

**ISIXHOSA INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NONGQAWUSE
SAGA: ORAL NARRATIVES AND THEATRICAL
PERFORMANCES OF THE NONGQAWUSE STORY**



BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late parents, first to my father uPrince Zweledinga Yani and especially to my mother uLydia Xakiwe Yani, who wished that I should be a medical doctor. Unfortunately, I never told her of my inability to count. I was ashamed to tell her of my inability to prove that x plus y is equal to one ($x + y = 1$). Truly if she was still alive I could have told her that it was going to be difficult for me to count all the human lives who are dying in methods of violence in our philistine barbaric crazy world. Yes, I will be a doctor, but a Philosophical Doctor. I also dedicate this work to my lovely wonderful children, uHlumela (my Pianist Daughter who loves the arts just like her father), uLihlumile (the lover of books just like her father) and uAyabonga (my superhero), who shares his birthday with his father and grandmother (my mother). KoKrila, ooThangana, Iinkomo ezibomvu ndiyabulela. NakuMaMpehla kanti nakoLeta. Makudede ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya. Vuma Ndlozi Lam. Camagu!

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is centred on the creative and linguistic interpretations (in English and isiXhosa) of the Nongqawuse prophecy and the cattle-killing of 1856-1857. By examining a range of historical, cultural and anthropological sources, the study foregrounds traditional African theatre elements as well as language as being important to a fresh understanding and appreciation of the Nongqawuse story. Using textual analysis as a methodological choice, the study analyses H.I.E Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, Xolani Mkonko's *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies* and Brett Bailey's *The Prophet* to locate the linguistic construct of the plays as well as their theatrical and performative aesthetics. The study adopts the Afrocentric theory in order to interrogate the texts within a decolonial context and locates the Nongqawuse prophecy and the eventual cattle killing as a narrative that communicates the traditional, cultural, historical and spiritual universe that defines amaXhosa of South Africa. While taking as its subject an event from more than 150 years ago, and literary debates from shortly after, my study has been able to contribute robustly to wider conversations that relate to the Nongqawuse prophecy and cattle killing and how the history is reshaped by African voices in terms of language and performance tradition. Added to this, the study contributes to the field of African languages by critiquing how these dramatic works, which focus on Nongqawuse's prophecy, creatively and refreshingly are inspired by Xhosa genres of orature and storytelling, set within a period of great upheaval due to missionary and colonial influences.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

This study is centered on creative interpretations (in both English and isiXhosa) of the Nongqawuse saga of 1856-1857. I will concentrate the interpretations and analysis on oral narratives as well as some of the performative aesthetics imbued in the story. The study will analyse Xolani Mkonko's play *Nongqawuse*¹, H.I.E. Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935), Brett Bailey's *The Prophet* (2003) and other plays emanating from the same cultural background for a fuller understanding. Moreover, the study will also look at how the isiXhosa language reinforces a central understanding of ritual performance and negotiates the truth embedded in the Nongqawuse story as a historical event in South Africa. To begin this study, it is important to first understand the nature of traditional African theatre and how the Nongqawuse story reflects these indigenous theatre elements generally.

Traditional African Theatre

Traditional African theatre houses a number of art forms such as ritual, festival, dance, music, songs, and story-telling. These forms help society cope with the realities and challenges of life. This is amplified by Kerr in his book, *African popular theatre: From pre-colonial times to the*

¹ Xolani Mkonko's play *Nongqawuse* is an unpublished text that was first performed in 2000. I am including it in this study as it is a performance text that dramatizes the Nongqawuse story.

present who highlights the performance aspects of ritual events that celebrate the stages and experiences of life:

African theatre is unique and encapsulates the African life patterns. What this means is that, *African* theatre seeks to document and extrapolate its diverse experiences, sometimes this is done through dance, songs and music or through chants (Kerr, 1995:6).

Thus, in all stages of life, including those of trouble, need, aspiration, and achievement, it could be argued that the African resorts to some of these performances to contain and understand the events that she or he experiences. The nature and definition of this theatre has been captured adequately by Banham and Wake as follows:

Traditional theatre encapsulates the existence, progress, development, and maximum utilization of social and cultural institutions of a group as it concerns artistic recreation and revaluation of moral/social ethos. This covers a wide range of activities as it relates to the lifestyles of the people — mode of worship, marriage relationship, farming, hunting, social mobilization, healthcare, economic potentials and cosmic/mystic beliefs. These are expressed through community outlets such as dance, music, song, mime, pantomime, costume, space, distance, and many more codes (non-verbal) of communication (Banham & Wake, 1976:1).

