their struggle against the totality of the white power structure. For Biko the problem lies in the fact that, even though white racism constitutes the real problem, it is still the other whites who wanted to tell the black people how to deal with the problem. The liberals misinterpreted the problem faced by the black people when they told blacks that the situation was a class struggle. While black people knew what the problem was and they were determined to stick by their findings that the problem was white racism (Biko 2007:99).

The quest for a true humanity meant that black people had to identify and kill the false political coalition between blacks and whites, because it was based on the wrong analysis of the situation. In fact, Biko states that the coalition formed the greatest stumbling block to the unity of the black people. The quest for a true humanity meant conscientising black people to the fact that their situation was not a mistake on the part of the white people, but a deliberate act and that no amount of moral lecturing would persuade people to correct the situation. It was from this position that the Black Consciousness Movement rejected the beggar tactics (protest) that were forced on black people by the liberals. Biko argued strongly that the basic problem in South Africa was analysed by the liberals as being apartheid whereas the real problem was white racism (Biko 2007:99-100).

According to Biko the liberals identified the basic problem in South Africa in the following fashion: the thesis was apartheid, the antithesis was non-racialism but the synthesis was very feebly defined. The liberals wanted to tell the black people that the solution to the problem was integration. The Black Consciousness Movement rejected this feebly defined synthesis on the grounds that it was full of unquestioned assumptions that embraced white values. Biko argued that integration as proposed by the liberals was long defined by whites and never examined by black people. He says that the problem with it was that it was based on the wrong assumption that all was well with the system apart from a degree of mismanagement by irrational conservatives at the top.

In its quest for a true humanity the Black Consciousness Movement defined the situation differently. The thesis was in fact a strong white racism and therefore, the anti-thesis to this had to be a strong solidarity amongst the blacks on whom this white racism sought to prey. Out of these two situations both blacks and whites could therefore hope to reach some kind of balance where power politics was going to have no place (Biko 2007:99-100).

This section highlighted that the aim of Black Consciousness was to conscientize black people about nature of their socio-political problems. It also highlighted that the nature of the problems faced by black people was white racism and that white racism had produced a negative psychological impact on black people, which is the inferiority complex that the black people have internalized. This chapter highlighted that the conscientisation process was meant to make black people aware of their potential that lied in rallying together as black people around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and in operating as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that held them to perpetual servitude (Biko, 2007:101). Biko points that the conscientisation had detectable effects on black people when he asserts that:

...gradually, the various black groups are becoming more and more conscious of the self. They are beginning to rid their minds of imprisoning notions which are the legacy of the control of their attitudes by whites. Slowly, they have cast aside the 'morality argument' which prevented them from going it alone and are now learning that a lot of good can be derived from specific exclusion of whites from black institutions. Of course it is not surprising to us that whites are not very much aware of these developing forces since such consciousness is essentially an inward-looking process (Biko:2007:4).

Biko and Black Consciousness movement believed that the conscientisation process was able to produce its intended effects on black social groups.

Karis and Gerhart (1997: 127-128) point out that more than thirty SASO university drop outs secured jobs as teachers in Soweto schools. Abram Onkgopotse Tiro the former Student Representative Council president was among them, he taught history at Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto. As well as Aubrey Mokoena, the expelled 1972 SRC president at Turfloop worked as teacher at the Orlando North Junior Secondary. These SASO activists made the ideas of Black Consciousness popular among the school children. This suggests that the Black Consciousness had a strong influence on the school children of Soweto.

Pape et al. (1998:344) also confirm the view that Black Consciousness had a huge influence on the school children that were in the forefront of the June 16, 1976 uprisings when they assert that:

In 1975, the government issued an order that black schools should teach some subjects through the medium of Afrikaans. This ruling coupled with the rise in the BCM that was taking place at the time, led to a major wave of resistance, unlike anything seen in South Africa since the 1950s. This wave of resistance began on 16 June 1976.

The Encarta encyclopaedia confirms the view that the Black Consciousness ideas had a huge influence on the school children of Soweto when it records that:

The influence of BCM played a part in the mass opposition in 1976 of school children to the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in the schools in 1976. The uprisings in the South-Western Township (Soweto) near Johannesburg which began in 1976 and which by February 1977 had resulted in at least 575 deaths were in part a result of Black Consciousness. In October 1977, 18 Black Consciousness movement including SASO were banned and 50 of their leaders detained. The arrest of Stephen Biko and his death while in custody, of maltreatment by the police, caused an international outcry. In the immediate aftermath of Soweto many young people escaped across South Africa's borders to join the

armed wings of the liberation movements “Black Consciousness Movement”. Microsoft (R) Encarta (R) 2006 [C.D]. Microsoft Corporation, 2005).

Moodley (in Pityana et al. 1992:150) also implies that the Durban strikes of 1973 were linked to the influence of Black Consciousness by reporting that:

A series of industrial strikes throughout Durban during 1973, for which the Black Consciousness Movement was blamed but neither claimed nor disclaimed responsibility, ushered in a period of greater repression. BCM leaders were banned, activists were detained and many incidents of harassment occurred.

The above quote indicates that the Black Consciousness did not only have an impact on the students but it also sparked resistance on the workers as well. Black Consciousness also had a huge influence on arts and culture because it used it as a tool for the conscientisation process. Mzamane (in Pityana et al 1992:185) adds that:

The writings of the Black Consciousness generation were addressed directly and primarily to the downtrodden and oppressed. Their aim was to liberate their people as much from white oppression as from their own selves: from the self-inflicted pain and suffering, and the senseless and devastating violence of the townships. Their audience and preoccupations affected their language and other stylistic features of their poems.

This confirms the truth that is implied in the topic of this study that conscientisation was the motive behind the selected poems of the poets SSGM. Mzamane explains that the nature of the language and the form that SSGM was used to convey the conscientisation messages through their poems.

#### 2.4 MARXIST THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

In this section I examine the Marxist theories of ideology and point to their relevance to the analysis of the literary text. The theories selected for examination in this chapter all point to the fact that the literary text reflects the socio-political context of the time in which it was written. The socio-political and cultural context that the text reflects constitutes the ideological views that dominated the period in which the literary text was written.

This study argues that SSGM sought to conscientize their readers by reflecting on socio-political and cultural problems of their time through the medium of poetry. It is this sincere reflection of the lived experience of the oppressed black people in South Africa that moves their readers into action. The conscientized readers were expected to begin to agree with the point of view of the poets, and start

to view white racism and its effects on black people in a deeper level. The aim was to make the readers more committed, resistant, defiant and politically active.

In order to show that SSGM Sepamla used poetry as a means of conscientisation this study presented an analysis of the socio-political context and discussed how this context is reflected in the poems. The Marxist theories of ideology were useful in the analysis of the poems selected. This is because the Marxist theorists assert that literature can only be properly understood when explained in its socio-political context. Forgacs (in Jefferson and Robey 1995:167) argue that despite their diversity, all Marxist theories of literature have a simple premise in common: literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality....any theory which treats literature in isolation (for instance as pure structure, or as a product of a writer's individual mental processes) and keeps it in isolation, divorcing it from society and history, it will be deficient in its ability to explain what literature really is. This suggests the idea that if one wanted to explain the poetry of SSGM, one needs to offer an account of what the apartheid system did the time the poems were written. The Marxist analysis of the poetry SSGM states that their poetry reflects the conflict between the oppressed and exploited black people and the capitalist white racists.

The Marxist theorists hold that social reality is not an indistinct background out of which literature emerges or into which it blends. Marx is known for his theory called Base/Superstructure theory. In this theory he states that the Base or Superstructure of a given social formation is made up of forces of production and relations of production.

The forces of production refer to the material productive forces that make production of goods and services possible. The relations of production refer to the classes which own and control the means of production, and therefore possess economic power, and the classes who, because they by contrast do not own or control the means of production, are exploited by that ruling class (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:167).

For Marx, societies are divided up, and people thus relate to one another, according to their relations to the prevalent forces of production. Different members of a particular society are divided up into a variety of social classes. In a capitalist society human beings are divided up into separate social classes depending on whether they own, or do not own those forces of production (Marx and Engels 1970:82)

Marx stated that the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, owned and controlled the forces of production, while the proletariat, working class, were without property because they did not own or control the forces of production but had to sell their labour power to the bourgeoisie the capitalist class. This

means that, beyond one's individual intentions or will, one was objectively placed within a particular social class, defined by one's relation to the forces of production which placed people in a particular relation to other human beings (Marx and Engels 1970:82).

Marx argues that those social classes that are exploited are potentially in relation to conflict and antagonism with those classes which exploit them. Marx's theory of exploitation is called the theory of surplus value. It is in this theory he gives his explanation of his reasons to say that the working class is exploited. Marx argues that the economic Base was constructed in conflict and contradiction because of the exploitation going on in it. For Marx, from the economic Base rises a legal and political superstructure to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The superstructure contains various elements of politics, the law and ideology. Politics and the law refer to the state and its various institutions: parliament, the legal or judicial system, and the various state bureaucracies.

Marx argues that the relationship between the Base and the superstructure is one of determination. The superstructure depends on the Base; it cannot survive without the Base. If you change the Base, then the superstructure will follow. The role of the superstructure is to support or sustain a ruling social power, the ruling class. This means that the role of ideology is to defend and perpetuate the material interest of the dominant social class. The ruling class erects a type of political arrangement - a state apparatus - and promotes specific values and beliefs, that is specific ideologies whose functions is to precisely defend and perpetuate the prevalent relations of production.

For Marx and Engels, the ideas of the ruling class were in every epoch the ruling, or dominant ideas. This is because the ruling class controlled or owned the forces of production, as well as the means of mental production. It is from this view that the researcher argues that in order to show that conscientisation was the motive behind the poetry under study; the researcher therefore needs to treat this poetry as the secondary echo of what was happening in the Base of material reality at the time of its writing. The reflectionist model of the text was useful in the analysis of the selected poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali. Their poetry reflects the social reality of the time and context under which they wrote.

Georg Lukacs (1962), a Marxist theorist, supports this view when he writes that the great realist writers were able to transcend distorted and partial ideological views of their societies to show things as they really are, that is to reflect the reality of their time. For Lukacs in order for the reader to understand the text the reader needs to look through a window to the real world depicted. Eagleton (1976) a Marxist theorist also held the idea that the text reflects the social reality by stating

that the task of the realist writer is to flash out the typical trends and forces in sensuously realized individuals and actions; in doing so he links the individual to the social whole, and informs each concrete particular of social life with the power of the 'world-historical'- the significant movement of history.

The concept of ideology is central to this study. This study argues that the poets under study sought to conscientise their readers about the workings of the apartheid ideology. The French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser (1970) offers a revised version of Marxism, his revision of Base/Superstructure made a significant contribution to the study of ideology. Althusser divided up social formations into three levels or instances: the economic, the political, and the ideological. Each of these instances or levels was relatively autonomous of others. This means that the Ideological and the political Instance could not be explained by referring to the Base. The two Instances had their own powers, their own effectiveness. The three levels were reciprocally inter-determining.

Althusser made a distinction between the concepts of determination and dominance. Even though the economic level is ultimately the determinant but a particular social formation can have any of the various levels as dominant at a particular time. In the case of apartheid South Africa, the political instance could be argued to have been dominant, although it was determined by the economic interest of capitalism.

Althusser (1970:135-140) argues that the ruling class do not usually only defend their economic power by mobilizing the forces of State violence in their defence. The ruling classes also rely upon ideology in order to win the consent to their domination. For Althusser ideology was not only a matter of values, ideas or beliefs. He argued that ideology had a material existence. Ideologies were produced and functioned within specific institutions which he called Ideological State Apparatuses-ISA's. The purpose of these ISA's was to reproduce the relations of production. This means that for Althusser the function of ideology is to perpetuate the dominance of the prevailing system of class relations, and of class exploitation. The political instance of the state functions to reproduce the prevailing system, to keep it going, to conserve its fundamental characteristics.

Althusser argued that ideology secures the reproduction of the relations of production by interpolating individuals as subjects. Interpellation is the process by which the ideological discourses address the individual, it hails or calls the individual, recruits him/her into its value system. He argued that in class divided societies, the Ideological State Apparatuses function to produce individual subjects with the appropriate forms of consciousness, who will be reconciled to their position in that society, who will therefore agree to the perpetuation of that particular system of

domination. Ideology provides individuals with imaginary images of themselves with which they are invited to identify, and by which their subjectivity is constituted.

Althusser argues that ideologies give individuals a false or imaginary belief that they are unified, autonomous and self-generating individuals in charge of their destinies. Individuals are not conscious of their subjection. It is from this view that this study argues that conscientisation was the motive behind the [art] selected poems of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali.

Althusser (1966) confirms this view by asserting that:

What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'feeling' (which is not the knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes...art gives us a view of the ideology to which (it) alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a retreat, an internal distantiating from the very ideology from which their novels emerged. (Writers) make us 'perceive' (but not know) in some sense from the inside, by an internal distance, the very ideology in which they are held.

The above confirms that the major role of art is conscientisation. It is also based on Althusser's view that in the everyday world ideology cannot be seen because it has been naturalized into the common-sense of its time. For Althusser art enables the reader to see or perceive the invisible everyday ideology. This means that [Art] the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali conscientises because it disturbs the normal ideological process of interpellation and unsettles the relations of exploitation/domination.

Macherey (1966) concurs with the view that literature conscientises about the workings of Ideology. Macherey held that the literary text's relationship with ideology is what is vital in any literary analysis. He claims that literature is a parody of ideology; it is a contestation of language. For Macherey ideology is by itself formless, always in flux, incapable of being pinned down. Eagleton (1976) adds that ideology is diffuse, amorphous and decentred, the invisible colour of everyday life, less articulated structure than a boundless medium.

For Macherey, ideology obscures the limits and incompleteness of the system it seeks to defend and presents itself instead as a harmonious totality with nothing outside of it. In appearance it has no limits because it has no recognizable shape, no borders, since these are hidden to disguise the fact that it is an ideology. He further argues that ideology exists because there are things that must not be spoken of. It is silent about its limitations, incompleteness and absences.

This study argues that the [art] poetry under study conscientises because it reveals the limitations, the incompleteness and the absences of ideology. Macherey confirms this view when he writes that the literary text works upon ideology and in the process of that labour it gives that formless a specific form. For Macherey (1966:132-133) the literary text turns ideology into a visible object. He adds that:

By means of the text it becomes possible to escape from the domain of spontaneous ideology, to escape from the false consciousness of self, of history, and of time. The text constructs a determinate image of the ideological, revealing it as an object rather than living it from within as though it were an inner conscience: the text explores ideology, art establish myth and illusion as objects.

Macherey (1966:63-64) argues that literature interrupts and solidifies the apparent motion of ideology. It congeals the formless and flowing language of ideology into a recognizable shape. He states that literature:

...built from the formless language of illusion (ideology)...but in the process of its formation the book takes a stand regarding the myth, exposing it...it gives an implicit critique of its ideological content, if only because it resists being incorporated into the flow of ideology in order to give a determinate representation of it.

Macherey confirms the idea that literature conscientises. For Macherey, the literary text works upon ideology to make it visible to the reader. This is what is referred to as constitute conscientisation in this study. Eagleton (1976:54) confirms that art conscientises by adding that:

In entering literature, however, ideology finds itself subjected to a Formalization which, strictly speaking, it cannot tolerate. This formalization exposes those limits, slips and incoherence of ideology normally concealed in everyday life, and it is for this reason that, once worked upon by the literary text, ideology begins to come apart at the seams.

Eagleton affirms that in giving ideology a determinant form, the literary text pones up the possibility of a critique of ideology. The literary criticism advocated by Macherey helps people to liberate ourselves from the grip of ideology.

In his theory of hegemony Antonio Gramsci (1973:42) affirmed the important role of ideology in any social formation. Gramsci differentiates between the corporatist ideology of a class, an ideology that expresses its own specific class interests, and the articulation of a much broader hegemonic world-

view. The term hegemonic means that the dominant social class transform its own class interest into a value-system generally appropriate to the broader society.

Gramsci (1973:42) points out that the social formation is made up of two fundamental classes - the bourgeoisie and the working class. In order for a fundamental class to attain hegemony over society as a whole it was necessary for it to incorporate the interest of the other, allied social classes and groups into its own discourse. The fundamental class articulates the interests of other social groups to its own while dis-articulating these social groups from other class alliances in which they have historically been placed. This means that the fundamental class claims to represent other social groups, in doing this it could gain the consent of those social groups. The ideological discourses would be used to cement the various social groups together.

Gramsci (1973:43) notes that civil society is the battle field, in which ideology is produced, diffused and challenged. He defines civil society as the private space autonomous of both the state and the economy. For Gramsci the civil society comprises the education system, the family, the trade unions, political parties, the mass media, and so on. Gramsci points out that the task of producing and disseminating these complex ideological formations is performed by what he called organic intellectuals, who represent the organic interests of a fundamental class. Gramsci used the term intellectuals in a broader sense incorporating teachers, journalists, artists, writers and so on. The poets SSGM could be seen as the organic intellectuals of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Eagleton's (1990:54-60) notions of dominant ideology, authorial ideology, and aesthetic ideology are also helpful for the analysis of the selected poems. The dominant ideology is the subject matter of the text, in the case of this study it is the specific issue discussed in the poem. The authorial ideology is a personal view that the speaker expresses in the text. In the case of this study, it is the ideas of the Black Consciousness. The aesthetic ideology is the literary genre.

In the foregoing section I examined the Marxist theories of ideology that I regard as relevant and necessary to the understanding of the poetry of SSGM. As I have pointed out in my discussion of these various theorists stand-point with regard to the study of literature, it came out that for a reader to be in a better position to understand and appreciate the poetry of SSGM, the reader needs to appraise their poetry within its socio-cultural and political context.

#### 2.4.1 BIOGRAPHIES OF THE POETS UNDER STUDY

This section aims to show that it is important to know the biography of the writer before one can attempt the analyses of the writer's literary work. The biographies of the poets are important

because they provide the dates of their birth and death as well as the socio-historical context under which they wrote their poetry.

In his theory of ideology called hegemony Gramsci (1973:43) states that the task of producing and disseminating ideologically is performed by what he called the organic intellectual, intellectuals who represent the organic interest of a fundamental class. This study argues that Serote, Sepamla, Gwala and Mtshali can be referred to as the organic intellectuals of Black Consciousness. This study argues that it is crucial to know the biographical background of the writer before attempting analyses of the writer's work as it throws light into the different kinds of ideologies that informed the writers and the people of his time. The writers write from a particular ideological consciousness in response to a particular ideological consciousness.

#### 2.4.2. BIOGRAPHY OF SYDNEY SIPHO SEPAMLA

Sydney Siphon Sepamla was born in 1939 in Krugersdorp and died on 9th January 2007. He was a contemporary South African poet and novelist. He lived most of his life in Soweto. He studied teaching at Pretoria Normal College. In 1975 his first volume of poetry was published entitled, *Hurry Up to it!* During this period he was active member in the Black Consciousness movement. In 1977 a collection of poems was published entitled, *Soweto I love you*. This collection was believed to be partly a response to the Soweto Riots. As a result of this it was banned by the Apartheid regime.

The following are his other poetry collections: *The Blues Is You in Me* (1976); *Children of the Earth* (1983); *Selected Poems* (1984); *From Goree to Soweto* (1988). Siphon Sepamla has also written novels, including *The Root is One* (1979) and *A ride in the Whirlwind* (1981). In these novels he alluded to the daily circumstances in which he and other black people had to live as his subject matter. The second novel was focussed specifically on the 1976 uprising in Soweto. It was banned at first but released again later.

He was a founder of the Federated Union of Black Artists which was later called The Fuba Academy of Arts. He was the editor of the literary magazine *New Classic*, and the theatre magazine *S'ketsh*. Sydney Siphon Sepamla received the Thomas Pringle Award (1977) and the French *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* for his writing. Under the democratic South Africa he was a member of the governments' Arts and Culture Task Group.

### 2.4.3. Biography of Mongane Wally Serote

Mongane Wally Serote was born 1944 in Sophiatown one of the oldest locations in the area of Johannesburg. However, when he was eight years old, his parents moved to Alexandra Township. He went to schools in Alexandra and when he passed form two his parents took him to Lesotho. It was partly because of better education there and partly because he was almost beginning to get involved into street politics. He returned to Soweto to complete his matriculation at Morris Isaacson High school. He studied at Wits University, via distance education.

Serote was offered a waiver to study fine arts at the University of Colombia. Shortly after completing his fine arts degree he joined Umkhonto Wesizwe, the armed wing of the ANC. He trained as a soldier in Botswana, Angola, and the Soviet Union. He worked for the department of arts and culture of the ANC in Botswana, Gaborone and later in London. He was closely involved with Black Consciousness political and cultural activities. He was arrested by the apartheid government under the Terrorisms Act in June 1969 and spent nine months in solitary confinement, before being released without a charge.

In 1993 he won the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. In 2004 he received the Pablo Neruda Award from the Chilean government. He has served as chairperson of the parliamentary select committee for arts and culture and worked as the CEO of Freedom Park, a national heritage site in Pretoria that is scheduled to open in early 2009.

He started writing when he was twelve years old. He used to write poems and give them to girls but after being punished for doing this, he began to write poems to his grandmother. He considers his grandmother as an important critic for his writing; she gave him the context for his writing. His works include *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972), *Tsetlo* (1974), *No Baby must weep* (1975), *Behold Mama, Flowers* (1978), *The Night Keeps Winking* (1982), *A tough tale* (1982), *Third world express* (1992), *Come and Hope with Me* (1994), *Freedom Lament and Song* (1997), *History is the Home Address* (2004). His novels include *To every birth its blood* (1981), *Goods of our Time* (1999) and *Scatter the Ashes and Go* (2002). He also writes essays in an attempt of entering an intellectual discourse in his country. The first two books that he wrote in essays form are: *On the horizon* 1980 and *hyenas*, 1990. In 2010 he published a novel called *Revelations*. He is currently writing a novel called *Rumours* and collections of essays under the title *shifting shadows*. He is also currently writing an epic about architecture. Serote is a very hardworking writer because he writes in parallels.

#### 2.4.4. Biography of Mafika Pascal Gwala

Mafika Gwala was born in 1946 in Verulam, KwaZulu-Natal. He did his primary education in Oakford primary school and then his high school education at Ntshanga. In the years 1966-1967 he studied law at the University of Zululand. After that he worked for a legal firm as an article clerk. In 1968 Gwala worked at the factories in Hammersdale. Shortly after that he moved to Transkei, where he taught English, Latin and mathematics at Lourdes high school, a Catholic school.

In 1972-1973 he returned from Transkei and again worked in factories in Hammersdale. He became involved in what appeared as trade unions. This was followed by the outbreak of great strikes in the factories of Hammersdale and the whole of Durban in 1973. Gwala was then arrested for his involvement in these strikes.

He then worked as a clerk in Trade union offices, at this time trade unions were illegal. The trade unions operated under the auspices of benefit funds. At this time he was a member of the Black Consciousness Movement. He worked with Steve Biko and the Black Community Programme while Steve Biko was banned to King William's town. Gwala was detained for one hundred days. He started writing poetry while he was an article clerk for a legal firm. He wrote his first poems as love poems to his Indian girlfriend Miss Sharita Maharaj. After noticing that Gwala had an exceptional writing talent, Miss Maharaj encouraged Gwala to consider writing as a career.

While working for the Black Consciousness Movement he edited Black review in 1973 and he contributed critical articles on contemporary Black South African literature. His poems first appeared in literary magazines called Classic and Ophir and then in the SASO Newsletter a Black Consciousness publication. He published two poetry books: Jol'inkomo (1977) and No more Lullabies (1982). In 1994 together with Gunner he edited a book called Musho which constituted the translation of various poems from other poets. In the book Musho Gwala contributed the praises of Harry Gwala and Govan Mbeki. He is currently writing vignettes. Gwala currently lives in Mpumalanga Township, near Hammersdale.

#### 2.4.5. Biography of Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali was born in 1940 in KwaBhanya village near Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal. He did his primary school education at KwaBhanya primary school. In 1958 he matriculated at Nkamana high school in Vryheid. At the age of 18 he wanted to enrol at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg but was refused because of the apartheid legislation.

Mtshali worked as a messenger in Soweto when in 1971 he published his first volume of poetry, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*. The collection is considered a land-mark in South African literature. Mtshali studied creative writing and education at Columbia University in the US. On his return he published *Fire flames* (1980), a collection of militant poems banned and then unbanned in 1986. In 1971 he was awarded the Olive Schreiner Poetry Prize and in 1971 the Poetry International Award in London. In 1981 he wrote *Give us a break* (edited), In 1997 *The Black Trinity from African Divinity*. In 2008 he wrote *Thando and Lerato* a play adapted from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2009 a play, *Hang John Matshikiza*. Unpublished works includes *A stranger from the cooler* and *The plantation Pope*. Mtshali also writes in other genres: short stories and essays. He has won many awards as a writer including the South Africa English Academy Poetry Award in 1971, The London Poetry International Award in 1973 and the South Africa Lifetime Achievement Award (Sala) in 2007. Mtshali is an adjunct professor at the New York City College of Technology, where he taught African folklore and modern African history. Mtshali returned to South Africa in the past five years. He is a founder and the deputy principal of the college of arts, called *Pace Community College* in Jabulani, Soweto. Mtshali lives in Pimvile, Soweto.

The foregoing summary of the biographies of the poets SSGM indicate that they are all Black South African poets who wrote during the apartheid era. This means that they were part and parcel of the black community to which they addressed in their poetry. This also means that they were first hand sources of the content of the poetry. Therefore, the stories told in their poetry, the sceneries described in their poetry, the arguments and points of view expressed in their poetry are truthful and depict the true picture of the experiences of black people under the apartheid regime. The poets SSGM used the medium of poetry to capture, record, interpret and reflect the black experience to the black people and to whoever it may concern in order to affect conscientisation in their hearts.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. POEMS PROBING RACIALIST ATTITUDES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines racism as a practice of discriminating against other people on the basis of their biological characteristics. A racist believes that his or her race is superior to others. In addition racism denies people their rights to social and political structures in society. Racism manifest itself in the denial of a certain group their rights to participation in cultural, political and social activities on grounds of their inborn different traits.

People who are racially discriminated against suffer immense injustices and even persecutions. Racism leads to ostracism, genocide and holocausts. The idea of racism contends that all members of a particular race are endowed with characteristics or capabilities which are unique to them, and as a consequence are inferior or superior to other races or races.

Emmett (in Chapman 1982:175) affirms that a point's view cannot be a racist view but that the poet's view was not racist one because they did not talk about whites as individuals, but whites collectively. This suggests that SSGM cannot be referred to as racist because of exploration of the racist attitudes in their poetry. The poet talks about whites not as individuals but as a group.

This chapter seeks to investigate that the poetry of SSGM, like Black Consciousness, conscientised the various black groups by claiming to represent their interest with the aim of cementing them into a powerful group. Biko (2007:74) points that it was important for the black people to use the concept of group power in order to feature well in the game of power politics. This means that for Biko it was important for all black social groups to unite themselves into a solid block against the forces that oppressed them.

Biko (2007:29) argues that the organisations that were fighting against apartheid were working on an oversimplified premise, they diagnosed the problem incorrectly. They forgot about the side effects and have not even considered the root cause of the problem facing the black people. These organisations failed to see that black people were completely disempowered, completely dehumanised and completely alienated.

According to Biko (2007:99) the basic problem in South Africa has been analysed by liberal whites as being apartheid whereas the real problem was white racism. For the purpose of this study conscientisation is a means of making people aware of the fact that the problem was white racism and that apartheid had real effects on the black people.

For Biko (2007:100) the Black Consciousness Movement therefore, defined the situation differently. The thesis was a strong white racism and therefore the anti-thesis to this must be a strong solidarity amongst the blacks on whom this white racism sought to prey. It is out of these two situations that the Black Consciousness Movement could hope to reach some kind of balance - a true humanity where power politics would have no place.

The analysis of the poems shows that the poems permeate racist attitudes held by both white people and black people about each other. Each analysed poem gives form to formless ideologies. The racist thinking that dominated white people in South Africa constituted of the dominant ideology that the poets sought to critique. The ideology of the Black Consciousness that informed the world view of the poets constitutes the authorial ideology that the poets sought to disseminate amongst the oppressed black people.

The poetic form through which the conscientisation message is expressed constitutes the aesthetic ideology. This means that their poetry conveyed the ideas, values and feelings experienced by the oppressed black people under the apartheid regime. It is these values, ideas, and feelings that constitute ideology. Conscientisation awakens the reader to be aware of the implicit workings of these ideologies with the aim of liberating the reader from the grips of ideology. This is important because to understand ideologies is to understand both the past and the present more deeply, and this understanding contributes to liberation.

Biko (2007:30) states that the side-effect of apartheid was that black people were completely defeated, completely dehumanised, completely disempowered and alienated. This means that their self-formative capacity was radically truncated by the constraints of the apartheid ideological forms of consciousness. Black Consciousness through its poetry, other art forms and community projects sought to empower the black people.

This study argues that the poetry of SSGM is an emancipatory discourse and as such, it attained its goal by initiating a process of self-reflection to ideologically truncated black people. The analysis of the poems in this chapter is intended to show that the motive behind the poetry of SSGM was to conscientize black people that the problem was not just apartheid but it was white racism and its effects on black people.

### 3.2. IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS

In the poem entitled "BONK'ABAJAHILE" Gwala (1982:3) conscientises the reader that the problem is white racism not just apartheid. In stanza 1 of this poem Gwala poses as if he is responding to a question that was once asked by somebody:

And you once asked why

blacks

live so fast

love so fast

drink so fast

die so fast

(Gwala 1982:3)

These lines show that the person who posed the question to the poet was a racist or he/she held a racist stereotype about black people, the view that this person held represents an ideology of racism which was the dominant ideology during the times of apartheid. This racist view point did not appear as an ideology to the person who held it but as a straight forward perception of black people. According to Althusser (1976:173-174) the everyday world ideology cannot be seen because it has been "naturalized" into the common sense of its time.

The question that the poet is raising in the above stanza is: are black people really like what this person thinks they are? It is when the poet tries to tackle this question that the reader becomes conscious of the reasons that cause black people to live so fast, love so fast, drink so fast and die so fast. Thus the problem is white racism not just apartheid. Here Gwala (1982:3) reminds his readers/black people that they faced institutionalised racism. This is shown in the following lines:

The cement smile

of the teller at the bank

adopted as symbol of courtesy:

'work and save

wear smart

get yourself a hi-fi/ TV

buy yourself a car!

(Gwala 1982:3)

The metaphor of “the cement smile” is a powerful expression because it emphasises that the bank teller is pretending to smile to a black customer but deep inside his/her heart this bank teller hates black people. It is ironical that the bank official gives advice to black people on how to live their lives. The poet raises the question on whether black people are supposed to be told how to live their lives by white people. With regard to this racist ideology Biko (2007:99) argues that whites are so immersed with prejudice, that they do not believe that blacks can formulate their thoughts without white guidance and trusteeship. Gwala (1982:4) under the same title of the poem mentioned above registers white racism in the following lines:

At Webber's I saw him  
running like mad  
on a futile marathon  
after he'd grabbed a bag  
from that farmer  
who pronounced 'Mophela'  
like 'amaphela'

(Gwala 1982:4)

The fact that the farmer pronounced Mophela a place around Hammersdale in KwaZulu-Natal as amaphela [cockroaches] indicates that the white farmer does not take the name of the residential area seriously because of his racist attitude. Althusser (1976:174) points out that the Arts enabled readers to perceive the invisible everyday ideology. It is this Art's ability of making readers see or perceive this invisible ideology. Serote seeks to educate his readers through the use of provocative lyrics.

This is true of the lyrics of Serote's poem (1974:11) “A POEM ON BLACK AND WHITE” through which he explores the theme of racially motivated hatred between blacks and whites. In this poem Serote

uses his creative power of imagination to predict the revenge that is imminent in which black people would attack white people.

In this poem Serote suggests that if the attack were to happen it would be justifiable since the whites are the ones who provoke the black people. Serote's position is supported by Biko (2007:71). Biko points out that it is the black man's right and duty to respond to the provocation in the way he sees fit. Serote has made use of a deceptive simplicity method which is based on direct speech as his style of exploring the theme of racism in this poem. These lines are prosaic and therefore reduce the aesthetic quality of this poem:

if pour petrol on a white child's face  
and give flames the taste of his flesh  
it won't be a new thing  
wonder how will feel when his eyes pop  
and when my nostrils sip the smell of his flesh  
and his scream touches my heart  
i wonder if i will be able to sleep;  
i understand alas do understand  
the rage of a white man pouring petrol on a black child's face  
setting it alight and shooting him at Pretoria street,  
Pretoria has never been my home  
i have crawled its streets with pain  
have ripped my scrotal sack at every door intended entering  
in that city  
and jo'burg city has seen me, has never heard me  
the pain of my heart has been the issue of my heart  
sung by me

freezing in the air

but who has not been witness to my smile?

yet, Alexandra's night shadow is soaked and drips with my

tears.

(Serote 1974:11)

Even though the lines in this poem are prosaic they are strident and their lyrical nature helps to improve the aesthetic quality. The forceful diction that Serote uses in this poem makes the poem a good poem and a powerful disseminating tool in order to agitate his readers to take a particular action against white racism. This agitation is necessary and justifiable because according to Biko (2007:24) white racism was only possible because whites are indifferent to suffering and are patient with cruelty directed to black people. This touching, moving, graphic diction is evident in line 4: the word "pop" in line 4 means to cause or to make a short little explosive sound, often by bursting something. This creates a picture of war in the mind of a reader.

In line 5 the poet has been very poetic in his use of the word "sip". The word "sip" means to drink a very small amount, but in this poem the word "sip" is used to mean smell. The literal meaning of this line is that the speaker will smell the burning flesh of the body of a white child. But the figurative meaning of this line is that the speaker will drink the blood of a white child. This statement could not have been acceptable to the white community but the black community of the apartheid time were going to applaud this statement. This statement creates a sense of devastating violence and cruelty in which a white child will be killed by the speaker.

In lines 6-10 the speaker is conscientising the readers of the fact that the white man has no conscience, feelings and ubuntu because he shoots and sets alight a black child in the streets of Pretoria and still slept at night; the scream of a black child does not haunt him when he sleeps. On the contrary the speaker thinks that the scream of a white child would be terrible that he would not be able to sleep at night.

Throughout this comparison the poet seeks to inform his readers that blacks have feelings of love, ubuntu and conscience but white people lack these important attributes of humanity. The striking sarcasm in lines 8-10 lifts the aesthetic quality of this poem. The speaker is sarcastic when he says that he understands the extreme violent anger of a white man when he shoots and sets alight a black child in the street of Pretoria. Through this sarcastic tone in lines 8-10 the speaker educates

blacks that white people will have to understand black people's violent anger too when a white child is attacked by black people.

In line 11 there is a striking irony: as a black South African it is ironical for the speaker to say that Pretoria has never been his home. Through this irony the speaker informs black people that they are treated as strangers in their own country. In line 12 the use of word "crawled" gives an image of a person who is badly wounded and cannot walk because of pain. In this line the speaker conscientise the reader that black people are badly affected by white racism in Pretoria.

The use of the word "scrotal sack" in line 13 would sound offensive to readers but the speaker has deliberately used it in order to highlight the fact that black people had no freedom of movement in the cities of South Africa. Blacks had to beg for jobs in the white owned businesses in the cities of South Africa. In lines 15-21 the speaker conscientises readers of the fact that black people have been treated badly in the cities of South Africa and white people have been indifferent to the pain faced by black people. Black people had been suffocating with anger for a long time, the speaker warns that black people's anger was about to burst. This is confirmed by Biko (2007:78) when he said that the wounds that have been inflicted on the black people and the accumulated insult of oppression over the years were bound to provoke reaction from the black people. Another striking technique which makes this poem an effective tool for conscientisation is the poet's use of direct speech throughout the poem. This makes this poem more dramatic and it allows the reader to feel more deeply for the speaker.

In the poem "She sat" Serote (1974:12) conscientize his readers about the problem of white racism which has caused fear not only to the blacks but the white people as well. Biko (2007:81) showed that whites had created and preserved for themselves a special position of privilege. This position was created and preserved by the use of violence and fear, but the use of these methods was in themselves a result of the whites' fear of the black population. These lines, lines 1-8 of this poem tell it all:

She sat there

Her blonde hair hung like a winter bitten willow,

Her eyes staring

She sat there,

Her stare like of a trapped rat;

Her cheeks cupped the falling tears,  
Like two dented graves pool rain water;  
She sat there.

(Serote 1974:12)

The reference to blonde hair suggests that the character in this poem is a white woman. The striking simile in line 1 highlights that the white woman once had the privilege of living a wealthy life under the apartheid regime but now in this poem is presented as having lost all her wealth just like a willow tree that dries up during the winter season. This is a powerful conscientisation imagery that warns the readers that what happened to her would also happen to all white people if racism is not wiped out in South Africa. Serote uses line 1 “She sat there” as a refrain three times. This helps to emphasize the idea that this white woman is stranded, is aimless; she has no idea as to how she must deal with her fear. The word “staring” in line 3 foregrounds this atmosphere of fear in the poem. The use of a simile in line 5, an imagery of a “trapped rat” conscientises readers that the white people will one day pay the price of being racist in South Africa.

The diction that Serote has used in this poem emphasizes the condition of being caught up with fear, frustration and being lonely. The word staring means to look for a long time with eyes wide open, especially when surprised, frightened, or thinking deeply. Serote chose this word “staring” in line 3 with the aim of conscientising his readers that soon the white people will be caught up in their own trap that had been set for the black people. That is; they used violence and fear to secure their position of power but by hating blacks they unconsciously taught black people how to hate and how to use violence.

In his poem “INTROIT” Serote (1974:20-21) seeks to conscientise his readers of the fact that racism is the source of the suffering faced by black people in South Africa. Govender (1994:16) affirms that Serote’s writing sought to conscientise black people about their suffering when she argues that Serote’s political ideology and passion for writing were born of his experience as a black person living in South Africa. In this poem the speaker prays to God and the speaker’s prayer has become a figurative song that is sung while the priest approaches the altar. The good aesthetic quality of this poem lies on Serote use of introit as a symbol of a song in which a black person reflects his personal feelings about his subject position in South Africa. Serote conscientised his readers that blacks suffer because of their skin colour. This is reflected in the following lines, lines 6-8:

I am a black manchild

I am he who defeated defeat

I am a surprise which surprise me

And line 9:

The load of the day leaves my shoulders red and bruised

And lines 24 -25:

I am no big blackman

I am a blackmanchild

(Serote 1974:20-21)

These lines are confirmed by Steve Biko (2007:31) who argued that the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated drowning in his own misery, as a slave, an ox, bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. This is Biko's opinion of the black people and is registered by Serote in this poem in lines 31-37:

the children have seen the sun shine into my eyes

they have seen my face glow silver with the light of the moon

May be they heard me weep too

For I have wept

Lord I wept

My heart bleeds through my eyes

For indeed my eyes is a bloody memory

(Serote 1974:20-21)

Furthermore Serote uses a diction that is forceful to conscientise his reader of the fact that the racism taking place in South Africa creates fear, boredom and alienation for the black people. This forceful diction is evident in

Lines1-3:

I have lain on my back  
flat like a long dead reptile  
I lie here while my load clutches my heart like a frightened  
Child

And line 5:

and the horrors of my stomach throb to my eyes

And lines 12-14:

the whores' scream and the barking dogs are my companions  
the snap of life and the making of death have woven my  
strides

And lines 15-16:

My thick footsteps pulsate on black shadows  
They rumble, rumble like a journey with a destination  
(Serote 1974:20-21)

The imagery of a "dead reptile" in line 1 educates the readers that blacks had lost their strength, and had become powerless. Biko (2007:30) affirms this opinion by arguing that the black man had lost his manhood, and accepted his subject position as an inevitable position. He adds that blacks were shocked and terrified by the white power struggle. The word "clutches" is very forceful it means to take or try to take hold of something tightly in a state of fear or anxiety. The imagery of a "frightened child" also foregrounds the idea that black people lived their lives in a complete state of fear. The word "horrors" emphasize the atmosphere of fear.

There are many other words in this poem that are forceful so much so that they register a state of fear with words like: "strides", thick footsteps pulsate", rumble, scream and barking dogs. The word "whore" in that line is strident since it may offend some readers, but Serote deliberately used it in order to conscientise the reader that black people are alienated. The speaker is alienated because instead having other human beings as his companions he has screaming whores and barking dogs and his is an abnormal environment.

In the poem titled "DURBAN" Serote (1974:32) seeks to conscientise his readers about a kind of racism that was commonly found in Durban, racism between Africans and Indians. Serote has brilliantly personified Durban in order to make it possible to describe it for his readers. This personification is found in line 1 when he writes that "Durban burns" instead of saying there are hot temperatures in Durban or it is hot in Durban. In this same line, line 1 Serote writes that the "heart" Durban has is "brutal". The word "brutal" is forceful because it means something that is cruel, violent and completely without human feelings. Through this imagery Serote reminds his readers that Durban is a cruel place. It is cruel because it burns him, the word burns can have a connotation of something that is viciously destructive.

Therefore one can conclude that the speaker uses the metaphor to describe the destructive element racism in Durban. In this poem Serote seeks to conscientise his readers about racial discrimination between Africans and Indians. He points out that Durban Indians discriminate against Africans while Coloureds are busy doing something. This is evident in lines 1-4:

Durban burns my head with its brutal heat  
and Indians cracking their tongues on my heart like a whip  
coloureds they don't come out  
they are not there they are sticking in somewhere  
(Serote 1974:32)

Serote uses a precise diction to conscientise the readers about the fact that Indians in Durban were cruel in their treatment of Africans. The use of the phrase "Indians crack tongues", to crack is to do something with a sudden sharp noise. Through this phrase Serote seeks to conscientise the readers of an idiom which says "to crack a whip" which means to act with authority to make someone behave better. This phrase creates the idea that Indians are in positions of authority, they are employers and Africans are labourers and there is exploitation between the two groups. This raises a critical question about Indians being part of the black people in terms of the Black Consciousness Movement's definition of blackness.

For Biko, (2007:52) blacks are those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation; it is a reflection of a mental attitude. Moodley (in Pityana et al. 1991:145) writes that Black Consciousness as an ideology was genuinely inclusive; from its inception it sought to include Indians

and Coloureds. But in his poem titled "Durban" Serote seeks to educate his readers that there are serious racial problems between Africans and Indians in Durban.

In lines 18-22 Serote seeks to conscientise his readers that Durban is dominated by white people and Indians. The imagery of "white faces that look more albinos" refers to white people and the imagery of "long blonde black hair" refers to Indians. These lines read:

and these white faces look more albinos hedged like this in  
blinking shades of black  
and Africans walking  
finished  
dwarfed by some load of reality of long blonde black hair  
(Serote 1974:32)

The allusion to Africans being finished and dwarfed in lines 20-22 conscientised readers of what Biko strongly believed about the effect of white racism on the lives of black people. Biko (2007:31) maintains that the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. It is as the result of this that Biko (2007:31) argues that black people had to acknowledge the truth, bitter as it may seem, before they could start on any programme designed to change the status quo.

Even though to a man in the street Durban can look beautiful but Serote in this poem seeks to conscientise his readers that Durban is a rough, ugly, dirty and unhealthy place because of the activities that take place in it. The ugly picture of Durban is highlighted in lines 5-10:

only old buildings breathing to the sky  
their wrinkled faces cracked and staring strait like  
corpses with dead open eyes  
cars rushing in and out like worms finishing rotten flesh  
and mobs of people  
snailing below the heat almost motionless

(Serote 1974:32)

In the poem titled "A SLEEPING BLACK BOY" Serote (1974:37) seeks to conscientise his readers about the negative impact of white racism on the lives of the black people. The lyrics of this poem are self-explanatory:

he lay flat  
face deep into the green grass  
the huge jacket covered his head, the heat onto his ears  
he is dirty  
the dirt screams from his flesh like a rotten smell  
he is pinned down by the throbbing footsteps passing by  
his lullaby is the hiss of the water from the pond and the  
roaring steel river;  
and the eyes of adults passing by  
dart around like bubbles of boiling water-  
this small boy will die one day  
his lips stuck together, glued by the glue he smokes.

(Serote 1974:37)

Biko (2007:30) writes that the fact that apartheid has been tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation and deliberate oppression makes the problem much more complex. Serote explores this issue in this poem. The sleeping black boy is a metaphor representing black people in general. Serote is using this poem to conscientise his readers about the negative impact of white racism on the lives of black people. The white racism has resulted in black people being dispossessed, alienated and therefore easily exploited because they are poor. Biko (2007:48) argues that poetry was a foreign concept in the African communities. This suggests that black people were not born poor or a poor nation but they have been deliberately made poor by their encounter with white colonial settlers who dispossessed them.

The form that Serote uses in this poem "A sleeping black boy" reinforces the theme of the poem. For instance he uses small letters throughout the poem; this helps to conscientise the readers that the life of this black boy is insignificant and is worthless. Serote's description of this black boy is touching in the sense that it makes the readers sympathise with the sleeping black boy especially the black readers. This is because Serote's descriptions of the sleeping black boy are prosaic: an example of this is line 4-5 where Serote uses a matter of tone "he is dirty" and "the dirt screams from his flesh like a rotten smell". This helps to create an immediate atmosphere which allows the reader to deeply feel for the sleeping black boy.

Despite this prosaic tone, Serote is able to lift the aesthetic quality of this poem by using striking imageries. This is evident in line 5 where he describes dirt as having abilities to "scream", this is an example of personification. In line 6 the "throbbing footsteps" are described as having abilities to pin down the sleeping black boy. In line 7 the reference to "the hiss of the water from the pond" and "roaring Steel River" as lullabies to the boy are brilliant metaphors that Serote uses to conscientise the readers that this black boy does not have the privilege to live in a house and he does not have parents to sing him a lullaby.

The description of the eyes of the adults as "darting like bubbles of boiling water" is another brilliant imagery that lifts the aesthetic quality of this poem. It is aimed at educating the readers that the adults who are more likely to be the black are ashamed of this sleeping black boy because he is an embarrassment to the black community. The last lines, lines 11-12 do not have any imagery; they register a very powerful statement because through these lines Serote shows that the boy would die a pauper. Serote seeks to conscientise the readers that if white racism is not attended to decisively, black people would die as paupers.

In the poem "BURNING CIGARETTE" Serote (1972:12) seeks to conscientise his readers about the negative effects of racism on the lives of black people. He uses the metaphor of a "burning cigarette" to highlight the insignificant position occupied by black people in South Africa. These are the lyrics of this poem:

This little black boy

Is drawn like a cigarette from its box,

Lit.

He looks at his smoke hopes

That twirl, spiral, and curl

To nothing.

He grows like cigarette ashes

As docile, as harmless

Is smothered.

(Serote 1972:12)

White racism was the reason for black people to be treated like small boys. In line 2 Serote seeks to conscientise his readers that black people are treated like objects, he uses the imagery of a drawn cigarette, “drawn like cigarette from its box”. Biko (2007:30) believes that the black man was completely defeated, completely dehumanised and lost his manhood. This is the extent to which the process of dehumanisation has advanced. Through the words “docile” and “harmless” in line 9 Serote seeks to conscientise his readers that black people are easily influenced and not likely to cause harm because they are completely defeated. This confirms what Biko (2007:30) said about the position of the black man in South Africa. Biko (2007:30) argues that the black man had accepted his subject position as an inevitable position. He was shocked by the white man’s power structure.

In the poem titled “anonymous throbs+ dream” Serote (1974:53-54) in stanza 4 which is titled Throb IV, he deliberately uses rude diction to conscientise his readers about the frustration and alienation faced by black women, he invites the readers to “look”:

Look now this black woman looks at me

with eyes sticking out as big as her arse

shouting at me to look between my thighs

and my eyes cover themselves with dust

like a woman hiding her nakedness

(Serote 1974:53-54)

In his poem Serote draws attention to the racist stereotypes that were regularly associated with black woman in particular. The description of her eyes as big eyes and its comparison to her arse that is also described as big highlights the racial discrimination because racism classifies people negatively in terms of their body structure. The reference to woman’s “arse” and to the speaker’s

“thighs” can be offensive to some readers, but it helps to give this poem a strident tone necessary for a conscientisation poem.

Serote (1974:54) in his poem titled “THROB VIII+A DREAM” makes a reference to King Shaka of the Zulu nation. He conscientised his readers black people’ suffering might have been a result of a curse put on them by the king of the Zulu nation while he was on his death bed. The lyrics of this stanza speak for themselves:

When he was dying  
tshaka had a dream  
That’s why black brothers must not fuckaround

(Serote 1974:53-54)

There is circulating information amongst the Zulu people that their King, Shaka of Senzangakhona, predicted the arrival of white people. He said they would come out of the sea, to rule Zululand with cruelty. The phrase “fuck around” is strident and therefore can be offensive to some readers because it taboo slang, but Serote uses it to highlight the urgency with which blacks had to deal with racism in South Africa.

