

**UNIVERSITY OF NATAL**

**SOCIAL COMMITMENT IN SOME ZULU LITERARY WORKS  
PUBLISHED DURING THE APARTHEID ERA**

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**SOCIAL COMMITMENT IN SOME ZULU LITERARY WORKS  
PUBLISHED DURING THE APARTHEID ERA**

**BY**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree “Doctor of Philosophy”  
in the IsiZulu Programme, Faculty of Human Sciences,  
University of Natal, Durban.**

**Date submitted: January 2002**

## DECLARATION

I, **NHLANHLA N. MATHONSI**, declare that except for the quotations indicated in the text and such help as I have acknowledged, this work: **Social commitment in some Zulu literary works published during the Apartheid era**, is wholly my own and has not been submitted for a degree to any other university. I bear full and sole responsibility for the accuracy of its factual content.



N. N. MATHONSI



Date: *21-01-2002*

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the loving memory of my great grandfather, **Nozilwa**, and my great grandmother, “*Intombi yakwaShoba*”. It is through them that I am “*UMfuneki ongafuneki, okumele aphume owakhe – uPhumowakhe*”.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe thanks to the following people:

**Professor N.N. Canonici**, my supervisor and promoter, for devoting enormous energies to my research and for making valuable comments in various chapters. Were it not for his detailed and thoughtful comments as well as moral support, this work could not have been completed.

**Mr E. Zondi** from whom I have been stealing ideas without acknowledgement and borrowed inspiration without measure, I owe special thanks to him for his intellectual support — “*Unwele olude, Nondaba. Ukwanda kwaliwa umfundisi*”.

**Professor M. Chapman** who, after listening to what I was proposing to do, suggested a chapter by chapter organisation of the thesis.

**Professor E. de Kadt** who, after reading various chapters, offered valuable insights.

**Mama (Mrs) Shozi** for words of encouragement in times of utter despondence.

**Ms Shamila Naidoo** and **Dr. T.S.C. Magwaza** who, through helping with proof-reading of my work, encouraged me to have time to do it over.

**To the rest of the IsiZulu Progamme staff members** — thanks for the privilege I have had of working in your midst.

Last but not least, very heartfelt thanks are due to **my family**, especially my wife **Khetho**, without whose unselfish and constant help nothing could have been achieved. In times of trouble you never misled me. For that and for everything else you will always be great.

## ABSTRACT

This study, *Social commitment in some Zulu literary works published during the apartheid era*, was motivated by what was perceived as arrogant and superficial observations by a number of especially foreign-based critics, that all the literature in South Africa African-languages published during the apartheid period was children stuff, not worth the paper it was written on, and that it did not show any effort at commitment to, or at reflecting on the weighty social problems that civil society in South Africa had to bear.

In response to such criticism, the study highlights aspects of social commitment in selected literary works, and it also sketches the committed approach as part of the African literary outlook. It traces commitment in oral traditional literature, where it appears that the great preoccupation of the oral society was that none of the achievements of the human spirit get lost. The proverbs clearly reflect on, and offer directives for, day-to-day problems, while myths represent reflections on the fate of man and the world. Folktales use common problems in life and family as the basis for the conflictual situations to be resolved. *Izibongo* (praise poems) declaim the heroic deeds of our leaders, trace our history, and demonstrate that, even in moments of glory, the needs of the people must be taken care of on pain of being negatively labelled with invectives that will reverberate through the centuries.

In a brief survey on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century stages of South African literature in African languages (Zulu, Xhosa, S. Sotho) it was noted that our pioneer writers made a gigantic effort to experiment with genres, forms and contents, and, in the process, to reflect on the anxieties caused by the often bewildering encounter of Africa with the west. Our early writers excel in creating poetry that amalgamates tradition and modernization, but in the narrative genres they seem to be able to be more genial and creative when they deal with historical material, possibly because they feel more at home with an inspiration that imitates the glorious praise poetry and are thus able to deal with the present in terms of past events, without upsetting critics or education authorities.

Then the decades of the expected maturity arrived -from the 1960s to the 1990s, but the seeds of vibrant originality sown during the previous period were cruelly trampled over and squashed, possibly by both the apartheid-appointed censors and by the fear that they would object to any 'committed' writing and destine it for the dustbin. Fear, self-imposed censorship, and possibly more than a little laziness hampered vigorous developments of literatures that had appeared very promising at their emergence. Listed here are a number of works in Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Zulu and Shona. The contributions of English and Afrikaans works to South African literary development are also outlined.. The fact that most works were meant for schools caused a further restraint on originality and creativity, although it should have spurred the authors on to do their very best, because through the schools they were moulding the future of the nation.

But a number of authors were valiantly able to overcome the general self-defeating frustrations and to rise to the challenge of producing excellent material, outstanding in both form and content. Some such works are examined and exemplified in the thesis. One of I.S. Kubheka's novels, *Ulaka LwabaNguni*, is analysed to show the depth of the conflict between Africa and the west, between country and city life, between western schooled and traditionally educated people. The new ways could become a monster that swallows everything and everybody, specially if one is unable to keep the animal on the chain of *ubuntu* that allows only as much westernization of the mind as can go hand in hand with the greatest traditional values.

Then follows the analysis of three historically based plays and one novel. History offers the opportunity of speaking about the present by describing the past. Msimang and Zondi do exactly this, and offer visions of today's social problems that become clearer when placed on the lips of people such as Mkabayi, Shaka, Cetshwayo, Bhambatha. Each of these works is a clarion call to wake up and be counted, because the new Africa is rising, both soulful and promising, full of expectations if one is able to overcome present day restrictions.

The author of this research fervently hopes that this work will produce better understanding among the South African races, and give birth to an era of multilingualism and multiculturalism, where the differences are treated as gifts rather than obstacles. The country

is great, and its populations present an extraordinary wealth of life and experience, especially when all is viewed through the prism of the colours of the rainbow, generously reflected in the new South African flag.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter 1

#### GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

1.0	<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1	<b>Overview of the topic and explanation of terms</b> .....	3
1.1.1	<b>Literary work and social commitment</b> .....	3
✓1.1.2	<b>Apartheid era and censorship</b> .....	9
1.2	<b>Status of creative literature in African-languages during the apartheid era.</b> ..	12
✓1.2.1	<b>Factors or reasons for the slow progress of representative Zulu literature</b> .....	18
	<b>(a) Effects of colonialism and apartheid</b> ....	19
	<b>(b) Control in the publication</b> .....	25
	<b>(c) Censorship in the mind-set</b> .....	25
1.2.2	<b>Need of genius</b> .....	28
1.3	<b>The socially committed Zulu literature of the apartheid era</b> .....	29
1.3.1	<b>Contemporary recoveries of an earlier independent tradition</b> .....	33
✓1.4	<b>Theoretical framework and research methods employed in the study</b> .....	35
1.5	<b>Outline of the dissertation</b> .....	39

### Chapter 2

#### ASPECTS OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT IN ORAL LITERATURE

2.0	<b>Introduction</b> .....	41
2.1	<b>Social functions of oral prose performances</b> .....	42
2.1.1	<b>Social concerns of Zulu myths</b> .....	43
2.1.2	<b>Social concerns in folktales</b> .....	45
2.2	<b>Social concerns expressed in proverbs (<i>Izaga</i>)</b> .....	47
2.3	<b>Social aspects of <i>Izibongo</i></b> .....	52

2.3.1	<b>The ancestry</b> .....	54
2.3.2	<b>Criticism</b> .....	55
2.4	<b>Concluding remarks</b> .....	58

### Chapter 3

#### AN OUTLINE OF THE AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERARY DEVELOPMENT

3.0	<b>Introduction</b> .....	61
3.1	<b>The early African elite story</b> .....	62
3.1.1	<b>Zulu literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s</b> .....	62
3.1.2	<b>Southern Sotho literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s</b> .....	69
3.1.3	<b>Xhosa literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s</b> .....	70
3.2	<b>South African-language literary developments from the 1960s to the early 1990s)</b> .....	72
3.2.1	<b>Zulu literature from the 1960s to the early 1990s</b> .....	73
3.2.2	<b>Literature in Southern Sotho from the 1960s to the early 1990s</b> .....	76
3.2.3	<b>Xhosa literature from the 1960s to the early 1990s</b> .....	78
3.3	<b>The English and Afrikaans way</b> .....	79
3.4	<b>Zimbabwe African-language literary development</b> .....	84
3.5	<b>Concluding remarks</b> .....	89

### Chapter 4

#### SOME SOCIALLY COMMITTED FICTIONAL WORKS

4.0	<b>Introduction</b> .....	94
4.1	<b>I.S. Kubheka's socially committed literary work</b> .....	97
4.1.1	<b><i>Ulaka LwabaNguni: The story</i></b> .....	101
4.1.2	<b><i>Ulaka LwabaNguni: Aspects of social commitment</i></b> .....	103
4.2	<b>C.T. Msimang's socially committed literary works</b> .....	111

4.2.1	<i>Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana</i> : drama synopsis .....	111
4.2.2	Elements of social commitment in <i>Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana</i> .....	112
4.2.3	<i>Buzani KuMkabayi</i> : a synopsis of the novel .....	121
4.2.4	Elements of social commitment in <i>Buzani KuMkabayi</i> .....	124
4.3.	<b>E. Zondi's literary works</b> .....	128
4.3.1	Summary of the drama <i>Ukufa KukaShaka</i> .....	130
4.3.2	Elements of social commitment in <i>Ukufa kukaShaka</i> .....	132
4.3.3	<i>Insumansumane</i> : The story .....	142
4.3.4	Social concerns in <i>Insumansumane</i> .....	143
4.4	<b>Summary and concluding remarks</b> .....	159

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

5.1	<b>Summary and observations</b> .....	164
5.2	<b>Possibilities for the future</b> .....	168
5.2.1	<b>Radicalisation for social transformation</b> .....	171
5.2.2	<b>Multiculturalism</b> .....	175
5.3	<b>Final remarks</b> .....	178
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....		181

<b>APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3: ZULU LITERARY WORKS FROM THE 1930's TO THE EARLY 1990's</b> .....	i -xii
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## Chapter 1

### GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1.0 Introduction

This study is concerned with the problems of African-language literature and its embedded ideological history within the literature of South African languages as a whole. The reason for choosing this topic of research is to evaluate the statements made by a number of critics, especially foreign based ones, that our African-language literatures lack social commitment (socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, etc.), and therefore fail to give expression to the needs, problems and feelings of the people, or to fulfil the function of conscientizing the masses.

African-language literature has been labelled as simplistic, underdeveloped and incapable or unwilling to address the issues that deeply concern black Africans. Many writers and critics (Coetzee J., Mphahlele E., Kunene D.P., Kunene R.M. and others) have had much to say about writing under the shadow of censorship, and take it for granted that everything written during the apartheid era is conformist, pro-colonial, neutral or non-committed.

Wauthier (1978:24)) distinguishes two trends in the vernacular from South Africa: a 'committed literature', and what he terms "*Janheinz Jahn Zoeglinsliteratur* ('schoolboy writings') - which reflects the teachings of missionaries and colonial officials". He then divides the latter into three types of writing: "a 'pro-colonial' literature, a conformist literature and a neutral literature". Wauthier warns us to carefully weigh whatever is produced in Africa before judging it, especially if we have not established criteria whereby a publication can be categorised as socially committed or not.

Using Zulu literature as a specific example of both committed and socially indifferent literature, whilst generalising on other African-language literatures and drawing parallels and similarities with a neighbouring country, e.g. Zimbabwe, this work takes a stance on the argument that the African-language literature<sup>1</sup> was emasculated by apartheid in the mind-set and publishing opportunity. While admitting to a great deal of compliance, it argues for the retrieval of works that did not fit the general mould and adopted a socially committed stance. This is in line with a selective positive criticism by locally based critics and the general feelings of Zulu students and scholars.

I need to point out, however, that literature cannot be discussed in isolation or in a vacuum. In order to be able to identify, analyse and clarify the aspects of social commitment in some Zulu literary works I need a theorised approach to show whether African-language writing fits into any dimension of literature. This is in line with Ngara's (1985) view that:

“if the critic is to perform his duties adequately he should in turn be sensitive to the concerns of the artist and develop critical norms which give satisfactory account of the content and form of the art of the day.” (Ngara, 1985:vii)

Early attempts at critical analysis have dwelt more on form or structure than on content and social function. This study will lean more on those theories that approach literature from the point of view of how it relates to different types of commitment—Marxist criticism and the theories advocated by African writers on socio-political commitment. The use of different theoretical approaches is due to the fact that the South African-language literature is too complex to be explained in terms of a single theory.

The present chapter is necessarily an introductory one, aimed at laying the foundations for the entire research. A brief explanation of the terms in the title, especially the concept of ‘committed literature’, will involve discussing the aims that a literary work should fulfil and the shortcomings and obstacles to their fulfilment. After this, the status of creative literature in African-languages as a consequence of the restrictions imposed on writers and publishers by the

apartheid regime will be outlined. It was mainly due to some of these factors that literature in African-languages was mostly directed to the school market. In spite of this, some literary works with an element of social commitment that appeals to the adult readership could be found. The theories on which the dissertation is based and the methodology followed for the research are also outlined.

### **1.1 Overview of the topic and explanation of terms**

I have chosen social commitment as the central criterion in the assessment of some literary works produced during the apartheid era. The discussion must therefore identify the elements that characterise a *literary work*, and how these were affected by the *apartheid system*, especially from the viewpoint of *social commitment*. The three terms will, for these reasons, briefly receive our attention hereunder.

#### **1.1.1 Literary work and social commitment**

Literature is the artistic level of language usage. All people can use language, but few create literature, that is, express an inspirational content in a beautiful form. Literary art is therefore the outward appearance of a psychological content, an experience of the soul which takes linguistic form. Literature is a form of art which is achieved when harmony or balance is created between form and content; in other words, when form (style) is moulded to convey content in a fitting way. Style is not supplementary to content or distinguishable from it. When the writer conceives of the idea, it is in the form of words. The form constitutes his style which is absolutely governed by the idea. If an author slightly alters his expression, his idea is also slightly altered.

According to Marx:

“Literary works are not mysteriously inspired or explicable simply in terms of

their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world which is the social mentality or ideology of an age." (Eagleton, 1976:6)

Craig (1975) supports the Marxist views that for the work of art to be successful as a reflection of a social process:

"... a writer is great to the extent that he can provide society in general, (or the reading public of the time) with a true mirror of itself, of its conflicts and problems." (Craig, 1975, in Selepe, 1995:95)

While it is generally accepted that literature mirrors society, i.e. it is inspired by social conflicts and needs; it expresses such conflicts and offers solutions to them, thus ideally leading society out of its ills, one should guard against limiting and enslaving art's nature and scope to social problems (especially great sufferings) only, when in actual fact it can also be inspired by great pleasures, joys, discoveries, etc. Social commitment is just one side of literature, which has to do with the type of content to be coupled with the form -the base of literature. Literature is more than just social relevance, otherwise bucolic, symbolic and lyric poetry could not be considered as literature.

The social significance of art lies, among other features, in the fact that:

"Art comes from a particular content and understanding that work involves responding to it as an element within that largest canvas of its own time." (Orkin, 1987:13)

Hence the need to look at the social, economic and political conditions that obtained at the time the work was produced for possible motivation, and not merely photographically reproducing "the surface phenomena of society without penetrating to the significant essences" (Eagleton 1976:30). Life is made up of history, geography, politics, economics, religion, education et cetera. For literature to be adequate, it must throw a beam of light on these aspects. Only then can we speak of literature as typifying social relations.

The struggle between the aristocracy and the working classes is the soul of Marxist theories. Ngugi wa' Thiongo transposes the theory to the colonial and post-colonial situation in Africa. Ngugi insists on the anti-imperialist struggle. He displays an intense sense of progressive socio-political commitment and this anti-imperialist thrust recurs throughout his social philosophy (Amuta, 1989:96). His socio-political thought is part of the dialectical theory that has society as the starting point and then spreads to its products to command relevance. He aligns himself with the broad masses, and to him commitment in Africa means moving away from literature which is "deeply rooted in the liberal bourgeois tradition, with its emphasis on value-free culture and art for art's sake," to making literature socially relevant through making it "an object of intellectual dispute".

Amuta (1989:114) aptly asserts that "engaged and committed African literature" articulates "the parameters and manifestations of commitment in several ways". It involves writing about the daily issues and also assuming the role of a teacher by guiding the society; and tackling public issues. This could imply mediating in the socio-political, socio-cultural, economic and religious worlds inhabited by the writer. In short, social commitment is literature compelled to face the socio-historical challenges of time and space. But it is taken for granted that the literary work becomes committed if it commands relevance by striking socio-political significance.

Williams (1977:200) observes that "commitment .... is surely conscious, active and open: a choice of position". This makes Amuta (1989) state that commitment is a matter of being "consciously" aligned or consciously prepared to change alignment in response to the social realities in question. It is the change of position which makes the writer relevant. In the apartheid era, for instance, it was the question of conscious alignment with challenges to grapple with the aberrations of apartheid. Each era presents challenges to literature and forces it to take sides for or against the progressive forces. This, however, must not change the fundamental fact that literature is essentially 'artistic'.

Amuta (1989) aptly sums up this interdependence thus:

“Commitment in literature is essentially artistic; the commitment in a literary work of art strikes us through the laws of artistic composition. When artistic commitment appeals according to the laws of mundane social rhetoric, art yields to propaganda.” (Amuta, 1989:115)

This implies that commitment is intrinsic to all art, and where art yields to propaganda, it is no longer art.

It is polarization which constitutes the core of the legacy of commitment and Amuta (1989:178) observes that such a polarization attempt rearranges people, thereby re-humanizing them. It is like a struggle against the injustices of the dehumanising apartheid. Apartheid had socio-political, economic, cultural, religious, educational and military dimensions. To dismantle it demanded different kinds of efforts. Nevertheless, there are writers who did not respond to the challenges presented by the apartheid government and that was tantamount to refusing to declare one’s alignment. Amuta observes that:

“A refusal to declare one’s alignment in art is in itself equal to wanting to equilibrate existing social structures.” (Amuta, 1989:116)

Social commitment refers to preparedness and ability to tackle social problems, conflicts, and needs besetting the society. If the problems (cultural, political, religious, etc.) that afflicted the Africans were so vast during the apartheid period, no practitioner of literature should have failed to reflect them and their causes, and to offer solutions. As part of the dramatic expression in serious literature, a socially committed author must identify the ills besetting society, and take aim at one or two of them. Targeting becomes necessary because if too many ills are presented, the force is dispersed. The next step should be the creation of a metaphoric image, consisting of fictional characters and events, which reflect the social ills the author is highlighting. Through the fictional characters and events the manifestations of the ills should be shown, with one or more workable solutions suggested. A socially committed work could challenge the society to alter itself and its circumstances through a catharsis, if the work is dramatic; through laughter at itself, if the work is comic.

In this regard Ngara (1985) asserts:

“Committed writers are extremely sensitive to the social problems of their day and are constantly coming to grips with them, hoping to play their part in changing society for the better. They are therefore constantly defining the role of art in society and endeavouring to develop literary forms that match their social vision.” (Ngara, 1985:vii)

He further states that committed literature:

“Is not only a passive product of historical conditions, a passive reflection of reality, but it can also influence and help to shape reality; for literature is a social force which, with its emotional or ideological weight, shakes or moves people.” (Ngara, 1985:25)

This is responsible commitment because it is the process of bringing about social change.

With this balanced view in the *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel*, Ngara tries to develop a theory of criticism which takes full account of the artist’s concern with language and form in relation to ideological content. Ngara (1985) aptly sums it up as follows:

“The dynamic of political struggles and social change affect the content and form of works of art, so that if we are to understand fully and appreciate the rise, development, concerns and styles of the literature of a nation we must see literature in relation to the history and struggles of its people, and in relation to the various ideologies that issue from socio-economic conditions.” (Ngara, 1985: 29)

This shows that socially conditioned literature is born out of a particular ideology, a term which Ngara (1985) defines as

“Referring to the dominant ideas of an epoch or class, with regard to politics or law, morality, religion, art, and science.” (Ngara, 1985:20)

The ideology expressed by literature or art is either in conflict or in harmony with the dominant

ideology. Writers produce literary works by defining their positions in relation to the context of ideological assumptions. Sometimes the artists cannot escape the influences of the prevailing ideology of the epoch. That is why Marxist aesthetics, which is in conflict with the apartheid ideology, cannot be ignored in South Africa. The Marxist approach, however, tends to subordinate form to content when we need a balanced view of literary formation and analysis, hence some theorists reject it. Marxism uses literature as a weapon against existing social structures and to promote a new cause, without emphasising the aesthetic base of literature. Literature has the social function to speak to the public in the language it understands, but plain commitment that sees art exclusively in utilitarian terms and refuses to accord it any other importance is faulty and becomes plain politicking.

Social commitment is no new concept in Zulu literature, as the next chapter will prove in a presentation of the oral traditions. Folktales were mainly told in response to social needs; *izibongo* were performed by the monitoring traditional *imbongi* as popular reflections of feelings towards persons and events; *izaga* were employed as expression of social norms. During the period of tremendous pain and oppression we expected not only socio-political commitment of literature but also historical, cultural, religious and educational commitment. In times of social change and transformation we still expect literature to deal with the aforementioned aspects.

In African-language literature produced during the apartheid era the linguistic element was considered essential by writers and critics who were unable to deal with serious content. They avoided the burning issues of the day by resorting to writing books for the school market. Such books were often didactic. They intended reading as a way to widen reading practice and for vocabulary expansion; training for the imagination and for writing; for analysing language use in terms of grammar; etc. Traditionally children must be protected from dangerous situations, therefore also from being exposed to radical ideas. The educational system was conceived as a one-way communication of ideas from the educator to the pupil. Pupils were expected to passively accept what was imparted to them (no personal research, no personal development

of ideas and initiatives).

While it is important to understand other people's cultures, these can only be fully appreciated in the context of one's own culture, which must remain the centre and the frame of reference. During the colonial period, the overseas "metropolis" was often used as the centre of culture and government, and the local culture was dismissed as insignificant. We must not make the same mistake, because the world has become a "global village" and we need each other. But we must shift the centre to our own culture, and consider the rest of the world in relation to it.

### **1.1.2 Apartheid era and censorship**

The Zulu literary works to be analysed were published during the apartheid era (1948-1994). Apartheid, the South African policy of separating whites from non-whites in almost every respect, was imposed by the National Party after 1948. It is sometimes called segregation on the bases of race, colour, language and religion. Apartheid is evidently a crude extension of German Nazism, as it proclaimed the superiority of the white race over all others, to the point that non-whites were denied the rights and opportunities enjoyed by their fellow citizens.

One finds examples of discrimination in most countries of the world, although in most cases it is not accompanied by a formal segregation imposed by law. Non-whites were always discriminated against in South Africa, from the earliest days of colonial rule. When British colonial rule was imposed on all four self-governing colonies, only in the Cape Colony were enfranchised blacks allowed to vote. In Natal very few natives had the right to vote, while in the two Boer self-governing colonies they had none. Since the 1909 Union, the ex-Boer republics forced the others to adopt their strict segregation policies.

The Union became the Republic of South Africa in 1961, and the apartheid laws of the National Party, enforced with great vigour by police, covered education, dwelling areas, washrooms, seats on buses and trains, drinking fountains, et cetera. When these practices, part of the policy

of government's legal segregation, became known to the members of the Commonwealth, the Nationalists were asked to withdraw them or risk being excluded from the activities of the organization. The government chose to go it alone as a republic rather than change its racial policies. This resulted in the isolation of the Republic of South Africa from the rest of the world. The outside world reacted to apartheid by cutting most bridges with the system. Within South Africa separate development often meant complete ignorance of the other population groups, of their history, problems and achievements. South African scholars were often ignorant of literary movements in the rest of Africa or even in South Africa.

Research shows that there was a considerable amount of censorship. The reports on race relations, missionary stations, author interviews, confirm this in a series of Surveys of Race Relations in South Africa. In 1962 a Publications Control Board was established to examine any publication. By the 1962 –1963 publications control, Miss Nadine Gordimer's book, *A World of Strangers*, was banned by the Board of Censors (Horrel, 1963:62). This clearly indicates that Censorship Boards had been in operation before the Publications Control Board was created in 1963 (Horrel, 1964:38). Gérard (1971:91) says that increasingly severe and wide-ranging use of censorship culminated in the Publications of the Entertainments Act of 1963. Under the terms of the Act, any book can be deemed:

“Undesirable, *inter alia*, if it or any part of it is

- (a) Indecent, obscene, offensive or harmful to the public morals;
- (b) Blasphemous or offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
- (c) Brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt,
- (d) Harmful to the relations between any sections, or is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare, or peace and good order.” (Horrel, 1963:69)

Provision (d) could be used as a political weapon, and it gave rise to very arbitrary interpretations over the years. The rest, however, seemed quite sensible for books to be read

by school children. Considering that magazines and newspapers continued to have a wide adult readership, it means that self-imposed censorship, publishers' cowardice and authors' laziness are mostly to blame for the poor quality of most Zulu literary books.

By 1967 banning orders and home arrest orders were common. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1967, in terms of Government Notice R510, a list was published of the names of 46 South Africans who had gone overseas, and whose words or writings could not be quoted in the Republic. Some of them chose to leave the country before they were banned. The list included writers such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Ronald Segal, Can Temba and Todd Matshikiza. Athol Fugard was refused a passport in 1967. The Prohibition of Disguises Act no.16 of 1969 was followed by the Publications and Entertainment Act, no. 85 of 1969 which dealt with periodicals. The result was that a chapter in a book on the history of SA contained blank pages because it quoted banned people (Horrel, 1971:35).

Generally it could be said that apartheid had a demoralizing effect on all aspects of African life. It gave rise to feelings of oppression, of being second or third class citizens, of often being treated like animals. The situation was made worse by the political changes that resulted in demonstrations ending in blood-shed and imprisonment of leaders. This dampened the creative spirit and enthusiasm of possible genius. What really makes the African-language literature of apartheid stand out as childish and not suitable for adult readership is that we tend to compare it with the earlier attempts at imaginative writing. In pre-apartheid literature we have Vilakazi making himself the conscience of the nation in both poetry and novel, in spite of some binding Christian and political ethics of the time. In his poetry Vilakazi protests about the sufferings of his people under the yoke of colonialism and industrialization. His protest is directed at the dehumanising effects of industrialization, which utterly destroys *ubuntu* (human qualities) in the African migratory workers (cf *Ngoba ...Sewuthi*; *Ezinkomponi*; and *Woza Nonjinjikazi*).

Vilakazi protests against the education system, which completely disregards many positive aspects of African traditions. In the novel *Noma Nini* he reconciles the two cultures (Western

and African) by showing how the Christian ethics prevent the African from showing who he basically is. Hence ululating became a norm also in western festive occasions. This powerful and revolutionary kind of expression, which is found in Vilakazi's writing, was seemingly accepted in the 1930s and 1940s, because opposition movements were still enjoying some margin of freedom. The other reason that enabled his work to appear in print could be that, although he was often blunt and direct in presenting social problems, he often couched it in deep traditional imagery and metaphors (Canonici, 1998:59).

## **1.2 Status of creative writing in African-languages during the apartheid era**

Wauthier (1978:347) says that writers' freedom of expression was reduced by government censorship in South Africa. Authors therefore produced writing intended for the school market, which differs from the literature of Nigeria and Ghana, but is similar to that of Zimbabwe. It has no glorification of African nationalism because its committed writers were banned for having expressed sentiments of independence and cultural revival. Most of the themes of this literature are so neutral and hackneyed, such that it might be called a "sub-literature, because in it western influence is obvious" (Wauthier, *ibid*). Being a product of social experience, literature has to recycle social experience and transform it, but the literature of the apartheid era avoids dealing with the most pressing of Africa's own needs.

Mother-tongue school education, which was supposed to be a positive element in the empowerment of African-languages, became a serious limitation in the scope of education even within South Africa. Since educated adults often preferred English publications to indigenous ones, African-language literature remained the domain of school children, and consequently did not pose any real intellectual or social challenge to the adult readership. This resulted in a chasm between school life and life in general. Moreover there has hardly been any mature critique of Zulu literature, apart from eulogistic presentation of an author, or of the structure of a particular work. We have second hand criticisms (Nyembezi, 1961; Gerard, 1971), especially of the earlier period for which there were critical articles and publications. Ntuli's (1983) outline of Zulu

literature is a summary, followed by wider outlines by the same author in 1987 and 1993, and by analytical papers by Canonici (1995;1997;1998) and Msimang (1996).

Considering the prevailing state of affairs in the imaginative writing of the South African-languages, it seems the words of Kadir (1996) about literature would be rather appropriate:

“The peripherization, silencing or excision of those self-searching voices has always left the collective body hollow and its body politics inane.” (Kadir, 1996:preface)

Our African-language writers do not seem to “sympathise with the anti-colonial cause of the oppressed South African” (Ngugi, 1997:15). They do not act like Alan Paton who “sees and knows the racist, physical, spiritual and intellectual violence inflicted on the African”. Ngugi (1997:19) says they should have taken the same Christian values and songs and interpreted them for themselves, giving values and meaning that are in harmony with the aspirations of the people’s struggles. This is only possible if people re-examine their own world outlook, values and prejudices, attitudes and stand. Ngugi (1997) aptly puts it:

“We usually start by travelling the imperialist way and only later do we set our eyes on what is African. We are then confronted with Europe’s reflection of itself in history, then forced to analyse and evaluate the world as seen by Europe.” (Ngugi, 1997:24)

Making readers view reality from a certain angle of vision is only beneficial if the reader is able to “see how the nation has defined itself historically and be able to relate that wholeness” with the world around it ( Ngugi, 1997:5). If that happens, literature is placed more centrally.

South African-language writers write as if they have only seen a beautiful and peaceful South Africa, as if they have not witnessed any extortion by the colonial authorities and as if there is nothing displeasing and shocking to report. They totally fail to denounce the colonial regime and write literary genres in which the atmosphere of poverty is splendidly recreated, despite

racial discrimination and apartheid having provided African writers with setting and subjects for a large number of works of different tastes.

The African-language authors never looked at the matter or attended to it in accordance with its degree of impact on the community. They wrote as if there were no sensitive urgent issues affecting the community, glossing over the problems or issues that affect the lives of the people, avoiding going straight and hitting it hard or lacking depth for fear of touching a sensitive matter at the bottom. Social commitment is achieved by researching the needs and the concerns, not just overreactions, and how they could be addressed without minimising the important component or the core of the matter. The third force, for example, should not be minimised when one writes about black on black violence.

The conformist and neutral literature, with its tendency to recreate a social climate and putting emphasis on local culture's failings at the expense of truth, made people feel inadequate, weak and incapable in the face of reality. It cultivated the culture of watching passively, showing gratitude and admiring the master. It did not show that Africans have depth of philosophy, wide range of ideas and experience. Most of the books associated a person's native culture with a low status, humiliation, slow thinking processes, downright stupidity, barbarism and so on. The general impression that nothing at all could be drawn from the South African African-language literature of the apartheid era that could be classified as "classic", might suggest having to set on fire the whole range of apartheid era material in indigenous languages. This is typical lack of commitment. Non-committed and pro-colonial literature scoffs at African heroism and often does not support the patriotic struggle. This is definitely not exercising the right influence over the masses. Those who are pro-colonial and conformist should have asked themselves, what influence they are passing on to the future generations.

This coincided with the period in which, though the bulk of the population was literate, it did not seem to have reached the stage where an individual would buy a book and in the privacy of his home read it to exercise his mind. The black population was a gregarious society that

pursued group rather than individual activities for relaxation and enjoyment. They watched *ingoma* dance and soccer matches, attended music festivals, went to church, and, where possible, to theatrical shows. Their attitude towards enjoyment, in Mayhead's words, "tends to favour a particular literary form, the drama" (Mayhead, 1969:9). One is, however, surprised that this is not reflected in African-language published drama. There is a chasm between performed/stage drama (often in English) and Zulu published drama, which might be due to the role played by radio theatre.

In view of this attitude the idea of prolonged periods of reading would seem to be a thing for the schools. This indeed was the case in the black community literature, be it poetry or prose, because most of the books were written by teachers who had their pupils in mind:

*"Qinisa ingqondo ndodana  
Ulibambe igoda ungalidedeli  
Igoda elashiywa ngo Vilakazi."*  
(Reinforce your decision my son  
Hold firm on to the interwoven rope  
The interwoven rope that Vilakazi and others left behind.)  
(Mhlanga, 1982:70, in *Intwasahlobo* -Msimang, 1982)

and

*"Ngiyakuyala-ke mntanami ukuba ufike uziphathe kahle  
ungazihlanganisi nezingane ezigangileyo."*  
(I advise you my child that when you get there behave yourself  
and do not mix with mischievous children.)  
(Gumbi, 1966:13, in *Baba Ngixolele*)

These two extracts show very clearly that the target readership was school children and if we recognise this fact, it will be fairly easy to account for their being so blatantly didactic. Because the books were intended for children, they had to conform to certain standards laid down by the publisher and the critic.

Literature is generally able to engage the emotions and stimulate the imagination. Reading literature is like meeting and getting to closely know the people for whom it is written. The literature of apartheid did in most cases portray social realisms, contradictions, et cetera, but the problems of the day were seldom expressed due to possibilities of banishment of either the work or its author risking detention. Problems such as protest against dehumanisation, colonisation, land expropriation, were very uncommon because that would portray authors as looking at things through the prism of the oppressed. But in the African-language literature no truth has been kept alive; nor any major errors, which would be either in compliance or in conflict with the imperial governments, have been exposed. This implies the absence of the communicative function of literature when literature is also supposed to be “social servant and historically utilitarian” (Fokkema, 1978:24).

Since the African-language literatures could not respond to the corrosive conditions of oppression and the consequences of censorship and exile, because of the reasons soon to be enumerated, English literature began to address concerns such as loss of land and identity, location and dislocation and other sensitive issues. The fact that African-language literature had to avoid these sensitive issues, with forced literary development, led to the broken literary history of the South African literature. That is why today when literatures of other languages boast about the haves, the African-language literatures speak about the hads. They refer to the days when *izimbongi* could freely access outlets to vent their feelings. They no longer own what they used to and subsequently they cannot contribute as equal partners in the multilingual cross-pollination. Some authors may need some serious counselling and psyching up to shed the deep-seated fears of detention, torture and death. If nothing at all is done, some might still re-live the apartheid days (by displaying those fears) even when those days are long gone and forgotten.

Some black writers have hitherto written from the point of view of the white man and white authors have gone out of their way to defend Zulu heroes (cf Ritter (1955) - Shaka (*Shaka Zulu*); and Walker (1949)- Cetshwayo (*Proud Zulu*)). Athol Fugard, in *Bloodknot* and *Boesman and Lena*, created destitute characters, who were left dreaming, bruising one another, searching

for the meaning of this racially cruel world, “gnawing at their conditions in a world without prospects of salvation and transcendence” (Kadir, 1996:83). Fugard successfully expressed the plight of ordinary people (black people in particular), the victims of poverty, violence, inhuman pass laws, ostracism, etc. in English literature. Some true liberals began to reject the aesthetics of humility.

South African English writers, among others, Peter Abrams, have written books that recreate the social climate of their country, of racial segregation- *Mine Boy, Tell Freedom, The Path of Thunder*. But the excuse will always be that English writers were free to write for the untrapped and decolonised (Wauthier, 1978:159). Dhlomo H.I.E., for example, wrote expressing the despair of his oppressed race in the “Valley of Thousand Hills”. Ezekiel (E’skia) Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue* presents an instance of compulsory evacuation; police opening fire and killing a child. This is the South African image of forced removals.

The history of African heroes was hardly taught in schools and African historical reactions were either ignored or taught from the colonial point of view. The criticism of the system imposed by colonialism appears muted, and is resolved in an idyllic celebration of a simpler -and often cruder - way of life of past eras, to which nobody is really prepared to return. Traditionally the epic deeds of a hero and all aspects of his personality were the main source of the eulogy of *Izibongo*. But since Cetshwayo’s death (1884) there has been no independent great socio-political leader. *Izibongo* of clan leaders or of a religious leader such as Isaiah Shembe, or a political and educational leader such as Langalibalele Dube, have had resonance only in limited spheres. The praises of Zulu kings, after 1884, are lame and hollow attempts at describing a greatness, which is only thought to be there. This is due to the fact that nobody with the values and virtues of a hero has emerged as a great leader in all sincerity. People have been afraid of frankly criticising both the colonial and the apartheid governments. Until Nelson Mandela emerged from prison in 1990, it is Msimang’s *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* and Zondi’s *Insumsumane* that have portrayed Cetshwayo and Bhambatha respectively as a challenge to the colonial government.

Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993) state:

“It is not disputed that, because the demand came predominantly from a school readership, publishers followed a careful policy to comply with the educational objectives of the moment. However, this does not imply that protest never reached the publishers’ desks, nor that critical works, especially in poetry, did not slip through.” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:138)

They conclude that, although African authors were seriously handicapped, some made serious efforts to overcome historical limitations and to create viable literatures in their languages. There are Zulu authors who managed to keep some socio-political problems in mind to conscientize the public.

### **1.2.1 Factors conditioning the slow development of representative Zulu literature**

There are numerous reasons for such hollow attempts at African-language imaginative writing, namely effects of colonization, apartheid government censorship, censorship in the publication and censorship in the mind-set. African-language writers, particularly South Africans, have been mercilessly criticised for their failure to write about sensitive issues. Some of the criticisms have been so harsh that we, at times, felt that these have overlooked the many problems that they had to contend with. First, the African author is too poor to finance the publication of his work. Consequently he is at the mercy of the white publisher, who may not tell him the truth about getting the proceeds so as to be able to finance his next publication on his own. In many cases authors have innocently sold their copy-right, only to find that they have been real losers in the game.

Since books were primarily intended for school use, the publisher would not take a chance with a book that was ill-suited for school use. Second, on the question of subject matter, the author could not hope to get a Nationalist government to publish a book that contains anti-Nationalist Party policy, nor can he/she hope to get a missionary establishment to publish a book that places African tradition over Christian ethics, especially after the apartheid government had set up laws

against such ventures.

#### **(a) Effects of colonialism and apartheid**

Through colonisation, African-languages are held in low regard by many of their speakers who believe that they are primitive, inferior, and unable to cope with technical terminology (Olney, 1987:61). The colonial government did not encourage its native subjects to direct their writings to relevant issues, i.e. protest against the brutalities inflicted on them. African-language authors then took examples from what they were allowed to read. Colonialism meant the loss of socio-political, economic and cultural independence. It broke the spirit of the Africans by making them feel inadequate, incapable and second-class people. Much of the content of literary works of the apartheid era glorified the west when in much of Africa in the 60s and 70s the task was to decolonise the literatures. South Africa was still engulfed in the predicaments that the rest of Africa had begun to rid itself of. The African hot demands of this era were the rediscovery of the African roots and the revival of pre-colonial traditions, which had been trampled over by imperialism. Reconciliation was never emphasised.

During that time two major conflicting paradigms to the task emerged. African Marxism sought to show that, as part of culture, literature is central to the contested terrain of ideology, as Africa finds itself caught up in a more vicious form of enslavement under neo-colonialism. On the other hand one section argued for a paradigm that would take the particularisms of African culture into account rather than reduce it into universal formulation of Marxism. Taking refuge in Marxism becomes justifiable as part of decolonisation provided we do not lack ideological clarity.

The people with formalist leanings overlooked that literature is not merely the written text but it is “a total whole manufactured by the existing material conditions and that every text in some sense internalises its social relations of production” (Eagleton, 1976:7). It should therefore not be restricted to structure, but should be allowed to express interrelatedness of all the aspects

that make literature.

Analysing and discussing the literary work involves subtly placing the work within the imaginative vision of the social structure as a whole, since it is a social product (Eagleton, 1976:7). Like the proletariat, black South Africans have suffered from capitalist exploitation.

However, there are no writings about underpayment of African labourers and the humiliations they are subjected to and have to endure. They write as if they have not witnessed a single minor extortion by the colonial authorities and as if there is nothing displeasing, disconcerting and shocking they have experienced. They are so docile and ambiguous instead of showing a feeling of revolt and love of liberty. We understand and share the sentiments of some of the early writers who had very little chance to produce texts that were not exclusively religious and therefore could not revitalise African oral and folklore tradition, i.e. praise positive aspects of African customs /practices and their fitting moral standards.

Nevertheless the apartheid era produced some slavishly imitative 20<sup>th</sup> century literature with obscure allusions totally cut off from the vital nourishment of the African traditions. Novelists and dramatists recreated, in the pastoral form, the glory of the shattered African state, the Zulu nation in particular (cf *Imithi Ephundliwe*). These books would be recommended for school syllabus, ensuring that the author gained financially, while investing in the system. Most of these writings were just recordings of real happenings or history as constructed by whites and therefore they were not about the African ideology. The opposing ideology is subtler than this. It seeks to subvert the existing order.

The stigma of the African-language literature of the apartheid era is that of trying to copy the western treasures to the neglect of the black man's tastes and aspirations. By imitating the west and producing content not their own, and thus failing to produce literature that has the stamp of African experience, African-language writers confirmed the label that Africa is "barbarous" and the west is "civilised". They made themselves second-grade producers. They opted to describe Christian doctrine at the expense of the suffering or utter neglect of the socio-

politically marginalised. After reading most of the books of this period one can hardly conclude that they are by Africans for Africans. They usually end up portraying caricatures of people, people who are afraid to give vent to their true feelings, in fear of being labelled as “barbarians“ or ‘uncivilised”. Since no practical gains can be obtained from such readings, the desire to read is impacted negatively.

Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993), forgiving the writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and attacking the apartheid writers, have this to say:

“It would be unfair to expect from authors of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a sophisticated commitment comparable to that which could be expected from their successors in the later half of the century. However the committed reader will soon notice that the socio-political undercurrent of the early century is hardly visible.” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:27)

According to Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993) this awareness had been inhibited by 3 factors:

- (1) Religious agendas of the missionaries;
  - (2) Inexperience in the possibilities of the written genres;
  - (3) The spirit of the times.
- (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:27)

Ntuli and Swanepoel further comment that:

“When the written literatures started to emerge, the freedom of authors had already been repressed by the prescriptive milieu in which they had been educated.” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, *ibid.*)

A clear evidence of this unchanging attitude is that even after 1960 only urbanization became a prominent field for exploration, although the effects of repression showed the average quality of much of the forth-coming writing. Although the reasons for making urbanization a major concern would be to explore the effects of migrant labour on family life, it was unnecessarily profusely addressed. Nevertheless this issue was not as sensitive as the loss of franchise and the

deprivation of the right to determine one's own future (not as a separate group). Hence the loss of the spirit of contestation and revival of nationalism taken up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in pursuing "Jim-goes-to-Johannesburg" novels; a theme wrongly called "the prodigal son theme".

Ntuli and Swanepoel ask themselves numerous unanswerable questions:

"Were the authors truly not committed or should their neutrality, even silence, be read as despondence? Were the authors even at this early stage signalling an attitude of avoidance towards thorny issues? Were they therefore, actually expounding the conduct anthropologists have called taboo? Or were they unwittingly preparing the youth for the inevitable uprising which would follow several decades later?" (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:43)

Or were they probably summoning energy for a murdering, revolutionary coming?