Traditional African theatre is therefore a conglomeration of the various art forms employed to reflect, inform, entertain, educate, sensitize, conscientize, mobilize, warn or comment on issues that concern the life and society of Africa. This theatre, in all its forms, is indispensable to African society, either as a complex whole or as a constituent part. Some of these African ritual events and oral narratives are regarded with veneration as a reservoir of past human experiences

from which present generations draw sentiments that strengthen them for their future. Mphande comments as follows on South African societies:

At a moment of need, it has always been a characteristic of human societies to reach back into that reservoir of their past and to reclaim some identifiable symbol for disentangling their confused present and mapping out their uncertain future. Southern African societies are no exception to such tendencies (Mphande, 1991:1).

Traditional African theatre has therefore survived despite the intrusion of modern culture and theatre from outside Africa. Thus it can be argued that although colonial dramaturgy influenced African theatre, it did not eradicate the drama of oral narratives as the way in which people entertained themselves, and the value they placed on such entertainment, ensuring that it was passed down from generation to generation. The essence of the oral nature of the African people and their theatre elements classified as 'orature' have been the major thrust for the survival of traditional theatre, drama, culture and history. 'Oral narratives' as obtained in traditional African theatre denotes the various types of narratives such as myths, legends, tales, riddles and proverbs (Kerr, 1995:9). Most commonly, African oral literature has consistently faced threats of ignorance and condemnation under the tag 'primitive', and scholars of literature have regarded it as a form of literature that is savage and backward (p'Bitek, 1973:19). However, anthropologists and researchers continued discovering the artistic and social significance of African art, and thus shifted their paradigm. They came to believe that oral narratives were not, and indeed could not be, indigenous and exclusive to Africa but were in fact part of a global literary expression:

Oral genres from throughout the world once dismissible as crude and "preliterate," from Mongolian oral epics or the lyrics of Indian love songs to

the extensive unwritten performances of Africa, have now come to be analysed forms of literature – of “oral” literature. (Finnegan, 2005:166-167)

However, before this contemporary understanding of the value of oral literature, written texts were seen as the only form of literature worthy of critical respect (Finnegan, 2005:166). It is no wonder that the Nongqawuse prophecy, as an important oral narrative in Xhosa traditional culture in South Africa, was at first negatively received, especially by white imperialists. Boniface Davies responds to this by pointing out that judging by the numerous articles in the London *Times* and the *Illustrated London News* at the time, the costly and almost decadal frontier wars, the Cattle-Killing, and the eventual annexation of what remained of Independent Kaffraria, kept amaXhosa in the news and the public imagination. Details of the ‘savage’ inhabitants of this remote territory were supplemented by the impressions of travellers, missionaries, amateur scholars and government officials (Boniface Davies, 2010:35).

Historiography and Theatre in South Africa: An overview

In an effort to grapple with the ever-changing political situation in Southern Africa, scholars like Tyhulu in his article “Visualizing the cattle-killing hagga mesh episode in post-apartheid South Africa: site of memory: context and meaning” explains a fundamental fact about the Cattle-Killing as follows:

The cattle killing episode is a chapter of South African history that not only marked the beginning of the end of the brutal Frontier Wars, but also contributed to urbanization and the emergence of the migrant labour system which in turn led to the pass laws that controlled the influx of people into urban areas. Because of its magnitude, the cattle-killing

episode is hard to visualize because black people loved their animals.
(Tyhulu, 2006:1)

Tyhulu's article, apart from demonstrating the historiographical details about the Cattle-Killing, also advances a close visualization of the incident in order for its impact to be felt more clearly. McLaren (2005), also show a great interest in such historiographical studies of not only African peoples, but also the white pioneers who colonized them. Other African scholars like Mazisi Kunene and his praise epics of the Shaka wars (1979), have spearheaded an appropriate reconstruction of historical events as a means of attempting to create a sufficient perspective on these events and reshaping their symbolic use in Southern African historiography to suit the image of the African resistance against colonization.