In the poem titled “BLACK BELLS” Serote (1972:52) seeks to conscientise his readers that for the black people to fight white racism which is the source of their oppression, they had to rally together around the cause of their suffering as it is asserted in the ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement. This poem is a call to black people to come together. The bells are used as instruments of calling people together to a meeting like a church service or a school to call the learners together before the classes start. In his definition of Black Consciousness, Biko (2007:53) asserted that Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin- and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the “normal” which is white.

The Black Consciousness Movement redefined the identity of the black people in a positive light when it referred to black people as “black people” thus rejecting the label “non-white” which was used by the white government when referring to black people. Biko (2007:52) writes that blacks are those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspiration. The Black Consciousness Movement used words to redefine the black

people just as the white government used words to label black people non-whites. This is what Serote has to say about the power of words in lines 1-12:

AND

words

Make pain

Like poverty can make pain.

Words,

WORDS,

Like thought are elusive,

Like life,

Where everybody is trapped.

I wonder who trapped me

For I am trapped,

Twice

(Serote 1972:52)

In these lines Serote seeks to educate his readers that “words” have the power to hurt and the power to heal. He makes use of a striking simile to compare “words” to poverty; the imagery of poverty is a relevant one because even though according to Biko (2007:48) poverty was a foreign concept in the African community, blacks are now familiar with poverty. They know exactly how painful poverty is. This comparison is powerful because it highlights the need to be conscious of which they are in relation to their environment, and to be analytical of their situation. In lines 9-12 Serote conscientise the readers that in life everybody is trapped; the word trapped can also mean oppressed. He uses a rhetorical question to conscientise his readers about the importance for one to acknowledge one’s own entrapment and to identify the source of the entrapment. In these lines, lines 9-12 Serote conscientises black people to acknowledge and identify their enemy.

In lines 13-30 Serote identifies the enemy of black people and points the way through which black people can escape from the trap. The lyrics of these lines are self-explanatory:

Like  
A word can mean two things,  
Who. And whitey  
Trapped me.  
I read.  
Words  
WORDS.  
Trying to get out  
Words. Words by Whitey.  
No. No. No. By Whitey.  
I know I'm trapped.  
Helpless  
Hopeless  
You've trapped me whitey! Meem wanna ge aot fuck  
Pschwee e ep boobooduboooodu bllllll  
Black books,  
Flesh blood words shitrrr Haai  
Amen.  
(Serote 1972:52)

What exactly does Serote mean by being trapped in the above lines? This question is answered by Biko. Biko (2007:40) maintains that the major danger faced by the black community was that it was conditioned by the system to an extent that even their resistance fitted within the system both in terms of the means and of the goals. This means that blacks were entrapped by whites to react to

their discrimination in ways in which whites wanted them to and for Biko and Serote in this poem blacks had to break free from this entrapment.

Furthermore Biko (2007:72) put it more clearly when he commented that the white society offended the blacks and through some skilful manoeuvres it managed to control the responses of blacks to the provocation. Biko (2007:71) argues that it is the black man's duty to respond to the provocation in the way he sees fit. In lines 17-22 Serote seeks to conscientise his readers that black people must not rely on the books written by white people because these books contain the ideology of the white people. Serote demonstrates his creativity and power of imagination in lines 26-27 in the phrase "Meem wanna ge ait fuc" which can be loosely translated as "Me want to get out of this fuck" and it articulates the speaker's longing to be set free from the white man's oppression.

In line 27 Serote has again demonstrated his creative power of imagination by using an idiophone "Pschwee e ep booboodubooobodu bllllll" this is imitation of a sound of a bomb. It highlights that blacks are likely to use guns and bombs in order to set themselves free. This idea of armed struggle is foregrounded in lines 29-30 in the words "flesh blood" and "Amen". These words mean that the end product of white racism would be a war between white people and black people. The word "amen" simply means "let it be"; it affirms the idea of the armed struggle. In lines 28- 29 he tells his readers that the truth is contained in the Black Consciousness literature.

In the poem "Ofay-watcher, throbs-phase" Serote (1972:50-51) seeks to conscientise his readers that white people are the ones who destroy this world therefore they must learn to listen. He also reminds the reader that black people are powerful but should learn to talk. This is evident in lines 94-101:

White people are white people,

They are burning the world.

Black people are black people,

They are the fuel.

White people are white people,

They must learn to listen.

Black people are black people

They must learn to talk (Serote 1972:50-5)

In lines 94-95 Serote conscientises his readers by making white racism a universal problem. The source of problems in this world is white racism, whites “They are burning the world”. This echoes the argument raised by Biko (2007:25) that there was nothing the matter with blacks. The problem was white racism and that it rested squarely on the shoulders of the white society.

Serote’s artistic creativity is displayed in the imagery that compares black people to the “fuel”. This metaphor is intended to conscientise the readers that black people are powerful, because fuel is a substance which is used to provide heat or power. Serote argues that black people could only demonstrate their power if they learnt to talk in resistance to their discrimination. Here Serote echoes Biko’s ideas on the culture of resistance to white racism. Steve Biko argued that it was wrong for the black people to condemn the white society in private and only when he was with other black people, but to become the first to praise the government in the presence of the police or his white employers.

The phrase, “blacks must learn to talk” for Steve Biko (2007:83) meant that black people could not be able to put up resistance against their overall oppression if in their individual situations, they could not insist on the observance of their manhood. According to Biko (2007:95) to learn to talk meant that the black people must learn to refuse to be pawns in a white man’s game. Black people must learn to provide their own initiatives and act on their own pace and not that created for them by the system.

Furthermore these lines echo the argument raised by Biko (2007:99) that whites were so immersed with prejudice, that they did not believe that blacks could formulate their thoughts without white guidance and trusteeship. Serote in this poem conscientises his readers that black people did not need the guidance of white people. White people had to shut their mouths because Biko (2007:55) it was unfair to black people that whites were the ones who provoked black people but the very same white people also control black people’s response to the provocation.

Mtshali (1971:28) in his poem entitled “Always a suspect” conscientises his readers about the negative impact of white racism on the life of a black person. Black people are always viewed by white people with suspicious eyes simply because of their black skin. It does not matter whether a black person is dressed in a decent way or he is highly educated. Mtshali’s use of direct speech helps to create a matter of fact tone that evokes the emotions of the readers making the readers feel for the speaker in this poem and the black people in general. This is registered in lines 13-20:

I trudge the city pavements

side by side with “madam”  
who shift her handbag  
from side to the other,  
and looks at me with eyes that say  
“Ha! Ha! I know who you are;  
beneath those fine clothes  
ticks the heart of a thief.”  
(Mtshali 1971:28)

Mtshali uses the word “trudge” to conscientise his readers that black people find it difficult to walk in the streets of South Africa. The word “trudge” is precise because it creates an imagery of a person who walks slowly with a lot of effort, especially over a difficult surface or while carrying something heavy. The word “madam” which is placed within inverted commas refers to the white woman. Mtshali demonstrates his artistic creativity by using inverted commas to indicate the double meaning of the word “madam”. The use of inverted commas also helps to make this line dramatic. The word “madam” generally refers to any married woman, but because Mtshali is talking about a white woman in this line, he uses inverted commas to indicate that he is talking about a specific kind of madam.

The mere fact that the white madam makes negative judgements about the speaker after she had simply looked at him; Mtshali shows his readers that black people were being prejudiced in the streets of South Africa. Mtshali also demonstrated his artistic creativity by dramatising lines 18-20. Again he achieved this dramatic effect by using inverted commas; these inverted commas indicate two things, first that these lines are actual words of the white woman. Second, that these are words that the speaker in this poem assumes the white woman might be saying to him in her racist heart. By making reference to the heart of the speaker as the heart of a thief, the white woman indicates that black people are naturally bad.

In the poem titled “Two chimney sweepers” Mtshali (1971:37) conscientise his readers about the racial stereotype that exist between white people and black people in South Africa. This is evident in lines 5-12:

They came out  
and wiped  
their faces  
and one said to the other  
I'm white and  
I'll always stay so.  
You're black  
You'll remain so!  
(Mtshali 1971:37)

These lines represent two groups of people who have a misconception that blackness and whiteness as their identities has an essence. When in actual fact according to Althusser (1984:36) there is nothing essential about people's subjective identity because ideology provides individuals with imaginary images of themselves with which they are invited to identify, and by which their subjectivity is constituted.

Biko (1984:97) argues that white people despise black people not because they need to reinforce their attitude and to justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believe that blacks are inferior and bad. For Biko this is what makes South African society racist. Siphso Sepamla (2007:35) in his poem titled "Nibbling" seeks to conscientise his readers about racism when he makes reference to the hatred that existed between white people and black people in South Africa. This is what Sepamla says in lines 1-10:

there are people who make truth  
in their own light  
like i do  
every time every time say:  
i don't like black people  
who say to the white man

always:

'to hell with you!'

say so myself

sometimes!

(Sepamla 1984:35)

Sepamla seeks to conscientise his readers that there are people in South Africa who have resorted to creating their own kind of reality as a means of coping with the harsh effects of the apartheid system and whose strategy is hatred. In order to conscientise his readers effectively Sepamla writes that he sometimes finds himself having to hate the white people even though he does not like to hate anybody. The reference to himself helps to create a poignant tone that forces the readers to reassess their own positions with regard to racism in South Africa.

In the poem titled "DA SAME, DA SAME" Sepamla (1984:7) seeks to conscientise his readers that racism affects everybody in South Africa. The artistic creativity of Sepamla is displayed in the manner in which he plays around with words and grammar in the following lines 1-7:

I doesn't care of you black

I doesn't care of you white

I doesn't care of you India

I doesn't of you clearlink

If sometimes you Saus Africa

You gotta big terrible, terrible

Somewheres in yourselves

And as well as in lines 22-31:

When da nail of say da t'orn tree

Scratch little bit little bit of da skin

I doesn't care of say black

I doesn't care of say white

I doesn't care of say India  
I doesn't care of say India  
I doesn't care of say clearlink  
I mean for sure da skin  
only one t'ing come for sure  
an' da one t'ing for sure is red blood  
dats for sure da same, da same for avarybudy  
(Sepamla 1984:71)

Sepamla's deliberate bending or breaking the grammatical rules and spelling rules of the English language is called poetic licence. The poem is intended to amuse and entertain readers while conscientising them that racism has no biological basis. In order to conscientise his readers effectively he holds them to an idea or a line of argument. The example of this is in line 5-7 where Sepamla through a line of argument informs his readers that, as long as people live in South Africa they have a serious problem in themselves.

In lines 9-11 Sepamla also educates his readers that all people were created in the image of God and God placed the same heart in all people regardless of their skin colour. Through a line argument he conscientise his readers that one must not inflict pain on another person if one cannot bear that pain on oneself. He also uses a line of argument to conscientise his readers that when people of different races are cut through their skin by a sharp instrument, only the red blood would come out regardless of the fact that these people have different skin colours.

Biko (2007:96) affirms that racism has no biological basis and that it was important for black people to verify whether their subject position was a deliberate creation of God or an artificial fabrication of the truth by power-hungry people whose motive is authority, security, wealth and comfort. For Biko (2007:97) the question of power in South African politics was introduced for economic reasons.

The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that whites could enjoy privileges afforded to them at the expense of black people. Therefore for Biko (2007:55) conscientisation was important and urgent because black people were not keen to club together as blacks because they were told that to do so would be racist. Biko (2007:55) warned that while blacks were losing themselves in the world of colourlessness and amorphous common

humanity, whites were deriving pleasure and security in entrenching white racism and further exploiting the minds and bodies of the unsuspecting black masses.

Furthermore, Biko (2007:24-25) argues that WHITE RACISM is only possible because whites are indifferent to suffering and are patient with the cruelty meted out to the black people. For Biko (2007:24-25) there is nothing the matter with blacks, the problem is WHITE RACISM which rests squarely in the laps of the white society. The problem was not apartheid but it was white racism and white people were to blame for racism.

### 3.3. CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter revealed that poets SSGM sought to conscientize the reader of the root cause of the problems faced by black people were not apartheid but white racism. Apartheid was the product of white racism. The analysis of the poems showed that the poems permeate the racist attitudes that were held by both black and white people about each other. Biko (2007:85) argues that whites were to blame for instituting racism against black people because if they did not like what was happening to the black people, they had the power in them to stop it. Blacks on the other hand had every reason to bundle them together and blame them jointly.

Biko (2007:55) maintains that; since the thesis was white racism there was only one valid antithesis i.e. a solid black unity to counterbalance the scale. For Biko (2007:55) this was important because black people could not wage a struggle without offering a strong counterpoint to the white race that permeated the black society so effectively.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. POEMS PROBING BLACK IDENTITY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Sono (1993:114) points out that the Black Consciousness defines black people as those who are subjugated politically, exploited economically, discriminated against socially, and hamstrung educationally. He argues that “black” was conceived to be “more” revolutionary, because the “reality of oppression and liberatory consciousness...encapsulates a political strategy which excludes all members of the ruling class and collaborators therewith”.

According to Sono black people are still oppressed in South Africa by being stigmatized and excluded from mainstream rights and opportunities. Sono uses the term blackness to exclude white participation; because blackness was conceived as a logical extension of Africanity/Africanism. The term African according to Sono refers to a person who owes his or her only loyalty to Africa (sic) and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority. For him both terms emphasize oppression and exploitation as defining factors of blackness. This chapter uses both terms interchangeably to refer to the cultural and political identity of black African people who were oppressed in South Africa.

The importance of culture during the struggle is highlighted by Cabral (in Mattelart and Siegelau, 1979:211) who observed that:

During resistance-a reciprocal relationship between culture and the struggle develops. Culture, as a foundation and a source of inspiration, begins to be influenced by the struggle; and this influence is reflected more or less clearly, in the changing behaviour of social categories and individuals as well as in the development of the struggle itself

Black pride and black experience expressed throughout the poetry of SSGM and in the writings of Steve Biko are articulated as a strategy to empower the oppressed black people. It must not be construed as the gross blatant essentialisation of black identity. Selden (1993:128-129) states that according to Post-structuralist theories the subject is not an autonomous or a unified identity, but is always a process. This view suggests that there can be no essential basis of African Identity. This means that all identities are not natural but are conventional cultural fabrications.

It is from this background that the aim of this show that the poets under study sought to conscientise black people about the need to rally together as brothers and sisters around the cause of their oppression which was the blackness of their skin and to operate as a group to rid themselves

of the shackles that bound them to perpetual servitude. For Biko (2007:74) this was the philosophy of the Black Consciousness. The Black Consciousness never claimed that the African identity was essential.

The poems analysed in this chapter are truly Black Consciousness poems because they express group pride and determination by the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self. Biko (2007:45) affirms this by arguing that African culture was not time-bound. It was not obliterated with the conquest of the African continent. For Biko African cultures had sustained severe blows and have been battered out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with, but in essence even today one can easily find the fundamental aspects of the pure African culture in the present day. According to Biko this meant black people's culture was not completely wiped out but disfigured and distorted. Biko's position coincides with that of Fanon on the position of African culture.

Fanon argues that colonialism was never satisfied with having the native in its grip but by some strange logic, it turns to his past and disfigures and distorts it (Ashcroft et al, 1995:154). It is from these positions that this thesis argues that the motive behind the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali was to conscientise black people to a deeper self-consciousness with the aim of resuscitating their culture.

The conscientisation that SSGM sought to effect through their poetry is the same conscientisation that the Black Consciousness Movement wanted to effect in the hearts of black people. These poets sought to conscientise black people about the goodness of their culture by alluding to various aspects of the black people's culture in their poems. Biko (2007:32) states that the aim of the Black Consciousness Movement was to correct the distorted history of the oppressed, to seek to re-write the history of black people and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background.

Therefore it is appropriate to argue that SSGM use poetry as an instrument of conscientising black people and anyone concerned by the fact that black people too had a culture of their own, and that they had every right to become the authorities of their own culture. This is true of Steve Biko (2007:44) who writes that it was difficult in the 1970s or during the apartheid time to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture. Biko states that Africans were not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even of themselves.

Furthermore, Biko (2007:44) states that there was so much confusion concerning African culture among non-African readers and even amongst Africans themselves. There was for Biko an urgent need to make a sincere attempt at emphasizing the authentic cultural aspects of the African people

by Africans themselves. It is from this position that this study argues that SSGM sought to remind their readers that black people had a culture too and to tell them to be proud of it.

#### 4.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS

Gwala (1977:46-48) in his poem "THE CHILDREN OF NONTI" alludes to the life history of his family that descended from his great-grandparent Nonti Nzimande. This poem is aimed at reminding his readers that black people too had a culture that they could be proud of. The Gwala clan is related to the Nzimande clan and the forefather of both clans was Nonti Nzimande. Gwala highlights various aspects of his family. These included pooling money together to help those in trouble or to pay a fine when one of them was arrested as well as having family meetings to celebrate or solve problems.

The children of Nonti are a black clan; therefore they represented all groups of black people in South Africa. What was happening to the children of Nonti was also happening in other black families. It is from this view that Gwala (1977:46-48) uses the picture of the children of Nonti to conscientise his readers that black people in general were able to cope with setbacks no matter how devastating the situation might be, like the children of Nonti, blacks were resilient. This is evident in lines 1-6:

Nonti Nzimande died long, long ago  
Yet his children still live  
Generation after generation, they live on;  
Death comes to the children of Nonti  
And the children of Nonti cry but won't panic  
And there is survival in the children of Nonti.

(Gwala 1977:46)

In stanza 2 Gwala (1977:46) educates his readers that Nonti were poor. Gwala uses the word "swoops" to create the idea that the children of Nonti are very poor. Furthermore, Gwala creates the imagery of a flood in his use of the phrase "like the marshed rice paddies of the Far East" to foreground the idea that the children of Nonti are very poor. In order to motivate black people not to be discouraged by their poverty Gwala writes that the children of Nonti were strong and clever despite their harsh situation. The portrayal of Nonti's children as being poor also reflect the poverty faced by black people in general because of the apartheid laws that discriminated against them.

Biko (2007:48) argues that poverty was a foreign concept in African communities. The poverty that is evident in black communities is caused by the whites who suppress the aspirations of the black people in every sphere of life. Biko (2007:97) testifies to this opinion when he commented that the question of power in South African politics was introduced for economic reasons. Biko writes that the leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks.

In lines 11-12 Gwala conscientises his readers that black people use music as a means of coping with their adversity. This is what he says:

And on these desolate roads there is song

Song in the Black voices of the children of Nonti.

(Gwala 1977:46)

Gwala's reference to music as a coping strategy that the children of Nonti employ in the midst of their poverty and distress affirms what Biko says about the role of music in black communities. Biko (2007:46-47) writes that music in African culture features in all emotional states. He writes that Africans sing even when they go to work; they use music as a means of sharing the burden and pleasure of doing a particular work. For Biko, any suffering black people experienced were made more real by song and rhythm.

The culture of black people is communal because it promotes sharing everything including food. The feast is incomplete if there are few guests the guests represented the ancestors of the family that host the function. If the guests are pleased with the food and everything that has happened at the party, the assumption is that the ancestral spirits were also pleased. Black people believe in slaughtering a beast to appease the ancestral spirits to appease them. The beast is slaughtered in public and community members contribute towards its slaughtering, preparation, cooking and eating. This is evident in the following lines, 21-26:

An ox drops to the earth, then another;

Knives run into the meat. Making the feast

to be bloodfilled with Life.

The old, the dead, are brought into the Present

of continuous nature in the children of Nonti

Got to be a respecting with the children of Nonti.

(Gwala 1977:46)

Biko (2007:98) says that black people are often described by white people as being militant, furious and impatient when they define themselves in relation to their social position. Biko's opinion coincides with Gwala's poem where both writers educate their readers that culturally black people do not have wrath but they do show their anger openly only when it is necessary. The readers are also made aware of the fact that black people culturally are a united in pain and in joy. Gwala depicts this aspect of black people in his description of the children of Nonti in lines 27-33:

When a daughter has brought shame

The woman show anger; not wrath.

And the illegitimate born is one of  
the family.

When a son is charged by the white law

The children of Nonti bring their heads together

In a bid to free one of the children of Nonti.

(Gwala 1977:47)

The assertion that alludes to "a son is charged by the white law" and to the children of Nonti bringing their heads together, in a bid to free one of the children of Nonti is a conscientisation calling for all the black people to rally together as the children of Nonti. This was also advocated by Biko (2007:53) when he points out that Black Consciousness in essence was a realisation by black people of the need to rally together with their brothers around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bound them to perpetual servitude.

The notion of truth as the basis of anything that black people undertake to do was central to Black Consciousness. Biko (2007:31) argues that black people had to acknowledge the truth that black people were badly affected by racism first, bitter as it may seem, before they could start on any programme designed to change the status quo. By making reference to the children of Nonti as the people who love the truth, Gwala seeks to inform his readers to uphold the truth as a virtue no

matter how the truth may hurt. The imagery of “winter” highlights the painful seasons and the imagery of summer highlights the season of rejoicing. This is evident in lines 34-40:

There are no sixes and nines be one  
with the children of Nonti. Truth is truth  
and lies are lies amongst the children of Nonti.  
For when summer takes its place after the winter  
The children of Nonti rejoice  
And call it proof of Truth  
Truth reigns amongst the children of Nonti.

(Gwala 1977:47)

Gwala asserts that there is consciousness in Nonti’s household where conversations, arguments, agreements and disagreements were debated. And that these conversations, arguments, agreements and disagreements in the children of Nonti did not result in hatred and faction fights but in solidarity and edification of wisdom. Gwala also states that it was common in the children of Nonti for one of the children to take up a position of being a leader or teacher teaching and conscientising the other children of Nonti about the workings and trappings of white thinking but this position never meant that this child is above the other children of Nonti. The imagery of one of Nonti’s children who stands up and conscientised the other children about the workings and trappings of white thinking points to the conscientisation role that was played by the native intellectuals.

Through this series of assertions Gwala sought to conscientise his readers that these debates, arguments, agreements and disagreements were intended to educate the children of Nonti about the workings and trappings of white thinking, edifying the children of Nonti with wisdom. Gwala wants to make his readers aware of the kind of communication that was part of the general culture of Africans. Biko (2007:45) affirms that in the African culture black people communicated among themselves with easiness.

Gwala conscientises his readers about the importance of speaking the truth even if a high degree of suppression prevented one from doing so and even if everyone else had forsaken the truth. Gwala achieves this by making an allusion to the children of Nonti by being able to rise up and speak in lines 49-55:

And later, later when the sun  
Is like forever down;  
Later when the dark rules  
Above the light of Truth  
The black children of Nonti will rise and speak.  
They will speak of the time  
when Nonti lived in peace with his children  
(Gwala 1977:47)

In lines 57-69 Gwala conscientises his readers that it was important for black people to stand firm for what they believe to be the truth and fight for freedom. He makes his readers aware of the fact that taking a clear standpoint is a freeing process in its own right; therefore just as the children of Nonti took a clear stand point to conscientise the oppressed.

In order to motivate his black readers to resist the white oppression Gwala reminds his readers that Nonti used a spear to fight the enemies of his people who brought great trouble to his children. The message here is that black people just like Nonti's should take up arms and fight for their freedom if need be. In lines 60-61 Gwala conscientises his readers that the children of Nonti were cornered, the black people in general were also cornered as a result it was justifiable if they resorted to be involved in the armed struggle.

The phrase "death and woes" in line 59 conscientises the readers that children of Nonti were faced with great problems and troubles, they lived their lives in extreme sadness. The experience of the children of Nonti is the experience of black people in general. Furthermore in lines 66-67 Gwala seeks to inform his readers about the importance of correcting the distorted history of black people and of being brave. This is registered in the line "Truthful tales shall be told": in this line Gwala is implying that the history of black people had been distorted.

Biko (2007:32) was concerned about the distortion of the history of black people, he states that Black Consciousness aimed to correct the distorted history of the oppressed, and sought to re-write the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background. The phrase "pushed their will" is a forceful metaphor because the word "will" means mental power used to control and direct one's determination to do something, despite difficulties or

opposition. The message in these lines is that people should be strong and should not be discouraged in their fight for freedom. This is shown in the following lines:

Truthful tales shall be told  
Of how the children of Nonti pushed their will;  
And continued to live by the peace  
The peace that Nonti once taught to them

(Gwala 1977:48)

The above stanza points to the continuity and the transference of peace from one generation of Nonti to another. In this stanza the culture of black people is portrayed as evolving from the past to the present modern culture. Biko (2007:45) affirms the idea of the evolution of black people's culture when he argues that one can easily find the fundamental aspects of African culture in present day Africa. Furthermore Biko (2007:106) affirms this idea by stating that black people had to relate the past to the present and demonstrate the historical evolution of the black man.

In the poem titled "Soul afternoon", in stanza five, Gwala (1977:51) portrays blackness as a group that is united behind the colour of their black skin. The speaker in the poem uses a third person pronoun "we" to create group cohesion amongst the black people. This is exactly what the Black Consciousness Movement called for: unity amongst the black people. This is true of Biko (2007:101) who argues that in its essence Black Consciousness is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his black brothers around the cause of their oppression- the blackness of their skin and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. There is striking imagery of Robben Island in lines 73-77 when Gwala alludes to black people resting "facing the sea as the children of blackness bringing together Black Mother Africa onto the shore". Robben Island was a place where many black freedom fighters were imprisoned because of their engagement in various political activities in an attempt to resist and end the apartheid system. Gwala asserts that black people ended up at Robben Island in pursuit of their freedom, self-determination, identity and history.

Gwala seeks to conscientise readers that the history of black people had been presented in a very strange way that made black people feel sad and ashamed of themselves because of the blatant distortions. Gwala says that the distortion in history books was aimed at stripping black people of their pride. The dominant ideology of the Anglo-Boer culture portrayed black people as bad, history books written by white people associate blackness with backwardness, ugliness and darkness.

Gwala informs his readers that it was not necessarily true, for Gwala there are good moral qualities in the culture of black people. In this poem Gwala defines the culture of black people in concrete terms. This is reinforced by Biko (2007:106) when he points to the need for defining the culture of black people in concrete terms. In fact Biko (2007:45) argues that even though the black culture had sustained severe blows due to colonialism, it was possible to find some fundamental aspects of the pure African culture in the present day African.

The term African culture according to Biko (2007:45) referred to the modern African culture. In lines 84-94 Gwala writes that indeed black people's culture is characterised by good moral qualities. In line 85 "Blackness cuts no tongues", to me this line means that if one is black that does not necessarily mean that one practices witchcraft. Gwala points that black people did not attack and kill other people in order to colonize them with the aim of dispossessing them of their wealth. It was not part of the black culture to subjugate and exploit other people. It is interesting to note that the good qualities of the black people's culture that Gwala outlines in this poem is the opposite of the culture of white people. This is evident in the following lines:

We count the virtues wherein:

Blackness cuts no tongues

Blackness spills no foreign blood

-no blood for gold

-blood for paper money

Blackness mixes no tequila

for foreign investment

-no tequila for investors

Blackness pegs no claim

for expropriation of property

no claim for people's property

(Gwala 1977:51-52)

In the last lines of this poem, lines 95-99 Gwala conscientises his readers that black people had every reason to be proud of being black because their culture was rich and full of talent. Gwala makes his

readers aware that black culture is marked with “real Blues” and to the researcher the phrase refers to difficulties and pain. But what is beautiful about the black culture is that it enables black people to be brave as they faced death and fear in the township streets. This is evident in the following lines:

Blackness black talents

Blackness echoes the real Blues

Blackness chucks out the death and fear in our streets

Blackness gets bully talk cracked in the face

Blackness silences Morgan-the Pirate’s grave.

(Gwala 1977:52)

In the poem “WE MOVE ON...” Gwala (1977:27) uses the technique of praise to conscientise his black readers about the importance of not giving up the struggle. What makes this poem a powerful conscientisation tool is that the persona is part of the black people who are the subject matter of this poem. Gwala achieves this by using a third person pronoun “we”. Gwala uses striking similes and metaphors that are commonly used in African praise poetry to conscientise black people of who they are; their role in the society, abilities, victories and poor living conditions. The aim here was to inspire black people to move away from self-pity, despondency, fear and apathy towards self-confidence and political activism. The following lines extracted from this poem clarifies their role:

We shaft cold fear...

We puff dry powder...

We fuse black truth

We are the Blackmasked ones

We are the Warrior profiles

We are the Black passions

We are the big gong

We are the black violators

We are the rhythm of the jungle

We bring the tom-tom drums

(Gwala 1977:27)

The aim of conscientisation was to bring hope and encouragement to black people the Black Consciousness Movement. Biko (2007:127) affirms this when he states that conscientisation was designed to fight against the sense of defeat because black people often looked like they had given up in the struggle. Furthermore for Biko conscientisation meant inspiring black people to develop some form of security to be together and look at their problems. The persona in this poem tells blacks that they must take the struggle for liberation to greater heights regardless of the severity of the apartheid suppression.

Gwala displays his artistic creativity in the way he uses the word “shaft” in line 2. A “shaft” is the part of an arrow or spear “Shaft” is a long pole with a sharp point used as a weapon. The word “shaft” is a noun but it is interesting that Gwala has used it as a verb. This has helped to conscientise black people of what Biko (2007:108) once said, that is to remove from their vocabulary completely the concept of fear and in a true bid for change take off their coats, be prepared to lose their comfort, security, jobs and positions of prestige, even their families. Biko argues that leadership and security are incompatible and a struggle without casualties is no struggle. In line 1 Gwala uses the imagery of “frost bitten” leaves to conscientise his reader that black people were badly affected by their environment, but despite their difficult circumstances they were able to keep on fighting.

The line “We shaft cold fear” suggests that the black people were ready to defeat their fear. For Biko (2007:83) fear was the most important determinant in South African politics. Biko argues that fear makes it impossible for the black people to behave like people let alone free people. This is because the apartheid system deliberately created a fear that erodes the soul of black people through the myriad of civil agents. In other words the phrase “We shaft fear” can be read as meaning that black people cheat or brave or attack fear. Gwala personifies fear by describing it as something that could be attacked or cheated. In line 3 the imagery of “sun baked” is refers to the black skin of black people. Gwala suggests that black people are black because they were burnt by the sun.

This is a powerful metaphor because it disputes the idea that there is something intrinsically negative about black skin. The imagery of “powder-keg” in line 7 is powerful because it conscientises the reader that South Africa was a place that could easily become dangerous to live in. In lines 7-8 Gwala alludes to black people fusing the black truth into the tunnels of the night. The message in

these lines is that black people had to have a deeper understanding of the nature of their plight and spread the message of black pride and solidarity.

The imagery of the “black truth” symbolise the experiences of the black people. The imagery of the “tunnels of the night” symbolise the minds of black people that has been possessed by white people, which means that black people were oppressed psychologically. This means that to “fuse black truth into the tunnels of the night” is to conscientise the black people deeply, with the aim of setting their minds free from the grips of the dominant ideology of the white oppressors. The tunnels of the night refer to the minds of the black people that are truncated by the ideological consciousness of the apartheid system.

The imagery of the “black masked ones” in line10 conscientise the readers of the fact that black people are undermined or prevented from being seen or being noticed. In line 11 Gwala states that black people are “warrior profiles”. By this metaphor he seeks to conscientise his readers that black people were capable of using arms when the situation compelled them to go to the battle field. An imagery of a warrior is a powerful one because a warrior is a soldier with special abilities. In the past he was the one who had both the experience and skill in fighting. The word “profiles” conscientise the readers that the lives of black people contain important and interesting facts.

The positive description of the history of black people inspired them to keep on fighting for their freedom. In lines 12-14 Gwala writes that black people are “black passion”; this is very powerful imagery because passions are very powerful feelings of for example sexual attraction, love, hate anger or any other emotions. Through this metaphor Gwala reminds his readers that black people are human beings; just like their oppressors they too can hate and love when circumstances compel them to do so. Furthermore the imagery of “black passion” alludes to the unfounded image of black people portrayed in trade books and white ghost stories that present black men as having massive powerful sexual power.

The imagery of the “big-gong” in line 16 is very striking because it portrays black people as a large piece of metal which is hung in a frame and hit with a stick to produce a loud sound. Through this metaphor Gwala conscientises his readers that black people were from a powerful nation that could make their presence felt by the white nations who had subjugated them in the land of their forefathers. Gwala states that black people are “black violators”; this suggests that black people were kin to violate or to act against the law, in this case the apartheid law that discriminated against them on the basis of their skin colour.

The imagery of the “machine rhythm” read along with the imagery of the “black violators” creates a picture of a weapon like a machine gun in the mind of the reader. This was a prediction that a battle would take place in the apartheid South African cities that Gwala in line 22 calls “plastic cities”. Through the imagery of “plastic cities” Gwala educates his readers that the cities were artificial and therefore they could be easily destroyed. The imageries in lines 23-25 foregrounds the idea that these cities are built on corruption.

The cities are full of “plastic gardens”, they are “...vitriolic trash”, “...in refuse bins”. In line 26 Gwala uses the imagery of the “rhythm of the jungle” to conscientise the readers that black people are as powerful as the natural forces. The word “rhythm” refers to a regular pattern of change especially one which happens in nature. The word “jungle” refers to a tropical forest in which trees and plants grow very closely together. Furthermore, writings from the politically turbulent context of South Africa like the word “jungle” could remind a reader of “jungle warfare”. The “jungle warfare” is a war fought in a forest where it is difficult to see the enemy where attack is unexpected. In the South African context the situation between the apartheid regime and the revolutionary movement could be described as warfare.

The imagery of “tom-tom drums” has long been used as symbol of African rhythm. The “tom-tom drum” is a drum is usually beaten with hands to produce a fast rhythm. Gwala has displayed his brilliant skill of choosing the concise word when he uses the word “daka” in line 31. The word “daka” is a Zulu word for mud. The mud huts are forms of houses commonly found in rural areas and in reserves.

The allusion to the “box houses” refers to the four roomed houses commonly found in black townships. The references to “mud huts” and “box houses” serves as a powerful metaphor that conscientises black people of the fact that they all come from the same background therefore it is important for them to use this common background to rally together as they fight for their liberation. Furthermore, this reference to “mud huts” and “box houses” is a provocative way of pointing to the poor living conditions under which black people lived in apartheid South Africa.

Biko (2007:30-31) argues that it was wrong for black people to condemn the white society in private and only when they are were with other black people, but to become the first to praise the government in the presence of the police or their white employers. In the poem “HATS OFF IN MY HOUSE” Sepamla (1984:44-45) conscientises his black readers to learn to be proud of their culture and to be resistant and defiant to any authority that seeks to undermine them as a nation. In order

to conscientise his readers about the importance of being brave and proud of their culture, he tells a story of how his father made his family proud by confronting a policeman.

Biko (2007:106) points that one of the essential features of black people's culture is that it is a man-centred culture whose sacred tradition is that of sharing. In Stanza 1 of this poem the persona points that his family consisted of drinking people and it goes without saying that his family used to come together to share a drink. This is evident in the following lines:

my old man  
he was a drinking father  
he had a brother  
he was a drinking uncle  
they had a darling sister  
ooo! She was a drinking old mate

(Sepamla 1984: 44-45)

The fact that the kind of drink is not specified in the poem demonstrates Gwala's poetic creativity of trying to engage the reader to find out the type of drink described in this poem. Sepamla's artistic poetic creativity is also displayed by his use of the phrase "my old man" instead of the "my father". The use of the phrase "my father" was going to be colloquial while the use of the phrase "my old man" sounds more poetic since it is an indirect reference to the persona's father.

The use of the phrase "darling sister" gives this line a poetic tone and it lifts the artistic quality of this poem. It is better than the phrase "beautiful sister" which is colloquial. The use of the word in line 6 "ooo!" displays Sepamla's artistic poetic creativity because it is an exclamation of surprise, pleasure, approval of the drinking behaviour of the speaker's aunt. The word "mate" which means "friend" in line 6 helps to foreground the idea that there is nothing wrong with the drinking habit of the persona's aunt because she is friendly to other people. The consciousness raising message in stanza 1 is that black people are a friendly people and that drinking alcohol does not make them violent but instead more sociable.

Sepamla demonstrates his skill of arranging words to form sentences in an interesting way. This creates a special meaning and rhythm necessary for the conscientisation process. This is evident in the following lines of stanza 2:

come some day  
in walked a young constable  
who saw very soon  
everyone was pissed like a sailor

(Sepamla 1984:44-45)

The phrase “come some day” is indirect, thus it is more poetic than the phrase “one day” which is a prosaic expression. The phrase “in walked” sounds more poetic than “walked in” and the term “constable” is indirect for the term “police”. The use of a simile “everyone was pissed like a sailor” is more appealing to the reader’s senses than the phrase “everyone was very drunk”.

In order to remain poetic in line 18, Sepamla avoids stating clearly that the police tried to arrest the members of his family by using the following language:

now anyone will tell you  
there’s nothing like a law agent  
for straightway the little constable  
fixed his authority.

(Sepamla 1984:44-45)

The person’s allusion to the police as a “little constable” is Sepamla’s provocative way of indicating that his father was bigger than the police both in body and in mental capacity. It foreshadows the father’s action of disciplining this police officer in the following stanza. The phrase “fixed his authority” in line 14 is more poetic than the phrase “he tried to arrest the members of my family”.

The manner in which the police officer tried to assert his authority compelled the persona’s father to react by taking the law into his hands. This is evident in the following lines:

in that instant  
my sometimes pugnacious old man

he who was an incorrigible guzzler

saw it fit to spit at the law

and hands raised to God shouted

hats off in my house!

(Sepamla 1984:44-45)

The persona's father is described as a "pugnacious man". Once again in the above stanza the diction that Sepamla has chosen to describe the father of the persona foreshadows the defiant action that the father shows the police officer. A "pugnacious" person is a person who is willing to start an argument or a fight or who is expressing an argument or an opinion very forcefully. The phrase "incorrigible guzzler" in line 2 is concise because it portrays the persona's father as a bad person who could not be changed from his bad drinking habits, he is a heavy drinker. Furthermore, the word "guzzler" has connotations of a person who drinks quickly eagerly and usually in large amounts.

Through the choices of his vocabulary that makes reference to black people and their bad drinking behaviour it is clear that Sepamla sought to conscientise his black readers about the dangers of alcohol abuse. He informed them that alcohol abuse is not part and parcel of the African culture. The idiomatic expression "spit at the law" in line 18 contains the main theme of this poem. It demonstrates Sepamla's ability to choose the right expressions to express his ideas in a concise and poetic way. This idiomatic expression means to speak in an angry way to show hatred or to show disdain for the law. The father of the persona spoke and shouted very loudly, commanding the police officer to take off his hat because he was in his house.

What is striking in this poem is the twist in the tail. The police officer is expected to be one who commands the people to follow the law but since he was in the house of an individual he had to follow the rules set by the owner of the house. The speaker in this poem was moved by the fact that the right of the individual is being asserted by the apartheid police officer. The word "law" in the context of this poem is a metaphor referring to the police officer himself as well as the apartheid law that he sought to enforce.

The consciousness raising message in this poem is that black people must learn to fight for their rights even on an individual basis. This was important to Biko (2007:83) because he said that black people would not be able to put up resistance against their overall oppression if in their individual situation, they could not insist on the observation of their manhood.

The motive behind the poetry of Sepamla, Gwala, Mtshali and Serote was to conscientise blacks that they too had a culture they could be proud of. This is true of Biko (2007:32) who points out that the African culture was viewed as barbaric. For Biko the aim of Black Consciousness was to correct the distorted history of the oppressed, and to sought to rewrite the history of the black man and educate people about their heroes who formed the core of the African background.

Fanon argues that colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grips and emptying the native's brain of all form and content but by some kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it (Ashcroft et al, 1995:154). For Fanon the native intellectuals begin to passionately search for the national culture because of their anxiety to shrink away from the Western culture in which they all risked being swamped. He argues that the native intellectuals, hot headed and with anger in their hearts, relentlessly determined to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people (Ashcroft et al, 1995:155).

Sepamla (1984:106) addresses himself to this question by searching for roots in his poem "IN SEARCH OF ROOTS" in which he provocatively outlines some cultural aspects that black people will have to attend to in order to be conscientised that Africa had a culture too and it was discovered. Sepamla brilliantly achieves this through the use of a series of striking sarcasms. The dominant ideology was that black people never had cosmetics before the arrival of the colonizers. The authorial ideology which is the conscientisation message is that black people did have cosmetics of their own kind. The following lines speak for themselves:

We will have to use animal fat  
and not bother with cosmetics and so on  
(Sepamla 1984:106)

The use of the pronoun "we" throughout this poem is striking because it educates black people to rally together and use the concept of group identity. This is in line with what Biko (2007:74) attempted to achieve through the Black Consciousness philosophy which expressed group pride and the self determination by blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self. Sepamla in lines 3-4 diffuses the dominant ideology that black people are superstitious when they slaughter the beast to perform some cultural ceremonial rituals. These lines speak for themselves:

We will have to spill blood  
Just so that we keep contact with our ancestors (Sepamla 1984:106)

Sepamla's deliberate use of the phrase "spill blood" is striking because it has a provocative tone, thus more poetic than the phrase "slaughter" which is more prosaic. The phrase "spill blood" is provocative because it means to cause the blood to flow, to fall, or to spread especially with a good purpose. The authorial ideology in these lines is that black people use the blood of animals for good religious purposes to communicate with the spirits of their ancestors. In lines 5-6 Sepamla diffuses the dominant ideology that before the arrival of the colonialist black people had no method of measuring time. The remark that the white man's instrument of measuring time is hurting black people's wrist is striking because it registers a critical tone about a white man's watch. This is evident in these lines:

we will have to read time from the sun

and stop hurting our wrists

(Sepamla 1984:106)

Sepamla expresses a critical point of view of a white man's beer when he makes an allusion to "potent spirits and things". Sepamla's use of innuendo in this phrase is striking because it displays his brilliant artistic poetic creativity. The reader is challenged to piece through the meaning of the phrase "potent spirits and things". The word "potent" suggest that the white man's beer is very powerful, forceful or strong. Sepamla's choice of the word is meant to conscientise the reader that the white man's beer is unhealthy for black people's consumption. The persona is so disgusted that he does not want to specify the other white man's food stuff that he chooses to call them "things" The following lines are self-explanatory:

we will have to drink home beer

and give up potent spirits and things

(Sepamla 1984:106)

One of the motives behind the poetry of Sepamla, Gwala, Mtshali and Serote was to conscientise the black readers that black people have a culture too. Mtshali (1971:9) in his poem "INSIDE MY ZULU HUT" uses a tone of praise to conscientises his readers that black people also have their own kind of architecture, decorations, utensils and heating mechanisms. The dominant ideology that Mtshali is diffusing through this poem is that black people never had any scientific knowledge. The way a Zulu hut is built displays both technical and scientific skills that black people possess. Mtshali's use of striking metaphors gives this poem the feel of African praise poetry.

It is striking that in lines 1-4 Mtshali describes the inside of a Zulu hut in relation to African landscape because he evokes in black people nostalgic emotions for their land as well as for their cultural traditions. These lines read:

it is a hive  
without any bees  
to build the walls  
with golden bricks of honey.

(Mtshali 1971:9)

In the above lines Mtshali's poetic artistic creativity is displayed in his use of run-on lines to highlight the hugeness of the inside of his Zulu hut. The phrase "It is a hive" is a metaphor comparing a Zulu hut to a bee house. This metaphor serves to conscientise the readers that a Zulu hut is not just a place where people sit and rest but that it is also a place where many people work hard as a team like bees in a hive. The inside of a Zulu hut is described as the opposite of the western town house because there is nothing glamorous in it, but there are working tools and instruments.

The allusion to traditional Zulu tools is intended to conscientise the readers about the existence of traditional tools. This is important because the tools are unknown to the colonizer and likely to be forgotten by black people especially by those who live in towns and cities. The tools are mentioned in the following lines:

A cave cluttered  
with a millstone,  
calabashes of sour milk  
clay pots of foaming beer  
sleeping grass mats  
wooden head rest  
tanned goats skins  
tied with riempies  
to wattle rafters

blackened by smoke  
of kneaded cow dung  
burning under  
the three-legged pot  
on the earthen floor  
to cook my porridge.

(Mtshali 1971:9)

Mtshali's choice of words in this poem is striking because it evokes nostalgic feelings in the black reader's mind. The word "cave" like the word "hive" alludes to the African landscape on which the Zulu hut is built. The black reader is inspired to remember that as an African he has a beautiful land. A cave is a large hole in the side of a hill, cliff or mountain. The use of the word "cluttered" reinforces the idea of a workplace; the inside of a Zulu hut that Mtshali describes is packed with many things. The first thing that the narrator mentions is the millstone. A millstone was used and is still used in some rural areas to crush grain.

A calabash is a traditional container made from tropical plants. Calabashes were used to store sour milk (mass) and many calabashes in a family indicated that the particular family was rich. A calabash is a symbol of African culture. Clay pots are traditional containers made of special clay by specialist craftsmen or craftswoman. Clay pots were very important to black people because they are a cultural symbol and were used to carry and keep water. Clay pots and sleeping mats were also used as traditional gifts during weddings and other cultural ceremonies.

Most black readers can relate to the millstone, clay pots, sleeping or grass mats, wooden headrests, tanned goat skins, cow dung, three-legged pots and an earthen floor because these tools were commonly used in the countryside where most of them grew up. Black readers can identify with these traditional tools. The names of the tools mentioned in the poem could also remind the readers about their roots. It can make them realise that they too have a culture they can call their own and be proud of. This kind of conscientisation is important because it could open up channels of solidarity among all black people, a solidarity that the Black Consciousness Movement called for amongst black people.

Even though this poem is a straightforward description of the inside of a typical Zulu hut with the aim to share some information with the readers; it is remarkable that whatever the speaker says in his description of a Zulu hut, it is the opposite of a typical Western house in terms of both architecture and the kinds of tools that can be found inside the houses.

In the poem "THE BIRTH OF SHAKA" Mtshali (1971:12) conscientise his black readers that they once had a powerful king that they need to be proud of. The conscientisation message here is that, since black people once had powerful leaders like King Shaka they had every reason to believe that they could win the battle in their struggle for liberation.

Mtshali brilliantly uses metaphor to build the artistic quality of this poem because throughout this poem written in the form of a praise-poem, Shaka is described as a powerful animal. Biko (2007:32) argues that Black Consciousness aimed to correct the distorted history of the oppressed, to seek to rewrite the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the African background. The oppressors of the black people were on one hand frightened by the picture of King Shaka while on the other hand the picture inspires black readers to love and to be proud of their history.

Mtshali displays his artistic poetic creativity in stanza 1 by using run-on-lines. The use of run-on lines conscientises the reader about the powerful flow of energy in the blood of young Shaka. The allusion to a "cub" is meant to conscientise the readers first of what a "cub" is and secondly that Shaka was a very powerful person at an early age. A "cub" is the young of a particular wild animal that eats meat, such as lions or bears. The challenge of not having a father made him become strong and courageous.

The allusion to Shaka tearing the neck of the "lioness" suggests that as a baby Shaka was so energetic that his movements were rough and violent when his mother held him in her hands trying to feed him or when bathing him. It will appeal to the women readers that Shaka's mother is alluded to as a lioness in this poem. The reference to young Shaka as being close to his mother conscientises readers about the cultural role of women in black communities in raising children.

The imagery of "gods" in stanza 2 line 7 refers to the ancestral spirits. The readers are conscientised that black people believe in the existence of the ancestral spirits. Most black people strongly believe that the ancestral spirits have a major role to play in the everyday lives of those who are still living. In the case of this poem the ancestors had a role to play in preparing the unborn Shaka for the challenges that he had to face in his life. This is evident in the following lines:

The gods  
boiled his blood  
in a clay pot of passion  
to course in his vein.

(Mtshali 1971:12)

In the above lines the readers are educated about a clay pot which is a traditional Zulu pot. The readers are also conscientised that traditionally for black people, cooking meant boiling. In lines 11-12 the readers are conscientised about an ox-shield. The dominant ideology was that a shield was something that was used for protection. A shield was used by soldiers in the past or by police officers. An ox-shield in particular is viewed as one of the important symbols of protection by black people. King Shaka is often portrayed as carrying an assegai and an ox-shield in pictures in found in history books. It is interesting therefore to note that the speaker in this poem suggests that Shaka's heart was shaped like an ox-shield. This is meant to conscientise the readers that Shaka was a symbol of hope and protector of black people.