Canonici (1998:57) says that after the 1953 Bantu Education Act the apartheid government appointed censors to keep a strict control on every book published in the African-languages. They did this because they were scared of subversive ideas that could be circulated in the languages understood by the masses. Many of these books could not say anything against the rape of the land by foreign invaders. Nevertheless some slipped through unobserved, because censors, being "outsiders on the main, often could not grasp the full implications of the images used in a literary work" (Canonici, *ibid*).

Gérard (1971), in his literary historical survey, concludes:

"It stands to reason that the modern writer in the Republic of South Africa can hardly deal with the observational themes of African experience, except in a cautiously descriptive way. Discussions of causes and remedies is severely restricted by censorship." (Gérard, 1971:268)

## *Censorship*

Writers were prevented from conveying the realities of the South African experience. Their openness could land them in trouble if they laid the blame on any group other than their own. Living in exile was the solution to avoid complying with the maiming requirements of apartheid policies, although it resulted in the fast development of English imaginative writing. The reason why the government did not worry about English publications was that it was understood by few.

Coetzee (1996:108) says everyone suffered under South African censorship. Even those who did not suffer directly do not want to “minimise the impact of censorship on those South African writers to whom it was applied in its full rigor, particularly those black writers who stood absolutely no chance of publishing a word in their native country”. Coetzee (ibid.) further says, “We all suffered together since we lived an impoverished life, just as we lived an impoverished cultural life and impoverished spiritual life”. The consequences of censorship were much wider and deeper than they were intended by the censors.

Sitas (1996:83) says that publications were controlled in the 1970s and 1980s. Theatre circles are left very few committed scripts, but what we do possess in abundance is a series of “powerful memories and models that transgressed every preconceived notion of limit” (Sitas, ibid). We are left with dreams of liberal thoughts of experiments in the 1950s and 60s that tried to keep a sense of virtue, a sense of transcendence against the walls that were created by apartheid.

The censorship, in turn, made writers forget indigenous African content and adult themes and this retarded their progress in terms of quality of content. They were eventually not satisfied with what they had written. That the African writer himself is not satisfied is evidenced by Ntuli and Swanepoel’s (1993) words:

“Authors were handicapped, it is true; but this cannot be held against them, nor for that matter against the literature per se. In fact these authors should be applauded for their efforts and for realising that if there was a language, it could

not be denied a literature.” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:138)

The country clearly needed to be healed from that racial sickness by providing a counter-ideology that would, though not democratic, keep things balanced. Literature instead justified consciously or unconsciously the existing order and settler ideology. There was, for instance, no attempt to examine contradictions –why leave the tribal trust land for the city? This was caused by destitution stemming from the land being appropriated by the few, while the majority was thrown at the mercy of the market forces. The rich parts of the trust land were given to the settler while the bare and barren land remained in the hands of blacks as shown by Msimang in *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*. The Boers won the battle of the land against the Zulus to the utter dismay of Cetshwayo. Considering that such incidents were common, it is surprising that this is just an isolated sympathetic incident on the part of African-language writers. Some of the African-language writers, novelists, poets and dramatists helped to reinforce the racial myth of the self-destructive black race.

Nyembezi’s *Mntanami! Mntanami!* (My child! My child! -1951) and *Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu* (The Squire of Pietermaritzburg -1961), seem to fall under the latter category of books. In *Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu* white characters are portrayed in a positive light as compared to black characters. It is the white detective, for instance, that is able to associate C.C. Mlomo with C.C. Ndebenkulu and to conclude that they could be the same person. These are just some of the shortfalls in the works that could be overlooked by a non-committed reader.

Having said some negative things about some of Nyembezi’s writing should not, however, mislead people to think that he is not an outstanding author. He has displayed some remarkable consistency in his work to merit the title ‘outstanding’. All in all the quality of his work, based on his ability to create tension and draw suspense, is undisputable.

Left to himself, the black person was dangerous not only to himself but to his neighbour as well.

The solution was to devise means to control him. One way to do this was to keep him away from normal society by building more prisons (*cf. Ngavele Ngasho* by David Mkhize). The origin of these disorderly spirits was never questioned. An informed literature would have challenged this. Black urban culture was scorned as depravity and delinquency (*cf. Mntanami! Mntanami!*). But how these subaltern classes and their culture (urban polygamy, prostitution, crime, et cetera) had developed was never addressed. These were caused by the imbalance in the distribution of the wealth and then the subaltern class grew out of this material necessity. Marxist criticism then becomes more relevant for its being a partisan ideology, seeking to create changes that benefit the subaltern classes in majority.

#### **(b) Control in the publication**

The fact that African-language writing failed to come to grips with adult themes and thus make progress in terms of quality could also be ascribed to the publishers having their eyes set on the market. Economic enterprises work for the highest profit. Since only the school market guaranteed profit, authors were asked to write books suitable for school curricula, according to criteria set out in government legislation. Government scrutinised works before granting subsidy for publication. Publishers soon understood that they had to toe the line if they expected subsidies and profits. Some publishing houses appointed an official reader, who was normally an experienced educationist and possibly an author, to carry out the delicate task of analysing, judging and editing manuscripts. Capable readers or editors exercised tremendous influence on younger writers. They ensured a certain standard of language and exposition, but often curtailed the freedom of exploration of new themes.

#### **(c) Censorship in the mind-set**

Writers internalised the publishers' requirements and thus became their own censors, and from then on African-language literature was never able to throw off its shackles. It is the problem of being convinced that African-language literatures are inferior to the western languages that

has made censorship in the mind-set easy. Writers allowed the western languages to set the standard by which their writing could be judged, and consequently they found themselves pre-occupied with trying to prove to the white man that their languages were capable of doing what whites' languages can do. Their main concern and pre-occupation was mastering the structure of the novel and drama, which eventually made them remain toddlers for many years. This disadvantaged them to the extent of creating the impression that they never told any stories in their lives and therefore had to learn story-telling from the white experts.

Perhaps the missionary endeavour unconsciously contributed to the belief that the material things were not for Africans. They had to concern themselves with the hereafter. This latently prepared Africans for an unknown eventuality. When the colonialists came to take over the material things the ground had already been levelled. Preparation for heavenly meekness could have tamed Africans and made them avoid tackling political problems squarely.

Msimang (1996) says:

“Informal censorship by the missionaries - indoctrination that led to disowning people (Africans) of the tradition and customs because they were dubbed heathens. They were only publishing materials with gospel teachings. This led to the creation of imaginative writing, which lacks relevance, commitment and realism, the childish stuff that was meant for school consumption. The realism that avoided fictionalising the real world in all its aspects: physical, social, economic, religious and culture.” (Msimang, 1996:57-58)

This made writers create characters who do not see the problem for what it is in order to cure the situations, as well as characters who think through rather than act out their destinies (psychologically-inward characters). They failed to strike the balance and they put more emphasis on those aspects that lowered the native culture. They created aimless and trite literature that avoided burning issues. Very little attention was paid to the fact that artists should be the voice of the nation in directing the changes according to the aspirations of the people.

Gérard (1971: 268) also confirms that writers often proved to have accepted religion without critically examining it. That is why Kunene (in Gérard, 1971) approvingly says of J.C. Dlamini's poetry:

“The critical attitude varies from sincere questioning of religion to sacrilegious comment.” (Gérard, *ibid.*)

The tendency to avoid sensitive issues resulted in downright didacticism, “a disquieting amount of childish stuff published for school use, with most of the good stuff in vernacular writing deplorably never reaching the print” (Gérard, 1971:270).

The fear governing the writers of the apartheid era of transgressing and going beyond the prescriptions of the government of the day, prevented their doing what was expected of them as the conscience of the nation. Those that ventured did so with the conviction that they would be able to defend themselves when cornered about their writing. To this end they so over-coated their works that only the well-initiated recipient would be able to decode their messages. The state of inaccessibility stemming from over-coating to escape the censorship-axe also created problems because the school public as well as the short-sighted adult readership could not be conscientized by such works.

Being in the government service, teachers wanted to ensure that their source of income was not put in danger, that their ideas would not cause problems, and that they would not be reported to their superiors for insubordination. All these elements led to a situation whereby radical perspectives were selectively excluded, and the educational system resulted in a general quietening of ideas and approaches to establish calm and peace. The outbursts of accumulated anger found expression at tertiary institutions, where some lecturers were more radical than teachers, students were rudely confronted with reality, youth gave way to adulthood, weakness to strength. Universities, especially, were considered hot-beds of change and revolution.

Even critical analysts who had been expected to fill the void, had much difficulty in avoiding a

one-sided emphasis. Most of them could just be labelled as social democrats because of lack of political-theoretical credentials in their social outlook. They reflected liberal reformist attitudes, in that they seldom voiced explicit political preferences (Nolutshungu, 1982).

### 1.2.2 Need for a genius

Most of the literatures of the world only reached maturity with the appearance of a genius capable of showing signs of being imbued of the national traditions, and having the capacity to absorb the new reality developing around him/her. A lack of either of these characteristics disqualifies a writer as a genius capable of summarizing national aspirations to serve as a profound inspiration on the people.

Vilakazi probably comes closest to this status for he exercised tremendous influence on succeeding generations of scholars and writers. His poetry is highly appreciated also outside Zulu circles because of a very good English translation. He is, however, accused of lacking breadth of vision and that his social commitment in poems lacks depth and his novels remain rather superficial exercises. In poetry, for example, he superficially experimented with the European forms without understanding the specific differences between European and Zulu poetry.

The Dhlomo brothers, R.R.R. and H.I.E., tried to make a significant contribution. R.R.R. Dhlomo tried to revive and revitalise Zulu history in order to provide reasons for national pride in the midst of colonial oppression. However, he can be considered a hurried writer, lacking in proper research skills, and eventually relying on available colonial sources rather than on oral Zulu sources. This turned what could have been historical novels into “fictional history”, in spite of deeper social concerns shown in his early English medium short stories. H.I.E. Dhlomo, his brother, has great ideals and taps the sources of Zulu history with a creative social bent, but he writes mostly in the medium of English. Thus he does not contribute to a genuine African-language/Zulu literature.

C.L.S. Nyembezi, a very valuable researcher in language and oral traditions, has also edited anthologies of poetry (without any personal poetry book of his own). He is especially appreciated for his three outstanding novels, through which Zulu fiction came of age. He is, however, accused for not using his pen much more vigorously in combating apartheid, and for having silently acquiesced to the prevailing socio-economic and literary systems propagated by the colonial authorities. And yet, the moral greatness he demonstrated when he resigned his professorship at Fort Hare in 1958 in protest against apartheid interference in tertiary education sets him apart as a hero. His influence on the African-language writers of the last 50 years is remarkable.

Outside the Zulu field we have great Xhosa and Sotho writers who could have exerted an influence on other African-language writers [or specifically on Zulu writers]. Authors such as E.S.K. Mqhayi, J.C. Jordan, T. Mofolo, and others set excellent examples. They are yet to be emulated by many African-language writers. Inter-language "pollination" has not taken place in South Africa, due to the apartheid system of "divide and rule", but also the intellectual laziness of authors, who preferred uncontentious old ways to the risk of new ones.

### **1.3 The socially committed Zulu literature of the apartheid era**

Although Ntuli (1987), Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993), Msimang (1996) and Canonici (1998) agree that African-language literature was severely censored, they, however, claim that the censorship machinery was not completely water-tight. This is the kind of claim that the present research would like to confirm by singling out a few important works that might live through to the next millenium because of the impact of their punch on the issues that affect black Africans.

Mazisi Kunene (1996:16) also comments that "Out of a generation which was only partially competent in the mother-tongue, there emerged some outstanding works of figures such as C.T. Msimang, D.B.Z. Ntuli, I.S. Kubheka, S. Nyembezi and J.C. Dlamini". I have been able to

identify some committed works that appeal to the adult readership, because their authors never feared risking their lives by telling the truth.

Of Mazisi Kunene's outstanding writers I have selected I.S. Kubheka (*Ulaka LwabaNguni*), C.T. Msimang (*Buzani kuMkabayi; Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*), and added E.Zondi (*Ukufa kukaShaka; Insumsumane*). The criterion I have employed for selecting them is their ability to show different dimensions of social commitment -- socio-political, cultural, historical, educational and religious commitment. The works of authors that made a great difference in creating qualitative, meaningful and responsible literature, despite constrictions, are evaluated against African post-colonial theories in order to clearly show the nature and the level of commitment contained. Ngugi (1981) and Wautheir (1978) put forward the following as being essential in literary commitment: challenging ideological domination; utilisation of African ideas to create imagery; restoration of the people to their own environment; making African literature a centre of Africa's process of learning; fighting for regenerative re-connection of the masses with their own culture; educating and instilling pride in people; showing that their base is as sound as any other; reflecting national decolonisation of minds, singing African and denouncing colonisation (Pan African spirit- African nationalism, exposing injustices suffered by the colonised). Starting from the functional aspect that literature should be socially committed, I shall attempt to show that the chosen Zulu writers produced works of outstanding quality. Their works reflect the conflict between tradition and westernization; between tradition and school education; between traditional and modern role of women; between ancestral veneration and Christianity; etc. These are the themes that dominate African society and responsible African literature.

The best literary works in Zulu are historically based: poetry, drama, novels. Such works are generally immune from censorship, because the readers (especially the uninformed censors) could simply enjoy the story without reading anything else between the lines. Good authors tell today's stories through yester-year metaphors. History masks today's life problems and makes them seem remote while they actually convey the message for today's society as well. It would

be proper to exclude the genre poetry on the grounds that it is generally believed to be the most suitable for resistance since it is based on the expression of feelings. As Msimang (1999) notes:

“The genre that is most suitable for resistance literature is poetry, and in this area the Zulu writer has more than sufficiently carried out his obligation. Protest poetry of the highest order abounds in Zulu literature. By saying that it is poetry of the highest order I mean that it is not naked propaganda, and as such it could elude the eye of the censorship commissioner.” (Msimang, 1999:xii)

Resistance is part of socio-political commitment and Msimang touches on it when he identifies poetry as being full of protest, in his *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla* (1988). In protest, resistance literature authors air their dissatisfaction about particular states of affairs and indicate that the situation does not need to be tolerated and that actions should be taken to rectify or transform it. Perpetrators are identified and helped to transform. These are literary merits in the expression of grievances. Msimang mentions a number of poet protestors in *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla Umqulu 2* (1988), e.g. Ntuli C.S. -*Vimba Phambili*, Gcumisa M.S.S -*Insengwakazi yakwethu*, Nxumalo O.H.E.M. -*Zishayele*, Msimang C.T. -*Nawe Goli*, etc. Furthermore, both Ntuli N.S. (1982) in his HONS Dissertation, *A brief Analysis of Protest in Zulu Poetry*, and Zondi N.B. (1995) in her M.A. dissertation, *Protest in Vilakazi's Poetry*, do critically analyse the element of protest in Zulu poetry. I shall not, however, deal with protest in poetry in this study.

Zondi's Bhambatha in *Insumansumane* challenges ideological domination by the colonial government. He does not allow Ndabazabantu's way of thinking to influence the way he thinks as an African. He does not want to shift an inch from what he basically is and he makes sure he corrects the white man where need be. Bhambatha, for instance, sjamboks the white man, Uys, who chases an African boy into the chief's compound. Msimang (1976) in *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* uses African ideas such as *isikhumba senkomo* (cow hide) and *uphoko* (grain) to show a balance of power between the Zulu and the English. Both these traditional images refer to innumerable quantities.

In *Ulaka LwabaNguni* Mphakamiseni's problem is that he is half traditional and half western,

as a result he is marginalised by both spheres. If he experienced dualism, and was able to amalgamate the old and the new, at least he would have been accepted by both. Kubheka does not show him flirting with the western ways to convince us that he is totally western. Implied in this act is that Mphakamiseni is living the western life superficially, and this failure to strike a balanced approach signifies a badly managed change. It is maybe this lack of commitment that the author criticises the character for. Considering that one has to thank God through the ancestors for carrying him through his achievements, Mphakamiseni deserves the punishment meted out on him. The author may for this reason have an axe to grind against the highly school educated Africans who are marginalised by their communities. The reason why the author does not show us whether the other side marginalises Mphakamiseni or not, could be that he wants to retreat to the commitment he is able to describe and defend rather than the one he is half-familiar with. In this way he might seem a segregationist rather than an integrationist like Vilakazi in *Noma Nini*. He has chosen a side and aligned himself with it.

The content of the afore-mentioned books is soul revitalising and it re-affirms original contribution in arts, as Wauthier (1978:17) puts it. It reflects functional and utilitarian versus individualistic and egoistic tendencies. The Zulu writers in these books have put the African culture at the centre. It appears they understand that if you lose your hold on the centre, things fall apart, that is, if black Africans make western culture their centre, they will be aiming at understanding this instead of their own culture. The most unfortunate consequence is that theirs will remain neglected and criticised.

Showing the sensitivity of some authors to the problems facing the nation, voicing the feelings and aspirations of the nation, does not make readers see their past as one of wasteland and of non-achievement. It makes them want to identify with that which is closest to them, forces that will never stop their own spring of life. This kind of base does not plant serious doubts about the moral rightness of struggle. Their dreams of victory or triumph do not become ridiculous but present themselves as a cure of all diseases. This is in line with Ngugi's (1981) advice to writers, to:

“Present sheer agitational material that would urge people to high resolves in their pursuit of the freedom and the redemption of their culture.” (Ngugi, 1981:69)

According to Ngugi (1981:42) commitment is the ability to give vent to the pride inherent in the language; the ability to show the spirit of contestation; a celebration of the vitality of languages to appropriate great works from the world literature; the ability to report misery, increasing repression, loss of land, political power, marginalisation and alienation. These are socio-political responses that the committed reader is always in search of in a literary work. The fact that these are, however, very uncommon in the African-language literature, indicates that most authors do not direct their writings to relevant realities.

### 1.3.1 Contemporary recoveries of an earlier independent tradition.

Oral literature is committed entertainment as it tries to meet the needs and aspirations of the community. *Izibongo*, *izaga*, *izisho*, etcetera, contain the African genius and philosophy. In *izibongo*, for example, *imbongi* does not shy away from criticising or advising the king when he deems it fit. He would never be restricted in terms of tone and interpretation because *izimbongi* used to investigate the feelings of the people about a particular incident in order to justify their epithets. This has always been a tall order for the African-language writers, more particularly those who write about a subject people. Dhlomo (1954) writes:

“*Lesi senzo esibuhlungu senzeka mhla ziyisithupha kuMbaso ngonyaka ka 1838.*”

(This painful deed occurred on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1838) (Dhlomo, 1954:50)

This refers to the assassination of Piet Retief and his party at the hands of Dingane. Dhlomo accepts, without questioning, the fact that Dingane committed such atrocities. Later historians declared that the reports of Shaka’s and Dingane’s cruelty were vastly exaggerated by western sources to make Zulus appear as savages that needed to be ‘civilized’. Europeans considered the conquest of African land and the submission of African populations as a benefit. Africans

instead considered it as breaking up national compactness, identity, culture and a land plunder. Surely Dhlomo had never explored the reason for exaggerating the atrocious acts. Had he done so, he would have gained a deeper insight into the history surrounding Dingane and Piet Retief. This means that before writers make statements about the characters they write about, they should explore and investigate the reasons and feelings about the incidents surrounding the characters. Without deep insight into the history the author could simply underrate the popularity and power of the character.

According to Greenlaw,

“Literary study has thus become not merely closely related to the history of civilisation but indeed identical with it.” (In Wellek and Warren, 1970:20)

The implication here is that good literature should facilitate an understanding of a people’s civilisation, the progress or retrogression they have experienced as a people.

Although the early modern writers in African-language literature could not boast of a higher education, yet we know them for the invaluable pioneering work they produced. Sontonga published the song *Nkosi Sikelela I-Afrika* which is part of the national anthem and the soul of Africa today. Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka* cannot go unnoticed. The work has been translated into several languages, hence it has received international recognition. Vilakazi’s poetry is another inspiring work that contains scathing attacks against the colonial system and the consequences of industrialization.

The themes of the committed works to be analysed in the fourth chapter, illustrate some of the problems besetting the life of black people in their own country, for example, lack of opportunities to express their own opinions on government legislation affecting them. A good example of this is the lack of consultation between Ndabazabantu and Bhambatha which is highlighted in Zondi’s *Insumansumane*. The Zulu nation, the Zondi people in particular, are never consulted on matters pertinent to them. Similarly in *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* the land

issue is resolved by the white colonial government in Pietermaritzburg, without consulting Cetshwayo who is the legal traditional owner of the tribal land. Kubheka in *Ulaka LwabaNguni* conveys the message to those who do not respect their ancestors that they may not claim any form of protection from their forefathers when they are in need of assistance. These are comparable to some literary works produced by the early African elite. The few committed contemporary recoveries are blazing the trail of the latter authors who were seemingly inspired by their predecessors in African orature.

#### **1.4 Theoretical framework and the research methods employed in the study**

Fokkema (1978), emphasising the importance of a theoretical framework, says:

“We need theories of literature in our attempts to interpret literary texts and to explain literature as a specific mode of communication. The scientific study of literature is inconceivable without relying on a particular theory of literature.”  
(Fokkema, 1978:1)

{The theory of literature develops methods that guarantee that observations and conclusions are not obstructed by personal preferences and values. It is common knowledge that a literary work reveals the criteria with which it should be evaluated and literary criticism creates a reservoir of general concepts by means of which the individual facts can be described and explained.} To discover these criteria the critic has to consider the historical conditions in preparation for the literary interpretation and this must be combined with evaluation growing out of understanding these conditions. This stems from the fact that literature is not static and isolated, but “part of a tradition and of a communicative process” (Fokkema, 1978: 20). Theories can co-exist, with one theory eventually possibly dominating the scene (Fokkema, 1978:5). This means that literary critical analysis cannot be restricted to one theory, e.g. structuralism, to the exclusion of the social environment. The structure of a text has both formal and semantic elements, i.e. meaning expressed by the work of art is a constituent of literature.

Amuta (1989) argues that African-language literature can be discussed only within the framework of political discourse essential to the dismantling of colonial rule and western hegemony. In exploring the possibility of a dialectical alternative base, he draws upon classical Marxist aesthetics and the positions on African culture adopted by Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi. From these explorations he derives a new language of criticism and a new interpretative model, which he applies to modern African literature.

The dialectical approach is to be employed for its ability to amalgamate various theories to produce a vivid picture as well as from the point of view that it implies literary dynamism, the interaction between the past and the present. And so the past, with its rich heritage, can form part of the material in the discussion for the reformulation of post-colonial/ neo-colonial aesthetics. In the dialectical framework no literary work is “born alone”. This could help African-language literature to abandon its isolationist approach and “move towards a wider perception in which criticism is informed by issues in the history of the society” (Amuta, 1989:84). The situation of African literature is too complex to be explained exclusively in terms of one theoretical approach. We will therefore employ an integrated framework, which builds on the premises of a number of approaches to account for the multi-functions of literature in this context, e.g. economic aspects –land loss, low wages, over-taxation, job colour-bars, commercial and financial discrimination. The African concept of art is communal, social, religious, functional, utilitarian and not egoistic and seeking after beauty for beauty’s sake. The other reason why I am not advocating a total rejection of western critical tools is that since modern African-language literature is an extension of the western literature tradition, critical analysis should be the judicious mixing of African and western critical approaches.

Although the framework within which this whole discussion is set is dialectical, to find out which theories are relevant to the African-language literature one has to begin by testing them to see which ones address the questions raised in local fiction. We need a theoretical outlook that couples literary theory and practice. Theories that concern the literature of the formerly colonised nations are related to Marxist and post-Marxist approaches to literature. Marxists

view literature as a product of culture and literary theory, as social criticism is used to analyse social processes. This means that for Marxist and post-Marxist approaches art is not art for art's sake, but it should reflect social processes to be successful and meaningful. Craig (1975) says:

“....a writer is great to the extent that he can provide society in general (or the reading public of the time) with a true mirror of itself, of its conflicts and problems.” (Craig, 1975, in Selepe, 1996:95)

This is, however, one side of the coin as has been said several times in this study. It is as essential as other elements of literature are. Understanding literature means therefore “understanding the social process of which it is part” (Eagleton, 1976:3). Form and content are inseparable, theoretically distinct as they are. One is caused by the other, therefore they are both necessary. They are reciprocal and there is no conflict in that authors have both obligations of art and social actions. The author does not have to neglect the social arena in pursuit of art perfection (Frank, in Eagleton, 1976:3) for that can destroy his art. Taking the exalted view of idealism the answer would be to avoid sticking to one aspect of literature to the total exclusion of others. This was the main mistake of Marxist criticism, as is observed in Eagleton's words:

“Marxist criticism sees form and content as dialectically related and yet wants to assert in the end the primacy of content in determining the form.” (Eagleton, 1976:3)

According to Fokkema (1978:24) some critics adhere to the dialectical materialism from the point of view that it takes literature as “ a social servant and historically utilitarian”. This has not been explored at length by the African-language literature critic of the apartheid era who had a tendency to put more emphasis on structure and to neglect the social meaning intended. Literature's role in society and its ability to enrich the way society relates to reality must be interrogated; this involves the area of ideology. By stripping down the literature's myth, it is discovered that literature is the product of ideology. Ideology works in the most undemocratic fashion in that in order to enforce its formulations it suppresses the discordant views. This in itself is a selective, meaning-oriented process. It is here that Marxist/ materialist theories

become relevant to African-language literature.

African-language literature of the apartheid era was merely used to cultivate and carry ideological significations. It lent rationale to colonial and apartheid government rule. For example, the themes in which a black protagonist goes to town, undergoes trials and tribulations, and eventually goes back home to settle and be happy, were encouraged. These themes advocated that blacks are never comfortable in an industrial urban culture, therefore they must return to their rural culture and settlement. In this way they promoted segregation. This was consonant with the political system, a system rationalised in the hideous discourse of racist domination and control. The industrial urban culture is portrayed as uncomfortable to blacks, who then have to return to their rural culture, which is familiar and protective. In this way blacks were encouraged to remain tied to rural culture. The main aim of this type of literature was to discourage the growth of a permanent urban-black presence, which would lead to black and white competing in the economy.

Art can be used to legitimise, uphold and advance the cause of the status quo or challenge the ruling class and champion the cause of those who are oppressed. Writing from the position of absolute immersion in the plight of the people in order to remove racial domination and the ideology that supports it, would possibly lift the hardship endured by Africans (Nolutshungu, 1982).

According to Simon (1969), for any investigation conducted to obtain valid and comparable results, it must take place in accordance with accepted research practices. For this survey to be conducted on a sound theoretical foundation, data analysis and interpretation has been preceded by the choice of research methods, data collection and processing in this study. The choice of research method is vital because there are several methods available which could be suited to specific projects to ensure the desired results. The method of research in this study has been partly empirical and partly theoretical, i.e. it involved going out to collect a body of facts and then sit back and analyse (armchair approach) in order to draw conclusions from the

observations. This specifically involved reading relevant theoretical works, especially by African authors, studying critical analyses and reviews on African-language literature, research works, dissertations (M.A.'s and Ph D.'s), etc.) to avoid the danger of relying too much on personal experience.

The data has also been collected from personal (imaginative) text books written from the earliest periods of Zulu imaginative writing to the writing of the apartheid era in order to identify relevant themes and search for pointers of social commitment. These have been chosen on the basis of the researcher's judgement about their (social commitment and lack thereof) suitability. This has helped to support the stance taken in the introduction about the emasculation of literature in indigenous African languages by apartheid and in the mind-set, as well as to show some glimpses of commitment.

### **1.5 Outline of the dissertation**

The thesis falls into five broad sections, which correspond to the various chapters:

**Chapter 1** has presented and explained the goals of the study, starting off from the general need to answer disparaging allegations from some hurried critics that literature produced in the African-languages during the apartheid era is devoid of any value, and is completely lacking in the social commitment necessary for it to assume the role of mirror and conscience-moulder of society. In the explication of the terms contained in the title of the study, the idea of literary social commitment has been explored and exemplified, and the nefarious influences of apartheid legislation on our emerging literature were explained at some length. In so doing, the theoretical principles on which the present study is based have also been developed. I also acknowledged the fact that some of our authors seemed to take the lazy way out, using their ability to write in Zulu as an easy means to enrich themselves without considering the responsibility that their talent put in their hands, to conscientize their readers on the ills besetting society, and to make them think about the ways to render the social situation better for all.

**Chapters 2 and 3** present an overview of the African-language literature. They present a special kind of scenario of pre-colonial, colonial and apartheid eras in order to show that there was social commitment. Chapter 2 specifically deals with the return to the honourable tradition of the oral past (the literature of the pre-colonial period), its functional values and losses and how that honourable literature, viz. folktales, proverbs and *izibongo*, could be tamed and recovered for contemporary relevance. Chapter 3 considers the history of South African African-language literature, specifically the rise of Zulu literature and that of its neighbours from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1980s in order to reassess the situation and conditions under which some socially committed works were produced. The chapter offers a sketch of events prior and during the apartheid era, paying special attention to imaginative writing in African-languages. It deals with written literature of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1950s, then from the 1960s to the 1980s, its substance --- the amount of adult readership before 1952, and the extent to which the liberation movements were concerned with the advancement of African languages.

**Chapter 4** presents an analysis of representative committed literature, the responsible, qualitative literature of the last thirty years, that made the greatest difference. **Chapter 5** contains a number of concluding remarks, i.e. summary of the findings, and future predictions or assumptions. It makes an attempt at pointing the direction that South African African-language literature may take to put things into their proper perspective, that is, making the culture of the African masses remain central to the African-language literature of the present. It focuses on the significance of such social commitment on the character of our new nation and its civil society as well as the status of South African African-language literature.

Note: 1. South African-language literature refers to literature written in any of the nine “black” languages in the Republic of South Africa as opposed to South African languages literature which may include English and Afrikaans.

## Chapter 2

### ASPECTS OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT IN ORAL LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter intends to highlight the element of social commitment in African oral genres. Oral literature represents the very soul of our culture, and constitutes the seed-bed of modern literature, as it supplies both the spirit and the approach to various forms of creative and artistic use of the word.

The writing of African-languages was only introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Before this ponderous historical innovation, the African people had perfected a system of communication, of creation of information, of recall, which goes under the general name of oral literature. This is evidently based on the use of the spoken word, therefore is the art of orature, which presupposes a performer, who is also a creator of the piece, and an audience, which participates in the performance and conditions its shape and outcome.

It is unfortunate that the emphasis placed by the early organizers of African schools on the three Rs relegated the oral traditions to the wastebin of useless items. The early missionaries had little or no understanding of oral traditions, and feared their 'pagan' flower-bed. Although there were notable exceptions, such as Canon Callaway, Bishop Colenso, James Stuart, and a score of other church people or educationists, the richness of the oral past was felt to belong to a world that was best forgotten.

The revival of the study of the oral traditions in recent decades has brought to the fore their inexhaustible wealth. We understand now how these traditions constituted the cornerstone of our civilization. Our past was enshrined in our eulogic poetry (*izibongo*) and in our folktales (*izinganekwane*) and legends (*imizekeliso*); our way of life and philosophy was reflected in our proverbs (*izaga*), while other manifestations of the treasures of our culture

could be found in children's word games (*iziphicaphicwano*), in our idiomatic expressions (*izisho*) and in the large variety of our songs (*amaculo, amahubo*).

While much of our literature was meant for entertainment, the oral society always had a clear vision of its responsibility to the young people and to the future: without education there could be no future, and what was not taught in a way that facilitated recall was lost. As a consequence, literature had either a direct or an indirect educational bent, and the realities that were being taught revolved around the social reality: individual life, family, community, state. Hence the statement made by all scholars of oral traditions: oral literature is socially committed; nothing must be wasted, because life is short; education is not a privilege but a duty.

This chapter will attempt to identify the thread of social commitment in various oral genres, using examples from Zulu. It is not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but a simple indication of the points to be kept in mind in modern literature as threads emanating from the past.

## **2.1 Social functions of oral prose performances**

In his **Zulu Oral Traditions**, Canonici (1996) dedicates chapter 5 to "Performance as an educational experience" (pg 64-74). He demonstrates that performance creates a community of all those taking part, since the performer's word penetrates all, instilling the same principles, sharing the same knowledge, evoking similar sentiments and stimulating similar responses. Canonici then analyses the kind of education imparted through the folktales: intellectual knowledge, accompanied by life skills and the emotional support of the group to ensure the fulfilment of the objectives of the performance. He finally describes a traditional performance as an emotional journey that involves all the faculties of body, heart and mind.

It is therefore abundantly clear that even the simplest oral performance was regarded as a very special event to shape the minds and hearts of children, and to create that "culture of

the feelings" which would remain even when what one had learned was forgotten. This happened because the narratives were not separate or unconnected samples of life-wisdom, but reflected the whole spectrum of traditional life, and served as exemplary of a tightly bound whole.

I would like, however, to consider here some socially hot problems that form the background to a number of Zulu oral narratives. They regard persons as individuals and as members of a society that is born, grows, encounters joys and sorrows, and prepares for a life beyond the horizon of what is sensually experienced and visible. The narratives quoted here are drawn from Canonici's (1995) *Izinganekwane: An Anthology of Zulu Folktales*.

### 2.1.1. Social concerns in Zulu myths

Myths give imaginative answers to the deepest questions and problems besetting human life, such as the following:

Where do we come from? Where are we going?

Why life? Why death? Why suffering?

Are we alone in this world, or is there a God from whom we come and to whom we go?

How do animals fit into the scheme of things?

In the story *UMdali* (The Creator) (Canonici, 1995:1), taken from Callaway (1870), we are told in simple terms some truths that form the bases of the Zulu religious beliefs and social life:

- (a) God is 'The one who came first, from whom all beings proceed'.
- (b) The ever-present ancestors were created by him and knew of his existence.
- (c) Nobody has met God personally: we cannot speak to him because we do not know even his *izithakazelo*, nor we go to him through his wife, according to Zulu custom: we do not know whether he has a wife or not.
- (d) Ancestors' veneration is a cornerstone of Zulu life, because the living-dead are there

to assist us in our needs, if we do what is right by them.

The pan-African story *Sibambe elentulo* (We hold on to the lizard's message) (Canonici, 1995:2) tries to make sense of the problem of unfathomable depth, i.e., of human death, and tells us of how death came to mankind. People would have liked to live for ever, but the wise and ponderous chameleon, who with his 360 degrees view and his ability to camouflage himself with any colour can see and feel the past, the present and the future, realized that it was much better if life in the flesh should come to an end. He allowed the fast and unthinking lizard to come to the people first and to deliver the message of death. Death, in spite of the pains it causes, constitutes the most momentous change in life, and it is wise to expect it and to welcome it as life's supreme crowning.

Story No.15, *Ukuvela kwezimfene* (The origin of baboons) (Canonici, 1995:44), is a highly entertaining "myth of origin". It tries to make sense and explain the similarities and differences between man and animal. It tells of how a human tribe, the *AmaFene*, became so lazy that they used the hoe to sit on rather than to till the soil. The hoe stuck and grew into a tail, the symbol of animality, and the people became veld animals, too lazy to build their homes and to work, and bent on stealing from the people who cultivated their land. Animals are therefore man's twins, but rather troublesome because of their lack of social laws that could restrain and direct them. And the people who renounce their God-given ability to work in order to improve nature, to build their houses and to produce what is necessary to feed the family, but rather steal what belongs to others and let themselves grow untidy (with long body hair), condemn themselves to the life of *izilwane zasendle* (wild animals). This story seems to contain a very accurate picture of *abantu* versus *izilwane*, and the easy assimilation of criminals and a-social people to *izilwane*.

Such problems are evidently timeless, and occupy the minds of people living in any era of history. Our predecessors therefore belonged to that group of wise people who dwelt on such heavy problems, and let the living folktale images guide them in their meditations. Myth is, in this sense, certainly not "child's play".

### 2.1.2 Social concerns of folktales

Folktales mirror life's joyful or sad events, which give rise to plots to either achieve joy and success, or to avoid trouble, punishment and pain. The "seeking hero" and the "unjustly persecuted heroine" are the most common themes, which are developed by plots reflecting the "initiation journey", during which people are confronted by all sorts of problems and adventures, designed to bring out the best in them, so that they may be purified and strengthened to be able to take on their adult role in society.

The conflicts folktale heroes and heroines must face and resolve are such that they could appear in any person's life. They broadly correspond to today's conflicts, whose solutions are normally based on common sense, and are thus also applicable to life in the modern world. Due to the immense variety of stories, of situations and themes, I shall only deal with few examples that can easily be taken to represent the whole imagery bank contained in the folktale tradition.

A number of tales describe a well-organized family unit into which suddenly appears a trickster who soon turns the situation upside down and creates havoc. For example, in No.34, *Umkhwekazi namasi* (The mother-in-law and the sour milk), the old lady, who has moved in with her daughter and son-in-law, is crazy about sour milk. She uses all sorts of tricks to get to it, although customs do not allow her to partake of maas in her son-in-law's home. She devises a plan to fool even the ancestor spirits by dressing up as her son-in-law, using his utensils and sitting on his stool. But she is eventually caught and sent on the impossible errand of finding water in a frogless river or pool. Just when she has almost reached her goal, she is caught by another great authority, the king of the animals, and condemned to be eaten the next day. A trickster animal, however, takes pity on her and frees her during the night. Human tricksters do not enjoy the freedom of animal tricksters in the folktale tradition. To upset the harmony of human society means challenging the cosmic order on which the very foundations of human life are built.

The trickster is an outsider who bursts into a community, does the unthinkable, and manages

to get away with it, causing great amusement and merriment in the audience. This vigorous challenge in animal trickster tales, which represent a very large slice of tradition, seems to ridicule an un-critical adherence to the traditional way of life. It also points out that being unaware of dangers through thoughtlessness is equivalent to being culpable of crass ignorance, for which one must be severely punished.

One of the most common shortcomings of a trickster's victim is a supine acceptance of his offer to help, or his promise to do something very unexpectedly nice for one who has done nothing to deserve such privilege. The offer is a cruel trap, of course, as the stupid victim realizes far too late. So, for example, the trickster **Hlakanyana** (The clever) (story No.13), convinces an old lady that she will re-acquire her youth if she agrees to play the game of *ukuphekaphekana* (cooking one another) in a large pot. The woman ends up being re-born, but to the next life! All trickster stories are a clarion call for constant alertness, not to believe a clever chatterbox, not to expect large presents without having earned them. Human society can be very cruel, and social change can only be brought about through painful effort.

In the story whereby the girl undertakes a journey and soon feels alone (cf *UMabhejana*, No.25; *UNokuthula*, No.26; *UZembeni*, No. 30), exposed to all kinds of dangers, insecure, sometimes feeling persecuted by her own mother, she finds strength in the assistance of ancestral spirits, who often appear along the way through gentle birds, or a helpful mouse, to supply her with directions and sometimes with magic means. This probably hints at the possibility of ancestral intervention, or lady-luck in times of need.

This leads me to another hot topic in modern literature, which is clearly found in the folktales, namely the all-embracing fear of *ubuthakathi*, witchcraft. This evil practice has many manifestations and faces, all socially disrupting. Some folktales highlight the jealousy of co-wives who try to destroy the handsome, caring and intelligent son, or the mother of the chief's happy wife (cf *UDumudumu*). Or the cruel fear of the father for the ability of his son, who could rise against him and wrench the throne from his hands (cf *UGunqu*). When jealousy appears between sisters, one of whom is good and the other evil, it ends with the

use of witchcraft, manifested in the master of evil, the stupid and gullible *izimu*; or in the pre-historical monitor lizard, *imbulu*. Evil is employed to destroy the good sister, who is, however, protected by the ancestors (cf *UNoqandakazana*, No. 20 and *UMamba kaMaquba*, No. 22). The sinned against are often protected by the ancestors.

From this hurried picking in the garden of folktale tradition, one can easily see that even the old grandmother, who gathered the children around herself in the heat of the evening fire, felt very strongly about the principle that stories should reflect life, and should serve as means of raising the social consciousness of even the youngest spectators to life's conflicts and concerns. Most traditional themes can be found, renewed in form and detail, in the writings of the most sensitive modern writers, who use the traditional imagery bank as a font of reflection and inspiration. But it takes a careful reader and a deep scholar of the oral practices to identify both the new and the old in our literature.

## 2.2. Social concerns in proverbs

Ntuli (1993) says proverbs play a major role in that they

“are verbal capsules containing the wisdom of the tribe as accumulated by its ancestors.” ( in Gérard, 1993:21)

They codify, transmit and perpetuate the rules of “behaviour which have preserved the cohesion of the society”.

Canonici supports and expands the same concepts:

“Proverbs give expression to people's ideas, emotions, ways of life, beliefs, etc, by the use of images drawn from the store of the cultural background, which constitute the signals, or the “vehicles” to link the sign with the reality or concepts it expresses.” (Canonici, 1996:40)

Proverbs do not only map out human life by giving directives of what to do and what to avoid, but they also reflect the greatest concerns, pains and conflicts that trouble humankind.

They therefore portray a picture of the joys, anxieties, beliefs, inspirations, etc., all couched in a language full of metaphors and traditional imagery. A study of Zulu proverbs is therefore essential to understand the never-ending concerns and preoccupations of Zulu society.

(a) Some proverbs are about the delicate balance between life and death, the material and the spiritual world, the known and the unknown, the living and the dead.

- (i) *Idlozi liyabhekelwa* (The spirit is watched for -this is a warning against deliberately exposing oneself to danger and expecting the ancestral spirits to come to your rescue. They will let you suffer the folly of your misdeed)
- (ii) *Kubulal' okudliwayo* (That which kills is that which is eaten -one dies by what he likes most, and so avoid over-indulging in earthly pleasures)
- (iii) *Ofuna ukuhlakanipha wakha eceleni kweqili* (He who wants to gain wisdom builds his house next to the cunning -this means that wisdom is gained by associating with the wise and so the chances of learning much are increased if one lives near a cunning person)

These proverbs provide wise advice. People learn to avoid falling into the traps laid by tricksters or into catastrophes caused by carelessness. If Mphakamiseni, as will be seen in *Ulaka LwabaNguni*, understood these proverbs he would be able to solve the problems besetting him. Instead he is blindfolded and destroyed by what he likes most: school education, hence "*Kubulal' okudliwayo*". He would have gained by choosing his associates carefully.

(b) Proverbs reflect life conditions: a journey from the known to the unknown, the constant movement and regular growth; the need to help other travellers (hospitality), conscious of our own precarious travelling condition.

- (iv) *Unyawo alunampumulo* (A foot has no nose -it cannot smell the looming danger of finding oneself embarrassed for having ill-treated strangers)
- (v) *Ukupha isihambi ukuzibekela* (To give food to a traveller is a form of investment -a hospitable act breeds another)

Strangers are afforded respect and hospitality in the African culture. Shaka is well-known for treating strangers hospitably, because he knew that a hospitable act breeds another.

(c) Proverbs reflect family life, which is based on the principle that life itself is the greatest gift of the ancestors. It is therefore necessary to offer a woman, the life-giver, protection and respect, which will be mirrored in the care taken for the children.

- (vi) *Induku ayinamuzi* (A stick has no household -a good and peaceful home is not established by using the stick)
- (vii) *Kubalek' ehlatshwayo* (The beast being slaughtered runs away - unkindness forces family members to separate)
- (viii) *Izandla ziyagezana* (Hands wash each other -mutual help is suggested)

Women must be aware that they are very important instruments of bringing life into the world, at the service (according to Zulu tradition) of the husband's ancestors. They must show respect and obedience, and educate the children to respect their elders.