Importantly, apartheid historiography trivialized and suppressed the traditions of Black performance in the country (Steadman, 1994). Though critical writings on South African theatre challenged apartheid historiography's oppressive methods towards black performance, they have on their own traditionally undervalued the influence of indigenous performance forms (Chapman, 1996). Revisionist scholars including Saunders (1988), Genovese (2014) and Lipton (2016) try to set right this record, but they have also been guilty of another kind of neglect, which forms a critical interest of this study. None of the key texts on South African theatre have focused sufficiently on the performance elements of the theatre nor has the issue of language as an indigenous medium of the prophecy been given sufficient attention. Sadly, it is also a fact that the plays that will be analysed in my study are creatively represented in the English language and contain minimal reflection of isiXhosa as the original language of the prophecy. The writings of most of the prominent scholars like Lewis (1991) in his article, "Materialism and idealism in the

historiography of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing movement 1856-7”, Boniface Davies (2008) in “The Cattle-Killing as Propaganda: Leon Schauder’s Nonquassi (1939)” have tended to refer mainly to historiographical materials and have concentrated less on the performative aspects including how language plays a functional role in reinforcing the theatricality of the story. While my own work will deal with the history of Nongqawuse and the movement of the Cattle-Killing, it will also attempt a critical enquiry into the theatrical and performative elements contained in the works of the authors I am studying and how the isiXhosa language re-enforces the cultural aesthetics of the story.

1.2. Statement of the problem

South African theatre has suffered much neglect especially in terms of the stories and events that center on black oppression and White supremacy (Hauptfleisch, 1997:10). Some of these stories, particularly those created by Black South Africans, have not been able to survive beyond the boundaries of oral narratives, i.e. the passing down of stories from one generation to the other through the spoken word (Solberg and Wright, 2003). This study is premised on a significant event in South Africa, the Nongqawuse revelations and subsequent Cattle-Killing of 1856-1857 and how these events, and the key characters involved in them, have been represented in South African theatre. There is no reason to believe, or even hope, that consensus will ever be reached over the 'true story' of the Cattle-Killing. A more interesting approach, if our intention is to come to a better understanding of the event and its relevance to the present, would be to use the many and sometimes contradictory voices in a different way (Davies, 2007:40). Added to this, apart from depending on the oral narratives of the story, this study will engage with three selected texts of Mkonko (2000), Dhlomo (1935) and Bailey (2003) to demonstrate how their sources of inspiration

can be harnessed by other theatre practitioners in reviving the theatre of ritual and resistance using residuals of the past.

The central problem of this study is that very little attention has been paid to the fact that the Nongqawuse story was first told in isiXhosa and that any interpretations of this major event in the lives of amaXhosa should at least acknowledge that translation of the Nongqawuse saga from its source language of isiXhosa into English often meant a loss of both precision and nuance. By examining how the three plays under study in this thesis deal with the event as as examples of both isiXhosa literature and prophetic traditions it is exhorts future scholars of African theatre to foreground the primacy of language in African performance pieces.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Survey the historical evolution of the Nongqawuse story and Cattle-Killing of 1856-1857.
- ii. Explore the role of ritual and resistance in the Nongqawuse and Cattle-Killing saga and to analyse how the selected playwrights have demonstrated the story as important in the theatrical and performance tradition of South Africa.
- iii. Investigate how the isiXhosa language is central to the understanding of the story from a cultural-historical point of view.

1.4. Significance of the study

Though the body of literature specifically dedicated to South African theatre is considerable and multi-dimensional and includes important works by scholars such as Nkosi (1983), Peterson (1990), Chapman (1996) and Hauptfleisch (1997), studies that address the creative interpretations of the Nongqawuse story and the Cattle-Killing saga from the performative aspect are scant. Compared to previous studies, therefore, this research responds to the need to revisit the Nongqawuse narrative and, in so doing, to deviate from well-trodden paths of the story that are hinged on just a product of historiography, oppression and colonization. Rather, emphasis is placed on interpreting the event as a creative and performative landmark in the South African theatre landscape. This research therefore sets out to explore depictions of the story of Nongqawuse and how her prophecy not only responded to the situation at the time but provided a roadmap towards understanding ritual performance in South African theatre and how contemporary studies on theatre in South Africa can still benefit from its dramatic and artistic interpretations. Fundamentally, the research also explores an uncharted territory – the tradition of performance and ritual enactments by amaXhosa thus expanding the frontiers of comprehending the entire event from the eyes of the people who first heard and witnessed it. Drawing lessons from the texts considered for study, the research distills concerns of understanding, interpreting and analyzing the story in the isiXhosa context. The study would be of major interest to theatre studies in South Africa as well as students of history, historiography and the language of theatre and dramatic narratives.