In Stanza 4 Mtshali demonstrate his deep understanding of trees, thorns and instruments to conscientise his readers that Shaka was strong and healthy. His muscles were as strong as steel; this idea is expressed in the words: "forged", "thongs", and "wattle bark". The word "forge" suggest that something is made with some difficulty. Most black readers who grew up in the countryside can relate to thongs. Thongs are narrow pieces of leather used to fasten something or as part of a whip. Thongs are very strong and not easily broken. The wattle trees are commonly found around Vryheid, the place where Mtshali grew up. A reference to wattle bark and to syringa thorns will appeal to black people who live in the countryside.

In stanza 5 Mtshali displays his skill in choosing concise expressions by using the imagery of powerful "lanterns" in lines 20-21 to refer to the eyes of Shaka. This imagery serves to conscientise readers that Shaka was able to foresee the future. This presentation of Shaka's eyes as powerful like lanterns, conscientises the readers that Shaka was a clever and visionary king who predicted problems before they actually happened. The allusion to "dark valleys of Zululand" is a brilliant expression because it creates an idea in the reader's mind that the shining of the "lanterns" looks brighter from a dark background.

The imagery of the white “swallows” that come across the sea is a very striking expression that refers to white people, the colonizers. Through this metaphor Mtshali conscientises his readers that King Shaka predicted the arrival of the white colonizers to Kwa-Zulu. In the last stanza that is made up of a striking couplet, conscientises the reader that King Shaka predicted the oppression of blacks by the white people. He told his killers that even though they could kill him they could never rule Zululand. Here Mtshali tells his readers about the curse put on black people by King Shaka. The conscientisation message in this poem is that black people must stop betraying one another; they must stop killing one another because these crimes will bring a curse on them.

The white readers would have been threatened by this poem since it talks about their prejudice against black people while the black readers would be inspired to rally together to fight for their liberation. Rallying people together was the main aim of the Black Consciousness Movement.

In his poem “A NEWLY-BORN CALF” Mtshali (1971:11), through a series of striking and original comparisons, gives his observation of a calf being born. He describes the birth and the first moments in the life of the calf. Through this poem readers are conscientised about the power and the ability of poetry as a genre that can afford the writer to highlight even very minute details that other forms of literary genres cannot highlight. The conscientisation message in this poem is about the challenges of being weak in the body and having soft tissues. The newly-born calf in this poem is determined to move and fight for its life. In this instance black people were therefore challenged to take a lesson from a newly born calf.

Furthermore this poem conscientises the readers about their cultural background because most black people who grew up in the countryside can agree with his descriptions and be reminded of their cultural back ground. The consciousness raising message in this poem is that culturally black people are self-sufficient because they were close to live stock/animals and the land.

In this poem, Mtshali conscientises his readers about the importance of paying attention to detail. He achieved this by giving a description of a newly-born calf. His descriptions highlight every minute detail of a newly born calf. In line 2 Mtshali’s skill of choosing concise diction is displayed in his use of the striking imagery of “oven baked bread”. This imagery is intended to highlight that the newly-born calf is very warm since it has just been born. The idea that the newly-born calf is warm is also reinforced in the word steaming in line 3; this word conveys the impression of bread so warm that it is sweating and causing vapour to form on its plastic covering.

In lines 4-9 the speaker conscientises his readers about the patience and diligent actions of the cow, the mother of the calf. The imagery of a “shiny coat” in line 5 is striking; it refers to the transparent covering or membrane. The cow cuts this membrane with her tongue, an image that seems to contain a contradiction. The readers are made to wonder how a soft organ like a tongue can “cut”. Mtshali’s brilliant poetic creativity is displayed when he develops this metaphor in the following few lines where the cow’s licking actions are compared with those of a child licking a toffee. Furthermore the tongue of a cow is compared to the pink “sole of a foot” an image which suggests softness and gentleness.

Mtshali’s brilliant poetic output is also displayed in lines 10-12 where he uses striking metaphors to describe the little calf’s swaying movements. The persona states that the legs of the newly-born calf are filled with jelly and custard instead of bone and marrow. This is a beautiful description because it is concise and highlights the shaky and unstable movements of the newly-born calf. In lines 13-15 Mtshali conveys the calf’s movement towards the comfort and nourishment of its mother’s udder. Mtshali’s use of the word “totters” in line 13 indicates the steady steps of the newly-born calf towards its mother’s udder.

Despite its fragile body the newly-born calf is determined to stand and make a move. Through this poem black people are conscientised to do the same, despite their plight they must learn to be confident and determined to carry on with their struggle for liberation. This poem conscientises about the culture of black people because many black people can identify with Mtshali’s description of the newly-born calf.

Biko (2007:50) states that even in a pluralistic society like South African, there are still some cultural traits that black people can boast about which have withstood the process of deliberate bastardisation. In his poem “SOUNDS OF A COWHIDE DRUM” Mtshali (1971:71) sought to conscientise his readers about the importance of a cowhide drum, the cow from which the skin was used to make the drum and most importantly the role of a praise poet in the African society. In this poem Mtshali conscientises the readers that the sounds of a cowhide drum have a more significant role that they could ever imagine. Mtshali’s brilliant artistic poetic creativity is displayed in his use of onomatopoeic expression in line 1 “Boom! Boom! Boom!” which is repeated in lines 6, 11 and 30 to enhance the rhythm of this poem.

The boom-boom sounds of a cowhide drum are a common sound in rural areas especially on Sundays. Mtshali who grew up in Vryheid probably heard this sound in his early years. The black readers, who grew up in the rural areas or where the black Zionist Christian churches are popular,

will easily identify with the sounds of a cowhide drum because this drum is commonly used in the black Zionist church services. Mtshali himself alludes to this in the following lines, lines 27-29 of this poem:

O! Hear me, child!

In the night vigils of black Zionists

lifting their spirits into ecstasy.

(Mtshali 1971:71)

Beside its use for Christian religious purposes a cowhide drum is part and parcel of the African culture as it is beaten at various African traditional ceremonial functions to evoke ancestral spirits. Therefore the beating of a cowhide drum is a symbol of African culture and tradition. When the African people hear the sound of a cowhide drum they are inspired to stand up and dance to its beat, they are inspired to sing along, they are inspired to speak in new strange languages. The sound of a cowhide drum has a very important role to play in African society, therefore when the persona in this poem calls himself a “sound of a cowhide drum”, that conscientise black readers of their beautiful culture that has been bastardised by the arrival of the Anglo-Boer culture.

In line 3 Mtshali’s poetic creativity is displayed in his use of words “rumble” and “roar”. These words are used in a very poetic manner, the word “rumble” suggests that the cowhide drum makes a low continuous sound. While the word “roar” suggests that the cowhide drum makes a long, deep sound. In fact there is a very striking imagery in this line, line 3, “roar as of thunder”. This simile compares the sounds of a cowhide drum to a sudden loud noise after a flash of lightening. Furthermore the word “rumble” in line 3 has another connotation that relates very closely to the apartheid situation in South Africa. Informally, to “rumble” means to discover the true facts about someone or something secret and often illegal. It also means to take part in the physical fight. Spying and fighting was part and parcel of life in apartheid South Africa.

The simile in lines 4 to 5 means to suddenly begin to listen very attentively because you hear something interesting. This suggests that, the sounds of a cowhide drum that the persona is alluding to in this poem, is symbolical one. The idea of the symbolic sounds of a cowhide drum is reinforced in lines 6 to 10 when the speaker states that the sounds held his heart and raised his hopes. The cowhide drum represents the poet and the sound of drum conveys the Black Consciousness message. The cowhide drum is personified as it begins to speak for itself. The following lines, lines 12 to 13 bear testimony to this:

I am the drum on your dormant soul

cut from the black hide of a sacrificial cow.

(Mtshali 1971:71)

Mtshali's use of a dramatic monologue in the above lines displays his brilliant poetic creativity. The speaker started to hear the sounds of a cowhide drum coming from far in the Northern skies and the sounds got nearer and nearer to the Southern skies until it gets very close to the speaker and begins to speak to the speaker or the speaker himself becomes the sound of the cowhide drum. In this stanza the readers are conscientised that the drum is not just an ordinary drum but a very special one because it is a sacrificial drum. It is a sacrificial drum because it is made with the hide of a black cow that was sacrificed to the ancestral spirits that is why it brings messages from ancestral spirits. Biko (2007:37) states that after the banning of the black political parties in 1960, black people were gripped with fear for anything political. Their anger was visible in their faces and actions but it was never verbalized.

The phrase "dormant soul" in line 12 alludes to this fact and points to the need for the conscientisation of black people. The word "dormant" means not to be active or growing but having the ability to be active at a later time. The word "sacrificial" is very emotional because it refers to one who has to suffer because of something that someone else has done. The killing of an animal for ceremonies and offerings to the ancestral spirits is part and parcel of the African culture.

In lines 14 to 17 Mtshali's poetic creativity is displayed when he dramatises his poem by making the spirits speak for themselves as the drum beat goes on and on. The readers are challenged to decipher whether the voice is the voice of the spirits or the voice of the praise poet who represents the voice of the ancestors. This is justified by the belief that exists amongst the African people which teaches that an African praise poet lives in two worlds: the praise poet lives in the world where the living people live and in the spiritual world where the dead or ancestors live. Therefore, according to the belief, the task of a praise poet is that of messenger; he takes messages to and from the ancestors, he connects the two worlds. The sounds of a cowhide drum play a very crucial role in the process of invoking the spirits of the ancestors.

In lines 15 to 17 Mtshali conscientises his readers that the huts that are commonly seen as the homestead of black people are not just houses but they have a cultural and spiritual significance because the ancestral spirits live in the "hallowed huts". It is interesting to note that even though

“Huts” are simple buildings the word “hallowed” suggests that the “huts” are very respected and honoured because of great age or importance. Mtshali conscientises his readers that they were not alone because the ancestral spirits were always watching over them and always ready to protect them. This is foregrounded in the word “vigilant” that suggests that the ancestors are always ready to notice things, especially possible danger.

The belief that exists amongst the African communities teaches that the major task of an African praise poet is to use poetry as a tool to conscientise people about their heritage. In line 18 Mtshali states that the task of an African praise poet is to write or sing about the features belonging to the culture of the people or society that have historical importance. Mtshali sought to conscientise his readers that blacks own a precious heritage of a glorious past which was trampled by the colonizers and the zeal of white missionaries. It shakes the hearts of the people by pointing to their existence. It helps people to challenge beliefs that are taken for granted. The following lines testify to this:

I lay bare facts for scrutiny  
by your searching mind  
all declarations and dogmas

(Mtshali 1971:71)

Mtshali’s diction is concise and this helps to conscientise the readers even with minute details of what he wants to share with his readers. For example the word “facts” in line 21 refers to something which is known to have happened or exist especially something for which proof exists or about which there is information. The word “scrutiny” in line 21 refers to the instance of making detailed careful examination of something in order to obtain information. The word “dogmas” in line 23 refers to fixed especially religious beliefs or sets of beliefs that people are expected to accept without doubt.

In lines 21-23 Mtshali states that the task of an African praise poet is to challenge the people to scrutinize the accepted beliefs. If these “declarations and “dogmas” are carefully examined they may be found full of faults. In lines 24-26 Mtshali seek to conscientise that another cultural role of the African praise poet is to entertain the people through beautiful rhymes and rhythms, thus shaking the hearts of the people into uncontrolled and exited emotions.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter highlighted the messages from the poets that black people could rally together to fight oppression and prejudices against the colour of their skin. Black people are conscientized to operate as a group to find ways to free themselves from the shackles that bound them to perpetual servitude. The analysis has shown that the poets; SSGM conscientize the reader that black people too had a culture of their own, a culture that they could be proud of. The poems depict their culture as a dynamic culture that existed in pre-colonial time and can be found both in rural and urban areas. The poems showed that the black culture is reflected in the lived experiences of black people and in all aspects of their lives.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. POEMS PROBING CHRISTIAN RELIGION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to highlight that one of the motives behind the poetry SSGM was to conscientize the black people that they too had a religion they could call their own and be proud of. This conscientisation message deconstructs the unfounded belief propagated by the white missionaries and the black missionaries that black people were barbarians; and had no religion and no conscience. Biko (2007:102) states that the missionaries were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement which aimed to civilize and educate the savages and introduce the Christian message to them.

This means that the missionaries never thought that black people had a religion of their own and that is why they were on a mission to civilise black barbarians. Biko (2007:49) refutes this belief that Africans had no religion of their own when he asserts that Africans are a deeply religious race. The analysed poems in this chapter affirm the beliefs of Biko with regards to how Africans relate to God. Biko (2007:49) states that Africans are a deeply religious race. They believed in the existence of a God; they had their own community of saints. Africans held that all people who died had a special place next to God. Africans knew nothing about hell. They did not believe that God created people only to punish them eternally after a short period on earth.

Biko (2007:49) states that the white missionaries confused the Africans with their new religion by claiming that theirs was a scientific religion and that the African religion was a superstition. It is from this view that this study argues that the dominant ideology that the poets under study sought to diffuse was that black people had no religion of their own but what they called religion was a mere superstition.

Biko (2007:34) took a very critical view of Christianity; and argued that Christianity (white man's religion) as preached by black ministers was irrelevant because it carried no message for the black people, as these ministers were pre-occupied with moral trivialities. For Biko ministers constantly urged people to find fault in themselves and by so doing distracting them from the essence of the struggle in which the people were involved. Biko argues that black people needed to redefine the message in the Bible and make it relevant to the struggling masses. Biko states that the Bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted.

For Biko the Bible must rather preach that it is a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. He says that the Bible must be shown to have something to say to the black people to keep them going in their long journey towards realisation of the self. Biko (2007:61) criticises Christianity for operating as an ideal religion for the colonisation of people and adds that during the apartheid period it was an ideal religion to maintain the subjugation of black people.

It is from this critical view point of Christianity that Black Consciousness advocated for Black Theology. According to Biko (2007:34) Black Theology sought to do away with spiritual poverty of the black people. It sought to demonstrate the absurdity of the assumption by whites that ancestor worship was necessarily a superstition and Christianity a scientific religion. For Biko, Black Theology was important because it sought to talk to black people in a language that was theirs. He argues that it was only by recognizing the basic set-up in the black world that one could come to realise the urgent need for a re-awakening of the sleeping masses.

According to Biko Black Consciousness sought to re-awaken the sleeping black masses. It is this re-awakening process that this study refers to as conscientisation. This chapter focuses on how the poets studied sought to educate black people that Christianity was not a holy religion as it was presented by white missionaries and some black ministers of religion.

## 5.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSES OF SELECTED POEMS

In his poem titled "A WISH TO EYE GOD" which is written in the form of a dramatic monologue, Serote (1974:41) sought to conscientise his readers about the nature of the relationship between God and the oppressed black person. What is interesting about this poem is that it poses itself as a prayer but while the persona addresses God, the readers are conscientised about his painful situation. The persona who is a writer wants to know from God whether his country could ever be a free country, a country where as a writer he could not write about the appalling socio-political situation faced by black people in South Africa. Mtshali's use of direct speech touches the readers emotionally through the portrayal of painful life he writes about. The following lines are quite emotive:

I will no longer write about people

dying in the street and bleeding through the ears and eyes

and babies suffocating in suitcases in muddy dongas; (Serote 1974:41)

Biko (2007:127) states that conscientisation meant making reference to the conditions of life in which black people lived as discussed by Serote in the above poem. Serote's poetic and artistic creativity is displayed in the manner in which he uses irony in lines 8-12:

Lord,  
I am not pleading or praying  
I am just polite  
choking my shout from rushing out  
I am calm

(Serote 1974:41)

What the persona expresses in the above lines is ironical, how can he say that he is not praying when he speaks to God? Praying can be defined as a means of speaking to God. This is what the persona is doing throughout this poem and this turns his poem into a benediction. It is also ironical that the persona denies that he is pleading because pleading is exactly what he is doing in this poem. Pleading can be defined as a way of making a statement of what one believes to be true especially in support of something.

The word "choking" in line 11 is a very powerful one when read in the context of apartheid South Africa. This word "choking" creates an image of someone who is prevented from breathing, and literary breathing suggests speaking or expressing your personal opinion about something of interest. The persona is "choking" meaning he is being suppressed from expressing his inner feelings about his painful situation. It is this repression that causes him to pretend "politeness" and "calmness". Black Consciousness took a critical stand about black people who pretended calmness and politeness in the height of apartheid repression and suppression. The persona in this poem is verbalizing the anger of black people to God. Biko (2007:37) alludes to the fear that black people had in 1960 after the banning of the black revolutionary movement, he states that anger was visible in their faces and actions but it was hardly verbalized.

In lines 13 to 32 Serote conscientises his readers that the cruelty that is afflicted on black people is so inhumane that even a person who tries so hard to be calm and polite will find it impossible to maintain his calmness and politeness. The persona cites that he was inspired to think about how God would react after hearing a woman shouting at God at a particular funeral. He was also challenged to think about who God is after he attended a funeral of a boy who was stabbed. This

allusion to the persona being challenged to think about God and all the things that some people say about God is intended to conscientise black readers to think about: their relationship with their God, what they see, what they hear and about their lives.

Biko (2007:64) states that no nation can win a battle without faith. As if he is responding to Biko's statement, in his poem titled "GOD IS GOOD", Mtshali (1980:11) seeks to conscientise his readers that despite the hardship they must never stop believing in God. This is evident in the following lines:

In His wholesomeness I adore Him  
In His adorable distance of infinite Space and Time  
which puny man measures in miles, yards, feet and inches  
and then multiplies into seconds, minutes, hours and  
centuries  
of our miserable lives, I still believe  
that God is Good  
(Mtshali 1980:11)

In the last stanza Mtshali displays his poetic genius when he swiftly changes from his theme of strongly believing in the goodness of God. This is evident in his use of the imagery of the "agnostic" that curses an angel in line 30. An agnostic is someone who does not know, or believe that it is possible to know, whether a god exists. Through this allusion Mtshali seeks to conscientise his readers that even though people can claim to believe in the goodness of God, there are times and situations when they find it difficult to believe that God and his angels exist. He points his readers to practical examples: if God and his angels exist, why there is so much propaganda, why bad people are rich and why do angels not put God into the hearts of the bad people.

The use of the American words "automobile" and "gasoline" indicates that Mtshali as poet was careful in his choice of words because when these words are used in this poem they sound poetic. In lines 36-37 the conscientisation message is that rich people cannot take along with them to heaven their earthly treasures. Their wealth will not open the doors of heaven for them.

Mtshali (1980:47-49) in his poem titled BACK TO THE BUSH conscientises his readers that it is not true that black people did not have a religion. The persona in the first part of this poem confronts and demands the truth from someone who is unnamed who later in the poem is discovered to be the Roman Catholic priest. The doctrines and teachings that were propagated by the Roman Catholic Church whose priest forcefully enforced his religion on black people is the dominant religious ideology of the time. The viewpoint at which the speaker in this poem presents this part of history is the authorial ideology. This authorial ideology aligns itself with the ideology of Black Consciousness. Biko (2007:103) argues that missionaries confused people with their new religion by scaring them with stories of hell and painting their God as a demanding God who wanted worship or else. Black people had to discard their clothes and customs in order to be accepted in this new religion. The poetic genre through which Mtshali expresses his opinion is the aesthetic ideology. According to Mtshali black people and their children were indoctrinated and coerced into accepting the Christian religion. This is evident in the following lines:

Tell me truth  
I am tired of your lies.  
I heard them when I was young;  
they still ring in my ears  
like that rusty bell  
from the Church of the Queen of Angels  
in the small township of Kwa-Bhanya.  
I can still hear those tintinnabulations  
touch the tinned heart in my chest,  
sending fears of hell fire  
down the profligate souls from the village.  
I can still hear swipes of the reed cane  
as the priest lashed the buttocks  
of the young truants,

who had stayed away from Mass on Sunday,  
because they had no decent clothes.

(Mtshali 1980:47)

Biko (2007:60) states that the people amongst whom Christianity was spread in order to cast away their indigenous clothing, their customs, and their beliefs which were all described as being pagan and barbaric. Mtshali testifies to this in the following lines:

when father Cockerel said Mass  
every child had to attend,  
every villager had to discard his tatters  
and put on his Sunday best;  
the converted 'heathens' had to stop  
wearing nothing,  
or throw away their animal skins,  
and then enter the temple of God properly dressed  
in starched shirts and blue serge.  
Those who did not obey this order  
had the Gates of Heaven slammed in their faces,  
because nakedness was a sin in front of Father  
Cockerel  
and of course in the eyes of the Lord.

(Mtshali 1980:47)

The persona questions and rejects the tendency of Father Cockerel to force all members of the villages to attend the Catholic Mass. Biko (2007:49) points that, it was illogical for Africans to have a particular building in which all worship would be conducted. As it has been shown above, in this poem the persona outlines and questions the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. In the lines

above, the speaker did not confront Father Cockerel directly. In the following lines Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by using the apostrophe; the persona addresses an absent Father Cockerel. The following lines are extremely forceful and they can conscientise black readers that even in the face of suppression there can be a possibility of self-assertion:

Now, Father Cockerel, wherever you are  
I fling this argument at your feet.  
I hold my sword for a verbal duel  
because you put me in this miasma of conflicting beliefs  
and left me utterly confused.

(Mtshali 1980:47)

Biko (2007:59) states that where people were subjected to a religion that was removed from their cultural make; elements of disgruntlement began to be noted and sometimes open defiance was soon displayed. The persona in this poem is so fearlessly assertive to the extent that he confronts the white priest to admit his wrongs and ask for forgiveness from the persona – the persona in this poem is a black person. This part of the poem appealed more to black readers as it reminded them that they had power to set the white colonialist free. These lines forcefully conscientise the white priest to admit his wrong:

Admit your wrong if you may;  
I will pardon you and give you  
an absolute dispensation.

(Mtshali 1980:47)

Biko (2007:63) affirms the above confrontation when he points out that the Catholic Church with its dozens of dogmas either has to adjust to a changing world or risk the chance of losing its young constituency. The readers are conscientised about the bias of the colonial religious ideology when the Catholic Church priest forced black people to stop performing their traditional, cultural rituals and ceremonies. Biko (2007:32) states that the colonial apartheid system considered African practices and customs as superstition and therefore something that had to be discarded with contempt. This is expressed in the following lines:

You told me not to slaughter  
the black ox for my ancestors  
and not to wear its hide  
which I tanned into a beshu.  
Instead you taught me how to chop  
and pluck a Christmas turkey  
because all civilised people do that  
You told me that people  
who wear beshu are barbarians,  
and those who smear their faces  
with ochre are savages.

(Mtshali 1980:47)

The allusion to the actions of Father Cockerel who was driven by wrath is striking because one cannot expect a servant of God to be controlled by wrath. He was supposed to be driven by virtues like love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. The imagery of “brimstone wrath” is striking because it highlights that Father Cockerel’s anger directed at his black congregation was too extreme. In the following lines Mtshali uses very emotional language to conscientise his readers that the Christian religion used cruel methods to convert people and that it had double standards:

What happened to the reed cane you lashed us with?  
You took out your brimstone wrath on  
Our poor, innocent, Black bottoms, Father Cockerel;  
but you leave your fellow godless creatures  
to streak along the streets with glee.  
I accept your double standards, Father Cockerel.

(Mtshali1980:49)

According to Biko (2007:64) Christianity was too abstract and in order for it to be applicable to black people it had to have something to say about their oppression. In this poem Mtshali sought to educate his readers that Christianity as it was presented to the black people by the missionaries was irrelevant and it alienated the black people.

In the last stanza of this poem he conscientises his black readers that they can only be completely free if they return to their own traditional religion by wearing traditional clothing (dashiki or bhesu), slaughtering a beast, drink its blood and bathe with its bile to connect with the ancestral spirits. The persona believes that following the African traditional religion would help to keep black people fortified with Black Power. This is evident in the following lines:

I will put on my dashiki or bhesu.

Comb my hair in a bushy style.

When you hear the black goat bleat,

know that I have cut its throat,

drunk its blood as a sacrifice,

bathed myself with its bile

so that I will forever

stay fortified with Black Power

(Mtshali 1980:49)

In the poem titled "A VOICE FROM THE DEAD", Mtshali (1971:17) informs his readers that black people had a religion of their own which is different from the Christian religion. The Christian religion believes in the existence of the community of saints and angels who act as messengers of God to man. The African traditional religion considers the ancestral spirits as mediators between God and the living.

Biko (2007:49) argues that black people had their own community of saints. All people who died had a special place next to God. Biko argues that blacks knew nothing about hell. He adds that black people did not believe that God could create people only to punish them eternally after a short period on earth. In this poem the persona diffuses and rejects the ideology of the existence of heaven. He argues that Heaven is in the heart of a person.

The persona deconstructs the ideology of God as an old man with a snow-white beard. He argues that God can manifest himself as a cripple beggar in the street. The persona also deconstructs the ideology of the existence of hell by pointing out that Hell is the hate in the heart of a person. Mtshali's artistic creativity is displayed in his choice of writing style. The dialogue format that Mtshali uses gives this poem a striking witty tone that challenges the reader to change the way he perceives the notion of the existence of heaven, hell and God.

Biko (2007:61) states that Christianity operates as an ideal religion for the colonisation of people, and during the apartheid period it was an ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of black people. Mtshali (1971:20) confirms this idea in his poem titled AN OLD MAN IN CHURCH. Mtshali uses the narrative to relate a story of an old man who in stanza 1 works long hours in a factory to boost the profit of his master. In line 2 Mtshali's poetic creativity is displayed in his use of the metaphor of "machine working at full throttle". This imagery is striking because it conscientises the readers that the old man is controlled in the same manner as the machine is controlled. Through this imagery Mtshali sought to tell the readers that the old man was treated by his master as if he had no feelings. Line 5-6 is very emotive in the sense that it informs the readers that the old man is over-worked so much that the work load at times prevents him from going to church. The imagery of the spiritual batteries being recharged in line 6 is effective and reinforces the idea introduced in line 2 that the old man is treated like an inanimate object.

In stanza 2 Mtshali informs the reader that the old man comes from a poor background because his church does not have a velvet-cushioned pew. Therefore the old man has to kneel on a dirty floor when he is praying. Mtshali uses emotive words and phrases in order to conscientise the readers about the conditions under which this old man had to pray to his God. In fact according to Mtshali this old man does not pray but he whispers into God's ear.

In line 9 the phrase "He falls on raw knees" conscientises that the old man is a poor person who wears a pair of trousers that has holes on the knees. His knees are dirtied by the floor that has no tiles or carpet. This suggests that his knees are things that need to be pitied because they are badly damaged. Mtshali uses very striking imageries in lines 11-12, when he describes how the old man prays as if he hits the heart of God with screams as hard as stones. This conscientises the readers to the fact that the old man's heart is full of pain and his prayers are articulations of harsh words to God. The comparison of the heart of the old man to a slingshot is a brilliant one because it highlights that the soul of the old man is hurting.

The allusion to a gilded communion plate is striking because it contrasts with the poor conditions of the floor and of the rough hands of the old man. The word “gilded” suggests that the communion plate is an expensive one and it belongs to an upper class community. The imagery of the “pond of serenity” is striking because it conscientises the readers that this serenity is an artificial peacefulness. Mtshali has displayed his poetic creativity in his use of the imagery of a “brow rippling with devotion” in line 15. This imagery is intended to conscientise the readers of the fact that the old man was a very loyal person when it came to his religious rituals and activities. This is foregrounded in the line 16 where the narrator points out that the old man is delighted by the movement of the garments worn by the priest.

In line 17 the imagery of the “cracked lips” is striking because again the narrator reminds the readers of the bad conditions of the body of the old man. The narrator remarks that the old man is thirsty, but not just for a drink, but for peace is very powerful remark because it reminds the readers that black people and the country as a whole needed peace. In stanza 3 the narrator focuses himself on the issue of offering. The old man is expected to give more money because when he “sneaks” a cent piece into the collection plate the acolyte disapproves it. This is evident in the following lines:

the old man sneaks in a cent piece  
that raises a scowl on the collector's face  
whose puckered nose sneezes at such poor generosity

(Mtshali 1971:20)

Mtshali's creative use of words is displayed in his choice of the word “sneaks”. This word is striking because it conscientises the readers that the old man is ashamed of the small amount of money that he puts into the offering plate. The word “fiery” in line 24 it symbolises anger therefore it is striking because it indicates that the preacher as well is not impressed by the offering of the old man. In this poem readers are educated that during apartheid era, Christianity promoted meekness instead of boldness and activism. In line 25 Mtshali shows this by making a biblical allusion taken from Mathew 5 verse 5 NIV Bible “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”. This is the verse that was used to support this ideology. Biko (2007:63) believes that this issue made Christianity too much of a “turn on the other cheek” religion whilst addressing itself to a destitute people.

The imagery Mtshali uses throughout this poem educates the readers about the poor living conditions under which the black people in general lived. This poem conscientises that Christianity supported the apartheid regime in South Africa by preaching that meekness is a blessing. It is from

this view that Biko (2007:104) advocated that the Black Theology had to find ways to relate God and Christ once more to the black man and his daily problems. For Steve Biko the Black Theology described Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God who allows a lie to rest.

Mtshali (1971:44) displays his creative power of imagination in his poem titled AT HEAVEN'S DOOR. He seeks to conscientise his readers about various responses that a black person might get when he reached the heaven's door. The speaker in this poem seeks to conscientise the readers that Christianity is irrelevant to black people and their problems. The persona wonders whether there is something wrong in heaven or on earth. The imagery of the "upstairs" is striking because it carries a provocative tone. In the following lines the persona deconstructs the Christian religious ideology of heaven as a perfect place.

Something  
is not right  
there upstairs,  
maybe the wrong  
is down here.

(Mtshali 1971:44)

In Stanzas 2- 4 the persona point to the reason why he thinks that there must be something wrong either in heaven or on earth. If the relationship between him and his God is right he would call to God and he would hear and respond to his call. But the persona points that there is only silence, he cannot even see the angels peering through the curtains. It is through these remarks that Mtshali sought to conscientise the readers to reflect in order to find out whether the ideology of the existence of God, heaven and angels is true.

If it is true that there is God, heaven and angels the question that these lines raise is, why there is no clear communication between the black people and their God. Steve Biko (2007:64) succinctly argues that if the faith of black people in their God was spoilt by their having to see God through the eyes of the same people they were fighting against then there obviously was something wrong in that relationship.

In stanza 5 Mtshali conscientizes his reader about the relationship that existed between the rich and poor people, the relationship was that of master and slave. As a black person this is the kind of language he was familiar with no wonder he called God the Master. The fact that the persona

expects the angels to decide for him whether he should enter heaven from the front or the back entrance conscientises the readers that Christianity teaches black people to be passive and expect other races to take decisions for them.

Biko (2007:34) deconstructs the Christian church and its interpretation of the Bible. He argues that the Bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. For Biko the Bible must rather preach that it was a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed.

In the poem titled RIDE UPON DEATH CHARIOT Mtshali (1971:64) brilliantly displays his creative power of imagination. This poem is a parody about the Christian story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; through it Mtshali sought to inform his reader that, like Jesus black people too suffered under the apartheid regime. In stanza 1 the imagery of "Golgotha" is striking because it is a place of suffering the mountain where Jesus Christ was crucified. In this poem "Golgotha" can be seen to symbolise South Africa because it is a place of suffering for black people.

The reference to "three vagrants" reminds the readers of Jesus and the two sinners that were crucified with him. The word "vagrants" refers to people who are poor and who do not have a home or job. The word "vagrants" will conscientise the readers of the fact the majority of black people in South Africa are homeless and jobless. In the context of South Africa during the apartheid era the "three vagrants" can generally be seen to represent political prisoners.

The reference to papers that were meant to remind the reader about legal papers such as passbooks and special permits that black people had to carry to avoid being arrested. The South African white government forced black people to carry their identification documents at all times and these documents had to be valid in terms of the apartheid law. In line 5 the imagery of the "Caesar's empire" symbolises the South African apartheid regime. The imagery of the "centurion" symbolises the South African security of the apartheid state. The "death chariot" which also refers to as a "mobile tomb" symbolises the South African police van.

In line 10 the simile "as airtight as canned fish" is striking because it suggests that the people of South Africa were oppressed and suppressed. Mtshali's use of the third person pronoun "we" is striking because it dramatises the poem as the three vagrants begin to speak for themselves. The pronoun "we" also symbolises the voices of the majority of the oppressed black people. It is this pronoun "we" that makes stanza 3 to be very forceful. These lines that constitutes stanza three speaks for themselves:

We're hot!

We're thirsty!

We're hungry!

(Mtshali 1971:64)

In the above lines Mtshali sought to conscientise his readers that black were suffocating and were prevented from expressing their feelings. They longed for peace- because they were thirsty and hungry for peace in their country. Mtshali informs the readers that the apartheid government was an army state. This is evident in Mtshali choice of vocabulary that indicates the presence of the army. The words: "Caesar", "centurion" and "lance". Julius Caesar was a well known Roman army officer who was good in fighting and conquering other nations. The centurion is an officer in the army of ancient Rome who was responsible for 100 soldiers. The lance is a long thin pole with sharp point which soldiers used in the past as a weapon when riding horses.

In stanza 6 Mtshali conscientises his readers that women played an important role in the struggle for the liberation of black people in South Africa. The reference to the woman washing the faces of the vagrants in lines 22-23 conscientises that woman are caring people. The reference to a woman carrying bread and tea portrays the nurturing role of the women. The states that constitute line 26 "we're dying" red from the apartheid context are a very powerful statement. It represents the voice of blacks who were killed in black on black violence and by the South African security system.

In his poem titled THE BIRTH OF OUR DAUGHTER 28:2:69 Mtshali (1971:18) also sought to conscientise black people that even though the arrival of the new baby brought joy to the parents it brought mixed feelings during apartheid. The straight forward reference to a woman's womb and to the male sperm is striking because it shows that the poet is able to express himself fearlessly. This is evident in the following lines:

She came unheralded

but a welcome guest.

There she lay

a bundle of our jubilation

whose soul fire

I kindled  
in her mother's womb  
with my God-given sperm  
We never stopped  
to ponder whether  
her coming was opportune.

(Mtshali 1971:18)

In stanza 4 the speaker asserts that the parents are collaborators with God in the creation of new human being. He argues that the role of parents is to raise children by instilling truth and morals in a world where there is no love and truth. It is from this view that Mtshali conscientise his readers that the task of the parents is to protect the children from being indoctrinated by religion. This is evident in the following lines:

We two parents,  
being little helpers  
of the creator,  
took on the task  
of bringing her up  
honest and moral  
in a world where  
Love and Truth  
are sugar-coated words  
offered to Sunday school children (Mtshali 1971: 18)

Biko (2007:108) states that one of the basic tenants of Black Consciousness is the totality of involvement. In his poem titled JUST A PASSERBY Mtshali (1971:56) conscientises his readers about the violence that happens in black townships. He asserts that it is wrong to hide behind religion when one is expected to be involved in the liberation struggle. In stanza 1 Mtshali gives a vivid

picture of how a black person is attacked. The brilliant choice of words in this stanza is what makes this poem a poem.

In line 1 Instead of using the word “hit” Mtshali uses the word “clobber”. The word “clobber” is more emotive because it means to hit hard and repeatedly. That is what the attackers were doing to their victim in this poem. Mtshali uses the word “scream” instead of the word “cry” because the word scream is more emotive. The word “scream” gives a picture that the victim was in a very severe pain. The phrase “victim of slaughter” is more effective because conscientises that the victim was innocent and was unable to defend himself from his attackers. The phrase “blood gush” is effective because it informs the reader of the copious amounts of blood that flowed from the victim’s body.

In stanza 2 the reader may find it is ironical that even though the speaker is a Christian he is not moved into defending the victim. A true Christian is expected to defend justice by being kind and gentle to the victim. The prayer of the speaker is ironical because contradicts the teachings of Christianity. The following lines bear testimony to this:

‘Lord! I love you

I also love my neighbour. Amen.’

(Mtshali 1971:56)

This kind of prayer represents the prayer that some black people said during apartheid. Mtshali incorporates this prayer into this poem in order to pinpoint to his reader that many people who claimed to be Christians during apartheid the time were hypocrites. They were insensitive to the needs of the suffering black people whereas their Christian duty called them to do so. In stanza 3 Mtshali conscientise his readers that most people used prayer as a means of defence mechanism. It was a means of relieving themselves from the guilty consciousness of having been indifferent to the harsh realities faced by black people. This is evident in the following striking simile:

I came out

my heart as light as angel’s kiss

on the cheek of a saintly soul.

(Mtshali 1971:56)

In stanza 4 Mtshali's choice of the word "strutted" is striking because it suggests that having delivered his guilty conscience through prayer the speaker becomes proud. The word "strutted" is concise because it gives a picture of a person who walks in a proud way trying to look important. The fact that some people are described as the "crowd of onlookers" conscientises the reader that most black people were not willing to involve themselves in the liberation struggle. This contradicts the teachings of Biko (2007:108) who states that one of the basic tenants of the Black Consciousness was the totality of involvement. In the last two lines lines 18-19 Mtshali warns his readers about the habit of denial that some Christians used as a defence mechanism, they pretended as if they did not see anything when in fact they have seen everything. The use of a rhetorical question in line 18 and the denial that follows it is striking. This is caused by Mtshali's brilliant use of dramatic effects. The female neighbour and the speaker are speaking for themselves:

Have you heard? They've killed your neighbour.'

'O! No! I heard nothing. I've been to church.'

(Mtshali 1971:56)

In his poem titled THIS KID IS NO GOAT Mtshali (1971:24-25) seeks to conscientise his readers that there is a remarkable apathy amongst the youth in South Africa. The youth have lost all the hope of attaining freedom because they were jailed for taking part in the incident that took place in Sharpeville. Or they were frightened by the intensive repression that followed after the Sharpeville massacre. He also points that some have decided to go to exile and some have decided to overseas for study purposes. In fact Mtshali conscientises that the youth had become more and more removed from the realities faced black people in South Africa. This is emphasized in the use of the "gone" repeatedly from line 4-6. This is registered in the following lines:

Where have

All the angry young men gone

Gone to the Island of Lament for Sharpeville

Gone overseas on scholarship

Gone up North to milk and honeyed uhuru

Gone to the dogs with the drink of despair.

(Mtshali 1971:24)

In stanza 2 and 3 the feeling that the young people have become more intellectual therefore far removed from the low class people is again expressed through a number of allusions to their behaviour. The young people spend more time in the bookstore. The imagery of “foraging for the food for thought” in line 8 is striking and alludes to the fact the young people concentrated on getting more intellectual knowledge. Mtshali emphasizes this idea by listing some of their favourite scholars. The aim for Mtshali was to conscientise the readers that the young people in South Africa during the time of the writing of this poem were complacent. This is evident in the following lines:

Yesterday I met one in a bookstore:

He was foraging for food for thought

From James Baldwin, Le Rio Jones,

Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre.

(Mtshali 1971:24)

An allusion to “faded jeans” and “heavy sweater” in line 11 can be read as a connotation that the youth had lost the sharpness of the mind or had become brunt when it came to socio-political matters. The speaker blames this to the kind of education that was offered by mission schools to black pupils. The imagery of the “rosary” is striking because it suggests that some people have placed their hope in the Christian religion.

This is contrary to Biko’s (2007:102) criticism of the Christian religion which was the vanguard of the colonisation movement to civilise and educate the savages and introduced the Christian message to them. Biko strongly argues that what religion brought was foreign to the black indigenous people. In stanza 4 Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by being sarcastic and witty. He makes an allusion to “Life University” whose lecture rooms were shebeens, hospital wards and prison cells. In actual life there is no University called Life University.

The reference to Life University is meant to conscientise the readers that lived life experience taught the young people to become indifferent of the painful situation that was faced by black people during the apartheid era. In order to try and cope with the pain of life many black youth resorted to drink liquor, commit crime and many of caught diseases. Mtshali seeks to conscientise his readers that the youth at the time of writing this poem they lived a life that was based on illusion. In stanzas 5 starting from line 23 to the last stanza, which is stanza 7 Mtshali again displays his brilliant poetic creativity by dramatizing the poem. This helps to give this poem a forceful tone as the youth speaks for himself. The ambivalent feeling that the youth is going through is registered in lines 23-32:

I can't be black and straight  
In this crooked white world!  
If I tell the truth  
I'm detestable.  
If I tell lies  
I'm abominable.  
If I tell nothing  
I'm unpredictable.  
If I smile to please  
I'm nothing but an obsequious sambo.  
(Mtshali 1971:24)

In stanza 3 Mtshali conscientises his readers about why jazz became popular amongst the black youth during the apartheid era. Instead of going to church most black people resorted to listening and playing jazz music in order to relieve themselves of the stress brought by the apartheid. It is interesting that speaker makes allusion to black jazz artists because this is in line with the teachings of Black Consciousness which promoted the black cultural expressions. Biko (2007:46-47) states that music in African culture feature in all emotional states. He argues that any suffering that the black people experienced was made more real by song and rhythm. In lines 36-41 Mtshali displays his power of imagination to highlight the reason why the speaker has stopped to go church. The imageries: "withered tree", "decaying pulpit tree", "gust of doubt and scepticism" are striking sarcastic as, they highlight that the sermons offered in Christian churches as inappropriate and irrelevant to him as a black person.

Biko (2007:61) confirms the idea that sermon of the black ministers is irrelevant when he states that the black minister had to stop standing on the pulpit every Sunday to heap loads of blame on black people in townships for thieving, house-breaking stabbing, murdering, adultery etc. Biko argues that the black ministers need to relate the vices to poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, lack of schooling and migratory labour.

In the last stanza Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by satirizing the idea of dying and going to heaven. In doing so Mtshali deconstructs the idea of basic ideology that informs the Christian doctrine. The speaker in a satirical tone expresses his doubt about the existence of another place called heaven when he points that he does not want to go to heaven when he dies. But he wants to have his heaven here on earth while he is still alive. Mtshali displayed his poetic creativity by making a sarcastic allusion to Houghton and Parktown, mansions and a smiling servant as the heaven.

It is through this sarcasm that Mtshali conscientises his readers that those white people who live in these suburbs are enjoying the heaven while on earth. Mtshali is provocatively raising a question, why can't the black people have their heaven while on earth too like the white people? The black readers were more likely to support this question and likely to be motivated into looking at their subject positions in a more critical view.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed a selection of poems that conscientize the reader about their own religion. The analysis revealed that the poems constitute a critique of the Christian religion as preached by the white missionaries to black people. The poets do not reject Christianity as such but they argue along the lines of Black Consciousness philosophy that; Christianity was irrelevant to black people and their socio-political problems. In this instance black people are therefore informed to look at Christianity from a deeper level so that they could revolutionize it and make it relevant to their own plight.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. POEMS PROBING EXPLOITATION

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reveals that the poets sought to probe and reflect on the life and experience of the black working class in South Africa. The poets achieve this by making allusions through narration, detailed description, satirical and taunting poetic form. The poems reflect the conflict and antagonistic relationship between black workers who are presented as being exploited by white employers. This confirms the validity of the Marxist thinkers that literature reflects the socio-historical reality that has a dialectical shape (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:172).

The Marxist theory of literature advocates that literature reflects the superstructure from which it stems. It reflects the struggle between those who have-, the capitalist class and those who have-not, the proletarian class. The poetry of SSGM reflects that South African ruling class/capitalist “bourgeoisie” owned and controlled the forces of production while the working class “proletariat” who were propertyless because they did not own or control any of the forces of production had to sell their labour to the ruling class (Althusser 1971:127-128).

Marxism calls this an economic base or infrastructure of society. The Base-Superstructure of a given society is made up of “forces of production” and “relations of production”. In a capitalistic society people relate to one another according to their relation to the prevalent forces of production. From the economic base emerges a superstructure. The superstructure consists of certain definite forms of social consciousness, which is what Marxism designates as ideology. Literature reflects the ideology of the time in which it was written. According to Eagleton (1976:5-6):

Art, then, is for Marxism part of the ‘superstructure’ of society. It is (with qualifications we shall make later) part of a society’s ideology-an element in that complex structure of social perception which ensures that the situation in which one social class has power over the others is either seen by most members of the society as ‘natural’ or not seen at all. To understand literature, then, means understanding the total social process of which it is part.

The poems selected for analyses in this chapter have one thing in common, they all conscientise the readers that the majority of black people were exploited as labourers and in many other various ways during apartheid. Biko (2007:97) affirms this over the question of power in South African politics which he states was introduced for economic reasons. He points that the leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that the whites

could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences.

For Biko (2007:30) what made the problem faced by the black people even more complex was the fact that the apartheid was tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation and deliberate oppression. In order to justify this position Biko provocatively states that the logic behind white domination was to prepare black people for the subservient role in the country. In the poems the poets SSGM sought to probe this issue with the aim of telling people to take some action to challenge their exploitative work conditions.

## 6.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED POEMS

In his poem titled SONG OF MOTHER AND CHILD Sepamla (1984:64-65) conscientises his readers that the exploitation of the black man on the gold mines did not only have a negative impact on the black man per se but it also had a negative effects on his family as well. Badsha and Wilson (1986:42) argue that the gold mines, which employ over half a million men, more that 97 percent of black workers are prevented by law from living with their families.

In stanza 1 Sepamla's brilliant poetic creativity is displayed in his use of irony by alluding to the lament of a mother and child a song. It is interesting to note that stanza 1 reads more like a prose and it serves as an introduction of this poem by explaining the them and the intention of this poem. It is also ironical that the man spoken of in this poem left his family in search of wealth but instead he grew old as a poor man.

Sepamla educates his reader that the man did not become rich because he worked for the mine owners not for himself. The conscientisation message in stanza 1 is that black people did not benefit from the mining business even though they were the ones who actually did the manual work by extracting the gold from underground. The gold mines only benefited the white mine owners.

There is a remarkable shift from stanza 2 to the last to stanza 14. The words "Oh!" and "O" that are used repeatedly throughout these stanzas and informs the readers that the speakers in this poem are not singing but crying with strong emotion. The word "Oh!" can be viewed to express disappointment, sadness, anger and annoyance.

In line 5-6 the allusion to the clashing of cow-hide shields and to the clattering of spears is meant to conscientise the readers that black people tried hard to defend themselves from the whites who came to their land to subjugate, conquer, dispossess and alienate them. The word "limbo" in line 7

conscientise the readers that after the white settlers used violent force to dispossess black people who were left in a state of uncertainty.

In stanza 3 Sepamla displays his creative power of imagination by alluding to the ashes entombed in the abyss of things and singing. This educates the readers that even though the father was dead his soul did not have peace because he died while working on the gold mines. It is from this context that the word “singing” in this poem is used metaphorically to mean weeping. The imagery of “ashes” is striking and suggests that working in the gold mines physically destroyed the bodies of the labourers.

The phrase “abyss of things” in line 11 highlights the marginalisation, alienation and exploitation of black workers in the gold mines. These factors reduce their humanity. The word abyss highlights the fact that the oppressive situation faced by the black people seems to have no ending or seems to be inevitable.

In stanzas 4, 7, 10 and 14 Sepamla’s artistic creativity is displayed in using striking parallelisms, refrains and repetitions as he switches smoothly from English to isiZulu. The following lines that have been refrained and paralleled in various parts of this poem help to give this poem an African mood. But most importantly these lines convey a nostalgic tone that creates a concern in the heart of black readers as they are reminded of how their forefathers were exploited in white owned gold mines. In fact the speakers are weeping in these lines. This is evident in the following lines:

hay’ hay’ igoli igoli

hay’ hay’ igoli igoli

(Sepamla 1984:64)

And stanza 14 reads:

Igoli igoli igoli

(Sepamla 1984:65)

The above line can be loosely translated into English as:

oh! oh! the place of gold the place of gold

oh! oh! the place of gold the place of gold

And stanza 14 can be loosely translated into English as:

place of gold place of gold place of gold

(Translation by: author)

Biko (2007:31) argues that the black man has lost his manhood and personality. Biko's idea is affirmed in stanza 5 where Sepamla uses a very striking imagery of the "living dead" to highlight the view that black men are paralysed, useless and completely dehumanised. In fact a "living dead" is the period in which people suffer a lot. In lines 17-19 the speaker asserts that the suffering that the men in the poem are going through makes them to become nostalgic of the glorious past. This longing to return to the glorious past is registered in the stanza 6 where the speaker asserts that there used to be heroes in the past. These heroes could have served as role models for the young people. In line 23 the imagery of "sons-of-yield" is striking because it suggests that black people have given in the struggle for their liberation. This is true because the phrase "sons-of-yield" is used to refer to people who have given up the responsibility for something often because they have been forced to do so.