- (ix) *Ihlonipha lapho ingayukwendela khona* (A girl is respectful even where she will not marry)

Some proverbs in this category are related to child upbringing.

- (x) *Umuthi ugotshwa usemanzi* (The tree is bent whilst it is still young, -behaviour correction should not be delayed)

Other proverbs commit men to fight bravely in defence of their loved ones, as well as fending for their well-being, and they warn men that the society does not want men who are too quick to show signs of fear and fatigue.

- (xi) *Indoda ifel' emaqeleni* (The man preferably dies in the wilderness - bravery)

Marriage and family life proverbs serve, for example, to strengthen the bond between the in-laws as well as the family members. The *ubuntu* tenet of interdependence is encouraged here, whilst outsiders are warned not to interfere in family affairs. Society disapproves of acts of interference by the uninvited. Proverbs express the value of independence, without necessarily implying the value of individualism.

- (xii) *Umkhwenyana isigodo sokuqhuzula* (The son-in-law is a log from which to chip -*ilobolo* was never fixed and so the in-laws were free to come several times for assistance)
- (xiii) *Eyomndeni ayingenwa*. (The family feud is not to be interfered with [never interfere in the family feud] -relatives get easily reconciled [the dense and bound structure is not easily destroyed- blood is thicker than water])

(d) Proverbs express opinions on the importance or not of wealth, of material possessions, of work, and of working together, as well as about *ubuntu* and community participation and co-operation.

- (xiv) *Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi* (Increase of people/ food is hated by wizard/witch -a witch does not want to see anyone else prosper. This is aimed at encouraging people to show more signs of being human)

Some proverbs teach the social importance of unity/solidarity for success.

- (xv) *Injobo ithungelwa ebandla* (The loin cover is woven in the midst of others- shared vision recommended)
- (xvi) *Ubucubu obuhle ngobuhamba ngabubili* (Beauty results from bead colour mixing -insufficiency of individual effort).

Extreme individualism does not thrive in African culture. In spite of individual capacities, people ought to be aware of their "insufficiency to achieve their welfare through solitary effort" (Kamwangamalu, 1999:29). Individuals owe their existence to the existence of the group. People achieve big things if they support one another. The proverbs therefore teach communalism and unity. This is to say: numbers count without implying the negation of individualism. Whilst independence is valued in the African culture, interdependence is highly valued for its possibility to ensure success. A man cannot exist by himself, for he comes from a social cluster as well as exists in it.

Proverbs about old age and death are committed to warning society against monopolising and unwillingness to share expertise with younger people.

- (xvii) *Akukho sigxobo saguga namagxolo aso.* (No block ever grows old with its bark, it peels off as it grows old -he/she is no longer what he/she used to be)

Proverbs have distinctive collective experiences, some learned the hard way. They have a moral lesson, making one learn and gain experience, i.e. educational point is expressed in a saying or proverb. New experiences which show people's new outlook on life have been collected and published by Mazisi Kunene (*Impepho* -1994).

Some proverbs are derived from folktales, originate from that which is related to religion and culture, history, contemporary events and modern life (looking at other cultures). Like in folktales, in proverbs animals metaphorically typify man.

- (xviii) *Imbila yeswela umsila ngokulayezela,* ("The dassie lacked a tail by

giving directions to others” - meaning procrastination is a thief of time) (Nyembezi, 1990:177)

The main purpose of proverbs, a collective body of life events, is to instruct the young and remind the old of what is expected of them by society (didacticism). They regulate behaviour by modes of conduct embedded in them. They are about the wisdom of people, their observations and reflections. They indicate how observant man is. As the man watches the shaping up of events in his situation, animal, human and bird behaviour, new ideas about life begin to take shape in his mind. He approves some behaviours and disapproves others. In this way proverbs are means of getting to know more about man and his surrounding, his likes and dislikes.

Proverbs raise awareness about the virtues of *ubuntu* (embedded in proverbs) for post-apartheid society. The need to structure sound relationships among the individuals spells out the necessity of introducing *ubuntu* in business sector in order to transform it and make it more humane.

Although the primary metaphors of proverbs are context related, since “the decoded or translated metaphor in proverbs is more often than not, not culture specific”(Neethling, 1995:195), and tend not to reflect only the philosophical underpinnings of a specific speech community, but possibly of many others, they could benefit all in South Africa. One has to learn the language in which people reflect what they value and what they do not, to be able to feel, practise and reflect *ubuntu* in daily behaviour (whose tenets are: solidarity, shared will/vision, respect, mutual trust, etc.). Proverbs, in which *ubuntu* is embedded, are a linguistic tool employed “to regulate and teach interpersonal relationships, and to emphasize the importance of harmony”, observes Mthembu (1996:2). This confirms that literature has always been the literary art that enlivens the truth societies live by.

### 2.3 Social aspects of *izibongo*

“A Zulu man, who is considered to have a natural gift for seeing and feeling most in the wake and experience of life, will look at his king, survey him in

the light of his ancestors, and then turn over in his mind the heroic deeds of his king, and even his weaknesses. Suddenly he will spring up in a crowd, with his shield pointed to the sky, and the whole of his body tingling with emotional excitement. ...Such man is never requested to do his duty, but stirred by the performance of tribal ceremony and imbued with national pride, he feels it most opportune to express his feelings ..." (Vilakazi, 1945, in Kaschula, 1993:35)

Vilakazi thus describes the praise performer, or *imbongi*, as a person with "a natural gift for seeing and feeling", who has a wide experience of life, and falls under the spell of his king and of the circumstances in order to let his feelings and inspiration take over, so as to express his and the people's vision of the monarch, as he erupts in poetic declamation accompanied by energetic rhythmic gestures ("... with his shield pointed to the sky ...") which bring together the living and the living-dead. Any individual could have "praises" to describe him/her, but those of kings, chiefs and notables are better known because they were sung by poets in different areas, wherever the "praised" person went, and thus quite naturally they were kept in the memory bank for posterity.

*Imbongi* therefore "introduces" the king, describing him in terms of his lineage (family, ancestors and their deeds for the nation) ("...survey him in the light of his ancestors ..."), and in the terms of own personal achievements ("the heroic deeds of the king") which are, however, spiced with subtle points of criticism ("and even his weaknesses") where the king does not meet the expectations of the people. In this public exercise of democracy one can see the balancing power of public opinion, which both encourages the king to carry on with his positive deeds, and warns not to take public favour for granted. In the *imbongi*'s role of recorder of events, of social commentator and spokesperson for the people one can identify the social functions of *izibongo* praise poetry (Brown, 1998:18; Opland, 1984: 176- 177). Mzamane (1981), holding that in the traditional society *izibongo* performed a special function, has this to say:

"In traditional society, while the poet is praising, he also points out certain absurdities and pitfalls. The king listens carefully because he knows that what is being said by the *imbongi* is what is generally said by the rank and file, who are less sacrosanct than the court poet." (Mzamane, 1981:6)

Social commitment is shown by the poet's ability to present even negative criticism of the king when he feels that this is for the good of the nation. The task here is to identify the problems faced by people under various kings, as they are directly or indirectly exposed in *izibongo*. I would like to briefly comment on two aspects: the ruler's ancestry and the negative criticism.

### 2.3.1 The ancestry

The lineage of the person includes his genealogy, which is important in the context of Zulu cosmology: the present king is a link in the chain of life with the nation's founding fathers, because their blood flows in his veins. He is therefore the present incarnation of the ancestors, who must listen to him in whatever he asks for the nation. He does not only represent the nation, but he is the nation. It follows that he has a heavy responsibility on his shoulders: he carries the ancestors to the people and the people to the ancestors. Personal success or failure represents the success or failure of both the living and the living-dead. Hence, his ancestors' epithets are also his own. Thus Gunner (1979:241) calls this verse "a poetic statement of identity." The *imbongi*'s voice therefore legitimises the present king or chief, as he calls him the offspring of Ndaba or of Zulu, or of Phunga and Mageba, as in the following lines:

*"UVemvane lukaPhunga noMageba"*  
(Butterfly of Phunga and Mageba)

(Rycroft and Ngcobo, Dingane, 1988: 70)

and

*"UDlungwane kaNdaba"*  
(Dlungwane (rager) of Ndaba)

(Cope, Shaka, 1968: 89)

The social relevance of this has at least two aspects:

- (a) Sense of responsibility, not to let one's ancestors down by not fulfilling their hopes and expectations. The person's failure amounts to betrayal of

ancestors and of the following generations.

- (b) Legitimation of lineage: this is important, especially for kings and chiefs, but also for ordinary clans and families. In this way it has a close link with *izithakazelo*,

One can easily realize that this understanding of the chief's social role plays a pivotal part in the description of historical events, and in the inevitable succession fights, as it happened at the time of King Zwelithini's accession. This is why the Zulu say that the ancestors choose the kings and the chiefs, and that they are therefore responsible to the ancestors rather than to external civil authorities, as Bhambatha declares in *Insumansumane*.

### 2.3.2 Criticism

Notable events in the life of the eulogized person have either shaped him and, or have been shaped by him. In either way he bears the marks of such events. *Izibongo* naturally reflect, in a special way, the person's achievements, but negative aspects, especially those reflecting wide social problems, also find the way to attract the king's attention, so that he becomes aware of what the people think of him. Negative criticism must be presented tactfully, and possibly humorously, to sweeten the pill and avoid crude reactions.

Criticism alludes to social problems, some of which are still relevant today. Although it is true that "nothing engenders success like success", and therefore the people tend to follow rather blindly a successful leader, the *imbongi* is able to pick up elements of concern and of criticism among the people, and to reflect them in his *izibongo*. For example, Senzangakhona is reprimanded for being a womanizer, and for devoting more time to his love affairs than to the affairs of state. Lust and sexual laxity are also prevalent negative traits in today's society. In Cope's version of *izibongo*, King Senzangakhona is described as an entertainer of beautiful woman, and one who lets his lust drive him to snatch a woman and to destroy her husband and son:

*"Ozithebe zihle uMjokwane,  
Ozithebe zihle zidlel' amanxasakazi.*

*Odle umfazi umkaSukuzwayo,  
Wamudl' uSukuzwayo kanye nendodana."*  
(He whose eating mats are beautiful, Mjokwane,  
Whose beautiful eating mats are eaten from by women.  
Who devoured a woman, Sukuzwayo's the wife,  
And destroyed Sukuzwayo and his son.)

(Cope, Senzangakhona, 1968:75)

This woman devouring act is against the cardinal rules of the society. The *imbongi* is socially committed to telling Senzangakhona that the society does not endorse the taking of another man's wife.

He is criticised for spending his time womanizing rather than dealing with the security and well-being of his people. The moral fibre of leaders is what sustains the nation. Senzangakhona's vanity renders him ineffective when it comes to war matters. This becomes notable when he is addressed as:

*"Uthi lwempundu lakwaNomgabhi,  
Obeluhlal' izikhova.  
Obeluhla' uPhungashe wakwaButhelezi,  
Luhlal' uMacingwane waseNgonyameni,  
Luhlal' uDlidlama wakwaMajola."*

(The stake forming gate-post of Nomgabhi  
On which owls perched,  
On which perched Phungashe of the Buthelezi clan,  
On which perched Macingwane of the Ngonyameni clan,  
On which perched Dladlama of the Majola clan.)

(Cope, Senzangakhona, 1968:79)

The 'owls' here are the neighbouring tribal chiefs who used to find Senzangakhona a soft target.

No one escaped these barbed references, even Shaka had some criticism levelled against him. *Imbongi* warns Shaka to stop creating enemies for himself and his people by pursuing his endless military campaigns. People are tired of wars: it is now time to rest, and enjoy the fruits of yesterday's labour. War is never popular with those who have to bear its consequences.

*“Mgengi phez’ izitha kusehlobo,  
Utshani bude buyagibanisa!”*

(Trickster, abstain from enemies, it is summer,  
The grass is long, it will get the better of you!)

(Cope, Shaka, 1968:95-96)

He is warned that this is likely to bring about his downfall. During the summer season the regiments were traditionally rested.

*Izibongo* are therefore employed to censor unacceptable behaviour in the nation. Behaviour censoring may vary from teasing to derogation or depreciation. Okpewho (1992:149), speaking about the depreciative or censoring element of *izibongo*, says that it is “discouraging social evils such as theft, adultery, truancy” and so on. For instance, *imbongi* boldly calls Dingane:

*“UNomashikizela,  
Umashiyimpi yakhe!”*

(The restless one ,  
Who left behind his regiment!)

(Rycroft and Ngcobo, Dingane, 1988:70)

and

*“ ... Umgabadel’ owagabadel’ inkundla yakwaBulawayo”*  
(The usurper of the court of Bulawayo)

(Rycroft and Ngcobo, Dingane, 1988:70)

for leaving his regiment behind and for committing the assassination of Shaka.

Turner (1997), in this regard, argues:

“The *izibongo* may be used to censure a person directly about his behaviour or they may be used indirectly to target someone in the community whose actions are deemed unacceptable.” (Turner, 1997:64)

She further comments that this is not necessarily “an admonishment or an insult, despite its

seemingly censorious or insulting overtones”.

Transgressors are ridiculed for going against communal ethic whilst the acts that promote strong positive communal relations are rewarded (Gunner, 1979:149; Finnegan, 1970:470). Cetshwayo is often criticised for not heeding the advice of his elders, such as Mpande and Shepstone, and this led to the bloodshed of Ndongakusuka, and then to the Anglo-Zulu war:

“*Undodeyalukuyalwa,  
Angani nabanoyise bayayalwa;  
Ngob’ udlule kuMpande ekuyala,  
Wadlula kuSomsewu ekuyala.*”

(He who is reluctant to take advice,  
Although those who have fathers accept it;  
For you by-passed Mpande’s warning,  
And you ignored Shepstone’s admonition.)

(Cope, Cetshwayo, 1968:227)

Sexual licentiousness, pride to pursue a defeated enemy to complete destruction, obstinacy and unwillingness on the part of young people to listen to the advice of their elders, are universal weaknesses which tend to destroy the fabric of society rather than strengthen it. These are some of the points of criticism levelled by the poets against the objects of their praises. And this demonstrates that the good of the nation is above the approval of the individual ruler, because even a king dies, but the population group persists. Thus *izibongo* fulfil the task of strong social control: even the most powerful king cannot afford to ignore the *imbongi*’s words, because he represents the people. And without the people’s support a king has no subjects, and no power.

#### 2.4 Concluding remarks

The present chapter has made an attempt at showing that social commitment is a traditional aspect of Zulu literature, firmly grounded even in the pre-literate oral forms, such as folktales, proverbs and *izibongo*. Oral literature embraces the philosophy of life of the Zulu people, their thinking about the world they inhabit and how they interpret life. We know that every nation takes death seriously and all nations think it was God’s plan to time-limit

man's life. Even the Zulus used to think deeply about the issue. That is why they concluded that death came with a salamander. The chameleon, however, is also never forgiven because despite being sent first it delayed and was overtaken by the salamander.

Gcina Mhlophe's story-telling has begun to reach and reconnect the people with their African roots and this involves having to take fragments and particles from the margins. Let us make the old people teachers to show the young how useful some of the things that we have done away with were, or what the past was like. Black Africans need to pick fragments from their humble craft and let them speak for them from a new landscape.

Proverbs, besides making the speech concise and picturesque, sound warnings and give advice to people as well as encourage them to strive at doing good things. Msimang, commenting on their serving as warnings and advice, cogently says:

*“Phela ziyizwi labadala elingashayi phansi.”*

(They are, of course, the unmistakable voice of the forefathers)

(Msimang, 1991:3)

A proverb forms the core image of a tale which is gradually expanded during the performance. In the proverb “*Imbila yaswela umsila ngokulayezela*”, for instance, the hyrax, being too lazy to go and fetch a tail, kept asking several animals to get a tail for her until the distributor ran short of tails. That is why she does not have a tail. The proverb is therefore employed to discourage laziness.

*Izibongo* are for adults. They contain history and tell about the character of the person. They teach the technique of criticism and praise. *Izibongo* express and reveal deepest emotions, thoughts, truths that refer to common origin, unity and oneness of the African tribes. In *imbongi*'s voice the members of the tribe are one and they sing in unison. According to Couzens (1985:154), this is part of the past from which Africans have been cut off, which is, however, still worth reclaiming. Couzens' (ibid.) advice is that “to be yourselves retreat to advance, probe into your own life by looking outward at the wider world”: centre and then ramify.

There is copious evidence of protest in *izibongo*. This is the tendency in the folklore where narrative texts condemn or encourage certain social practices. Oral literature in this manner was not alien to the aspirations of the society. Brown (1998:113) advises that *izibongo* should be placed at the centre of literary study for national unity and not be linked to any ethnic group. The place of the African monarchy in the modern democratic state has greatly shifted and the modern *imbongi* has, as a result of changing circumstances, resorted to advising, praising, criticising political leaders and labour unions. Let us celebrate the heroic deeds of local kings as well as those hard-working personalities in our writing by grasping the continuity of the nation's history and then draw from it the moral support needed to recover the community's place in the modern civilised world. This could help avoid the views that would serve the interests of colonialism, i.e. the view that an African has never produced anything of value. Oral translation links itself with social, political, historical and religious events. It helps to ridicule socially undesirable and unacceptable things as well as create and affirm the positive social actions and ideas. It, for instance, punishes anti-social individuals and ridicules transgressors against the communal ethic.

Through this rich oral literature, the nation learned about the entire spectrum of human existence. Re-affirming the original contribution of folktales in art can mean re-affirming the cultural identity while harnessing the energies of a struggle for post-apartheid solidarity. We can examine the African scene while examining its relations to the western form. Writers and performers could make oral stories about early pregnancy prevention strategies more relevant for current purposes by relating them to Aids prevention strategies. Pre-marriage sex was never encouraged and so today it could solve the problems relating to unnecessary and untimely pregnancies, abortions and HIV infections. The new education system should introduce measures which could distance children from ideological influences (characterised by dominance and subservience), which often result in creating division. It should challenge the status quo by making the children of the rainbow nation learn common literature that can create national identity whilst catering for cultural diversity.

## Chapter 3

### AN OUTLINE OF AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERARY DEVELOPMENTS

#### 3.0 Introduction

To appreciate South African-language literature it might be helpful to understand the conditions under which it was written and the events that shaped it. It should also help to draw comparisons with other literatures written under similar circumstances. Such background knowledge will enrich our understanding of the works of all writers, either committed or non-committed.

This chapter presents a brief chronological review of the South African- language literature, and outlines the socio-political, socio-cultural, religious and economic factors that influenced various authors of Southern African imaginative writing. The chapter focuses on those writers that left their mark and were widely read, and the description of their main themes. First, I deal with the early beginnings of imaginative writing to the late 1950s (the early elite story), then from 1960 to the early 1990s (the late elite story), concentrating on the similarities and differences in the content outlook of the two periods. Lastly, I compare the South African-language writings (Southern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa) of these periods with the imaginative writing in Shona and Ndebele, as well as in English and Afrikaans during the apartheid years in South Africa. This is undertaken because the South African-language literature did not develop in isolation but in the context of other languages.

An Appendix to chapter 3, with a list of the Zulu publications in book form, will appear at the end of the dissertation. But I am going to deal briefly with works and authors from the two periods to identify the most common themes expressed before and after the restrictions imposed by the apartheid regime.

### 3.1 The early African elite story (from the early beginnings of writing to the late 1950s).

By the elite story I mean the modern literature, especially narratives comprising novels and short stories written by the first group of intellectuals who had learned the genres at schools and universities. Elite stories reflected the world as seen through the eyes of *amakholwa* rather than those of *amabhinca*: a world supposedly “civilized”, at least in the dominant mentality.

#### 3.1.1 Zulu literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s

The missionaries were responsible for reducing the African-languages to writing, and for developing a school system for young people. School education evidently needed the creation of written literature for reading exercises and for the development of linguistic skills. Zulu society was very conservative and suspicious of these foreigners who wanted to bring in tremendous changes. Some elders, however, agreed that the youth should attend school and get initiated in the new ways. But for a long time the “official attitude” remained one of suspicion, and reticent co-operation. This is probably one of the reasons why it took so long for mature men of high social standing to try to make use of the best elements of language and culture through the new medium of writing in order to create works of outstanding quality, which would announce that isiZulu had finally arrived on the scene.

According to Malan (1987) the first decades of imaginative writing

“Had strong thematic emphasis on the acculturation and uprooting process as an ever-increasing number of blacks were subjected to a Western and urban life struggle.” (Malan, 1987:4)

It stands to reason to surmise that generally the missionaries wanted the “heathen culture” eradicated, and many African-language writers, who were themselves the fruit of mission schools, could not escape such influences, and avoided more burning issues, such as political ones. Bishop Colenso, in the 1850s and 1860s, took a strong stand against his own Church

of England, in maintaining that the Church should accept a number of customary practices, such as polygamy, that did not clash with the spirit of the Gospel. He was branded as a ‘heretic’, and the attitudes of arrogant superiority of the western ways of life prevailed, supported by both church and colonial government.

In a 1901 article, even John Langalibalele Dube, a church minister and an educationist, admitted that:

“The African is slow to learn, ..... He has inherited this from his ancestors.”  
(Gérard, 1971:211)

Dube, however, strongly pioneered the emergence of a “new African aristocracy”, and of an “elite” distinguishable by levels of education and westernization. To this aim he managed to get American funding for the establishment of a Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatali*, which was to have a tremendous influence on the development of creative writing in Zulu. The newspaper, whose earliest inception was 1906, became the arena where the best Zulu minds exchanged ideas (and sometimes insults), re-told ancient stories in new ways, narrated contemporary events, took sides with regard to new legislation, commented on the successes or failures of anything that touched African life. On the pages of *Ilanga* there appeared also the first poems, essays, short stories of budding writers: creative and imaginative literature was thus born. Even Vilakazi’s first collection of poems, *Inkondlo kaZulu* (1935), gathered his poems which were already published in *Ilanga* or in *UmAfrika*, the other great Zulu weekly published at Mariannhill.

J.L. Dube was also responsible for the publication of the first extensive narrative in Zulu, his novelette called *Insila kaShaka* (Shaka’s bodyguard -1930), a fact that earned Dube the title of “Father of Zulu literature.” Magema Fuze had already published his semi-factual narrative on the origins of the black peoples of South Africa (*Abantu Abamnyama lapho bavela ngakhona* -1922). James Stuart had published a series of books containing oral witnesses, folktales, *izibongo*, etc. that he had collected during his many years of travels in Zululand and Natal. In the early 1930s the terrain was evidently ready for the emergence of Zulu literature, and Dube, Vilakazi, R.R.R. Dhlomo answered the call and cemented their

brains with the creation of new genres, on the lines of European literature and in a constant effort to remain true to the form and inspiration of the oral heritage.

R.R.R. Dhlomo tried a historical and social re-assessment of the past and the present. His narratives include five historical novels, *UDingane ka Senzangakhona* (1936); *UShaka* (1937); *UMpande* (1938); *UCetshwayo* (1952) and *UDinuzulu* (1968). Books such as Dhlomo's *UShaka*, *UDingane* and *UMpande* are relevant to the African's quest for self-affirmation, because there is no greater incentive to positive living than the consciousness of coming from a long line of outstanding people.

Dhlomo initially wanted to rehabilitate Dingane, the most maligned and misunderstood of the Zulu kings. He tried to achieve this by presenting the Zulu interpretation of events, such as the massacre of Piet Retief or the battle of the Black Mfolozi. The trilogy caused a lot of controversy, especially because many events were not properly researched, and Dhlomo had fallen back on white sources and prejudices. The books had stirred heated debates among Africans for a more genuinely African view of history. There were great discussions about Cetshwayo and the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. Dhlomo took up the challenge, and in 1952 published his *UCetshwayo*, which had been thoroughly researched and was more a history book than a novel. This work had the effect of revolutionizing the views of scholars and historians on Cetshwayo, and opening the way for the so called "new historians" to enter the fray of African history. Dhlomo's 1968 volume on King Dinuzulu was less controversial. Unfortunately Dhlomo has treated some of the characters and events from the point of view of the early white writers, and this does not encourage the adult reader to keep such works in his book-shelf, and renders Dhlomo a writer for the school public only. He has, however, a fluent style and a powerful way to dramatise events and to portray characters.

Ntuli (1993) observes that:

"Although the works make good reading, they are sometimes marked by the writer's tendency to confuse the chronological sequence of events." (Ntuli, 1993:141)

It is only in his *UCetshwayo* that Dhlomo “puts into Cetshwayo’s mouth the classic cry of democracy concerning rule and representation” (Vladimir, 1976: 90). Dhlomo makes the British responsible for the war by making them find a vague pretext to attack Cetshwayo, because he is the risen spirit of Shaka that wants to unite the various tribes into one strong nation that will be a threat to the British expansionism. According to the British that emerging national unity had to be crushed. The tribal African here was beginning to show the spirit of patriotism and pride, with nationalistic and militaristic responses. Dhlomo groped back into the past in order to create full unity. In this novel he was able to rehabilitate his own image as well.

His brother, H.I.E. Dhlomo did not choose to write in Zulu, but did express his views on the nature and the future of African drama (*South African Outlook*, 1935 (Gérard, 1981)). He showed exceptionally keen interest in drama, his views being:

“African art must deal with the things that are vital and near to the African today.” (Dhlomo, 1935, in Gérard, 1981:227)

and

“We want African playwrights who will dramatise and expound a philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representation of African oppression, emancipation and evolution.” (In Gérard, 1981:229)

Herbert started to offer his views about Zulu poetry in 1939. His downright criticism of the use of Zulu led him to a clash with B.W. Vilakazi whose views were that African-language literature had to be in African-languages. Herbert Dhlomo continued to write in English and produced *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941), a poem that has the spirit of the past inspiring the present generation to find roots in it and resist discriminatory practices.

B.W. Vilakazi is one of the most outstanding writers of the thirties who made his mark by producing in more than one literary genre (see Appendix). He completed the novel, *Noma Nini* (For Ever /Any Time), in 1933 and had it printed in 1935, after winning the first prize in the 1933 International African Institute, New Writers’ Competition. This novel is a fusion

of Western and African views on marriage. It defends the possibility of integrating the best of Zulu tradition with the new culture introduced by Christianity and school education. In this way it proves to be a culturally committed novel.

In the same year he had his collection of poems *Inkondlo kaZulu* (1935) published by Wits University Press. In this collection he experimented with European forms.

Vladimir (1976) observes that

“Style in the literature of the thirties was frequently too imitative of European models”, and with it, came “an ideological pattern.” (Vladimir, 1976:31)

Most writers then became ideological writers who did not create any ideology but merely transmitted it. This is one of the things that did not impress H.I.E. Dhlomo. However, Vilakazi’s 1945 collection under the title *Amal’ Ezulu* (Zulu Horizons) with *Imfundo Ephakeme* as one of his famous poems, impressed even his great rival, H.I.E.Dhlomo, who praised the “new Vilakazi for widening his horizons by identifying with the struggles of his people” (Gérard 1981: 258). The treatment, that is, human dehumanisation in the dungeon of the mine, that Vilakazi received as a worker under the white man, made him express the feelings of the black man (cf. *Ezinkomponi* and *Ngoba Sewuthi*).

Vilakazi started writing at the end of the 1920s. In 1924 Hertzog became Prime Minister of the Union and after that racist laws of segregation and discrimination were passed. Vilakazi saw his culture deliberately humiliated by the colonizers and was made to understand that:

“a people’s true national literature.... is closely connected with the language and history of their nation.” (Vladimir, 1976:236)

This encouraged him to openly protest against racial oppression. His poetry is truthful to the statement: “The black man is deprived of his riches and land in the name of God” (ibid). He was prepared to fight for their freedom by encouraging and stimulating his readers and listeners to do the same and patiently wait for the time of victory.

*Nje Nempela* (Verily so) was Vilakazi's last novel, which was published in 1943. The book with the exposition of the events leading to the Bambatha rebellion of 1906, depicts the rivalry between co-wives in a polygamous household, traditional hospitality, as well as true love rising above suspicion, quarrels and tense relations created by spiteful speeches. Besides Dube, Dhlomo and Vilakazi, Violet Dube is distinguished as the first woman creative writer. She wrote *Woza Nazo* in 1935. Kenneth Bhengu soon followed on behind Dube, Dhlomo and Vilakazi. He wrote and published *UKhalalembube* in 1953, and thereafter a number of novels and a drama followed.

The first attempt at drama came in 1941 with Nimrod Ndebele who produced *UGubudele Namazimuzimu* (Gubudele and the ogres). This book is based on a tale which, at a glance, does not have any serious appeal to the African adult reader. It is about the ogres which eat Gubudele's father while Gubudele swears to pay them back in the same cruel way. He later invites the ogres in order to thank them for the wonderful job they have done to help rid him of his troublesome, cruel father. Whilst they are enjoying themselves, he sets the house alight and they burn into ashes. Canonici (1998), being able to break the thick coat, finds in it some serious underlying meaning:

“The ogres represent the white colonists who, after being welcomed into the country with the usual African hospitality, have made themselves owners of the whole nation and have taken advantage of its people. The young generations, however, are not going to stand by for ever, and the time of reckoning would come when a bloody revenge could take place.” (Canonici, 1998:60)

The drama, in this way, proves to be socio-politically committed. This over-coating was probably done to continue a very long tradition of social commitment, but using well-known metaphorical language and forms which were meant to educate while entertaining.

The 1940s saw the development of the prodigal son theme in novels and plays. Instances of departure from rural area to cities became prevalent. The contributors of this decade were, among others, R.R.R. Dhlomo, E.H.E. Made and E.T.Mthembu (see Appendix). The best exponents of the trend, however, were to follow in the next decades. On the whole very

little was produced in the 1940s. Most of what was produced were moralistic stories, transposing the American “Pilgrim’s Progress” theme, but rendering too explicit the moralising Christian educational system.

In the 1950s C.L.S. Nyembezi published *Mntanami! Mntanami!* ‘My child! My child!’ (1950), a novel with the “prodigal son theme”, and in 1953 *Ubudoda Abukhulelwa* (Acts of manhood are not necessarily performed by grown up men) followed. I should point out here that the so-called “prodigal son theme” is a misnomer. In the Bible story the son demands his inheritance and goes far away where he wastes it. He then returns home to his father repenting his wasted life, and asks for forgiveness. In Zulu stories we see the son going to the cities, wasting the treasures of his traditional values, education and health, then returning home to die. In Nyembezi’s *Ubudoda Abukhulelwa*, the movement into town is an initiation journey where the young men bravely overcome all obstacles, to be able to return home mature and rich. This is not a “prodigal son theme”. The only story (in the form of a play) which has a true “prodigal son theme” is *Baba Ngonile* (Father I have sinned) by K. Bhengu. *Indlela Yababi* and *Mntanami! Mntanami!* are similar to the latter play in that characters return home changed in attitudes, but the slight difference is that the girl and the boy take and waste the great inheritance of life, culture and tradition.

In 1961 *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* (the Squire from Pietermaritzburg) appeared. In the story the rogue, disguised as a rich tycoon from the city, cheats the naive villagers. It is humour in the story that makes it interesting, although black people are made to laugh at their own folly. Events are skilfully woven to the climax but with utter disregard of sensitive issues in the community. It is probably the richness in narrative techniques - humour, style, characterization, etc., that made *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* one of the most widely read novels.

Other contributors of the 1950s are L.L.J. Mncwango, E.E.N.T. Mkhize, Jordan Ngubane, M. Ngcobo, J.C. Dlamini, Kenneth Bhengu, D. Maduna, G. Nyanda, N. Tchamase and J.N. Gumbi (cf Appendix). G. Nyanda’s (1959) *Ifu Elimnyama* (The dark cloud) is more assertive in that he openly expresses his dissatisfaction about the 2nd World War

compensation in which soldiers received bicycles. Most of the contributions lack the element of social commitment.

Kenneth Bhengu became a very prolific writer, specialising in historical novels. Although his contribution in different decades is worth noting, he never produced any socially committed literary work. In Mncwango's *Ngenzeni?* (What have I done?), it is not clear what the suggestion is when lovers escape and settle in Shaka's land, because Shaka did not want people who do not respect the law. With the forced love theme, in *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, Ngubane (1957) ridicules abuses in the *ilobolo* practice, that force a girl to marry a man she does not love to obtain a bride-price in order to make the father wealthy. He criticises abuses in traditional life, such as authoritarianism and inhuman customs. Other writers took the same route and made the theme very common. The pertinent question could be -what does this suggest about the past of a black man? Was it a wasteland? On the whole, however, most critics agree that there was a spirit of independent creation, a social inspiration, a wide historical breadth that are difficult to find in the 1960 -1990 period..

The period during which literature in Zulu (also in N. Sotho and Venda) emerged, i.e. the 1930s, saw literature in S. Sotho and Xhosa making steady progress. S. Sotho literature dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, around 1880. Whereas early Sotho and Xhosa writers composed in their own languages, some of the first imaginative writing by Zulu authors is in English. R.R.R. Dhlomo's *An African tragedy* (1928), for instance, in which he criticised *ilobolo*, is in English, and it supports the western view.

### **3.1.2 Southern Sotho literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s**

Sotho modern imaginative writing started outside the borders of South Africa. It was due to the missionary journal, *Leselinyana la leSotho*, that the first literary endeavours came exclusively from Lesotho. All writers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century made their debut in this journal (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:34). According to Gérard (1971: 130), Sotho began to thrive in 1906 and the period between 1906 and 1912 became "the golden age" in Sotho literature. The major contributor to the journal was Sekere (1849-1930), but the first novel,

*Moeti wa botjhabela* (Traveller to the East -1907) was by Thomas Mofolo (1876-1948). Mofolo's third and best novel, *Chaka*, appeared in 1925, although it was already completed by 1909. Fear of a negative influence on the readers might have caused a twenty years delay in its publication. In *Chaka* one sees the author's return to pagan values. The novel's influence did go beyond South Africa after its publication. Leopold Senghor (1974) and the Ghananian author, Ayi Kwei Armah, viewed *Chaka's* hero (Shaka) as an all-African hero.

The best Southern Sotho poets are Ntsane and Khakatlan. Ntsane (1920-1983) attacks the fallacies of his time, "lost freedom, colonialism, racial tension, divided religious roots, hypocrisy, etc." (Gérard, *ibid*). With regard to his rendering of sorrows of migrating to the city he could be linked to Vilakazi's *Ezinkomponi*, and like Vilakazi he sees both sides of his enemies. He also has the ability to strike the balance in his criticism. He makes a plea for the restoration of human dignity and self-assessment for a better future (Ntuli and Swanepoel 1993:67).

### 3.1.3 Xhosa literature from the beginnings to the late 1950s

Literature in newspapers, among others, *Isigidimi SamaXhosa* (The Xhosa express -1882), *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Native opinion -1884) and *Izwi Labantu* (The voice of the people - 1897), came to supply material for formally published books. As Opland (1996) observes:

"Xhosa literature history participates in a broad history of social and political developments such as the growth of mission education and the emergence of an educated Xhosa elite, the emergence of urban centres, ... ." (Opland, 1996:110)

Opland (1996:111) mentions J.T Jabavu, S.E.K. Mqhayi and W.B. Rubuswana among the "major players on both political and the literary stages".

Among the Xhosa writers who made significant contributions during the period between the first half and the early second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1900 -1959) are H.M. Ndawo, who wrote *Uhambo LukaGqobhoka* (Gqobhoka's progress -1909), *Izibongo ZamaHlubi namaBhaca* (1928), *Inxenye Yeentsomi ZaseZweni* (Part of earthly tales), *UNolishwa*

(Nolishwa -1930) and *UNomathamsanqa* (Nomathamsanqa -1937); G.G. Makhlima - *UNtsize* (Ntsize -1924); S. Mlotshwa. -*UNozipho* (Nozipho -1923); E.F.Gwashu -*Intombi Yolahleko* (The prodigal girl -1953). G.B. Sinxo is one of the prolific writers, who during this period published *UNomsa* (Nomsa -1920), *Umfundisi WaseMthuqwasi* (The reverend of Mthuqwasi -1922), *Umzali Wolahleko* (The prodigal parent -1933), *Imfene kaDebeza* (Debeza's baboon -1925), *Isakhono Somfazi Namanye Amabalana* (The woman's capability, etc.-1956) and *Thoba Sikutyele* (Humble yourself if you want the truth told about you -1959).

Not much social commitment is found in the Xhosa modern writing of this time, although Opland (1996) is of the opinion that the early politicians and church ministers who published in newspapers in Xhosa or English, had very definite ideas about the needs of their people. J.C. Jordan's contribution, however, proves that Xhosa novel writing made considerable strides in this period. In 1940 Jordan published *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (The wrath of the ancestors) in which he handles the conflict between modern education and traditional values; individual, Christian marriage versus traditional, polygamous marriage. The wrath of the ancestors arises as the traditional values are abandoned for inevitable modern ones. The king's wife, a total foreigner in her culture because of her missionary education which has caused her to suffer an identity crisis, goes about in the household bareheaded and in short dresses. Out of ignorance she kills the sacred snake to the doom of whole family.

E.S.K. Mqhayi's *Ityala lamawele* (The law-suit of the twins -1914) is still acclaimed for its superb and engaging dialogue, although Mqhayi's greatest contribution is said to be in the field of poetry. *Ityala Lamawele* is based on civil justice among the Xhosas as exemplified by the dispute on who between twins is entitled to inherit the throne. He demonstrates "an intricate interrelationship of cultural information and literary composition." (Satyo, in Gérard et al.1993). His other contributions never served the national interests. His *Inzuzo* (1942), a collection of poems, is comparable to Vilakazi's *Inkondlo kaZulu* (1935). He excels in traditional style poems more than in modern techniques of poetic writing.

J.J.R. Jolobe is one of the modern Xhosa writers who has published widely without showing

his socio-political or cultural leanings. *Buzani Kubawo* (Ask father-1958) by W.K. Tamsanqa, follows the trend of Jordan Ngubane's *Uvalo lwezinhlonzi*, in which the forced marriage theme is dealt with. A clash between the son and his father ensues because the father is the custodian of African tradition while the son is influenced by his modern education and up-bringing. Lack of compromise between them results in a series of calamitous events (Qangule, 1968:22).

Although New genres such as poetry, drama and essays were explored during this decade, more emphasis was put on the portrayal of the adverse impact of migration to the cities. G.T.M. Mzamane's *Izinto Zodidi* (Things of value-1959) is about city migration. A woman, fighting for her rights, rescues a man and restores healthy family life (Ntuli and Swanepoel 1993:64). Blacks are again guilty here of wanting to avoid other races for fear of being de-cultured or having their culture contaminated by other cultures. This is the view that culture is static (does not change) versus the view that it is dynamic, and must change. In this way they unintentionally and unconsciously support the Group Areas Act. They fail to understand that when a culture brushes shoulders with another it does not get contaminated but develops. There is nothing wrong with leaving your fatherland in pursuit of a better life somewhere else.

### **3.2 South African-language literary developments from the 1960s to the early 1990s**

The above refers to the literary activity that saw the production of drama, short stories and essays and a proliferation of poetry by a second school-educated generation. The period 1960-1990 was characterised by intense political activity and violent social change, and agitation for independence. The Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which excluded blacks from integration into the fullness of national life, started to bite bitterly in the 1960s. It destroyed the mission schools which had given some blacks the chance to acquire a liberal education. In spite of extensive protests against the new laws that eliminated any black political rights, the apartheid government pressed forward with repressive measures. Opposition movement leaders were imprisoned or banned, and many chose the way to exile rather than imprisonment or banishment.

The ANC's protest politics failed to produce any results, and this led to a split in 1959 and to the formation of the Pan African Congress (PAC) (Gerhart, 1978; Lodge, 1983). Different censorship acts regulated the reading and possession of banned books. Canonici (1997) says:

“Government appointed censors kept a strict control on every book produced in African languages, as it was largely destined to the school market; and as they were scared of possibly subversive ideas being circulated in a language well understood by the masses.” (Canonici, 1997:2)

English texts were initially not interfered with, because they could not be easily understood by the African masses who were mostly illiterate, and so in that way committed literature in English prospered. Those authors who wrote in the indigenous languages had to resort to over-coating their writing in order to escape detention and banishment. According to Okpewho (1984: 262-263) “over-coating” was done in “search for something more fulfilling and reassuring.” To him “over-coating” is a general system of following the tradition of cultural metaphors in literature, with the aim to deliver various meanings. In the context of censorship African-language writers found “over-coating useful to employ in order to cover up ideas and programmes of action.”

### **3.2.1 Zulu literature from the 1960s to the early 1990s**

Zulu literature of the thirties laid a sound foundation for the emergence of a more vibrant African-language imaginative writing in the fifties. Later in the 1960s and 1970s a new generation of writers, now academics and intellectuals, came onto the Africa-language literary scene. Ngcongwane, Zondi, Ntuli, Msimang, Kubheka, Gcumisa, Molefe, etc. are just some of such prominent writers and critics who came onto the scene. Among them, however, it was only those who had acquired education during the liberal times (before the 1960s) who showed serious interest in writing socially committed literary works, and dared to overstep the limitations imposed by censorship. Although the theme of migration to cities persisted, most writers seemed to have accepted stereotypes and were thus less credible with regard to the solutions they offered to serious problems. This never enthused the critics.

*Ukufa kukaShaka* (Shaka's death -1960) by Zondi, written as a historical tragedy, is one of the socially committed and fulfilling plays in Zulu, because it shows the hero committed to the cause of nation building. Mkabayi, however, initiates the plot or conspiracy that culminates in the assassination of Shaka. The same author takes a committed stand in *Insumansumane* (Absurdity -1986) and uses historical material to suggest that rebellion might be a way of dealing with the hegemonic situation to achieve national autonomy. In *Insumansumane* the images drawn are utilised as metaphors of present day conditions and to subtly criticise the colonial authorities. While most works of the apartheid era are indifferent, this is not.

The other contributors of the 1960s are N. Tshamase, S.M. Matsebula, M.Ngcobo, S.S. Shabangu, S.V.N. Mdluli, J.M. Zama, J.N.. Gumbi, M. Hlela & C. Nkosi, M.Ngcobo, M.T. Mkhize and Z. Khuzwayo. The dominant theme is still the 'prodigal son'. In Gumbi's (1966) *Baba Ngixolele* (Father, forgive me), Fikile shows disrespect to her parents after acquiring a western-style education, and ends in ignominious death. This shows that parental guidance becomes essential for success in the new urban world.

Other scholars who have contributed extensively to the African-language literature are D.B.Z. Ntuli, O.E.H.M. Nxumalo and C.T. Msimang (see Appendix). D.B.Z. Ntuli, one of the most prolific writers, has "gained prominence as an exponent of short fiction, drama, the novel and poetry" (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:100). He is able to blend the oral and modern traditions remarkably, and is capable of resurrecting worn out images and make them glow with life by using the traditional images that appeal to the people at grass root level.

Joyce Jessie Gwayi had three novels published in the 1970s, namely *Bafa Baphela* (They all died -1973), *Shumpu* (To chop down -1974) and *Yekanini* (Oh my! -1976). Her feminist approach to novel writing does not go unnoticed. In *Yekanini*, J.J. Gwayi tells about the life history and childhood of Shaka, who later becomes the King of the Zulu. Shaka, the son of Nandi, had a very bitter and the saddest childhood as illustrated in the story. However, all the difficulties he faced as a child were to prepare him for the brighter future as one of the most respected leaders that ever lived in Southern Africa.. This is all credits to his loving mother's role.