The study notes that while the historical facts surrounding the Nongqawuse story are still contested (Peires 1989; Davies 2007; Offenberger 2008) there is even less that has been reported on how this aspect of South African history has been realized theatrically. The findings of this study shall

significantly contribute to the understanding of how the Nongqawuse story and Cattle-Killing was understood and creatively interpreted by amaXhosa and South Africans generally.

1.5. Methodology of the study

This study shall depend on two sources of data, viz; primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are based on the creative texts of Xolani Mkonko's *Nongqawuse* (2000), H.I.E. Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) and Brett Bailey's *The Prophet* (2003). The secondary sources shall rely on a review of related literature and my personal experiences as a theatre practitioner. The study also interprets and analyses the plays from the historical context as well as the theatricality of the story as represented by the authors.

1.6. Chapter division

The work shall be presented in seven chapters. Chapter One shall present an introduction to the research; Chapter Two reviews the related literature, Chapter Three will be the theoretical framework. In Chapters Four, Five and Six interpretation and analysis shall be presented. Chapter Seven shall be the concluding chapter.

1.7. Scope of the study

A literature review on both the historical enactment of the prophecy and its later creative interpretations in the form of theatre pieces will be conducted to locate it as a significant event in South Africa's past. Thus, this study does not set out to discuss the history of the Nongqawuse

story alone but aims to interpret the story within the context of isiXhosa narratives and how the selected texts contribute to the understanding of its theatricality and performance aesthetics. The study relies on content analysis and interpretation of the selected texts as primary sources from which to generate data for analysis. Finally, my own experiences as a theatre practitioner will make up the secondary source of data. The aim of this study is not to debate the origin of the Nongqawuse story or prophecy as captured by other scholars but to draw insights to the linguistic and performance elements of the story as important to the origin and development of South African theatre.

1.8. A brief history of amaXhosa

The Xhosa people, henceforth referred to in this study by the endonym amaXhosa, are of the Bantu ethnic group of Southern Africa who are mainly found in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and in the last two centuries throughout the Southern and central-southern parts of the country (Soga, 2013). The language of amaXhosa, known as isiXhosa, is a recognized South African national language (Nyamende, 1996) and is the second largest language in the country².

Oral historians like Tonkin (1995), La Hausse (1990), Kaschula (2002) claim that the name 'Xhosa' comes from the legendary leader of the original sub-group AmaXhosa, whose name was Xhosa. Nomlomo (1993:12) says that the legendary Xhosa broke away from other Nguni ethnic groups in Embo (the areas North West, central west and central south of KwaZulu-Natal) around the seventh and eighth centuries AD, and moved with his people to the south-eastern parts of South Africa. The history of amaXhosa is contested, but legend has it that the first leader of

² http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf (p.24)

amaXhosa is conceived by many of his descendants as having brought his people to the area that is now the Eastern Cape (see Soga, 2013; Peires, 2003). However, some sources amongst contemporary historians like Mabona (2004) and Bleibinger (2008) claim that “the name Xhosa has an entirely different derivation: that it comes from the name given to them [amaXhosa] by the Khoikhoi, whose territories in the Eastern Cape [amaXhosa] gradually infiltrated and overran. That name was ‘Kosa’, meaning ‘angry men’” (Mabona, 2004:15).

According to oral history of amaXhosa as captured by Tonkin,

The earliest arrival of amaXhosa in the parts of Eastern Cape was around the seventh and eighth centuries AD. They crossed the Dedesi River, now unidentifiable, from Embo (KwaZulu-Natal) and they were going towards the area currently known as Umthatha about seventh century AD. By the eighteenth century AD the last league of this ‘national trek’ settled at the mouth of Tyolomnqa (Chalumna) river, near the modern port of East London. The fragments of Early Iron Age Bantu pottery that were found next to Tyolomnqa river in the 1960s, and cited by Tim Maggs in his archaeological but historical article, The Iron Age Sequence South of the Vaal and Pongola Rivers, are ‘fragments’ of evidence of this early settlement of the eastern Cape by amaXhosa (Tonkin, 1995:15).