In stanza 8 the imageries of "scattered seeds" and "sickly soils" are striking because they symbolise the displacement and alienation that characterise the black community. The word "seeds" can be seen to refer to black children or black people that have been displaced and alienated by the system created by the white people. The phrase "sickly soil" can be seen to refer to the black community, the black community is sick because it has been dehumanised by cheap labour recruitment.

Sepamla conscientise his readers about the effects of exploitation on the black people through the use of carefully selected diction. The word "fouled" in line 27 is striking because it suggests that the black community has been polluted by the advent of gold mining. The phrase "indecisive acts" in line 27 is also striking because it suggests that the black man was unable to make clear or good choices and decisions. The following lines affirm the assertions by Biko (2007:29-30) who argues that black people were completely disempowered, completely dehumanized and completely alienated:

where men are put to flight

in the moist dawn

spirits of the dead floating about

in search of fellow-beings.

(Sepamla 1984:64-65)

In stanza 9 once again Sepamla displays his creative use of colourful words to register the idea that the black man has lost his dignity because of cheap labour in gold mines. The imagery of “white fleeting clouds” can be seen to symbolise the dust that came from the gold mines and the smoke that moves fast from the factories. The imagery of “arms in supplication” in line 33 is a striking extended metaphor because it is the subject position of the speakers (mother and child) that makes them to compare the rising dust to the hands raised by a person praying.

Biko (2007:86) states that black people were to blame for allowing the exploitative situation to exist. He argues that powerlessness breeds a race of beggars who smile at the enemy and swear at him in the sanctity of their toilets, who shout baas willingly during the day and call the white man a dog in their buses as they go home. Biko’s view is expressed in Sepamla’s choice of words such as “supplication”, “collard”, and desperation.

The word “supplication” in this stanza is used to express a very deep meaning than just a word prayer. Supplication is the process of asking a god or a person who is in the position of power for something in an anxious way that shows that you do not think that you are very important.

The word “collard” means to catch and hold someone so that they cannot escape and that is what Sepamla suggest about the condition of the black people. Black people are suffocated to the point of death, in fact they are the living-dead. The rhyme, supplication and desperation between line 33 and 34 is striking as it displays Sepamla’s creative talent as a poet. The word “desperation” points to the feeling you have when you are in such a bad situation that you are willing to take risks in order to change it. By alluding to the feeling of desperation Sepamla is conscientising his readers what black people felt through their desperation to effect change.

In lines 35-36 Sepamla once again confirms Biko’s (2007:31) idea that black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. These lines read:

because there are no men here

only the act of gasping

(Sepamla 1984:65)

In his poem titled THE WORK SONG Sepamla (1984: 62-63) educates his readers that black people were the only ones who were exploited in the country. In this poem Sepamla makes it clear to the readers that the black labourers themselves were aware of their exploitation. This is evident in the following lines taken from stanza 1 and 2:

In Commissioner Street  
On the Main Reef Road  
In Prince's Avenue  
Down there where people are  
I've heard the anguish of a chant  
Heard rising into the air  
Like orchestrated screams of a big band  
The harmony of labourer's voice  
Singing:  
abelungu goddamn  
abelungu goddamn  
basibiza bojim  
basibiza bojim  
(Sepamla 1984:62)

Sepamla's allusion to the streets which have colonial names seeks to conscientise the readers of the fact that South Africa was a colonized country. The name of the streets, "Commissioner", "Prince's" avenues symbolises the authority of the colonial masters. In line 4 "Down where people are" Sepamla conscientize his readers that exploitation happens even in the open in the market place. The word "anguish" in line 5 suggests that the labourers' extreme unhappiness is caused by physical or mental suffering. The word "screams" in line 7 suggests that the even though the labourers are singing but in the ears of the speaker their singing carries a tone of a people crying with bitterness. The word "labourer" in line 8 registers the idea that these men are involved in unskilled physical work outside and exposed to the elements of the weather.

On the other hand the phrase "orchestrated screams" in line 7 and the word "harmony" in line 8 suggests that the speaker finds the singing of the labourers entertaining. There is beautiful rhyme and rhythm in the work song despite the difficulty of work that the labourers are doing in the street. The work song gives the labourers sustenance and a feeling of togetherness, it give them more

energy. This confirms Biko's view on the role that music on in the lives of black people. Biko (2007:46-47) states that music in the African culture feature in all emotional states. He argues that when black people go to work they share the burdens and pleasures of the work they are doing through music.

In lines 10-13 Sepamla has borrowed phrases, "abelungu goddamn" "basibiza bojim" from a popular isiZulu work song. These phrases can be loosely translated into English as, "white people are to blame" because "they call us by names like Jimmy or James". It was common during the apartheid era for the white employers to give blacks names of their choice which were convenient to remember and easy to pronounce. Often the names given to blacks by their white employer were short English names like James, John or Jimmy.

Basically the Zulu people do not say "abelungu goddamn" but they say "abelungu ngodamn" but Sepamla's brilliant creative skill in playing with words has been displayed in his modification of this phrase from "ngodamn" a sarcastic English version "goddamn". According to my intuition the word "abelungu" is a Zulu word that comes from the isiZulu word which was coined by King Shaka "abalumbi" which means "people who are good at using witchcraft". King Shaka gave this name to the whites after his observation that they were good at impressing black by introducing various things that were considered tricky and mysterious by the Zulu people.

In stanzas 3, 5, 6 and 7 Sepamla seeks to conscientise the readers about the actual effect of exploitation in the physical bodies of the labourers. In these stanzas the speaker in the poem seems to be observing the street workers at very short intervals because he gives minute details about them. The imagery of "tattered arms" in line14 highlights that the hands of the labourers are badly damaged. The line "The pickaxe leaping, lapping up the ground" shows it moved very fast. The word "thudding" in line 17 suggests that the pickaxe is a heavy instrument and it produces a rhythmic heavy sound as it hits the earth. In line 1 the phrase "stubborn earth" conscientizes the reader that digging the surface of earth was very hard. Exposure and hard work affected their health as the sound of their voices become rough. This is highlighted by words "hoarse", "coarse" and "croaking". In line 17 the phrase "croaking pleas" informs the reader that hard labour was to blame for their suffering. In fact the main message of their song is that white people are to blame because they call black people with different white names. This message is refrained in stanzas 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 and it reads as a chorus of their songs:

abelungu goddamn

abelungu goddamn

basibiza bojim

basibiza bojim

(Sepamla 1984:62-63)

The phrases “Men have ambled” in line 27, “Bones creaking” in line 28, “Bodies reeking” in line 30 are very emotive because they conscientise the reader that the work had a very negative effect on the bodies of the labourers. The word “ambled” suggests that these men were very tired therefore walked very slowly. The word “creaking” suggests that the bodies of the labourers produced a harsh squeaking sound as they walked. The word “reeking” suggests that their bodies produced a strong-unpleasant odour. The speaker even point out that the labourers felt the pain as they sat down to drink a homemade brew. Through these series of allusions Sepamla wanted to conscientise his readers that black people were exploited by the apartheid system.

In stanza 6 the allusion to the wiping of sweat and sniffing of mucus is very emotive because it again conscientizes the readers that their work was very hard and that it had a negative effect on their health. The allusion to the labourers courting a passing by young lady conscientises the readers despite their difficult situation, they had not lost the sense of being African young men. It is part of an Africa culture that young men must always greet a young African lady in an appreciative way. It is interesting see how Sepamla inflected the chorus so that it sends a love message to a passing-by young lady:

dudlu ngani goddamn

dudlu ngani goddamn

abelungu goddamn

basibiza bojim

basibiza bojim

(Sepamla 1984:63)

There is a misprint in the word “ngani” it is supposed to read as “ngane”. The above stanza can be translated into English as:

I love you babe goddamn

I love you babe goddamn

Whites are damned

They call us jimmy

They call us jimmy

(Translated by the author)

In the stanza 9, Sepamla points to the main motive of the poem. The speaker's encounter with the labourers chanting a resistance work song in the streets and moving harmony stirred the poet into a consciousness. The work song has inspired speaker to praise the bravery of the labourers publicly because he felt that no one ever acknowledged the input of the labourers in the struggle for liberation. In fact the work song had a conscientisation effect in the life of the speaker. The harmonious manner in which the labourers sung caused the speaker to start to reflect on what these men were going through in the following lines:

Stirred into a consciousness

To celebrate the unsung man

I've walked away in disbelief

Admiring

Requiring

Enquiring

The balance of nature:

To crown the labourer with such moving harmony

(Sepamla 1984:63)

In his poem written in the form an epigram titled "STORY OF THE TRACTOR" Gwala (1982:65) conscientises his readers that black people are a product of exploitation therefore they live illusionary lives in illusionary environment. Gwala's artistic poetic creativity is displayed when he inflects the word "tractor" to word "tractored" this produces a nice rhyme which gives this poem a

tone of a play. Gwala has effectively employed a technique called deceptive simplicity to make this poem a successful poem.

There is a striking deeper meaning; a tractor has a very negative history to a black person because it was used by the capitalists to construct towns and cities at the expense of the local people. Therefore a tractor can be a good symbol of exploitation to black people because it is used to create colonial structures, it is used on colonial farms, it was used to demolish black settlements and it can refer to military vehicles used to attack with the aim of suppressing black rioters in the townships. Gwala's allusion to that the South Africa was surrounded by tractors conscientises the readers that South Africa was an army state.

Furthermore the word "tractored" in this poem symbolise a complete disempowerment of black people and the illusionary lives that they lived during apartheid. The imageries of: tractored streets, tractored corners, tractored buildings, tractored stairs, tractored rooms and tractored people minds are very striking because they suggest that everything that surrounded people is illusionary and even people themselves lived illusionary lives. This poem points to the urgent need for conscientisation of black people in order to set them free from the entrapment of the apartheid ideology.

Gwala (1982:22) in his poem written in a form of an epigram titled "IN A TEXTILE FACTORY" conscientises about the exploitation by reflecting on unsafe working environment the workers were exposed to in the textile industries. Again Gwala displays his brilliant ability to use words in a very economical manner. This makes the style in which this poem is written to be very striking. The use of ellipses, exclamation marks and tsotsi Taal (a language popular in Black Township) gives this poem a dramatic tone that creates an image of what exactly happened on a textile factory floor. This is evident in the following line that constitutes this poem:

...jigsaw man

tip

tumble

oops!

tadpole smogo

check the mojo

dick

gig  
jig  
& m/c jit  
spindle now...  
machine blues...  
(Gwala 1982:23)

The use of ellipses helps to engage the readers into the writing of this poem as Gwala challenges the readers to fill in the missing words. The man working on the jigsaw had his tip cut by the jigsaw. Again Gwala leaves it to the reader to figure out what is being cut by the jigsaw. The word “oops!” in line 4 gives the readers a clue that an accident is taking place because it is an exclamation, an expression of regret about a mistake or slight accident. The word “oops” has the same connotation with the word “smogo” in line 5, this word is a tsotsi Taal word meaning a serious mistake.

The imagery of a “to tadpole” in line 5 is striking because it compares the black man to a small black creature with a large head and long tail which lives in water and develops into a frog or toad. This imagery conscientise the readers that an injury of a black man at a work place was not an important issue to the factory owners because they did not place any value in the life of a black worker. In line 6 the reader is invited to see what was in the machine, once again Gwala displays his artistic creativity by playing with tsotsi Taal words. In fact Gwala uses wit to convey a joke that a man’s sex organ were seen dancing on the machine.

The word “dick” is a taboo slang referring to male sex organ. The word “gig” is an informal English word referring to a party or a performance. The word “jig” means dance. The word “spindle” suggests that the male sex organ was spinning in the machine. The phrase “machine blue” which constitutes line 12 highlights that the machine has caused sadness in the lives of the textile factory workers.

In his poem titled “MILK AND CORN” Mtshali (1972:42) conscientizes his readers about exploitation by making an allusion that black people work very hard to earn a living but at the end of the day other people rip the fruit of their hard work. Serote’s wit as a creative poet is displayed when he makes a direct comparison between mother’s milk and corn. The imagery of the “milk” in this poem can symbolise a wish to grow while “corn” symbolises wealth. This is evident in the following lines:

If my mother's milk was wise enough  
as wise as the corn of the field  
I would not be here,  
Corn comes once in a year, fears other seasons  
but not my mother's milk  
It gave me life after that big cry  
it taught me to suck  
to walk  
to love  
(Serote 1972:42)

The logic that he wants to convey to his readers is that the mother's milk comes at any time as long as somebody sucks the mother's teats but the corn does not come at any time. Serote's poetic creativity is displayed in line 5 where he uses ambiguity to conscientise the readers about the reason behind the cry when a baby is born. The reader is challenged to figure out who was crying the baby or the baby's mother. What causes the cry? The speaker blames the milk for affording him the chance to grow into a man because as a black man he is being exploited. If the milk did not provide him with nutritious food he would not have grown up and therefore he would not be a victim of exploitation. This is evident in the following lines:

and today I am a man  
huge  
blackman with experience,  
expected to work,  
I toil today where the corn refuses to grow  
the sweat of my brow drips  
splashes on iron-hard rocks under the whipping sun,  
but I keep on, I want corn

for I can make milk in some woman

for somebody to suck

(Serote 1972:42)

The word “toil” in line 14 is striking because it suggests something more than just ordinary work but very hard work which was physically tiring. In lines 15-16 the imagery of the “sweat dripping from his face” is emotive it can cause the readers to feel sorry for the speaker. The imageries of “iron-hard rocks” and “the whipping sun” in line 16 are striking because they suggest that the speaker works under terrible work conditions. The last three lines allude to the fact that as a man he has no option but to work because he is a father he has a wife and children to feed.

In his poem titled “PORTAIT OF A LOAF OF BREAD” Mtshali (1971:4) conscientises his readers about exploitation by contrasting how the rich and the poor benefit from the production of bread and how the process of producing bread affect the life of a labourer. In stanzas 1, 2 and 3 Mtshali informs the reader that it is the task of the labourer to work the wheat fields, mill the wheat, prepare the flour into dough, bake the dough into bread, transport it to the retail store and prepare a breakfast table. The imageries of a: “cook” in line 14, “slice and toast” in line 15, “butter and marmalade” in line 16, “food-bedecked breakfast table” in line 17 conscientise that the white people enjoyed more privileges than black labourers. White people were so privileged that they had to butter their bread while black people were under privileged that they had to eat bread that is not buttered. This idea is highlighted in the line “Man can live on bread alone”. Mtshali as a creative poet has deliberately twisted the biblical verse in Matthew chapter 4 verse 4 “Human beings cannot live on bread alone...” (Good News-Bible) to give his line a biting tone.

In stanza 4 Mtshali uses striking imageries to conscientise his readers about the bad effects of the production of bread on the physical body of the labourer. This evident in the following lines:

While the labourer

with fingers caked with

wet cement of a builder’s scaffold

mauls a hunk and a cold drink

and licks his lips and laughs

‘Man can live on bread alone’ (Mtshali 1971:4)

The imagery of “caked fingers” suggests that the hands of the labourer are extremely dry hence allusions to “wet cement” and “scaffold”. The person who works in the construction industry can fully identify with the scenery that Mtshali is portraying in this stanza. The word “mauls” is striking in that it is opposed to the idea of the “food-bedecked breakfast table” in line 17 of this poem; it suggests that the labourer eats the bread and drinks his cold drink in a very violent manner. The word “hunk” suggests that the bread is not sliced, this is opposed to the imagery of “slice and toast” in line 15 of this poem. The allusion to the laughing behaviour of the labour suggests that the labourer is not conscious of his exploitation because a person who is aware of his exploitation cannot make it a joke.

In his poem titled THE WASHERWOMAN’S PRAYER to my mother in law Mtshali (1971:5) explores how a black woman is exploited under the apartheid economic system. The exploitation has a direct damage in the body of a black woman. Mtshali directly reminds his readers to notice the specific body parts of the washerwoman. This is evident in the following lines:

Look at her hands  
  
raw, knobbly and calloused.  
  
Look at her face  
  
Like a bean skin soaked in brine  
  
(Mtshali 1971:5)

The diction that Mtshali uses in these lines is striking and therefore appeals to the heart of the readers. The word “raw” suggests that her hands are sore because they are damaged. The word “knobbly” suggest that her hands had lumps on the surface. The word “calloused” suggests that her hands have become thick and hard because of the hard work she has to perform on a daily basis. The imagery of a bean soaked in brine is very powerful because it suggests that the skin of the face of the washerwoman is no longer supple and fresh, it has got aging marks.

The words “toiled” in stanza 2 suggest that the washerwoman does hard work so hard that it makes her to become tired. The phrase “master” conscientise readers that the washerwoman is no different from a slave. The phrase “soiled by a Lord’s luxuries” is ironical as a result it has levels of meanings. The first meaning is that the clothes are expensive but they can make the washerwoman dirty. The second meaning is that the washerwoman has internalized the subject position that has been assigned to her by the apartheid system of economy. She is terrified by the power of her white master and is unwilling to resist the white master’s authority. Biko (2007:30) states that people

have accepted their subject positions as inevitable position. They are shocked by the white power structure. It does not matter what conditions they are subjected to, black people do not resist exploitation. Black did hard work and hardly complained as shown in the following lines:

In frost-freckled mornings  
In sun-scorched afternoons  
She has drudged murmurless.

(Mtshali 1971:5)

Biko (2207:30-31) states that it was wrong for the black people to condemn the white society in private and only when they are other black people, but to become the first to praise the government in the presence of the police or his white employers. The following lines highlight what Biko discourages in black people: the washerwoman's actions:

One day she fell and fainted  
With weariness.  
Her mouth a foaming spout  
Gushing a gibberish.

(Mtshali 1971:5)

Mtshali uses his poetic creativity to convey to the readers that the washerwoman's prayer is a foolish prayer. This poetic creativity in the rhyme "fell and fainted", this suggests that the washerwoman is dreaming. This poetic creativity is also evident in the imagery of "a foaming spout gushing a gibberish" this is a brilliant imagery which suggest that according to the speaker the washerwoman speaks meaningless things. The washerwoman's mouth is a "foaming spout" which emphasizes that the mouth does not speaks rubbish but for the speaker the mouth itself is rubbish. The words of the washerwoman are compared to the bubbles; this suggests that they are meaningless. This is a good example of an extended metaphor. The word "gushing" means to express a positive feeling, especially praise in such a strong way that it does not sound sincere. This is what makes the speaker think that the washerwoman's prayer is "gibberish". The word "gibberish" refers to words spoken or written which are nonsense and have no meaning. The following lines constitute the washerwoman's prayer:

'Good Lord! Dear Lord!' she shouted

'Why am I so tormented?

How long have I lamented?

Tell me Lord, tell me O Lord,'

(Mtshali 1971:5)

The speaker in this poem considers this prayer as irrelevant because it does not blame the white people for exploiting black people. Biko (2007:34) states that black people need to redefine the message in the Bible and make it more relevant to the struggling masses. For Biko the Bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely constituted. It must rather preach that it is sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. The washerwoman in this poem is committing a sin by allowing herself to be exploited. The response from God to this washerwoman is very much interesting as it highlights the very ideology that Biko tries to dismantle:

'My child! Dear child', she heard,

'Suffer for those who live in gilded sin,

Toil for those who swim in a bowl of pink gin.'

And the response from the washerwoman to God is:

'Thank you Lord! Thank you Lord.

Never again will I ask

Why must I carry this task.'

(Mtshali 1971:5)

The washerwoman looks to God through the eyes of white people. Biko (2007:64) states that if the faith of black people in their God is spoilt by their having to see God through the eyes of the same people they are fighting against then there obviously begins to be something wrong in that relationship. The washerwoman's prayer of resistance is passive. It shows that she is conditioned to the system to an extent that even her resistance fits within the system.

In his poem titled "REAPERS IN A MEALIEFIELD" Mtshali (1971:10) through a series of vivid descriptions, conscientizes his reader about the exploitation of the farm workers in South Africa. Line 1 reads: "Faces furrowed and wet with sweat", this suggest that their faces reflect the physical labour and sweat which they had to endure under the blazing sun. The fact that these are women labourers makes the reader to sympathise them. The imagery of a "rustling sheaths" in line 4 refers to the protective leaves covering the cobs. Mtshali displayed his poetic creativity in his use of the word "rustling" because it foregrounds the idea that the dry material covering the mealie stalks seems to crackle as the cobs are picked and tossed into bags.

In lines 7-8 Mtshali displayed his poetic brilliance in his use of the imagery of "desert" and "dust". These two images are symbols through which he conscientizes the readers about the unrest and economic exploitation that characterized the apartheid era. The word "Tanker" in line 7 has a military connotation it therefore also conscientizes the readers about the political unrest which was characterized by the presence of huge army and police vehicles in big cities and in black communities. In lines 8-9 Mtshali is able to use a brilliant imagery called enjambment to highlight the movement of the tractor. The manner in which Mtshali described the driver of the tractor is also very moving. He used two striking compound adjectives, the driver is a "pipe-puffing man" who has "tobacco-stained teeth" that are the colour of the mealies being harvested.

There is an effective use of alliteration in line 14 the repetition of [l] sounds in "loaded by thick-limbed labourers" and in lines 15-16 the repetition of [b] sound in baked/brown with dust. These alliterations conscientise the readers not only about the heaviness of the bags of maize lifted onto the tractor but also the physical hardship experienced by these hardworking men. The reference to the vest ingrained with brown dust tells the readers about the dusty environment they worked in.

In lines 17-19 Mtshali has used a brilliant personification:

The sun has lashes

the workers with

a red-hot rod;

(Mtshali 1971:10)

The sun is portrayed as a foreman or master fiercely whipping his labourers. The word "lashes" and the alliterative phrase "red-hot rod" convey the idea of the intense heat in which the labourers have to work. The alliteration in "brine-bathed brow" in line 21 and "battered... bubbling" in lines 22-23 add to this impression of heat and hard labour.

It is interesting that after having drunk “maheu” from their “battered cans” the labourers become energetic. The reason for this according to the speaker in line 27 is that “soon the day’s work will be done”. This attitude of labourers to their exploitation indicates that they are unconscious of their exploitation or they have become conditioned to their exploitative work condition. Mtshali uses two brilliant imageries to conscientise his readers about this idea of being energetic. In line 25 the men toss the bags of mealies about as if they were “feather cushions” and in line 26 the woman are as energetic as “prancing wild mares”.

In his poem titled “A ROADGANG’S CRY” Mtshali (1971:13) seeks to conscientise the readers about the exploitation of black labourers who work in the streets. In lines 2-3 the simile comparing “Pneumatic drills” to the guns in a battlefield conscientises the reader that the streets of South Africa were not different from the battlefields. This was because of the high degree of violence. Biko (2007:95) states that South Africa was a police state during apartheid. The reference to “red soil” in line 4 can symbolise blood or grave sand while the imagery of a “tuberculosis’s sputum” indicates the degree of contempt that the speaker has for the exploitation of black labourers.

Exploitation happens every day in broad daylight and at the market place where everybody can see yet people do not see it as exploitation. Exploitation is viewed as a normal daily task. But the street worker demonstrates the bravery that Biko and the Black Consciousness wanted to instil into the minds of black people. The song amazes the people passing by the street because of its relevant message and the rhythm. This is evident in the following lines:

Business-bent brokers hurry past,  
Woman shoppers shamle tiredly, shooting their children,  
Stragglers stop to stare  
as the ruddy-faced foreman watches men  
lifting a sewerage pipe into a trench.  
Its starts  
as a murmur  
from one mouth to another  
in a rhythm of ribaldry  
that rises to a crescendo

'abelungu ngo'damn

Basbiza ngo Jim-

Whites are damned

They call us Jim.'

(Mtshali 1971:13)

The worker's song is striking because through it the street workers demonstrate their bravery. They sing a powerful song of resistance right in the front of the rude foreman and the passers-by. The message of the song raises the consciousness of the black readers about the need to resist the exploitative power of the white people. It is the message of the song and its rhythm that compels the passers-by to stop and watch the singing labourers. Here Biko (2007:46-47) explains the magic behind the music in black communities. He states that any suffering black people experienced was made more real by a song and rhythm. He adds that tourist always watch with amazement the synchrony of music and action as African worked on the road side use their picks and shovels with well-timed precision to the accompaniment of background song.

In the poem titled "THE SONG OF SUNRISE" Mtshali (1971:34) uses his poetic brilliance to register the exploitation of black people. The first stanza contains brilliant imageries that are aimed at appealing to the imagination of the reader. In lines 1-3 the day break is personified as having a "sword" that it uses to cut the blanket of the night from the sky. In everyday language the speaker wants to convey the idea that the day break comes when the workers are not expecting it.

In lines 4-9 the morning is personified as someone who secretly looks at the sleeping worker through the blanket, furthermore the manner at which this someone [the morning] responds to the daybreak is compared to the way a baby sleeps and its response to a lullaby. These two powerful imageries conscientises the readers that the being a worker is not a pleasant experience since a worker is expected to wake up in the early hours of the morning and go to work.

In stanza 2 Mtshali deliberately uses a prosaic style to directly conscientise the readers that the workers were compelled to wake up very early in the morning and go work. The exclamation marks in lines 10-13, the auxiliary verb "must" in line 13 and the repetition of various phrases conscientises the readers of the fact that the workers had no other option but to wake up and go to work. This is shown in these lines:

Arise! Arise!

All workers!

To work! To work!

You must go!

(Mtshali 1971:34)

In lines 14-16 the speaker conscientises the reader that the workers do not have a privilege of own a private mode of transport. They entirely depend on public transport to commute to and from work place. This exposes them to many difficulties like noise pollution from buses, trains and taxis. Mtshali displays a striking precision in his description of various noises made by various vehicles; each vehicle produced a distinctive noise. It is interesting to note that the each type of noise description has a military connotation. The descriptions conscientises reader of the turbulent conditions of life in South Africa, a township life is very hectic life. A person who dwells in a black township can easily identify with these descriptions of noise:

Buses rumble,

Trains rattle,

Taxis hoot.

(Mtshali 1971:35)

The use of the first pronoun "I" in line 17 is striking because it makes the speaker to become very close to the poem and to the black reader who lives in a township. While other commuters have accepted the routine of having to wake up early in the morning and go to work as an acceptable part of everyday life, the speaker disapproves of it. The attitude conveyed by the speaker in the last stanza of this poem suggests that he is uncomfortable, nervous or embarrassed by the routine of waking up at dawn to follow the queue in the train stations. This is evident in the diction used in the following lines:

I shuffle in the queue

with feet that patter

on the station platform,

and stumble into the coach

that squeezes me like a lemon

of all the juice of my life.

(Mtshali1971:34)

Mtshali uses a carefully selected diction to conscientise the readers that the speaker disapproves the routine of travelling to and from work by train every day. The words “shuffle”, “patter”, and “stumble”. The word “shuffle” means to walk by pulling your feet slowly along the ground rather than lifting them. The word “patter” refers to series of quick quiet soft sounds and the word “stumble” means to walk in a way which does not seem controlled. The simile in lines 21-22 is striking because it educates the readers that capitalistic exploitation drains off all the energy from the workers just like how juice is drained from a lemon. Mtshali chose the imagery of lemon to educate the readers that the lives of black workers are unpleasant [sour] just like the taste of a lemon.

In the poem titled “THE MINER” Mtshali (1971:35) conscientises his readers about the effect of exploitation in a man who works as a miner. In line 1 Mtshali tried to lift the literariness of this line by avoiding to use the phrase [knocking off time] because it is prosaic, but instead he uses the phrase “At the strike of the noon bell” which is more poetic.

In line 2 instead of saying that [he came out of the ground] Mtshali uses a more poetic language “he pops out of the shaft”. The simile in line 3 is very effective because it compares the miner to a fast moving bullet. The miner is happy that the day’s task is over. This informs the readers that being a miner is not a job that is enjoyable. This is highlighted in the swift manner at which he comes out of the shaft. A reference to “bazooka” in line 3 has a military connotation, it therefore conscientises the readers of the violent situation in South Africa. In lines 4-5 the speaker conscientise the readers of the exploitation of this miner by pointing that he walks as if his feet are heavy, obviously this is due to the fact that his is tired and his boots are also heavy. The sympathy of the readers is evoked when the speaker states that the miner will stretch his limbs in a coir-mattress bed in the compound. The miner had gone through the hard work and after this hard work he does not have a decent place to rest his tired body; this is the highest level of exploitation of man power.

In lines 6-10 Mtshali uses the imagery of “gnarled hands” to conscientise the reader about the effects of exploitation in the body of the miner. The word “gnarled” suggests that the hands of the miner are rough and twisted because of lack of protection from hard work. The emotions of the reader are evoked when the speaker states that the miner’s hands are not only damaged but they are also very dirty. The miner uses his very dirty hands to wash his body which is also very dirty. The

poem reveals that the miner can not afford toiletries and that life in the compound is very unhygienic with no proper bathroom. This is shown in the following lines:

With gnarled hands  
Daubed with gold-tinted ochre  
to wash a face  
and armpits mouldy with sweat of pushing a cocopan  
down the rails into the ore-crushing mill.

(Mtshali 1971:35)

The miner is conditioned to his subjectivity; he sees nothing wrong with the kind of life that he finds himself in. For him this is how things were meant to be for a black man. He is happy that he has fulfilled the task placed before him by his white masters. Biko (2007:30) states that people had positively consented to being powerless; they thought that their subordination was inevitable in the shocking white power structure. The miner in this poem believes that the white man is clever than him. This is highlighted in the in the rhyme: /brawn/brain. This is evident in the following lines:

He shakes a plastic skal in noisy beerhall  
and gulps down the beer and strikes his chest  
a victor over a day's work:  
'Hurray I'm the brawn-  
And you're the brain.'

(Mtshali 1971:35)

Mtshali's use of the words "skal" and "beerhall" in line 11 is brilliant because these words give this poem a black township flavour. These words evoke nostalgia for a black reader who comes from a township or a rural background. The description that the miner "gulps" instead of saying he drinks, reminds the reader that the miner behaves almost like an animal. He does not enjoy or appreciate the taste of the beer.

The issue of going to work is an important one to Mtshali. In his poem title "GOING TO WORK" (1971:50) readers are conscientised that black workers are entrapped into this condition. The habit of going to work is a symbol of exploitation but to an average man going to work is a normal part of life. The speaker and other black people are poor because they are poorly paid as a result they cannot afford to buy a car. The fact that they are transported in trains and in large numbers highlight that they are not different from livestock. This is highlighted in the phrase "thousand black bodies" in line 3 and in the word "encased" in line 4. This idea is also highlighted in line 5 by the fact that the coaches "hurtle". This means that the trains move very fast in a dangerous way. This is evident in the following lines:

I go to work  
for five days a week  
with a thousand black bodies  
encased in eleven coaches  
that hurtle through stations  
into the red ribbon of dawn  
crowning the city skyscrapers.

(Mtshali 1971:50)

Mtshali's poetic creativity is displayed in his use of an imagery of the "red ribbon" of dawn that crowns the city skyscrapers. The phrase "skyscrapers" symbolises capitalism, towns and cities are centres of exploitation. This informs the readers that the first trains reach the city very early in the morning before sunrise. In lines 8-14 Mtshali uses a striking simile to conscientise the readers that black workers resort to alcohol in order to cope with the effect of exploitation. Thus alcohol enables the commuter to assertively define himself. It is interesting that in his definition of himself the readers are made aware of how he is exploited. This is how defines himself to his fellow black brothers:

'Brothers, who doesn't know me  
I'm a cog in Mr Jobstein's wheel,  
and Mr Jobstein is a big wheel

rolling under Mr de Wiel's ox wagon.'

(Mtshali1971:50)

The imagery of "cog" in line 12 is striking because it conscientises the readers that the commuter is dissatisfied with the subject's position that he occupies at his work place. If someone is described as a cog in a machine, they are a member of a large organization and their job, although necessary, makes them feel unimportant and powerless. In other words the speaker in this poem is conscious of the fact that he is exploited.

In his poem titled "A BALLAD OF ELLOFF STREET" Mtshali (1971:53-54) employs powerful imageries to conscientise his readers about the exploitation of the black people in the streets of a big city. He wants to make his readers aware that "ELOFF STREET" is a place of exploitation in its various forms. In stanza 1 the imagery of "road gang" is striking because it creates a picture that there are gangsters in the road, when in actual fact this phrase refers to the labourers working on the road. The metaphor of "road gang" is extended as it compares the labourers to a group of birds. The idea of birds is highlighted by the use of the word "pecks", this word compares the pickaxe used by the labourers to the beak of the birds. The imagery highlights that the labourers are exploited to an extent that they lost their human dignity.

In stanza 2, Mtshali uses a striking alliteration to conscientise his readers that the life of the labourers working on the road is difficult and demands a lot of energy and it has a negative effect on the bodies of the labourers:

Tears of tar and dust  
mix with rivers of sweat  
on a broken brow.

(Mtshali 1971:53)

The alliteration "Tears of tar" highlights that the labour is extremely difficult for the workers. It is interesting to note that not only the dust rises up as they perform the work but also large amounts of sweat "rivers of sweat" flow from their bodies. The phrase "broken brow" highlights the idea that the hard labour damages the physical bodies of the labourers.

Biko (2007:46-47) argues that when black people go to work, they share the burden and pleasure of the work through music. This is registered in stanza 2, despite the hard work the labourers can still sing out loud. They sing very loud that the words of their songs reach the inside of the office where the exploiters are busy making love to their secretaries. This is evident in the following lines:

The words of the songs rise  
in a crescendo higher and higher  
to the dizzy height of an office window  
where air conditioned executives sip  
chilled beer or whisky on the rocks  
and make love to their blushing secretaries on luxury couches.

(Mtshali1971:53)

Mtshali has makes use of a striking contrast in stanza 1 and 2 the labourers are portrayed as doing extremely hard work that makes them to sweat. But in stanza 3 the imageries of “dizzy height” and “air conditioned executives” suggests that the white exploiters occupy jobs that are viewed as important. The labourers toil outside while whites who work in the offices are busy making love to secretaries. The imagery of the “rocks” is remarkable because it highlights that the beer or whisky is placed on ice cubes, this is contrary to the imagery of the sweating labourers on the street. The imagery of “blushing secretaries” suggests that the secretaries are an embarrassment because they were involved in sexual activities.

In stanza 2 Mtshali personifies the sun and describes it as having the ability to see through “peep through” curtained windows. The “sun” was watching secretly the while the executives were making love to the blushing secretaries. The sun is described as a bird that uses its talons to scratch the conscience of the white executives. Mtshali has used this imagery to conscientise his readers that despite all forms of security systems “Chubb safe sarcophagus” [line12] that the white exploiters used to protect themselves, these forms of security could not protect them from the guilty conscience that haunt their hearts for the wrongs they commit against black people.

In stanza 5 Mtshali sought to educate his readers that black people occupied a subservient role by making a reference to a street cleaner that is likely to be black and also to a township stove box. According to Steve Biko (2007:30) the logic behind white domination was to prepare the black man

for the subservient role in South Africa and for Biko this was often freely said in parliament concerning the educational system of black people. This is evident in the following lines:

A street cleaner picks paper with a palsied hand,  
shovels them into his satchel  
as if to cook for supper on a stove box marked  
'Keep your city clean  
Hou u stad skoon.'

And in stanza 6:

Clean!  
Clean of what?  
When a blind beggar sits at a street corner  
and strums his battered guitar  
and sings  
'Though I'm blind  
My soul can see.'  
(Mtshali 1971:53)

In lines 23-24 the exclamation and the rhetorical question are striking because they give this stanza a forceful tone. These imageries show that the speaker sees irony in the campaign to keep the city clean. Thus a question: "clean of what?" The motive behind Mtshali's writing was to tell his readers that "Eloff Street" was a dirty street because corruption is taking place in that street. Mtshali challenges his readers by making a reference to a blind man, who despite of his short sightedness can see the dirty deeds that take place in "Eloff Street".

If a physically blind person could see through his soul yet those with eyes could not see the exploitation taking place in "Eloff Street. In stanza 7 the blind man makes references to the bad things that take place in "Eloff Street". Eloff Street is full of criminals "pickpockets". Biko (2007:30) observes that black people have become shells, shadows of human beings. They are completely

defeated, drowning in their own miseries, they are slaves, and they are oxen bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. This is evident in stanza 7 of this poem:

Where gawking yokels,  
their shoes caked with cowdung,  
come flying like moths to the bright city lights,  
only to have their wings clipped  
by the smooth-tongued confidence trickster.

(Mtshali 1971:54)

In line 31 Mtshali makes use of the imagery of “gawking yokels” to conscientise his readers that black people found themselves alienated in Eloff Street. The word “gawking” refers to an instance of looking at something or at someone in a stupid way without thinking. The word “yokels” refers to a stupid or awkward person who lives in the countryside rather than in town, especially one whose appearance is in some way strange or amusing. In line 32 the imagery of “cake” is striking because it shows that the shoes worn by black people in Eloff Street are very dry and worn out because they could not afford shoe polish.

The imagery of “cowdung” is used to highlight that most black people in the big cities come from rural areas. Most black people migrate to big towns and cities with high expectations which are often not fulfilled by those white people who promise them better job opportunities. Mtshali uses a very powerful imagery of “moths” to highlight this aspect. Black people are compared to the flying moths that are attracted to the bright lights especially at night. The imagery of “clipped wings” symbolises the exploitation of black people in the big cities. The word “smooth” in the context signifies polite talk. The phrase “The imagery of “smooth-tongued confidence tricksters” symbolises the white exploitative capitalist.

In the last stanza Mtshali uses striking imageries to conscientise his readers that due to desperation and frustration some black women resort to prostitution. This is evident in the following lines:

Where passes a pair of nut brown babies  
two flesh pedlars on a nocturnal stroll:  
they jingle ample breasts and buttocks-

'Wares up for sale.'

(Mtshali 1971:54)

The repetition of "where" in lines 30, 31 and 36 are striking because they conscientise the readers that all the incidents that the blind man alludes to in the poem take place in Eloff Street. The very Street that is supposedly kept clean in the eyes of the city officials, whereas in the eyes of the blind man the cleanliness of Eloff Street is doubtful. In the above stanza Mtshali's precision use of language is striking through his use of "nut brown babies". This imagery refers to a black woman.

Mtshali describes the women as "nut", this description indicates that he disapproves of their engagement in the prostitution business. The word "nut" is used to refer to a person who behaves in a foolish or stupid or strange way. Mtshali display poetic brilliance through his description of the two black women as "two flesh pedlars". The word is "flesh" very emotive and it conscientise the readers that the two women are selling their bodies in Eloff Street. The word "pedlars" is poetic because it does not simply mean that these women are traders. This word refers to people who travel to different places selling small items by moving door to door. Prostitution was illegal in South Africa. It is therefore interesting to note that at another level the word "pedlars" refers to someone who sell illegal drugs to people. The phrase "nocturnal stroll" suggests that the two black prostitutes were active in conducting their business at night; they walked down Eloff Street in a slow relaxed manner parading their private body parts.

The colon at the end of line 37 is very striking because it is not used for grammatical reasons, which introduce a list of things or a sentence or phrase taken from somewhere else. But it is used as a literary device to draw attention to the shocking revelation that the persona is going to disclose in line 38.

The word "jingle" in line 38 is striking because in its basic meaning it refers to a short simple tune, often with words, which is very easy to remember and which is used to advertise a product on radio or television. Mtshali brilliantly uses the word "jingle" to conscientise his readers that the black women advertise their private body parts as products advertised on radio or television. The word "ample" in line 38 means more than enough. Here Mtshali informs his readers that the two black women were almost naked.

In line 38 Mtshali also displays his poetic brilliance by using imagery called pun in the word "wares" to educate his readers that the bodies of black women have been turned into commodities in Eloff Street. The words "wares" refer to small items for selling, in a market or on the street but not usually

in a shop. The interesting pun in line 38, when read, it sounds like “wears up for sale”, meaning [clothing up for sale].

Biko (2007:127) states that conscientisation meant making reference to the conditions of black people and condition in which black people live. In his poem titled “THE WATCHMAN’S BLUES” Mtshali (1971:46) reminds his readers about the exploitation of black men in the security guard industry. In tuition informs the author that there was a commonly held belief amongst black people in big towns and cities that the Zulu man makes a good security guard or that this career was often occupied by the Zulu man from Zululand. Mtshali as a Zulu man himself knew about this stereotype and wrote this poem to challenge and dispel it.

In stanza 1 Mtshali conscientises the readers about the lonely environment in which the watchman works. He is described as someone who works in a lonely place at awkward working hours. He waits for long hours in the cold weather for the criminals to come and steal the white man’s wealth. It is interesting to note that he is expected to use a “knobkieries” not a gun to fight the criminals. His working conditions were a typical example of exploitation at its best. Mtshali’s brilliant poetic creativity in using precise diction and imageries is highlighted in the following lines:

High up  
in the loft of a skyscraper  
above the penthouse of potentate,  
he huddles  
in his nest by day: by night  
he is an owl that descends,  
Knobkieries in hand,  
to catch the rats that come  
to nibble the treasure-strewn street window.

(Mtshali1971:46)

In line 2 the imagery of “a skyscraper” symbolises a big city, big cities are a symbol of capitalistic exploitation. In line 3 the word “penthouse” symbolises the wealth of the white exploiters, this word refers to luxurious apartments or set of rooms at the top of a hotel or tall building. The word of

“potentate” in line 3 symbolises apartheid white capitalist who were the illegitimate rulers of South Africa. This is a precise imagery because basically the word “potentate” refers to a ruler who has a lot of power, especially one whose power is not limited by the existence of a parliament. The word “huddles” conscientises the reader that the place where the watchman is sitting is very cold or the watchman is afraid of the criminals. It is because the word “huddle” means to hold one’s arms and legs close to one’s body to protect it from the cold and to defend it from injury. The idea of the cold weather is foregrounded in line 9 where the readers are told that the watchman sits near a brazier.

Mtshali successfully uses an imagery of the bird of the night; an “owl” to conscientise his readers that the watchman works night shifts and day shifts. This is an example of exploitation because it is unacceptable for one person to work both shifts continuously. But an owl is not an innocent bird because it is associated with bad luck. Mtshali uses the word “descends” to convey the idea that the watchman is waiting to attack the criminals.

There is a striking pun in the way Mtshali uses the word “descends”. In lines 1 and 2 the speaker reveals that the watchman is sitting “high up in the loft of a skyscraper”. Seen from this background the word “descends” could simply mean to move to a lower level. But when viewed in terms of lines 7-8 the watchman is carrying a “knobkerrie” in his hand, the meaning of the word “descends” here suggests that the watchman is waiting to attack in a sudden or overwhelming way. In line 8, Mtshali uses an imagery of “rats” to refer to criminals. This is a striking comparison; criminals are thieves and “rats” symbolise thieving.

Steve Biko (2007:37) states in the 1960s the anger was visible in the faces and actions of black people but it was not verbalized. This is echoed in lines 11-12 where the imagery of “a fish cork” is used. The watchman is corking up his feelings of anxiety [blues]:

his head bobbing like a fish cork

in the serene waters of sleep.

(Mtshali 1971:46)

The word “bobbing” highlights the watchman’s anxiety. If a person is bobbing his head he is moving his head up and down quickly and gently. The simile “like a fish cork” maybe construed by a careless reader to mean a fish, when in actual fact, it refers to a person who does not allow himself to express anger, anxiety or sadness. The watchman feels very bad about his exploitation but he is afraid to verbalize his anger.

According to Biko (2207:30-31) it was wrong for black people to condemn the white society in private and praise the whites in the presence of their employers or police. In lines 11-12 the watchman typifies this group of black people who instead of verbalizing his anger displays the opposite, the illusionary feelings of peacefulness. Mtshali has successfully conveys this illusionary calmness in the word “serene”. Here Mtshali reminds his readers that many black people lived their lives under this false consciousness of calmness of the situation.

In line 13 the phrase “jemmy boys” is effective because besides giving this poem a township feel it is poetic. It is a tsotsi Taal [a form of township English idiom] which according to Mtshali (1971:46) refers to burglars armed with crow bars. Mtshali also uses striking euphemisms in phrasing line 14 as “have not paid him a visit” instead of [have not attacked him]. The watchman is not conscious of this exploitation instead he loves to be honoured by his white employer. Mtshali conscientises his readers that the watchman lives under a false consciousness that he is a blooded Zulu. There is no such thing as a blooded Zulu because Althusser (1984:36) states that ideology provides an imaginary experience to individuals of their real conditions of existence. Biko once argued that any black man who propped the system up actively had lost his right to being part of the black world. In other words that person becomes a non-white.

The watchman has been so ideologically inculcated so much that he does not see a problem in calling a white person “baas”. The watchman has in actual fact become non-white. He accepts being called a boy by a white man even though they are both men. Biko (2007:30) concurs with the above argument that a black man had lost his manhood due to the extent to which the dehumanisation had advanced as seen through the watchman who is satisfied with a meagre wage. This is evident in the following lines:

and the baas will say:

‘Here’s ten pounds.

Jim was a good boy’.

(Mtshali 1971:46)

The watchman unconsciously serves the apartheid capitalist exploitation to which he is subjugated. He is being paid to victimize the very people “waif” and “hobo” who have been produced and victimized by the apartheid economic system. This is evident in the following lines:

To rise and keep awake  
and twirl the kerie  
and chase the hobo with 'voetsak'

(Mtshali 1971:46)

In lines 26-27 Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by personifying the rays of the sun and the night. This imagery describes the job of the watchman as the rays of the sun that attack the night violently just as the watchman violently attacks the waif and the hobo. In line 28 Mtshali displays a striking precision in his use of the word "pines". The word "pine" registers the watchman's strong desire which is difficult or impossible to obtain, a desire to be with his three wives and twelve children in Mahlabathini.

The last four lines of this poem are dramatic because the watchman who has been quiet for a long time suddenly redefines his identity. In his words he registers the fact that in the big city he is alienated but back in Mahlabathini he is regarded as a real man with a complete identity. Althusser (1984:36) states people are determined by ideology. Where the watchman finds himself determines what he is subjected to and whatever he is subjected to determines his identity. This is evident in the following lines:

'where I'm a man  
amongst men  
not John or Jim  
but Makhubalo Magudulela.'

(Mtshali 1971:46)

### 6.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed a selection of poems on exploitation where poets sought to conscientize by probing the socio-economic status of the black people in the racist, capitalist South Africa. The poems do not necessarily portray South Africa as a class society. The poems represent a sincere picture of how black people constitute an exploited working class and white people constitute a class of capitalist employers. The workers work awkward hours, under dangerous conditions with some living work and stay far away from their families which result into the breaking down of family ties. The poems portray black workers as brave heroines and heroes of the liberation struggle in

their own situations and efforts. The poets allude that the worker's bravery and open defiance to the white domination is not recognised by those who are expected to recognise it. The analysis indicates that poets sought to pay homage to the workers by conscientizing the reader about their role in the liberation struggle in South Africa.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7. POEMS PROBING THE EXISTENCE OF NON-WHITES

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an in-depth analysis of the selected poems by Gwala and Mtshali that show that non-whites were a blockage to attainment of their liberation. Buthelezi (in Pityana et al 1991:121) states that the term Non-white was specifically meant for the Indian capitalist group (particularly concentrated around Durban), and those individuals who served in such apartheid institutions such as the Bantustans, the South African Indian council, the Coloured Persons Representative Councils, and the so-called mayors in Urban Bantu Councils. The term black therefore was not all inclusive.

Wilson (in Pityana et al 1991:26) states that SASO viewed the term non-white as a negation of being. For SASO it portrayed a desire to become white in the sense that 'whiteness' was the norm to which one attached other people who could not be defined in their own terms. In order to become people black people had to name themselves. They named themselves 'black'.

Buthelezi (in Pityana et al 1991:121) points that the term black was not used to refer to skin pigmentation but to a reflection of mental attitude, and that only those committed to the liberation process could be described as black in the political sense by SASO militants. The term Non-white referred to all those people who did not identify with the liberation process. Biko (2007:38-39) states that the problem with non-whites is that they operated within the apartheid system because they believed that something good could be gained from the apartheid institutions.

For Biko (2007:38-39) working-within the system twisted people's logic and it amounted to gross over-simplification. Furthermore, Biko (2007:42) argues that operating within the system was going to result in political castration therefore it was important for black people to resist all attempts at the fragmentation of their resistance.

According to Biko (2007:116) black people were historically defined as black and when they rejected the term non-white and took upon themselves the right to call themselves what they thought they were, they chose the term black because they felt it was the most accommodating term. Biko (2007:53) also adds that the term black was used to define all those who were by law or tradition, politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspiration. The term non-white that was used by the white government to refer to black people, the belief by some black people that they are not blacks but non-whites constitute the Dominant Ideology.