O.E.H.M. Nxumalo has also contributed in various literary genres, but *Ngisinga Empumalanga* (I gaze toward the east -1969) shows his nostalgic groping into the past of the African traditional life. The novel is a type of “Cry the beloved country” story. C.T. Msimang has also published many literary works, out of which *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* (The storm that thundered at Sandlwana -1976) is considered by me the best in terms of social commitment. *Buzani kuMkabayi* (Ask Mkabayi -1982), which is said to be “probably the best researched novel in Zulu” (Ntuli et al, 1993:266), also boasts of some elements of social commitment.

Between 1980 and 1990 more volumes of poetry than prose appeared, as will be clear from the Appendix. With the system of segregation and discrimination being pushed to its cruelest limits, the period which was supposed to be marked by cries of liberation and independence turned out to have little to offer. Most writing took the form of straight-forward life history, with the problems of child upbringing handled by many writers. This neutralisation of themes in South African-language literature continued in spite of the fact that in the rest of Africa colonisers had already granted colonies independence between 1960 and 1970.

Ntuli (1987) says:

“Most of the works became unbanned in 1982 and 1983, then the heat went off the imaginative writers.” (Ntuli, 1987:150)

Yet the popular theme of “Jim goes to Johannesburg” continued to be exploited in the African-language literature without presenting the white capitalist in the role of exploiter as the English literature so often did. The disruption and inhumanity of apartheid was never explicitly criticised (Mphahlele, 1987:5). Literature was in the main quieting, childish stuff fit for the school market and writers seemed to have ceased to be the voice of the community or to feel obliged to point out wrongs perpetrated against blacks by one section of the community including its leaders.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the racial struggle by different groups had been against British imperialism. Afrikaans and Zulu nationalism had been aroused by different incidents. However, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Zulu writers’ reaction to racial issues changed considerably. They resorted to being satirical, or sought refuge in depicting black life in the way that pleased the establishment. Gérard (1971) aptly

sums it up in the words:

“Most Zulu writers, however, draw their inspiration from the most glaring social problems of the present, that is, within the limitations imposed by apartheid legislation.” (Gérard, 1971:265)

As opposed to the earliest works and glimpses of the early century that often expressed social criticism and vehemently addressed the issue of race, the experience of blacks became known through the interpretation of the situation by whites. Whites had to write about the 1953 Bantu Education Act, the 1960 Sharpsville shootings, the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the arrest of Mandela and other leaders, the 1976 Soweto riots and the 1983 Tricameral Parliament when Indians and Coloureds were given limited decision-making powers. This was a vicarious experience since most white writers had never actually experienced or known what they were writing about. After 1976 English literature became a significant weapon in the political struggle. Chapman (1987:7) described the English Soweto poetry thus: “despite stricter censorship and banning of numerous works on literature, vehement resistance against racial inequality continued.”

### 3.2.2 Literature in Southern Sotho from the 1960s to the early 1990s

According to Lenake (in Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:129) short stories have been the most neglected genre in Southern Sotho, while poetry seems to have flourished better than the novels. Lenake does, however, agree that “there appears to be more quantity than quality in the anthologies produced” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:135).

More than 40 novels appeared in print during this period. The main contributors are: S.M. Guma -*Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia* (Women leaders among the Basia -1963); A.E.S. Lesoro-*Leshala le tswala molora* (Children do not always follow their parents' footsteps -1963), -*Pere e ntsho Blackmore* (The Black horse, Blackmore -1968); T. Mafata -*Mehaladitwe ha e eketheha* (When daises dance -1991); R.J.R.Masiea -*Ho se tsebe ke lobote* (Ignorance is bliss -1992); K.E. Ntsane -*Makumane* (1961), *Nna Sajene Kokobela*, CID (I, Sergeant Kokobela, CID -1963); K.S.M. Mohapi -*Leboela le a ja* (Once bitten twice shy-1992); K.P.D. Maphalla's *Kabelwamanong* (The vulture's prey -1987) .

R.J.R.Masiea's *Ho se tsebe ke lobote* is about sons who are spoiled by their mothers' efforts to please them. They, as a result, become utter failures in life. This portrayal of some actual

occurrences in African communities is just realism for its own sake. It has no functional value. K.P.D. Maphalla's *Kabelwamanong* (The vulture's prey -1987) falls under the category of detective stories. In this way he joins K.E. Ntsane's *Nna Sajene Kokobela*. R.C. Bodibe's *Bofelekwane, botho kapa bofokodi* (Dishonesty, human nature or weaknesses - 1985) addresses the old problem of conjugal infidelity. The story focuses on an ill-fated marriage (cf Lenake, 1993 in Gérard, 1993), but no solution is offered. Except for S.M. Guma's (*Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia* -1963) commitment to women empowerment for the role they played in the past, there is very little commitment on the part of the novels I have presented here. Guma praises Mmanthatsi for leading the Batlokoa tribe after her husband's death (cf. J.J. Gwayi's *Bafa Baphela* -1976). Maybe with the help of native speakers and analysts we might come to know whether there is any social commitment, but from the above it can be concluded that most of the novels seem to shy away from addressing sensitive issues. We need a researcher who could go deeper than Lenake's argument that the themes of the novels of this time:

“Are current and meant for the contemporary critical adult readership.”  
(Gérard, 1993, in Swanepoel, 1993:133)

About 30 plays were published. Among the massive contributors of the time, just to name a few, are N.M Khaketla.-*Pelo ya monna* (A man's heart -1977); Lesoro -*Tau ya ha Zulu* (The lion of the Zulu -1964); R.J.R. Masiea -*Mmualle* (The character's name -1984); K.B. Taoana -*Obe* (1962); J.J. Moiloa - *Jaa, o siele motswale* (Eat, but leave some for your friend -1966). This play attacks human selfishness and greed, which are current problems in our society. Khaketla's *Pelo ya monna* (A man's heart -1977) “dramatises the misery of a loving wife in an unhappy union” (Ntuli et al., 1993:92). Lesoro's *Tau ya ha Zulu* (1964) is about the great Zulu king, Shaka. Its shortcoming is that it is not well researched, and so it lacks some important historical details about Shaka. Lekhoa Swart Booysen's *Sekhukhune* (1989), a play based on the Pedi leader, king Sekhukhune 1, is about the struggle to stay in power against his half-brother, Mampuru, “and against the Transvaal Republic under President Paul Kruger; and the struggle between traditional African culture and Christianity” (Ntuli et al., 1993:96). The fact that the dramatist castigates neither world brings some hope of social commitment, because he does not devalue his own culture.

About five short stories and essays were produced during this period. Among contributors are:

Z.L. Hoeane (1962); J.J. Moila (1965); K.T. Morojele (1973). All in all it could be said that in poetry social commitment is in great abundance, while in other genres it is still an uphill battle to get authors committed. Maphalla, Lesoro, Masila and Litabe can be singled out as outstanding poets. K.P.D. Maphalla's poem about feelings is *Fuba tsa ka* (My feelings - 1984). In 1985 Solomon Chapole could comment thus on the poem:

“Nadine Gordimer has described Black poets of the 1970s composing in English, as committed writers (Gordimer, 1973:7). Maphalla is a committed poet of a different kind. *Fuba sa ka* is not committed to changing the Group Areas Act -it seeks to change the self, the ego, the inner being. Maphalla is writing about life, its pains and pleasures. His subject matter is not confined to Maputo or Belfast or Munich or even Messina. His subject addresses man everywhere and anywhere in the world. He writes about death, pain, love, hope, peace. In this sense he is a universal and not a local poet.” (In Ntuli et al, 1993:95)

On the same vein Moleleki (1985:iv; 130) observed:

“‘Whilst Sesotho poetry is functional in its thrust, it also preens itself with poetic aestheticism.’ Protest in Maphalla ‘seems to be a series of contradictions that brings about misery to humanity in general’ (Moleleki, 1930:130), among which are discrimination and oppression.” (Ntuli et al., 1993:94).

Striking a balance between form and function, as Maphalla successfully does, is always necessary to avoid plain politicking in literature.

### 3.2.3 Xhosa literature from the 1960s to the early 1990s

From the 1960s to the 1980s a number of writers made significant contributions to Xhosa imaginative writing, but little stands out as socially committed. Gérard (1981) observes that by 1968 Qangule could still complain about the lack of social commitment in literature, that:

“Taken as a whole it may be said that Xhosa poetry has not as yet produced a person comparable to Vilakazi.” (Gérard, 1981:213)

This could be ascribed to the fact that “Xhosa poets did not seem to understand the tragic side of life”. Qangule then tried to fill the gap by producing *Intshuntshe* (A spear -1970).

In the 1970s the appearance of *Kwazidenge* (Hills of fools) by R.L. Peteni proved that Xhosa literature was taking a new turn. The themes of racial prejudice, tribalism, violence, etc. were to prove this point. In *Kwazidenge*, a famous television Xhosa drama, Peteni presents a rivalry and fight that regularly breaks out between the Hlubi and the Thembu villages. Further conflict which is likely to result in war is looming, because Zuziwe (a Hlubi girl) who is engaged to Ntabeni, loves Bhuqa of the Thembu village. When this is discovered by the feuding parties, another fierce fight is provoked. The origin of this senseless feud is not known but the warring parties will not stop hating each other, and this makes the war a futile exercise. This absurdity is reflected in Diliza Mququ's (a Hlubi boy) words:

“I hate them because I must. I was brought up to hate them.” (Satyo, 1993, in Gérard, 1993:84).

The evils of tribalism could be equalled to those of racial prejudices and segregation.

During this period different genres mushroomed. Contributions in the novel, poetry and drama continued, with essays coming to the scene. In the field of essays, however, much still needs to be done. Many essayists fight for the permanence of certain cultural norms and beliefs. In the genre of the short story, one of the most prolific writers of the 70s is P.T. Mtuze. According to Satyo (1993) Mtuze is the first to use the most neglected setting, the Karoo, in Xhosa literature. In drama very little happens. Writers keep experimenting with different things. Much activity happens in poetry. Rhodes University is making every endeavour to see that good poetry is produced in Xhosa. S.M Burns-Ncamashe's attempt (*Izibongo zakwa Segile* -1979) is one good example. Satyo (1993) concludes that although some Xhosa authors have produced some works of literary value, there are still (and still will be):

“Opportunists who do not concern themselves so much with the spirit of the directives, with the result that they clinically accept the formulas as the price of wealth and literary prominence.” (Satyo, 1993, in Gérard, 1993:88)

### **3.3 The English and Afrikaans Way**

The problem of not producing socially relevant content, which had started through colonial influence, was compounded by the watchfulness of the censorship system which prevented self-expression and protest in African-language literatures. Zulu had earlier on reflected

some aspirations of the people, but when it became toothless, English was confirmed as the language of resistance, especially after the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953. Soon thereafter English writing flourished, with a number of writers voicing their bitterness and dismay about the racist policies of the Nationalist government, as enshrined in the Group Areas Act of 1950.

The 1960s were the years of liberation and freedom, with colonial powers granting independence to various African states, among others: Ghana (1957), Guinea (1958), Nigeria (1960), Mali (1960), Botswana (1966), Lesotho (1966) and Swaziland (1967). Others were to follow soon, viz. Angola and Mozambique (1975), Zimbabwe (1980) and Namibia (1990). The literary output of this period came to be known as “post colonial writing.”

Late in the 1960s white writers in English and Afrikaans expressed their anti-apartheid point of view, thus joining their black counterparts who were voicing the frustration of their dreams. During the 1970s and 1980s the theme of racial prejudice and violence received some active treatment. In English and Afrikaans significant changes took place, with Afrikaans poetry rising to explore new horizons and display nationalism. Blacks soon found new outlets in English.

According to Kavanagh (1985), during the colonial period the ideology and culture of the British capitalist classes achieved considerable legitimation among blacks (African, coloured and Asian). Kavanagh further argues that Afrikaners were:

“Subjected to the same cultural domination as blacks, but they launched a fierce national struggle to free themselves from the political and cultural hegemony of the English-speaking in which the development of the Afrikaans language and literature played an important role.” (Kavanagh, 1985:17)

Kavanagh further asserts that the reaction to cultural domination by the Nationalist Party was indoctrination of the youth and working classes. Nevertheless, it was to take decades for the Afrikaner nationalists to reduce the cultural influence of the English-speaking group.

This was due to the fact that part of the society was already psychologically worked to willingly accept leadership of the ruling class, because up to 1953 black students attended the English-speaking white universities and so the English-speaking group had exercised a subtle form of domination through their special relation with the black intermediate classes. Moreover, the culture of the English-speaking group enjoyed hegemony in the capitalist world. Rivalry of the “ANGLO-BOER” over the control of Blacks was the main issue. By trying to impose the adapted versions of the African traditional ideology and culture, the Afrikaners had little chance of eliciting “spontaneous consent” from the black majority. They were therefore forced to stiffen the operation of hegemony by replacing it with direct coercion of rule.

Through the Bantu Education Act of 1953 the medium of instruction ceased to be English. Some famous missionary schools, e.g. St. Peter’s School, had to close down. St. Peter’s School, established in 1922 by the Anglican Community of the Resurrection (CR), closed down in December 1956 and its entire generation of African intellectuals began to recognise “the contradiction between the Christian ethics of their education and the realities of colonial and later colonial society”, writes Woeber (1995:58). Mentioned in the list of those who had believed the world was opening out for them but soon had restrictions stifling their efforts, are Herbert Luthuli, Zakes K. Mathews, Peter Abrams, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Alfred Hutchinson, Todd Matshikiza, Oliver Tambo, Joe Mathews and Nthato Motlana, all students of St. Peter’s School.

Ezekiel Mphahlele, airing his frustration, openly states:

“The church was intent on claiming credit for the education received by black intellectuals, without being prepared to ensure they claimed their rightful place in the society.” (Woeber, 1995: 62)

Seemingly there was no point in getting that type of education if it was not going to open doors for them. Surely there were conflicts, but the church was not to blame for the decision taken by politicians that made the church appear to be contradicting itself. Those who were educated before 1952 had received a form of education aimed at preparing them towards

assimilation into “civilised society”, while those educated after 1953 received the form of education that directed them toward exclusion (Kavanagh, 1985). This is confirmed by the then minister of education, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd’s words:

“My department’s policy is that education should stand with both feet in the Reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu Society ....there is no place for him (the Bantu) in the European Community above the level of certain forms of labour.” (Kavanagh, 1985:31)

Bantu education was therefore a mechanism of social control, the way of excluding blacks from better jobs. With the relations between whites and blacks continuing to be conducted in English and Afrikaans, African languages became marginalised.

While the Nationalist Party policies were accepted in the rural areas, for the urban areas they were unrealistic, and this caused the situation to be volatile. The Nationalist Party was half-way with their work (between 1958 and 1966) of trying to consolidate their own hegemony when the rise of black African nationalism began to threaten their rule (Kavanagh, 1985:19). Aiming at completely destroying all the key instruments of the English-speaking ideological and cultural influence, in 1975 the Nationalist Party introduced the policy of own representation (black by black), which resulted in separate facilities and residential areas. Were it not for the common history, cultural heritage and economic dispossession that easily dissolved ethnic barriers, blacks would not have successfully resisted the overall dominance of the white groups.

Towards the end of 1960s Black Consciousness was born in South Africa and this gave rise to a new generation of assertive writers. Bold defiance and assertiveness were to be expected in the early seventies. It was a period marked by protest, resistance and liberation in literature. Against all odds, courageous authors in English took the struggle forward. E. Mphahlele, N. Nakasa, B.Modisane, A.L. Guma, L. Nkosi, P. Abrams, D. Brutus, C. Pieterse, M. Kunene, J. Ngubane, T. Matshikiza, B. Head, A. Nortje and others. Most of these were either forced to leave the country or went into self-imposed exile and continued to make contributions outside South Africa. English and Afrikaans writers did not keep quiet. Authors such as Alan Paton (*Cry, the beloved country* -1948), Nadine Gordimer

(*Face to face* -1949), Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink responded to support their colleagues. They were supported by other fellow South Africans who were committed to “dispelling the plight of the colonial legacy and asserting the African presence in their birth country”; the need to liberate the mind appeared in their works (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:73-75). They created art, not for art’s sake, but out of commitment. This was a weapon to be effectively used.

Alan Paton’s *Cry, the beloved country* (1948) employs the story of Jim goes to town while pricking the conscience of fellow South Africans by sympathising with the anti-colonial cause of the oppressed South Africans. Ezekiel Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue*, on the other hand, works through the hurts left by apartheid towards coherence and recovery. Peter Abrams’s *Mine Boy* (1946) “draws attention to the lives of black South Africans in a white controlled country” (Chapman, 1996:228). L.A. Guma expresses that violence is the predictable and tragic outcome of suffering in *A walk in the night* (1962). This literature of reaction and opposition in English continued into the 1980s, with Njabulo Ndebele’s *Death of a Son* (1987). This is a story about the bullet that whizzes and kills the son in the township.

Some English readers in the South were aware of the developments but the African-language reader was not exposed to the works portraying these ideas. African-language writers appeared to be living in a world different from that occupied by writers in English and Afrikaans. Only a small group of African intellectuals read the English press (especially *Drum*) and books that were highly critical of the government stance. Consequently the nature of African-languages and regionalism destroyed communication and unity among the South African black nations. It was through the means of the powerful mass media that in 1976 the winds of change came to the people who had been told to avoid dangerous information. This led to the emergence of the spirit of revolution among the youth of the day. Scholars in African-languages only realised at this late stage that they had the obligation of spreading their energies in order to deal with life in its entirety in society. But the three decades had seen the increase in the number of publications in African-language literature, with very little commitment. In spite of the rise of a more sophisticated writer,

only mild and concealed protest appeared.

### **3.4 Zimbabwe African-language literary development**

Since Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi were colonised much later than South Africa, the development of school literature lagged behind. Zimbabwe literature is similar to that of South Africa with regard to the lack of social commitment. It has no glorification of African nationalism and its heroes. While African-language literary developments were going on in South Africa, conditions were not conducive for literary production in south and north Rhodesia. Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) were directly administered by the British South Africa Company until 1923, after having been conquered by Cecil Rhodes. With the Company's rule coming to an end, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was annexed and became a colony of Great Britain. It was soon granted responsible government, while northern Rhodesia (Zambia) became a British protectorate with a legislative Council of "nine official members and five unofficial members representing settler interest" (Gérard, 1981:187, and history books).

After the central African Council, consisting of governors of the three countries (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe), was formed in 1945, the constitution of the federation was promulgated. This was achieved in 1953 in the face of strong opposition by African leaders. Kamuzu Banda (Malawi) and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia) led the wide-spread protest by Africans. Malawi and Zambia secured their independence in 1964, while Zimbabwe declared unilateral independence in 1965. This was done without the consent of the British government. The white minority under Ian Smith were in complete control and that caused wide-spread protest to break out under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. This obviously caused some delay in the development of creative writing of these countries.

In Zimbabwe the missionary enterprise did not take the lead in the growth of vernacular writing as it did for Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. It happened mainly through government initiative. The period between the two world wars was marked by a huge void in Zimbabwe

Africa-language literature. The need to provide reading matter was addressed by the establishment of Southern Rhodesia African Literature Bureau in 1953. It coincided with the year in which the Bantu Education Act was promulgated in South Africa. This was not a publishing house, but aimed at “promoting the reading habit” and sought “to encourage, assist and advise local authors” writing in Shona and Ndebele indigenous languages (Gérard, 1981:232).

Authors had to submit their manuscripts to the Bureau for assessment and then look for a possible publisher. The kind of reading this procedure promoted was mostly directed to African school children, and encouraged simple plots and moralising themes. This was fairly easy because most of the authors were teachers trained in the missionary schools. From the above one can see a close link between the former Zimbabwe government and the apartheid government in terms of literary control and the discarding of subversive material.

The year 1956 saw the production of the first piece of Shona writing in Zimbabwe. S.M. Mutswairo published *Feso* (Feso -1956). Having attended Adams College with R.R.R. Dhlomo, Mutswairo could not escape his influence as to reviving the memory of the past. According to Gérard (1981:233) the book deals with “the invasion of the Vatapa people into the historical Rouwi kingdom, which had destroyed the power of the Monomotapa empire shortly before 1700”. There was nothing sinister originally underlying the book, but when the growth of nationalism took a new turn in Rhodesian affairs, the book was reviewed as “a subtle tract of protest and call for liberation” (Gérard, 1981:234). Ngara (1985:25) makes this evidence more valid by stating that the novel, *Feso*, was regarded as an aid to political activity. Some nationalists were reciting the poem from the novel at political gatherings. Hence the authorities banned it in the 1960s and it was only unbanned after independence. It becomes obvious that after Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) the white minority was not prepared to tolerate overt political criticism.

According to Tom Mtshakayile-Ndlovu, a lecturer in African-languages at Zimbabwe University, the story of the poem goes thus: Khiwas (whites) in Shonaland moved south and penetrated Shonas. Later on they moved to Matabeleland and found it hard to penetrate

them. In 1893 they provoked the Ndebeles into war and defeated them. Lobengula then disappeared and the Shonas and the Ndebeles came under white rule. In 1896 the ancestors rose against the act and there was a drought and a swarm of locusts that destroyed everything. The Ndebele people re-mobilised and an uprising broke out. They expected the Shona people to join them but it never happened. The campaign was then dealt a heavy blow. The woman fighter, Nahanda, who had instigated people to fight, was later executed by whites. Mutswairo writes a poem appealing to this woman to help drive out the enemy.

A novel, *Soko Risina Musoro* (The tail without a head -1958) by Herbert W. Chitepo, soon followed. The most popular genre in Shona is the novel. The most widely known author is Patrick Chakaipa, who wrote five novels between 1958 and 1968. His first novel that takes place in pre-colonial Shona society is *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (Lonesome Karikoga -1958). His *Pfumo reropa* (The spear of blood -1961) is a novel depicting the ills that can result from the abuse of power. While in South African-language literature antagonism between Christianity and tradition could not be tolerated, in Zimbabwe such content could easily find its way into print. *Rudo ibofu* (Love is blind -1962) by Patrick Chakaipa, is one such example (Gerard 1981:235). Writers in Zimbabwe African-language literature did not shy away from sensitive issues, in spite of the censorship axe. As Gérard (19981) observes:

“With *Garandichauya* (I shall return -1963), and *Dzasukwa Mwana-asina-hembe* (Dzasukwa Beer-for-Sale -1968), Chakaipa turned the problems of modern urban life and impact of the new money economy on a people used to a subsistence economy: the disappearance of the community sense, the hankering after material rewards, the dissolution of family life, the addiction to greed, sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and alcoholism.” (Gérard, 1981:236)

The first Shona play, *Ndakambokuyambira* (I warned you before -1962), made Paul Chidyausiku the ‘Father of Shona drama’, although he mostly writes novels. His novelette, *Nhroondo Dzokuwanana* (The way to get married -1958) tackles the issue of *ilobolo*, which he wants restored to “its original contractual significance” (Gérard, 1981:237).

The bold attempt in Zimbabwe literature, which is similar to A.C. Jordan’s *Ingqumbo*

*Yeminyanya* (The wrath of the ancestors), directed towards those of his kind who do not acknowledge the work of the ancestors, is *Machudura* (You shall confess, Shona -1967) by Emmanuel F. Ribeiro. It heralds a new wave of attitudes towards traditional beliefs and dramatises the threats of the avenging spirits of the ancestors, which will persecute those who ill-treated them until they admit they committed the crimes and then indicate their preparedness to pay for their sins. In Zulu *UGubudeleNamazimuzimu* (the first Zulu drama) seems to have set the trend, though over-coated for an uninitiated reader.

Owing to government control of literary writing, Ndabaningi Sithole had to discard the original title of his book *Umvukela wamaNdebele* (written in IsiNdebele) and rename it *AmaNdebele kaMzilikazi* (1956) to make it possible for it to be printed. It was re-published as *Umvukela wamaNdebele* in 1980. Its content was: Get weapons to fight the whites (Amakhiwa) because that was how the Africans were conquered. The year 1959 saw the release of the first anthology of Ndebele poetry -*Imbongi Zalamuhla Layizolo*, with Ndabaningi Sithole as one of the contributors. C.T. Msimang's title *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla* must have originated from this title. This was not issued by the Bureau. The first anthology of Ndebele to be issued by the Bureau was *Kusile Mbongi Zohlanga* (The dawn of Ndebele poets -1969). The most popular genre in Ndebele and Shona, however, is the novel, as is the case with the South African-language literature. With regard to women writers, the first woman to have a novel published in Zimbabwe was Lassie Ndondo with *Qaphela Ingane* (Take care of the boy -1962).

A number of Zimbabwean novels have entirely rural setting and often re-create the pre-colonial past to offer a critical assessment of traditional life. With regard to moral lessons on the social evils of the city, Zimbabwe stories taking place in urban settings are similar to South Africa-language literature stories. Cultural interaction and attempts at reconciling the discordant values of the traditions, as represented by B.W. Vilakazi's *Noma Nini*, is one of the main themes as well. This is evidenced by Gérard's (1981) words:

“The outlook of most Zimbabwean writers is shaped by their adherence to Christian standards. They often try to sift the two-value systems with which they are faced in order to invent some syncreticism that might make the best

of both worlds. In cases where no reconciliation is possible, they invariably stand up in favour of the Christian way of life, as in the indictment of polygamy proposed by L. Washington Chapavadza (1926-1964) in *Wechitatu Muzvinaguhwa* (Two is company, three is none -Shona; 1963).” (Gérard, 1981:239)

Zimbabwe African -language literature is very young, with a small number of works, yet it provides “a fairly complete and complex picture of some of the major preoccupations of the African elite” (Gérard, 1981:240). That Zimbabwe literature is more well known than that of South African-language literature, is due to the analytic work on Shona undertaken at the University of Zimbabwe’s Department of African-languages, on the initiative of Professor George Kalahari.

Ndebele writing has never been given the same attention as Shona because of differing population figures. IsiNdebele is close to Zulu and to date (1999), according to Tom Matshakayile-Ndlovu, it is still using Zulu grammar books at secondary schools and at university level. The situation in primary school is different. No grammar is taught but Zulu rhymes and short stories are prescribed.

It is the policy of partnership rather than segregation which helped Zimbabwe African-language literature to thrive. A measure of co-operation between races, especially in the field of poetry, produced some wonders. This co-operation was motivated by N.H Brettell, who as early as 1952, had commented that “A voice one misses is that of Rhodesian African” (Gérard, 1981:235).

This evidently shows that Rhodesian whites wanted the Salisbury Poetry Society (SPS) to be fully representative. The result was that the later issues of the SPS included some poems by Shona writers in English versions. Eventually several translated Shona poems appeared in the *Poet*, “a little magazine published in Madras” (Gérard, 1981:235). These initiatives were followed by the launching of *Two Tone*, a Rhodesian poetry quarterly; then *Chirimo* (1968), a thrice yearly review of Rhodesian and international poetry. It was this multilingual outlook which made it possible for Ndebele to show itself on the Zimbabwe map, with a Ndebele anthology of poems (Gérard, *ibid*).

Zimbabwe literature in English saw the emergence of Zimbabwe literature in exile, with the appearance of a historical novel, *On trial for my country* (1967) by Stanlake Samkange. This happened during the era of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Ian Smith, after 1965.

### 3.5 Concluding remarks

Following Chapman's (1996:xvii) advice of recognising the potential of the comparative method in investigating "the intersections of traditionally closed categories", we have avoided regarding language systems as entirely self-contained. This has enabled us to chart out similarities and differences among the Southern African literatures. Literature in African-languages has some striking similarities as regards recurrent themes. Resemblances stem from sharing common experiences in the socio-political and cultural spheres. However, it is embarrassing to notice a general softness on protest, which renders such literature only suitable for beginners.

Due to the fact that literature in Zulu has been mainly meant for the school market and has been written by teachers, it has privileged the narrative genres, particularly the novel and short story. Poetry has also flourished. But a genre that requires active participation by the critical reader, such as the essay, has only found limited popularity. Drama has also been published, but mainly for school reading and not for performance. In fact, playwrights lack the practical experience to stage popular plays, because the format, borrowed from Europe, lacks the vitally African aspects of music and dance. Township popular theatre has prospered in a language that is a mixture of English, Afrikaans and African-languages, but displays rhythm, music and dance, together with large community participation.

In the Appendix to this chapter, I have attempted to cover all Zulu books published between 1930 and the early 1990s. The list cannot be considered fully comprehensive. In the division of this chapter, cut off dates were not easy to determine. The 1930s to the late 1950s were identified as pre-apartheid because the early 1960s saw the starting point of the drastic measures by the Nationalist Government, with the Sharpsville incident marking the

watershed. The first decades of the Nationalist Party were marked by the introduction of severe laws aimed at consolidating white supremacy, thus making the lives of the black people increasingly difficult and miserable. This made the writing about realities of South African life very difficult but necessary. Censorship of writers, exile and house arrests became common. Wide-spread dissatisfaction continued until the late 1980s, with the regime resorting to security measures (the various states of emergency) rather than to reform in its attempts to resolve problems.

Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu writing rose independently of one another and at different times, along different lines. But they were all initially subjected to European control. Zulu literature, however, was until 1960, lagging behind when compared with Southern Sotho and Xhosa literatures. This could be attributed to the history of Zululand in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Attempts to integrate the Zulu nation took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Anglo-Zulu war -1879) and were finally effected in 1906 after the utter crush of the Bambatha rebellion. Missionary activity in Zululand began in 1887, half a century later than it did among the Xhosa people. It was only in the 1930s that the impressive starts by S. Sotho and Xhosa literature were followed by Dube's first venture.

The chapter has presented the characteristic pattern of African-language literature in Southern Africa. It has shown that it is a kind of literature that polarises the past and the present, the western and the African traditional lives, with very little effort to blend the two worlds to make it possible for Africans to survive and to flourish. Anxieties caused by fear of the unknown filter through this literature. An explanation, which is applicable to literature in all Southern African languages (including English and Afrikaans, and Zimbabwe African-language literature), is that what gave rise to the theme of urban life as corrupted and evil is: Most writers were rural teachers, who saw all aspects of life through the prism of African culture and traditions, as they were cultivated, inculcated and lived in rural areas. When those teachers visited towns during their holidays, they found that people no longer followed the same customs and traditions. Astounded by these scandals, the teacher-writer saw it as his duty to warn his readers about the evils of urban life. As Scheub (1985) puts it:

“It is not that the urbanised, westernised world is in itself evil, but that without traditional Zulu values the contemporary world can be seductive, dangerous and ultimately ruinous. Christianity is not villain, it is the relaxation of Zulu values that follow in its wake! The ideal is to combine them (much as the Xhosa poet, Jordan James Jolobe, does in the poem *Inggawule*), to accept westernisation without forsaking Zulu tradition.” (Scheub, 1985:501)

To this end it could be concluded that before 1948 there is little justification in seeing imaginative and creative genius reflected in Zulu literature. The first generation of African-language writers was colonised and so they wrote what they had internalized, i.e. western and Christian themes as opposed to traditional ones. They projected images that they had learned from whites (Golan, 1988:6). They did not emphasise the themes they wanted but relied much on the work of the historians which was commonly believed to be true (cf R.R.R. Dhlomo’s *UShaka*). Zulu literature was not developed purely along traditional lines, but was written in the new forms made available to Africans by their European masters. In most cases it reflects a lack of independence and originality of mind. Dhlomo, for example, is not powerful and original in his approach. He does not transcend the sermon of the white people to glorify his own people (compare his *UShaka* with Zondi’s *Ukufa KukaShaka*). The main limitation of the early generation of writers is that, although they might have mastered the structure or form, the content is hardly socially committed, indigenous or African. It is a kind of writing inspired by the missionaries, hence it is a moralising genre. Golan (1988) aptly puts it when she states:

“Since the function of the historical text was to justify occupation and exploitation, the demonstration of the native barbarism, the creative ability of the native past and its symbolic messages could not be afforded any place.” (Golan, 1988:1)

The same kind of writing continued during the apartheid era in the African-languages, with freedom of expression reduced by government censorship. Vilakazi, however, had earlier exercised his freedom of expression by depicting the sufferings of his people under the yoke of colonialism. He openly criticised the education system that disregarded the positive aspects of African tradition. In *Woza nonjinjikazi* he sees the train as a symbol of oppression and destruction, and an all swallowing monster. In *Ezinkomponi* he sees a curse on the mine

compounds.

Vilakazi was not the first person in African-language writing to denounce the white man's behaviour. Even before Vilakazi glimpses of commitment are met. Chapman (1997:93-94) says Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925; English translation, 1931) condemns Shaka for Lesotho's troubles in the 1830s but ends up "endorsing a kind of nostalgic Zulu pride." Mofolo condemns "the Zulu king's non-Christian barbarity but rescues him "from colonial charges of mindless butchery." The novel raises the issue of African identity and Western influence, and further suggests the need for the African people to tell their stories, conveying all that information to the western groups through various means. In this way the society's rediscovery of its identity could be assured.

The year 1948 saw the affirmation of Afrikaner nationalism, which eventually led to the victory of the Nationalist Party. This was to be followed by decades of increasing repression, untold misery, loss of land and political power, hurried urbanisation, marginalization and alienation (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:42). With the Bantu Education Act of 1953 the Nationalist Party made sure that the black child was confined to the limits of his tribal outlook. The Act stipulated that:

"All education, except in the case of foreign language, should be through the medium of the mother-tongue for the first eight school years and (that) mother-tongue instruction should gradually be extended upwards to secondary school and training institutions." (Gérard, 1981:206)

Prior to this, the revival of nationalism had been taken away from the people (Suppression of Communism Act (1950)). As a result, the vitality of language to appropriate the great works from the world literature, could not be celebrated. The consequences were that this policy presented an outlet to second-rate writers where they could channel their works. This never made the situation really conducive for the elaboration of the mature and sophisticated literature originally contemplated by H.I.E. Dhlomo and attempted by Vilakazi. Instead "Jim goes to town" novels, or the prodigal son theme became most common. Local realities, e.g. the growing clash of cultural values, frustrated nationalism and the need to give vent to the pride inherent in languages, had to be contained.

The situation was made worse by “the information black-out and the curtailment of freedom of speech”, which reached its climax with the “banning of the African National Congress in 1963 and with the increase of state control on publications which followed in the wake of the Sharpsville shooting” (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:77). Ntuli et al. (1993) observe that:

“The propaganda programme and censorship of hard news in the early 1960s certainly succeeded in blurring perspectives on developments elsewhere in Africa.” (Ntuli et al, 1993:76)

Southern African-language literature became too dependent on the school market. With the main concern being publishers’ profits and authors’ royalties, quantity rather than quality was encouraged. Literature could not command adult readership. Stories about migration to big cities with moralistic endings persisted. Hence the socio-politically committed authors of the time switched to English to be able to transmit their views to a more influential and politically responsive readership (Ntuli et al, 1993:80). Chapman (1996), in this regard, says:

“Generally the large themes of acculturation and transition have been trivialised into trite endorsement of the exotic tribal land.” (Chapman, 1996:216)

This renders vain a search for socio-political responses. The “riddle of lack of commitment” (Ntuli et al, 1993:42), especially towards the end of the period, persisted. Assertive content did not gain popularity of expression as much time appears to have been spent on mastering techniques. Nevertheless, there were poets, novelists and dramatists who dared to express their dissatisfaction with the political scenario. Ntuli (1993) says of the Zulu literature of this period:

“It has been observed that writers avoid tackling controversial issues because their works are often screened for the school market. It is a fact, though, that we still find poems and stories which refer to some of the well known thorny issues, but this is done so tactfully that the work is good art and not mere propaganda.” (Ntuli, in Gérard, 1993:153-154)

## Chapter 4

### SOME SOCIALLY COMMITTED FICTIONAL WORKS

#### 4.0 Introduction

Margaret Mead (1970), in her preface says:

“Today the central problem is commitment: to what past, present or future, can the idealistic young commit themselves?” (Mead, 1970:vii)

I have already demonstrated that oral traditional literature during the pre-colonial period was fully and socially committed, especially to aspects of education, and to a reflection of the ills that beset the social fabric. It is surprising that this committed trend was not pursued by black authors also during the apartheid period, when life for the black communities was characterised by conflict, injustice and contradictions. By aiming their works at the school market, those writers often imposed restrictions on their own inspiration for fear of reprisals and of the censorship machinery. Some might have subordinated their talent to their financial interests, going for publication at any cost, rather than for quality above all. Although a few authors chose to serve the interests of the oppressed, the mediocrity trend resulted in an uninspiring bulk in African-language literatures. I claim, however, to be able to draw some examples exhibiting a high level of social commitment. As Vladimir et al (1976) put it,

“Recognising the strictness of the South African racial laws the younger Zulu writers try to say everything in parables. They choose inconspicuous, often escapist subject matter and develop it in such a way that the censorship cannot interfere, but the reader can understand the author’s slight allusions. It is not an easy way but it is necessary ....” (Vladimir et al., 1976:237)

Eagleton (1976) calls this implicitness “over-coding”:

“A process by which, as a result of the convergence of various codes in a particular element, additional meanings are produced.” (Eagleton, 1976:168)

Meanings are produced by placing the message in the cultural context, that is why I am determined to look at some socially committed works through the Zulu prism. This becomes necessary because context understanding helps one to come very close to the intrinsic order of semantic elements. The aim of this chapter is therefore to bring to the surface the aspects of social commitment to show that there are some socially committed literary works in the African-language literature. Hopefully this will be achieved by provoking some discussion centred around the social action derived on the foundations of social commitment. The task, in this sense, is not an easy one.

The literary works I have selected are: *Ulaka LwabaNguni* (The wrath of the Nguni clan-1988) by I.S. Kubheka; *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* (The storm that thundered at Sandlwana-1976) and *Buzani kuMkabayi* (Ask Mkabayi-1982) by C.T. Msimang; *Ukufa kukaShaka* (The death of Shaka-1960) and *Insumansumane* (The extraordinary happening-1986) by E. Zondi. These have been chosen on the basis of the researcher's judgement as regards their suitability for the purpose of this study. Although other critics have already dealt with these works, I feel that I could add to their general understanding by looking at them from my particular angle.

There are many approaches to the study of literature which contribute to the understanding of a work, each with some limitation. I began by testing the literary texts against a theoretical outlook that couples literary theory and practice and this is how I was prompted to explore aspects of social commitment within the framework of theories which are relevant to the African-language literatures. A student of literature is expected to discuss characterisation, theme, plot, setting, style, etc. to be able to successfully interpret a literary text. I have chosen, however, to analyse the above works concentrating on setting and theme. Setting is viewed as the main cultural influence on the writer at the time of writing (thus reflecting the historical motivations for any work), shown in the point of view made explicit in the description of characters in their own historical setting. In other words, the historical circumstances at the time of writing condition the presentation of past historical events for the education of the writer's audience. Yesterday merges with today and tomorrow. The theme, on the other hand, is about what the story intends to convey, as

reflected in the author's point of view. This is identifiable, especially through outstanding oppositions, or deep versus surface structure contrasts. These basic elements, however, should be preceded by the knowledge of culture. Identifying disciplines (politics, economics, religion, education, etc.) and subtly placing the scene within the imaginative vision of the work as a whole is an issue essential for the fullest explanation of any work of literature. Culture, for example, is the essential element for the meaning to be fully grasped. It affects all the elements already mentioned. Canonici (1995), in this regard, says:

“A Zulu work should be of enduring cultural relevance and value in order to be acknowledged as a ‘classic’. The Zulu milieu will reflect the Zulu philosophy of life and culture, customs, idiosyncrasies and positive aspects, as manifested in a careful use of language.” (Canonici, 1995:155)

Culture embraces religion (beliefs), art, morals (ethics), education (acculturation or enculturation), politics, law and customs, etc. In Zulu things have great dependency on each other, so is the nature of its aspects of social commitment. African leaders, for example, are rarely installed politically since they are dynastic. Although analysis is a process of intellectual dissection of a whole into its ingredients in order to understand and appreciate the integrity and meaning of the whole, inseparability and dependency make this an impossible exercise in Zulu. Some evidence in support of this argument is furnished by Cele (1997) when he states:

“In Zulu society, culture, politics and religion are inseparable. For instance, it is believed that a king is appointed by the ancestors.” (Cele, 1997:73)

I have opted to analyse the chosen literary works by moving from the less powerful to the most powerful literary work in terms of conflicting versions of the world culture as well as personal confrontation. Making a comparison of two or more works assumes that through comparative analysis the reader will be helped to understand individual works more fully. Beauty is better appreciated when it is juxtaposed to ugliness, and more importantly so when it is compared to beauty of a different kind. Through exhaustive study, clarifying and accounting for the responses to works that interest and excite the critic, and searching for similarities or differences between works, the reader is forced to consider various aspects

and dimensions of a particular work. This might be a difficult exercise, but the rewards of this approach are usually equal to the labour. Searching for emphasis in each work will tell the reader what each author's primary concern is and then the relationship between what happens (the action) and the meaning (theme) will be determined and considered. This is, in Smit's (1999:1) terms, a re-examination of the literary strategy in terms of societal constraints. Pertinent references will be made to particular texts either to exemplify, or to place the literary work in question in comparison with other artistic works under discussion.

I now turn to the books that make the discussion of social commitment relevant to the period upon which this part of the thesis focuses. When I deal with each author's work(s), I propose to first present some background information, followed by a summary, and then social concerns.

#### **4.1 I.S. Kubheka's socially committed literary work**

Isaac Sibusiso Kubheka was born at Mnambithi (Ladysmith). His parents, who were farmhands, died while he was still young. He was then brought up by an uncle who provided for his schooling and professional teacher training. He obtained a university degree and H.E.D. at Fort Hare University, and an M.A. at the University of Natal in Durban. He spent his life as a teacher, eventually becoming a headmaster at Umlazi. Some of the situations described in his novels are derived from his personal experience.

Kubheka's literary works reveal his anxiety about the loss of the values that accompanied the Zulu traditional way of life, as represented by the *ubuntu* philosophy. Possibly he was frustrated with scholars and teachers who teach or learn everything there appears in books, but do not learn the wisdom imparted by the book of life. Some scatter-brains, half-baked new intellectuals use their newly-gained knowledge to lead a life without solid moral principles, and feel entitled to scorn the un-schooled rural people, without realising that this scorn turns on themselves, as it shows them as lacking what is really valuable in life, the wisdom and humanity that comes from the proper understanding and practice of *ubuntu*.

As a writer, Kubheka has published three novels, all dealing with aspects of the epochal conflict between tradition and modernization, or African versus western ways of life. As I have explained earlier on, this conflict constitutes a constant motif in most early literatures in South Africa, as stated by Scheub (1985):

“These two broad areas of literary activity (i.e. Traditional Zulu life and the new Christian ways) were to combine in the 1930's in imaginative literature, thereby producing the crucial conflicts which have profoundly concerned Southern African writers for decades: the urban, Christian, westernized milieu versus the traditional African past.” (Scheub, 1985:493)

For example, Vilakazi's first novel, *Noma Nini* (Whenever -1935), clearly reflects this conflict, and describes one of the main characters, Tomasi, as alienated from his own culture when this suits him, but then falling back on it when he needs it. Vilakazi proposes an amalgamation of the positive aspects of both cultures as a way forward.