This indicates rather clearly that amaXhosa were not nomadic people, though the need for large pieces of land in order to accommodate their expanding communities and to secure agricultural lands for their future generations and grazing lands for their cattle made them move from one point to another. Mnyaka and Motlhabi further explain that,

AmaXhosa were sociable people. They used to love the company of their fellow beings and keep an ‘open-house’ attitude towards any stranger. A

traveler, on his way, never had to worry where he would sleep or get the next meal, because any family he came across with or to would share with him what they had and gave him a place by the fire to sleep. In the same way, when there was a feast in any kraal (*ubuhlanti*), there was no suggestion of “who was invited?”, as it is the case in our westernized society, because everyone who was near enough was automatically invited, and it was expected for any person to stay until there was nothing left of the slaughter to eat and no more *umqombothi* (African beer) to drink (Mnyaka and Motlhabi, 2005:221).

These aspects were based on their belief in communality – the acceptance that everyone belongs to my family, thus we are members of one family. It also draws on the philosophical notion of *Ubuntu* (spirit of humanity) – that *umntu ngumntu ngabantu* (a human is a human by others), which is the core aspect of any indigenous African culture.

Ubuhlanti (the kraal) was the name given to the cattle enclosures and the huts that were encircling *ubuhlanti*, and each homestead used to have its own kraal. The kraals formed family clusters of each village or community. Each village or community had many kraals and one principal kraal known as the Great Place, where *inkosi* (chief) of the village used to stay. The gates of all kraals, including the principal kraal, used to face towards the east where the sun rises in the morning. This was symbolical as a way of welcoming and honouring the ‘Supreme Energy’ or the ‘Primary God’, Langa, known as Ra in ancient Egyptian mythology, for bringing a new day (Mostert, 1992).

Cheetham and Cheetham (1976) note that *umzi* was the name used for the homestead, and when they were two or more they were known as *imizi*, with many *imizi* consequently forming a village.

Umzi was created or formed through an extended family that could include the head of the family (*utata wekhaya*) and his wives, children and ageing parents, the huts of married sons and their families, and the huts of old unmarried daughters. Just like the kraals, all the huts faced eastwards to the sun. The huts were round and made of mud, with a pole in the middle of each hut supporting a dome-shaped or a conical grass roof. The fire used to burn in a hollow in the mud plastered floor, and it was around this fire that the people, especially the children, listened to *iintsomi* (fairytales) told by grandparents, especially *oomakhulu* (grandmothers). When the weather was too bad to cook outside, a traditional pot would stand over the fire with the next meal slowly cooking inside. But cooking could only be done in the huts of a wife or wives, not in a hut of the head of the family. In the absence of a wife or wives, cooking could be done in the huts of elder daughters.

The account above describes the physical space in which many amaXhosa conducted their lives as it was, in a way, the ‘stage’ on which daily performances and narratives were enacted. The Nongqawuse story therefore cannot be sufficiently told without imagining the original space of the peoples in which not only her narrative, but subsequent interpretations of her narrative, were enacted.

1.9. About the authors

The three authors that have been selected for this study are Dhlomo, Bailey and Mkonko. The choice of these authors is specifically based on the focus of the study which is to creatively interpret and analyse the Nongqawuse story and Cattle-Killing as performative in the theatrical parlance. The three authors therefore, do not only focus on a historical presentation of the story, but have artistically created the whole story as one that can be performed to be educative and entertaining. Since the authors originate from diverse cultural backgrounds it is imperative to

understand the full implications of their dramatic and theatrical choices. What follows is the biography of the authors as well as their creative contributions to South African theatre generally.

1.9.1 H.I.E. Dhlomo

According to Couzens (1985), Herbert Isaac Ernest Dhlomo was born in 1903 in Natal Province, South Africa, and was educated in local schools, before training as a teacher at Adams College and teaching for some years in Johannesburg. Dhlomo was very active in social affairs during the 1920s, which resulted in several articles published by him in newspapers such as *Ilanga Lase Natal* in Durban and *Bantu World* (Roberts, 1988).

Herbert Dhlomo, during his later career, as noted by Chrisman (2000), soon became one of the major figures of the new black elite. The catchphrase of the time was 'progressive' and *The African Yearly Register* of the time described Dhlomo as "a young man of fine personality, very progressive in his ideas" (in Chrisman, 2000:10), which at this time meant that he was open towards the achievements of Western modernity.