The term black was used by the Black Consciousness to replace the term non-white, the belief that black people are not non-whites but are black people and must be proud of being black constitute an Authorial Ideology. The poetic idioms and craftsmanship through which the Dominant and Authorial Ideologies are exposed to the readers constitute an Aesthetic Ideology. Through the form the poets have been able to represent a sincere and honest picture of the role of the non-whites in the struggle for the liberation of black people. This confirms the validity of George Lukacs's view of the form; he held that form is the content of a literary work when it assumes a meaningful configuration (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:172).

## 7.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED POEMS

The bastardization of the culture of black African people produces non-whites. In his poem titled "DETRBALIZED" Mtshali (1971:47) critically describes a character that lives an illusionary life in order to conscientise his readers about the existence of non-whites in the black communities. According to Biko (2007:106) it was important to define the culture of black people in concrete terms. The character described in this poem does not have a concrete socio-cultural background. It is not clear where he was born:

He was born in Sophiatown  
Or Alexandra, I am not sure,  
but certainly not in Soweto.

(Mtshali 1971:47)

The character represents black people during apartheid who were not conscious about the value of education. These people did not have a focus in life. In line 8 the imagery of "pilfered" shows that the character chose to steal items with little value and to carry golf equipment for white people. The character here is non-white and he does not see a problem in serving white people, while the white people were busy enjoying life. This is evident in the following lines:

He skipped school  
during playtime  
to hock sweets  
peanuts, shoelaces,  
pilfered in town,

caddied at the golf course.

(Mtshali 1971:47)

Althusser (1984:36) states ideology makes the people to see themselves as free, autonomous and determining. The character described in this poem thinks of himself as a free and autonomous person. He is unconscious of the fact that he is subjected to the dominant ideology of his time. The character described in this poem represents the kind of black people who were half literate and white illiterate but unconscious of this problem. Mtshali brilliantly uses a striking literary device of sarcasm to show that the character in this poem is illiterate. The character's knowledge of the world is very limited because he relies on one newspaper to get information. This is evident in the following lines:

He can write-

only his name;

He can read-

'Our one and only paper',

The Golden City Post-

murder, rape and robbery.

(Mtshali 1971:47)

Biko (2007:106) points to the need for black people to reduce the materialistic element that was slowly creeping into their society. The character described in this poem has a different mentality because he loves to accumulate material possessions. The poem shows that the character is a non-white because he loves to belong to a higher class of society. This is shown in the following lines:

He wears

the latest Levison' suits

'Made in America', from Cuthbert's

A pair of Florschem shoes

'America's finest shoes'.

He pays cash

That's why  
He's called Mister  
(Mtshali 1971:47)

And in stanza 15:

He runs a car-  
'60 Impala Chev.  
Automatic, sleek.  
(Mtshali 1971:48)

Biko (2007:107) argues that it was important for people to think along such lines as black campaign and to establish their own banks for the benefit of the community. The character in the poem is non-white because he does the opposite of Biko's advice regarding the upliftment of the economy of black people. The character buys from the white owned chain stores. The character in this poem has been led to believe that if the price of the product is high it means that the product is of good quality. This evident in the following lines:

His furniture is  
From Ellis, Bradlow's exclusive.  
Nothing from the O.K. Bazaars  
except groceries  
and Christmas toys  
for their kids.  
'very cheap!' says his wife.  
(Mtshali 1971:48)

Biko (2007:115) states that Black Consciousness used a phrase "Black is beautiful" to challenge the belief which made black people negate themselves. It was also used to discourage black women from using: hair straightening devices, skin lighting creams and make up. For Biko and the Black Consciousness black women's use of these devices tended to be a negation of their true state and in

a sense the black women were running away from their true identity. Biko (2007:45) mentions that the African culture is unsophisticated like the Anglo-Boer culture. The wife of the character in this poem does the opposite of what Biko believed and taught. This is highlighted in the following lines:

She's very sophisticated,  
uses Artra, Hi-Lite  
skin lightening cream,  
hair straightened,  
wears lipstick  
a wing, nail polish:  
she can dance  
the latest 'Monkey'.  
  
(Mtshali 1971:48)

Black Consciousness discouraged a culture of being irresponsible amongst the black people (Biko: 2007:101). Biko (2007:106) also argues that human relations are important in black society. The attitude of the character in the poem is the opposite of the characteristics of the black society. He is abusive and exploitative to his wife. He is unconscious of the fact that it is wrong to ill-treat a woman. This is illuminated in the following lines:

He married her  
after he had fathered  
two kids  
to prove her fertility  
There's the occasional  
domestic quarrel:  
he punches her  
a 'blue eye'

to show her

he's the boss.

(Mtshali 197:48)

Biko (2007:52) defines Black consciousness as a reflection of a mental attitude. This means that, black people are only those people who identified themselves with liberation struggle. Biko (2007:670) adds that the pass laws were constant reminders that the white people were on top and only tolerated black people with great restraint. The character in this poem does not see the problem with carrying a pass book. This means that the character holds the opposite mental attitude from that of the general black people which is represented by the Black Consciousness philosophy. This is evident in the following lines:

He knows

he must carry a pass.

He don't care for politics

He don't go to church

He knows Sobukwe

He knows Mandela

They're in Robben Island.

'So what? That's not my business!'

(Mtshali 1971:49)

According to Biko (2007:86) any black person who propped up the system actively had lost his right to being considered part of the black world. That person was not black but non-white. In his poem titled "NO MIRTH FOR BANTUS" Gwala (1977:24) conscientises his readers that there are some black people who claimed to belong to a special class called "middle class bantu blacks". Gwala criticizes this group and called them Non-whites. This group of black people according to Gwala thought too highly of themselves. When they were invited to black wedding parties they displayed white mannerism and this was not in line with the culture of black people.

Buthelezi (in Pityana, et al. 1992:113-114) argues that the SASO militants were later eager to make distinction between politically committed black intellectuals and the educated middle class whose blackness was only 'skin deep', meaning they were only black because they had black skins but acted and behaved like white people. For Buthelezi the middle class bantu blacks consisted of an educated, middle-class professional group which had largely been educated at missionary institutions and at Fort Hare. They were drawn from well-to-do families, the sons and daughters of chiefs, rich peasants and wealthy petty traders and professional people. For Buthelezi, on the contrary the SASO militants of the late 1960s and early 1970s were products of the locations and townships. Many of them had managed to acquire university entrance largely through the efforts of their own labour during school vacations when they worked in factories and even on the mines.

Gwala takes a critical position about the middle class Bantu blacks when he refers to it as an empty class. This is expressed in the following lines, lines 1-12:

Middle class bantu blacks  
roll into black weddings parties  
with a clumsy gait  
of (a) dice on a ghetto pave little realizing  
not a single face  
will moon through  
their sweaty foreheads  
for checkup on the  
temperature of their  
boozed-up entry  
will moon through  
their sweaty foreheads  
for checkup on the  
temperature of their  
boozed-up entry

they come bagged

with empty class

(Gwala 1977:24)

In lines 13-24 Gwala conscientizes his readers that the “middle class bantu blacks” were not as secure and safe as it seemed. In line 12 “begged” suggests that the “middle class bantu blacks” carried along with them to the black wedding parties the wrong feelings and beliefs that influenced them to think and behave in the way that was unacceptable to the black community. It is from their behaviour that Gwala warns that this group of black people stands the risk of being attacked by the members of black community. This is evident in the following lines:

they'll slip stares

of assurances

about invitation cards

right across and all over

just in case

the ever so casual

common blacks

should get their noses mugged

and pull off

their gadgeteering masks

of white brow etiquette.

(Gwala 1977:27)

In his poem titled “BLACK STATUS SEEKERS” Gwala (1977:33-34) conscientises his readers about the existences of a group of black people called non-whites. He explicitly expresses his bitter feelings for those who wanted to become white. These black people behaved like white people and applied skin lighteners. In stanza 1 the speaker states that this group of black people are very stubborn, so stubborn that even shouting at them like Mongane Serote shouts at the apartheid system in his writings, could not change their whiteness seeking behaviour. The persona directly conscientises the

readers and the non-whites that what the non-whites believed was nothing other than “bullshit”. This is conveyed in the following lines:

To say bullshit! to you all  
with the gusto of Mongane  
is not meated bone for y'all.  
Maybe this jive is not for bluessing,  
But then who's to lament?  
You all know it,  
you  
blacks with so-called class  
you  
you non-whites, you.

(Gwala 1977:33)

The imagery of “bullshit” is striking because it highlights the extent to which the speaker hates the behaviour of the middle class bantu blacks. The word “bullshit” in line 1 is a taboo slang, meaning exaggerated or foolish talk, nonsense, deceitful or pretentious talk. This word reinforces the word “jive” in line 4, the word “jive” is also slang and refers to a talk which is meaningless or dishonest. The persona in this poem suggests that the middle class bantu blacks were not being honest with themselves. Everything that they believed was mistaken and it was important for them to subscribe to the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

In line 8 the phrase “so called” and the repetition of the word “you” four times in lines 7,9 and 10 highlights the intensity of anger and disgust that the speaker hold for the non-whites. The speaker distances himself from non-whites.

In stanza 2 Gwala displays his poetic creativity by using the metaphor of Black grownup kids to refer to the non-whites and the metaphor of Black toddler to refer to those black people who subscribe to the ideas of Black Consciousness. The speaker asserts that those blacks who do not emulate white people's way of life are more beautiful than those who try to emulate white beauty. The black conscious people are described in this poem as “suckchewing the black soil”. The imagery of “plastic

architecture” that covers “smothering” Marabastad town is precise because it brilliantly highlights the idea that the beauty made based on the white values is fictional. This is evident in the following lines:

Black grownup kids  
munching cream crackers  
can't reach  
the beauty of  
a Black toddler suckchewing  
the black soil,  
You all know it.  
Plastic architecture  
is smothering, Marabastad,  
Sho you all know it.

(Gwala 1971:33)

Moodley (in Pityana, et al 1992:147) states that the Black Consciousness movement raised concern about the extent to which blacks were bleaching, creaming and straightening their hair, at great cost, to fit unattainable white images of beauty. Stanza 3 uses a strident voice to express his contempt for the things that the non-whites did which were not in line with the culture of black people. The following lines say it all:

Your non-white woman  
rouge themselves  
redder than Jesus' blood,  
They make Cutex play mommon games  
on their faked finger nails,  
When a brother has got them Black

They'll tell you they won't go back-  
won't go back you, phony jive ass men.  
When you can't love Black  
then you wish to be white.  
Non-whites!

(Gwala 1977:33)

The contrast between the rouge colour and the colour of the blood of Jesus is striking because it conscientises the reader about the extent to which the speaker is disgusted with the rouging behaviour of non-white women. The non-white women did not only have fake faces but also had fake finger nails. The imagery of "phony jive ass men" conscientises the readers that to the non-white women black men are fictitious, counterfeit stupid people who reject blackness in favour of whiteness.

Stanza 4 is made up of lines 32-48 Gwala uses striking imageries to educate the readers what constitutes non-whites. He paints the picture of non-whites as people who create problems for black people. The following lines are self-explanatory:

Non-whites you've become  
a fuckburden to Blacks.  
Non-whites you're hardboiled eggs;  
Your golden intentions are a threat  
to the nation's health.  
You don dashikis  
then go off on super-super talks  
in praise of the London/New York  
that you've never come to know:  
'When I was in London...' New York  
that you've never come...'you'll say,

just to seek oneupmanship,  
eelslipping the argument.  
You avoid ghetto truths  
in your neighbourhood  
Yet you'll go around  
bragging of the 'real rough' place  
that's whirling the blackman  
for a drown.

(Gwala 1977:34)

The imagery of “fuckburden” is striking because it conscientises the readers that non-whites are a source of trouble to black people. The imagery of “hardboiled eggs” highlights that their way of life and of thinking did not benefit the black nation but endangers the well-being of the nation. Instead of attending to the socio-political problem facing black people in South Africa the non-whites make long irrelevant speeches “super-super talks” in which they praise European countries. The non-whites are a show off this is conveyed in the word “one-upmanship”. This word “one-upmanship” is an activity or skill which results in someone getting an advantage over someone else.

In stanza 5 there are two striking rhetorical questions through which Gwala sought to conscientise the readers that on-whites poses a threat to the black nation:

Non-whites, how can you be a wolf

With a cat's face?

Non-white, how can you??

What kind of hooch is this you're in?

(Gwala 1977:34)

The imagery of a “wolf with a cat’s face” is striking because it conscientises the readers that even though the non-whites may look as innocent as the face of a cat in reality they are as dangerous as a vicious lion.

### 7.3 CONCLUSION

The dominant ideology of the apartheid system interpellated the average people to assume that all blacks experienced oppression in the same degree and that all black people were all black. The authorial ideology which is the message conveyed throughout the selected poems is that there were black people who did not identify with the majority of the oppressed black people. In the poems non-whites are challenged to change their insincere attitudes and behaviour.

This chapter has shown that for Gwala and Mtshali non-whites constituted of black people who were educated in missionary institutions, those who studied overseas, all those black people who worked as civil servants in the apartheid institutions including Indians who were business owners including some coloureds. The in-depth analysis showed that the poems conscientises the reader that non-whites were part of the problem because they had vested interest in the apartheid system. The beautiful idiomatic expressions and, poetic language that Mtshali and Gwala use to convey message constitute an aesthetic ideology.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8. POEMS PROBING WHITE LIBERALISM

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Biko (2007:69) the biggest mistake that the black world ever made was to assume that whoever opposed apartheid was an ally. Biko (2007:71) argues that white liberals identified themselves with black people in order to appease their own conscience, for Biko they could do this so far as it did not sever all their ties with their relatives on the other side of the colour line. Biko argues that by being white, the liberals were the beneficiaries of the status-quo. Thus in their minds they were comfortable as things stood and therefore should not bother with change.

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the selected poems of SSGM that warn black people to stop collaborating with white liberals. The Dominant Ideology that the poems sought to subvert was that the white liberals were good whites who hated apartheid and identified themselves with the struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed black people. The Authorial Ideology expressed in the selected poems analysed in this chapter is that white liberals were hypocrites; they had to be excluded from anything that had to do with the struggle because their inclusion arrested the progress of the struggle. The white liberals were part of the problem because they were the beneficiaries of the apartheid policy. The Aesthetic Ideology is the beautiful stanzas with allusive language through which the conscientisation message is conveyed.

#### 8.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED POEMS

Biko (2207:70) argues that integrating the liberals as an effective way of opposing apartheid was impossible to achieve in South Africa. He argues that it was because this integration was foisted on two parties whose entire upbringing had been to support the lie that one race was superior and the others were inferior. In his poem entitled "PAPER CURTAINS" Gwala (1977:14-15) Gwala uses a striking dialectical reasoning to challenge the integration based on the liberal ideology. The striking colloquial tone in which this poem is written makes this poem more forceful and realistic.

The refrain of the phrase "If you say" and the pronoun "you" throughout this poem helps to give this poem a striking conversational and forceful tone. The poem is written in the form of apostrophe as the speaker directly addresses an absent person, this imagined person could be a white liberal. The speaker alludes that the white liberals look into South African problem through paper curtains; this implies that the white liberals had a poor view or misconception of the nature of socio-political problems in South Africa.

Biko (2007:99) further argues that the basic problem in South Africa has been analysed by liberal whites as being apartheid whereas the real problem was white racism. It is from this view that Biko (2007:69) adds that the integration proposed by the liberals was going to fail because it was foisted on two parties whose entire upbringing had been to support the lie that one race is superior and the others are inferior. Sepamla registers this view in his first stanza; he speaker challenges the white liberals for being hypocrites. The white liberals argue that it is possible for the different racial groups in South Africa to be integrated into one peaceful nation that lives in harmony despite their huge differences in the background. The speaker argues that this idea is very insincere because whites are very rich economically while blacks are very poor economically. This is evident in the following lines:

If you say  
Black, White and Yellow  
can make or break the walls that surround them  
then you shall not shame yourself  
by clothing them  
Black, White and Yellow  
in tattered rags  
picked up from the gutters  
of the Stock Exchange.

(Gwala 1977:14-15)

Biko (2007:71) argues that liberals were the beneficiaries of the apartheid system as a result they were not serious about the attainment of true changes. Sepamla reinforce this view in stanza 2 when he writes that the liberals enjoyed living a wealthy life in the wealthy suburbs of Lime hill. In line11 Gwala uses a striking imagery of “cancer symptom” to suggest that the liberals claimed to hate accumulation of wealth at the expense of other races. The imagery of “tumour” in line 14 suggests that the liberals ‘s love for the privileges offer to them by the apartheid state was the real problem that made identification with the black community impossible. This is evident in the following lines:

If you say  
Limehill is a cancer symptom  
Then you shall not deplore  
the incision of a surgeon's knife  
that will encircle the tumour and  
cut it out  
bringing new life to the body cells.

(Gwala 1977:14)

In stanza 4 Gwala argues that there are double standards in the liberals' claim for change because while advocating for change they were also frightened by any swift move towards the attainment of that freedom. Sepamla uses striking imageries of the "speedneedle" and "meter" [speedometer] to highlight that the fight for freedom should be intensified. It is the very intensification of the liberation struggle which was feared by the liberals that would result in the attainment of freedom. Freedom could only be achieved through the sacrifices of both blacks and whites Sepamla argues that the liberals were not keen to make any sacrifices. For Sepamla "Sacrifice" is the catalyst that would bring freedom to South Africa. This registered in the following lines:

And if you cry change  
you shall not shrink  
at the slightest shaking  
of the speedneedle  
as it races across the meter of our lives  
to register the pace of the motor  
that drives home freedom. Sacrifice.

(Gwala 1977:14)

Biko (2007:98) argues that black people are described as militant, furious and impatient when they define themselves in relation to their social position. Gwala reinforces this idea in stanza 4 when he points that liberals accuses black freedom fighters for taking the struggle too far. Biko argues that liberals accused the black freedom fighters for threatening peaceful relations by being overhasty and running too fast. Gwala directly tells the liberals that if they say all the above about black people and the pace at which black people pursued the attainment of their liberation, then the liberals were hypocrites.

The word choice used in this poem is striking, for example in line 29 the liberals are explicitly referred to as hypocrites. A hypocrite is a person who pretends to believe in something or to feel something when in actual fact he or she does not. The term “stuntist fraud” refers to a criminal action which is intended to get attention for the people responsible for it. The word “stunt” means to prevent growth or development of something from reaching its limits. This suggests that the presence of liberals in the struggle for the liberation of black people delays the attainment of that liberation.

In lines 30-31 the speaker suggests that liberalism will one day lose its effect. In lines 32-37 the speaker warns the liberals by comparing liberalism to paper curtains. This suggests that liberalism as a world view is very problematic because it prevents the liberals from seeing the reality of the South African political issues clearly.

Gwala (1982:25) addresses himself to the ideology of racism in the poem entitled “To the race-problem solver”. Only a reader who knows the background of South African politics can draw conclusion as to who the poem is addressing in this poem. Gwala is actually addressing the white liberals in this poem.

Biko (2007:69) explains that the banning of the political movements in 1960 opened the stage for the liberals to continue to fight for the rights of blacks. Biko states that the liberals defined to the black people what they should fight for. He adds that liberals wanted or made it a political principle that all groups opposing the status quo must be non-racial in structure, liberals argued that if one stands for non-racialism one could not in any way adopt racial policies. In this poem Gwala was responding to this debate between the liberals and black people who were fighting against racism.

In this poem Gwala is suggesting that liberals were hypocrites. They were not serious about solving the problem of racism in South Africa. They did not do enough even though they had power to do so. This is evident in the following lines:

At least if you really wished  
you really could  
if you really could  
you 'd really have to  
It's how the ball has pitched  
(Gwala 1982:25)

Biko (2007:71) argues that the liberals identified themselves with black people in order to appease their own conscience; they could this so far as it did not sever all their colour line. By being white they were the beneficiaries of the status-quo. Thus at the back of their minds they were comfortable as things stood and therefore should not bother about change.

In his poem entitled "NIBBLING" Sepamla (1984:35) expresses the view that liberals are hypocrites. This is registered in stanza 1 of this poem where the speaker alludes that some people resort to creating their own realities as opposed to the South African political situation. The speaker asserts that he hates black people who confront white people and the speaker admits that he too, at times finds himself compelled to confront white people. This is evident in the following lines:

there are people who make truth  
in their own light  
like i do  
every time i say:  
i don't like black people  
who say to the white man  
always:  
'to hell with you!'  
i say so myself  
sometimes!  
(Sepamla 1984:35)

In stanza 2 the speaker asserts that he dislikes self-proclaiming liberals because it reminds him of the political bankruptcy of the white political liberalism. This is highlighted in the following lines:

i don't like white people

who say

sometimes:

'i am a liberal!'

they make me think

of other liberals

always!

(Sepamla1984:35)

Biko (2007:71) argues that liberals were arrogant and assumed a monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement. In stanza 3 Sepamla says that is very hard for black people to trust the white liberals despite the stand point they may assume. The speaker hates liberals who pretended to admire black people who were successful by praising them for being clever. The speaker asserts that these expressions are motivated by arrogance. This is evident in the following lines:

when I'm talking to a person

especially

a white lady

who hasn't said she's a liberal

it doesn't seem right to hear:

'isn't he clever?

isn't he marvellous?

said of black man

who is a success.

the expressions

sound tainted  
with a tight-fisted  
generosity  
always!  
(Sepamla 1984:35)

In stanza 4 the speaker implies that liberals are white people who are perfect flatterers and whose behaviours make him suspicious. This is how the stanza reads:

I admire white people  
who are perfect flatterers  
They leave me  
With only one thing:  
Suspicion!  
(Sepamla 1984:36)

According to Biko (2007:55) black people were not keen to club together because they were told that to do so would be racist. Sepamla asserts that liberals are liars and misinterpret the anger of black people as anti-whiteness. This view is evident in the following lines:

i hate lies  
one of which tries  
to explain my bitterness  
as anti-whiteness.  
of course i do hate  
  
some people-  
i am in love

with mankind!

(Sepamla 1984:36)

In his poem entitled "IF" Sepamla (1984:100) uses a striking dialectical reasoning to challenge the hypocrisy of the white liberals. In this poem Sepamla alludes to various sets of actions, practices and tendencies that white liberals display in order to impress black people and to prove that they are liberals. The liberals also do all these things in order to create an impression that they are good people because identify themselves with the struggle for the liberation of black people. In this poem Sepamla argues that if liberals were really committed to the emancipation of the black people they had to be prepared to sacrifice the privileges provided to them by the apartheid system. Biko (2007:24) confirms this view by arguing that no matter what white people did, the colour of their was skin-his passport to privilege and always put him miles ahead of the black people. For Steve Biko no white man can escape being part of the oppressor's camp.

Biko (2007:85) states that if the white in general did not like what was happening to black people, they had the power in them to stop it there and then. Blacks, on the other hand had every reason to bundle them together and blame them jointly. In his poem entitled "TELL ME NEWS" Sepamla (1984:101) challenges the white government and its liberal newspaper for hiding the double standards of the South African apartheid government. Sepamla uses a very striking dialectical style where the speaker presents two contrasting messages in order to conscientise his readers to arrive to a particular truth.

In each stanza the speaker confronts his listener about various cruel incidents that had happened to black people, each stanza contains definite statements which are followed by a striking rhetorical question.

In stanza 1 when the speaker raises the question on whether the prisoner who was found hanging in the police cells with a blanket was "punchdrunk". The speaker is implying that apartheid was deliberately involved into the death of this prisoner. The speaker does not believe that the prisoner was punchdrunk. The term "punchdrunk" means being tired and confused after putting a lot mental effort into an activity, and you find it difficult to think clearly. This is how stanza 1 reads:

Tell me of a brother

who hanged himself in prison

with a blanket

was he punchdrunk

(Sepamla 1984:101)

In stanza 2 the speaker raises the question on whether the black man who threw himself out of the window from the ninth floor was frustrated by loneliness as a result he could not hold tight in the building. The speaker implies that the apartheid government was behind this murder and apartheid was to blame. This is how stanza 2 reads:

Tell me of a brother

who flung himself to death

from the ninth floor of a building

did his grip fumble with the loneliness up there

(Sepamla 1984:101)

In stanza 4 the speaker raises a question on whether a black woman who became pregnant while in the police cells had been charged under the immorality Act. The speaker implies that there were double standards in the way the apartheid regime enforced its law. When a white policeman slept with a black woman no one was charged under the immorality law. This is how stanza 4 reads:

Oh, tell me of a sister

who returned home pregnant

from a prison cell

has she been charged under immorality Act

(Sepamla 1984:101)

In stanza 5 when the speaker poses a question on whether a black man who hung himself with a piece of his torn pair of jeans, was hiding a pair of scissor in the cell. The speaker is actually implying that government officials killed the black man and created a story to hide their crime. This is how stanza 5 reads:

Tell me of a brother

who hanged himself in jail

with a piece of his torn pair of jeans  
was he hiding a pair of scissors in the cell

(Sepamla 1984:101)

In stanza 6 when the speaker poses a question to a respectable white man whether the gruesome sight of a mangled corpse has not begun to sit on his conscience. The speaker implies that white people during apartheid did not have a conscience. This reinforces the idea that whatever good actions the white liberals took in support of the liberation struggle was motivated by their need to clear their guilty conscience. This is how stanza 6 reads:

Tell me, tell me sir  
has the gruesome sight  
of a mangled corpse  
not began to sit on your conscience.

(Sepamla 1984:101)

### 8.3 CONCLUSION

The in-depth analysis of the selected poems in this chapter showed that the motive behind the poetry SSGM was to conscientize black people to look at liberals with suspicion. The analysis revealed that the aim behind the writings of Biko and the poets under study was to conscientise readers about how the liberals identified themselves with black people in order to appease their own consciences.

The tone that is expressed both in the writings of Biko and in the poems is that by being white the liberals were the beneficiaries of the status-quo. And because of this at the back of their minds they were comfortable as things stood and therefore should not bother about change. The in-depth analysis has revealed that the motive behind the poetry of Sepamla, Gwala, Serote and Mtshali made black people aware of Biko's (2007:69) warning that not everyone who opposed apartheid was their ally. On the other hand the analysis revealed that the motive of the poetry was to conscientise even the white liberals that one is either part of the solution or part of the problem (Biko 2007:137).

The dominant ideology that the selected poems sought to subvert in the minds of black people was the common belief that white liberals were good people whose advice could be taken seriously and be used by blacks when deciding the course of their struggle for liberation. The authorial ideology expressed throughout the selected poems in this chapter is that liberals were hypocrites and their presence in the liberation struggle for the black people removed the focus of attention from essentials and shifted it to ill-defined philosophical concepts that were irrelevant to the black people (Biko 2007:25).

The aesthetic ideology refers to the techniques used by the poets in their presentation of the subject matter. It is the dialectical analysis of the role of the liberals in the liberation struggle of the black people. As has been shown in the analysis the dialectical presentation of the subject matter in these poems has produced beautifully striking rhetorical questions and figurative meanings. These are the artistic elements of the selected poems particularly the way in which the poets use language to articulate their views effectively. The form and the language beautifully complement the theme.

## CHAPTER NINE

### 9. POEMS PROBING BANTUSTANS

#### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the selected poems that conscientize [tell] the reader to reject Bantustan governments. The reader is told directly and indirectly that the Bantustan institutions were designed to serve the interest of the apartheid system at their expense. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1990:85) defines Bantustan as any partially self-governing areas reserved for Black South Africans. Page 564 of the dictionary also refers to Bantustan as the homeland. It defines homeland as one's native land. An area in South Africa reserved for a particular African people. This dictionary records that name homeland was the official name for a Bantustan.

Pampallis (1996:186-187) state that Bantustans were established after the passing of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959. At first there were eight Bantustans or 'Bantu Homelands' but later increased to ten. Pampallis mentions the following Bantustans: Venda, Lebowa, Gazankulu, KwaNgwane, and kwaNdebele, Bophuthatswana, Qwa-qwa, KwaZulu, Transkei and Ciskei.

Pape et al. (1998:338) identify three reasons for the formation of Bantustans. First, the division of the territory of South Africa was designed to enable whites to keep control of the major urban areas, the most fertile farming land, most of the major mines, and most of industrial production. Pape et al records that while black homelands had political control over territory, they had little access to the real wealth of the country. Access to urban employment for people living in the homelands was restricted by the influx control.

The second reason that Pape et al record is that the homeland system was intended to create an international image for South Africa-one of giving independence to black people rather than oppressing them through apartheid. The third reason is that the homelands system was set to create a group of a black population who would have a stake in the existing political system. Pape et al add that many of the leaders of the homelands earned high salaries and had considerable power within their communities. The authors further argue that the apartheid government wanted to promote this group as leaders of the black population, and thereby to provide an alternative to leadership of the liberation movements.

Pape et al. (1998:339) also report that even though the apartheid government tried to promote the homelands internationally as a method of decolonisation, they were rejected by most international bodies. The United Nations never recognised the Bantustans and eventually came to view the liberation movements as the legitimate representatives of the South African people. These reasons formed the basis under which the Black Consciousness conscientized black people to reject Bantustan institutions.

Biko (2007:90) argues that it was necessary for the black people to reject Bantustan approach because it was a solution given to blacks by the whites, the same people who had created the problem. Biko could not believe that the same people who were guilty of subjugating and oppressing black people would expect them to believe that they could design a means of escape from that situation.

Biko (2007:92) identifies four reasons why black people had to reject the Bantustan approach: (1) the aim behind Bantustan approach was to create a false sense of hope amongst the black so that attempt by black people to collectively enunciate their aspirations should be dampened (2) Bantustans were designed to offer a new but false direction in the struggle of the black people, it separated the black people struggle into eight different struggles for eight false freedoms that were prescribed long ago (3) Bantustans were designed to cheat the outside world into believing that there was some validity in multinational theory so that South Africa could go then go back into international sport, trade, politics etc. with a soothed conscience (4) Bantustan approach was designed to boast up as much as possible the intertribal competition and hostility that is bound to come up so that the collective strength and resistance of the black people could be fragmented.

The Dominant Ideology that Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali sought to challenge in the minds of black people was that the Bantustan approach was a solution to their problem because the black tribes were self-governing in their own territories. The Authorial Ideology is the message that the poets convey through the poems that the Bantustan approach had to be rejected because (as Biko put it) the aim behind it was to create a false sense of hope amongst black people so that any attempt by blacks to collectively enunciate their aspirations should be dampened. The Aesthetic Ideology is the verses with beautiful allusive language, rhymes and rhythms. The fact that the selected poems probe the real history of the liberation struggle with regards to Bantustans proves the validity of the Marxist thinkers that writers narrate history, make sense of it, observe it and describe the world. And that literature is about the real life (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:172-173).

## 9.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS

In his dramatic monologue poem entitled “WORDS, WORDS, WORDS” Sepamla (1984:104) conscientises his readers about the power of language, that language has been used in a clever way by the apartheid regime to define and defend the logic behind the existence of the Bantustan governments. The language has been twisted to erase the existence of tribes in favour of nations. In this poem Sepamla implies that this is done in favour of the apartheid government. The whole poem is marked with a striking sarcasm as the speaker mocks the way the apartheid system justifies the existence of the Bantustan states. This is shown in the following lines:

We don't speak of tribal wars anymore

we say simply faction fights

there are no tribes around here

only nations

it makes sense you see

'cause from there

one moves to multinational

it makes sense you get me

'cause from there

one gets one's homeland

which is a reasonable idea

'cause from there

one can dabble with independence

-the bloodless revolution

(Sepamla 1984:104)

The pronoun “we” is striking because it makes the reader wonder whether it refers to the official of the apartheid government or to the speaker representing the black community. The pronoun “we” is also striking because it creates the in-group versus out-group (them) setting. But what is important is

that the dramatic monologue throws light to the stupid logic behind the existence of the Bantustan institutions. The reason for denying the existence of tribal wars and tribes in South Africa was to create a perception that there are many different nations in South Africa. This is highlighted in line 7 in the use of the word “multinational”, this word suggests that South Africa within itself were several small independent countries.

Biko (2007:89) confirms this idea by stating that there were eight Bantustans or homelands which were autonomous states to cater for various “nations” that make up the South African native population. In lines 13-15 the speaker makes a very sarcastic remark when he alludes that the idea of independence will deserve a warm applause, because it suggests the possibility of achieving independence without bloodshed. This is highlighted in the phrase “bloodless revolution” which suggests that there would be changes in South Africa with the use of the armed struggle. The word revolution refers to a sudden and great change especially a violent change of a system of government.

In stanza 2 the speaker uses a forceful tone to conscientise the readers there are words that are manipulated by people who are in power in the society. The speaker highlights that there are words that some people reject and do not want to use or hear them being used by other people. The speaker finds it interesting that while certain words are rejected by some people there were some who took the very same words and reshaped them and twisted their meaning to suit their egocentric agendas. This is discussed in stanza 2 where the speaker replaces the word “tribes” by the word “nations” in order to create an idea that there several nations in South Africa and this is done to affirm the existence of Bantustan states in South Africa. In lines 23-24 there is a striking simile where the words are compared to policemen. There is also a striking personification in these lines as the words are given the ability to “stalk”.

The word “stalk” means to follow as closely as possible without being heard or seen. The black South African can easily identify with the experience of being stalked by policemen because it was part and parcel of their everyday lives. In line 28 the word “spell” refers to spoken words which are thought to have magical power or the condition of being under influence or control of such words. The word “spell” therefore suggests that the speaker believes that there are words that have been used to bring bad luck on them as black people. This suggests that the speaker believes that there some words have the power to shape the destiny of a person. The phrase “poetic justice” is effective because it highlights the idea that there were groups of people who twisted the meaning of words, changed particular facts and rules in order to suit their own ulterior motives.

In his poem entitled “Ezi Piece-piece of Land” Sepamla (1984:127-128) conscientise his readers about the negative effects of the Bantustan legislation on the everyday life of black people. This displays the poetic creativity of Sepamla as he blends isiXhosa and English to convey the feelings of black people with regards to separate development theory.

In stanza 1 the speaker deliberately and provocatively distances himself from the Bantustan legislation. This is registered in line 1 in the phrase “i-law yomlungu”. This phrase can be translated into English as “the law of the white people”. In following line the speaker alludes that one’s identity changes over night even though one has never made an application for change of status. The speaker registers his dissatisfaction and disillusion about the subject position in which he finds himself. This is highlighted in the following lines:

Ag man i-law yomlungu is just full of watchmecal

I mean how you can explain le fact

one sleeps a Zulu one day

and then suddenly i-next day makes you Swazi

when ndingathanga ask for i-change of status

(Sepamla 1984:126)

In stanza 2 the speaker focuses on his personal identity. In line 6 he defines himself as a “polecat”, a polecat is a small wild fierce animal that lives in Europe, Asia and North Africa, which has dark brown fur and a strong and unpleasant smell. This imagery of “polecat” is striking because it symbolises black people. Black people have the same skin colour as a “polecat”, like “polecat” black people are found in most parts of the world and like a “polecat” black people can be said to have a strong and unpleasant smell, this explains the nature of their discrimination.

In stanza 3 the readers are told that Bantustan institutions created unnecessary inconveniences for black people. The speaker alludes to the oppression, scarcity of food and work. The basic human rights like access to decent education, travelling freely from one country to another country etc. It is interesting to note that the speaker might be provocatively referring to homelands as countries.

In stanza 4 the speaker attributes all this inconveniences that the black people had to face to the Bantustan legislation and he challenges black people to clearly reject the Bantustan institutions. Biko

(2007:92) states that Bantustans were designed to offer a new but false direction in the struggle of blacks, it separated the black people's struggle into eight different struggles for eight false freedoms that were prescribed a long time ago. This is evident in the following lines:

Man i don't like le nto bayi-perpetrata on me  
ngoba over the years ndazi i-oppression  
plus ne- scarcity of food and work  
ke why nge-one morning ndithi wake up to freedom  
yi-elimination by degree this whole thing  
which I don't care for  
yile wild-buck or rabbit's life-  
ka jump here jump there boy  
if you must survive  
hayi man I don't want it I'm clear  
ndithi leave me ngezo way zam

(Sepamla 1984:126-127)

In stanza 6 Sepamla uses a striking sarcasm in line 37 when the speaker refers to the Bantustan legislation as "le law-ndini", this can be translated into English as "the so called law". This imagery highlights the high degree of contempt that the speaker has for the Bantustan legislation. In lines 41-42 there is a striking idiom "give the devil his long rope" because it suggests that some black people were not keen to challenge the Bantustan legislation with the hope that the apartheid state will one day suffer for its own action. In line 43-50 the speaker makes a direct allusion to the Bantustans governments. He hates the Bantustan legislation so much that he longs for a [piece] peace of mind. Sepamla deliberately misspelt the word "peace" to induce a poetic effect in the poem. The phrase "ndifung'uma" can be translated to mean "i swear by my mother" explains that the speaker hates the way the Bantustan legislation operates. This is shown in the following lines:

Now I'm telling you man this business is getting worse  
Kuba ezi piece-piece of land

Kuthwa zi-homelands

Zithwa exercise like that

(Sepamla1984:127)

In stanza 7 the speaker conscientises the readers that the Bantustan legislation made it hard for black people to plan and organize their lives as human beings. This is registered in the following lines:

Xa uthi look and tell yourself

what are they doing kule psychology yam

ngale philosophy ye-separation

you cannot plan ahead

xa i-future ingena sure

I'm a feather in the wind

Bandiblowisha this and that way

as if andina-common sense

I mean even a tree can't survive kwezi-condition

(Sepamla 1984:127)

The phrase "xa uthi look and tell yourself" in line 51 is striking because it challenges the readers to make a self-introspection. In line 52 the reference to "psychology" suggests that the Bantustan legislation affects the psychological wellbeing of black people. The imagery of the "feather in the wind" is striking as it suggests that black people were discriminated against by the apartheid system through the Bantustan institutions. The speaker provokes the minds of the readers by posing this question; what is the point of naming a child "Nomathemba" if there is nothing that black people could hope for in their country.

Biko (2007:95) states that the Black consciousness calls upon blacks to provide their initiative and to act at their own pace and not that created for them by the system. In lines 66-70 Sepamla affirms this idea when he alludes that he did not like the revolution that had been thrust upon him. But he

wants to grab the opportunities and stage a revolution of his own kind at his own chosen time. This is evident in the following lines:

I don't like le revolution  
abayithi thrust upon me  
I want to choose my own time  
ukuthi grab i-opportunities  
and then stage i-revolution in my life  
  
(Sepamla 1984:128)

According to Biko (2007:34) the Black Consciousness sought to talk to the black man in a language that is his own. He argues that it was only by recognizing the basic set-up in the black world that one will come to realise the urgent need for a re-awakening of the sleeping masses. In his poem entitled "The Odyssey" Sepamla (1984:66-68) uses striking prosaic language to directly conscientise the readers about the need to look at the South Africa socio-political circumstances from a deeper level. This poem is a classic example of conscientisation poetry because it openly instructs the readers to explore and discover issues that are not readily visible or noticeable.

In stanza the speaker challenges the readers to explore and discover various aspects of the land. The word "explore" in line 1 means to analyse, examine and to take a look around. In line 2 the word "discover" means to disclose, bring to light or uncover or to discern or to dig up. All these words are meant to challenge the readers to be conscious of what they were not noticing in the land of the speaker and speaker's people. In line 2 the readers are challenged to notice "where the sun shines". The phrase "where the sun shines" symbolically refers to the part of South Africa that belongs to white people, a place where there are world class housing and world class facilities.

In line 3 the phrase "where shadows linger eternally" symbolically refers to the place where black people live, townships and reserves. The reserved areas were under the black chiefs which were found in the Bantustan governments. In line 3 the allusion to the "peace" that "sits ready to walk away" tells the reader to see that the little peace that one could see in South Africa was illusionary. In lines 5-6 the imagery of the "wild game" that sniffs and run away conscientise the reader of the imminent civil war in South Africa. In line 6 the disastrous future is implied in the word "scamper", this word means to run in fear.

In stanza 2 there is a striking pun in the manner the word “lie” is used because it means both to sleep and to speak falsely. The imagery of “mountain humps” symbolises the huge problems that people had to face in South Africa. In stanza 3 the readers are conscientised to be steady while making their assessment of the South African socio-political situation. The readers are instructed not to jump into quick conclusions because they might miss all the necessary discoveries. This is expressed in the following lines:

by all means make these discoveries

but don't be in haste

to climb

to tumble

to pronounce

(Sepamla 1984:66)

In stanza 6 Sepamla reminds the readers that people in South Africa were divided into various categories that he and the apartheid regime provocatively call nations. The speaker wants the readers to think about the possibility of having people from various backgrounds living together in peace and harmony. This is expressed in the following lines:

discover the many nations of our land

for ours is the land of tribes

the African

the English

the Afrikaner

the coloured

the Indian

the Jew

and etc,etc, and etc

(Sepamla 1984:66-67)

In stanza 7 Sepamla argues that the Bantustan theory resulted into tribal educational institutions and tribal based media institutions. In lines 37-41 the speaker seeks to conscientise the readers to be suspicious of the educational system as well as the media reports. This is registered in the following lines:

discover that we are far from being an ignorant people

for ours is a land of many tribal universities

where many read unbiased tribal newspapers

for ours is the land of sabc

the guardian of modern-day twists

(Sepamla 1984:67)

In line 32 Sepamla has demonstrated his poetic creativity when he employs a striking litotes, the meaning of line 32 is that people of South Africa were ignorant. In line 2 the speaker points to the existence of tribal universities as proof that South Africa was ignorant. Again in line 39 there is a striking use of the positive to highlight the negative, the word “unbiased” is used to mean [very bias]. The SABC radio and South African newspapers are biased in their presentation of the South African political circumstances.

### 9.3 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the selected poems in this chapter warns people about the nature of Bantustan governments. In their treatment of the issue of Bantustans the poets SSGM probed the Bantustan issues so that black people would understand what Bantustans stood for. And most importantly, what Bantustans had long been believed to be by some black people. That is the belief that something good could be achieved by blacks through the Bantustan approach. In the poems the poets directly and indirectly tell [conscientizing] the readers that Bantustans had to be rejected.

The analysis also echoes the same concerns about Bantustans as expressed by Biko in his essay about Bantustans. This confirms the validity of the claim expressed in this study that the poetry of SSGM conscientized the readers along the lines of Black Consciousness ideology.

The fact that the poems address the reality of Bantustans and the way Bantustans were used by the white government to create an illusionary freedom for black people confirm the Marxist view that literature is a knowledge of reality and that for it to be reflected in literature, reality has to pass

through the creative, form giving work of the writer (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:171). The analysis has also shown that the poets conscientize the reader by taunting white people and portraying them as bad people. This taunting aspect of the poems helps to make the poetry a powerful tool for conscientisation.

## CHAPTER TEN

### 10. POEMS PROBING POETRY WRITING

#### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the preferred writing style which was driven by socio-political needs rather than the expected poetic aesthetics. Mtshali (in Chapman ed, 1982:100) states that the motive behind his poetry was to inspire his fellow blacks: to be proud, to strive, to seek their true identity as a single group. In fact for Mtshali (in Chapman, 1982:103) the primary motive behind the writing of his poetry was to satisfy an inner feeling, an urge to create something. The secondary motive was to try and communicate these inner feelings to anyone who happened to care and listen. This study argues that conscientisation constitutes the very acts of writing with the aim of satisfying inner feelings, the very act of writing with the aim of trying to communicate these inner feelings to anyone who happened to care and listen.

The white elitist literary critics evaluate the goodness of black poetry in terms of the quality of English language and decorative literary devices. According to Ulliyatt (1977:51-62) the deficiency of black South African poetry is in its lightness of tone. He argues that the black poets in South Africa persist in using almost every occasion to castigate the prevailing system of government without regard for the basic precepts of poetry. Ulliyatt argues that literary critics must insist on poetic merit, craftsmanship, discipline, art and imagination. In an interview with Lynda J White (White 1994: Appendix B) Mrs McDonald who was the HoD of English in High school supported the view that black poetry is inferior to that written by the great Eurocentric poets. She argued that black poets writing in English are writing in a second language and thus struggle to use its idiom correctly.

In response Biko (2007:130) questions the language used in the document that was circulated at a particular funeral, and argues that the writer of a document had to use precise words he knew could convey a precise meaning. He argues that the Englishman in the middle may have a problem in understanding the document but the black crowd to which the document is directed will have no problem in understanding it. The white critics forgot that the black poets never claimed to use a high standard of English to display a high class English. The motive behind their poetry was to convey urgent messages to their fellow blacks.

Mtshali (in Chapman, 1982:110) states that the English that black poets use in their poetry is not the Queen's language as written by British poets for example Wordsworth and Coleridge. He describes the English they use as the language of urgency. They use this English because they have an urgent message to deliver to anyone who cares to listen to it. Mtshali argues that as black poets they had

no time to embellish urgent messages with unnecessary and cumbersome ornaments like rhyme, iambic pentameter, abstract figures of speech, and an ornate and lofty style.

It is from this background that this study argues that the motive behind poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali was to educate black readers and to whoever cared to listen to a deeper self-consciousness. The problem with the white elitist literary critics was their evaluation of black poetry they divorced it from its socio-political context. Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey (1995:167) argue that Marxist theorist literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality.

## 10.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED POEMS

Cornwell (1980:9-10) states that calling something literature depends on the relationship between literary and extraordinary orders. He argues that what is literary in one system is not necessarily in another. This suggests that a literary critic cannot be an expert of all literary even of those literary forms that stem outside his socio-political context. Gwala (1989:71) confirms the idea that literature can be better understood only if it studied within its socio-political context when he asserts that, literature is born in the process of social crisis and political change.

In his poem titled "LITERARY CRITICS" Mtshali (1980:62) conscientises his readers that literary critics are not as innocent and honest as they may seem to be in the eyes of an unsuspecting reader. In this poem Mtshali argues that the literary critics and the authors of literary works write from two different motives. The literary critics review the literary work with ulterior motives. Mtshali brilliantly uses run-on lines and carefully chosen diction to express his inner feelings about the literary critics in the first 6 lines of this poem:

Critics are enemies of the truth  
and lovers of pomposity and falsity  
which they parade with all the inanities of  
intellectual tripe and sanctimonious sob-songs.  
They write in ornate style  
and pick your work with a fine tooth-comb  
(Mtshali 1980:62)

In the above lines Mtshali states that literary critics sacrifice the truth in favour of intellectualism. The motive behind their writing was to show off their beautiful writing skills in order to be admired by the readers. Mtshali's diction appeals to the readers because it is deliberately strident. There is a beautiful personification in line 1 where the speaker suggests that the "truth" had the qualities of being an enemy of the literary critics. The use personification is also used in line 2 where the speaker suggests that the literary critics were in love with "pomposity" and "falsity".

The virtues "pomposity" and "falsity" are deliberately given human qualities and this helps to give this stanza a forceful tone. The word "pomposity" means that the literary critics pretend to be serious and important in their review of the work of a writer. The word "falsity" means that the literary critics are insincere and dishonest in their assessment of the work of the writers. In the imagery of "the inanities of intellectual tripe" means that despite the claim of being intellectuals their writing is extremely silly because it lacks real meaning.

The word "tripe" suggests that their writing is full of stupid ideas. In lines 5-6 Mtshali asserts that the literary critics in their assessment of a literary work avoid looking at the literary work as a whole but they pick on certain pieces of information and ideas from it and use them to write in a decorated language. This suggests that the literary critics write for writing's sake, while writers like Mtshali write to share and to conscientise people about their painful life experiences. Mtshali expresses this in the following lines:

But I write what I please  
as I huddle in these crummy rooms  
infested with rats and roaches.

(Mtshali 1980:6)

In line 7 which reads as "But I write what I please" echoes the titles that were written by Steve Biko which appeared in the SASO Newsletter, after he was elected chairman of SASO publication. The articles were titled "I write what I like" and were signed off by "Frank Talk". The articles give an authentic exposition of the philosophy of Black Consciousness and it inspired black poets under study and many other black writers to express their opinions with reckless abandon. This is what the Western literary critics failed to understand, thus they wrongly assumed that the infusion of emotions into the literary work was a lack of craftsmanship.

In his poem titled "prelude" Serote (1974:9) educates his readers about what actually happens in his mind and his whole body when he starts to write his poetry. The following lines are self-explanatory:

When i take a pen  
 my soul burst to deface the paper  
 pus spills-  
 spreads  
 deforming a line into a figure that violates my  
 love,  
 when i take a pen,  
 my crimson heart oozes into the ink,  
 dilutes it  
 spreads the gem of my life  
 makes the word i utter a gasp tot he world,-  
 my mother, when i dance your eyes won't keep pace  
 look into my eyes,  
 there, the story of my day is told.