The initial setting of Kubheka's three novels is the farming area around Ladysmith, producing an atmosphere of rural traditional life where his characters can be easily delineated against a rather flat background. But the plots of the three novels then move to urban and peri-urban settings, to large schools, hospitals and universities, that become the stage on which the main characters must face those life conflicts for which education normally had not prepared them.

Kubheka's first novel, *Kungavuka AbaNguni* (The Nguni could rise from the dead -1973), describes a father (Themba Gumede) who has built up his reputation in an urban township through a shop (economic respectability), and by making sacrifices so that his only daughter (Nomusa) can become a respected nurse. But she falls for a young man whom he considers unworthy, a *tsotsi* and a good-for-nothing. The father thinks that his wealth and authority should be enough to shelter his daughter, but on the day that marriage negotiations are initiated, she goes to town to get some relief from the pressures her father places on her, and gets involved in a road accident that leaves her paralysed. Some readers could think the Nguni ancestors have taken revenge on a disobedient child, but the author shows that the party that is really punished is the father, who sees all his dreams come to naught, and who

is also reprimanded by his own father for his blind attachment to tradition, so much that he could not see that his authoritarianism and arrogance had alienated him from those he holds sacred and from a generation that follows customs and rules quite different from those he holds sacred and inviolable, and therefore also from his elders and his own age-mates. Themba's father, Mziwempi, states:

*“Nabo-ke abaNguni bakho ndodana sebevukile!”*  
(Here are your Nguni ancestors, my son, they have risen up!) (Kubheka, 1973:264)

In *Ulaka LwabaNguni* (The wrath of the Nguni clan -1988), as we shall see, Kubheka returns to the themes of western against African, rural versus urban, traditional versus modern education. The “Anger of the Nguni ancestors” is directed at a proud young doctor who has cut off all links with his African past, to the point of making himself a Scotsman by changing his name to MacPherson, and cannot see the need to acknowledge his biological mother, although she had contributed very little to his upbringing. The method of revelation of the ancestors' anger follows the pattern characteristic of Kubheka's works: a succession of road accidents, with the climax being reached when the car crash results in the death of the characters.

In Kubheka's third novel, *Umthathe Uzala Umlotha* (The sneeze-wood breeds the ash - 1993), the author returns to the theme of the nefarious effects of western-type education on a promising young man, who, due to failing to balance it with influences of traditional values, is eventually completely ruined morally and physically by his sexual and social behaviour. The young man's father, seeing the physical devastation that debauchery has brought upon his son, ruefully exclaims: “If this is the sign of the much desired university degree, I do not want to have anything to do with it!”

Kubheka shows great ability and dexterity in handling conflictual situations, thus describing many aspects of his characters, and also creating tension and drawing suspense. This is a good teaching technique of plot constructing, because when the action reaches its tragic and harsh climax, the credibility or plausibility of the story is not placed under suspicion.

Although the three novels present thought-provoking and disturbing reflections on modern life, and excesses and abuses in the process of transformation from a rural to urban society, I have chosen to analyse the novel *Ulaka LwabaNguni* as the most suitable for the purpose of my study.

#### 4.1.1 *Ulaka LwabaNguni*: The story told

The novel presents three main characters, Sikhwama Mkhize, a farm worker; his wife, MaGumede and their son, Mphakamiseni. When the novel commences MaGumede is deliberating on Sikhwama's having accepted his condition on the farm. As soon as Sikhwama comes back from work on the white farm, he starts cooking sheep's tails. MaGumede, who, at face value, is against the stench caused by the sheep's tails cooking, actually objects to the spirit of acquiescence and servitude adopted by the family head, Sikhwama. As long as they stay on the farm, they have no prospects of improving their lives. Her frustration is further fuelled by the fact that they have a young son, Mphakamiseni (Raise him up!), whom she does not want to be condemned to the same type of servitude that they have endured. There is no school for the children on the farm, and the farmer and his wife show no respect for their workers. Sikhwama is used to this type of life and work, and has no great esteem for school education. MaGumede, on the other hand, becomes the engine for change as she convinces her husband to send Mphakamiseni to her own brother, Joseph Gumede, who is a school teacher.

The opportunity for changing Mphakamiseni's life and open up endless avenues for progress and advancement comes when Joseph accepts to have him as his own son and educate him. And so the rising up and social elevation of Mphakamiseni begins. From the fact that Joseph is always addressed by his Christian name, we understand that he may not share any aspect of traditional life. Thus Mphakamiseni grows up away from his own parents and culture, and eventually goes with his uncle to Clermont from where he is sent to Mariannhill to complete his matric. The boy does well and even qualifies for the Medical School where he qualifies as a doctor. However, the type of education that he has received from his uncle makes him despise the uneducated (*amaqaba*), and refuse to visit his biological parents. By this time,

however, he is so alienated from his rural roots that he has even changed his name into MacPherson, as if the name alone should enable him to become a Scot. The author does not tell us whether MacPherson ever thinks or dreams of his parents, and the break with his African origins seems complete.

The Mkhizes, on the other hand, have abandoned the humiliating farm life. One day the young doctor sees his mother walking in Durban with a friend. MaGumede rushes to him, but Mphakamiseni is ashamed to associate himself with such a 'primitive and uncultured' woman and runs away. At the new place MaGumede develops some illness and goes to hospital. At King Edward Hospital she looks with anticipation at the prospect of seeing her doctor son and to be treated by him. On enquiry, she is told that there is no Mphakamiseni working there but Doctor Mac (MacPherson abbreviated). The young doctor again refuses to have anything to do with her, and declares that such a primitive woman cannot be his mother. MaGumede gets very upset once again.

On a subsequent visit to King Edward, MaGumede again approaches Mphakamiseni and calls him her son. Mphakamiseni, however, rudely disclaims his mother publicly. Out of sheer embarrassment MaGumede runs out of the hospital and is crushed by a passing car and dies. Sikhwama, Mphakamiseni's father, accuses him of killing his own mother through the arrogance acquired by means of his studies and of his westernization.

When the accident happens we think Mphakamiseni has won the day, but his failure to totally suppress his conscience causes culture and blood to re-appear in his stony heart. Remorse sets in, but Mphakamiseni tries not to show any emotions. The mother then begins the process of re-educating him to the human values (*ubuntu*) that he had thrown out of the window of his perspectives. The process is long, with the mother who keeps appearing in dreams, nearly winning to make Mphakamiseni do the right thing: proper burial and *ukubuyisa* ceremony for his mother. All she wants is recognition of her role in his life. She gave him life; made it possible for him to study and break away from the servitude of farm life. She demands the respect that is due to her as a mother, a respect that must extend to her beliefs and to the rituals to which she was accustomed. Mphakamiseni, however, keeps

delaying for no apparently serious reason, except personal comfort. He buys a car, furthers his studies, marries and buys a house. Eventually the ancestors get angry and fed up, and take revenge on the young doctor, his wife and their unborn child. The final car accident causes a massacre that destroys the whole family, and even the possibility for the ancestors to be ever remembered and venerated.

#### 4.1.2 *Ulaka LwabaNguni*: Aspects of social commitment

Contextually the novel has aspects such as political, economic, religious and other aspects to be analysed. Criticism of social structure implies looking at these aspects as fundamental pre-occupations in the work. Farm working in a South African context has a combination of these aspects, and to understand and appreciate the aim of the novel one needs to grasp them. In *Ulaka LwabaNguni* social structure criticism arises from a class struggle showing Mkhize and MaGumede against the farmer, and then Mphakamiseni against his parents. There are social problems, namely traditional versus school education; the latter versus wisdom; life, faith, religious practice, abuses, excesses, misunderstandings, as a reflection of realities in life. This is a thread that runs through much of Zulu, Xhosa, Venda and Sotho literatures. Life on the farm is used as a spring-board to prove how desperately the Mkhize family wanted their son to have a better life.

Kubheka's novel mirrors the state of servitude on to which a very high percentage of rural Africans are subjected. White people bought land from the colonial government, and settled a number of African families on it, to cultivate or work it for the owner. The owner, in return, distributes to his workers small portions of land to cultivate as gardens, and to rear a small amount of livestock on it. Work for the owner must come first, since he owns the land and sometimes pays a basic salary. Private work is done during one's spare time. Some enlightened farmers built farm schools for the children of their workers, but others did not. The Nkovane farm owner is one such a non-benevolent farmer who never cared about the children of his workers. On the white owned farm Sikhwama cannot breed as much stock as he can, and as a tenant he cannot own cattle as beautiful as his landlord's.

Kubheka uses the example of Sikhwama Mkhize's family to highlight the plight of farm hands, the level of near slavery in which they are kept, and the wide-spread belief that only western-type school education can free them from the shackles they live under by opening up for them the labour market. The main reason the story is told with a lot of sensationalism is that farm life is equivalent to bondage and near slavery for the farmhands, and can be seen as a typical example of the general conditions of the African during the apartheid rule in South Africa. The situation was this terrible on some white owned farms in the 1980s when the literary work was written. The work is therefore a comment on the plight of the workers and a call for the change of working conditions on those farms.

MaGumede and Sikhwama are trying to save Mphakamiseni from this racial and economic bondage on the farm. But since schooling would deliver farm workers' children from bondage, they would not be allowed schooling by farm owners. That is why when it is discovered that Mkhize's son is attending school they are both forced to work (man and wife) at the same time, not on rotational basis as it used to be the case. When life on the farm becomes intolerable, they are eventually compelled to leave the Nkovane's farm, their place of birth. We expect Mphakamiseni to show signs of *ubuntu* and come to their rescue. After all the protection they have afforded him, he becomes insensitive and arrogant. This shows that although school education opens the path to emancipation and qualifies people for the labour market, it does not guarantee maturity. One needs to grow in the ways of wisdom, as represented by the philosophy of *ubuntu*, of traditional life and education.

The fiercest social conflict is being waged between the forces of tradition and those of change, symbolised by the antithesis rural versus urban, or town versus farm, with abuses, excesses and radicalisation on both sides. Urban school educated people identify themselves as 'civilised' and *amakholwa* (believers, Christians), and feel entitled to look down upon the rural and un-schooled people as 'primitive' (*amaqaba*) and *abahedeni* (heathens). This elitist pride, and the accompanying scorn for rural un-schooled people, shows up the 'newly arrived' as boring and unintelligent prigs, who confuse religion with western ways of life. They have a tendency of placing themselves on pedestals that do not fit them. In fact one can be a Christian or educated without being able to read and write, and simple rural people

often are more genuinely religious and educated than their proud urban counterpart. Kubheka seems to ridicule the act of confusing the issues of religion, etiquette, social manners and school education when he puts the following expressions on Joseph Gumede's lips:

*“Hayi ukuhlekela phezulu ingathi izintombi zamaqaba ziyotheza” noma athi “phansi ubuqaba kusesikoleni lapha asithathe indlela yenkanyiso nempucuko.”*

(Stop laughing loudly like “uncivilised” girls collecting firewood!” Or he would say: “Down with obsolete “uncivilised” ways. It is at school here, let us walk the road to enlightenment and progress!”) (Kubheka, 1988:87)

These are points of etiquette rather than religion. These comments by Joseph make Mphakamiseni look down upon people who have never been to school. This is evidenced by the author's words:

*“Kuyena imfundo yencwadi wayeyithatha ngokuthi iyisicongo nesiphetho sokwazi. Kwakungafiki ukuthi ikhona into eyaziwa ngumuntu ongafundanga esikoleni.”*

(To him book education was considered as the highest point and the end of wisdom. It never occurred to him that an informally educated person knows something.) (Kubheka, 1988:209)

Parent-child relationship forms a base to lead the child to a fully-fledged adult life, and school education is meant to be a supporting system. There is nothing wrong with exposing children to foreign cultures, as long as they have mastered their own. The problem is to let a person with no sound base venture out of his surroundings. He tends to look at things through other people's windows and then wonder whether his own people are mad or what. He sees everything they do as senseless, for instance, it makes no sense to Mphakamiseni to think his parents were so concerned about delivering him from the looming bondage instead of delivering themselves from their own servitude on the farm. He is blind to the fact that they never had the opportunity and the means to do it. In his case, although they did not have means, they had somebody (his uncle) who still could appeal or subscribe to some tenets of *ubuntu* and on whom they could rely. Rearing your brother's or sister's child was once a common occurrence in the ancient times. But the short-sighted Mphakamiseni

regrettably does not understand this. It is for this reason that Sikhwama's father does not absolve Sikhwama and MaGumede from being partly responsible for Mphakamiseni's problem.

The lack of feelings of belonging should have been a force strong enough to give rise to a sense of conformity to the norms of society. This would have eventually changed Mphakamiseni's way of doing things. Is there no peer group for Mphakamiseni that we can put all the blame on his uncle? Of course there is, but the main problem lies in Mphakamiseni's character. He is also to blame for what he is. Mphakamiseni puts more emphasis on his right as an individual and totally forgets to open up to invite others into his world. He left this until too late to provide him the opportunity to be helped. To the ancestors (*izithutha*), because of his failure to commit and align himself with either side, he is like a man who has committed an unpardonable sin. In this regard, the author's point of view is:

*"... iphutha labakuye ekubambeni kwakhe imfundo ngomsila acabange ukuthi imbeke endaweni engcono nephezulu nefanelwe ngabafundile kuphela."*

(... the mistake he made was to grab education with its tail and think it had elevated him to the position that is suitable for the school-educated only.)  
(Kubheka, 1988:220)

Mphakamiseni thinks school education is an end in itself. His school education, however, has rendered him ignorant of the African tradition, causing him to despise it, as well as the people who are its practitioners. Western education, which is meant to help him escape exploitation and oppression, ends up being a raft used to escape reality. No matter what kind of education one has received, nothing must interfere with the respect due to one's parents and grandparents, who constitute the reference point of life and society. For example, Mphakamiseni's grandfather tries in vain to solve the cultural conflict in the young man's life and to advise him on the proper ways of fulfilling his duties towards his dead mother. The *ukubuyisa* ritual is very significant in that it is believed to be a means to integrate the living with the dead. Mphakamiseni furthers his studies and buys a car at the expense of performing the *ukubuyisa* ritual. Mphakamiseni is neither embracing the coloniser's religion

nor his own. He has discarded traditional customs without substituting them with anything else, which could galvanize his whole being. The pride in his formal education (knowledge that is not necessarily wisdom) makes him disdainful of any belief that cannot be proven scientifically, such as religion. Far too many people pretend to be Christians because they act like westerners, but without embracing the basic commands of Christianity to “love and serve God first and your neighbour as yourself”. Mphakamiseni would need to re-define his belief system, values, practices.

Mphakamiseni’s lack of respect for his parents is not easily pardonable. If he made the mistake of ignoring them because he was still young, when he became mature he should have realised that the act is inhuman. In African religion before God there are the ancestors who are the intermediaries between man and God. Disclaiming your ancestors is like crushing the bridge that takes you to God and still hope to succeed to reach him. Sikhwama believes that the survival of at least one child is due to the ancestors’ intervention. Mphakamiseni’s emotional instability is caused by failure to acknowledge his parents when they were still alive as well as failure to consider them as living across the grave. Mphakamiseni is too rigid to quickly realise how to organise his actions. Had he realised it early, the accident might have been averted.

The author might have seen or observed that the problem with some African intellectuals is that they substitute informal education or African culture with formal education or white culture and thus become white Africans. If Mphakamiseni was a white intellectual his behaviour would have been heralded as culturally correct, however, in the African context it is a sign of lacking human qualities (*ubuntu*).

It would be difficult to explain how Kubheka, who has spent most of his life in the teaching profession and in the western-organised school system, could try to discredit it by creating the most revolting highly school-educated characters, unless we are prepared to accept that he is ridiculing the tendency to confuse the issues as previously explained. Having tested the value of the literary work by the impression it makes on me, I find it sincere and true. Some of us from a culturally distinct society behave exactly like the protagonist, Mphakamiseni,

when we are exposed to popular cultures. We think highly of ourselves once we have obtained high qualifications. This is the glimpse of the truth which is, however, usually so disconcerting as to be positively unpleasant.

A book such as *Ulaka LwabaNguni*, committed to restoring people to their own environment, exists so that where one man has lived badly, a thousand who avoid following his example, may behave correctly. This is definitely a committed attempt by the author to change our attitude to the world by sharing with us some of his feelings. It demands, however, a person to exercise his imagination to feel the man with noble emotions behind the book.

*Ulaka LwabaNguni* is one book which is not alien to the aspirations and experiences of the masses when most modern African-language books are sociologically conditioned by both the colonial and the apartheid milieus. The book reflects the writer's imaginative response to social reality. The author has seemingly known and experienced cultural imperialism and racial-political domination, that is why he is a cultural nationalist and a teacher who wants to instil dignity in his own people. When Sikhwama decides to avenge himself on Mantshongo, it's a sign of political resistance. This is radical writing in that it goes to the roots of the problem and looks at it through the eye of the oppressed. The value of the book is that it deals with our daily problems, for example, treating people hospitably. It encourages and emphasises African customs, while it shows the importance of communication and of fighting for one's rights.

On Mphakamiseni's failure to acknowledge his parents this is to say -avoid betraying your own culture. In the African culture we have to look after our parents who cared for us and offered protection when we were too young to do it ourselves. Once we have forgotten who we are and have lost touch with ourselves and with reality, we are not likely to be aware of our problems or to think properly. This is Mphakamiseni's predicament. He is not prepared to go back to his culture and then look at other cultures through the prism of his own culture. He seems to have literally taken after his mother's words:

*“Ngifisa sengathi angandiza njalo aye phezulu emazulwini angavumi ukubheka emuva hleze abuye alingeke akhumbule lapha kwamhlaba engcindezini.”*

(I so wish he could continually fly up to the heavens, and never want to look back lest he be tempted to long for the life of slavery here on earth.)  
(Kubheka, 1988:92-93)

Reaching a state of equilibrium therefore is going to remain an unfulfilled dream. It rests with MaGumede, the engine that moves change on, to be a controlling factor in the second part of the novel when change goes too far, without respecting the positive values of the past. At a glance or out of its cultural context the book questions parenthood (parental support, protection, education, etc.), but in its proper cultural context it questions our view of school education. That the view of some school-educated people is wrong, is evidenced by MaGumede’s words:

*“Ngisaphinda kulo elami lokuthi indaba inomuntu ayikho ekufundisweni.”*  
(I want to repeat what I said earlier on that it is the person who is the problem, and not education.) (Kubheka, 1988:92)

This is also the author’s point of view. As Canonici (1998) cogently notes:

“The nefarious effects of higher education that does not go hand in hand with social and personal maturity or with wisdom, is castigated in several novels, such as I.S. Kubheka’s 1988 *Ulaka LwabaNguni* (The anger of the ancestors).” (Canonici, 1998:61)

Literature can give information about the society. Kubheka acknowledges a close link between literature and the society and concentrates on the internal qualities of literature. His main interest is the society rather than the individual. Man is a product of society rather than of his own individual self. One should think of learning “as a process of becoming a member of a certain community”, which entails “the ability to communicate in the language and act according to its particular norms” (Sfard, 1998:6, in Lantolf, 2000:155). Kubheka in this way believes in the possibility of the retention of individual integrity within the social system. Like Zondi in *Insumansumane* (see 4.3.3), he had hoped there would be respect for African customs by Africans themselves, then by outsiders. Some Africans, however, have opted to move out and be counted with the whites. Kubheka therefore wants to change or regulate

social behaviour through Mphakamiseni's suffering.

The author is committed to restoring African people to their own environment, that is why he does not offer any serious remedy for the move away from the African religion and its traditions. Although as a teacher and a headmaster embracing western forms of education, Kubheka commits himself to saving his tradition. Unlike Vilakazi in *Noma Nini*, who advocates a reconciliation of cultures, Kubheka does not propose a compromise. Different authors have a right to see things differently. During Vilakazi's time it was fashionable to be western in your doings; however, with Kubheka living 50 years later, during the apartheid period and the movement towards a decolonisation of the mind, it comes as no surprise that Kubheka has to assertively write about decolonisation and identity re-discovery.

In 1940 A.C. Jordan published one of the most successful Xhosa novels, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanaya*, translated in the 1980s as *The Wrath of the Ancestors*. In this novel an educated and forward-looking Xhosa king marries a woman he had met during his post-graduate studies. She despises the local Xhosa customs, goes around with her head uncovered and in short dresses, to the point of becoming a foreigner to her own people. Out of ignorance she even kills a snake, believed to be the manifestation of her husband's predecessor. For these "sins", she and her husband are killed by the wrath of the ancestors and their lineage destroyed.

Apart from the nearly identical title, there are several points of contact between Jordan's and Kubheka's novels. The most important seems to be that both Thembeke (the Xhosa king's wife) and Mphakamiseni are cultural foreigners, or fugitives from their own culture. They are driven to this state by the identity crisis that perturbs them and very many of their contemporaries, who have been unable to build bridges between the African and the western cultures, as a result they do not know who they really are. They refuse to be identified with black culture and try to become pseudo-whites (cf Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993:63). Kubheka's story tells us that family and blood ties can be forgotten, but never cancelled.

## 4.2 C.T. Msimang's socially committed literary works

Christian Themba Msimang has made meaningful contributions in all genres of Zulu literature, namely novel, short story, poetry and drama. He became well known through his drama, *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* (The storm that thundered at Sandlwana-1976) and the two novels, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni* (Let's go to the diviner-1973) and *Buzani kuMkabayi* (Ask Mkabayi -1982). Other than these genres he has authored the following anthologies of poems: *Amagagasi* (The sea waves-1979), *Iziziba ZoThukela* (the deep pools of the Thukela river -1980), *Izinsungulo* (The large piercing needles- 1980), *Intwasahlobo* (Spring -1982), *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla -Umqulu 1* (Poets yesterday and today, Volume 1-1986) and *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla -Umqulu 2* (Poets yesterday and today, Volume 2 -1988). In folklore studies Msimang has vastly produced folklore manuals, too many to mention, and his two outstanding studies on Zulu oral traditions are: *Kusadliwa Ngoludala* (1975) and *Folktale Influence on the Zulu Novel* (1986). The two works that I am going to deal with in the present study are: *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* and *Buzani KuMkabayi*

### 4.2.1 *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*: Drama synopsis

The play is about the events which led to the battle of Sandlwana, which is the most memorable battle that ever took place between the Zulu nation and the British Empire. When the story opens we see Cetshwayo a disgruntled man. He is worried about the outcome of the discussions regarding the contested land of Zungeni. The Boers have, without permission, occupied the land that rightfully belongs to the Zulus, but Cetshwayo hopes that Sir Theophilus Shepstone will uphold the rights of the Zulus. The king later learns that the decision over the land has not been in his favour. Soon after this he gets a report that Mehlokazulu has killed two of Sihayo's wives on Natal soil, and, according to the agreement with the British, no Zulu armed men were allowed into Natal. The Natal government sends an ultimatum with the demand that the guilty party be sent to Pietermaritzburg for a court case. If the demand is not complied with by the king, it could mean war with the colonial government. This demand is coupled with the imposition of a heavy penalty of 600 cattle, and the request of disbandment of the regiments protecting the

Zulu empire. This is a clear insult to the independence of the king and a thorn sore enough to make war inevitable. Cetshwayo has had enough with the British who have already taken his land and given it to the Boers. He is prepared to fight the British and this is just the spark to start the fire that leads to the battle. After meeting with his councillors, Cetshwayo decides to challenge the colonial government by sending it a bag of *uphoko* (grain), warning of the number of soldiers that he could field if the British intolerance is not checked. Cetshwayo's refusal to comply with the terms of the ultimatum provides the colonial government with a pretext to attack him. The British soon enter Zululand but are defeated by the Zulu army at Sandlwana.

#### 4.2.2 Elements of social commitment in *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*

The play politically reflects on the reasons for the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, namely, the white man's land hunger and British arrogance. Cetshwayo fights for the maintenance of the Zulu traditional way of life, for Zulu independence and for the integrity of Zulu freedom. Canonici (1998) points out that, in *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*:

“The author reflects on the reasons that led to the bloody Anglo-Zulu war of 1879: the colonists' hunger for land, and the British colonial arrogance to impose their way of life on the various black populations with the excuse of bringing western 'civilization' to them.” (Canonici, 1998:62)

The process of African decolonisation had begun in 1958. But whilst most countries in Africa were obtaining independence, South Africa remained firmly governed by a white minority government which imposed strict conditions on the black majority. This minority government excluded blacks from political life, and imprisoned or forced into exile leaders of black political organisations and individuals. Msimang's play, which appeared at the same time as the Soweto students' riots of 1976, is a bold demand for Zulu (and, by extension, South Africa's) freedom and independence. It is a cry for re-acquisition of the national right to be oneself on our continent and in our country. Through Cetshwayo's words and actions, the play describes independence at various levels (which applied to both 1879 and 1976).

In *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* the land issue is central. Cetshwayo is prepared to die rather

than lose the land he keeps in trust for his people. Physically, the whole country must legitimately return to the original owners, the Africans. Or, at least, the government's tricks to increase white-owned land by re-settling Africans on barren land must stop. The independence and integrity of the land is a pre-requisite for freedom. The play opens with the king expressing his loss of patience for having to wait for many days to hear the verdict on the disputed land. This is a struggle for physical independence: when the kingdom does not have to answer to any outsiders, and the land is secure in Zulu hands.

*“Ngihlatshwe yiva lapha nceku yami. Isihlungu saleli va singicima inhliziyo sengathi isihlungu seva logagane noma lesinqawe.”*

(I have been pricked by a thorn, my attendant. Its poison affects my heart-beat as if it were a mimosa thorn tree poison or that of a small scrubby thorn mimosa tree.) (Msimang, 1976:1)

Cetshwayo's language is never direct. All he means is - the pain he feels while he is waiting for the verdict of Zungeni, makes him explode. It is threatening to cause him to stop tolerating the trouble he is forced to tolerate. In fact the issue of the disputed land makes him fed up.

Cetshwayo intensifies the discomfort by using the expression *“iminjunju eqaqambayo”* (intensity of pain), but indicates that he wants the views of Mnyamana and Bhejane, because one benefits by the experience of others - *“injobo ithungelwa ebandla”* (Msimang, *ibid.*). Bhejane and Mnyamana, who have just joined Cetshwayo and Makhasana, both take him literally and as a result they do not grasp the metaphor. Realising that he has spoken past their ears, Cetshwayo explains that it is his heart that is throbbing painfully because the Whites have taken portions of his land without consulting him. There is a clash of tradition on the land issue. Cetshwayo, as the custodian of the land, has the sole right to distribute it. But, contrary to this thinking, the British have usurped the authority to assign it to whoever they want. Mnyamana cools the King down and tells him to completely rely on *“ubaba uSomtsewu”* (Lord Shepstone) for everything. Mnyamana is evidently shortsighted with regard to the issue of land distribution, and since Somtsewu has become the father to the Zulu nation, he has ironically secured the authority to distribute land. The most relied upon and trusted Somtsewu yet is part of the system and therefore cannot be expected to

act against other whites.

Cetshwayo is a law-abiding king who needs to be treated with honour and respect. But honour and respect is never deserved by a man who does not defend the rape of land. The possibility of losing the contested land makes him cogently say:

*“Ngithi Mnyamana izwe yinto yokufelwa!”*  
(Mnyamana, I say land is something worth dying for!) (Msimang, 1976:2)

The fact that the quoted words are repeated three times in the first three pages, is an indication that the king is in a bad mood. The way his speech threatens war makes us wonder what would have happened if he was directly talking to his offenders. For Cetshwayo land loss has to be prevented at all costs, even at the cost of life. He clearly indicates that were it not for the oath he made when he was installed, he would have taken action to rectify the situation.

*“Angizikhohliwe izifungo engazenza eMlambongwenya.”*  
(I have not forgotten the terms of the oath that I made at Mlambongwenya)  
(Msimang, 1976:2)

Land is culturally the mother that gives life to and feeds everything and everybody. It is the body of the nation, that is why Africans never sold or allowed it to be disposed of. But the new comers (Whites) do not understand it in this way. For them it is only an economic transaction, that is why they have taken the Zungeni land (after the sacrilegious cession of Natal by Dingane and Mpande, which Cetshwayo never accepted) as their own, not as tenants for the king or the Zulu nation.

He regrets the day he made a present to Somtsewu. He realises that he should not have accepted Somtsewu on the day of his installation. He had thought they were sincere friends of his father, Mpande, but that implied his recognition of their authority over himself. The British wanted to introduce a system of patronage, regulated by a set of mutual rights and duties. The system works in time of peace, but not when hostility is encouraged by arrogant behaviour.

*“Yeka izinkomo zami inyoni kayiphumuli engamnyathelisa ngayo mhlazane ezongibeka.”*

(I regret ever presenting him with white cattle to dispose him favourably (usher him in) on the day he installed me.) (Msimang, 1976:27)

Cetshwayo has not yet fully reached a stage of realisation. If he had he would not say: “*ezongibeka*.” He needs a person with a clear mind to remind him that an African king is never installed by whites. But, any way, he pronounces a total resentment of the white administration.

*“Khumu! Sengiyakhumuka manje.”*

(Hold on! I am breaking away from them now) (Msimang, 1976:28)

It makes Cetshwayo despair to learn that Somtsewu has seen it fit to support the Boers at his expense. He does no longer want to have anything to do with the white man. At this stage, although he is concerned, “the related notions of ‘commitment’, ‘choice’ and ‘decision’”, have not forced their way to the centre to make him more concerned (Bartley 1962:4). In that way he is going to find a simple substitute type of commitment. That is why Mnyamana can still plead with him to please try and find an alternative to going to war against the British. The king soon finds that he can no longer stand this open contempt by the British, as reflected in the words:

*“Kukhona esebenyele umtapo. Ibumba selilibi, sibe sisalibumbe liyabhidlika.”*

(Some people have relieved themselves in the clay supply quarry. The clay is now spoiled. Each time we try to mould something it breaks down) (Msimang, 1976:40)

Legally Africans must be free to run the country according to their own traditions and laws, without interference from the colonial powers. etc. Africans must be honestly consulted on matters pertaining to laws, especially those regarding them, for example, coronation laws, the death penalty, etc. Economically, the country must be free to use its own devices and resources to survive and prosper (e.g. regimental system for both economic and security reasons). Morally, the king must be free to govern the country according to its own ancient customs and traditions, without outside interference, allowing for dynamic development of

the local traditions. Without this, the country has no soul and no life. These are the main points of the ultimatum as raised and summarised in the play. Also the Soweto students' fight against Afrikaans was a battle for consultation, independence and freedom.

The incident between Mehlokazulu and Sihayo's wives (Mehlokazulu's incursion into Natal) is considered by the government in Pietermaritzburg as a deliberate violation of the "coronation laws" and of the system of mutual understanding agreed upon in the 1873 coronation ceremony. As regard this violation, the two parties have different perspectives: Cetshwayo offers a reparation gift of 50 white cattle, hoping this would re-establish the balance and the friendly relations between the two governments. As if the British want to exacerbate the situation and force Cetshwayo to declare war on them, they impose a bigger fine of 600 heads of cattle, as well as the handing over of Mehlokazulu to be tried and punished according to Natal law, on the grounds that the crime has been committed on Natal soil.

If the English cannot be appeased, it means that everything is going to fall apart. It has become clear that the colonial administrators have a different view of justice. If the fine cannot appease them, what purpose does it mean to serve? The king has run short of choices, except to fight and die, if that is the necessary end.

*"Ngiqoma ukufa kunokubizwa ngevaka elanikela ngabantu balo ngokwesaba ukulahlekelwa ngubukhosi balo."*

(I prefer to die rather than to be called a coward who betrayed his people for fear of the loss of kingship.) (Msimang, 1976:42)

Cetshwayo is beginning to act and think selflessly and impatiently. But all along he has been a good leader, not acting in haste, and in control of the situation. We realise that, for every person, trying times may come and go, leaving one with very little choice but to commit oneself. Such times came twice for king Cetshwayo. First, when he had to accept Mpande-Mbuyazi's challenge and fight at Ndondakusuka; secondly, when he had to fight the British at Sandlwana. He makes a decision from which there is no turning back, knowing well that it is going to be firearms against spears. But a British conquest should only come over his dead body:

*“Kuleli lawoJama umlungu uyochachaza ngifile.”*

(In this land of Jama, the white man will have his way only when I’m dead.)

(Msimang, 1976:60)

When Cetshwayo replies that it is impossible to comply with the demands regarding Mehlokazulu, the Natal government sends him an ultimatum that if not accepted, would mean the loss of physical, moral, military and legal independence. Cetshwayo evidently cannot accept his nation’s suicide, and war becomes inevitable. Thinking of the servitude he will have to endure under the British yoke makes Cetshwayo brave the advancing British artillery. That is why when he sends his army to Sandlwana he tells them that it’s life or death: they should fight to the victory or die fighting, to avoid living under the fetters of British oppression.

*“Le mpi ngizoyilwa ilanga libe linye, ngibachithe abafokazana ndini.”*

(This war is going to take me one day to fight and defeat these despicable strangers.) (Msimang, 1976:71)

Indeed the soldiers fight bravely to preserve their independence. They shock the British army by dealing them a heavy blow at Sandlwana.

The British are the first ones to invade (the aggressor) the Zulu kingdom. This shows colonial arrogance and deception. Cetshwayo’s diplomatic attempts to prevent the rape of the land by colonists as well as the imposition of their rule on him, all fell on deaf ears, because Sir Bartle Frere wanted the federation of all republics under the British flag. Msimang’s words in the preface are a testimony to this:

*“Kwahlaluka ukuthi empeleni uCetshwayo wayengenaphutha lokuba aze ahlaselwe kuphela kwabe kuyinto ka Sir Bartle Frere ukuba ahlanganise zonke izifunda ezikwelomzansi neAfrika zibe ngaphansi kombuso weNdlovukazi.”*

(It became clear that in actual fact Cetshwayo was not that guilty such he deserved to be attacked but it was Sir Bartle Frere’s plan to unify all South Africa regions under the Queen of England.) (Msimang, 1976:preface)

On the other hand Shepstone wanted to win popular support. He had initially allied himself with Cetshwayo in opposition to the Transvaal Boers, but soon switched his support to the

Boers' cause. Shepstone had hoped that the crowning and some flag-waving acts would merely subdue the Zulus and persuade Cetshwayo to accept his terms. When the diplomatic Sir Theophilus Shepstone's self-proclaimed crowning achievement failed to accomplish the desired outcome, Cetshwayo's cheap tinsel crown proved to be a farce (Edgerton, 1988:13). When Shepstone's diplomatic trickery miscarried, he decided to resort to force.

Cetshwayo had mistakenly agreed to be crowned, thinking that British troops would protect his interest in future. But as soon as he realised that it was not to be so, he backed down. The king had miscalculated and flawed but he could not be easily made to cede his country's autonomy. Cetshwayo was alarmed by the influx of British troops on the disputed Zungeni area while his own were ordered to retire. That was when it dawned on him that he had trusted the wrong man.

Mpande's (Cetshwayo's father) subservience to the white men had brought this sorry pass to his heirs. Cetshwayo had to battle to restore Zulu independence in its fullness. The nation is aware of the king's loss of influence and that the main cause was his shortsightedness on the day of his installation. Two warriors reflect on Cetshwayo's limited powers resulting from his acceptance of Shepstone's so called "coronation laws". They say (Magemfu's words):

*"Ingonyama isiyingonyama ngegama, eqinisweni lonke iboshwe izandla nezinyawo."*

(The king is still a king in name, but in fact he is hands and feet bound)

(Msimang, 1976:6)

Msimang is part of the community that is affected by this tragic event. The author does not approve the taking of land without any justification -The use of the word "*phangwa*" (preface) by the author shows his attitude towards the new dispensation, that divides the king's land amongst his *indunas*, making them equal to him. Even Cetshwayo did not approve of the division. The word '*Isikhundlwana*' used in relation to Dinuzulu in *Insumansumane*, could also be used for Cetshwayo with regard to his loss of power. It would seem he was considered unfit and unable to shoulder the kind of responsibility that kings used to carry in terms of the tradition. Msimang is committed to expressing the

feelings of the people about Cetshwayo's treatment by the Natal government. He seems to have absorbed the need to give vent to their feelings.

It is also a struggle for control of land and its economic resources. The economy of the black people was based on cultivating crops of maize, sorghum, pumpkins, beans, etc. Cattle farming provided meat and milk for sour milk (*amasi*). Socio-culturally and socio-politically the importance of the cattle was on its being the medium of exchange or appeasement to fathers-in-law and sealing political alliances through kinship ties. The loss of land means the loss of source of all the above-mentioned. That is why to Cetshwayo land means everything.

A writer's work implicitly reflects his political leanings as his writing is coloured by his culture and philosophy. There is no neutrality. The point of neutrality is challenged here when we consider the meaning behind Lindenberger's (1975) words:

“The dramatist could seek out areas whose essential conflicts seemed to point forward, in fact to anticipate those later stages of the historical process with which the audience might experience some emotional identification.”  
(Lindenberger, 1975:6)

Msimang, for instance, has chosen the events leading to the battle of Sandlwana as a base for his drama, and end up by telling of the important victory of Sandlwana. He never touches the other skirmishes of the war for fear of denting the image that he has so skillfully built. He has avoided telling about the defeat in order to make it acceptable to his audience. The mood during the time of writing was so volatile that dampening it by talking of defeat would have been an act of cowardice. He had to be engulfed in the popular feeling of the period. He only briefly mentions the plan that miscarried, the plan not to cross the Tugela river. But before the British could claim a victory in their insatiable thirst for power, they learned a bitter lesson at the hands of the Zulu army.

Critical assessment of sources objectively written together with artistic interpretation of characters and events implies historical commitment on the part of Msimang. Cele (1997:13) says history grants a work of art acceptance as a possible interpretation of a period in the world of history. The use of historical characters, events, settings could possibly convince

the readers that what they are shown is the truth of history. Msimang has selected and manipulated the historical material to his own end. He has used it as a metaphor of the political situation at the time of writing. The past is considered as exemplary to the present in order to throw light on present day developments.

### **Concluding remarks**

A dramatic performance unites the audience, the actors and the playwright into a unity of intent and ideals, especially in Africa where theatre is open to the participation of the audience. Rhythm, music, dance, gestures, are imitative and invite people to take part, and so to be transformed into the atmosphere of celebration that pervades everything and everybody.

When the play is a historical drama, the spectators become proud of belonging to the nation that has produced such heroes, and are stimulated to imitate their glorious deeds. Simply reading Msimang's play one can feel the exaltation of feelings, the rage of the king, the courage of the people, and nearly the sounds of the battle at Sandlwana. But since the play has never reached the stage, the message of resistance launched by proud King Cetshwayo only reaches us through the pages of a book. and radio (play was once broadcast by Radio Zulu).

The reasons of Cetshwayo's war, however, were still felt by the people of 1976, specially by the students of Soweto that marched and died to protest against Afrikaans cultural hegemony, against the injustices of land reforms that stole from the blacks to give to the wealthy whites, against destruction of African cultural and historical heritage.

In short the play should be seen as the desperate cry of a people oppressed and at the end of its tether, a people that can look back on a very glorious past to draw strength for coping with the present. It seems to say: yes we are under a very oppressive government, but we shall overcome it, as we did in 1879 when our oppressors drove us to despair. The land on which we live is ours, not the white people's. We draw strength from it: it is worth dying

for its independence. Physical independence is meaningless without a cultural, religious, social and economic independence. We must work for the preservation of what is good in our culture, customs and traditions. Cetshwayo won the day because he was a thoroughly upright person, trusted by his people who stood united behind him. Our moral fibre will eventually lead us to victory, the fibre shown by the Robben Island prisoners. The acquisition of such moral superiority is the task of every individual, be it in a leadership role or not. And we do not need tremendous exterior incentives to achieve this: the strength must come from within.

#### 4.2.3 *Buzani KuMkabayi*: a synopsis of the novel

*Buzani kuMkabayi* is said to be “probably the best researched novel in Zulu” (Ntuli et al., 1993:266). Research has helped Themba Msimang to re-create the ancient setting that stretches over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the characters and events which constitute the foundation of our nation, from the early King Jama to the kingdom of King Mpande. The novel contains perceptions about the central character, Mkabayi, and events surrounding her life as traceable in history. It describes how this most powerful female personality escapes death as one of the baby twins was customarily put to death, and lastly how she acts behind the scenes in the rise and fall of the kings, Shaka and Dingane. Ntuli (1987) sums up the content of the literary work well when he states that *Buzani kuMkabayi*.

“Relates the history of the Zulu kings against the background of the powerful princess, Mkabayi.” (Ntuli, 1987:130)

Although the writer depicts an atmosphere of doom over the Zulu kingdom, caused by Jama’s refusal to dispose of one of his twin baby girls, which was considered as an open rebellion against the national ancestors, Mkabayi constantly takes charge of difficult situations and turns them around to the advantage of the nation. Considering herself as a curse to the nation when her mother dies, Mkabayi does not want to marry, and as a result she turns down many suitors of royal blood. In this way she manages to convince her bereaved father to get married again, making possible the birth of Senzangakhona, the heir to the kingship. When her father dies, she acts as the regent of Senzangakhona, her half

brother. Even after Senzangakhona has ascended the throne she remains his forceful, intelligent and decisive councillor, covering up his shortcomings and making the kingdom prosper, in spite of her being a woman. When her brother dies, she takes over the throne until a successor is ready to take over.

Mkabayi decisively acts behind the scenes to have Shaka proclaimed king, hoping to be able to continue influencing his decisions as she had done with Senzangakhona. But Shaka has no time for the petty family squabbles brought to him by his once-powerful aunt and a heroine of the Zulu people. Presumably wounded in her pride, Mkabayi hatches a conspiracy that has Shaka killed, thus paving the way for the rise of Dingane. This sin of regicide still weighs on the conscience of the Zulu people. Mkabayi survives to witness Shaka's prophecy (of white people gaining the upper-hand) come true with the destruction of the powerful Zulu army at the hands of the whites at Ncome. After Dingane's reign Mkabayi spends her days under Mpande. Only when she is old, powerless and exiled by Mpande does she admit having been manipulated by Dingane to commit the fateful error. Mpande has decided to distance her by sending her to the north, at Dumbe (Paulpietersburg), on the pretext that he needs a powerful person to guard, defend and cordon off the northern border from possible enemies. In a moving moment Mkabayi looks back on a long life and is given a chance to repent for the murder of Shaka.

#### 4.2.4 Elements of social commitment in *Buzani kuMkabayi*

Among many historical elements which could be understood as socially relevant at the time of writing, I identify and comment on three: King Jama's commitment to life, in spite of the general call that at least one his twins be killed; the gender issue of Mkabayi's rise to power; and the consequences of her socio-political short-sightedness in plotting Shaka's assassination.

Jama made a commitment to life when the diviners and the elders of the nation requested him to get rid of one of the twin girls born in the royal house. It is nearly impossible to explain how the Nguni tradition of disposing of at least one of the twins arose, since most

neighbouring nations revere twins and honour their mother (cf Adam Kuper, 1987). It is possible that fear of anything unusual, especially with regard to human birth, historically took a turn for the worse when some diviners suggested to deal drastically with cases of multiple birth, that resembled animal births rather than human ones: get rid of either one or both babies, by filling their mouths with a sod, so that their cries would be completely stifled. Jama had awaited all his life to have a child. He loved his wife dearly, and he loved his twin girls. Although he was considered the high priest of the nation, and the one responsible for setting ethical standards by following ancient traditions, he courageously took a stand in front of the elders and proclaimed his decision that neither of the twins would be put to death: their lives were as important as his own life. This act became a new inner core of the Zulu tradition.