The idea of Progressivism, Chrisman (2000:12) explained, was part of Dhlomo's earlier writing and accepted as given (and unmediated by any critical analysis) the virtues of Western-style education, 'civilization', moderation and anti-tribalism. Examples of this kind of Western influenced philosophy are evident in Dhlomo's writing are *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) and *Ntsikana* (an improvisational piece, n.d.), which are written along the lines of supporting Progressivist ideas and justifying white policy. Couzens explains this further:

Native Africans were supposed to be the junior partners of the whites in politics and literature, a relationship that was supposed to develop eventually into racial equality. The literature they produced was meant for a mission press, and its aim was to keep the political situation quiet rather than to ameliorate it for the blacks.

The language of these early writings also reveals the heavy influence of British Victorian and Romantic anthology pieces, which manifests itself in a pompous style, elitism and overawed-ness in the face of British models. The black writer of the time was simply supposed to show his or her cleverness by emulating the great white tradition (Couzens, 1985:40).

Although somewhat an apologist for Western ideals (as is evidenced by his self-confinement to the English language), Dhlomo during his life contributed substantially to South African theatre history and sensitively portrayed the conditions of Blacks in South Africa. Some of his works that have survived as collected in Chrisman's writings include but are not limited to, *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) and other improvisational works like *Shaka*, *The living dead*, *Workers Boss Bosses*. His best collection, *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* was published in 1941. His work *The Girl Who Killed to Save* will be used in this study for reflection since it deals specifically with the Nongqawuse phrophecy.

1.9.2 Xolani Mkonko

The biography of Mr Xolani Mkonko as provided here is based on my personal communication with him on the 4th May, 2017. According to him he started acting in 1989 under the direction of Lulamile Matoto. He performed in unpublished plays like *Unrevealed Evils* and *June 16th the painful memories*. He attended acting lessons under the veteran Winston Ntshona. Dr Ntshona also directed Xolani in Witness Tamsanqa's *Buzani Kubawo*. Mr Mkonko was a founder of New Generation, the group that performed for Queen Elizabeth when she was in Port Elizabeth in 1995. In New Generation he performed in the Johannesburg Youth Festival (1999) in the production titled *Peace in our Land*.

Mkonko was also a founding member of Rise and Shine Theatre Project (1994) which established a musical group called Tambora under Lulamile Matoto. He also established Embo Cultural Productions which mostly popularized (within the Port Elizabeth area) the Zulu dance called Indlamu. In 1997 he acted as a lead actor in a film called *Footprints* directed by Ben Nomoyi and later on acted in a feature film called *Die Kalfe Kabinet* as an extra, directed by Scholts films. In 1999 Mr Mkonko joined Wits University to study for a Bachelor of Arts (Dramatic Arts), but only spent a year at the institution. While at Wits he worked with me in a production called *UGcaleka Ubuyile* (Gcaleka has Returned), an Oedipus Rex revised production and *Skankatamela Tsotsi* also directed by me for the Wits drama school.

In 2000-2002 he took a Scandinavian tour together with the Upondo Lwe Afrika project working with a Swedish group called Ung Utan Pung (UUP) under the management of Johan Sundberg, a Swedish satirist. While in Sweden he was involved in many cultural activities promoting African artistic expression including running seminars and workshops for Swedish High Schools. In 2004 Mr Mkonko was hired by Africa Theatre, a theatre in Cape Town, to facilitate a training project at the Eastern Cape Training Centre. The training involved Aggressive Management and Robbery prevention through industrial theatre or forum theatre under two companies, Setracon (Security Training Consultant) and PAA (Petrol Attendant Academy). Recently Mr Mkonko directed and acted in a production called *Makhanda The Warrior Prophet* (written by me) for the 2006 Standard Bank National Arts Festival. The production was well received by former Eastern Cape Premier Nosimo Balindlela. Mr Mkonko's personal vision is to see South African Arts and Culture reaching its full potential. He is the writer of the production *Nongqawuse the Dissertation of True Lies*. Mr Mkonko is currently involved with uMhlobo Wenene (South Africa's national radio

station for the isiXhosa language) Radio Drama as an actor and is the author of the play titled *uNongqawuse: the dissertation of true lies* (2000) which will be used for analysis in this study.