(Serote 1974:9)

Serote displays his poetic brilliance by carefully choosing striking diction to express a specific meaning. The word "bursts" in line 2 suggests that his spirit explodes when he writes. This means that to him the writing process is a means of pouring out the contents of his heart, it is psychotherapy. The imagery of "pus" that "spills" symbolises the words of his writing, he compares words of his poem to "pus" because they are unpleasant in the ears of those who are guilty of oppressing black people. In line 5 of the poem that he writes is "deformed", this suggests that the lines of his poem are not as ornate as one may expect in English orthodox poetry.

In line 7 the imagery of "crimson heart" that "oozes" into the ink informs the readers that it is hard for a black writer to control his inner feelings. The word "gem" in line 9-10 suggests that the piece of writing that the writer has produced is the masterpiece even though the words he uses are forceful.

South African black writers could not ignore the hardships under which they lived their lives and write about the beauty of natural vegetation as the orthodox Western English poets do. In his poem titled "IN DEFENCE OF POETRY" Gwala (1982:10) conscientises his readers about the importance of the relevance of the subject matter of poetry to the socio-political text from which it is produced. He argues that if there is nothing poetic in the socio-political context, then one must not expect the poets to be poetic in their writing. Here the words poetic means beautiful or pleasurable in its subject matter and in its ornate style.

Basically the word poetry refers to a piece of writing in which words are chosen for their sound and images and ideas they suggest not for their obvious meaning. It is interesting to note that Gwala deliberately uses colloquial language throughout this poem because this reinforces the theme of the poem. The series of rhetorical questions are a forceful method of conscientising his readers about the socio-political ills that a committed black poet could not ignore when writing poetry in South Africa. This is evident in the lines in where he talks to his fellow blacks:

What's poetic

about Defence Bonds and Armscor?

What's poetic

about long-term sentences and

deaths in detention

for those who 'threaten state security'?

Tell me,

What's poetic

about shooting defenceless kids

in a Soweto street?

Can there be poetry

in fostering Plural Relations?

Can there be poetry

in the Immorality Act?

What's poetic

about deciding other people's lives?

Tell me brother,

What's poetic

about defending herrenvolkish rights?

(Gwala 1982:10)

The series of allusion to historical facts makes this poem powerful despite the colloquial language in which it is written. The "defence bonds" were self defence forces in South Africa. Armscor was the factor which was responsible for the production of weapons managed and owned by the apartheid government. It is a fact of life that the political activists were detained without trial for an indiscriminate period and many of them died in police cells. The world could not deny that the brutal shooting of school children in Soweto by the South Africa defence force in June 16, 1976.

In line 12 the reference to "plural relations" conscientise the readers that it is a fact of life that the apartheid government encouraged the development of racial hatred among people in South Africa. An allusion to "Immorality Act" conscientises the readers that in the eyes of the apartheid state the culture of black people were often considered immoral or ungodly. Biko (2007:53) argues that there was a need for the black people to become their own authorities and avoid being interpreted by others. Gwala (1982:10) agrees with Biko's sentiments in lines 15-16 where he writes that there is nothing poetic about the whites deciding on the lives of black people.

It was a fact of life for black people in South Africa had no power to make any decisions under the apartheid regime. Biko (2007:97) argues that white people despised black people not because they needed to reinforce their attitude and to justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believed that black is inferior and bad. Gwala registers this idea in lines 12-19 of this poem when he alludes that the apartheid government defends the "herrenvolkish rights". The term "herrenvolkish" is striking because it refers to a group that regards itself as naturally superior or a master race and the whites regarded themselves as such in South Africa.

Gwala is explicitly not apologetic for not writing about the beauty of natural vegetation and for not writing in ornate style as expected of by the Western literary critics. This is evident in the conclusion of Gwala's poem which is marked by a strident voice of dissent:

As long as

this land, my country  
is unphonetic in its doings  
it'll be poetic to disagree  
(Gwala 1982:10)

The socio-political context dictates to the writers the appropriate writing style that could be used in order to conscientise the readers effectively. Mtshali affirms this view when he argues against the culture of writing long poems especially in a politically turbulent country. This means that those literary critics who believe that a good poem must be a long poem are mistaken when they criticize South African black writers for not writing long poems.

In his poem titled "A LONG POEM" Mtshali (1980:63) conscientises his readers about the shortfall of a long poem in favour of a short poem. He brilliantly uses the imagery of a "meandering river" to educate the readers that a long poem is not an effective tool for conscientisation. In The following lines of stanza 1 and 2 Mtshali uses a strident tone of dissent to criticise a long poem:

A long poem is like a meandering river  
of sustained feelings fused into narrow banks  
that flow languidly into a deep gorge,  
where the water springs into life  
and gulps down in swift powerful gallops  
like those of a wounded steed.  
Then all of a sudden it opens  
into a wide undulating plains  
where it drags slowly, slowly until its  
whole power is dissipated into a heap  
of platitudes and clichés.  
(Mtshali 1980:63)

In line 1 the imagery of “meandering river” is striking because it conscientises that a long poem has no clear order and it has no particular meaning. The word “languidly” highlights that a long poem lacks energy, efforts and enthusiasm. Imagery of a “wounded steed” is striking allusion to the black people. In stanza 2 the phrase “platitudes and clichés” conscientises that the length of a long poem makes its meaning to become weak. The word “platitudes” refers to a remark or statement about something that, although it might be true, is boring and meaningless because it has been said so many times before. This idea is reinforced in the word “clichéd” which also refers to a form of expression that is often used when its original effectiveness has been lost.

In the last stanza Mtshali speaks in favour of a short poem. The imagery of a “snippet” alludes to a short powerful poem which triggers a response from the readers. Imageries of a “jaded soul” and of “forlorn” are striking because they conscientises that black people were saddened by the prolongation of their oppression and they were starting to give up hope in their struggle for liberation. The word “jaded” means lacking or losing interest because something has been experienced too many times. This is illuminated in the following lines:

So give me a pen  
I will write only a snippet of taut verbal muscle  
a sinew of controlled emotion;  
I hope to strike a responsive chord  
in the jaded soul of the forlorn  
whose diminished ego lies in a pile of rubble  
(Mtshali 1980:10)

### 10.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the mistakes Eurocentric elitist critics use to evaluate the English standards black poetry. In the selected poems the poets fearlessly challenge the view that the poetic form must follow strict prescriptive literary conventions in order for it to be acceptable.

The content of the selected poems seems to echo the feelings of the titles of titles given to the essays of written by Steve Biko, I write what I like. Their poetry was a fighting poetry, resistance poetry, discourse poetry. That is a poetry that was meant to educate by probing real life issues. Their poetry was not art for art's sake. Their poetry was geared towards the articulation of the feelings, hurts, joys and disappointments of the oppressed black people. The form assumed by their poetry is in line with the way George Lukacs define the correct form; for Lukacs the correct form is t he one that reflects reality in the most objective way (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:175).

The Dominant Ideology that the poets sought to reject was the Western literary criticism of their poetry which was based on the literary aesthetics of the orthodox English literature. The Authorial ideology expressed in the poems is that literature is produced by the socio-cultural and political context. The writing style is dictated by the nature of the subject matter. The socio-political context under which a particular piece of writing dictates the subject matter and the writing style that a writer must use to conscientize his readers effectively. The arguments raised by the poets about poetry writing confirm the validity of the view of George Lukacs, Lukacs argued that:

Form is the content of a literary work when it assumes a meaningful configuration. The reality which literature either manages or fails to reflect is a social and historical reality with a dialectical shape (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:172)

The above quote indicates what was important for Marxist theorist in the literary world was the content conveyed. The good literary work is one that addresses the socio-political problems faced by the struggling masses. The form that the literary work assumes must be determined by the nature of the subject matter.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### 11. POEMS PROBING ANGER AND STATE VIOLENCE

#### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

George Lukacs in Forgas (in Jefferson and Robey 1995:173-176) argued that:

Writers narrate history, make sense of it, observe it and describe the world. Literature is about real life, and it is also some kind of autonomous reality itself, with particular formal characteristics of its own. Accurate reflections are a sign of the author's artistic greatness.

The above applies to the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali. Their poetry reflects the history of the liberation of the oppressed black people in South Africa. This chapter reveals the imminent disaster, calamity or a civil war in South Africa that was about to occur. The poets achieve this by probing the feelings of black people about state violence.

The analysis revealed that the poets were able to reflect on the state of affairs in a sincere and honest manner. Despite the state's ruthless violence directed to those opposing it, the poets were able to write fearlessly about the victims the freedom fighter, the victims of the state police and to predict the calamity as the end product of the apartheid regime.

The fearlessness of the poets to probe dangerous issues makes the readers to view them as champions of the liberation struggle for the oppressed black people. It is their fearlessness that ignites the heart and conscience of black people, moving them into action. This chapter seeks to show that the poets SSGM can be viewed as heroes because they took on the state and in doing so were breaking the law. The John Pampallis (1996:181) confirm this by stating that:

The term 'communism' was broadly defined that it could include virtually any non-parliamentary political opposition: people or organisations could be punished for doing anything intended to bring about 'any political, industrial, social or economic change...by the promotion of disturbance or disorder, by unlawful acts' or 'encouragement of feelings of hostility between the European and non-European races of the Union'

The ideologies of the apartheid state and the ideology of Black Consciousness are reflected in the form and content of the poems. The probing and reflection on real life issues confirms the Marxist thinking that literature is an imitation of life (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:171).

Biko (2007:33) predicted an outbreak of a calamity warning all and sundry about the limits of endurance the human mind. The Dominant Ideology that these poets sought to challenge was the belief that the apartheid regime and its coercive apparatuses were powerful to suppress the aspirations of black people to the end. The poets predicted that one day the oppressed black people would avenge the pain that they suffered at the hands of white people. It is this allusion that makes the white government uncomfortable with the resistance literature.

The Authorial Ideology, which is the message the authors wanted to convey to black people was that: as Biko (2007:108) a bid for change that blacks had to take off their coats, be prepared to lose their comfort and security, their jobs and positions of prestige and their families. Biko quotes two English proverbs to motivate the black people to be completely involved in the liberation struggle, "Leadership and security is incompatible and struggle without casualties is no struggle".

The proverb indicates that Steve Biko believed that black people' anger was piling up and that disaster was imminent. The aesthetic ideology that has been depicted in the in-depth analysis of the poems is an honest and sincere reflection of the state of the socio-political-context of the apartheid era. The form and content of the poems depict the socio-political a dialectical socio-historical reality. This affirms the Marxist view of literature, that literature reflects the socio-historical context from which it stemme

#### 11.2 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS

In his poem titled "PAUSE" Sepamla (1984:22) educates his readers about the painful life that black people were subjected in the townships. Sepamla displays his poetic brilliancy by not alluding to the people who are to blame for all the pain he writes about in this poem. These people were white people. The use of pronouns "We", "us", "our" throughout this poem refers to the race of people to which Sepamla belongs to. In fact a South African who knows the history of South Africa will agree with the provocation that is described in stanza 1 of this poem.

In stanza 1 the speaker registers the tone of being fed-up with the whole irritating situation. It is a kind of come-what-may tone. The message that is expressed in this stanza is: the anger of blacks is piling up because they cannot bear the intensity of provocation anymore. This is how stanza 1 reads:

We are sick of death

Clashes by day

Search-warrants by night

These things creep into our bones

Piercing right into our marrow

(Sepamla1984:22)

Steve Biko (2007:80-81) states that whites had created and preserved for themselves a special position of privilege. He argues that this position was created and preserved by the use of violence and fear but the use of these methods was in itself a result of fear of the black population. In his poem titled "FEELING SMALL" Sepamla (1984:23) registers this idea that whites are living their lives in fear of the black population. The pronoun "they" refers to white people. The line 'Strue's living God!' is an oath that the speaker uses to prove that he is sure that whites can never be able to free themselves of the fear. This suggests that whites were aware of the piling up anger of black people. This is how Sepamla put it:

I say they can beat their breasts

a thousand, thousand times

to show

how they've made God listen at times

to rationalisations

But Brother!

they can never, never be so large hearted

to free themselves of fear

'Strue's living God!

(Sepamla 1984:23)

In his poem titled "ON JUDGEMENT DAY" Sepamla (1984:92) uses sarcasm to conscientise his readers that it is not true that black people like to sing, like peace and like to run for running the sake. He argues that the belief that black people like all the above mentioned virtues is a myth and it patronizes black people.

The sarcastic tone is highlighted in the refrain of the stanza with the words “singers, runners, peace-loving”. This repetition is intended to emphasize the opposite, which means that black people are not born with these qualities. But they are subjected to them without their will. However black people were not happy with the whole stereotype. In this poem Sepamla asserts that black people have been undermined and marginalized. Sepamla rejects this stereotype as myths. This is evident in the following lines:

Black people are born singers  
Black people are born runners  
Black people are peace-loving  
these myths make of us naiveté

Sepamla asserts that black people sing, run and pretend to love peace because their circumstances force them to do so, they do not do all the above just for the love of doing it. They run because they were often chased by the coercive forces of their white subjugators. The reference to the choking dust is meant to emphasize their humiliation. They have no dignity and identity because they disappear in the air like the bubbles of champagne.

We have been sipped with bubbles of champagne  
we have known choking dust  
and have writhed with the pain of humiliation  
singers  
runners  
peace-loving

The gust of this poem is in stanza 4 where Sepamla directly asserts that the whites were not aware that the anger of the black was piling up, and this could result in a disaster that will affect negatively on both whites and blacks. The allusion to take cover emphasizes the idea of an impending disaster. This is how Sepamla put it:

nobody really sees the storm raging within us  
nobody cares to know that we've reached our own

bottom

laughing has become agonising

singers

runners

peace-loving

my foot

I fear we will all sing at night-vigils

and as i see things we will all run for cover

what i don't know is which peace will still be loveable

(Sepamla1984:92)

In his poem titled "MEASURE FOR MEASURE" Sepamla (1984:99) implies that one day black people will avenge the pain that white people were inflicting on them. This is implied in the title which suggest a popular idiom called [an eye for an eye] meaning that whoever kills must also be killed. This poem was written to conscientise the white government that an outbreak of a disastrous outcome was imminent in South Africa. Sepamla displays his poetic creativity by sarcastically alluding to the fact that the white government can be able to measure the distances between Pretoria and Cape Town, the number of days in a year in which black people could be contracted, the size of houses that were good for blacks etc. However whites were unable to measure how far the blacks were from obtaining their liberation. This is how the last stanza of this poem reads:

and when all that is done

let me tell you

you'll never know how far i stand from you

(Sepamla1984:99)

There is proof in Gwala's (1982:34) poem titled "BLUESING IN" that poets are like prophets when he prophesizes that in 1994 apartheid will be abolished. Therefore in this poem Gwala conscientises his readers that apartheid will come to an end in 1994. Here Gwala also displays his poetic creativity by using striking imageries and names to allude to South Africa and its apartheid system. The word

“blues” refers to the feeling of sadness. The word “Azania” is a name used by PAC and AZAPO with reference to South Africa. The term “Humpty Dumpty” refers to the apartheid government and all its oppressive systems. This is how the last stanza of this poem reads:

Blues, blues  
Azania blues 1994  
We buried Humpty Dumpty  
on a hill at Magaliesberg  
A monument marking his grave reads:  
'He didn't want change'.  
(Gwala 1982:34)

In his poem titled “UKUBUZA KUKAMKHULU UNXELE: 20 JUNE 1976” [QUESTIONING OF AN OLD MAN NXELE] Gwala (1982:36) conscientizes his readers about the feelings of black parents about the killings of black children in Soweto on June 16, 1976. The statement that Mr Nxele makes in this poem represents the view of the majority of black parents. This is highlighted in his use of the plural “our children”. The pronoun “they” refers to the apartheid government. The question that he raises is a striking rhetorical question. Nxele is not actually raising a question but is simply saying that, since they are gunning down our children, they must also kill us as well. This statement indicates that the anger of black people was piling up. This is how the whole question reads:

Sons,  
They are gunning down  
our children  
in Soweto,  
What more  
are we still living for?

(Gwala 1982:36)The idea of a disastrous civil war is also registered by Gwala (1982:73-74) in his poem titled “THE HORN”. The horn is being referred to in this title is a battle horn. This poem is a reflection of the Zulu king to his chief headsman about the imminent war that the Zulu people had to

wage against their invaders. A poem like this one was meant to conscientise people of South Africa that the anger of the black people was piling up.

The speaker in this poem alludes to the need of not making any peace agreements. He alludes to the young men carrying guns moving across valleys and mountains. He adds that even the maidens will take part by chanting and stamping their feet. Furthermore, the speaker makes an allusion that even their forefathers had to fight battles to protect their land. The reference to black heroes, Chakijane [was a clever hero-in Zulu mythology] and Bhambatha the son of Mancinza is meant to inspire and encourage blacks to see the need for waging a war. This is how this poem reads:

“THE HORN”

Dlothovu, so would it be better  
if we blew away our dreams  
if we counted the rivers we still have to cross  
and the grasslands we shall have to track across  
in running battles?  
so's when our maidens  
stamp their feet and chant at the outlets of rivers  
would it not be better  
if the young men belted on their guns  
at all the rivers crossings?  
What more then, when the battlehorn's water  
has spilled  
when the sun is nearing sunset  
darkness be waded through solemnly  
-the darkness of yesterday's mind-chases;  
Our forefathers long ago won fortitude

against this misery,

Even Chakijane and Bhambatha son of Mancinza

will resonate bravo.

(Gwala 1982:73-74)

In his poem titled "ON BEING HUMAN" Gwala (1977:9) conscientizes his readers that black people too are human beings just like any other human races. Therefore, the subjugation they are subjected to can cause them to begin to have some destructive thoughts have negative thoughts. Gwala has displayed his poetic creativity in his use of striking imagery of migratory birds. The juxtapositioning of contrasting thoughts in lines 10-14 is striking. It conscientizes the readers that people in general have two opposite qualities and black people in particular are not an exception. This is how it reads:

Thoughts jet north and south

like migratory birds trailing season:

stopover here,

stopover there,

The trips go on

in shuttle system

B

U

T

one thought never leaves:

That one is human

with feelings of love and hate

with pangs of destruction and embrace

with inner urge to destroy and create.

(Gwala 1977:9)

In the poem titled "THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA" Mtshali (1980:17) informs the readers that black people's anger could lead to a turmoil and which could lead to the dawn of a new era. In line 1 the word "turmoil" refers to the state of confusion, uncertainty or lack of order. For Mtshali it is through this turmoil that the history will remove all the injustices that are evident in the world. In line 2 the imagery of "spring cleaning" is striking because it suggests that the old order will be completely wiped off from the face of the earth. In line 6 the oppressors are referred to as "baying like a dog skulking for shelter", this suggests that they would try to run and hide. In line 8 the imagery of the "turbulent sea" foregrounds the idea of a sudden, unstoppable change. This is how the lines of stanza 1 read:

The world is in turmoil  
History is spring cleaning  
the cobwebbed corners of the earth,  
its swishing broom rattles the sun,  
it ladles the sleeping moon,  
it sends it baying like a dog skulking for shelter,  
frightened birds fly off from the treetops,  
they flop and drown in the turbulent sea,  
the grey foam of confusion floats above the waves.

(Mtshali 1980:17)

In stanza 4-6 Mtshali becomes even more forceful as he suggests that the masses of the oppressed black people will make a strident shout in their demand of the new era. In line 29 the word "strident" is striking because it means, expressed in a forceful language that does not try to avoid upsetting other people. The word "shackles" refers to a pair of metal rings connected by chain and fastened to a person's wrists or ankles to prevent them from escaping. Therefore, in line 29 the word "shackled" means that the masses referred to in this stanza were oppressed. The word "rage" in line 30 is striking because it does not just refer to anger but to the extreme anger of the people. The word "dirge" highlights the sense of mourning because of death. The idea of death and destruction is also reinforced in the words, "demise", "graveyard", "decaying monster" which all emphasize a sense of death. In this poem death refers to the end of an old era.

In stanza 6 Mtshali sought to conscientise the readers that the anger of black people was piling up. He achieves this by pointing to examples of countries where the oppressed masses called for the removal of the old oppressive social order. These countries include Vietnam, Cambodia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola. It is interesting that in line 40 Mtshali wanted to mention South Africa but for security and censorship reasons he could not mention South Africa. This is how stanza 6 reads:

‘Down with the old in Vietnam!

Down with the old in Cambodia!

Down with the old in Guinea Bissau!

Down with the old in Mozambique!

Down with the old in Angola!

Down with the old in...?’

(Mtshali 1980:17)

In his poem titled “FLAMES OF FURY” Mtshali (1980:19-21) conscientises his readers that people’s anger was increasing because of the experienced conditions in South Africa. Since this poem was written in 1975 one could possibly argue that in this poem Mtshali predicted the 1976 Soweto uprisings and many other uprisings that followed after that period. Even though this poem talks about how the extreme anger could destroy the symbols of oppression, in every opening line of each stanza Mtshali evokes the fellow-feeling by exclusively and directly addressing black readers as brothers and sisters.

Throughout the opening lines of the stanzas of this poem black readers are exclusively conscientised and are encouraged to actively involve themselves in the process. This suggests that the “flames of fury” will be burning in favour of the black people against their white oppressors. This is how the opening lines of stanza 1 reads:

Wait for them, brother,

wait for them, sister,

be ready:

flames of fury are coming

like a wild veld fire

In lines 9-10 Gwala conscientises his readers that there will be a disastrous outcome in South Africa. The imagery of the “war trumpet” suggests that there will be a civil war in South Africa. The disastrous outcome is expressed through the idiom “cry and gnashing of teeth”. This is a common idiom used in black communities to convey bad times in the future. The disastrous times are also conveyed in the imagery of a river flooding with blood. This is how these lines read:

listen to the sound of the war trumpet.

telling you to cry and gnash your teeth

announcing the pains of death

and the blood that will flow wider

than the Tugela River in flood,

when it bursts its banks

to drown the laggard locust

In the opening lines of stanzas 2, 3 and 4 Gwala conveys to his black readers the feelings of his fellow black people. It is this shared fellow feeling that has a conscientisation effect in the readers. This is how the opening lines of Stanza 2 read:

O yes, my brother.

And you my beloved sister,

there will appear in the horizon

flying machines sweeping like swallows

Stanza 3:

You will, brother

and you my loving sister, hear the uncontrollable

voices of mourning orphans and bereaved parents,

Stanza 4:

Beware brother,  
beware sister,  
falling tongues of fire

In stanza 6 Mtshali asserts that black people will be the one who will be driving the struggle to destroy the apartheid regime and all its luxuries:

Where will you be, my brother,  
and you my darling sister?  
need i ask you?  
needless to say, in the thick of it,  
in the fore line of the struggle,  
from where you will witness-for you were the cause-  
those luxury houses crashing to the ground,  
demolishing the edifices of our degradation,  
watch their priceless paintings and treasure-troves  
razed and reduced to the ground.

(Mtshali 1980:20)

In this poem the anger of black people is beautifully compared to with “flames of fury”. The word “flames” literally refers to a burning gas or burning of fire but in this poem it figuratively refers to anger and destruction. The word “fury” also literally means extreme anger. This means that this poem conscientises the readers about the increasing anger of black people.

In stanza 7 again there is a striking fellow feeling effect. The speaker asserts that the flames of fury will burn the symbols of “our bondage”, “shackles of our oppression and exploitation” the use of pronoun “our” is inclusive as it refers to the readers together with the speaker in this poem. This means that both the speaker and readers share in common the feeling of being in bondages, the feeling of being oppressed and exploited. Black people were conscientised to be prepared, to be firm

and strong. It is this shared fellow feeling that makes this poem a powerful tool for conscientisation.

This is how stanza 6 reads:

Be ready, brother,  
be prepared, sister,  
for the flames of fury to burn  
these symbols of our bondage,  
these shackles of our oppression and exploitation,  
be ready, be firm, and be strong!

(Mtshali 1980:20)

In stanza 8 the speaker conscientises his fellow men to take a critical stand point on the way the international countries intervened in South African political situation. Mtshali again displays his poetic creativity in his use of the words such as “prattle” and “cackle”, these words are striking because they convey the idea that the Western and Eastern countries made worthless statements concerning the South African political situation. The allusion to these countries as the “so-called Super Powers”, reinforce the idea that according to the speaker these countries do not deserve to be called Super Powers. In this stanza the speaker tells his fellow blacks to ignore the so called Super Powers in their cause for liberation.

The word “prattle” means to talk foolishly or childishly for a long time about something unimportant or without saying anything important. On the other hand the word “cackle” means to make a loud and unpleasant sound of a chicken or figuratively it means to laugh or talk in a loud, high voice. The word “crackle” is beautifully reinforced in line 70 where Mtshali uses an imagery of “crackling hens of senility”. In this imagery Mtshali offers a very critical view of the Western and Eastern countries because the word senile means showing a lack of mental ability because of old age. This suggests that in this stanza Mtshali convey the idea that the Western and Eastern countries lacked the ability to think clearly and to make proper decisions regarding the South African political situation. This is how lines 66-70 read:

Indeed, brother, and you my sister,  
you heard the prattle and crackle  
of the so-called Super Powers,

and I beg you, for the cause of our liberation,

ignore the cackling hens of senility-

(Mtshali 1980:20)

Mtshali conscientizes his fellow black people that Western and Eastern countries were hypocrites because they collaborated with the oppressors. They were interested in making good relations with the government that oppressed the poor people in the Third World countries. In line 74 the imagery of “detente” foregrounds this idea, the word detente refers to an improvement in the relationship between two countries which in the past were not friendly and did not trust each other. This is how lines 74-75 read:

Dishing to the Third World porridge of lies called detente

cooked in a broken pot of empty promises.

Here he criticises the so called ‘good relations’ between the first and the third world which suffered under oppressive governments is also conveyed in lines 76-82. The imageries of “golden snuff boxes”, buffalo knots” and “tattered hearts” clearly shows Mtshali’s incredible imaginative powers. This is how the lines read:

We saw the offer each other snuff,

with golden snuff spoons, from golden snuff boxes,

like crones tying buffalo knots

with the shreds of our tattered hearts,

whilst secretly they arm our enemies

and tell them to tighten the manacles of our misery

and the handcuffs of our humiliation.

(Mtshali 1980:20)

In stanza 10 Mtshali conscientises his fellow black to resist all forms of oppression, undermining and intimidation directed to them by their subjugators. He informs his readers that freedom could only be attained if black people were able to stand firm against all kinds of threats. In this stanza Mtshali has displayed his poetic creativity in his choice of words. The word “pernicious” in the phrase

“pernicious pack of lies” is concise because it suggests that the lies Mtshali have a harmful effect or influence. The word “insidious” in the phrase “insidious state of our lives” is concise because it suggests that the kind of lives implied is dangerous or unpleasant. The imagery of the “moulten snake” could easily appeal to the black readers because the idiom “to be intimidated by a moulten snake” is commonly used amongst black communities.

This idiom means that one must not be intimidated and frightened by something that has no power to harm. The word “brandished” in the phrase “brandished as a big stick...” is striking because it highlights the idea of frightening and intimidation. This word means to wave something in the air in a threatening manner. This is how this stanza read:

Listen, brother, resist it all,  
for the sake of our freedom, sister,  
rejects the pernicious pack of lies,  
this insidious state of our lives,  
refuse to be intimidated and frightened with  
the dead skin of a moulten snake  
that is brandished as a big stick  
to bear the timid hearts of a subjugated people.

(Mtshali 1980:21)

In stanza 11 Mtshali conscientises his fellow blacks to consider the route of the armed struggle. The idea of the armed struggle is emphasized through the use of striking imageries of war. In line 97 the imageries of “gunpowder”, “rusty cannons” are war imageries. In line 98 the speaker’s fellow people are directly instructed take up their assegais and spears and fight victoriously. In line 99 the speaker motivates his fellow black men to “let the bullet explode”. In line 101-102 the speaker states that the attack had to be directed to the enslaver’s dungeon of defeat. In stanza 12, which is made up of one loin line, blacks are instructed to make the enslaver produce the plundered stores of three centuries after the conquest of black people. This is how some lines in stanza 11 and stanza 12 read:

lick the gunpowder from the rusty cannons,

clash the shield against the spear,  
let the bullet explode into a weeping droplet of sterile semen,  
let the assegai sing the sweet song of our victory,  
let death despair and perish into the enslaver's dungeon of defeat.

Stanza 12:

Let him produce the plundered stores of three centuries of our conquest.

(Mtshali 1980:21)

In stanza 14 the speaker conscientises his fellow blacks not to forget to always be ready for a civil war. Here black people are made aware of their strength to fight back. The angry black people are beautifully compared to the anger of the provoked Black Mamba. In lines 111-113 black people are conscientised of the strength of their physical bodies. This is highlighted in the use of the word "biceps" in the line "in your black biceps forged from the black soil..." The word "biceps" refers to a large muscle at the front of the upper arm.

In his poem titled "A SONG FOR SOUTH AFRICA" Mtshali (1980:27) registers the anger of black people about how they were detained without trial, imprisonment, and the banning of all political activists. It is the highest degree of anger in Mtshali and his fellow blacks that made them to regard the imprisoned political activists as their heroes and heroines. Biko (2007:40) also affirms this idea that black people looked at those people who were either at Robben Island or in banishment or in voluntary-exile or otherwise as their leaders. Mtshali fearlessly drops some names of the leaders in stanza 1. By mentioning the political activists he manages to educate the future generations about the role these activists played in the struggle for liberation. The allusion to real people and real places is a powerful method of conscientisation because it makes the readers to be emotionally involved. It makes the readers to consider their own views, opinions, as well as their place in history and responsibility in both the past and present South Africa. This is how stanza 1 read:

Nelson Mandela, we remember you

in the island of heroes.

Walter Sisulu, we remember you

in the island of heroes.

Govan Mbeki, we remember you

in the island of heroes.

Ahmed Kathrada, we remember you

in the island of heroes.

Braam Fischer, we remember you

in grave of heroes.

Josia Mbatha, we remember you

in the island of heroes.

Robert Sobukwe, we remember you

in the remote places,

where they dumped you

(Mtshali 1980:27)

In his poem titled "HECTOR PETERSON-THE YOUNG MARTYR" whose death triggered the Soweto uprising Mtshali (1980:29-30) uses striking imageries that portray black people's anger. In the last stanza of this poem he makes a very categorical statement that black people will avenge the brutal killing of black children.

In stanza 1 Mtshali displays his poetic creativity in his use of the striking words and phrases when he describes the scenery. The meaning the phrase "guns blazed" beautifully compares the guns to the fire that burns brightly and strongly. In line 2 he mentions that the school children were unarmed helps to suggest the idea that the state police had no justifiable reason to fire at the school children. The use of the word "shattering" and the phrase "fragile skull" in line 4 gives an idea that the bullets suddenly broke the soft skulls of the school children into small pieces.

The imageries of the brains that splashed in the gutter, "severed limbs", "singed hair", "ears", and "eyes scattered on the dusty streets". The imageries of the tender young hearts that were torn into shreds, buzzing greenflies that jostled with ants for blobs of dried-up blood all aimed at conscientising the readers to the fact that black people had a justifiable reason to become angry. This is how some lines of stanza 1 read:

The guns blazed,  
fired at unarmed school children,  
the bullets hit their targets,  
shattering the fragile skulls,  
brains splashed in the gutter;  
severed limbs and singed hair,  
ears, eyes scattered on the dusty streets;  
tender young hearts torn to shreds,  
buzzing greenflies jostling with ants  
for blobs of dried-up blood,  
  
(Mtshali 1980:29)

In stanza 1 and 2 Mtshali deliberately uses a strident voice to present a war like scenery in order to provoke a fellow feeling and poignant effect in his readers. The intention is to conscientise them to a deeper self-consciousness so that they could see the need to involve themselves into the liberation struggle even if it meant waging a war against the white oppressors. But in stanza 3 there is a dramatic shift from the description of war like scenery to the direct address of Hector Peterson who is absent. This is a brilliant use of imagery called apostrophe, a literary device commonly used in drama.

The imagery of “wanton savagery” is striking because it creates an idea that killers of Hector were without care, they were cruel and wasted an innocent life. They killed Hector in a very violent and cruel way. In line 20 the word “serene” is striking because it beautifully contradicts the idea of violent cruelty alluded to in line 19, the word “serene” means peaceful and calm which is the opposite of violent and cruel.

The imagery of the “rivulets of blood and tears” is striking as it highlights the gruesome manner in which Hector and other school children were killed. Obviously the tears are the tears of parents mourning the killing of their children. This idea is highlighted in the imagery of a father who “haul home his daughter’s corpse”. The word “haul” is striking because it highlights the idea that the dead

body of the daughter is very heavy. The increasing anger of black people is beautifully conveyed in line 22, “a swirling turmoil of black fury rising to a pitch,” This is how some lines of stanza 3 read:

Hector Peterson, victim of wanton savagery,  
you lay there serene in rivulets of blood and tears,  
a weeping father hauling home his daughter’s corpse,  
a swirling turmoil of black fury rising to a pitch;

(Mtshali 1980:29)

In lines 23-24 Mtshali’s allusion to the “string of denials” is intended to highlight the deliberate insensitivity, insincerity and inhumanity of the apartheid regime. The description offered in stanza 1 and 2 and the dramatized denials that constitute stanza 4 are beautifully juxtaposed. This indicates that Mtshali was not only interested in recording the gruesome events of the time of his writing but he was also interested in displaying his artistic creativity as a poet. In stanza 4 Mtshali also seeks to conscientise his readers that the apartheid regime suffered from a denial complex and that instead of seeing its fault it shifted the blame to the Black Consciousness Movement for the calamity of June 16, 1976. This is highlighted in the following line:

‘There’s no crisis in the land.  
There’s no cause for panic;  
We are not guilty!’  
Guilty of what?  
‘It’s only a bunch of young Black Power fanatics,  
who are fanning the flames for a polarisation of races.’

(Mtshali 1980:29)

In stanza 7 Mtshali displays his poetic creativity when he compares the burial of the school children to a very loud sound of a buffalo horn that is louder than the church bells. This means that the fact that the school children were killed; their death triggered the possibility of the outbreak of the civil war. This is highlighted in the imagery of the “buffalo horn”, the buffalo horn refers to the war horn which was blown in black communities to alert members of communities about an impending attack.

The imagery of “church bell” reinforces the sad mood that is associated with death and burial. The state of confusion that came with June 16, 1976 is also highlighted in the use of the word “tumult”. In line 49 Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by using direct speech express the meaning dramatically. The use of inverted commas indicates that these lines are direct words articulated by the mourners in the funeral of the school children. The clear message that is expressed in this stanza is that black people were willing to avenge the death of their children. This is how stanza 7 reads:

When the young corpses were buried,  
the buffalo horn rang louder than the church bell,  
the world heard the booming tom-tom above the tumult,  
‘Today we bury our beloved children, tomorrow is our enemy’s turn’

(Mtshali 1980:30)

Furthermore, in his poem titled “ABRAM ONGKOEPOETSE TIRO, A YOUNG BLACK MARTYR” Mtshali (1980:31) suggests that the reason behind the anger of the black people was their need for vengeance. In stanza 1 the phrase “flaccid denial” it suggests that the denial by the apartheid officials that the state is not guilty is very soft and weak. This is conveyed in stanza 1:

Memories will linger longer  
than all the flaccid denials of guilt  
when dastard deeds are done,  
this decaying word will  
hobble on its scabby feet  
to an ignominious end,  
leaving behind an acrid dust of hatred  
and flames raging for vengeance.

The increasing anger of black people is also registered in lines 11-12:

the flame in our furious hearts will flash  
all the nocturnal conspiracies

Furthermore, in stanza 3 Mtshali clearly expresses the idea that when black people react nothing could stand in their way. This stanza, conscientises black people to continue fight for their freedom. This is how stanza 3 read:

But no bomb can ever kill  
the spirit of a fearless fighter,  
no jail can hold it,  
not even the grave will seal it off  
from a people aroused to action.

(Mtshali 1980:31)

In his poem titled “EFFIGIES ARE FALLING” Mtshali (1980:34) predicts the down fall of the apartheid system which he compares to with “effigies”, effigies are models or other objects which represent someone, especially ones made to represent a disliked person which is hung or burnt in a public place. The imagery of “effigies” is striking because it suggests that in the same way the effigies fall and get burnt in the public place something that was going to happen to the apartheid system and all that it represented in South Africa.

The part of this poem which is most striking is lines 33-45 where the speaker alludes to the extent to which black people’s anger result in them attacking [those who have made them mad] the white oppressors:

What effigies am I talking about?  
Ask the man in the madhouse;  
I heard him laughing aloud,  
I heard him telling the sun,  
‘Don’t show your pretty face to-morrow,  
it will be spattered with blood  
when i cut the throats  
of those who have driven me mad.’

In his poem titled “16 JUNE 1976 (a commemoration in Harlem of the Soweto uprising)”, Mtshali (1980:38), educates his readers about the increasing militant spirit in the black communities. In stanza 1 of this poem Mtshali asserts that the anger of black people was uncontrollable and that it culminated to the Soweto uprisings in June 16, 1976. In this stanza Mtshali asserts that the anger of black people in Soweto was set to shake white people’s complacency. In this stanza Mtshali displays his poetic creativity by using striking diction. This is evident in his use of euphemism of “fateful day”. The personification of Soweto in the phrase “Soweto rose up”. This is how stanza 1 read:

Three years have elapsed  
since that fateful day  
when Soweto rose up in uncontrollable rage  
and set the whole fabric of white complacency aflame.

In stanza 2 again Mtshali shows his brilliant poetic creativity by using striking diction to educate his readers about the increasing anger of black people. The imagery of “pillars of capitalism” suggests that capitalism had strong foundations in South Africa. But the word “tottered” suggests that the foundations of capitalism were shaken. The imagery of the rumbling ivory tower of the privileged few, suggests that the privileges of the minority white people was threatened. The pride of white people is beautifully compared to a “peacock throne”. The extreme anger of black people is beautifully compared to a “volcanic spasm”. This comparison of black people’s anger to a volcano is also reinforced in the imagery of “boiling black lava” that erupts. In lines 11-15 the anger of black people is shown in the way the speaker openly criticizes the white society. This is evident in the phrase “fragile shroud”, the white people are compared to a piece of soft fabric that a dead person’s body is wrapped in before it is buried. The white society is referred to as the “damned” “self-condemned souls”. This suggests that white people are aware of their wrong actions and are guilty stricken. The speaker taunts white people by making negative remarks about their peeling skin of their bodies. The speaker alludes to the sickness of their skin and their habit of drinking brandy.

The readers will be amused to note that despite the fact that the white police forces were “clinging to loaded pistols” but in line 15 the speaker allude that they were afraid of the township school children. The imagery of “bubbling froth” is striking because it first refers to the enthusiasm of the Soweto children, and a connotation that they were not as dangerous as the ruthless apartheid police viewed them. There was no need to shoot the children at the school.

In stanza 3 the speaker asserts that the Soweto uprising and the manner in which the apartheid regime responded to it indicated that the power of the anger of black people. It also indicates that apartheid was coming to an end. This is highlighted in the phrase “the writing is on the wall” for the repressive regime. The proverb “the writing is on the wall” is used to mean that there are clear signs that something will fail or no longer exist. In line 20 Mtshali uses a popular black idiom “the legs of a dying horse lash out at the raging mob” to highlight that even powerful people could become weak even though they may keep resisting.

In the poem titled “I’M A BURNING CHIMNEY” Mtshali (1980:36-37) seeks to conscientize his readers that the anger of black people will result to a calamity in South Africa. It is interesting to note that the title FIRE FLAMES the title of a collection from which this poem is adapted from. It is also interesting to note that it is the militant message conveyed by this poem and other poems in this collection that resulted to the banning of this book in South Africa.

According to the subtitle of this poem the speaker in this poem is a militant person and the message conveyed in this poem is a “cry, the words indicate an increasing degree of anger in black people. In stanza 1 the speaker asserts that his life has been torn into broken pieces, he adds that it is not only his individual life that has been torn but every day life of black people. This implies that all black people are represented in this militant cry. This is how stanza 1 reads:

I stand on the debris of my life,  
the Black man’s life.  
the life of every black soul.

In stanza 4 Mtshali clearly conscientises his readers about the increasing anger of black people. Mtshali uses striking phrases such as “blacker and blacker” and “fires of fury” to highlight the idea of an increasing degree of anger in black communities. This is how stanza 6 read:

I grow blacker and blacker by the day  
as my heart crackles with fire of fury,  
stoked by the daily degradations for my blackness.

In stanza 5 and 6 he informs his readers that the white oppressors shall be punished forever. This idea is registered in line 24 “their inevitable perdition. The speaker says that their punishment will catch up with them while they are busy enjoying the privileges afforded to them by the apartheid system. In stanza 5 the phrase “woeful wood” suggests that some rich white people used the stick

for playing golf to hit black people in the buttocks. The allusion to golf is striking because this game was often associated with wealthy white people. This is how stanza 5 and 6 read:

I eat the woeful wood  
that is fed into me  
by those who burn my buttocks  
to seek the warmth and comfort  
from the hearth of their cosy homes.  
Let them sit there  
and watch the logs of time  
perish into the ashes of their inevitable perdition.

(Mtshali 1980:36)

In stanza 7 the speaker educates his listeners that black people would soon be able to set themselves free from fear of articulating their opinion in an angry manner. Mtshali displays his brilliant poetic creativity in his use of imageries “suffocating smoke”, “sooty phlegm”, and “strident voice of dissent” to convey the idea that black people have for a long time longing to freely express their feelings. The phrase ‘suffocating smoke” foregrounds the sense of suppression. The phrase “sooty phlegm” highlights the extent to which the speaker is disgusted about the suppression of black people. The phrase “strident voice of dissent” expresses oneself through a forceful language which does not try to avoid upsetting other people.

The high degree of militancy of black people is also clearly registered in stanza 9 where the speaker compares his heart to an anvil. The word “anvil” refers to a block of iron on which heated pieces of metal are shaped. The speaker asserts that on his “anvil” heart he will “forge” a weapon that will be sharper than a Turkish dagger. Mtshali’s highest degree of imagination is demonstrated in his imagery of the moon that plays truant from its observation tower. This suggests that the world will suddenly become dark. While the darkness covers the earth, black people will suddenly attack their white enemy.

In stanza 12 the speaker expresses the idea that the attack will be carried out very quickly. This is highlighted in the phrase “phantom’s slippers” which compares the speaker to a ghost. The imagery is powerful because a ghost has supernatural abilities of appearing and disappearing quickly. Mtshali’s use of the imagery of an “informant owl” compares the apartheid state informers [apartheid state intelligent unit] to a kind of special bird. A long time ago it was believed amongst black communities that this bird had abilities to foretell an approaching disaster and warn the members of the community. The speaker asserts that not even the state informers [apartheid state intelligent unit] would be able to foretell the sudden attack and would not be able to identify the attacker.

In stanza 13 the imagery of “handwork” is striking because even though it refers to the work done skilfully with hands, but in the context of this poem it alludes to the destruction caused by the bombers. In stanza 14 the speaker expresses the idea that the attack that will bring to an end to an all white apartheid government will mark the victory of the black people. Mtshali uses striking imagery to highlight the joyous and victorious experience of black. The imagery of “ebony face” is striking alluding to the black people, it is a reference that is intended to present their blackness in a positive light.

The imagery of “sunrays” alludes to the beginning of a new era. The word “iridescent” emphasizes the idea of something beautiful as it means showing many bright colours which change with the movement. The phrase “frankincense smoke” adds to this idea of a beautiful experience because it compares victory to a sweet smell. The word “elation” highlights the idea that black people will be extremely excited about their victorious conquering their oppressors.

In stanza 15 the word “ascend” in line 52 is striking because it is the direct opposite of the word “descend” in line 38 of this poem. In line 30 the word “descend” meant to move down with the aim to attack. But the word “ascend” as used in line 52 means to move up with the aim to rule the country. The pronouns “we” and “us” in this stanza refer to black people. In this instance black people would take over the running of their country from white people. This is how stanza 15 reads:

We will ascend to take up our rightful places,  
we will sing a song in unison,  
‘At last victory is ours,  
the whole household now belongs to us.’

(Mtshali 1980:37)

In stanza 2 of the poem titled "EMPTY MILITANCY", Mtshali (1980:39) uses a striking precise imagery of "cascading waterfalls" to conscientise his readers about the extreme anger of black people. This imagery of "cascading waterfall" suggests that the anger of black people is flowing non-stopping like a powerful waterfall. This imaginative scenery inspires Mtshali as a poet to capture it for the present and future generations to know. This gives the idea that poets are historians. For Mtshali the anger of black people was written in everything that black people said and did. This is how stanza 2 read:

Give me the propitious pen  
to capture the cascading waterfalls of anger  
written in syllables, letters tied into  
a chain of ideas,  
around a necklace of notions  
modern and antiquated but still as valid as today.

(Mtshali 1980:3)

### 11.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter explains the meaning of poetry. The form and the content of the poems confirm the predictions of Biko (2007:33) about an outbreak of a calamity of some sort. This chapter has also shown that indeed the poets under study through their poetry predicted the outbreak of a civil war in South Africa. Their act of articulating their feelings and taunting the enemy in a fearless manner makes their poetry a powerful conscientisation tool. In fact this can make the reader to view them as the heroes of the liberation struggle. The poets captured, recorded and reflected on the dominant ideologies as well as the apartheid state apparatuses. The analysis showed that the apartheid state employed coercive measures, the soldiers and the police in order to suppress the angry black people. Obviously the use of the Repressive State Apparatuses followed after the failure of the Ideological State Apparatuses to make black people consent with being powerless.

The dominant ideology that the poems analysed in this chapter sought to deconstruct constitute a series of denials from the apartheid government officials that South Africa was not in crisis. The authorial ideology that the poems analysed in this chapter sought to conscientize the readers about the masses of the oppressed black people who were becoming more and more militant. The chapter also touches on the crimes perpetrated the apartheid regime. The aesthetic ideology that is

reflected in the poems is the content and form that displays a striking realism that speaks to the consciences of the readers, challenging them as individuals to act against the oppressor.

The poets achieved this by giving a sincere and honest description of the events and incidents as well as detailed descriptions that represented the true experiences of black people including the names of some victims of apartheid brutality. The effect of using real people and events makes the readers to be emotionally involved. It makes the readers consider their own views and opinions, as well as their place in history and their responsibility in both the past and present South Africa.

George Lukacs held that the accurate reflections of the socio-historical context are a sign of the author's artistic greatness (Forgacs in Jefferson and Robey 1995:176). This is particularly true of poets SSGM; who managed to reflect a sincere and honest picture of the anger of the black masses and the state violence. The poems selected for analysis in this chapter are invaluable because they enhance the memory of the reader with regard to the history of the liberation struggle.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### 12.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The selected poems in this study reveal that indeed the poetry of SSGM was more than just poetry but also an emancipatory discourse. This means that as discourse poetry in general it can be used as tool for conscientisation. The poets SSGM succeeded in conscientising black people by portraying a sincere and honest picture of the experiences of the oppressed black people under the apartheid regime. In addition the poetry of SSGM constitute the history of the liberation struggle and therefore an invaluable resource just like non-fiction books of history. The poems help to enhance the memory of all South Africans about their historical past so that they can better understand their past, present as well as their future.

George Lukacs's view that literary text reflects the dialectical socio-historical reality has been confirmed because the form and content of the poems addresses contrary notions that constituted the ideologies of the apartheid era. The fact that the poets SSGM sought to disseminate the ideas of Black Consciousness and the revolutionary ideas in general confirms the views of Antonio Gramsci that the task of contesting ideologies lately is in the hands of cultural intellectuals, which he calls organic intellectuals. Writers are counted amongst the organic intellectuals. This study also reveals that the poets SSGM can indeed be viewed as the organic intellectuals of the Black consciousness Movement and in general of the revolutionary movements in South Africa. This is evident in their poetic form and content in which they discuss, interrogate and probe the issues of: (1) racist attitudes (2) culture of black people (3) Christian religion (4) capitalist exploitation (5) non-whites (6) literary criticism (7) anger of black masses (8) white liberalism and (9) Bantustan institutions. The form and the content of the selected poems challenge the perception, the world view, which is the ideology of the reader forcing the reader to think deeper about these issues and to take a particular stand point. In fact the reader is made to look at these issues from the point of view of the Black Consciousness.

This study aimed to show the connection between the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali, the ideology of Black Consciousness and the ideologies of the apartheid system. The study also discovered that in their attempt to conscientize readers about the covert workings of the apartheid ideologies, the poets SSGM colluded with the very concept of ideology they were trying to expose and subvert. In the process of conscientizing readers, they find themselves being forced to reveal the ideology that inform the premise from which they were writing, interrogating, probing and reflecting on the socio-political circumstances. They analysed the socio-political problems from

what they called the Black perspective. The Black perspective constituted the Black Consciousness philosophy.