*“Kwasekuyisikhathi sokuba aphume lesi kepha wathi uyema wafikelwa yisiyezi. Ekhandu .....Ingani laphaya esibayeni uZulu wayengangoboya bendlovu. -kuphelele izikhulu zezwe, oNkwelo noMhlaba, abafowabo benkosi. OMudli babekhona lapho, ....izinsika zombuso kaZulu.”*

(It was the time for him to come out, but when he tried to stand up he became dizzy. This was all in his head ..... the Zulus had filled up the kraal to its capacity. -Present were all the nation’s dignitaries, Nkwelo, Mhlaba and others, the King’s brothers. Mudli and others were there, ...the pillars of the Zulu kingdom.) (Msimang, 1982:6)

King Jama is prepared to bear the brunt against the nation that insists that the custom demanding to have one of the twins killed be respected. He cannot bring himself to perform such a horrible act. Jama’s commitment to sparing the life of both twins is an act of great courage, especially when we consider the negative reaction of the nation’s elders. He courageously states:

*“Sengizwile ukuthi nithi mangendise omunye wabantabami. Sengizwile ..... Kepha usitshela isizwe ukuthi uthi uJama kaNdaba kaMageba siphaphalazile nxa sizikhohlisa ngokuthi impilo yami ibaluleke ukwedlula ekaMmama nekaMkabayi ..... Akekho phakathi kwalamawele engizomgingisa igade.”*

(I have heard that you maintain that I must sacrifice one of my children. I have heard .... But do report to the nation that Jama of Ndaba of Mageba says it (the nation) has made a huge mistake by deceiving itself in the belief that my life is of greater importance than that of Mmama and Mkabayi. ....I

am not going to kill either of the twins.) (Msimang, 1982:11)

Jama's clearly challenges an inhuman tradition, and the bitter criticism of his councillors. When the twins' mother dies, the nation interprets the event as a punishment meted out by the angry ancestors on the King and the nation.

Msimang's work depicts a very committed king migrating "from one 'absolute' commitment to another" (Bartle, 1962:5). His message, through the words and actions of King Jama, is to encourage all would-be mothers and fathers to make a commitment to life, even in the face of difficulties, hardships and social pressures. In the context of the 1980s this message may have two implications: respect for unborn life, in spite of the rising tide of abortions, women's abuse, rape, etc.; and respect for the sacredness of the life of the young, which some politicians tended to consider easy cannon fodder in the battle among the main political parties for the heart and soul of the nation that was to be born out of the revolutionary climate. Commitment to life must comprise a defense of all life, the born and unborn child, the young and the old, because if a nation does not treasure the child in the mother's womb, then it means that it is not preoccupied with life, any life, and its quality. Msimang's Jama offers a clear example: it might be necessary at times to go against uninformed public opinion when life is at stake.

Understood against this background, *Buzani KuMkabayi* proclaims Jama the saviour of all the twins, born after his changed commitment. All the twins alive today in the African tradition are Jama's heirs, and they owe it to him that they were never sacrificed. Mkabayi is the eldest sister -*izibulo* (first born) of all the twins, whose lives were spared.

The political situation in the 1980s was so volatile that it needed men as courageous and committed as Jama. Black South Africans, young and old, needed to be reminded that in the struggle numbers do not count, but determination does. The country required individuals who were prepared to fight selflessly for the future of the young generation.

Educating blacks about their past, like Msimang has done, is important because recounting past exploits creates a feeling of solidarity and restores cohesion and the strength of the

divided, while recounting its mistakes highlights the significance of solidarity and cohesion when there is a need for decision-making. Mkabayi is held in high esteem for her contribution and devotion to the Zulu kingdom, in spite of her major error of judgement in taking part in the killing of Shaka. Of course to err is human, and sins are sins, though in our eyes they seem to differ in terms of degree. But as Canonici puts it, with reference to the atmosphere conveyed by Msimang's novel.

“No matter what the people do, they are doomed because the ancestors are still angry with them.” (Canonici, 1998:62)

Mkabayi's rise to and exercise of power is a gender issue that proves her father right when he said that each twin's life was worth as much as his own. The girl who is initially perceived as a curse to the nation, rises to be an extra-ordinary woman. It is as if her mother's life had been sacrificed for her own life, and the ancestors had been fully appeased. She then had a blank cheque to write it anyway she liked, for good or for evil. But her choices had to bear consequences for the whole nation.

Mkabayi does not marry but gets her father to re-marry, and to produce a male heir. She eventually becomes the regent when her father dies. This is an unprecedented event in the history of Nguniland. Mkabayi remains powerfully influential even when her brother sits on the throne, because Senzangakhona is a very weak king and a womanizer.

Msimang is boldly in favour of women. Whereas Jama did not regularly meet with his councillors to discuss matters affecting the tribe, Mkabayi, his daughter, does. This is highly appreciated by the elders of the tribe. Msimang approvingly says:

*“Ibandla lisimze libopheke sengathi UMkabayi ulichele ngale ntelezi abathi ngumabopha. Abanye kube sengathi kabazizwa kahle izindlebe zabo.”*  
(The assembly of men suddenly became tongue-tied and dumbfounded as if Mkabayi had doctored them with a medicinal potion known as “*umabopha*” (the sense locker). To some it was difficult to accept what their ears were relaying to them.) (Msimang, 1982:94)

Considering the number of good things Msimang says about Mkabayi, one gets the

impression that he does not look down upon women. He respects women of stature. Physically beautiful as she was, she was mainly seen to exhibit male qualities in thought, personality and action. She demands to be treated as equal to men. She takes the men's task with equal ease to labour for her people. She undertakes to select a wife for her father, to negotiate and arrange his marriage in order to save the nation from being ruled by an illegitimate king. Were it not for the part she played in getting Mthaniya to marry Jama, Sojiyisa, Jama's illegitimate son, would have been Jama's successor. She summons and addresses the tribesmen and installs new kings. This is quite unprecedented for a woman to do.

Msimang's book provides evidence that it was possible for women of stature to rise to powerful positions in Nguniland. He explores the role they have played in politics, although the world has had very few women leaders. Msimang says of Senzangakhona's regent:

*“Nanxa abanye babengakuthokozeli ukuphathwa yintombazana, UMkabayi phela, babonakale belitusa ikhono lakhe lokuba ngamehlo enkosana yesizwe, uSenzangakhona. Bawutuse futhi nomkhuba wakhe wokude elumana indlebe nesizwe ezindabeni ezifana nalezi.”*

(Although some could not live with the fact that a girl was in control, i.e. Mkabayi, they were full of praise of her leadership skills, as the regent on behalf of Prince Senzangakhona. They also commended her for constantly consulting the nation on such matters.) (Msimang, 1982:102)

In South Africa Mkabayi and Mantantise (King Sikonyela's mother) occupied positions of the highest power, in spite of the fact that chauvinism is considered to be the order of the day in the whole of Africa. Mkabayi is a good example because of the crucial role she played in Zulu politics, although this has never been fully explored by the African-language literature. Mkabayi renounced motherhood and married life to remain completely available at the service of the nation. Mantantise forcefully governed her nation when she remained a widow. Evidently freedom is a condition of availability to pursue national interests. Secondly, in the 1980s many of our political leaders were either in prison or exile. It was up to great women to embrace leadership roles in the struggle, and they did so, like Mkabayi. This questions the prevalence of men in high positions when there can be such powerful women. This stance is not neutral at all, but it reflects a pro-feminist partisan spirit on the

part of the author.

Adebayo (1999) considers an ideal committed artist as exemplifying

“Convergence of public and private destiny in which a particular artist becomes the bearer of the national burden ..... Under such circumstances, the artist becomes public property, an epic hero, the bearer of a new ideology who carries within his breast the authentic national genius.” (Adebayo, 1999:7)

Among her great achievements, at Senzangakhona’s death Mkabayi helps Shaka to take over the kingdom. But then Dingane’s jealousy takes hold of her. The same “Mkabayi plots the fateful regicide of September 1828 which will bring Dingane to the throne” (Canonici, 1998:62). She is able to witness the national curse (“the swallow” prophecy) pronounced by Shaka before he died, hang over the Zulu nation. The Zulu *impi* under Dingane is dealt a devastating blow by the Boers at *Ncome*. This serves as a reminder to her and the nation that the ancestors can only bless and support those who act for the good of the nation. By destroying the base or foundation of the Zulu empire, she has committed the most unpardonable sin to the ancestors and God, the Almighty. That is why during her last days she groans painfully when she takes a journey of the mind back to where things started to unfold. She has been both a blessing and a curse to the nation.

Msimang shows a touch of deep sympathy for Mkabayi, in spite of the part she played in Shaka’s death. She is not infallible. Like any of us she can fall victim to her weaknesses and errors of judgement. Although she has had a hand in Shaka’s rising to power, she fails to take the time to investigate Dingane’s allegations against the King. Thus she stains her hands with Shaka’s blood.

*“Ukuba angizange ngimbulale uShaka abaphansi babeyoqhubeka bangenze isandla sabo sokuphetha intando yabo. Leso sandla ngasingcolisa ngegazi likaShaka elalimsulwa.”*

(If I did not kill Shaka, the ancestors would have continued to make me their hand in fulfilling their wishes. I stained that hand with Shaka’s innocent blood.) (Msimang, 1982:195)

The revelation of the truth by Mbuyazi makes her withdraw from the affairs of the tribe, because, in her view, she has ceased to be the ancestors' good hand in nation building.

When Msimang gets Mkabayi to speak the truth and to mourn for the murdered Shaka, thus causing "the mighty and just Heavens to weep and mourn uncontrollably for Shaka", the audience witnesses "how truth has been murdered by lies and envy" (Mthiyane, 1984:131-132). Those who understand the cause Shaka died for, mourn for him but do not wish that Mkabayi had been sacrificed for the gods.

The mystery surrounding Mkabayi's ambivalent influence unfolds when she mentions that Dingane actually played a big role in the murder of Shaka. We accept her admission of guilt when, after discovering that she has religiously and politically committed a major error of judgement, she becomes remorseful and repentant. She painfully comes to realise that the murder of Shaka, which paved the way to the dissolution of the Zulu kingdom, was a serious blunder. We sympathise with her when "she finally resolves her inner conflicts" (Mollema, 1995:175), and then agonisingly says:

*"Iqiniso yileli: ngalutheka. Ngaluthwa nguDingane, Nyambose. Wafika kimi uDingane ngikwaDukuza ethwele izandla ekhanda ebabaza ukungcola kukaShaka ngokubulala unina, indlovukazi uNandi."*

(The truth is: I was misled. I was misled by Dingane, Nyambose. Dingane came to me when I was at Dukuza holding his head with both hands, bewildered and astonished at Shaka's evil deed of killing his mother, Queen Nandi) (Msimang, 1982:195)

Her acceptance of the curse and recognition of her guilt brings about a stage of purgation or catharsis in this novel and in *Ukufa kuShaka* (cf Zondi's works). This is probably why Mthiyane considered *Buzani kuMkabayi*:

"a narration with a telling comparison, Msimang has individualised the scene where Shaka is murdered and left as a solitary, unwanted baggage. This scene is not only painful and sorrowful but draws both relaxed pity and violent disgust from the reader." (Mthiyane, 1984:131)

Small people make small mistakes, often with little or no consequence. Great people instead

commit major blunders that can affect many innocent lives, and perhaps cause momentous historical turns of events. Mkabayi's mistake was to consider Shaka's death as a family matter of succession. It was instead an event that had wide reverberations in South Africa and beyond. For once, perhaps in the most important moment of her life, she sided with the narrowest of views and forgot the width of Shaka's power. She, who had renounced family, wanted to play family business, but with disastrous results.

This is possibly the message that Msimang intends conveying to the "Mothers of the Nation" who had entered the political arena in the 1980s: be careful not to be blinded by family interests, when the good of the nation is at stake.

#### **4.3 E. Zondi's socially committed literary works**

Elliot Zondi has published two historical Zulu dramas: *Ukufa kukaShaka* (The death of Shaka-1960, quoted here in its 1979 edition) and *Insumansumane* (The mysterious happening-1986). They portray two significant periods in the history of the Zulu nation: the death of Shaka, the founder of the Zulu empire, in 1828, and the Bhambatha rebellion of 1906, the last armed venture by the Zulu people. Heroes in the two dramas impersonate experiences and problems of their people and are seen as inspiring the present-day audiences towards solving problems that are still commonly felt in black communities today.

After the whirlwind of the second World War, in which most African nations had participated as part of their colonizers' army, Africa was now being swept by Harold Macmillan's "winds of change", fanned by powerful national liberation movements, and inspired by great idealists and visionaries, such as Sekou Touré, Leopold Senghor, and Julius Nyerere. Statehood and independence was being achieved throughout the continent, except in South Africa and in the Portuguese colonies. In South Africa the colonial administration had ceded the levers of power to a post-colonial, quasi-independent form of government in 1909, and then to a racist republican dispensation in 1961. The lot of the majority black population had gone from bad to worse, with discrimination and oppression openly and legally applied since 1948.

Zondi's Shaka summarises, personifies and idealizes the African aspirations in the late 1950s and early 1960s. King Shaka was the son of Senzangakhona's third wife, the Langeni princess, Nandi. Nandi was not a court favourite, and her uncontrolled temper forced her out of the royal compound. Together with her child, Shaka, she went back to her Langeni people, then moved from tribe to tribe, until they were offered shelter by the Mthethwa chief, Dingiswayo. Here young Shaka distinguished himself as a warrior. In 1816 Senzangakhona died, and Shaka succeeded him to the throne of the small Zulu tribe with the support of Dingiswayo. He soon established a standing army, which he trained strenuously to be fearless and fierce in battle, and was thus able to subdue and integrate many clans to form a mighty Zulu empire. By 1820 he had destroyed many chiefs, such as Phakathwayo of the Qwabe tribe; Zihlandlo of the Mkhize tribe; and Zwide of the powerful Ndwandwe tribe (Cope, 1968; Canonici, 1997:10).

With regard to *Insumansumane*, history tells us that with the fall of Dingane in 1838 (after the supposed "Cession of Natal by Dingane in 1836) and Cetshwayo in 1879, white farmers were granted vast tracts of land in Natal. Labour was, however, scarce on white-owned farms as men in the African reserves preferred to follow their traditional ways of life. The only way to solve the labour problem was to impose taxes. By the 'hut tax' a man had to pay tax for each hut. Since in terms of the traditional way of life each wife had a hut, this tax was seen as a way to penalise polygamy. Then a 'dog tax' was imposed for each dog owned. These taxes forced men to seek paying jobs in order to obtain money for the tax, and this was seen as a form of slavery by some characters in *Insumansumane* (Canonici, 1997:37).

The Natal colonial administration had thus hoped to solve the labour problem as well as its financial problems by introducing these two taxes. However, the financial problems escalated and a solution was sought by imposing a 'poll tax' (a pound per head), whereby every male over 18 years had to pay one pound. The new tax was explained to chiefs as 'a pound for a head', or as 'head tax', thus creating a mystery of why a head had to be paid for. The Zulu had become suspicious of census. Bhambatha had rightly sensed that this was likely to follow when he questioned the motives of the census (Marks, 1970:143), of being counted as if they were animals rather than individuals. Being counted in the African culture implies subordination and domination. The counted are automatically lowered in status while

the one who does the count becomes dominant. The introduction of the new tax confirmed the people's suspicions of being treated as slaves. They were not convinced by the government's explanations, and therefore did not co-operate.

All chiefs received allowances from the government, which gave it permission to demand chiefs to control their tribes to pay tax. At the end of January 1906, the time of tax collection, the government was met with sullen disapproval and resistance. The situation became volatile and martial law was imposed in February 1906. Chief Bhambatha of the Zondi clan was one of the chiefs who were unwilling to co-operate. He did not respect the colonial government, and believed that only King Dinuzulu, and no one else, had authority over him. He refused to pay tax and fomented rebellion in Natal on his return from Dinuzulu, after joining forces with Sigananda Shezi. He was eventually deposed and replaced by his uncle, Magwababa. Believing he owed no allegiance to the colonial government, Bhambatha kidnapped the usurper, Magwababa and then took refuge in the Nkandla forest. Claiming Dinuzulu's support, Bhambatha "hoped to provoke a general uprising, which did not materialize" (Canonici, 1997:37). Tax payment enforcers, police, tax collectors, and all collaborators had their lives put at risk. On the 10th of June, 1906, Bhambatha was attacked and killed. With many people not believing he had died, his head was cruelly cut off and displayed to convince the incredulous of his death.

#### 4.3.1 Summary of the drama *Ukufa kukaShaka*

The drama relates the events that led to the assassination of Shaka, the most powerful king ever to lead the Zulu nation. Shaka was killed by his half-brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana, together with his commander, Mbopha. The schemer behind the regicide was, however, Mkabayi, the kingmaker who had brought to the throne Senzangakhona, and then Shaka himself. She is upset because Shaka does not listen to her pleas, supposedly expressed on behalf of the people. She complains about four topics:

- (a) Shaka's wars have exhausted the nation, and the soldiers are tired of warfare: they would like to settle down, marry and have a family, while they still have the energy.
- (b) Why go in search of enemies far way? They cannot harm the nation. Neighbouring

enemies are finished, and it is time to take a rest from war.

- (c) Shaka rules the people too severely, with an iron hand. People are disgusted at the continuous view of corpses fed to the vultures.
- (d) Court cases are not properly conducted. People are easily condemned to death. Even the diviners, supposedly the prophets of the nation, have seen their numbers severely cut down. Nonkenkeza, a worthy member of the diviners' society, has also been recently condemned, in spite of the services he has rendered to Mkabayi.

Shaka responds by explaining the global vision he has of his kingdom, and its role in KwaZulu and in South Africa:

- (a) The kingdom must be strong, so as to be respected and feared by everybody, including the whites, who have large armies in the south.
- (b) The position of strength will enable *amaZulu* to remain independent, to venerate their ancestors, to do things according to their traditions.
- (c) In the face of the dangers coming from the south (the Cape) and the north (Maputo), the African people must be self-sufficient, ready to withstand any danger, as he is personally ready even to lay down his life for his nation. The country must remain on guard, strong both inside and outside, disciplined, without fears from false diviners or external enemies. Hence the need for a strong army, kept in constant training and state of alert.

It is therefore clear that Mkabayi presents a limited vision of the role of the Zulu kingdom, as if it was the private property of Senzangakhona's family. Shaka, however, had a wide vision of a universal dispensation, to benefit the Zulu as well as all other African nations, which had to contend with the threat of rape and invasion from the white intruders.

Shaka is, however, intelligent enough to understand that his brothers have got a grudge against him and are trying to get rid of him in order to take over the throne. For this reason he sends them off on an expedition against Soshangane, hoping that they will meet their death. But Mkabayi had foreseen this, and had arranged for the princes to return during the night and to attack Shaka while he would be alone and powerless.

#### 4.3.2 Elements of social commitment in *Ukufa kukaShaka*

Zondi's *Shaka* encourages efforts at nation building, and marks a return to the glorious past of heroic deeds which produced strength in unity. The play provides reflections on notions of liberation and nationalism, and forms part of the anti-colonial literature of the 1960s. Historical fictional narratives often express present-day aspirations, proposing solution models evoked in view of the present conditions. The hero is portrayed as a charismatic personality to whom present-day audiences can look for inspiration in their attempts to solve current problems. Some historical figures who attained legendary status are seen as having fought for modern ideals, such as unity, freedom, independence. The pan-Africanist ideas of the new African leaders were pushing history forward, and Zondi reflects these ideals in his portrayal of one of the most famous Africans. The play is reflective of the situation prevailing during the time in which it was published. The Zulu nation had been humiliated and divided due to the laws of apartheid; of lacked inspiration and sense of direction in order to plan a possible recovery from the status of quasi-insignificance.

What makes this story interesting is that it gives another viewpoint on the death of Shaka. Zondi is mainly concerned with the arguments for and against Shaka's assassination. While historical accuracy is one point of concern for Zondi, the other is definitely that of trying to make the African ideology dominant. He is deeply influenced by the political climate of apartheid South Africa. As Eagleton puts it:

“There are periods and societies where conscious, ‘progressive’ political commitment need not be a necessary condition for producing major art; there are other periods -fascism, for example, when to survive and produce as an artist at all involves the kind of questioning which is likely to result in explicit commitment. In such societies, conscious political partisanship, and the capacity to produce significant art at all, go spontaneously together.”  
(Eagleton, 1976:57-58)

The play *Ukufa kukaShaka* has tragic undertones in which a man committed to a good cause is destroyed. It significantly ends with a soliloquy making people react with human compassion at the futile waste of life. In this way Zondi causes readers to identify with Shaka. As a tragic hero with weaknesses like ours, Shaka is an important inspiration for

today and tomorrow. King Shaka is the protagonist in the play, and the whole play revolves on his conflicts, feelings and fate. He is admired for his nobility, courage, and outstanding achievements. The fact that Shaka grew as an ordinary being, the illegitimacy of his birth and his ability to put up a struggle against all odds, make the audience identify with him. He becomes one of them (many illegitimate children likely to become heroes) and so he is assured of their sympathy. His tragic flaw is **hubris**, excessive pride and over-confidence, which renders him blind to the looming danger. Canonici (1997) , in this regard, says:

“The idea of invincibility and indestructibility go hand in hand. He is assassinated because of this fault in his personality, which leads him to the mis-reading of the events and of his people’s feelings. We sympathise with him.” (Canonici, 1997:20)

The book conveys the tragic fall of one of Africa’s great sons. His all-devouring ambition and anger have led him from victory to victory. He now feels that he shares the powers of the Almighty. As Becker (1966:29) puts it: “He (*Shaka*) grew to regard himself as superior even to the ancestral spirits”. This is confirmed by his words:

“*Izwi likaShaka izwi likaMvelinqangi.*”  
(Shaka’s voice is the voice of God.) (Zondi, 1979:10)

Shaka equates himself with God., Kings were believed to represent God on earth according to the ladder of creation. This may be the reason why Shaka could not back off from the idea of delivering the nation from mental bondage. He dedicates his whole life to embracing the ideal, hoping that everyone else would join in his enterprise. Mkabayi represents the people who do not share this sentiment, and asks him to desist from this endless killing. This is noted in Shaka’s words when he is challenged by Mkabayi, who is pleading for Nonkenkeza:

“*Njengoba niyakhala uma ngibulala izigcwelegcwele, amasela, nabathakathi, nithi abajeziswe kanjani abantu?*”  
(As you complain when I kill wrong-doers, thieves, witches; how do you think people should be punished?) (Zondi, 1979:16-17)

Shaka sees the looming danger, yet he continues because of overconfidence emanating from

the fact that he represents the ancestors and God. He sees this as the need to fight vigorously for cultural and political recognition, thus he remains uncompromising, and braves assassination. He has in fact tried in vain to share his vision with the conspirators, but his ideals seem to conflict with theirs. If they are not convinced, there is nothing he can do.

*“Yiz’ uvalo, inqobo isibindi. Kumiswe abaphansi, ngeke ngiphambuke ezwini lokhokho: noma ..., ngiyowumisa umbuso kaZulu. Ngizoma noma ngiwe ngezwi loJama.”*

(Although I feel threatened I must be brave. It was destined by the ancestors, I will not divert from the voice of my forefathers: ..., I will build the Zulu empire. I will stand or die by the voice of Jama and others.) (Zondi, 1979:14)

Mkabayi, Dingane, Mhlangana and Mbopha represent the antagonists. In most cases the opposition stands in the way of progress, just for the sake of securing for themselves the power wielded by the ruling party. It wants to win by any means. With Mkabayi, their leader, being equally powerful and dangerous, there is no turning back. Her instructions must be carried out to avert the danger. Shaka, on the other hand, represents idealists, freedom fighters and a call for justice for all.

Zondi sides with Shaka against his assassins. He invites us to share his feelings for him through reminding us (at the end of the book) of the role Shaka played in uniting and strengthening the weak and scattered Nguni tribes. This is what Shaka is revered for in the whole African continent. He created a powerful nation which is the envy of any nation builder. When he is tormented by fears of assassination, after becoming aware of the manipulation of his half-brothers by Mkabayi, he does not back off. As Boulton (1960:46) aptly sums up, tragedy “deals with conflict, dilemma and suffering.” She further says:

“After one of the crises, the human dilemma becomes insoluble; there is no going back and no easy answer or happy ending.” (Boulton, 1960:147)

With Dingane, Mhlangana and Mbopha striking “at an opportune moment when the Zulu regiments had been sent to the ill-fated Bhalule expedition against Soshangane, leaving Shaka relatively alone and unguarded at Dukuza, he falls in solitude more terrible than of his childhood” (Ballard, 1988:23). The nation witnesses his fall as the fall of a martyr and

of the nation itself. He has made the nation stronger by centralising political and material power in one king. Moreover, Shaka's commitment is to put an end to cowardice, witchcraft, loss of self control; to instil courage and pride in oneself; to fight for unity and strength. His message to today's masses is that they must provide an alternative to the practice of basic opinions and commit themselves to the search of new identity.

Shaka shows immense stature in that he does not show fear in battle, nor does he show it when he is confronted by death. The words: "...*lishisa kanjani leli lembe.*" (...how hot this hoe is) (Zondi, 1979:52) suggest that Shaka at times found difficult the task of being a king. Nevertheless, Shaka showed courage and conviction in the performance of his role. He dedicates himself to his ideal, and expects everybody else to do the same. This is his answer to Mkabayi.

When Jeqe mourns over the corpse, he makes it clear that Shaka has enjoyed immense popularity among his people:

*"Impela akusoka lingenasici; leli gazi elimpompozayo likhomba ukugqwala kwethusi, ukubuna komthunzi, ukusha kwesiphethu sibuzwe bukaZulu. Nakuba inkosi ibinolaka, ingancengi, ingathetheleli, ikwazile ukumisa umthetho, inhlonipho, ukuzibamba, ubuqhawe, nokuzithanda, konke lokhu okuzobhuntshe."*

(It's true that no man is without blemish: the blood that is oozing is an indication of a fading bronze iron, the weathering of a shade, the drying up of the fountain of Zuluness. Although the king has been short-tempered, not persuasive, and not forgiving, he managed the promulgation of laws, bringing about respect, self-control, heroism and building self-esteem. All this is going to disappear.) (Zondi, 1979:52)

Shaka was responsible for the exaltation of moral values or values of *ubuntu*: generosity, honour, justice and devotion to duty. All these virtues were going to die with him.

As in most powerful conflicts, the drama provides a mediator in the person of Jeqe, whom J.L. Dube had immortalized in his 1930 *Insila KaShaka*. Jeqe is the shadow of Shaka, his right hand in organising affairs of state, in moving public opinion, in setting precedents so that Dingane and Mhlangana are forced to take part in a dangerous military expedition. But

Jeqe is also privy to Shaka's innermost thoughts, the confidante of Shaka's dreams and visions, a realist alter ego who can discern the limitations of Shaka's human personality and the great inspirational value of his dreams. After Shaka's assassination, when everybody is afraid of declaring either for or against the slain hero, Jeqe is the only one with the courage to kneel over the lifeless body, to touch his blood, and to proclaim to the heavens the greatness of his King. He thus becomes the voice of his nation, the un-appointed but extremely effective *imbongi*, the dramatic announcer of the closure of a historical period whose repercussions are still felt today.

Shaka's death marked the beginning of another era, of questioning the divine will. For example, where were the ancestors? Were they never worried to see their plan of building a strong nation miscarry? What had annoyed them? Were they aiming to punish the nation for failing to reach consensus on earth so as to avoid dividing them in the heavens on the issue of killing one of the twins (Mkabayi and Mama)? These questions were, and still are, left unanswered.

Cele (1997) points out, however, that:

“Although the ancestors' voices are listened to with great respect, they are not always complied with. The ancestors are referred to as “*izithutha*”, ‘the foolish ones.’” (Cele, 1997:15)

As if Msimang was convinced that to some readers Jeqe's mourning over Shaka's dead body was not enough, in *Buzani KuMkabayi* (1982) he compounds the *catharsis* of *Ukufa kukaShaka*. The catharsis stage is arrived at when the tragic hero is purged of the sins he has committed. Purgation of guilt, perhaps, is attached to the hero's tragic act. Aristotle says tragedy purges “our minds by means of pity and terror” (Boulton 1960:145). The conscience of the audience is cleared not only by what happens to the murdered, but by the fact that they are able to draw judgement and say he has been wronged by his murderers. As the audience concludes that the murderers deserve punishment (Hatlen, 1972:203), we are left with a sense of the greatness of the man as well as the suffering involved in human life. Many tragic representations of suffering and defeat leave the audience not feeling depressed but relieved, a relief in the hope that everything will return to normal soon. It is a tragedy

without *nemesis/ retribution* (offenders are punished) until Msimang (1982) in *Buzani kuMkabayi* comes to present Mkabayi suffering, being tormented by Shaka's death. Mthiyane (1984) agonisingly writes:

“Because no earthly being shares the pangs with Shaka, Msimang causes the mighty and just Heavens to weep and mourn uncontrollably for Shaka. The cruel earth ....!. Msimang, however, redeems this plight by painting a finale where Mkabayi weeps and mourns for the murdered Shaka. In fact, Msimang glorifies the end of the novel by allowing the dead truth to spring anew in the dying figure of Mkabayi!” (Mthiyane, 1984:132)

The painting of the finale where Mkabayi weeps and mourns for King Shaka suggests that Msimang shares Zondi's sentiments in acknowledging the huge loss the Zulu nation sustained in Shaka's death. In this way *Buzani KuMkabayi* complements Zondi's *Ukufa kukaShaka*. Mkabayi speaks the truth as she mourns for the murdered Shaka, and then the audience witnesses “how truth has been murdered by lies and envy” (Mthiyane, 1984:131). Those who understand the cause he died for, begin to mourn for him. This evokes our sympathy in spite of the opposition's point of view. Seeing that many politicians have found it hard to unite black Africans through peaceful means, the reader/nation is convinced that Shaka's campaigns were necessary actions. The nation then dismisses Mkabayi's earlier assertion in *Ukufa kukaShaka* that the leader should be revered by all, and trusted in whatever he does.

The mention of Shaka's being sent by the ancestors to accomplish their mission, as Mkabayi testifies in *Buzani kuMkabayi*, makes us not wonder why he never backed down from the burden of his mission. He becomes loyal to it up to the point of death. He wanted to fight to the bitter end, that is, until the external danger, the white coloniser he had prophesied as the “swallow”, was removed. The opponents (Mkabayi, Dingane and others), not realising all this, were only content with what had already been achieved. Out of shortsightedness they were concerned with the satisfaction of man's needs and not those of the whole nation. In this sense Shaka's assassination is seen as a betrayal of the nation and this turns the nation against the conspirators in honour of Shaka's being so patriotic. It's thanks to him that at least during the post-colonial era the neo-colonial power (the apartheid regime) found Shaka's spirit still burning in the new generation that started preaching the unity of all

blacks.

By making it possible for the truth to be resurrected, Msimang has purged Shaka and exalted him to a very high position. The loss that the nation has sustained gets compounded when his betrayer comes back to declare him the most sinned against, rather than a sinner. Further, this pulls down the shutters against the old distorted view of Shaka, 'the brute', 'the beast-like', 'the heartless', 'cruel' and so on, as he is called by some writers. He is more humane, with a stronger sense of justice and the common good. Badian's (1968:11) words seem quite apt:

"His attitude to punishment by death was in terms of a code recognised and accepted by his people." (Badian, 1968:11)

Criminals were tried by Shaka and his councillors, and if they were found guilty they were put to death. Imprisonment seems worse a punishment than death for it prolongs suffering. Considering all this, Dingane, the usurper, was therefore not defeated by whites at Blood River (*Ncome*), but by the ancestors and God whom he had betrayed by killing Shaka before he could complete his work. The gods had worked tirelessly but only to have their efforts thwarted by man's uncontrolled jealousy -the desire to attain greatness not allotted to him. Dingane had to pay a terrible price for hampering attempts at effecting a lasting union (a formidable force) before the looming attack of the white man.

From the above it could be concluded that Shaka's death is indeed an African tragedy. When he died not only South Africa suffered, but the whole continent groaned painfully to look at the opportunity lost, the opportunity to keep African nations tied with an unslipping knot for an unforeseen external danger -the colonial powers. Zondi's Shaka is an "attempt at the resuscitation of the heroic heritage" of the African people as opposed to the myth of the under-achieving black savage who deserves to be dragged to the western civilization (Adebayo, 1999:7). It is a big threat to the apartheid ideological stance. The way Zondi admires Shaka's political and military genius, his combined power to drastically overhaul and re-organize the black society, make us forget the atrocities of *Mfecane* and their horror of destruction. When his body is untouched by wild animals after he is assassinated by his

siblings and left in the plain, it is confirmed that he is the greatest personality ever thrown up by history. Zondi has seemingly, in Adebayo's (1999:20) words, bent the "epistemological stick" in other direction to help re-insert the hero's lost humanity.

The sixties was the right period for Zondi because in much of Africa in the 60s and 70s the task was to decolonise the literatures. South Africa was still engulfed in the predicaments of colonisation, while the rest of Africa had begun to rid itself of. The African hot demands of this era were the rediscovery of the African roots and the revival of pre-colonial traditions which had been trampled over by imperialism. Eagleton (1976:46) asserts that "in such an era, the need for explicitly revolutionary art" becomes pressing. Nevertheless, it is wrong "for an author to be openly partisan. The political tendency must emerge unobtrusively from the dramatised situations". In his dramatization of the historical event, Zondi expresses his ideological conception of the world and thus is not openly partisan. His stance is supported by Eagleton (1976:6-7) who states that literary works are "forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world", that is, ideology = social mentality, and that "all art springs from an ideological conception of the world."

Zondi concentrates on the assassination of Shaka as the main event, and with a tightly-knit plot, he "successfully manipulates apartheid opportunities for his own ends" (Msimang 1999:xii). As Chapman (1996:90) states: "by early 1960s decolonization was beginning to define the period." It was between 1958 and 1966, that is before the National Party began their own hegemony and rule, when the black nationalism began to threaten white rule. Apartheid suffering required unity and loyalty resurrected (Cele, 1996:10), and therefore *Ukufa kukaShaka* was published in opportune time to decolonise the black African minds and warn them against down playing their own worth. It is a political comment on the situation in which it was published. Canonici (1998) argues thus:

"The book, which was published at the time of ANC's pan-African policies' international popularity, depicts Shaka as a pan-African idealist who is prepared to sacrifice his life for the unification of many tribes and clans, which would otherwise be unable to withstand the onslaught of the advancing white colonists." (Canonici, 1998:62)

*Ukufa kukaShaka* provided some opposing ideology with the aim to show them what they are worth.

### **Concluding remarks**

The story of the death of Shaka has been written and re-written by several authors, not only of Zulu origin. Not omitting the negative aspects, Zondi highlights many positive attributes (cf “*Impela akusoka lingenasici*” (Zondi, 1979:52)), and this constitutes progress for a figure that was generally portrayed in a negative light in the 1920s and 1930s. Most authors expressed horror at the atrocities committed during Shaka’s rule. Dhlomo, for instance, describes Shaka in both negative and positive colours, according to Gérard:

“A tyrant and merciless despot, a respected and loving king; a warrior, a founder of the most aristocratic nation, a prophet and a man who wanted to save difficulties.” (Gérard, 1971:223)

A negative view of Shaka was expressed in J.L. Dube’s 1930, *Insila kaShaka*, whose Shaka reflects the author’s Christian value system (Golan, 1988:262). Dube’s work reveals the Zulu king as the “cause of destruction and death”, “a tyrant and capricious ruler” (Gérard, 1981:232). According to Couzens (1985) H.I.E. Dhlomo, however, took a stance to resurrect Shaka and rehabilitate his reputation in his poems and plays. In his essays, Shaka is a nation builder, a unifier, a communalist, a diplomat and a genius in military affairs. Dhlomo “was concerned to restore even Dingane’s reputation” ( Couzens, 1985:320). In 1944 he managed to rehabilitate him in plays that were never published. Later, more independent-minded Zulu writers re-assessed Shaka’s personality and historical role.

If Shaka was blood-thirsty why would Mofolo end up “endorsing a kind of nostalgic Zulu pride?” The whole of the southern hemisphere collapsed at the end of Shaka (Chapman, 1996:210). Zondi tries to reconstruct the dented image of king Shaka, and this adds to the emergence among the Zulu intellectuals of a totally new Shaka (Golan (1988:263), who is both a Zulu nationalist and a fighter for black liberation. Golan (1988) says:

“Jordan Ngubane described Shaka not only as the greatest Zulu leader of all

time, but also as the first African nationalist. It was the image which Mazisi Kunene developed in the epic- *Emperor Shaka the Great*, making Shaka the father of black nationalism.” (Golan, 1988:263)

Zondi’s Shaka is clear about the differences between the Zulu and the British system of land tenure, but he treats the matter tactfully, humanly and reasonably, although his ideology clashes with that of the white man.

*“Thina sithi izwe elami lonke, lilinywa abantu bami kuphela.”*  
(We maintain that the whole land is mine, and only my people have a right to cultivate it.) (Zondi, 1979:19)

The white man’s view differs greatly from this, for each of them owns a piece of land.

*“Yilowo nalowo mlungu uyinkosi ngokwakhe, lento esizama ukuyiqeda thina lapha.”*  
(Every white is a king by himself, exactly what we are trying to put to an end here.) (Zondi, *ibid.*)

Shaka acknowledges that the white man has different ideas about land tenure: something that was going to create considerable problems under his successors. Today white farmers own land while most blacks have to rely on Land Reform and Redistribution to own it, while tribal land is entrusted to the king who distributes it as he wishes. Despite different views Shaka never ill-treated the settlers, but extended the hand of friendship and hospitality to them. He requested them to teach his people to read and write. His successors were not as friendly to the settlers. Couzens (1985) says of Shaka:

*“To state that he was a cruel king is to pay a man who broke virgin ground and founded a nation the poorest compliment. Had there been no Shaka there might never have been a proud Zulu nation.”* (Couzens, 1985:247)

In Zondi’s play, Shaka challenged Mkabayi to show him a better way of dealing with fake diviners, murderers, traitors, thieves, etc. According to him, society was better rid of them all. This will be interpreted as cruelty by certain nations, nearly 200 years after the events. But social and moral sensitivity grows and is refined with reflection and experience.

Shaka's change of military tactics and weapons marked a change in the course of African history. The ability to fight at close range would definitely win battles. There was a need to create national unity for political freedom in strength to be realised, and Shaka felt he was God's instrument in creating a powerful nation. Zondi demonstrates the value and dignity of the person we lost. *Ukufa kukaShaka* is heralded as "one of the best plays ever written in Zulu" by Ntuli et al. (1993:147), in conception, plot development, theme, language and style. This successful positive dramatisation of a major Zulu historical event is one of the committed attempts that makes Zulu literary works compare favourably with works in other languages where writers had no restrictions.

#### 4.3.3 *Insumansumane*: The story

In *Insumansumane* disrespect of people and culture and lack of consultation are the major issues. Ndabazabantu (Bantu Affairs Commissioner) bursts into Bhambatha's homestead and does not greet the chief nor is he prepared to sit down to be given a hearing by him. He accuses Bhambatha of having undisciplined subjects, who flog his horses. Bhambatha reciprocates by not greeting, and Ndabazabantu responds with contempt, "*uthi uyinkosi ...*" (You think you are a chief) (Zondi, 1986:1). Bhambatha does not show any sympathy. He instead calls him '*umnqolo*' (a boy tied to his mother's apron strings). Ndabazabantu reports the matter to Magwababa and instructs him to bring the chief to him at Greytown.

Mutual respect is highly valued in the African culture as one of the tenets of *ubuntu*. Ndabazabantu's attitude is negative, superior and arrogant. If the chiefs are not respected as a matter of course, they in turn cannot expect respect, and their instructions will not be taken seriously. Bhambatha refuses to play inferior as expected, as reflected in the words "*lo mlungwana ufike ...*" (This little whitey comes...) (Zondi, 1986:6) and "*akakhohlwa singabafana*" (He is convinced he is dealing with boys) (Zondi, 1986:10). Thus Ndabazabantu has caused the subtle scorn to be reciprocated.

Another display of utter lack of respect for the chief and of arrogance on the part of white people involves the white farmer, Uys, who barges into the chief's homestead to remove his employee, a boy who had escaped from the farm. The farmer starts beating him in the

chief's presence and in return he gets severely sjamboked for disrespecting the chief. The act should have constituted a clear and stern warning, but the farmer, out of ignorance, commits another serious offence by calling the chief's mother, MaMchunu, '*mfazi*' (traditionally married woman), and again gets punished.

When Ndabazabantu comes to Bhambatha's house for the second time, he warns Bhambatha to perform the duties for which he was appointed: to collect taxes from his subjects; to supply labour; to respect the government's messengers (Ndabazabantu and others). According to him, it is not part of the chiefs' duty to provide answers to the questions asked by the people: they should go to him in Pietermaritzburg.

Bhambatha, still dissatisfied with the government's rule of deposing chiefs as it pleases, considers contacting all the deposed chiefs to organise an armed resistance. When Ndabazabantu again comes to Bhambatha's house, he accuses him of thrashing a white farmer and reminds him that he rules over blacks, not over the white people, therefore he has no right to punish whites. This time Ndabazabantu is here to tell Bhambatha about the government's poll tax for all adult males, besides the tax for married men. No discussion and excuses will be entertained as the government has already made the decision. Ndabazabantu instructs the chief to bring all the Zondi adult males to Greytown to pay tax and to have their questions answered.

Bhambatha is prevented from going to Greytown by Nhlonhlo's group, who do not see the reason for the payment of the poll tax. Bhambatha hopes to get to Greytown the following morning to explain his case, but the Bantu Affairs Commissioner has already concluded that Bhambatha's reaction is a form of insubordination and resistance. Hence he is deposed in favour of Magwababa, his uncle. The chief reacts by kidnapping Magwababa, and Nhlonhlo organises regiments for an armed revolt.

#### 4.3.4 Social concerns in *Insumansumane*

Zondi declares in the introduction that his aim is not simply to re-tell (*landa*) the story, but to revisit (*bukeza*) and interpret the events which were possibly misinterpreted by historians.

He takes the stand point that the history of the black people has been told in a biased way and needs to be thoroughly revisited and told from the African point of view. Zondi uses the element of mystery to revisit the incident with the aim of correcting the distortions of the past for the African identity re-discovery. Identity loss is one of the key issues that contribute to making blacks look down upon themselves. He therefore hopes that by putting events in an African perspective, he may win back some colonised minds. He presents the growing list of grievances, expressed through Bhambatha, to show that the situation was intolerable. The land issue tops the list of protest, second, is the issue of tax imposition, and then the consequences thereof. By the former issues the colonial government wants to make cheap labour readily available, and in turn reduce polygamy. The latter definitely adds salt to the wound.