This study therefore has shown that the poets SSGM while making people aware, sharing an opinion, a point of view, a feeling, and directly and indirectly convinced the readers to adopt the Black Consciousness ideas with regard to the liberation struggle. According to the poets' writings this was a psychological freedom from white domination, freedom from fear and self pity, learning to be self assertive and self-sufficient from the whites; independent thinking and analysis of the situation and being proud of being black etc.

This study explained the use of essentialist ideas in the poems which invited bitter criticism of their poetry. But in their interaction with the researcher the poets SSGM dispelled the view that they deliberated, blindly essentialized the black identity, by explaining that it was necessary to use essentialist ideas in order to conscientize the oppressed black people. They argued that they had no other option, but to produce conscientisation messages to their readers. According to the poets the best way was to employ strategic essentialism. The poets also reject the labelling of their poetry as Soweto poetry, arguing that they were a group of poets coming from different areas in South Africa.

It was also a revelation to find that Gwala and Serote started writing poetry in the same way. During the interaction with each of them separately, the researcher discovered that their first poems were written for girls. At first their poetry were love letters intended to amuse girls but later the letters developed into serious poetry. Serote started to write at a very early age. This suggests that Gwala and Serote are gifted poets or writers. They did not start writing because of political reasons, writing is their gift. They wrote about political subject matters because the circumstances of that time compelled them to do so.

Gwala, Serote and Sepamla wrote about issues that were central to the Black Consciousness they were active members of the Black Consciousness and worked for the movement. It is therefore obvious that their poetry was used as conscientisation tool just like many other art forms that were used by the Black Consciousness as a means of reaching out to the black communities with Black Consciousness messages.

Mtshali, in his interaction with the researcher pointed out that he writes because of his love for words. Mtshali enjoyed the feeling of having been able to produce a beautiful piece of writing. It gives him a kind of gratification and a sense of freedom. Mtshali also stated that his poetry reflects life, as he wrote about the socio-political circumstances of Soweto where he lives and his experiences in New York. The interview with the poets confirmed the assertion of the topic that

conscientisation was the reason behind the writing of the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Mtshali and Gwala.

Gwala, Serote strongly agree with the view that conscientisation was the motive behind their poetry. Mtshali ticked disagreed in the attitude scale but in his interaction he implied that through his poetry he shares his experiences with his readers. He admitted that through his writing he aimed at capturing and recording the events, the hurts, and the hardships experienced by his people in the hands of the apartheid regime. Mtshali pointed out that he strongly believes that art imitates life. This means that Mtshali believes in the conscientisation role of art.

Sepamla (in Chapman 1982:118) confirms the idea of that conscientisation was the motive behind his poetry when he argues that:

I don't set out to change people. I only hope those who listen to my voice might be influenced one way or another. I'm for ever hoping that I provide a stimulus for some kind of reaction from an audience. I think this is what black writers can hope for amongst black audience. We should be shaking them to a deeper self-consciousness. I think the authorities agree with this opinion as can be witnessed by the banning of works by black writers.

The above quote indicates that Sepamla wrote with the intention of conscientising his audience. The reason was that as an active member of the Black Consciousness he had to contribute towards educating the masses about the atrocities that were being committed against them. The in-depth analysis of the selected poems, the interviews with the poets and the attitude scale administered with the individual poets all confirm that conscientisation was the motive behind the poetry of Sepamla, Serote, Gwala and Mtshali.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEWS WITH MAFIKA PASCAL GWALA CONDUCTED IN 2003

Yini ngempela eyayinenza nibhale.

*Yisikhathi, kwafika isikhathi lapho singakwazi khona ukuthi sisi expresse. Noma ngabe kwaku ne ngcindezelo kodwa i urge yokuzi expressa yayinkulu.*

Okay.

*Kwafika isikhathi, ngiyanothisa kukhona into ethile e supreswayo manje.*

Uhum.

*Uyawakhumbula ama groups amaningi ayedlala ama instruments, izinumber ezinjengo Botanic 500, ama groups ama In-laws to give one example ne lokhuza Harari kanjalo. Naku music kwakukhona le urge yokuzi expressa. Kwakuyisikhathi ngizothi kwafika isikhathi. Nothing could stop you.*

Kusho ukuthi imiphi le minyaka o 1970s?

*Kuma 1970s ehhe,njengoba nakuma 70s futhi kwafika isikhathi se Black Consciousness.*

Uhum....., Okey, kushu'ukuthi sekufika le edge le yokuthi abantu bakwazi ukuthi bazi expresse, kusho ukuthi nje that's what compelled you as such nabanye ukuthi nibhale there was nothing more that that , in terms of social circumstances or social problems.

*No, the social circumstances were there, the social need was there, but if the time was not ripe. I don't think we would have done it. It was the right time for it. Kwaqondana kwakhona o Black consciousness. Kwafika isikhathi abantu bayafuna ukuthi bazi expresse.*

Okay, what do you think were some ideological implications ngokwama poems enu ikakhulu mayelana self-identity, ne subjectivity, noma uma ukhuluma nje ubhekisele ukuthi wena uwubani. Uphila kuphi, kwenzakalani, you know, uma ucabanga kahle i self-identity as such iya empower yini umuntu noma iya disempower.

*I self- identity iyamu empower ngoba , it means you put yourself through a circle. I wouldn't call it a circle, through a rounded wire and call than you have to jump through so it's self empowerment in many ways.*

I self-identity sengathi iyangena kakhulu kuma poems enu, nina ni explora kakhulu i subjectivity, ukuthi ningobani nanokuthi kwenzakalani ezimpilweni zenu cishe nakubantu eniphila nabo emalokishini. Naleli poyinti leli engafuna ukulazi is it valid to argue that the concept of ethnicity, race and nationalism are found on the fiction of origin and descent and subject to politics, language, religion and commerce. Awu chaze njengombhali wama poems ubuyibuka kanjani indaba ye ethnicity, neye race, neye nationalism ngoba ngiyathola futhi ukuthi uma ngabe ngifunda kancane ngawe engathi nawe ungomunye wabantu abangabasunguli somehow be Black Consciousness Movement.

*Well, I ethnicity sayifika ikhona.*

Ehhe.

*All we did was just to handle it, challenge it, to disentangle it from the other many ama fascists (front issues of the day) that were there. So thina ngeke sisho kakhulu ukuthi i ethnicity sayakha thina mhlawumbe noma kanjani. Sayifika ikhona. And that we were merely responding to it.*

Le nto ye race impela ke yona uthini ngayo Bab'uGwal ngoba manje nina niyayifaka la kuma poems enu and ukungena kwayo njengama BCM writers uyabona abanye bathi nina nenza i reversed racism.

*Well, labo abasho njalo ke baya bheda ngoba manje the racist situation was existing and thina were had a gift, imvamisa nje kulaba obabalile othi uyaba researcher we all belong to different periods. So when we came up into this situation, sekukhona no BCM noma ke saba articulator nabo sasiza ukuba developer. It was the reality existing already so thina what we say, was don't be ashamed of it. What we had to do was just to plot and see what we could make out of it.*

I political voice kuma poems enu, did you put that voice deliberately or it came out you know khona ngokwalo nina nani implicator i politics ukuthi what was happening politically was unjust and all that stuff. Did you do that intentionally noma into that you could not avoid doing?

*Thina we couldn't avoid ukuthi singayi confront i racial situation ngoba yayi confrontwa nawo baba bethu nawo omkhulu bethu bayi confronta. And thina what we did was to move deeper into it and given the situation that was prevailing at the time sazithola thina sesiyi articulator kangcono i racist situation.*

Uma ubheka kahle hle esikhathini samanje. This racism thing isiyisima kanjani nangesikhathi enabhala ngaso. Ngakube ukhona umehluko kwi ndlela esesiphila ngayo thina njengezi ngane zenu and ayisihlukumezi i racism. Uyibuka kanjani wena njengomuntu omdala.

*Manje ngiyabona i racism iyasihlukumeza ngoba izinto eziningi esithi siyazenza even now ziya challenjwa abantu ababefisa ukuthi i status quo si existe as it was. Manje thina ke asikwazi ukuthi silwe naleyo nto successfully or not successfully it is for other people to judge us.*

Do you think that we as the young writers we need to articulate these injustices and say ukuthi no..no...no.. no asikakafiki lapho okumele sifike khona.

*We need to do that, actually what happened, as they tried to explain us we got more ground for explaining ourselves out of that, ukuthi ngobani bona bayasibeka ukuthi this is racism in reverse kanje so we had to justify ourselves and nathi ke sizi defende lapho and to further throw a ball into their court. And they were unable to return the ball until now. Thanks to Mandela.*

Ok, now bab'u Gwala what do you think is the job facing cultural intellectuals in our time maybe people like writers, politicians or academics. What are they suppose to do? Ngibuza lokhu in terms of i identity ne self-representation.

*Well, now i am very bitter because our generation was denied a chance of expanding into the dawn of liberation. You know it reminds me of a situation that existed in one Latin American country. That Latin America country is called Chile. Where you had democratic revolution not completed by elections. A certain man came into power and then this man here wanted changes and the cultural front was very strong in support of those changes. And here in this situation now we had people in the new leadership who are suppressing anything that can come along and challenge many envisaged ideas on change. So that you get the idea now that this dispensation we are in present moment is rather anti-revolutionary. Just like in Chile where a certain military military general came out and suppressed the cultural workers. The same has happened here where by there are people who does the same thing.*

Some people seem to discredit black English poetry of the seventies as if you guys were out just to attack the government of the time, disregarding the literariness of poetry.

*I will disagree with that very much because for example myself i have written poems that were designed to inspire workers, they are not poems. I can admit that they were not poems, those were just social statements that I wrote in order to push the issue forward. but i have not included them in my writings, in my collections. I just kept them. They are just there unpublished but i use them in*

*social-gatherings for political purposes. But when it came to poetry, poetry is something different. Poetry was releasing your energy in a formulated way.*

So you did not disregard the literary conventions of poetry. You did not actually defy the conventions.

*We had to defy the conventions because the conventions were confining us. We had to defy the conventional standards because they were arresting our development. Our progress was being retarded by them. So we had to defy them but it did not mean that we were not writing poetry. For instance there is a poem entitled "Bluesing in" its here [taking the book]. I'm not sure the page is [looking for the page]. This poem starts with "Blues blues komati blues 1874" and it ends with "Blues blues Azania blues 1994".*

*Now in 1994 we had our liberation, a stage of our liberation not real the complete liberation. Not the perfect liberation but it was prophetic in that it says that in 1994 Humphy dumpy sat in the wall and he died and then the monument on his grave reads "he did not want change", In 1994. And it was in 1994 that Mandela took over the government, formed the government of National Unity, considering the fact that Inkatha was included. So it was the government of National Unity.*

But you wrote that poem before 1994.

*It was written long time ago.*

When i read this poem i said to myself this must be new book.

*No, it is not. This poem was written long ago in 1976 if I mean it.*

Then 1994 came in here.

*It came in and it shows it was prophetic, there are many other poems here that are prophetic. That I have seen on my own just reading leisurely and i say how come I said this. But at that time it's happening.*

So Bab'u Gwala let us move on, but you are free to expand on that previous question if you like.

No.

What was the role of language as such to symbolise the themes you wrote about. The language could have worked the other way round, maybe when used by the other group of people perhaps the whites to distort the reality. What do you think about the role of language in literature?

*The role of language was very vital in many respects. One of those being, we had to use a language that defined the given set up. Even in language, because the given set up had controlling mechanisms and we had to challenge those mechanisms and destroy whatever possible. For you to succeed in bringing across the message but necessarily taking into consideration that you are not substituting propaganda, so that propaganda is an art but not all art can be propaganda. Unlike conventionally saying "art is not propaganda".*

So language was used to describe the reality of that particular time. So now to what extent have the oppressed people been able to use English language to defend themselves or to challenge socio-political and cultural domination? What made you to write in English if you were truly black?

*It is true because we were supposed to write in isiZulu, isiSuthu, isiXhosa, isiTsonga, isiTswana, but we were writing in English which was a common way of reaching understanding amongst ourselves without jeopardizing chances of tribal fictions and so we did it in English. And for that I would like to remind you, just to inform you that in 1966 I failed English 1 at the u Ngoye University [University of Zululand]. I failed English 1 for one reason there was this Miss Bennett. She had got her Masters degree at Wainscot University in the states.*

*She had this poem by Wilfred Owen and the poem talks about a miner or a certain person in the mines. I felt that the ghost of the person was not the subject matter of the poem .And I told this lady that i did not believe in ghosts. I explained the poem physically without going into this metaphysics of saying well, it's a ghost of the poet. It's the ghost of the dead person. She hated me, and you know one day she got me red handed. She had to get me. So one day she said all the assignments had to be submitted to her on that day because she had given us plenty of time. And then I asked myself "what do i do now because my assignment is at dometries. It's not here now and I kept quiet. People submitted others did not and than i went to the dometries.*

*I took my assignment, took it to her, and there she was saying no no no no. I am not accepting that, and I pushed her she was sliced and thin and tall. I swang her around I said baby please understand. Here is the assignment. She said i am not taking it. I placed it on her desk and said look if you don't do that God will look at you very seriously. She said you are telling me about God. Is it God who said you must not do your work? She said all kinds of things to me. I said yes i understand i was just kidding. This was the side of the man talking to a woman, after all she was not married. After all she*

*was a woman and next time she came into the lecture hall and gave a long speech on students who thought they knew better than their lecturers. I remember that i was one of the best students in English 1. But i was failed, at the end of the year. I was failed.*

Maybe it was done deliberately.

*It was deliberate, I do not doubt that. Some boers could say it in Afrikaans that "I am telling you now that you are failing". What will be a point if continuing with madam x if you had been told that you are failed. Whites were dominant and that was what they liked and they had no conscience. So years went by then I had a girlfriend, an Indian girlfriend, Sharita Maharaj.*

I cannot believe that you had an Indian girlfriend, but you considered Indians as blacks?

*Ja, so it was in 1967. I am writing her love letters beautiful love letters, poetry, Wrote letters in poetic form and she said to me one day. Why don't you write poems because you are gifted? Why don't you write poetry? I said to her i have never thought of that and i can't write poems. She said no you must try it. Try it one day.*

*There is one thing i regret in my life. Because of the racial situation I lost a woman who came from a better family like an Indian family. She was from a better family in many ways. But she told me her family history. The father, her father was from a lower class. Her father was a barman. He used to work at a motel. She married a teacher, an Indian teacher. But what I am saying is that we were battling hard to articulate but we were not aware of it. But later we realised that we had to do more, to improve one's self. But i ended up being a poet, a writer actually. I consider myself more as a writer than a poet.*

*It just happened that i found myself doing more writing. So there comes Black consciousness. I was able to articulate the philosophy of Black consciousness that is how i became a kind of a founder member, because people like Biko will talk, talk, talk than i would have to sit down and write all the ideas. I would have to guide them because by that time i was already a Marxist. I always used Marxist rationale. I always came by a dialectical perspective into things.*

So as a person who has been writing poetry, I feel like the traditional English poetry tends to serve the values of the Western oriented middle class patriarchy, but that is my subjective understanding, more than that it serves the intellectual development of all people. Bab'uGwala what do you think could be a response of an ordinary black person to their subject position. I think, you know your poetry helps to the intellectual development of many people. Your poetry had more substance to black people than the traditional English poetry.

*Well, it's because it talks about the reality of that particular young black student. It is closer to his existence, to his perspective, to his ideas, to his interpretation of life in general. Because that is what it was all about, interpretation of life in general from an independent view point. Looking into the assimilation that had occurred between blacks and whites because there has been assimilation we cannot deny that. And it was not a negative assimilation it was a positive assimilation. All cultural development is positive unless it has been imposed from above like in the case of Hitler, like in the case of Hitler that is something else then.*

So all in all wena bab'uGwal what could you say was the role of poetry under apartheid period especially black poetry?

*Well! It helped many blacks to feel proud of being black. It made many blacks wish to acquire independent thinking. It made many blacks don't want to sit back and look but to act to counter the philosophy of white domination.*

So the debate around such concepts like standards, excellence, merits and quality, this debate often occurs frequently when one talks about black South African English poetry by black writers. What do you think those terms signify. The terms: standards, excellence, merits and quality.

*Well! there is a poet who wrote in English unfortunately he is late. David Livingstone, he never wrote anything political but because whites challenged us on what writing about being black was all about, were the ones who place him on the top. He was one of the best poets and then there is another one, Campbell. Roy Campbell, he was a fascist but he is topped. The whites like him, it shows how one sided their thinking is.*

My lecturers liked to talk about Roy Campbell now and again.

*They are proud of him because he was South African. They are proud of David Livingstone because he was South African. He was born in Zimbabwe, he ended up being a Zimbabwean citizen then later he came to South Africa to be a bacteriologist.*

So what do you think is unique about South African English poetry of the 70s? Uzongixolela bab'uGwala uma ngabe ku..... cisha..... aya xhuman ama questions ami. What is unique? What is different in it? What makes it special because it seems as if there is something special about this poetry. Denis Brutus visited our University i think in 1998 or in 1999. I attended the college lecture. The professor was quiet unhappy about the stuff that was taught to the kids in schools. To him it seemed as if the books that are supposed to be prescribed and be in circulation in this country, in this point in time they are still not in circulation. And one cannot understand why? And I agreed with

him because it is hard to get a copy and many other copies. I don't know why is that? What made the black poetry of the 70s unique and different, and so special?

*It's because it was an independent adventure. Barney Pityana said when black men were becoming of their own, when they were being on their own, something happened to their poetry as well. Then, it was black man you are on your own, do your thing and do it thoroughly. Don't rely on the white man.*

Ok, so is it possible for one to analyse and explore your poetry without relating it to B.C.M or one needs to understand what B.C.M was all about for him to understand the poetry of Serote, Mtshali, Gwala and Sepamla.

*One had to understand the poetry of Sepamla, Gwala, Mtshali and Serote because really like all of us we wrote from a black man liberation point of view. What happened is coincidental period there was this BCM and then BCM seemed to be the main thing to be targeted by the liberals. But it was not necessarily writing for BCM. It was writing for something on its own and BCM just happened to be there. That is why I said it was period.*

*But giving you an example people like Nina Simone sang on black power, people like Roberta Frank now they all talked about blackness but it did not stop them from using whites like Carol King to articulate blackness in America. They used white artists, works of white artists, they sang and re-interpreted them. From that came something positive. One guy in Black consciousness wrote an article that came out in SASO Newsletter in 1972. If I am not mistaken, well it's a pity that the man is now late. He said that whites took Elvis Presley but Elvis Presley imitated blacks. And he gave many examples. It's true. But then you said Black Consciousness now has given us an independence from whites. It's now blacks who are creating independently. But then I told them it's not true because we are having people like Carol King. She is a white Jewish, lady she sings so well do you know this LP tapestry.*

No.

*You are young, mafikizolo, so I said, is not true because people like Roberta Frank are taking songs of whites re-polishing them and sing them. There is nothing wrong with that let us not put colour into this black thing. Black Consciousness had nothing to do with colour. It had to do with your perspective. That this country belongs to the black majority and then from the black view point something must be done and it was as simple as that.*

So there was this liberal discourse or ideas, the whites claiming to speak on behalf of the blacks. What do you feel about it, would you agree that B.C.M poets were trying to say no to the liberals.

*Can you tell me one TV show that has no white person behind it. We didn't want whites to interfere into our intellectual development. They wanted to tell us what to think, how to think and when to act upon it and thought about it. They were really interfering. The break away of Biko from NUSAS was that gesture, that we don't want them to tell us. Right in the mist of Black Consciousness we always had whites, those who agreed with us. Rick Turner was there and many others.*

I have already spoken about the role of black poets after 1994. But you said the struggle is not over as yet, simply because we have earned our freedom. We, cultural intellectuals, should keep on articulating the issues that affects our communities.

*Yes! It's true, as it is i am not writing, well poetically. I am not writing poems, they just don't seem to come up. The muses have forsaken me.*

But, what are the muses now bab'uGwala? What is that?

*The muse, is the god of poetry.*

Oh! It's true that there are muses. I came across this word in my reading but i could not understand what the muse was. But there is that goddess or a god of some sort that controls the writer's thinking.

*Ja! The muses have forsaken me but I am writing vignette now, short-short stories. Because I find that if write poetry I can't go along with Mandela when i know that he's wrong. I will only remain the object of change. When I know that some of us are just fat cats so for me not to criticize. I would rather not write poetry because I will be forced to criticize.*

Ok! Maybe this could be last question. According to the ideas presented in black poetry of the seventies, what was it that black people of South Africa were fighting for. Is it what we see happening politically, socially, economically and educationally in South Africa what people died for in the struggle.

*Well most of it is what we died for in the struggle but lot of it has nothing to do with that even the forces of change are being arrested by the very comrades that we had.*

What would you like the researchers to highlight about you and your writings? Or say about black South African poetry?

*Well, I would say we wrote then on the present for the future and we had to breathe light on the yesterday at the same time.*

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEWS WITH MAFIKA PASCAL GWALA CONDUCTED ON 15-01- 2009

Mr Gwala, good morning.

*Good morning.*

Mr Gwala many things have been written about your life history. Could you please give me a brief outline of your life? Like where you were born? Where did you grow up? Which schools you attended? Where did you do your tertiary education? Outline briefly about the beginning of your writing career. How many books you have published? How many books were not published? Are you writing currently? U bab'uGwala usuka kuphi? Wazalelwa kuphi ngempela? ngoba mina ngimazi esemudala nje.

*Ngazalelwa e Verulum, North of Durban. Ngafunda e Oakford primary kukhona i high school yamantombazane. I primary yabafana yayi ngcina kwa standard five. Ngasuka lapho ngaya e Ntshanga ngayokwenza u standard six. Entshanga ikubo ka baba.*

Entshanga. Ngibone emabhodini kubhalwe ukuthi Entshanga ngiza ngapha.

*Ikubo ka baba impela. So ngafunda khona ke e secondary, u standard six ngeza no form 1 kuse khona ama form, form 2, form 3. Ngaqeda Entshanga ngaya Enkamana ngafika ngenza u matric.*

Uhum.... waqeda wase uphinda wenzani emumva kwalokho? Wayosebenza noma....?

*Ngaya e University. Ngahlala two years e University. Zabheda izinto ngalezo zikhathi. Nanitelekela ngisho ukudla.*

Yimiphi nje le minyaka bab'uGwala use University?

*It was between 1966-1967.*

Ubab'uGwala wayezalwe ngamuphi unyaka?

*It was in 1946.*

Ngo 1967 ubab' uGwala wayese University?

*It was between 1966-1967.*

Yiphi yona in University bab'uGwala?

*Ongoye, ngasuka lapho ngajoyina i firm yaba mmeli njengomuntu ofundayo, otadishayo no kwenza i law.*

Ok, ubab'uGwala wayefuna ukwenza i law.

*Ngangifuna ukwenza i law. Ayi izinto zangangihambela kahle.*

Enkampanini yabammeli manje?

*Enkampanini yaba mmeli ayi kwakuse khaya khona. Babengithanda futhi abammeli bami bengikhonzile. Kodwa nje ngenza iphutha elilodwa angayikhokha imali ngesikhathi e UNISA ngangakwazxi ukubhala i examination.*

Zona izifundo zobummeli. Yimake bab'uGwala laphaya enkampanini wawusebenza kanjani? Wawu mabhalane noma kanjani, interpreter?

*Ngangwumabhalane phela, kuthathwa ngokuthi ngiyi article clerk.*

Ok. Ngiyabona.

*Kwathi ngo 1968. Ngeza lapha ngazosebenza la eMafemini e Hammarsdale.*

Uhhum

*Ngafunda ke lapho, angikubeke nje kanjena ukuthi ngashiya emafemini. Ngahamba ngaya e Transkei. Kwakukhona isikole esasiyi Boy's secondary. Ngaba uthisha khona e Lourdes. E qinisweni kwakuyi Boy's secondary kwakuyinto esa private school Kwakuyisikole sama Roma.*

Okey. e Lourdes. Ngiyabona baba kwakuyi Boy's secondary.

*Ngiyathemba uMathanzima wayesabaphethe. Uhlezi ebahlupha. Uyabona and esabahlupha. Ngashiya lapho.*

Oh! Laphaya e Lourdes ufundisa ini? Sipi isifundo bab'u Gwala?

*I English ne maths. Kwakwenzeka ngifundise nesi Latin ngobangangisazi.*

Ehhe. Yaqhubeka ke impilo e Lourde Kwase?

*Ngo 1972-1973 ngaphinda ngasebenza efemini. Ayi kwasho ukuthi sihlange nabanye abafana abangama trade unionists. Kwasuka ke isiteleka samafemu esaba sikhulu. Saba sikhulu impela ngoba kukhona usuku okungazange kuvulwe neyodwa i femu. Kwakuthiwe stand still. Bangibopha ke lapho.*

Kwakuyibona o 1973 labo. Yimake bab'ugwala ngibuze kukhona lama strikes okuthiwa aduma kakhulu kwaze lwathiwa yi Durban strikes. Kwakuhambisana naleso sikhathi.

*Yebo. Kwakuyileso sikhathi.*

Manje usuboshwe lani?

*Phela babe bona ukuthi imina.*

Babebona ukuthi uwena owawuhamba phambili.

*Ngokwabo. Kanti kwakukhona nabanye o mastermind.Ababengabazi.*

Ok

*Ngaphuma ke lapho emafemini ngayo sebenza enyonyaneni e Bolton Hall. Leli hall lisekhona namanje.*

Oh. Likhona lapha nje e Hammarsdale?

*Cha. eThekwini.*

Inyunyana ke lena igama layi cishe usalikhumbula.

*Ngangisebenza.....izinyunyana zazingakabikhona.Zingavunyelwe ukuthi zisebenze ngokukhululeka.So kwakuyi benefit scheme kudidwa uhulumeni. Kwakubizwa nje nge benefit fund. Ngasebenza khona ke. Ngaleso sikhathi sengithintene ke ne Black Consciousness.*

Ehhe obani ke labo? O 1974, 1973 ngiyacabangela.

*Kuseyibona o 1973 laba. Ngasebenza ke. Ngathi uma ngishiya lapho e Bolton hall. Ngayosebenza kwi Black Community programmes-BPC.*

Ok.

*Ngasebenza ke no Biko. Yena wayesebheniwe ngaleso sikhathi. E bhenelwe e King William's town. Ngasebenza kwi Black Consciousness. Kwathi ngo 1976 kwakhona le nto ka June 16. Ngase ngifundisa ngaleso sikhathi ngo 1976. Ngifundisa la e Hammarsdale.*

Usubuyele esikoleni futhi?

*Ngifundisa e Albini secondary school.*

Ikuphi ilapha elokishini. Idumile nje ngiye ngizwe engathi isikole esidumile.

*Ngo 1976.*

Ufundisa sona isilungu noma wase ushitshile kwezinye izifundo.

*Cha isilungu ngangingasishiyile. Ngifundisa ne Geography. Isifundo sami ke i Geography ngoba ngangi good kuyona.*

U good kuyona.

*Ngafundisa ke kwaphela u nyaka. Ngase ngizoqala la Okhozini la elokishini.*

Uhhum. Isikole futhi sona lesa?

*Kuqala unyaka ngaphusha, ngaphusha, ngaphusha. Kwafa u Biko.*

Ngo?

*Ngo 1977 salokhuza, sathatha appropriate steps. Ngaphambi kokuthi kufe u Biko Kwafa u Mapetla Mohapi wase Stake Spruit e Eastern Cape. Wasebenza kwi Black Consciousness.*

Yena ushoniswa yini manje?

*Kwakuthiwa uzilengisile. Wabulawa amabhunu.*

Kwase kuduma ukuthi uzilengisile. Kwasekulandela ke u Steve Biko.

*Kwase kulandela ke u Steve Biko. Bambulala. Ngagcina ngalelo langa ke ukufundisa kuleso sikole.*

Esasi selokishini.

*Esasi selokishini. Ngoba kwafika lo. Uyambona lo. Wayethunywe e Goli. U bani lo wamaphoyisa.*

Owayemhlophe?

*Cha. Lo osasasipendiwe.*

U Jackie Selepi.

*U Selepi uyakwazi layikhaya. Wafika ke uSelepi wangifiza ngisesikoleni. Njengoba ngithi ngagcina ngalelo langa ke esikoleni. Wafika la u Selepi negenge yaseGoli. Ayi enziwa amalungiselelo okuya le e Eastern Cape. E Kings Williams's town. Mina angisekho njalo esikoleni.*

Awusekho esikoleni.

*Kwase kukhona i state of emergency. Awu bangibamba abakwa sidlodo. Bangifaka phakathi nga dethenwa for hundred days.*

Uhhum.

*For hundred days ngi ditheniwe. U principal. Kush'ukuthi wayewasaba amabhunu. Waye pro-struggle kodwa ewasaba amabhunu.*

Kodwa ewasaba amabhunu.

*Ayi. Wayesengibekela imingcele okufanele ngihambe ngayo. Ngase ke ngibanjwa ke ngaboshwa.*

So kwahamba ke kanjalo.

*Kanti nakhona lapho sengibuyile. Babengesaba. Kanti umuntu usezoboshwa.*

Uboshwa nje baku bamba kuphi? Bakubamba e Goli manje.

*Cha! Bangibamba la.*

Ningakaphindeli e Goli no Selepi.

*Bangibamba ngosuku engingahamba ngalo.*

Kukhona owayebatshelele ukuthi uyahamba lomuntu manje.

Uzokweqa umungcele.

*Bangibamba sengihamba bangifiza nezitifiketi zami. Nama particulars onke ami. Ngoba ngiyahamba manje ngiyo gobela i golela yasebusuku.*

Yini I Golela baba uGwala?

*Awu wazalwa nini ungayazi i Golela? Isitimela esiya kwaZulu. Esasihamba size sifike eGolela.*

Ehhe.

*Awu bangihlalisa ke lo hundred days wabo.*

Kwaqala ke manje kwenzeka yonke lento. Usuqalile ukubhala izinkondlo lezi engizicubungulayo?

*Ukubhala ngakuqala ngiseyi article clerk. Kwakukhona intombazane yendiya engangizwana nayo.*

Ehhene.

*Le ntombazane ke ngangiyibhalela ama poem othando.*

Okay. Yaqala kanjalo ke le nto.

*Kwakungeyakwa Maharaj le ntombazane. Yathi yini ngangabhali ama poem ngoba nginalo ikhono. Ngaqala kanjalo ke ukubhala. Ngaqaliswa yintombazane. Ngaqala ukubuka ngenye indlela manje ukuthi hhawu imbali. Iyimbali ngani? Ngephunga? Ngombala wayo? Noma ngobu sweet uma uyi testa amanzi lawa i nectar. Amazolo lawo uma ubona amazolo wawuthi uma uthi embalini uzwe ubu sweet. Uju lwezinyosi kanje. Kuyinto enhle. Le.*

Kwase kuyakuthinta ke?

*Ngaqala ke ukubhala.*

Uhu.

*Ngaqala ukumisa amadlebe uma abantu bekhuluma. Ngilalelisise ukuthi bafuna ukuthini.*

Ubalalelisise abantu. Kushukuthi kubalulekile ukuthi uma ubhala ulalele ukuthi bathini abantu.

*Ehhene. Kufanele ulalele uzwe ukuthi bathini abantu.*

Uhu.

*Ya ngabhala ke ngibhalela le ntombazana. Angithi uyazi ukuthi amandiya anemithetho eminingi. Bayithatha le ngane abazali bayo bayoyiganisela umuntu osemdala. Phela ayiseyona intombi.*

Oh yingakho bayithatha bayinikeza umuntu omdala. Yingoba yayingaseyona ivirgin.

*No Gwala akakhombisi ukuthi uyayithatha.*

U Gwala akacacisi.

*Akacacisi.*

Pho manje kwenzeka kanjani bab'uGwala ukuthi kugcine sengathi izinkondlo zakho zigcina sezithinta inhlalakhle yabantu generally?

*Phela angithi sasine "SASO Newsletter" ngafaka ama poems ami khona. A publishwa. Already sengi publishile amanye ku magazine okwakuthiwa i "Classic" I "Classic" Magazine and then ngabuye ngabona enye i magazine i "Ophir".*

Nakhona angena ke ama poem.

*Angena, angena nge shodi ngoba i "Classic" ngafaka awu five ngiqala nje kwathi kwi "Ophir" abawu seven.*

Akhula manje ngala kwi "Ophir".

*Akhula kwi "Ophir". Ayi ke kwi Ophir ngase ngiyilokhu ngibhala ke ngabanika bewathatha ama poem ami. Ngikhumbula enye yawo i Chidren of Nonti.*

Ehhene. Ngiyayibona.

*Iyona engayithandayo ke mina.*

Kuma poems akho iyona ekuthintayo kakhulu.

*Kulawa apublishwa yi "Ophir".*

Okay. Ehhene , yini owawuyithanda bab'uGwal cishe ungathi kancane nje.Yini eyenza ukuthi kube iyona owawuyithanda kulama poems angena ku "Ophir".

*Yingoba ngalesosikhathi ngangise Transkei. So kukhona umshado komunye umuzi wakwa Nzimande.*

Uhhum.

*Ngawu attenda lo mshando.*

Uhhum.

*Uyabona kwakusashadwa phakathi nezinsuku emabhaceni.*

Uhhum.

*Kusekhona ukuthi ngama weekend kuzodliwa kushadwe phakathi nezinsuku. Kwase kuba nomthetho othi akushadwe phakathi nezinsuku. Ngaya ke kulowo mshado njengo muntu wakwa Nzimande.*

*Manje lana kwakuyikwa Nonti. Siwuzalo lakwa Nonti. Angithi thina bakwa Gwala singabakwa Nzimande.*

Uhhum.

*Manje into engayithanda ngayo ukuthi ngayibhala without efforts and without breaks.*

Yavele yaziphumela nje inkondlo. Ngayiqala ngayiqeda ngosuku olulodwa.

*Awu ngabona ukuthi nami kanti sengiyi poet. Ngikwazi ukubhala i poem ngosuku olulodwa.*

Ngigijime kanjalo nje.

*Ngigijime kanjalo nje. Ngiyiqede. Kwasho ukuthi ayi kuza kahle.*

Manje uNonti lona Ubani? Ukhokho ngandlela thize, ubani lo?

*Ya. U Nonti phela ukhokho wama Phephethe. Bako Zibukwana. Bakwa Majiya. UMajiya kaSishosho. USiShosho kaMaphinda. UMaphinda Ka Nzimande.*

Oh! Ngiyayithanda le ndaba. Manje bab'uGwala manje la ku le poem ukhuluma ngomndeni wakwa Nonti kanjalo nje.

*Ehene. Ngiyakhuluma ngawo. Ngibuye ngichome ke kwenye indawo. La ekugcineni "later when the sun is forever dies". Kubuye kube ukuchomela abelungu. Kodwa okungekhona futhi lokho.*

So cishe kube yilokho ekade ngikhuluma ngikusho. Ngikubiza ngokufengqeleza ngandlela thize. Yaqala yaphuma incwadi. Oh cha! Ngiyayibona le ndaba le. So yase iphuma kanjani ke incwadi? Sekuyibhuku. Aphuma kanjani ke amabhuku ke wona.

*To whom it may concern. Ngayithumela ku Donker. U Donker kwakuyi Dutch man eyafika la yaba ne publishing house.*

Uhhum.

*Yayi concentrator kubantu abamnyama ibanika i boost.*

Okay.

*Yayi khokha le nkampani.*

Yayi khokha wawukwazi ukubona ukuthi ngiyakwazi ukuthenga isinkwa.

*Ngiyakwazi ukuthenga isinkwa.*

Manje u To whom it may concern kwakuyi title ye collection. Yayiphi incwadi?

*Cha.*

Noma kwakuyincwadi efaka izinkondlo zabantu abehlukene nezakho zikhona.

*Kanjalo ehhe. Ngoba incwadi engayikhipha ku Donker yayingeyena u To whom it may concern. Kwaku wu "Joli'nkomo".*

Ngiyayibona.

*Ehhene u "Joli'nkomo".*

We bab'uGwala uyazi lesi sihloko esithi To who it may concern siyaye singichaze nje uma ngisizwa. Yini naniqonde ukuthi ngo To whom it may concern. Siyaye singithinte kukhona nenkondlo futhi esho njalo.

*Ingani uyazi ukuthi u To whom it may concern wawubhala ngomuntu uthi akaqashwe ngomunye bese ubhala ukuthi "to whom it may concern". Usho ukuthi ubani ofunda le nto le azi ukuthi usibanibani. Kanje kanjena. Uyamunika ilungelo asebenze phansi kwenkampani yethu. Noma yini kanjalo. U "to whom it may concern" into enjengaleyo.*

Yinto enjengaleyo nje. Manje naningasafeqezezi yin bab'uGwala ngoba manje niyayiguqula le nto. Nidlala ngayo Niyifaka kwi poetry nangadlela thize kwakukhona ukufeqezeza ngadlela thize.

*Ehhene.*

So kwaba uJoli'inkomo yase iphuma ke nezinkondlo zika ba'uGwala.

*Ehhene. Umuntu owangi introducer ku Donker u Wally Serote.*

Uhhum.

*U wally Serote.*

Uhhum. So kwase kuba khona enye ke elandela u Joli'nkomo incwadi.

*Hhayi. Yaqhamuka late.*

U" Jol'inkomo" waqhamuka ngamuphi unyaka. Ukuthi aphume simazi siwu mphakathi.

*Waphuma ngo 1977.*

Ngo 1977 kwase kuthi late kwaqhamuka eyesibili. Yima ke bab'uGwala ngiyayithanda le ndaba yama titles akho. Enye into engiyithanda kakhulu ayangi mover mina. Yini wawuzweni uvele uthi "No more lullabies". Ngoba i lullaby ngicabanga ukuthi iculo lokudlalisa izingane la.

*Hhawu. Akusekho konke lokho. Kwakuwujova amabhunu. Abulala u Biko enza zonke izinto eziningi ezingasile.*

Uhhum.

*Then I said "No more lullabies".*

Kush'ukuthi akuncengwana.

*Kanti futhi kwakukhona nokuthi ngoba ngaboshwa ngase ngiyaphuma. Kwakukhona kimina lesa sibirijana sokuthi awu fusegi noma ngingafa. Angisadingi nokuthi ngize ngiphume. Kush'ukuthi kwakuyiphutha nje uma usubukisisa. Ukube ngaphuma ngabe ngenza izinto eziningi ngaphandle kwase South Africa.*

Uhhum.

*Manje sebengibophile. Ngaphuma. Ngase ngiba defaya ngase ngiya forcer ngathi "No more lullabies"*

Ngiyabona. Iphuma emumva kweminyaka ewu five emumva kokuba kuphume lena yokuqala.

*Ehhene.*

Ehhe. Kwase kuba khona okunye futhi okubhaliwe oku pubhlishiwe.

*Hhayi. Lokhu okunye. Lokhu okunye. "Umusho".*

*"Umusho" ngike ngawubona ngithi chafachafa ema compuyutheni.*

*"Umusho" ke uphume nje late. Sa compiler ama poems. Kukhona u Professor Gunner. U Miss Gunner ula e Maritzburg. Angazi noma usekhona yini. Wayenza i research ye PhD. Naye wayenza kanje esebenzisa i recorda. Etha angimsize uku translator.*

Ok. Wavela kanjalo ke "Umusho".

*"Umusho" wavela kanjalo ke. Si translator ke izinkondlo zabantu.*

Uhhum.

*Hhayi ukuthi izinkondlo per se kodwa kuthiwa yini? Izinkondlo zesiZulu. Hhayi izinkondlo.*

Oral literature.

*Oral literature. Kodwa singathini uma sisho....*

Praise poetry.

*Praise poetry. Ya! ngesiZulu ke.*

Izibingo zama khosi.

*Izihasho.*

Iya. Insizwa inezihasho, inkosi inezibongo.

*Ngaleso sikhathi ngise Manchester ke.*

Seyithini iminyaka lapho baba uGwala, ngobani nje uma ufanekisa.

*Ngahamba ngo 1988 uma ngingaphosisi 1988 or 1987.*

Uhhum. Ngangenza u standard 7 ngalesosikhathi.

*Wawuse mncane.*

Wawu se Manchester ke ngalesosikhathi.

*Sazi translator ke lezi zinkondlo. Ke Ziphume,ziphume seziyi bhuku njengoba nawe usuzibona.*

Uhhum.

*Hhawu. Ngabona mina ukuthi kukhona la ayelokhuza khona. Kukhona nezibongo zika Gatsha.*

Uhhum.

*Le ntombazane yayi nesibindi le. Yayo interviewer u Gatsha.*

O kanti usisi lo enanisebenza naye. Usisi lo othi use Pietermaritzburg. Wahamba wayo interviewer u Gatsha.

*Ngase ngibona ukuthi ngoba u Gatsha umnikile i interview yakhe, izibongo zakhe. Le nto lena ayi sawundi kahle ku ANC.*

Uhhum.

*Wena wabona u Gatsha. Wangabona abanye abantu and wayenazo futhi izibongo zika Luthul.*

Ehhene, usisi lo.

*Ehhene. U Luthuli washona sengikuleli office labammeli. Ileli office la kwangena khona uMxenge. Kwahamba mina kwasala kwangena uMxenge.*

Kwasala kwangena uMxenge.

*Le nto lena iduma kakhulu mani. Asifake umfutho othile. Siyi salvage ngoba as it is ayihambi kahle.*

Ayihambi kahle.

*Ngase ngibhala izibongo zika Henry Gwala.*

Uhu...

*No Gavin Mbeki.*

U dade nazo ke wazisebenzisa.

*Sase senza i collection sobabili.*

Ehhe.

*Sayi publisher ke.*

Kwase kuphuma "Umusho" ke kanjalo.

*Kwase kuphuma Umusho ke manje.*

Uhum. Ayi ngiyezwa bab'uGwala. So ke emumva kuka Musho ngasekubhaleni. Ngisho njengamanje kukhona futhi u bab'uGwal asakubhala. Indoda ngeke uyazi phela ungathi indoda izilalele kanti kukhona nje elele phezu kwakho. Cishe okungaka phumi. Cishe okungase kuphume. Into enjengaleyo.

*Akukho okungase kuphume. Kodwa ke kodependa.*

Uhum.

*Ukuthi ngabona mina ukuthi kuya pheya ukungajahi uku publisher.*

Uhum.

*Funda kahle ubone i point of view yabantu ne mood yabo ne point of view yakho. Lendaba yokuthi ubhale njengo...*

Uhu.

*Kukhona leli gama abalishoyo ukuthi umuntu uprolific.*

Ehe.

*It is a good thing to be prolific.*

Uhu.

*Kodwa uma uthatha izinkondlo njengoba ziyizinkondlo.*

Uhum.

*Ukuba prolific akuyona into ongayithatha kalula.*

Akuyona into ongayithatha kalula. Ngiyezwa bab'uGwala so lokhu othi mhlawumbe uma kungenzeka kungase kucishe kuphume kuseyizo izinkondlo. Noma sekungolunye uhlobo lombhalo oluthize?

*Kukhona lento okuthiwa ama vignette.*

Yini ke bab'uGwala?

*Isi French sakhona.*

Ok leli gama livela kwisi French.

*Uma ngilibona. Livela kusi French.*

Kodwa khona kuwuhlobo olunjani nje lombhalo lolu bab'uGwala.

*Ama short story kodwa abe mafushane.*

Uhu. Bab'uGwala یشort story imfishane. Imfishane kakhulu ukudlula i short story.

*Khona ku personal.*

Ok. Ok. Ku personal. Kuhluka kangakanani ku essay.

*Cha! Akuyona i essay kuyi short story.*

Kodwa ukuthi kufishane and ku personal. Ngifisa ukuyibona le mibhalo kodwa ke hhayi ngizo khuleka nje ubab' uGwala aze ayi publishe lemibhalo.

*Ngaba nebhadi ke elikhulu. Angikadluli futhi kule yonto. Ngathatha umshini layi khaya. Nansi ilokhuza yami. I computer yami. Yayisaphila ngaleso sikhathi. Ngahambe ke nama vignette ami ngiyowa kopisha edolobheni.*

Ehhe. Kuphi ke e Malasibhokwe noma e Thekwini.

*E Thekwini, angazi kwenzekeni kimina.*

Uhhum.

*Ngehle etekisini.*

Eyi iyangithusa lento ofuna ukuyisho bab'uGwala. Qhubeka Kodwa.

*Ngehla e tekisini. Ngakhumbula itekisi ikade isithelile ukuthi ngiphethe into enjengalena. Eyi ngisuke ngejubane. Ngiye e renke manje yase Hammarsdale.*

Ehhe.

*Ngithi, ngithi lemoto ayikho.*

Uhhum.

*Kwathiwa ayi sizomtshena lo mfana ukuthi kunezimpahla ezi nje.*

Uhhum.

*Kuze kube namhlanje.*

Hawu, bab'uGwala!

*And the worse part of it, kwakukhona nama originals. Ngangithi ngizowa saver ngendlela yakhona. Hheyi uma ngikhuluma nabantu bathi. Nami angiyazi lento. Bathi awuboni ngani amanzi amnyama lawa. Kukhona kini othakathayo.*

Uhhum. Hawu bab'uGwala!

*But what I am doing now. I am rewriting those vignettes.*

Uyawabuyisa manje.

*But it's not easy because angikho sure ukuthi yayi mfishane yayiyinde noma yayinjani. Eyi lento ivele ingifikisele izinyembezi.*

Ukuthi nje nabantu bakithi nje ba irresponsible. Abantu nje in general. Umuntu uyakwazi ukubona umusebenzi womuntu ukuthi ubalulekile lo msebenzi. Uzame ukumcinga lo muntu. Abantu bayaxaka.

*Bayaxaka.*

Ngoba uyakwazi ukubona ukuthi umsebenzi othize lona.

*Noma kukhona owawuthathayo emotweni.*

Kodwa kwayena umthathi bab'ugwala bekufanele abone. Uyakwazi ukubona ukuthi uzozidinga izinto zakhe umuntu. Ukuthi kukhona lokho emphakathini ukungabi nandaba nje. Kanti kumnikazi womsebenzi kuyinto ebalulekile.

*Kuyinto ebalulekile.*

Ayi ngiyezwa bab'ugwala kodwa ke kuyazameka lama vignettes ayahlangana?

*Ukuwuhlanganisa ngilwa nokuwa hlanganisa. Manje ngebhadi ngabileka udadewethu lomshini.*

Uhhum.

*Wadukisa intambo. I pulaki, epulaka odongeni izoxhuma la kule nto le. Manje le nto iwumuhlobiso nje lapha.*

Ngizoyibuka le nto bab'ugwala. I computer le. Akaze ngiyibone.

*I computer ibuke.*

Akaze ngiyibone into enje i laptop?

*Yayingakafiki i laptop.*

Njengamanje umusebenzi lo ukuphi? Usephepheni noma u stakhe kwi disc? Lokho okuhlanganisayo njenga manje.

*Ayi lokhu engikuhlanganisayo kusemaphepheni.*

Akuka thayiphwa?

*Akuka thayiphwa anginawo umushini woku thayipha. Manje abantu sebe thayipha ngalezizinto. Ngama computer aphambili. I computer yami iwumhlobiso nje.*

Awu bab'uGwala. Ayi ngiyezwa bab'uGwala. Kukhona okunye ke cishe before siyivale le. Ye life history. Akusekho okunye cishe ingase.... generally nje nawe. Ongafisa ukuthi ngikwazi.

*Angazi.*

Ngiyabonga bab'uGwala. Bab'uGwala what made you to prefer poetry as a form of self-expression than all other forms of literary genres out there.

*Well, the genre of poetry came about because, it was a simple way of expressing one's self. The mood of the period made it possible to get away with poetry as compared to short stories or writing a novel. Unlike now it's easy to write a novel than then.*

Ok. Would you say that the primary function of your poetry was conscientisation, that means making people aware of certain things, sharing an experience but along the lines of being black as in Black consciousness thinking? If so, to what extent?

*Black consciousness came about because conscientisation was a primary motive for many people to write a lot.*

Uhhum.

*What Black Consciousnes was not. It was not a colour tag?*

What do you mean Mr Gwala by that?

*I mean people did not get into black Consciousness because of counter-racism. It was not counter-racism. It was just a way of understanding problems.*

Uhhum... uhhum.

*At some time playing it safe.*

Okay, at the same time playing safe. I understand you bab'uGwala. Now in the process of writing a poem, did you deliberately considered the diction and the form or the structure of a poem. If so why and to what exetent?

*Ja, I wrote poetry. I had to consider form, diction. It was the only thing that we could not do without. It was taking poetry/poems making them be what they were.*

Uhhum. The titles of your poems to me as a reader they are pointed. I use the word obscure somewhere in the questionnaire and they are catching. One cannot look at your poems and their titles and just ignore them. When you look at a poem for instance the one you talked about, “the children of Nonti”. You see, you must read. What was the intention of framing them in that way, framing the title of your poems, titles of your books.

*There was no complete intention. It just happened.*

It just happened.

*Ja.*

To any black reader. Your poetry is very touching. In your opinion what is it in your poetry that causes this?

*Ayi. I can't answer to this one.*

Many people may wonder as to what made you to write in English and not in your mother tongue. What could be your response to this?

*Apartheid had something to do with it. Racist ideas and they wanted to see a Xhosa not mediating with a Zulu. And a Zulu not coming in line with a Sotho. So it was a way of being together without creating a fault.*

Okay. bab'uGwala. Some literary critics seem to blame Black Consciousness and the writing that aligned itself with it for essentializing the blackness or the black identity. What would be your response to these critics?

*They were misled.*

Your poetry could be said to be counter hegemonic to apartheid hegemonic discourse. If so, to what extent could this be the case?

*Well. You write and you explain later what is it? That is why I don't have answers to why in a particular way.*

It is only when you explain, you analyse that you can see that, oh this is this, this is that.

*This is this, this is that.*

Just as a writer. You put down your ideas and your feelings at that particular time.

*Yes, yes! Exactly!*

This is interesting. Now literary scholars call your poetry “protest poetry”. What would be your response to this label?

*I don't agree with it. Protest poetry? Those critics are patronizing us. And they patronize us when they can't patronize us they should be throwing stones. It is not protest poetry. I don't remember seeing a poem of mine that was protest.*

It is scary bab'uGwala because i have read a number of thesis where Gwala is being referred to as the protest writer. Some literary scholars call your poetry, Soweto poetry. What would be your response to this label again?

*There is no such thing as Soweto poetry. EMpangeni there is poetry, there is poetry in Dimbaza, in Vryheid theres is poetry. There is poetry in UMLazi. So why call it label, are these liberals. They like to label, and to call you ill. That they they say Soweto poetry or protest poetry, for me it's startling. I don't respect you if you say that.*

Uhhum... I am asking this question bab'uGwala because if i read that too I fail to understand. Bab'uGwala is in Hammarsdale Kwazulu-Natal but his poetry is called Soweto poetry.

Now, in their attempts to appraise your poetry some scholars, literary analysts avoid an in-depth analytical method. That is, they normally do not try to focus on a poem as a whole and try to appreciate many things that are in the poem. And deliberately limit themselves into what suits their pre-conceived agenda. Like you have got a topic and you only limit yourself to that. What do you feel about this kind of approach to poetry?

*It's arrogance. It's arrogance.*

Could you briefly account for the dialectical quality that marks the world view that is expressed in your poetry?

*Ja. You see when we engaged Black Consciousness we knew that Black Consciousness was not an end in itself. It was a means to an end. So when people say things about what you have written you don't*

*have to worry or feel the pain. Yes I know you are hurting but you should not worry about those people or consider it.*

Thank you bab'uGwala. What would you say about the state of black poetry in the post apartheid time? I mean Black poetry in general, whether in English or what but poetry written by blacks.

*Ok. No I would say the creativity is not there like before. You find those raps. They rap, some they politicize more than we did for Black Consciousness. There is this Ubuntu. Now ubuntu and Black Consciousness is one thing.*

Uhum.

*Black Consciousness was a cultural front for the liberation struggle.*

Okay. Uhum.

*Now some joined in, came in late. Think that ubuntu is unique. It is not unique. People would have used so many types including Marxist ideology. Ubuntu is away of explaining Black Consciousness within this period of Freedom Charter. I remember one ANC person who thought that poets had to write things that were not anti-white because the ANC is taking over.*

Okay.

*Now. What does that mean? We did not have, we as writers we did not have a Yen'an. We had no Yen'an conference.*

What do you mean by Yen'an conference bab'uGwala?

*Mosta Tung. He called writers during the long march. He called writers and artists to explore ways of cultural activism, to define the revolution of China as it was happening during the long march. Now this person in the ANC was saying. But we did not have a Yen'an. But what was happening there, was the fear in the ANC that these youngsters are going to make us feel powerless.*

Okay

*Just live them to the cultural things. And then they did what they did. They deliberately destroy, if possible aspirations of equality among the young. Because they find that the ANC had no cultural policy. So by that I mean for people to, let's say let's take an example. In Chile the students and the youth went and had a camp in a stadium, Sardiango. The students and the youth of Chile wanted*

*their leader, now the leader had been arrested by the army. Now, students refused to leave the stadium. Then the soldiers killed them, a massacre. They shoot them at random. If we employ Yenan, so the leadership of the ANC apart from some who were from Black Consciousness they felt weak. The testing grounds, once there was Gaburone art festival in 1982.*

Uhhum.

*And then some years later. The festival of the ANC and then some leaders later in 1986 or I'm not sure now. There was a cultural festival in Amsterdam. They called us from here to Amsterdam to discuss and exchange ideas. Well you could see..... Then in 1992 there was another one in London.*

Uhhum, these cultural festivals.

*You could see that there was that weakness. Those who were in exile were not artists. There were artists, great artists like Mandla Langa, Wally Serote. I attended because I was inside. So now, in terms of Black Consciousness to send it's message of ubuntu.*

Ja. I am happy to get this view from bab'uGwala because I am researching on poetry in relation to Black Consciousness. But the more I try to dig it, it is like people somewhere, say "don't dig too much of that" but that is were my interest is.

*Your interest is your interest.*

What do you think should be the role of a poet in the post-apartheid era as compared to the period and the circumstances under which you wrote you poetry.

*Well. Firstly, the poets are cultural workers. The ANC is right, cultural worker in Italy, Rome and Paris wherever. They are viewed as cultural workers just like Black consciousness writers are cultural workers.*

What kind of legacy you would like to live behind you as a poet, for us, for the generations to come?

*People must write and don't worry about what they are writing as long as it is in the true spirit of South African.*

Bab'uGwala. We have gone through sixteen questions. I might not have accommodated certain things. If there is more that you would like to share with me. I would be happy to hear that in general now. I was saying people would ask me. Is it that I have expressed feelings of one regarding writing.....? Language is not chosen by a person, language is the medium of communication. Communication takes place between people who share languages. We have to take it that our

writing in English is not important but because we were conquered by the British we write in English. If we had been conquered by Indians we would be writing in Telegu, Gujarati etc. But I now have respect for people who write in their mother tongue because..... when you move around Europe or say in Durban you find that people are proud in writing in their own languages, especially in Africa. So that is how it is, a very important thing for people to understand your language. Your mother tongue is what you should be writing about. But thina we had to write in English because ther is a Xhosa, there is a Suthu, there is a Venda, there is a Pedi.

*We were forced to write English. I think we must realise that writing in English is not that important. A person, who conquers the language of another person, also conquers that person. That is why they came with the term "Soweto poetry". They came with "protest poetry" they just wanted to push us aside in a particular way. They fear us. So from that I feel i should be writing in Zulu. It is hard for me because i am not used to, but i know i can do it because i have done it. And I know I can conquer the English. My poetry is written in English but in Zuluwised English*

APPENDIX C

MAFIKA PASCAL GWALA. ATTITUDE SCALE. CONDUCTED ON: 15-01-2009

The intention of administering this attitude scale was to assess, verify and affirm the validity of the topic of this thesis against the views of the poets themselves regarding their poetry. This attitude scale constitutes a series of statements after each individual statement the poet will put a cross in the square next to the answer that he feels describe his poetry better. The options that are written under each individual statement read as: strongly agree, partly agree, strongly disagree, and partly disagree. The poets are free to elaborate on any of the given statement, they are also free not to respond to a statement.

1. The motive behind the writing of my poetry was conscientisation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

2. Poetry is the use of allusive [figurative] language to tell a story, describe a scene or emotion or convey of an idea through the medium of verse, it does not necessarily have to rhyme.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

3. A good poetry provokes the thought of a reader in a particular way.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

4. My poetry is allusive, rhetorical, lyrical and paradoxical

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

5. My poetry echoes the concerns of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

6. My poetry was directed mainly to the oppressed black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

7. It is acceptable and appropriate to call my poetry protest poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

8. My poetry mirrors the truth about the harshness of the life of a black person in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

9. I prefer an in-depth analysis of my poems because it considers each poem as a whole thus appreciating my poetic creativity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

10. My poetry was counter a hegemonic discourse to the apartheid hegemony.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

11. Through poetry I try to articulate the feelings and aspirations of the oppressed black people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

12. My poetry was intended to inspire the people away from complacency into political activism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

13. As a poet I am the mouthpiece of the people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

14. The distinctive feature between poetry and prose is the way each genre uses a language.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

15. When I write a poem I choose words and expressions for their special meaning.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

16. What is important in the literary analysis is the relationship between the literary work and ideology.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

17. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry was a reaction to white racism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

18. As a black poet I regard myself as an organic intellectual of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

19. It is correct to call my poetry Soweto poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

20. Like Black Consciousness my poetry took a critical stand against the white liberals.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

21. My poetry reminds black people that they too have a culture and they too are human beings.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

22. My poetry reminds black people that they too had a religion of their own.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

23. My poetry reminds black people of the fact that their culture is dynamic and not static.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

24. The title of a poem must be obscure for a poem to be thought provoking.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

25. I used poetry as a means of recording my own experience and views which are in turn the views and experiences of the black people about the whole apartheid system.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

26. My poetry is a means of communicating, educating and sending messages across to whom it may concern.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

27. My poetry is not rap, rap is not poetry but it is prose.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

28. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry is dialectical in its analysis of the problems faced by black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

29. My poetry reflects how black people thought and used language to make sense of their pain during the apartheid period.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

30. Like Steve Biko I deliberately used strategic essentialism in order to assert the voice and the identity of the oppressed black people. It is not true that I was blind about the dangers of essentialism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEWS WITH MONGANE WALLY SEROTE CONDUCTED ON 15-10 2011

UBaba u Serote uzalelwe kuphi?

*Well I was born in Sophia Town one of the oldest locations in the area of Johannesburg. However, when I was small maybe 8-9 years my parents left saya e Alexandra township kulapho engikhulele khona e Alexandra. Ngangena isikolo khona. Kulapho isikolo siqala khona kuya ku form two. Abazali bami bangisusa bangiyisa e Lesotho partly because of education but also partly because I was almost beginning to get involved in street things. Bangiyisa e Lesotho ngafunda until... angiyiqedanga in form three yami ngazoyqedela e Alexandra. Ngasuka ngangena e Soweto e Morris Isaacson High School up to matric and then ngasitadisha ne Wits. I long distance angiqedanga nalapho. Ngathola i waiver ngayo sitadisha i fine arts e University of Columbia. Ngaya khona for four years. Ngayiqeda. Manje uma sengiqeda lapho kwakufanele ukuthi ngiyoyoyina umkhonto wesizwe.*

Uhum....

*So ngasuka e Columbia University ngaya e Botswana. Ngasuka ngaya e Ngola. Ngiqale nga trainer as a soldier e Botswana ngaqeda. Ngasebeza ngasuka futhi ngaya trainer e Angola for nine months ngaqeda. Ngabuyela e Botswana ukuyosebenza futhi underground.*

Uhum....

*Ngayo trainer futhi e Soviet Union*

*Ayi ngiyezwa baba u Serote. Now can you tell me about the beginning of your writing career. Uthando lokubhala.*

*Many people ask me that question. I really try to probe my mind as to why did I start the way I started? I started when I was 14 between 12 and 13.*

Uhum...

*And the way I started, the way I use to do it. I use to write little things. I don't know whether they were poems because I have never seen them since I grew up.*

Yes

*But I use to write them and give them to girls until one day I was punished for it. I stopped doing so. And then I started writing for my grandmother. And grandmother was the most important critic for my work. The most important thing about that is that she gave me a very important context.*

Uhhum...

*I write in English but I also don't write in English you may read English but if you probed deeper you will find that whatever I write is deeply contextualized through within African culture.*

African culture

*That is the most important thing engayithola ku gogo leyo, wangipha yona. So I was not surprised when I got a medal which said I have made a significant contribution in South Africa to the English language. I was not surprised about that, because I am sure the English would not write the poetry that I write.*

Yes

*And yet they are writing in English.*

This is interesting. What made you to choose to write poetry, but you write other forms as well.

*You know. I am known primarily as a poet and that is because the first entry into literature that I had was through poetry. As I wrote in poetry I was still in South Africa. The struggle for liberation intensified so much that I felt the poem form cannot carry the weight of the changes that were happening in the country.*

Uhhum...

*And that is why around 1974, 1975 up until then I was writing poetry. Around 1974, 1975 I changed. I started writing novels. The first novel that I wrote was *To every birth is blood*. As I was writing I realized also that there was a need for me to enter into intellectual discourse about our country. So I have also written essays. As an attempt to enter intellectual discourse my definition of intellectual has always guided me, guided my writing. I believe that if you say you are an intellectual while on the one hand you had to deal with theory of things, on the other hand you must test those theories in practice.*

Uhhum...

*Whatever it is that you deal with as an intellectual, should be to find a way to continually understand that what is constant to life is very constant to life. Is change and what is it that you must do, having understood that what is constant to life is change, so that change must not traumatize us.*

Uhhum...uhhum

*Change must become a necessity which catapults us into better places. You see, that is a role of an intellectual as to what I understand. To understand contradictions, unpack contradictions; illuminate the negatives in the contradictions. Identify what is positive and use the positive parts to reconstruct life so that life is better and has quality. And also you learn from the negatives.*

Uhhum...

*That is my understanding of what an intellectual is. I regard myself as an intellectual and I have always probed intellectual discourse from that position.*

Uhhum... I think bhuti. So far how many books you have written; titles and years of publication?

*The first, two books that I have written in essay form. One is called, " On the horizon" and I think it must have been published in the 1980s. The other is called "Hyenas" and I think that it was published in the 1990s. Then there are four novels "To every birth is blood" which was published in the 1970s. "God of our time" published around the 1980s." "Scatter the Ashes and go" was published in the 1990s. And quite recently I produced a novel which was published last year called "Revelations". I am presently working on another one called "Rumours" and I am presently working on... you know I work in parallel.*

Uhhum...

*I write poetry here, I write novels here and essays in parallel. So at present moment I am also working in essays under the title Shifting shadows at light.*

Uhhum...

*The novel is called "Rumours". The poetry that I am going to write is about architecture.*

Uhhum... architecture as far as I understand the concept, it has something to do with the building of structures.

*Yes. I am very fascinated by building of structures by our people, how they build them. You and I we see round houses. We have never asked how the foundation of this round house is structured. We know that they build in mud. We have never asked what they mix in this mud is. We have never*

*asked how the thatch is made. We have never thought how, the poles holds the thatch are so stable for so many years. We have never thought why it is that people throughout the African continent deliberately chose to build houses which are round.*

I have never thought of all that myself.

*Yes but it is like that. So I thought I should probe all of these things through poetry.*

Uhhum...

*It is not long that I have started that for two-three days ago, I started that writing. So all in all you in poetry, you have *Yakhal'inkomo*, *Tsetlo*, *Behold mama flowers*, another one called.....*

No child must weep?

Iya. "No baby must weep" ehhe...

"No baby must weep"

*And that there is another one "The night keeps winking". After *The night keeps winking* I shifted from writing short poems. I now write epics.*

Epics

*You find one poem is about fifty pages, sixty pages. And that is because I believe that the story of our people is very deep, is very broad, and is very wise. You can't just write short poems and capture it. So I am exploring the depth of the wisdom of our people.*

Uhhum...

Yes

So what impact the socio-political context of the time in which you wrote especially the poems of the 1970 had on your poems, in the way you treat them, in the way you present them?

*You know if you are my age. I would say to you everyone when they grew up, your first political consciousness was to hate the white people with passion. That was the first political consciousness. After that you then want to find out what you must do.*

What must I do?

*What must I do? We were most fortunate because in our country you could choose among many political movements which you could join. There was the ANC, There was the PAC. There was UNITY MOVEMENT and others.*

And others

*Yes. I was also fortunate in the sense that I grew up in Alexandra. It was a very strong hold of the ANC. Where they came on a daily bases, every weekend to politicize us. So I joined the ANC when I was 16 and at that time the ANC was already banned.*

Uhum...

*So I was in the underground of the ANC around 1965.*

Uhum...

*And then I was arrested. I was kept in solitary confinement for nine months. I will tell you that, that was the most painful time of my life. Very, very painful because beside the fact that we were kept in solitary confinement. You did not know when you come out of that. You were held there indefinitely but also were tortured very brutally. You see. And I knew once that happens that I must leave South Africa. So the slighted chance I got, I left.*

Uhum...

*Ya. So the poetry that I was writing had three objectives in it. The first one I was saying to myself the oppression in our country has been so brutal and violent that our people are quiet. So they need a voice. And I must be that voice, which is the first aim. The second thing, I said to myself it is very, very important for some of us to keep the record of what happened. Lastly is what you are saying here, to conscientize people. So it was always when I write, those three things which guide me how to move. How do we keep our people, how do we give our people their voice in the way we write.*

Since your poems were political explicit. You wrote fearlessly, saying the things that people would have loved to say, telling to these white people. So, articulating the feelings of the people on their behalf. Now were you not afraid of the brutal apartheid police. It is interesting that in the height of repression there were writers like you, who were able to say things that people were afraid of saying.

*I am very happy that I said those things. I know that there were times when one worried a lot and was afraid and I must say that. But also I knew there was no choice for me. I had to do it. So, one moved through different emotions at all time. Sometimes you feel very afraid. Sometimes you feel*

*very angry. Sometimes you are very displeased and say these things have to be done and you did them.*

Some scholars refer to your poetry as Black Consciousness poetry. Were you influenced by the ideas of Black Consciousness?

*Uhhum... it is a very interesting story because as I was telling you. I started as an ANC member. And when I came out of prison we were told we must be part of the Black Consciousness Movement. And I took the Black Consciousness movement stalk, rock and barrow. I believed in it. And I am not surprised when people call me a Black Consciousness writer. It is because I really believe in that. Late of course after a lot of thinking I still believe that it is important to have Black Consciousness philosophy. But I think our struggle is much deeper than that.*

Some literary scholars also refer to your poetry as Soweto poetry. What can be your response to this label?

*So you know sometimes critics link up stories. For instance I am not from Soweto but of course I was part of a national poetry movement. I would say we consciously built it. They were poets from Natal, Mafika Gwala, Ben Ngobe you know people like that. There were people from other areas of the country and we use to meet often, sometimes under Black Consciousness Movement, sometimes on our own. For instance there was a poetry festival at the University of Turfloop organized by Dazzler Nkondo. Many of us will meet there. So we were a strong voice in the 1970s.*

Uhhum...

*We are not from Soweto. Not all of us came from Soweto. Many of us came from there but not all of us.*

And they also refer to your work as protest poetry.

*I have always rejected protest because, what does protest mean? Our situation did not want us just to protest. Our situation wanted us to fight. Our situation wanted us to sacrifice our lives. I regarded myself as a freedom fighter not as a protestant. You know when they say you protest I always get the image of a child. We were freedom fighters. At that time as you have correctly asked, when we wrote like that we were not afraid. Many of us were pulled out of poetry readings, arrested and detained like Dom Mattera.*

You wrote a poem about him.

*People like that, there is a lot of them. So you were correct to ask, you were not afraid. Now and then we were very afraid. We knew there was no other way. It had to be done and sometimes we were even ready to die for it.*

Uhhum...

*Because at that time when you said things like that, as soon as they say you are a communist. They arrested you and once they arrested you. You could get killed. A lot of people were killed.*

Just for being linked with communism.

*Ya... They make an excuse that you are writing communist poetry.*

So the communists had to be eliminated. Some literary scholars argue that the problem with your work/ poetry is that ... which also they claim is the problem with black writers. They say you essentialize the black identity. So you use essentialist ideas. They argue that in doing so you trying to revive the irrelevant pre-colonial past. The habit is to exaggerate it as if it was smooth and glorious. What could be your response to this criticism?

*Well... You know. Earlier on I told you that the responsibility of an intellectual is to continuously break down contradictions, break down challenges of opposites and that the objectives for that when you are an intellectual is that, is to find those things in contradiction, dichotomy, or opposite of things which can contribute to make the world a better place, which can contribute toward giving quality of life to people. So if people call you black. By calling you black they almost say you are the devil. If you are black you must contradict that.*

Uhhum...

*You must than say, there is nothing wrong with the colour of my skin. I love this black skin. We are not romanticizing it. We are creating a negation to the negative that describes us. And we are choosing the positive. You see in any change there is always the negative and the positive thing to each other. You need to identify the positive and use it and learn from the negative.*

Uhhum...

*So even there, that is what we are doing when we praise ourselves as black people or when we praise ourselves as Africans or when we praise the continent. It is because we are opposing the view that has always been said. That we are primitive, we are pagan, we are inferior, we are almost like monkeys, almost like devils. We see in use human beings and we have said that we are human beings. We can go as far as we can to explain why we say that.*

Uhhum...

*And because we are human beings even the continent where we live is full of human beings. It is like any other continent. It must find its way for development, meaning developing people.*

So it is disputable that black writers simply reverse racism. It is not true that our fathers Steve Biko, Serote, Gwala and many others who worked in Black Consciousness Movement were simply out to reverse racism. So that white could be oppressed, now black people to become racist.

*No. We were very clear that it was important for us to liberate ourselves. By liberating ourselves we understood that we will never believe anything or accept anything that white people said about us. We were not reacting to that. We were confirming who we are. And it's a duty for all human beings to continuously confirm who they are. Now if some people are going to react and say you are confirming yourself so that you are negative to them it's their problem.*

Uhhum...

*Our challenge is that we must be part of solutions of things that confronts us. If there is a challenge I must say how I resolve this challenge. If that is a problem I must say how I must resolve this problem. I must not say well there is a problem, what can I do? No as an intellectual I must work out how do we develop to challenge the challenge and create from its challenge the best of what we can.*

This is interesting

*You see if we were reversing racism, because racism was a state programme.*

It was legislation

*It was a state programme. It meant that we had to create a state to reverse this racism and become racists. We did not do that. There is no evidence anyway of our wanting to do that. Black Consciousness was a very important phase of our lives. And that phase has not passed. Young people must study that phase. And say how we develop it further.*

They are afraid of doing that

*I know, but bayasaba. But they will leave a very bad legacy for their children.*

Even in schools not all your poems are prescribed for study. There are those poems that are avoided, kukhona lawa angathintwa.

*Those learners must demand to study Black consciousness poetry. They must demand it.*

Uhhum...

*They must study it and extend it as far as possible and say if it was to live in 2090. What would happen? They must explore it.*

Now if you look closely into socio-political life of black people in the post-apartheid time. Would you say that black writers currently should keep on confronting racial issues like black writers of the 1970s?

*There is still racism in our country. There is a fact that the majority of the large part of our economy is in the hands of the minority. This is the fact that the land belongs to the small minority. There is a fact that the largest group which are poor in the country are black people. So the challenges are still stirring us in the eyes. And like a good intellectual. I want to find solutions to that. I will write about those contradictions. I will try to attempt and say it looks like the suggestions for the way forward is the following. You know. I will do that and I am asking that Black intellectuals to enter this arena. Look into the past and say what were those people who live before us, what they were doing. And from that learn how to move forward. I think we should insist on studying the past. Then they will argue that, that is the past, is not the present. You will then show them who are the people who are most poor in the country? Who are the people who have the means of doing whatever they want to do in the country. Let us study that. Without accusing anybody, let us study the objective reality. And then say what we learn from this.*

Uhhum... some literary critics discredit the black poetry of the 1970s including your poetry. Arguing that, the motive of this poetry was to attack the apartheid system. In doing this the poets disregarded the literary conventions. What can be your response to this criticism?

*Well. I told you that at another time. I felt that the poetry form was overwhelmed by the experience of the oppressed. That is what made me break the rules. If you read my epic poems you will always see how I break rules of writing poetry. I am saying poetry will be worthwhile only if it expresses the experience of people not the form.*

Not just the form.

*Not just the form, but the content is important. If the content dictates that I must shift the rules, I will follow that. The most important thing is the content not the form.*

In your writing were you influenced by the Marxist thinking?

*I was. I am a communist.*

Now Ubhuti usebhalile usabhala but what kind of legacy would you like to leave behind?

*I am hoping that when my work is assessed in the long distant future. If they find one thing in it that, that I was honest about what I was writing. I will be happy.*

APPENDIX E

MONGANE WALLY SEROTE.ATTITUDE SCALE CONDUCTED ON 15-10-2011

The intention of administering this attitude scale was to assess, verify and affirm the validity of the topic of this thesis against the views of the poets regarding their poetry. This attitude scale constitutes a series of statements after each individual statement the poet will put a cross in the square next to the answer that he feels describe his poetry better. The options that are written under each individual statement read as: strongly agree, partly agree, strongly disagree, and partly disagree. The poets are free to elaborate on any of the given statement, they are also free not to respond to a statement.

1. The motive behind the writing of my poetry was conscientisation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

2. Poetry is the use of allusive [figurative] language to tell a story or describe a scene or emotion or convey of an idea through the medium of verse, it does not necessarily have to rhyme.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

3. A good poetry provokes the thought of a reader in a particular way.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

4. My poetry is allusive, rhetorical, lyrical and paradoxical.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

5. My poetry echoes the concerns of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

6. My poetry was directed mainly to the oppressed black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

7. It is acceptable and appropriate to call poetry protest poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

8. My poetry mirrors the truth about the harshness of the life of a black person in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

9. I prefer an in-depth analysis of my poems because it considers each poem as a whole thus appreciating my poetic creativity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

10. My poetry was counter hegemonic discourse to the apartheid hegemony.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

11. Through poetry I try to articulate the feelings and aspirations of the oppressed black people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

12. My poetry was intended to inspire the people away from complacency into political activism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

13. As a poet I am the mouthpiece of the people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

14. The distinctive feature between poetry and prose is the way each genre use language.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

15. When I write a poem I choose words and expressions for their special meaning.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

16. What is important in the literary analysis is the relationship between the literary work and ideology.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

17. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry was a reaction to white racism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

18. As a black poet I regard myself as an organic intellectual of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

19. It is correct to call my poetry Soweto poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

20. Like Black Consciousness my poetry took a critical stand against the white liberals.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

21. My poetry reminds black people that they too have a culture and they too are human beings.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

22. My poetry reminds black people that they too had a religion of their own.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

23. My poetry reminds black people of the fact that their culture is dynamic and not static.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

24. The title of the poem must be obscure for a poem to be thought provoking.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

25. I used poetry as a means of recording my own experience and views which are in turn the views and experiences of the black people about the whole apartheid system.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

26. My poetry is a means of communicating, educating and sending messages across to whom it may concern.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

27. My poetry is not rap, rap is not poetry but it is prose.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

28. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry is dialectical in its analysis of the problems faced by black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

29. My poetry reflects how black people thought and used language to make sense of their pain during the apartheid period.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

30. Like Steve Biko I deliberately used strategic essentialism in order to assert the voice and the identity of the oppressed black people. It is not true that I was blind about the dangers of essentialism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEWS WITH OSWALD MBUYISENI CONDUCTED ON 11-09-2011 AND 16-10-2011

Where and when was bab'uMtshali born?

*I was born in Vryheid in KwaBhanya Village at KwaZulu-Natal.*

Where did bab'uMtshali do his primary school education, secondary and tertiary education?

*I attended KwaBhanya primary school and Columbia University in New York.*

Where did bab'uMtshali work after finishing high school?

*I worked in Johannesburg*

Tell me about the beginning of your writing career.

*After finishing a diploma at the Premier school of journalism, I started writing articles and later poetry.*

What actually motivated you to write poetry?

*I started writing poetry for the love of words and power of the written word.*

What made you to write your poetry in English and not in your mother tongue?

*I write both in English and in isiZulu.*

What made you to choose to write poetry instead of other literary forms?

*I also write in other genres, short stories and essays.*

How did you get your books published?

*By phoning and negotiating with publishers.*

So far, how many books have you written? Please mention the titles and years of publication.

*"Sound of cowhide Drum" 1971, "Fire flames" 1981, "Give us a break" (edited) 1981*

How many books did you write which have not been published? Please mention titles.

*"A stranger from the cooler" and "The plantation Pope".*

Would you please in an in-depth point to me what was the main motive behind the writing of your poetry?

*I write to express my feelings, emotions, hope and aspirations.*

What impact was the socio-political context of the time in which you wrote had in your poetry?

*I have been deeply affected by the socio-political and economic situation under which I live.*

Many literary scholars call your poetry, Black Consciousness poetry. What can be your response to this view?

*I don't know what Black Consciousness poetry is. One of my favourite poems is, "A portrait of a loaf of bread."*

Some literary scholars call your poetry, Soweto poetry. What can be your response to this label?

*I write about my childhood in KwaBhanya and my experiences in America and of course in Soweto where I live.*

Some literary scholars call your poetry, Protest poetry. What can be your response to this label?

*I am not a protestant but a catholic with both small and big "c".*

Your collection of poetry titled "FIRE FLAMES" (1983) was banned immediately after its publication. In your opinion what were the possible causes for its banning?

*I have no idea about the banning of Fire flames. You must ask..... (name cannot be written in this thesis) who was a member of the censorship board.*

Some literary critics argue that the major weakness of your poetry is that you essentialize the identity of black people. What could be your response to this criticism?

*I don't know what essentialism means.*

Some literary critics argue that Black Consciousness was the reversal of racism. What could be your response to this criticism?

*Perhaps it is true racism comes in different colours and shapes.*

If you look closely into the socio-political life of black people in the post-apartheid time, would you say that black writers should confront racial issues as the black poets did in the 1970s?

*I cannot pontificate as I am not a pontiff.*

What do you think is the task facing the writers or specifically black poets in the post-apartheid era in South Africa?

*I cannot speak for any writer. Each one is an individual, living and writing about their own lives.*

Some literary critics discredit the black poetry of the 70s including your poetry, pointing that the motive of this poetry was to attack the apartheid government. And in doing this the literary conventions were disregarded. What would be your response to this criticism?

*Literary critics have to earn a living. They are free to write, they like to receive their pay cheques.*

Now in the process of writing a poem, did you deliberately considered the diction and form, if so to what extent?

*I am a free spirit I believe in free writing without any inhibitions.*

Would you say that the primary function of your poetry was conscientisation, that is to make people aware of certain truths, sharing an experience but along the lines of Black Consciousness?

*Poetry has many functions like many other genres.*

Could you briefly account for the dialectical quality that mark the world view expressed in your poetry?

*I believe in writing simple verse that is not ornate ostentations.*

What kind of legacy would you like to live behind you as a writer and as black poet for future generations?

*Whether it is deliberate to call me "black poet" I thoroughly enjoy the pun and the fun of this interview.*

INTERVIEWS WITH MTSHALI CONTINUED ON THE 16-10-2011

*Sometimes you do things for the love. Just like writing poetry for me is like making love. I am a very passionate person, using the words that I used in my poetry that I still used in my poetry. I try to put all the emotions, you know, all the feelings, all the five senses into the writing, into every word that I*

*put down. It's like building a house; every brick should count in order for the building to be strong. You must make sure that, that a brick is put correctly, so that is how I approach poetry.*

*I put all the best words powerfully, that I can master in order to convey as powerful, the image and the message as possible. That is how I approach poetry. It's not just playing with words but it is using words as powerful as I can in order to communicate my own feelings. I want to send a message and this message must be as powerfully stated as possible. That is how I approach poetry. It doesn't matter what subject matter or issue or a challenge that I am trying to resolve or a challenge I am confronted with. I use words to try to convey what I taste, what I think, what I hear, what I see. All those sense come into play. And that is how I can define my poetry.*

*It plays on the senses. And I use the most powerful sense and that is imagination. And also all the seven senses must balance. You have to have balance in life because if you are born without balance, then you are born deformed some other people have other senses that are missing, that are born blind. It means there is a disturbance of balance if you were born with those deformities. If some people are even more sensitive, having one deformity like, some blind people can compose a beautiful music, and play music. How do they do it because somewhere, somehow you know nature has endowed them, compensated them with that gift of expressing themselves. I don't have any deformities that are inhibiting me. So I have a great appreciation for those who have one of those deformities and yet they are able to convey whatever they want to convey. That is the essence of my poetry. I don't know about other poets or other artists. It is because poetry is also an art. Absolutely it's an art. You have to practise it all the time like you know playing a piano. You have to practice this until you master it. And it's an on-going process of learning. It is not something that you are going to do haphazardly and stop and throw the book away. But you have to keep on practising it and make it your way of life, your lifestyle.*

Poetry

*Poetry and writing because now, like I am doing some translations. I have translated Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet from English into isiZulu. I have added some music into it, although I am not a musician but I have some knowledge of music. So that is to me an extension of poetry because a good song makes a very fine poem. And a very fine poem makes a very good song.*

Uhhum...

*I just elaborated because I wanted to make sure that I define as elaborately and as extensively and comprehensively what I regard as poetry. How do I define poetry, why am I writing poetry? What do*

*I hope to achieve by writing poetry. Those are all things that you know come into play with any involvement in poetry.*

One of your poems that is currently prescribed in schools entitled, An abandon bundle, learners get so shocked with the way you describe the scenery, the baby as a bundle, the dogs fighting over it. It is a very moving poem and I am often touched when I handle it, reading it, every learner will be shocked. In real life, in our own country, was an accident like that.

*Well. Tell them. Tell the learners I did not imagine it. It is based on experience. It is based on the actual incident that I saw with my own eyes. In two, three weeks ago there was a programme on SABC 3. They were describing babies, this is in Bloemfontein. You can call the SABC and verify this. They say thirty babies a monthly are abandoned in Bloemfontein, thirty babies!*

Currently

*This was three weeks ago. Three weeks ago. It was in September 2011.*

So you wrote this poem some many years ago.

*I wrote this poem in 1968.*

But the habit of abandoning babies is till the happening in our country.

*It is even more now.*

When we are free, some analysts say that the girl was forced by the circumstances. She was the product of poverty and everything. So the girl had to abandon the baby in order to be free to carry on with life. So now how can we justify it because the government has grants for the needy people? We are free now.

*That is very good. I should not say rationale, but at the same time to say that. But is to look at life superficially instead of delving deeper into why a mother would abandon her baby, something that came from her inside, her part of her. You know it's like cutting your own arm you know chopping it off and then for whatever reason. This is a living organism not something that it's maybe a still born child. We don't know. Even if it would have been a still born child, it would have been better for her than to go to the clinic, a hospital or maybe take what she has brought out dump it in a church, in a police station. There were many places where she would have taken it to. But this was in 1969. Now we are in 2011 and thirty babies in a small town like Bloemfontein. What about Johannesburg? What about here [Durban]?*

In Clermont, kwaDabeka the incident is often reported.

*How many babies are abandoned there?*

It always comes out in the newspapers.

*So you know as an academic yourself when they say art imitates life. Art imitates life. That means art is simply a mirror of life. Whether you are writing a poem, you look at it and you see life there. Whether it's a song it's a reflection of life. Whether it is a song it is a reflection of life. Whether it is painting all those genres are meant.... the artist might be unconsciously indulging in that because he or she is compelled. There is something that is urging him or her to do that. But at the same time it is also a reflection of what he or she is going through. She is just a medium she is just a conduit of doing that. That is poem that will always.... even the animals seldom abandon their babies. The little one they will always protect them. Isikhukhukazi you know a hen will always fight the hawk coming to snatch the little chicken. Why can't we do it ourselves?*

This is so interesting

*Tell them to look at it and if it is the case and say to themselves. You know, how old are they?*

They are 16-18 years old.

*So they are teenagers. They are capable of giving birth already.*

Some of them have given birth already.

*What was the experience like, you are not going to ask them to confess that? You are going to ask them suppose you were a mother or that girl or that woman. What would be going on in your mind? What would you be thinking? Was she rationalizing and say I am going to leave it and the dogs are going to cut it. Did she foresee that everything has its cause and effects? If you do this and these are the consequences. Yes, these are the results.*

One of the criticisms that I have encountered directed to black writers Dr Mtshali is that black writers have a tendency of exaggerating the pre-colonial past. They describe it as something that was homogenous, glorious, so in their writing whether poetry, novel and so on. They try to revive this irrelevant past. For the critics the colonial past was not as homogenous as it is described in books written by black writers. It had its own complexities. What can be your response to this criticism? You are one of the African writers.

*So I stand accused of that too.*

Yes.

*Ok. Well maybe there is some resemblance of truth. But I don't know, when you look at our colonial history is very simple. I mean colonized people sometimes they view themselves as victims. Others view themselves as people who have a duty to fight for their liberation from that colonialism. Others submit themselves and do nothing and say well what we can do, sehluwa we were defeated. So there is defeatist attitude as well as resistance attitude. The resistance is that we cannot tolerate, this cannot go on forever. It is because the human spirit wants to be free. It does not matter wherever you go. It fights; it always wants to fight for freedom. Even those who say we were defeated and they throw out their hands in defeat and submit themselves. There are days when they will feel like no this cannot go on, they want to fight back.*

*Despite their feeling that it's a hopeless effort or struggle is just in vain. They might feel that way. Others say well I might die for they are prepared to fight. Now in between these, there are writers because they come from the same society, from the same communities. They are also divided into those classes. There are those who are writing for the sake of writing. And there are those who are using writing to liberate themselves. First, from that mind set of oppression. They are using all those genres whether a short story, an essay, a novel and so on. It's a form of liberating themselves. And by liberating themselves, they are liberating their own people too. So what I am trying to say cannot put everybody into the same box or pigeon hole all of them. We come and we have different experiences. We react and respond differently. But I personally I feel that integrity, honesty in using whatever craft you are practising should be the guiding principle.*

There should be the guiding principle

*Ja. You have to be a principled person to write or to point you are not doing this for the sake of money because you are going to be remunerated, you are going to be paid, you are going to earn something. No you are writing this because there is something, conscience is driving you. No you feel because you have the talent or the ability at least to express yourself. Then that is what we do. So if there are people who feel that I am glamorizing, romanticizing the pre-colonial past. I don't see what I stand to gain if I do that.*

You want to bring back the irrelevant past.

*But there is no past that is irrelevant. That is where the mistake is. The past can never be irrelevant. Whatever happened good or bad in the past because it has a tendency of repeating itself? You know*

*in another form. If there was slavery in the past you can say wow we are free now there is no more slavery.*

The labour brokering in South Africa is form of slavery.

*And there is also human trafficking; the new term is no more slavery, its human trafficking. What is human trafficking? Is it not slavery? Prostitution, Is it not slavery? So now what do you say? You say slavery is long abolished. It doesn't exist anymore. But you are kidding to yourself because it comes back in another form. So I have only one thing for those who say that maybe I am one of those who re-define in those terms. I am just saying that I try to be as honest as possible whether I succeed or not it's entirely up to the critic. It is because the critics are there to criticize or to critic.*

*They are entitled to their opinions and I am entitled to my own opinion of defining myself. They can define themselves you see as critics but I mean what qualification they have to become critics or to be called critics. Is it because they can look at something and then just criticize it? Or are they bringing some new aesthetics. They are an ivory tower, trying to look down and point and say this or that. That is how I regard many critics because they want to sound intellectual. There is a lot of what is called sophistry you know that they apply but much of that is not really authentic. How much of that is really genuine? That is a question that is that we had to ask, how much of that is actually truthful or it is just the way of earning a living.*

It looks as if.

*Iya. Earning a living they become so called experts in criticizing poetry or looking at poetry analysing poetry. They are bringing their own perspectives if they have any; they are bringing their own biases. You know.*

Very close to this question. There is also another criticism that; black writers represent the identity of black people as something that is fixed, something that is unchangeable, as if there is that element in their blood that makes them black. So they argue that this is visible in their writing. This includes your writing. For example in your poem titled "The birth of Shaka" where the blackness is exalted. The critics say this is dangerous because it reinforces the notion of racism instead of challenging it. It does not challenge the binary opposition of racism, black is evil vs. whites is beautiful.

*Evil*

Yes. Specifically, the poetry of the 1970s including Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, Wally Serote, Mafika Gwala, and Sipho Sepamla. The critics argue that instead of challenging the white racial supremacy. You simply say ok you say we are ugly, we are nice, and we are beautiful. The whites are evil because they oppress us.

*That is misunderstanding, at least on my part. I can't speak for other poets. I have always maintained my dignity, my integrity, my credibility. You see for instance Serote is from Sophia town and I am from Vryheid KwaBhanya So I am saying this just to show our perspective might not be the same. So I can bow for him and defend him and say I am his spokesperson. He comes from Sophia town. Our perspective maybe different but we say one thing. We are both black and as black people we have suffered plus-minus the same experiences. That is racism and discrimination. Now our reactions and responses are different.*

They are different.

*Ja. He might be more angry angrier than me. I might be more subtle. But it's not out of... because I am a coward. It's because I feel I am more effective if I use sarcasm he uses you know big sticks. I use small sharp sword. But It just kills too just as the big sticks kills. So it is methodology that is just different. But otherwise the motivation is the same. I can never glamorize racism in reverse and say I am going to curse the whites because they are cursing us. It is counter-productive.*

It is counter-productive.

*Yes. I have my own approaching and analysing my situation and facing whatever challenges I am facing. And then getting down to how I deal with it in my writing. There is a great American author James Baldwin. James Baldwin wrote a very powerful book called Go and tell it on the mountain. It's a book about his experiences as a young boy growing up in Harlem in New York. His father was a preacher in a church. It was like in our own black churches here. So he became a preacher at a very early age, about when he was 12-13 years old. He became a preacher in his father's church. He said from preaching to adult in a church I was able to reduce them to tears. It was because I was telling them about Jesus. How Jesus will come and serve use from the oppression that we as black America we are suffering and feeling. Somebody else came and said no he is now the black power.*

*They are calling whites pigs, devils and all that. He says the achieve more. That book became the best seller. It was turned into a powerful movie. So what I am saying those who were using curse words, white people are devils, blues eye devils, they were saying by all means necessary we must liberate ourselves. It was pure hot erratic. He dig more through hid writing that book and other books and essays that followed after that, in highlighting the plight of the black people in American. So some*

*people he was an Uncle Tom, why use this high prolific style and high sounding words. You should just call them devils. Let them go to hell. And he said you are not going to tell me what to do, and how to say it. Let me say it my way. That is what he said.*

That is interesting.

*Ja.*

I have noticed Dr Mtshali deals with political matters in a very explicit way. I wondered; were you not afraid of the brutality of the apartheid state police. In some of your poems you even write about Abraham Tiro, Hector Peterson, and many more others in the book *Fire flames 1981*. What was going on in your mind? If I were you, at that stage I was going to be afraid to write these issues in the poems, the way you wrote about, the way you presented them. I was going to cower. You were able to write and have these words published.

*But it was banned. Are you aware of that?*

Ja. But the fact that you were able to and you were prepared to have it published and circulated.

*You have just answered yourself. You have answered the question yourself. I was prepared to write it and I wrote it and I said to damn with the consequences. I was... not because I was reckless and wanted to be a hero. But I thought this is one time that I had to say it as strongly as possible and be as authentic as possible. And use no metaphors or satire camouflaged language which is very powerful in itself that type of language. But sometime you know your own moods they swing. You can't be stable all the time. When I say stable you know they feel very angry.*

*There are sometimes when you are very, very calm, cool and collected. So when you go into all those moods you have to be able to describe each mood as it comes. And in all those poems I was so outraged by the brutal killing, the murder heartless completely heartless. I had to say it in a strongly as possible, and Hector Peterson..... I said to myself whatever the consequences. I thought I was going to be detained to be honest.*

*But I said people have died, people are in detention, if I could be detained for writing poetry. It would be the most absurd thing on earth. People say... but where did he say go and kill out white people. I did not say that....no else. I was talking about events and incidents that were horrifying me. That were nauseating me and making me absolutely mad and angry, Ja that is why I said it as strongly as I did. And I put it down there. And it didn't last long. The book *Fire flames 1981* was published by Shooter & shooter In Pietermaritzburg.*

*I think they printed about three thousand copies if I am not mistaken. They sold only about hundred and then the book was banned. They had to transport all those other copies to United States, they were bought by a publisher.... I don't know what Press in the states. The Green Press or something, like that but the book was never again issued in South Africa. But strange enough six months after it was banned it was unbanned. But it was too late. So much harm has been done. There was a lot of protest and say what is the justification. Do you know who was behind the banning? It's our hero.*

I read from the responses that you faxed to me.

*What.....?*

You cited..... (name cannot be disclosed in this dissertation)

*Yes.....!!*

And I couldn't believe it. His books were mainly read in black schools.

*But you can imagine he was the only black in what was called the censorship board. The censorship board was pure white. All of them, It had Afrikaners who were the most racist and conservative. He joined and sat in their board and they paid him handsome sum of money. And I said... because... I also admired his writings in isiZulu. Why these crazy people, mad people. Why would he do that?*

Ja, It happened unfortunately.

*Where is he? Do you know? Is he still alive?*

Ja. He is still alive. I am not sure if he has retired.

*Laurence Green is the name of the publisher in the states. You can look it up in the internet and find out how much of that was sold out. I am keen just to find out. I never made a dime or a penny from that book after all those efforts. I did not earn a dime or a penny. But I am not bitter. I made my statement and I was lucky I was given an opportunity to read most of those poems on a radio interview in America.*

It is amazing.

*Ja. Almost three million people heard. I told them I said I am reading from a banned book in South Africa. I hope you are all going to be polluted by my political stand. And I got so many calls. Yes brother tell it... tell it... tell it. (He laughs aloud). They were saying, they were really encouraging me to say what I wanted to say...*

Uhhum...

*So you can see from there that were we living in very unstable, turbulent times and had to do what you had to do. I thought about my family because I loved my family. But I took a risk. I am a great risk taker when it comes to things like that. Not for fame or going to be paid, I thought it was the most honourable thing for me to do and I did it, and I did it.*

APPENDIX G

OSWALD MBUYISENI MTSHALI- ATTITUDE SCALE CONDUCTED ON 11-09-2011

The intention of administering this attitude scale was to assess, verify and affirm the validity of the topic of this thesis against the views of the poets themselves regarding their poetry. This attitude scale constitutes a series of statements after each individual statement the poet will put a cross in the square next to the answer that he feels describe his poetry better. The options that are written under each individual statement read as: strongly agree, partly agree, strongly disagree, and partly disagree. The poets are free to elaborate on any of the given statement, they are also free not to respond to a statement.

1. The motive behind the writing of my poetry was conscientisation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

2. Poetry is the use of allusive [figurative] language to tell a story or describe a scene or emotion or convey of an idea through the medium of verse, it does not necessarily have to rhyme.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

3. A good poetry provokes the thought of a reader in a particular way.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

4. My poetry is allusive, rhetorical, lyrical and paradoxical.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

5. My poetry echoes the concerns of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

6. My poetry was directed mainly to the oppressed black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
				✓	

7. It is acceptable and appropriate to call my poetry protest poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
			✓		

8. My poetry mirrors the truth about the harshness of the life of a black person in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

9. I prefer an in-depth analysis of my poems because it considers each poem as a whole thus appreciating my poetic creativity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

10. My poetry was counter hegemonic discourse to the apartheid hegemony.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

11. Through poetry I try to articulate the feelings and aspirations of the oppressed black people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

12. My poetry was intended to inspire the people away from complacency into political activism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

13. As a poet I am the mouthpiece of the people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

14. The distinctive feature between poetry and prose is the way each genre use language.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

15. When I write a poem I choose words and expressions for their special meaning.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

16. What is important in the literary analysis is the relationship between the literary work and ideology.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

17. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry was a reaction to white racism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

18. As a black poet I regard myself as an organic intellectual of Black Consciousness philosophy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

19. It is correct to call my poetry Soweto poetry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

20. Like Black Consciousness my poetry took a critical stand against the white liberals.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

21. My poetry reminds black people that they too have a culture and they too are human beings.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

22. My poetry reminds black people that they too had a religion of their own.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

23. My poetry reminds black people of the fact that their culture is dynamic and not static.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

24. When I write my poems I try my best to provoke the thought of my readers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

25. I used poetry as a means of recording my own experience and views which are in turn the views and experiences of the black people about the whole apartheid system.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
✓					

26. My poetry is a means of communicating, educating and sending messages across to whom it may concern.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

27. My poetry is not rap, rap is not poetry but it is prose.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

28. Just like Black Consciousness my poetry is dialectical in its analysis of the problems faced by black people in South Africa.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			

29. My poetry reflects how black people thought and used language to make sense of their pain during the apartheid period.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
	✓				

30. Like Steve Biko I deliberately used a strategic essentialism in order to assert the voice and the identity of the oppressed black people. It is not true that I was blind about the dangers of essentialism.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Partly Disagree
		✓			