The play frequently refers to the land issue, which is perceived by blacks to be making life in the reserves impossible. Most of the arable land is occupied by a handful of whites who regard the Africans living on 'their' farms as labourers. In the reserves people can no longer rear as many cattle as they wanted, or grow enough corn and mealies, and therefore they are compelled to seek employment in order to survive. Ndabazabantu keeps reminding the Zondis that they are tenants, which may be why they are levied tax for using the land they no longer own.

Land dispossession was caused by the Delimitation of Reserve Act of 1902-4. Land was sold to whites and Indians while Blacks settled on overpopulated and overworked land. This made life difficult for Africans since they depended on subsistence farming for survival. On the other hand farm owners soon complained about the shortage of labour.

To add insult to injury, the colonial government expected Africans to pay taxes to feed their unjust jailors. The collection of tax was done indiscriminately as Dinuzulu was also expected to collect tax from his people. These differences culminated in clashes. Culturally they meant that one section had to accept the system of the other.

The taxes demanded from the Africans were more than what their piece of land could produce. With the white man's currency being money, the Africans were compelled into

money earning jobs. Since taxation had been devised as a way of bringing about a better labour supply to white farmers, the government created a mechanism to discourage people from moving to town for better wages. One had to get a special permit to work in town.

*“Kanti uyaya yini umuntu eGoli imvume ingekho ... Uma ethi uyathubeleza le eGoli uzingelwa njengenyamazane kunjalo nje akukho mpatho, umuntu uphathiswa okomgodoyi.”*

(Can one go to Johannesburg without a permit ...? If you try to dodge out, you are hunted down like a buck, on top of that ill-treatment is prevalent, a person is treated like a stray dog.) (Zondi, 1986:22)

This is the issue of power, briefly -who is in control? The taxes imposed on dogs and on huts cannot be clearly justifiable. Lack of understanding is reflected in the words:

*“Lezi zindlu zethu, sizithelelelani ngoba asihlangene ngalutho kuzo noHulumeni. Sizakhela ngaphandle kosizo lwalo Hulumeni.”*

(Why do we have to pay taxes for our huts, since the government has had nothing to do regarding them; we build them ourselves without the help of this government.) (Zondi, 1986:29)

That suggestions to impose additional taxation on Africans were aimed at forcing the Africans to work on European farmers' terms is testified by Marks (1970:132) who states that “better state of labour had been the focus”, and subsequent to that “Poll tax was passed into law in August 1905” (Marks, 1970:140).

After various taxes (hut tax, dog tax) were imposed upon the Africans, the Poll tax made the situation even more intolerable. The government is seen as wanting to suck the people's blood in this way. This makes Bhambatha take a journey of the mind back to 1879 (Cetshwayo's era) to find the reasons why the Natal government prevented the Zulus from shedding blood. He sarcastically comes to the conclusion that, by preventing faction fights, the government wants to save the African blood for its own benefit.

*“Yiqiniso ukuthi uHulumeni yimbungulu, usiyekisa ukuchitha igazi ukuze yena alincele.”*

(It's true that the government is a bug, he stops us from spilling the blood so that he can suck it himself.) (Zondi, 1986:64)

Bhambatha has realized that the government's primary aim in forcing blacks to work is to solve farm labour shortage.

*“Lo Hulumeni akasho ukuthi asiyosebenza ukuze sinothe, uthi asiyosebenza ukuze sikwazi ukukhokha intela.”*

(This government does not say that we should work in order to become rich, it says we should work in order to manage paying tax.) (Zondi, 1986:72)

The Poll Tax translated as ‘head tax’ (*intelo yekhanda*) created a very confused state of affairs. The reasons for imposing this tax were not well communicated so as to remove all possible doubts about its necessity. In the African culture the only thing that they owe to a person is *ilobolo*, and so Ndabazabantu has become another father-in-law. The white administration must carry the blame for sowing the seeds of discord and open conflict because of its poor communication efforts. The whole tribe is complaining, because it is not comfortable about “*ukhandampondwe*” ‘a pound for a head’ (Zondi, 1986:63).

Marks (1970:140) states that “the translation of Poll Tax into Zulu as a ‘head tax’ was rather unfortunate and led to wry remarks that a legs and arms tax would soon follow.” This misconception resulted from lack of understanding of one another’s language. The language used could not access the intended meaning, that is, a pound per head/ person. It seemed they were to pay tax for their heads. Why this had to happen it could not be explained. It remained a mystery, as the title of the drama indicates.

Zondi wants to communicate “certain facts doled out by history” (Mbhele, 1990:184). The government “never discussed issues or bills with black people before their promulgation” into laws. They imposed them on the Africans. Bhambatha wants to be given a chance to say what his aspirations are rather than to be dictated to all the time. He demands two way communication as opposed to only getting orders from Ndabazabantu.

And to show that the government desires to maintain the status quo, Ndabazabantu retorts:

*“Akuwena ozotshela uHulumeni ...”*

(You are not going to tell the government what to do.) (Zondi, 1986:34)

This is tantamount to saying ‘you have no say in the running of your country’. Bhambatha insists that his people need to be treated like human beings, shown respect as intelligent people capable of understanding. Nobody listens to him. He wants to be given the opportunity to use his thinking, which is in accordance with the accepted rules of human rights. The Commissioner’s arrogant and uncompromising attitude, as demonstrated by his unpreparedness to entertain any discussion or objection, leads to Bhambatha’s refusing to obey. Bhambatha is sincere and outspoken and it is this behaviour which conflicts with Ndabazabantu’s.

“*Angizukotizela muntu.*” (Zondi, 1986:36)  
(I’m not going to show respect to anybody.)

Ndabazabantu states that he is the only person qualified to answer questions from the people:

“*Onale mbuzo makathunyelwe kimi.*”  
(He who has such questions must be sent to me.) (Zondi, 1986:64)

But people know that it is a one way communication. By asking questions they cannot hope to change the government’s mind, as it has already done some thinking for them, and theirs is to do and die.

Bhambatha is unhappy about the lack of consultation with regard to economic exploitation introduced by legislation. He is against the oppressive economic levies imposed upon Africans. He moans about the labour system. Children do not see why they have to work or to pay tax. The Zondi people suffer hardships, over-crowdedness, poverty, etc., as a result of the new demands of the political authority. This is a protest against the whites who are insensitive to the pains tolerated by black workers. Blacks are neither involved in decision-making nor consulted when resolutions are taken. They are treated as if they have no minds or opinions, as is observed in the words:

“*Musa ukuzikhathaza ngokucabanga uHulumeni usekwenzele lowo msebenzi*”

*wena yenza okuthiwa kwenze.”*

(Do not worry yourself by trying to think: the government has already done that work for you and yours is just to do as instructed.) (Zondi, 1986:65)

The play demonstrates the arrogant culture of dominance upheld by the apartheid regime. Bhambatha does not want to identify with Ndabazabantu, because he is a nobody, uneducated, incapable of showing respect for black adults. Zondi goes further: he displays some stereotypes of a non-Zulu speaker who claims to know Zulu, but is sorely ignorant of appropriate cultural and ideological attitudes. Ndabazabantu knows no *hlonipha* language, nor the social life of black Africans. Hence Bhambatha retorts:

*“Azazi lutho ngathi: amasiko ethu, nemicabango yethu, ...”*

(They do not know anything about us, our customs, and our way of thinking, ...) (Zondi, 1986:11)

The lack of mutual understanding is rendered worse by the fact that Africans are also ignorant of the white man's culture and way of life. Bhambatha's views are a typical example of cultural ignorance.

*“Bangamanuku abelungu, bafinya qede amanqomfula bawafake esikhwameni, bachama endlini, ....”*

(Whites are filthy, they wipe their mucus and keep it in their pockets, they urinate in the house, ...) (Zondi, 1986:27)

To the white man it is unhygienic to fling one's mucus on the floor, or to relieve oneself in public. Whites and blacks follow different customs (cf 'Mlungu Ungazikhohlisi' by J.C Dlamini). Bhambatha does not want to imitate the white culture. He wants to develop his own because he likes it (Zondi, 1986:12). But it is clear that there is no possibility of working together because they are always on a collision course. Bhambatha's aspiration is to stick to his roots and traditions, his culture which is bound up with common identity. There is no need to relate it to political struggle (Eagleton, 1976:215). But European imperialism has tried its best to destroy indigenous languages, customs, traditions and dignity by simply ignoring them.

Calling the chief's mother 'mfazi' (traditionally married woman) is an insult to the chief

because traditionally a royal woman is never called as such. Definitely, this 'subtle scorn' and 'coarse behaviour' could hardly go unreciprocated, that is why Bhambatha lashes the white farmer for lack of respect for his authority and position (Canonici, 1998:63). Bhambatha then makes it clear that he cannot continue to respect the government and its officials if they do not learn to treat the Zondis like human beings. If Africans could stop looking down upon themselves, whites would begin to respect them.

*"Lo Hulumeni akazi ukuthi kuhlonishwana kabili, kuhle simfundise le nqubo enhle kangaka yethu thina maZulu; siyaziqhenya ngobuzwe bethu ngakho-ke masingahlonizi ngalokhu, sidingwa ukuthathwa njengabantu."*  
(This government does not understand that respect is reciprocated, we must teach him this most beautiful Zulu custom; we are proud of our nationhood. therefore we should not be ashamed of that, we must be treated like people.)  
(Zondi, 1986:35)

By reminding the Zulu people that they practise something which is valued world-wide, that is, democracy (men sit down and share ideas (Zondi, 1986:31)), Zondi aims to instil pride in the African people. This is one essential thing that the African people have lost, and which they really need to recover in order to regain their self-esteem.

Canonici (1998) sums up Ndabazabantu's attitude:

"The arrogant, callous and unintelligent way the Commissioner disregards the customs, the etiquette, the channels of communication, and the sacredness of a person whose chieftainship is his birthright, all show him as a dim-witted *izimu* who prefers the use of brute force rather than reason to satisfy his greed." (Canonici, 1998:63)

While Bhambatha demands respect and equal rights, some people shyly support the position of the government. They do not consider Bhambatha as spokesperson of the people. Bhambatha swears to deal with such people one silly day. Magwababa, Bhambatha's uncle, epitomises puppets (*izincelebana*), that is, the people who do not challenge the status quo but simply give in to the government's demands, like the township councillors who were regarded as stooges for the apartheid regime. They work for the benefit of the government of the day. These stooges created by the government make resistance ineffective. Bhambatha can clearly detect the white man's ulterior motives.

This attitude of the colonial government, which was also demonstrated by the apartheid government, prompted Zondi to call for a unified objection among the blacks. He achieved this by emphasising historical events which could be open to such an interpretation. Bhambatha's preparedness to take action against the government seems to suggest that rebellion might become the only solution in a situation of deaf rule and arrogant hegemony.

Bhambatha is not going to show fear or respect, because he cannot tolerate nuisance, "*umbhedo*" (Zondi 1986:70), and resolves to teach the white administration a lesson. He calls on all traditional leaders to resist the colonial government's imposition and to stand with the people they represent. Implied in this act is a lack of co-operation between the two parties, as it cuts all possible ways of communication.

Bhambatha hates people who impose their will on others without any explanation and motivation. He considers such people "*ondabazabo*" / "*ondabazenu*" 'Commissioner of their /your affairs' (Zondi 1986:8). He believes that if one claimed to be representing him he would better be prepared to listen to his likes and dislikes. Bhambatha hates people who look at things through borrowed eyes as he feels it makes the beauty of the African culture not seen and appreciated for what it is. He is convinced that his culture has a place on earth. Other cultures have to be viewed through the Zulu cultural prism. Understanding culture implies understanding the language which carries it. If one represents others, he should understand their language and culture to do his work effectively and efficiently. With Ndadabazabantu, still confusing "*umnqolo*" for "*amaqolo*" (lower backs), mutual understanding is miles away. Giving one a chance to express his opinion enhances good communication. As long as Ndadabazabantu considers Bhambatha "*lo mfana*" (this boy), nothing will be achieved. It dis-empowers and marginalises Bhambatha, while it also shows that Ndadabazabantu has no understanding of his own position vis-a-vis an hereditary chief.

The government's continual failure to respect land and cultural rights leads to Bhambatha's armed stand and insurrection. Bhambatha turns to the armed struggle at last because he is not listened to. His fury is symbolised by his spitting at Ndadabazabantu. He sees this as the only solution to get Ndadabazabantu to respond to his call for a respectful discussion. The result is that violence is reciprocated. The words in the following quotation mark the end

of verbal communication and a transition to authoritarian attitudes.

“**uNd.** *Uyangifela?*”

“**uBamb.** *Cha angikufeli, oyokufela ilenkosi osuyibekile (asho shingile ahambe) mina ngizofela amaZondi.*”

(**uNd.** Are you spitting at me?)

**uBamb.** No, I’m not dying for you, he who will die for you is the chief you have just installed (turning his back against him). I’m going to die for the Zondi people.) (Zondi, 1986:94)

Bhambatha angrily plays on the dual meaning of the verb ‘*fela*’: ‘to spit at’ and ‘to die for’. Ndabazabantu is indignant that the chief should spit at him (‘*fela*’). Bhambatha explains that Magwababa will die on Ndabazabantu’s behalf, while Bhambatha will lay down his life for the Zondi people. A similar situation had forced Cetshwayo into the military adventure to reciprocate the violence of the colonial government. It is this attitude of fight or perish that helped the Zulu *impi* rise triumphant at Sandlwana.

The shortage of land and the introduction of numerous taxes would definitely destroy the Zulu social order and cultural life. The oppressed Africans draw their own logical conclusions from these measures. The ‘hut tax’ was seen as an effort to reduce polygamy, and this would interfere with the right of parents to have many children, and with the function of the ancestors, who are considered the sole givers of life.

“*Uyabona-ke le ntela yezindlu izolwa nelungelo lethu likwandisa imizi yethu ngokuthatha abafazi.*”

(You see the hut tax has come to fight against our right to increase our families by taking many wives.) (Zondi, 1986:37)

The act will impact negatively on Zulu cultural life. White government officials are seen as witches who were against the right of people to multiply -*Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi* (The increase is obstructed by the witches). Men are forced to seek money-paying employment to be able to pay taxes. They even go to work in white people’s houses as *ondishana*, jobs reserved for women. What ‘*undishana*’ (dish-boy) actually does in the morning is to take out madam’s chamber pot (Zondi, 1986:21; Canonici, 1997:41).

In addition the chief's role as a decision-maker is transformed into that of a messenger. Chiefs are expected to carry out government's ordinances, without any objection nor possibility to discuss them with their councillors. This amounts to the destruction of the Zulu social democratic system. Although Bhambatha feels that he owes no allegiance to the white government, as his position is hereditary, yet he, like many other chiefs, got the position after Cetshwayo's fall, and with the white government's approval. Since the annexation of Zululand as a vassal state, many laws were enacted without consulting the Zulu. The white administration is still continuing with its culture of non-consultation, which in Zulu tradition shows lack of respect for the other party. If a chief does not obey, he is deposed. The deposition of chiefs mean that they are only expected to be puppets, not to listen to their own people, but to serve the government to convey its orders. Chiefs have been stripped of all the powers they initially had. The deprivation of the opportunity to air his views shows Bhambatha that the government does not expect chiefs to care for their subjects as they traditionally did. Put in the context of the apartheid era, this would mean the government wants people who work for the benefit of the apartheid regime and not for the oppressed community.

*"Bona bafuna izincelebana."*

(They want puppets.) (Zondi, 1986:17)

Canonici (1998) explains Zondi's insistence on this point of mutual respect as a reflection of the historical situation at the time of writing. During President P.W. Botha's rule, in the 1980s, Botha, like the old Natal colonial government, "was convinced that reforms could only be introduced from above by a benevolent government who knew better than the people for whom the laws were made." He wanted to introduce political reforms based on separate development, and on what he maintained was "partnership among equals" (as reflected in the general idea of the Tricameral Parliament). Naturally, separation meant domination by one leading group and consequent servitude by the others. Botha's idealism was based on the old colonial idea of "benevolent Christian stewardship", whereby all the relevant decisions were made by the leading group for the benefit of the other groups. The play clearly takes issue with these ideas, and eventually rejects them. The drama, in this way, is "a call for consultation and the introduction of democratic processes." It justifies "the

readiness of many people to fight for what is their birthright, in their land of birth" (Canonici, 1998:63).

The significance of the text is that it displays the amount of damage that the transfer of power and authority from black leaders' hands to the white leaders' caused. Dinuzulu and Bhambatha have no direct power over their subjects. Traditional tribal life was thus destroyed. Morals began to dwindle, as parents had to work instead of looking after their children. This was another problem facing the African chiefs. Furthermore, they felt that tax introduction was aimed at indirectly forcing Africans to reduce their birth rate. This was viewed as another violation of their human rights. Hence Nhlonhlo, reinforcing Bhambatha, says:

*"Okubi kakhulu ukuthi ukulahleka kwelungelo elilodwa kuzolandelwa ukulahleka kwamanye amalungelo."*

(What is really bad is that the loss of one legal right forecasts the loss of other rights.) (Zondi, 1986:37)

Nhlonhlo describes the faulty relationship between the black people and the government thus:

*"Kukhona igoda, elingabonakali elifana nelomshado; umehluko wukuthi ingani elomshado lisho ukuzwana nokuvumelana, leli eliphakathi kwenkosi no Hulumeni luwukhonono, akekho othemba omunye."*

(There is an unseen bond, like the one of marriage; the difference is that the one in marriage is based on mutual understanding and agreement, but this one between the chief and the government is one of dissatisfaction, one does not trust the other.) (Zondi, 1986:75)

If MaMchunu had seen the relationship this way, she would not have said to Bhambatha that he was the government's bride. The colonial government treats black people far more harshly than black men treat their wives. Nhlonhlo's character is by far more shrewd than MaMchunu's, an ineffective peacemaker who tries in vain to persuade her son to calm down. Zondi does not shy away from pointing out what he does not like in his characters.

The colonial system ignores the black man's needs and traditions. As a consequence

Africans have become strangers to themselves, their own traditions and religion. Through British hegemony most Africans have lost their identity, because they place themselves within a foreign tradition. Msimang (1976) had already made it clear that the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 was to defend the Zulu territory and to maintain the soul of the nation by preserving its traditions. It is against this background that the Bhambatha rebellion must be seen. Bhambatha resisted all attempts at colonising the African mind. To acquiesce to the laws of the colonial government meant that Africans would begin to salute Ndabazabantu as ‘*Bayede*’ (Hail your Majesty), or to recognise him as a legitimate king. This would mean renouncing any claim at political and cultural independence. Bhambatha recognises only one legitimate authority over himself and his people: that of Dinuzulu.

*“UBayede kimi UDinuzulu kuphela.”*

(His Majesty to me is my king Dinuzulu only.) (Zondi, 1986:93)

Bhambatha represents the trouble that the African man had to tolerate for his own freedom. The solution is to be open and sincere in dealing with the white persons, rather than hide one’s true feelings:

*“Ubona bengasazi nje laba belungwana, yingoba siyabafihlela izinzwa zethu kangangoba baze balibale ukuthi sinazo.”*

(The reason why these whites do not know us, is that we hide our true feelings from them so much so that they forget we ever have them.) (Zondi, 1986:19)

When the political violence reached high levels in the 1980s, a transformation process needed to be urgently effected. The apartheid regime, like the colonial administration, used bullets to obtain its ends, and yet was extremely severe with Africans who possessed firearms. It intended to keep Africans enslaved through its firepower. The Africans suffered under the yoke of injustice in education, in politics and job opportunities, in work places in general, from ignorance of the laws (as they were not clearly explained to them) and from family separation (migratory labour). Government collaborators were getting fat on the blood of their own kin. Ignorance of the black man's needs and traditions was still prevalent, as the white moved about with arrogance and filled with prejudice, and disrespect of all that was dear and sacred to the Africans. The authoritarian apartheid government had to be

forced into a system of consultation. At the time of writing (1986) such contradictions were still prevalent. The paradoxes are in fact hinted at by the strong ideological statements that spice the text: Shortage of land meant no own food, but that black people had to be shop dependent. This together with a burden of taxes imposed on them meant they had no rights at all. Politically all tax payers should share equal rights, but here no rights of African people were respected. The legislation by which taxes were imposed was therefore oppressive and it resulted in Africans eventually suffering extreme poverty. *Insumansumane* therefore came at the right time, suggesting a rebellion similar to Bhambatha's if the demands for reform continued unheeded.

Nhlonhlo, a young man with little to lose should a fight ensue, represents the young people of the 1980s who risked life and limb in their fight for freedom. Zondi seems concerned with the concept of national liberation and what it can bring to the South African audience. Groenewald (1989:7) states that Zondi, for the first time in Zulu drama, has taken a committed stand in that he is critical about the prevailing hegemony and suggests a way to deal with it. The text is thus overtly activist.

In Zulu tradition only an *imbongi* holds the privilege to criticize the authorities without fear of reprisal. Zondi employed the mystery technique to covertly criticize the apartheid regime. This is a call to fight for national solidarity and his presentation of the dialogue provides overwhelming evidence for the words pronounced in the preface (*Kuyoqinisa ubuzwe bethu*). Nhlonhlo's selfless claim to wider freedom and recognition shows a contemporary die-hard stand.

*“Singangena emlandweni wokulwela inkululeko hhayi yamaZondi kuphela nje, kaZulu wonke.”*

(We can make history by fighting for freedom, not only for the Zondis, but for the whole Zulu nation.) (Zondi, 1986:56)

Zondi has deliberately made Bhambatha a radical chief so as to demand respect and equal treatment for his people. Bhambatha is branded a terrorist by the government because he and some of his subjects are not prepared to accept any shabby treatment from the whites. Since he has tried in vain to make the government realise its flaws, he sees resorting to

armed struggle as the only solution to defending the integrity of the Zulu people. Even if it means going to rot in jail, as the government is known to be good at administering different kinds of torture to enforce conformity, he is prepared to sacrifice his life for the freedom of the black people.

The play starts off presenting a scenario of conflicting cultures and culminates in a scenario of racial domination and oppression. Equality of rights and power is played down by Ndabazabantu. Whites are superior to Blacks.

*“Akuyena umuntu lo omshayile, ngumlungu, awuyona inkosi kuyena wena uphethé abantu.”*  
(It is not a black person that you have beaten, it’s a white man, you are not his king, you rule over blacks.) (Zondi, 1986:61)

Bhambatha is not allowed to whip the white since he is only the chief of the Zondi people and not of whites. This makes conflict a racial issue.

*Insumansumane* presents a global picture reflecting the culture of haves and have-nots. This clearly shows that Africans cannot be liberated from their condition by ideas responsible for their being underdeveloped. In this sense replacing neutral texts with generally committed ones should be urgently called for. The understanding of reality should be accompanied with a view to change it. Either one legitimizes, upholds and advances the cause of the status quo, or challenges the ruling class and thus champions the cause of the oppressed (Amuta, 1989:177). Groenewald (1989) therefore rightly argues:

“The dramatist (Zondi) takes a committed stand and uses historical material to suggest that rebellion seems to be a way of dealing with a hegemonic situation; but with national autonomy as the ultimate goal.” (Groenewald, 1989:6-13)

Interpretation within history or contemporary frame of reference leads to the meaning being understood within the historical setting. A biographical approach is closely related to the historical approach in that it examines the work in relation to what is known about the character’s life. It is a requirement of the struggle, for apartheid seems to have evoked a wave of national feeling, national resistance to its laws and experience of enthusiasm for

national independence. By going back to history you are inevitably conveying a sense and experience of history to the masses. By getting the hidden spirit to keep knocking at the door to force the old and unwanted spirit to break out and disintegrate, Africans could become themselves.

Lukacs (1981), in this regard, says:

“The strange whim of the people is that they demand their history from the hand of the poet and not from the hand of the historian.” (Lukacs, 1981:44)

Readers want to have facts dissolved into poetry in keeping the impression formed by the people about historical characters, portraying them without distorting their conduct. Zondi aptly camouflages political ideology with history. His characters debate their historical circumstances while commenting on the prevailing state of affairs. That is why Groenewald (1989) argues that:

“Zondi wrote this play on the Bhambatha rebellion as to assert his perception of some present day issues, (as well as) to strengthen Zulu nationality.” (Groenewald, 1989:70)

The ‘decolonisation of the mind’ is one of the aims of the book. Achieving this demands a language fitting to history. This is what Zondi is good at. He employs sentences with “ideological content.” He has resurrected memorable events to honour the past heroes. He has revisited things that Africans have achieved so that they can have a clear picture of themselves as a people. This has resulted in giving expression to a native state of mind by groping into the history while trying to interpret modern reality. This was achieved by resorting to diplomatic ways of camouflaging protest while smuggling the message to the readers by making the suggestion implicit.

In *Insumansumane*, the oppressed may have to resort to revolt in order to rectify the situation. The message only seeps through and sinks after gathering nuances of expression on the way. Zondi is not just content with pointing out an undesirable situation or injustice, but suggests the necessary steps to remedy it. His characters challenge the system.

Bhambatha and Nhlonhlo, for example, demand revolutionary realism while Bhambatha alone is trying to destroy hegemony. Bhambatha is very meticulous on principles of equal rights. Like Shaka, he reflects in-depth on leadership and loyalty. He is a radical leader who reflects Zondi's ideological directives.

Good relations and communication thrive from consultation characterised by sharing ideas, reciprocal help, mutual respect, humility, patience, intelligibility, cross-cultural knowledge, giving one another a hearing. These are Zondi's suggestions on how to govern democratically, as well known by Africans. The analysis of culture and ideology in the play and its political meaning seem to suggest that the book functioned in the interest of black people. That is why Zondi's Bhambatha intends to plead with the dethroned chiefs to take a stand and unite against the government's harsh rule. In this way Zondi seems to have achieved asserting nationalism, correcting the distortions of the past and strengthening nationhood. This portrays the text as an overt activist. The text dialogue is pregnant with ideological content demanding freedom and recognition of human rights. Awareness of power relations is reflected in these words:

*“Mandla mani inkosi esenawo? Sithlela izindlu, sigqilazwa emapulazini, sivukuza emigodini, semukwa izindawo, kuncishishwa izinkomo konke lokhu inkosi ayikwazanga ukukuvimbela. Yini manje ezokwenza inkosi ibenamandla okugwema le ntela yekhandla ngaphandle kokwala ukuyikhokha kufe gula linamasi lichithwe yilezi zinsizwa.”*

(What powers are still vested in the king? We pay hut tax, we are oppressed on the farms, we dig in the mines, we are deprived of land, there is a cut down on livestock; the king could not prevent all this. What is it that is going to make the king have power to prevent the payment of poll tax except refusing to pay it then subsequent to that the breaking of sour milk gourds caused by these infuriated men.) (Zondi, 1986:82)

Nhlonhlo and Bhambatha have nothing to lose in the ensuing fight against the white man because they have already lost all their basic rights. The drama, in this sense, calls “for consultation and the introduction of democratic processes” (Canonici, 1998:62) and justifies the people's readiness to fight for their rights. Incessant failure to consult or to involve blacks in what is meant to cater for their interests makes every attempt by the government viewed with suspicion.

#### 4.4 Summary and concluding remarks

The committed writers I have studied share one main concern: that there is no serious effort to communicate and consult, and this leads to social and political fighting and strife. This is evidently a reflection of the political situation prevalent at the time of writing. But it is also a theme that is valid for all times. Man is a social being and therefore a member of community, the soul of community is communication, part of which is consultation. For effective communication one needs sympathy, knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual respect. These are elements of *ubuntu* which are bones of contention in the literary works I have dealt with. The racial divide takes many forms: arrogance and lack of care and understanding on one part; ignorance of socio-political and religious traditions; ignorance of customs and language; etc. All this is part of the struggle between Africa and the West, which is the dominant theme of Zulu literature from 1922 to date.

The politico-economic dimension of Kubheka's writing is found at the beginning where MaGumede wants relief from physical, economic, spiritual and political bondage. She is aware that it would be risky to build a beautiful house on the farm (even if they had the money) since their 'king' (the farmer), unlike the Zulu king or chief, solely owns the land and they have no rights over it. For that reason he can simply tell them to leave his farm without any notice. Her desire to escape this bondage regrettably leads to her being embarrassed by her son. She has been hoping that by saving her son from exploitation on the farm, she would be able to die a happy person and rest in peace. But that is not to be. As soon as the Mkhizes leave the farm the focus is on Mphakamiseni's western education. According to Kubheka, no system is directly to blame for Mphakamiseni's behaviour. The writer is just committed to sensitising and raising awareness about the dangers of one-sided education. This becomes a socio-customary issue rather than a political one.

*Ulaka LwabaNguni* has a strong socio-cultural, educational element. Mphakamiseni represents certain individuals of the elite group who erode their base or roots, hoping to find solutions to their problems as well as complete satisfaction in the western system. Kubheka warns them that the ancestors will not bless those who desert them, but they will follow and punish them wherever they are. Whether this is true or not, it depends on one's beliefs and

convictions as well as on what one is committed to. This is a socio-cultural problem, blamed on assimilation of education by the individual.

In *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* Msimang is committed to telling the nation that the war undertaken by Cetshwayo against the British was justified. It was the last resort to save the physical and moral integrity of the Zulu Kingdom. Since it was an unbelievable risk, the stakes had to be very high: the survival of the nation, over and beyond the personality of the king. The land issue to date is still the most sensitive issue. Without land one can hardly survive. With the rights to punish transgressors to be curtailed, the king would be left a vassal. Was this to be allowed? Msimang takes Cetshwayo's side in expressing his utter disgust at the insensitivity of the white man. A man without any land and rights is no man at all, but a prisoner. Punishment of subjects is only one aspect of respect for the laws and customs of the land (=spiritual and moral independence). If you cannot implement the laws of the land, there is no judicial, moral and ethical independence.

In Msimang's *Buzani kuMkabayi* the issue of gender, that is, just showing that the Nguni never marginalised their women, provides a committed history of not discriminating on the grounds of sex. Msimang describes how deserving women could rise to power positions normally occupied by men. This commitment culminates in his complementing Zondi's *Ukufa kukaShaka*, because the same woman who plots Shaka's death ends up cursing the day the idea of killing Shaka began to take shape in her mind. That is her main error of judgement - *Akukho soka lingenasici* (Every man has blemishes). This is the tragic flaw which provides a catharsis for Zondi's *Ukufa kukaShaka*.

Zondi on the other hand simply politicises the history of *Ukufa kukaShaka* in that he is committed to correcting the distorted history about Shaka. His Shaka is concerned about the national issue of unity/ solidarity rather than the individual biological satisfaction to get married and have a family. With national defence secured by solidarity, even the individual sought and desired marriage will be protected from external dangers. This makes the single-minded Shaka deaf to warnings of discontent and mistrust in his rule.

Zondi never allowed the ideology of his relations with the whites to filter through his writing

about his past. Unlike Dhlomo, though he learned western and Christian values, he never projects them on his own history images. He writes his mind and for his own people. In the late 1980s his writing changes tone and reflects intolerance, decolonisation, and nationalism. In *Insumansumane* he inspires confidence in his people to challenge and fight ideological domination. Lack of consultation on matters affecting the Zondi people is the bone of contention and it causes the two parties in conflict to go to war. For Zondi, when everything else has failed, the only choice one has is to go to war. A war of rights is a justified war and a war worth fighting. Zondi also touches on the development of migrant labour and economic dependency through the eyes of a black South African.

Zondi is deeply concerned that Zulu people seem to have lost sight of their glorious past and appear unable to take hold of their national fate. His two plays are not a simple representation of national events but a wake up call to the Zulus to reflect on who they truly are, and to live a life worthy of their heritage. Generally Zondi responds to the demands such as socio-cultural, political and religious restraints surrounding him. He has altered the convention of a popular mode to suit his purpose. He challenges the system that requires him to do nothing more than to passively exist. Cognisance should be taken of the fact that Bhambatha, for instance, is a character that exists in a world torn apart by oppressive forces. Zondi initiates action against the restraints of the time, in contrast to largely passive characters created by the authors of this time. His play reveals an interest in contemporary problems. Amuta (1989) says:

“The emergence of ideology, in a serious aligned sense” necessitates “a mass mobilization of culture and literature in the service of the struggle for freedom.” (Amuta, 1989:56)

Ideologically committed tradition is a representation of “the conscience of patriotic and progressive forces in the country, sharply focusing on anti-apartheid and imperial struggle in South Africa” (Amuta, 1989:58). It demands literature that is “ideologically partisan in a progressive revolutionary sense.” Zondi’s books testify to this temper. He has moved further than his Zulu counter-parts in this direction of evolving a true people’s literature. He has illustrated liberation politics aimed at delivering people from bondage.

Zondi's drama engages with the present through a covertly grasped past, accounting for the causes of the black man's tragedy in South Africa. He imaginatively creates an old era which sharply contrasts with the present; that puts across messages to challenge the happenings of the immediate past. His drama pulls us into the world of imperialism, and the forces that destroyed Africans are clearly exposed. He uses the past to reflect or throw light on the present. His re-awakening of the past national greatness gives strength to hopes of national rebirth. The appeal for national decolonization and national character will necessarily be connected with a re-awakening of past greatness and of moments of national dishonour. Radicalization should be seen in the light of an act of crushing conservative groups who are still pursuing their aims of consolidating their past hegemony. Zondi is consumed by the need to render the past transparent and has successfully illuminated "the future as a horizon of possibility", that darkness may not close in again (Greaves, 1988:32).

Historical novel and drama have been used by writers as a tool to reflect their social commitment. Historical drama, in particular, has seemingly replaced *izibongo* as a vehicle to put right what is considered wrong. History is used to mask the counter-ideology (politics), and to make unsubstantiated the sweeping statements and allegations that everything written during the apartheid era is trite and not committed.

As Lindenberger (1975) says:

"Most of the greatest historical dramas are certainly concerned with transfer of power from one force to another." (Lindenberger, 1975:31)

This is true of the historical plays we have analysed here. *Ukufa KukaShaka*, for example, dwells on transferring power from various chiefs to one central power. We have witnessed this need to centralise powers twice on the part of British authorities, both in *Insumansumane* and *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*. In most cases resistance ensues from these struggles. Since power struggle always has to do with land control, economic control is never ruled out. We need decolonising literature, like *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* and *Ukufa KukaShaka*, that will correct distorted history, the literature that re-awakens past nationalism and greatness as well as rebuilt image and reaffirm cultural identity and self

discovery. We need literary works such as *Insumansumane* which exposes the injustices suffered by the colonised, that challenges ideological domination and educates and instills pride in the people, that exposes the problems of political and cultural allegiance.

The literary works critically dealt with in the preceding discussion touch on various issues from different angles. All the discussion amounts to is a call to writers to recognise the need for social revolution and to play a leading role in it. Such action is grounded on the fact that most writers do not want to see people suffer. The attempt must have yielded some good literature reflecting the feeling of the people faced with all kinds of suffering; the kind of literature that is the voice of the oppressed people. This is usually achieved by images mostly understandable by those initiated in the African oral traditions. The employment of alternative techniques to achieve one's aim of servicing the society shows utter social commitment on the part of these writers. For the government of the day to benefit from writers it must allow them freedom to express their views for and against it.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

#### 5.1 Summary and observations

It is now time to draw conclusions by summarising the work and looking at the clues that point to a better future. The thesis set out to respond to the criticism levelled especially by foreign-based critics and authors towards African-language literature produced during the apartheid period, that all the works that saw the light during that era lacked the aspect of social commitment. In the first chapter I took a stance on the argument that African-language literature was emasculated by apartheid. I admitted to a great deal of compliance, but argued for retrieval of works that managed to convey a social perspective.

In the second chapter I dealt with the pre-colonial era literature (oral literature) and highlighted the social concerns expressed in this earlier independent tradition. In the third chapter I provided a general outline of the development of Zulu literature, contextualized through limited references to parallel literatures in the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe. First, I called upon the pre-apartheid era literature and highlighted the early growth of written literature and the social concerns it expressed, but within the constraints of new forms in which writers were experimenting. Second, I showed that during the apartheid era all social developments took place under the conditions of social struggle and that social struggle appeared in more or less overt forms. At the same time, literature in indigenous languages became a body without a soul, and could only be considered as childish stuff produced for school children.

In Chapter 4 I showed that there is an element of social commitment in some African-language literary works by exploring the idea that genuine creative literature reflects and mirrors the society in which it is born and grows. In a period of traumatic pains and transformation socially neutral works are not worth much attention at all. This study has

highlighted a number of important aspects to be considered about social commitment. It has tried to show that specific works of fiction, especially those treating their material historically, were indeed capable of touching social commitment. Zulu literature, as an example in point, has portrayed social commitment in drama and to a certain extent in the novel.

In this case historical dramas have shown their ability to carry out operations that Ngugi and others required of criticism. These historical dramas allow part of the past period to relate to the present. Historical drama seems to have taken over the function which traditionally belonged to *izibongo*, that is, the function of dramatising social and historical events with the aim to mirror social, political and economic events surrounding Zulu history. Historical developments during the apartheid era had made such overt depiction impossible through various preventative measures, but nevertheless committed writers managed to use history to mask their social commitment. The plays act as warning for those who ignore traditional imagery: for the African-language literature is rich in implications and must not be taken for granted. Their influence could have resulted in the 1976 Soweto riots.

In this extremely wide field, I decided to restrict my detailed presentation to five literary works of only three authors, hoping that these examples would suffice to show my point of view. I called upon Kubheka, Msimang and Zondi, because the problems they confront only vary in terms of degree rather than being totally different. They enlighten blacks on the problems particular to them as well as try to show how to improve the relationship between whites and blacks. I have identified a deep lack of communication skills between whites and blacks in the literature I have analysed, which could be overcome by showing respect to other human beings. Communication is premised on reciprocated respect (cf Zondi's *Insumansumane*). If one section of the community continues to be marginalised, communication will not improve.

The study is capable of establishing new lines by looking at the direction at which social change took place among the blacks. Was it change or shift from old ways of life to the adoption of new ways? Did the new religion promise anything worth committing to, and

aligning with? What do some authors say in this regard? Some M.A.'s and Ph.D.s, related to these questions, could amplify the evidence gathered.

To this end, the evidence presented appears to be sufficient and capable to direct me towards some informed general conclusions. The aspects of social commitment unveiled in the works analysed will hopefully give information and insight to would-be writers on how to formulate correct cultural strategies for revolutionary transformation and reconstruction, and make them more effective in their struggle for a better future of the majority of the country. The above discussion has shown that despite writing in the "margin" (Swanepoel 1998:20), some African-language writers produced a body of literature that cannot be ignored. Now that there has been a shift of power (from the hands of colonisers), African writers need to move the African-language from the 'margin' closer to the centre, without moving English and Afrikaans to the 'margin'. South Africa now needs a 'plurality of centre' (Ngugi, 1993:11).

One purpose of this thesis has been to encourage would-be authors to engage in cultural, economic, etc. repossessions by drawing on the positive attitudes of their own colleagues. Committed literature, according to Ngugi (1981:3), has to do with an assimilation of people's beliefs, languages, environment, unity and capacities. It is important that people not see their past as one of wasteland and non-achievement. Rather, committed literature will make them want to identify with that which is closest to themselves, with the forces that will never stop their own spring of life. This kind of base would not plant serious doubts about the moral rightness of the struggle, nor render ridiculous the dreams of victory, but would present triumph as a cure for all diseases. It sheds the blinkers that make the masses follow the direction pointed out by the master. It should result in the creation of literary works that show that African-language literature has depth of philosophy, and a wide range of ideas and experience, and that demonstrate that language in its engagement with culture is the "collective memory bank of a people's experience" (Ngugi, 1981:15).

Writers should provide the society with the true mirror of itself, its conflicts and problems. This means that besides portraying social realisms and contradictions, protests against

colonialism, dehumanisation and land expropriation should be their main concern. This would imply looking at things through the eyes of the oppressed groups, “singing Africa and denouncing colonialism” (Wauthier, 1978:243). The years after South Africa has gained independence should be for the African intellectuals a major source of inspiration, reflecting their aspirations and not quietness.

Contemporary writing will have to emulate those literary works that slipped through unobserved if African-language writing hopes to have a bright future. It will need to shed neutrality and align itself with a specific ideology, irrespective of whether it is the ideology of the ruling class or the opposition. This could stimulate the desire to read and bring about practical gain. Using this committed writing as a foundation, the chances of seeing Africa reborn are strong. However, if we are still going to write about the stereotypical villains and victims of apartheid without demonstrating a break-away from this earlier period, we would glorify apartheid. We will definitely need to show processes of liberation from apartheid conformity and restoration of humanity.

Contemporary African-language writers will need to affirm the cultural identity that the socially committed writers have fought for and reconstructed in the process of the struggle for post-apartheid solidarity. Daniel Kunene (1994) has voiced the following plea with regard to the issue of lack of social commitment: No school children writing, and no religious writing any more –the country and its people are sick and tired of the forces of darkness and light stories as portrayed in the apartheid literature books. These display influences exerted by western thinking and are a good reflection of the psychological effect of colonialism. The African-language authors should write for adults by creating characters who see the problem for what it is, and who make efforts to cure the situation by breaking the mental shackles of their oppression. They should manufacture Africa’s brand new shoes rather than repeat other writers’ themes. The themes are repeated for no good reasons. Authors should remember that they are the conscience of the people and express the inner feelings of the people, unless they claim they themselves never suffered and there are no apartheid victims in their surroundings.

Nevertheless, there are still factors that I consider as possible handicaps to this shift. As long as writers are not in control of the means of production and are still bound to the publishers' prescriptions, whether they are now free to write about the effects of apartheid, without a thorough investigation of the shaping of events, they will still be doomed. They still will live under the directives of the publishers –the settler ideology. To succeed in this they need to gain control of the forces that determine success, for example, the publishing industry, capital, etc. Hlophe (2000), in this regard, states:

“Blacks will need to combine their resources and start a publishing house to make it possible to get a platform.”(Dumsani Hlophe, Sowetan -22/4/2000)

Success can only be achieved if the publishing houses are owned by people who want to improve an adult readership by addressing the sensitive issues in the communities. Msongore (1973) says:

“The black race will be equal or better only if they take constructive, positive steps to build the future : Isolation and exclusion will not achieve this objective.” (Msongore, 1973:2)

## **5.2 Possibilities for the future**

The study concludes by examining the status of Africa-language literature, specifically Zulu, in the new dispensation, and by focusing on the significance of social commitment in the character of a new nation and of civil society.

Now that legal apartheid has been abolished, South African writers are faced with a new, and in many respects more challenging, climate. Resistance will give way to the recovery of uncomfortable truths, the need for healing and the articulation of previously unacknowledged forms of politics and identity. Literature of the South African past will appear different, as literary history begins to reconstitute its object in the light of the country's democratization and transformation. Writers will have to incorporate related political, cultural and theoretical issues in their works.

A bright future for the African-language writing has been predicted by a number of scholars. Mazisi Kunene (1996), for example, acknowledges the existence of South African-language literature as a formidable force with enormous potential for development, and has expressed the opinion that it will emerge as the greatest literature in future. However, this will not be automatic. At first we might get the evils of apartheid as dominating themes after the restraints have been removed. The danger of this is that authors could create while under emotional stress, and the result could be politics without art. Consequently this could lead to the birth of another immature literature. Were this to occur, the lack of maturity could no longer be simply attributed to restraints placed on authors.

If it happens that the political leaders behave like their colonial masters and perpetuate the wrongs of the past, there will be a need for authors to fulfil the role they have been denied by the apartheid government, that is, to depict themes that enlighten the black man as to the problems particular to him; socio-political issues such as wage problems, how to improve the relationship between white bosses and black employees, how to cope with seeking employment. They will need to behave like Alexander Pushkin (Sunday Tribune, 6 June 1999) who is viewed as an “alternative government, guardian of the national conscience in permanent opposition” to those who have struggled to control the victims. Pushkin spoke equally to reformers and conservatives. Writers can be a tool towards uniting people in this way. They can become the centre onto which all the radii hold. This is how to become a true patriot; a patriot with power to change society beyond recognition.

In literature, it is not only what one says that matters, but how one says it. Reaction to what has been said is determined by the degree of guilt one feels after having heard what is said. This could possibly stimulate the desire to read African-language books because it could bring some practical gain. For some time African-language works have to stay “at a high pitch of passionate intensity” (Malan, 1987:530). This should be done with the aim of keeping the muscle of African identity flexed because this is the time of action. Outright criticism is still required, and so Africans should not seem more prepared to compromise than their white counter-parts are. Otherwise they could still de-rail the newly won struggle and have their African culture relegated once again. The time to prove that black Africans

are capable of attaining 'white standards' is over. Writers should never emphasise the culture of failings at the expense of the truth. Books with negative messages should be done away with for they build no nation. Pointing to and describing the degradation caused by apartheid and centuries of factual slavery will not envisage any redeeming element and make African-language literature a great literature, capable of conquering the world. The hell of apartheid has no heaven to look towards. Furthermore, with structures repetitive, and often sagging and lacking inspiration, and driven by socio-political themes, authors are not going to achieve great literature. There will be no rebirth and regeneration of literature from the semi-death of the apartheid period. World literature will not be conquered by such attempts that undermine the importance of artistic creativity in the literary work.

Moran (1997:189) warns that "hasty and questionable marriages of convenience that occur between oppositional and pro-state structures in the arts" need to be avoided. Authors will have to depart from ridiculous situations and go for honesty in portrayal. Loving with honesty and sincerity could make writers worth reading. It is not sufficient for the authors to show what they do not like in the external world, they must control our reactions with considerable subtlety to be able to accomplish the work's artistic end. Authors should provide African-language literature that will whet the appetite of every reader by making literature play a significant part in being stimulating and informative of people's culture.

Daniel Kunene (1994) even supports the idea of having this literature translated into other languages to help spread African ideas to all South Africans and to move this important component of South African literature closer to the centre (from the margin). Inter-translation will have to be encouraged to support unity and avoid estrangement and opaqueness. Unless the culture, ideas, capabilities are accessible to whites in general, the collaborative enterprises in literature, art, the culture and personality of this majority could be generally either ignored or falsified. If the language of communication is still English, important meanings and textures of everyday experience of the culture of the majority will be invariably excluded if not distorted. We would even need to translate folktales to other African languages in order to rescue the rich African cultural traditions from falling into the world of forgetfulness and extinction.

### 5.2.1 Radicalisation for social transformation

Black Africans should stubbornly refuse to compromise unnecessarily and struggle for complete freedom. Outright criticism /radicalization is still required (to a certain extent). Black Africans should not be seen as more prepared to compromise than whites are. Otherwise the struggle could be derailed and the Africans relegated once again. Radicalisation can crush conservative groups wanting to pursue their aims of consolidating their hegemony once more.

Literature is communication. Black Africans need to retell those stories which they never had a chance to tell. Telling them could lead to self-actualisation, self-esteem and self-image manifestation. They should claim their own victory by speaking their mind, for fear might hold back. Tony Voss's tentative words still hold true that:

“The revolutionary and utopian gesture of putting the past behind us can only thus live with the equal necessity of knowing what happened ... We may thus live to hold on to an historical moment which does not sympathise with that of other civil communities.” (Voss, 1992, in Chapman,1997:193)

If we do not improve the situation, the hooks of a painful past will continue twisting and hurting us inside. “The pangs of metaphoric suffering will not decompose suddenly,” says Sitas (1999:8). Preparedness for complete freedom should be preceded by competing successfully rather than by self-subordination.

Many institutions face the near impossible task of repairing and decomposing the pains and suffering of the damaged hearts of South African people. It is also the task of the African-language literatures to follow suit. The African renaissance will not be realised unless the South African-language literatures also take the initiative to bring about change. There is always some utopian vision that points to the past as the fertile base from which the multicultural society could be built. I have insisted on history as the teacher of life in four different works, but it does not necessarily mean always waiting until history becomes the past before we appreciate and celebrate it. We are surrounded by great events and extraordinary heroes now, around whom we could carve exemplary characters.

Artists should not be pushed behind by the government of the day, for by so doing they will be granting it permission to prescribe like the previous government did. The government has shown willingness to free the African-language literature from censorship pangs. Writers, as the conscience of the people, should express the inner-feelings of the people in their writing and not allow themselves to be threatened by the ruling government. The fight to dispel the dark night that colonial oppression and the apartheid regime have brought should persist. Slavery is not completely gone yet. It should still be the theme, for during the time of slavery blacks drank bitterness to the dregs. The country still has people who have this collective memory. Fear of recurrence should be the driving force and should enable the blacks to stand up and fight the return of the bitter old days. What African-language writers have seen / experienced in their country should appear in their works, and this does not necessarily mean that writers should not welcome reconciliation. Bhengu (1999) has managed reconciliation while writing about the bitter old days. African-language writers need to write about, for example, the third force that sets people against one another. They should speak until the black race no longer sees its blood in the hands of the white nation and forgets both their own colour and that of the opposite side, and then forgives completely. This move could ensure the birth and regeneration of a new nation.

This involves telling the truth, hoping that it will generate reconciliation. In future, indigenous imaginative writings will have to redress mistaken views; arouse the necessary nationalism in people whose self-worth has been downtrodden; put things into proper perspective and rebuild the destroyed shrines. This could address the question on how to persuade the youth to remain indifferent to the influences of European progress and thought, when their leaders still reflect those influences in their speeches and writings. To put it in Wauthier's (1978) words:

“Recognise the Pan-African spirit which characterises the spirit of very many in the indigenous elite of the continent.” (Wauthier, 1978:26)

African-language writers will have to acquire whatever raw material can be drawn from past civilizations to revive their culture. Revolutionary content negates, with foreign influences and projects, a pro-African / Zulu image. Such content is abundant in traditional imagery.

African-language readers still need the help of works that would provide a clear portrait of European behaviour - depicting their dishonesty, brutality, being self-satisfied, in order to develop a sense of guilt in them about the past of the black race; stamp out their pride; fighting these principles and not the white people themselves, whilst also teaching the new generation that whites are also indispensable to them and for the future of this country. We dare not lose sight of the fact that reconciliation should be the strongest point of the post-apartheid African-language literature. This should remain so because this is how our newly-won independence was ushered in when the apartheid era gave way, and therefore it should never be allowed to cease to inspire.

African-language literature should be made to play a role in the liberation struggle, something it could not do in the past because of apartheid control. It should be used to engender the feelings of nationalism. Dhlomo's words are still relevant to the South African situation:

“We want African playwrights who will dramatise and expand on the philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representations of African Oppression, Emancipation and Evolution.” (Gérard, 1971:22)

African-language writers should, in Ngugi's (1981) words, show

“desire to praise the positive aspects of African practices and fitting moral standards.” (Ngugi, 1981:26)

Authors should create material that is relevant to the experience of South Africa. It is true that authors dealt with socio-cultural matters in the past, but often to criticise or downplay aspects of traditional culture rather than praise its positive aspects. Traditional medicinal practices, for example, were generally associated with witchcraft, polygamy with the urge to satisfy gigantic sexual desires, endless wars with the wanton killing of people. If the praising of some positive aspects of African culture (lobolo, traditional medicinal practices, traditional African courtesy) is abundantly found in Vilakazi's *Nje Nempela*, his last novel, in spite of the spirit of the times, today that should be every writer's dream and preoccupation.

Writings by blacks for blacks can increase power and get blackness celebrated. If we awaken the neglected values of the black culture and set out to defend, present and glorify folk-culture and avoid being pre-occupied with the absurdities of witchcraft, African-language literature could be worth reading. In future we expect to see more and more writing that will have effect on human lives and have power to make history. We need books that a person who is interested in Zulu literature cannot afford to neglect, books whose influence on succeeding generations of Zulu radicals cannot be equalled (Amuta 1989). We need writers who are always angled to convey their opinions on Zulu affairs in their venture to use fiction to spread their ideas, not literature with limited adult appeal. Committed literature should therefore be equated with writing daring works which should be characterised by a revolutionary content.

Reviving culture, rehabilitating African chiefs and customs, re-awakening past national greatness could lead to cultural resuscitation, re-affirmation of the validity of cultural values and teaching the young what the past was like and how useful some of the things of the past were. Non-African cultures already occupy very important positions in our society. They are supported in these positions by the elite who provide the model to be imitated by the masses, those who are still rooted in traditional African cultures. This relationship between the elite and the masses creates gleams of hopes which are immediately shattered as soon as one recalls that the elites are mostly de-cultured to a certain extent. They are mostly cut off from the masses because they are under the influence of foreign culture(s). They see the traditional culture from outside since they no longer live it but only idealize it. That is why we have two cultures lying side by side, in a kind of ignorance of each other, although not completely closed to each other because of certain minimal exchanges.

By shedding imperialist-imposed tradition black people could transcend colonial alienation (Ngugi 1981:18). This could be achieved by avoiding the themes that support the status quo, merging cultures and / or changing and transforming western ideas to give them new meanings and implications by reflecting them through an African prism. Knowing yourself first enables you to touch the lives of others, make them share with you most intimate feelings, suffering, joy, and despair. Black writers should strive to make blackness accepted

with pride and assertion. They should start by identifying the mechanisms of cultural oppression and then begin the process of slowly clearing their minds and hearts of oppressive values and images upon which their condition of bondage co-dependended (Kavanagh 1985:155). This does not imply replacing one hegemony by another, but it demands that values should neither be white nor black oriented.

For a sustainable national unity it is necessary to establish the black man's worth in the eyes of the white man and help them fight for rediscovery of themselves. This can instil some pride in the people and make them contribute meaningfully in the hybrid national culture. We need to consider that South African-language literature is still at the periphery, that is, far removed from power of influence. But it seems to be looking longingly at the centre of Thabo Mbheki's dream- the African Renaissance. It lacks dignity, respect, self-esteem, and to return to the authentic self it has the duty to open avenues of self-fulfilment. Black Africans need focus. The fact that a democratic government is in power does not necessarily mean that the theme of resistance has become totally exhausted. If we lack focus a crisis will clearly be inevitable. New writings should pursue the quest for a new society, not repeat the mistakes of the past, with racism reversed. Remember that those "who forget their history are likely to repeat it" (Ogude, 1998:252). The past as theme could still be relevant, but will need to be topicalised. How this could be done is still a question. As long as the act of democratization is relevant, the theme of resistance against the apartheid past cannot be disposed of.

### 5.2.2 **Multiculturalism**

To recover African identity and lay the foundations for a national hegemony by discovering the truth about the deliberately distorted past, we need the kind of ideology that is not going to fail to understand the cultural diversity of the South African community. South Africa needs a non-racial, multicultural alternative - "the creation of a radical democratic culture that celebrates cultural diversity and cultural hybridization," says Wade (1996:245).

Chapman (1996) warns that:

“The character of the new nation and the civil society should not blind us to the need of self-discovery and resuscitation. Such literature should form the base, otherwise the new nation or society would be built on a weak foundation.” (Chapman, 1996:264)

Ignoring their rediscovery of identity and cultural resuscitation could be a recipe for disaster. The creation of the tremendously exciting inter-racial enterprise of multiculturalism should not demonstrate contempt for black traditional culture: collaboration should not mean that whites as agents of the cultural hegemony of their group would teach blacks aspects of their own European culture. Stressed should be African cultural strengths rather than weaknesses. This is the affirmation of cultural identity while harnessing the energies of the struggle for post-apartheid solidarity.

The feeling of satisfaction will derive from a sense of cultural completeness, affirming the creation of identity that transcends social differences. And this would be effected by the integration of black intellectual experience into the white intellectuals' main stream, with the universal or common identity told by means of a black protagonist. In order to achieve historical reconstruction or constitution of a single South African literature, negotiation will need to be carried from a position of strength. This will involve raising the blinds to one another. Blacks will need to express how they see themselves and how others see them, whether whites notice them at all and see blacks as they are or behold a stereotype view. They will have to convince whites that blacks do exist in the real world and try to get whites to recognise blacks' existence. Blacks will need to know their cultures before they compare them with other cultures. It is of no use attacking people who do not see you for what you are. At first blacks will have to struggle to recapture their identity, to believe in diversity but not in conformity. Striving to become one in many should be the main aim. Since this has an underlying theme of transformation it will create a sound basis for choice.

South Africa is characterised by a great diversity of cultures and should strive to balance this pluralism with a sense of unity. We need to promote and protect differences. This could be achieved by sharing the body of knowledge that the historical circumstances have not made it possible to access. If students could be made to read and bring different cultural resources for class discussion, interaction amongst them could be very meaningful because cultural

pluralism can generate fruitful dialogue. The dialogue, however, would need to be preceded by putting the African culture at the centre. As South Africans we should all orientate ourselves towards placing Africa in the centre and consider all other things for their relevance to our situation and their contribution towards understanding ourselves. The suggestion here is that Africans should have knowledge about themselves and view things from the African perspective. This does not necessarily mean nudging western streams out of the way, but it means putting things in their proper perspective.

Operating in the interests of the majority will need to be emphasised. Multiculturalism needs to be developed beyond the racial parameters of blackness or whiteness. We need to reconstruct firm foundations now that the apartheid system is a thing of the past, attend to problems such as relevance of content, assert African identity and presence. Writers need to produce plays and novels with moderate radical and militant content for an appeal to the readers of other groups in order to improve relations. These could form bases for the stories that are going to appear on screen or even inform the mass media, such as the news bulletins, news articles and dossiers in various magazines.

Multiculturalism has an element of cross-culturalisation which could stem from drawing parallels and similarities, avoiding negative things and encouraging cross-breeding. The world of beauty that we aspire to is the one that sees the merging of the culture of the real white liberals and the African culture. This therefore implies that the positive elements of this culture should be emphasised and the picture that depicts the interaction of the two opposing cultures provided. We need to look far ahead to the era whereby the image of the black culture is entertained and projected by South African whites, who will no longer look at it as primitive, inferior and racially personal. We want a complete removal of the structures that were created to furnish the stereotypes that the ruling section required to justify and defend their domination.

Literature should be employed as an active element in bringing about historical changes, cross-culturalisation, national literature, its rebirth and regeneration. African-language writers need to create a sense of possession before a sense of sharing. Image rebuilding,

nation building should be coupled with re-affirming the cultural identity. This is an endeavour at mediating South African identities and it is hoped that by letting them set off as equal partners, racism will be replaced by the recognition of diversities. Authors in the literary field should help effect changes in the attitudes of the people of South Africa by making the unknown known. Through this they will hopefully successfully alleviate and totally destroy fears of the unknown.

### **5.3 Final Remarks**

When I read Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981;1986), I was so consumed with a desire to look at how successful African-language writers have been as regards to helping their own people to recover their lost shrines. Such a moving book on decolonising the mind should have exercised some influence on African-language writers, but there is very little change of attitudes and behaviour on their part. I hope that by presenting first a grim picture about their writing followed by a slightly positive and brighter one, writers could be encouraged to produce imaginative writing which touches on sensitive issues. With some improvement on such positive aspects, I am quite certain that multiculturalism or cross-culturalism will not be a one-sided issue, because both parties (African & formerly west) can have an equal input. By avoiding cultural assimilation one is not necessarily following a narrow isolationist path but allowing cross-breeding to take its course naturally.

Africa-language writers have the power to sway their communities to see the world through the right lens: through the African prism the African image can be a true reflection of who they are. It is this lens that should shape how they interpret the world, because if they see things with borrowed lenses they will definitely see things differently. One of the questions they should ask themselves is: Are our perceptions the right ones? From here they will realise whether the situation needs changing or not, and then take the necessary steps. It has been indicated or hinted at that it is attitudes by some people that have led to the people's lessened sense of self-worth. The study does not seek to put pressure on the writers since it stands apart from them, but it does seek to make them their own judges. My only advice would be - avoid short-cuts or quick-fix solutions to cross-culturalisation, otherwise the

nation will easily reap the consequence of such haste. If we all want to own multiculturalisation or cross-culturalisation, it might be well to heed Ngugi's (1981) advice, that:

“A sense of real possession only begins when people share naturally, freely and spontaneously.” (Ngugi, 1981:40)

I hope and trust that I am not straining any relations or charging the air with emotion, but that I am levelling the grounds for a long and lasting relationship. Multiculturalisation should come from giving and sharing in your relationship, otherwise if Africans decide to resort to quick-fix solutions they might later find they are responsible for their own stagnant situation when things do not improve. First and foremost Africans need to raise their blinds to one another for history reconstruction and then open themselves for other people to understand them. This is very necessary, for if they do not do it other people may easily prescribe their own glasses to the Africans with the excuse that they do not know the other side. Decolonised African-language writers should help their own people see what they themselves see.

Let us rid ourselves of the “apartheid corpse” by writing in a new reality, by letting our heads carry visions of a perfect world. The role of the authors is to express that vision by plotting characters and situations that:

“Help and make sense of the new world and understand our relationship with it. This new dispensation is rich to have all these unleashed. You have elected yourselves the spokesperson of the black condition.” (Mandla Langa's keynote address at Maskew Miller Longman's African Heritage Literary Award in Johannesburg, Sowetan, 10 February 1998)

In “The Enigma of Arrival: Nadine Gordimer and the Politics of Identity in *None to Accompany Me*”, Wagner (1995) aptly sums it up when she says finding a way to “fit in” in Africa is through some form of responsible commitment to the process of bringing about change. We are no longer under a colonial government and so we can now speak of our own people, and lastly “do not be afraid to go too far, for the truth lies beyond” (Gordimer, 1995 (*Writing and Being*), in Wagner, 1995:73).

I do hope black Africans will overcome the problems of city life and settle peacefully with their neighbours in the new dispensation, once stereotypes have been eroded. There will be a need, however, for black Africans to adapt the values of their traditions to the novelties of the wide-world civilizations, while those novelties similarly adapt themselves to traditional values.

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#### **D. Newspapers**

- The Sowetan -Hlope Dumsani, 22 April 2000) -"African solutions to African problems."  
-Thabo Mbheki, July 1999 -"The mutual understanding of who is an African", addressing the Afrikanerbond on the relationship of Afrikaners and other groups.  
-Mandla Langa, 10 February 1998 -"Using the free word."
- The Sunday Tribune -Alexander Pushkin's (Russian poet) turning 200 years celebration, 6 June 1999 -"Mother Russia's tribute to her master poet."
- Ilanga LaseNatali -D.BZ. Ntuli, 20-22 July 2000 -(*Izingwazi zoSiba*) "U-Elliot Zondi -liyancomeka igalelo lakhe lokuthaka i-drama nomlando."

The Daily News -Dr Alex Coutts, 25 August 2000 -“Shaka not as cruel as portrayed.”

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

### ZULU LITERARY WORKS PUBLISHED FROM THE 1930's TO THE EARLY 1990's

#### NOVELS

- 1930 *Insila kaShaka* - J.L. Dube  
1930 *UNkosibomvu* -P.A. Stuart  
1935 *Izikhali zanamuhla* -Dhlomo R.R.R.  
1935 *Noma Nini* - B.W. Vilakazi  
1936 *UDingane kaSenzangakhona* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1937 *UShaka* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1938 *UMpande* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1938 *UMohlomi* -N.S. Luthango  
1939 *UDingiswayo kaJobe* - B.W. Vilakazi  
1939 *USukabekhuluma* -A. Zungu  
1940 *Indlalifa yaseHarrisdale* - E.H.A. Made  
1943 *Nje Nempela* - B.W. Vilakazi  
1946 *Indlela yababi* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1947 *UNomalanga kaNdengezi* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1947 *UMamazane* - R.H. Mthembu  
1948 *Nigabe ngani* -J.M. Zama  
1950 *Mntanami! Mntanami!* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
1950 *UZwelonke* - A.J.W. Nxumalo  
1951 *Umbubuli* -D. Mahlobo  
1952 *UCetshwayo* - R.R.R. Dhlomo  
1952 *Okwami Okwezandla* -J.M. Zama  
1953 *UKhalalembube* - Kenneth Bhengu  
1953 *Ubudoda abukhulelwa* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
1954 *Umbuso kaShaka* - F.L. Ntuli  
1955 *Imigodi yenkosi uSolomoni* -J.F.Cele  
1956 *Uvalo lwezinhlonzi* - J.K. Ngubane

- 1957 *UMamisa iqhawe leSwazi* -J. Nxumalo & M. Zulu
- 1957 *UKadebona* - Kenneth Bhengu
- 1957 *Lemuka izwe elihle* - D. Maduna
- 1957 *Inkungu maZulu* - M. Ngcobo
- 1959 *Umbuso wezembe nenkinga kaBhekifa* - Kenneth Bhengu
- 1959 *Ifu elimnyama* - G. Nyanda
- 1959 *UGongoda* - N. Tchamase
- 1959 *Ukuzalwa kukaMuntukaziwa* -J.N. Gumbi
- 1959 *UVelengazi* -L.G.S. Mthiya
- 1960 *UNsingizi* - N. Tchamase
- 1960 *Lafa elihle kakhulu* - C.L.S. Nyembezi
- 1961 *Amalutha emalutheni* -M. Xulu
- 1961 *UBheka* - D.B.Z Ntuli
- 1961 *Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu* - C.S. Nyembezi
- 1961 *Ikusasa alaziwa* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo
- 1961 *Wangithembiselani* - I.N. Mpofu
- 1964 *Inkanankana* -S.M. Matsebula
- 1964 *Wo He! Bantu* - M.Ngcobo
- 1965 *UNyambose noZinitha* - Kenneth Bhengu
- 1966 *Baba ngixolele* - J.N. Gumbi
- 1966 *Imvu yolahleko* - S.S. Shabangu
- 1966 *UBhekizwe namadodana akhe* - S.V.N. Mdluli
- 1967 *Ingwe idla ngamabala* - J.M. Zama
- 1967 *Wayesezofika ekhaya* - J.M. Gumbi
- 1968 *UDinuzulu* - R.R.R. Dhlomo
- 1968 *Imithi ephundliwe* - M. Hlela & C. Nkosi
- 1968 *Ubogawula ubheka* -K. Bhengu
- 1969 *USimpofu* - M. Xulu
- 1969 *Ukufika kosuku* - M Ngcobo
- 1969 *Inhliziyo ingugo wami* -E. Mkhize
- 1969 *Esezane* - Z. Khuzwayo
- 1969 *Ngisinga empumalanga* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo

1970 *Ngiyoze ngimthole* - D.B.Z. Ntuli

1970 *Uzenzile akakhalelwa* - W.B.M. Mkhize

1971 *KwaMzobe* -K. Bhengu

1971 *Ukufa kuyosihlanganisa ekugcineni* -B.J. Dube

1972 *Themba Mntanami* -J.B. Mchunu

1973 *Akuyiwe emhlahlweni* - C.T. Msimang

1973 *Ayikho impunga yehlathi* - Kenneth Bhengu

1973 *Indlalifa engenasibaya* - M. Xulu

1973 *Bafa baphela* - J.J. Gwayi

1973 *Izinsizwa Amakhosi* -OE.H.M. Nxumalo

1974 *Shumpu* - J.J. Gwayi

1976 *Siyofa silahlane* - Kenneth Bhengu

1976 *Yekanini* -J.J. Gwayi

1977 *Imiyalezo* -J.M. Mngadi

1977 *Qhude Manikiniki* - M. Ngcobo

1977 *Izwi nesithunzi* - R.R.R. Dhlomo

1977 *Abafana boqunga* - N.J. Makhaye

1977 *Kungavuka abaNguni* - I.S. Kubheka

1978 *Uthando lunje* - M. Xulu

1978 *Kungenxa kabani* - M.S.S. Gcumisa

1979 *Bamngcwaba ephila* - S.S. Shabangu

1979 *Zibanjwa zisemaphuphu* -T.G. Hodie

1981 *Mahlayana Mahlayana* - M. Xulu

1982 *Intombi Yezimanga* -N.J. Zondi

1982 *Ngangingazi* - Z. Mbhele

1982 *Buzani kuMkabayi* - C.T. Msimang

1983 *Amahlaya Alala Insila* -N.T. Mkhize

1983 *Isiyingi sothando* - J.D. Chisimba

1983 *Uphuya waseMshwathi* - Kenneth Bhengu

1983 *USandanezwe kasigwinyanansimbi*- S.J. Nkosi

1985 *Imiqhele eyelakanyene* -S.J. Nkosi

- 1985 *Amathunzi Ayewukela* -N.M. Makhambeni
- 1985 *Izinyembezi zomzali* -J.N. Gumbi
- 1985 *Ikhiwane elihle* - L. Molefe
- 1985 *Isigangi sendoda* -L. Molefe
- 1985 *Osibndigidi bongqondongqondo* - L. Molefe
- 1986 *Insizi Yezinsizi* -S.B. Mbatha
- 1987 *Ithemba lokugcina* -M.T. Mkhize
- 1987 *Isithunzi sikamuji* -S.S. Shabangu
- 1987 *Isitolo Esasingasebhange* -L. Molefe
- 1987 *UDlokwakhe* - Kenneth Bhengu
- 1987 *Uze ungikhonzele* - N.J Makhaye
- 1987 *Umhlaba uyaphenduka* - A.B. Shange
- 1987 *Lalela mngani wami* -E.M. Damane
- 1988 *Nondela Mntanami Nondela!* -M. Xulu
- 1988 *Ulaka lwabaNguni* - I.S. Kubheka
- 1988 *Mntanomntanami* -E.M. Damane
- 1988 *Itshe lesikhumbuzo* - M.G. Ngcobo
- 1988 *Abangani* -J.P. Shongwe
- 1989 *Zibukhipha zibuthela* - A.T. Shabangu
- 1988 *Izwi lendlovu enkulu* -N.S. Ntuli
- 1989 *Awu! Sacishe Saduka Nezwe* -L. Molefe
- 1990 *Inhliziyo iyayazi indlela* - A.B. Shange
- 1990 *Isimanga* -J.D. Chisimba
- 1990 *Iphisi nezinyoka* -M.M. Masondo
- 1990 *Kwasa Esiqalabeni* -M.C. Seme
- 1991 *Ilanga laseLangeni* - Mhlongo
- 1991 *Uyabuya uDlungwane kaNdaba* -J.N. Gumbi
- 1991 *Makhosi* - L. Molefe
- 1991 *Inkukhu yanqunywa umlomo* -M.T. Mkhize
- 1991 *Seziyosengwa yinkehli* -M.V. Bhengu
- 1991 *Itshe eliyigugu* - D.B.K. Mhlongo

- 1991 *Isizwe Esisha* -L. Molefe  
 1991 *Uyabuya uDlungwane* -J.N. Gumbi  
 1991 *Isigcawu Senkantolo* -M.M. Masondo  
 1992 *Kwakwenzenjani* - N.M. Makhambeni  
 1992 *Pho ugabe ngani* - B. Dlamini  
 1992 *Ifa lenkululeko* - A.B. Shange  
 1992 *Isidleke samanqe* -B. Dlamini  
 1993 *Iso likaSathane* - N. Mbambo  
 1993 *Umhawu usuka esweni* - P.N. Radebe  
 1993 *Umthathe uzala umlotha* - I.S. Kubheka  
 1993 *Kushaywa edonsayo* -J.C. Buthelezi  
 1993 *Ukubulala ngomlingo: Izigemege zikaJon Zulu* -Ndlovu Nandi  
 1993 *USiphiyaphiya* -L.F. Mathenjwa

#### **SHORT STORIES & ESSAYS**

- 1940 *Ubuwula bexoxo* (essays) - E.H.A. Made  
 1960 *Izigemege Zodwa* -M. Xulu  
 1962 *Emhlabeni* -O.E.H.M. Nxumalo  
 1966 *Amanqampunqampu* -S.C.Z. Khwela & O.E.H.M. Nxumalo  
 1969 *Izikhwili* - D.B.Z. Ntuli  
 1970 *Imicibisholo* - D.B.Z. Ntuti  
 1970 *Umathokomalisa* -J.M Sikhakhana  
 1971 *Uthingo lwenkosazane* -D.B.Z. Ntuli  
 1972 *Ezomhlaba azipheli* - W.M.B. Mkhize  
 1977 *Emhlabeni Mntanomuntu* -W.M.B. Mkhize  
 1980 *Iziga* - N.P.A. Khumalo  
 1980 *Umbani* - R.S. Ndlovu  
 1980 *Ngiyeke ngezomhlaba* -W.M.B. Mkhize  
 1980 *Kusemhlabeni lapha* -M.J. Mngadi  
 1981 *Kunjalo-ke emhlabeni* - W.M.B. Mkhize  
 1981 *Uyothi wabonani emhlabeni* -W.M.B. Mkhize

- 1982 *Amawisa* - C.S. Ntuli & D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1983 *Umchachazo* -L.T.L. Mabuya & N.P. Khathi
- 1985 *Amagwababa echobana* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo
- 1985 *Ngamafuphi* -D.B.Z. Ntuli (editor)
- 1985 *Amandiki* -N.A.P. Khumalo
- 1986 *Izizenze* -D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1987 *Umtshingo* -D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1987 *Amathunzi namayezi* - N.F. Mbhele
- 1987 *Kunje-ke* (essays) - M. Xulu
- 1988 *Ikusasa eliqhakazile* - N.G. Sibiya
- 1988 *Izimboko* - N.S. Ntuli
- 1988 *Izinhlansi* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1988 *Zihlekana iziphongo* -Molefe L.
- 1988 *Amanoni embuthuma* -A.M. Maphumulo
- 1989 *Umcebo kaNyambose* -N.F. Mbhele
- 1989 *Imishiza* -N.S. Ntuli
- 1989 *Izihlonti* -Shange A.B.
- 1989 *Sikhula nabanye* -M.C. Seme
- 1990 *Isicamelo* -D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1990 *Umlabalaba* -O.E.H.M. Nxumalo
- 1990 *Izipho zenhliziyi* -G.S. Zulu
- 1990 *Benza ngani* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo
- 1991 *Izinseka* - F.A. Ngobese
- 1991 *Amazembe* - D.B.K. Mhlongo & N.S. Ntuli
- 1991 *Sikhula ngokuxoxisana* (essays) - N.Z.E.Xala
- 1991 *Ingevu yesilimela* -N.J. Makhaye
- 1991 *Amacabanswani osiba* - N.F. Mbhele (editor)
- 1991 *Ngizoke ngibone* -L. Molefe
- 1991 *Ziyenzeka emhlabeni* - W.B.M. Mkhize M.T.Mkhize
- 1991 *Izibani* -A.B. Shange & N.J.K. Sithole
- 1991 *Izipeletu* -M.C Seme & R.S Ndlovu

- 1991 *Imvomve* -M.S.S. Gcumisa
- 1991 *Ifutho* -Kheswa A.T.& Gcumisa M.S.S.
- 1991 *Ithungelwa ebandla* -C.T. Msimang
- 1992 *Induku* - D.B.Z. Ntuli, O.E.H.M. Nxumalo & C.S.Z. Ntuli
- 1992 *Ucu lobuhlalu* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1992 *Amaphupho Ayakhuluma* -L. Molefe
- 1992 *Izimbobo zehluzo* -R.M. Mngadi
- 1992 *Iqhude* -N.J. Makhaye & D.W. Ndlovu
- 1993 *Itholene phezulu* - C. Nxaba
- 1993 *Igula Lendlebe Aligcwali* -C.T. Msimang
- 1993 *Inqeke* -C.S. Zimema, M.A Hlengwa., N.E. Mbesa & S.R. Ntshele
- 1993 *Siyofa sizilanda* -A.M. Maphumulo
- 1993 *Izinto Ziyahlehla* -L. Molefe
- 1993 *Amalangabi* -N. Sibiya

## **PLAYS**

- 1941 *UGubudela namazimuzimu* - N.N.T. Ndebele
- 1941 *Umvulane* - N.P.J.Steyn
- 1944 *Unkosiyaphansi* -H.E. Tracy & K.E. Masinga
- 1951 *Manhla iyokwendela egodini* - L.L.J. Mncwango
- 1953 *Umhwebi waseVenisi* - O. Shange (William Shakespeare)
- 1953 *Kusasa ngumngcwabo wakho nami* - L.L.J. Mncwango
- 1959 *Ngenzeni* - L.L.J. Mncwango
- 1960 *Uqomisa mina nje uqomisa iliba* -M.A.J. Blose
- 1960 *Ukufa kukaShaka* - E. Zondi
- 1962 *Mageba lazihlonza* - B.B. Ndelu
- 1961 *Inkinga yomendo* -B. J. Dube
- 1963 *Izehlo ngezehlo* - C.L.S. Nyembezi
- 1965 *Imidlalo enkundlanye* - A.CT. Mayekiso
- 1965 *Ngavele ngasho* - D. Mkhize
- 1968 *UThemi* - B.J. Dube

- 1971 *Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi* -S.B.L. Mbatha
- 1971 *Ukufa kuyosihlanganisa* - J. Dube
- 1971 *Indandatho yesethembiso* - D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1972 *Baba ngonile* - Kenneth Bhengu
- 1974 *Ithemba* - D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1976 *Izulu eladuma eSandlwane* - C.T. Msimang
- 1977 *Mubi umakhelwane* - J.N. Gumbi
- 1978 *Inkatha yabaphansi* - M.S.S. Gcumisa
- 1979 *UNtombazi* - A.H. Dladla
- 1983 *Amavenge* - E.M. Damane, D.B.Z. Ntuli & A.B. Shange
- 1983 *Awuthunyelwa gundane* - E.M. Damane
- 1984 *Kwabulawayo* -J.N. Gumbi
- 1985 *Ukuzala ukuzelula* - K. Bhengu
- 1985 *Zal' abantu ziy' ebantwini* - J.N. Gumbi
- 1986 *Insumansumane* - E. Zondi
- 1986 *UNyoni* -M.B. Khumalo (C. van Herden & L. Odendaal)
- 1988 *Ingwijikhwebu* - L. Molefe
- 1988 *Ishashalazi* - D.B.Z. Ntuli & N.F. Mbhele
- 1988 *Izimboko* (one act plays) - N.S. Ntuli
- 1988 *Woza nendlebe* - D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1988 *Yisiphithiphithi maNgwane* - L. Molefe
- 1989 *Hhawu ndlalifa* - E.M. Damane
- 1990 *Izwe lizothini* - L. Molefe
- 1990 *Isihlakaniphi* -L. Molefe
- 1990 *Amaseko* - N. Makhambeni
- 1991 *Ngizoke ngibone* (radio play) - L. Molefe
- 1991 *Umnyuzi* - L. Molefe
- 1991 *Lalela-ke* -D.B.Z. Ntuli
- 1992 *Indoni yamanzi* (one act plays) - D.B.Z. Ntuli & N.G. Sibiya
- 1992 *Umcebo ofihliwe* - E.M. Damane
- 1992 *Ngiwafunge amaBomvu* - L. Molefe
- 1992 *Wayesezowela* - L. Molefe

- 1992 *Ijikankezo* -L. Molefe  
 1992 *Uthule Nendaba Engaka* -L. Molefe  
 1992 *UNozimanga* - B.M. Mweli  
 1993 *Awuwelwa uMngeni* - M.S.S. Gcumisa  
 1993 *Isihlabelelo* -N.S. Ntuli

## **POETRY & IZIBONGO**

- 1935 *Inkondlo kaZulu* - B.W. Vilakazi  
 1945 *Amal' Ezulu* - B.W. Vilakazi  
 1948 *Umyalezo* - E.T. Mthembu  
 1951 *Umuthi wokufa nezinye izinkondlo* - E.H.A. Made  
 1951 *Iqoqo lezinkondlo* - J.S.M. Matsebula  
 1952 *Izithopho nezibongo* - A.S. Kunene  
 1953 *Imbongi yakwaZulu* - E.E.N.T. Mkhize  
 1956 *Itshe lesivivane* - S.Z.S. Dhlamini  
 1957 *Inzululwane* - J.C. Dlamini  
 1958 *Izibongo zamakhosi* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1959 *Imisebe yelanga II* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1961 *Imisebe yelanga I* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1961 *Imisebe yelanga III* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1962 *Imisebe yelanga IV* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1963 *Amahlungu aluhlaza* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1963 *Imikhemezelo* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1963 *Izimpophoma zomphefumulo* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
 1961 *Ikhwezi* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo  
 1966 *Inkondlo kaNobantu* - M.A.J. Blose & M.V. Bhengu  
 1966 *Izikhali zembongi* - T.M. Masuku  
 1966 *Ikhwezi likaZulu* - J.M. Sikakana  
 1968 *Umzwangedwa* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo  
 1969 *Ithongwane* - M.T. Mazibuko

1969 *Amangwevu* - D.B.Z. Ntuli  
1969 *Hayani maZulu* - P. Myeni  
1970 *Kuyokoma amathe* - E.E.N.T. Mkhize  
1971 *Inkwazi* - A.C. Nkabinde  
1972 *Isoka lakwaZulu* - N.J. Makhaye  
1972 *Imvunge yemvelo* - D.B.Z. Ntuli  
1972 *Amehlo kaZulu* - D.B.Z. Ntuli & C.S.Z. Ntuli  
1973 *Iyezane* - M.T. Mazibuko  
1973 *Uphondo lukabhejane* - T.M. Masuku  
1973 *Imfihlo yokunyamalala* - J.C. Dlamini  
1975 *Ugqozi 1* - D.B.Z. Ntuli  
1975 *Ugqozi 2* - D.B.Z. Ntuli  
1977 *Ithala* - D.B.K. Mhlongo & L.T.L. Mabuya  
1979 *Amagagasi* -C.T. Msimang  
1980 *Izagila zephisi* -L.B.Z. Buthelezi  
1980 *Izinsungulo* - C.T. Msimang  
1980 *Iziziba zoThukela* - C.T. Msimang  
1980 *Isibuko senhliziyo* - C.L.S. Nyembezi  
1981 *Isilulu semicabango* -M.S.S. Gcumisa  
1981 *Amavovo ezinyembezi* -J.C. Dlamini  
1981 *Ubuhlalu buka Zulu* -L.T.L. Mabuya & D.B.K. Mhlongo  
1981 *Unsinsi lwenkunzi* -L.T.L. Mabuya  
1981 *Imisinga yosinga* - E.S.Q. Zulu &N.F. Mbhele  
1982 *Intwasahlobo* - C.T. Msimang  
1982 *Amaqabunga entombe* -L.B.Z. Buthelezi  
1982 *Ilaka lokulangazelela* -L.T.L. Mabuya  
1983 *Uvivi lokusa* - E.T.Z. Mthiyane, L.T.L. Mabuya & O.M. Mbatha  
1983 *Inkezo kaZulu* -A.D. Magagula  
1984 *Amaqhabanga* -J.J. Thwala  
1985 *Ukugedeza kwengede* - M.S.S. Gcumisa  
1985 *Umhlomi* -L.T.L. Mabuya & M.G. Nkosi  
1985 *Ithunga likanondlini* - L.B.Z. Buthelezi

- 1985 *Indosamasuku* -M.D. Buthelezi
- 1986 *Siyacaba* -L.J.T. Mthalane & N.M.C. Mthembu
- 1986 *Izimbongi Izolo nanamuhla* (Umqulu 1) -C.T. Msimang
- 1986 *Khala nkomo ka Zulu* - L.B.Z. Buthelezi
- 1986 *Amagekle* -E.S.Q. Zulu
- 1986 *Inkonjane yezulu* -J.B. Hlongwane
- 1986 *Amayezi* -L.T.L. Mabuya & E.TZ. Mthiyane
- 1986 *Iziphepho zengqondo* -N.F. Mbhele & J.J. Thwala
- 1986 *Isilulu sikaZulu* -E. Damane
- 1987 *Amajozi* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1987 *Imbali yamathemba* -A.S.M. Zuma
- 1987 *Uhlanga lwezwe* -AT. Ndlovu & L.B.Z. Buthelezi
- 1987 *Ithonsi lomkholongo* - V.V.O. Mkhize & C.M. Mhlongo
- 1987 *Umvimbi* - L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1987 *Indlela yomcacamezelo* -A.S.M. Zuma
- 1987 *Izingcazi zogqozi* -E.J. Mhlanga
- 1988 *Izimbongi Izolo nanamuhla* (Umqulu 2) -C.T. Msimang
- 1988 *Ugubhu* -L.B.Z. Buthelezi
- 1988 *Izinhlansi zomlilo* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1988 *Isihluthulelo* - J.C. Dlamini
- 1988 *Intshengula* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1989 *Inkanyezi yokusa* -B.W. Mngomezulu
- 1989 *Iminyezane* -A.B. Shange
- 1989 *Izinduku zomsimbithi* -E.J.Mhlanga
- 1989 *Sadabukisa Isizwe* -J.C. Dlamini
- 1989 *Indonsa* -S.B. Majola
- 1989 *Lo mlil' olokozayo* - O.E.H.M. Nxumalo
- 1989 *Ihluzo 1&3* - N.M. Makhambeni
- 1989 *Unyazi 1* -E.S.Q. Zulu
- 1989 *Unyazi 3* -E.S.Q. Zulu, N.F. Mbhele & K.E. Hlongwane

- 1990 *Izimbongi zoSiba* - Mbhele N.F.
- 1990 *UNodumehlezi kaMenzi* -C.T. Msimang
- 1990 *Amabhosho* -L.Z.M. Khumalo
- 1991 *Ukukleza* -A.T. Kheswa & E.T.Z. Mthiyane
- 1991 *Usinga 1 & 3* - N.S. Ntuli
- 1991 *Ihluzo 2* - N.M. Makhambeni
- 1991 *Imvubelo* - A.M. Maphumulo
- 1991 *Izingqungqulu zoSiba* -Mhlanga E.J.
- 1991 *Imizwelo* -L.T.L. Mabuya
- 1991 *Umnyama omnyama* -V.V.O. Mkhize & C.M. Mhlongo
- 1992 *Imbiz' imbelwe* - Z.L.M. Khumalo
- 1992 *Unyazi 2* - E.S.Q. Zulu
- 1992 *Iqoma* -Z.W. Gule
- 1992 *UBuhlaluse* - N.R. Nkosi
- 1993 *Amakloba* - M.S.S. Gcumisa
- 1993 *Imibengo* - A.T. Kheswa & E.T.Z. Mthiyane
- 1993 *Izingcula zembongi* - E.J. Mhlanga
- 1993 *Ucu olumhlophe* - L.T.L. Mabuya & C.T. Msimang
- 1993 *Ubulawu bamathwasa* - E.J. Mhlanga
- 1993 *Ithunga likaNondlini* -L.T.Z Buthelezi
- 1993 *ISandlwana* -L.T.Z Buthelezi
- 1993 *Amathunzi ayewukela* -Gcumisa M.S.S.
- 1993 *Izibonkolo* - A.M. Maphumulo & J.J. Thwala
- 1993 *Umdlala kaZulu* -T.E. Nxumalo & L.M. Mlambo