1.9.3 Brett Bailey

Brett Bailey was born in 1967 and remains a major contributor to South African theatre. In the forward to Bailey's book *The plays of miracle & wonder: Bewitching visions and primal high-jinx from the South African stage* (2003), John Matshikiza wrote,

Brett Bailey has carved out a niche for himself as the *enfant terrible* of the theatre of the New South Africa. The English-language theatre of the old South Africa was characterized by the works of Pieter Toerien, Richard Loring and the guardians of imperial values on the one hand; and by the likes of Athol Fugard. Gibson Kente Barney Simon, looking at social and political issues of black life, on the other. There was no middle ground. (Matshikiza, in Bailey, 2003: 6)

Matshikiza further explains that Bailey is someone who bravely explores areas of South African life that are shunned by other writers, and by so doing allows us "to peep into the undiscovered territory that stands out in stark relief all around us" (Matshikiza in Bailey 2003:6). It should be noted that Bailey has consistently broken grounds in his provocative writings by daring to write about matters that would usually be considered taboo, that is, the fractured inner spiritual world of black African culture. Apart from engaging in creative writing as a playwright, he has worked throughout South Africa, in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Haiti, the UK and Europe (Tonkin, 1995). His acclaimed iconoclastic dramas, which interrogate the dynamics of the post-colonial world, include *Big Dada*, *Ipi Zombi?* *iMumbo Jumbo* and *Orfeus*. His performance installations include *Blood Diamonds* (later known as *TERMINAL*) and *Exhibits A & B*. He directed the opening show at the

World Summit on Arts and Culture in Johannesburg (2009), and from 2006-2009 the opening shows at the Harare International Festival of the Arts. From 2008-2011 he was curator of South Africa's only public arts festival, 'Infecting the City', in Cape Town. Bailey himself admits that his ventures do not always succeed, this humility is captured by Matshikiza who muses that the playwright acknowledges the fact that:

His quest is not always successful, that his plays do not always "work" as he intended them to. But at their best, his plays – huge, theatrical, colourful, reverential, irreverent – reach into a subliminal space that touches the raw nerves he is aiming at, to provoke us out of our lethargy, both as theatregoers and as stakeholders in a national enterprise of extraordinary potential that could just as easily founder on the reefs of its own history at any moment. And above all, he takes on each project with a frontal assault of bold theatrical proportions that no other practitioner dares to attempt in these times of moral uncertainty (Matshikiza, in Bailey, 2003:7)

His contributions as a creative writer and director distinguish his works as worthy for critical reflection. Bailey's commitment to uncovering the truths of the dehumanising effects of Apartheid can be summed up in his own statement:

The dim chambers of our collective imagination are haunted by silent misinterpretations and twisted configurations of Otherness, ...They cloak the atrocities that occurred under colonialism in the shimmering robes of civilization, and energize degrading stereotypes and dehumanizing systems. (in Stefanova, 2014:130)

His play *The Prophet* will be analyzed in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Background to the study

This chapter concentrates on a critical review of related literature on understanding the nature of theatre especially Black theatre in the South African landscape as well as diverse perspectives on the Nongqawuse story and Cattle-Killing of 1856-1857. The review of literature in this study constructively builds on, and contributes to, our understanding of how the Nongqawuse story and the Cattle-Killing of 1856-1857 is represented in the play scripts selected for this study. The chapter will also present historical and contemporary accounts of the Nongqawuse prophecy as well as some of the critical scholarly perspectives that have evolved since the revelation of the prophecy by the young Nongqawuse in 1856.

Although studies on the Nongqawuse story and Cattle-Killing such as those by Mphande (1991), Tyhulu (2006), McLaren (2005) and Gagiano (2011) have focused on the interpretation of the story from the historical, political, social and economic dimensions, little attention (see Iannaccaro, 2014) has been paid to the creative interpretations of the story as represented in dramatic literature, particularly in the works of the authors I am studying, nor has there been any in-depth treatment of how the story can also be understood from a theatrical praxis. As such, this study provides additional insight into the representations and perceptions of amaXhosa understandings of the Nongqawuse prophecy as represented in the plays. The analytic focus on these plays from historical, cultural and theatrical perspectives, and a focus on how language reinforces a more

nuanced understanding of the story will combine to provide a better comprehension of the story and its significance for contemporary society.

Apart from studying the selected plays from historical, cultural and linguistic perspectives I will also include reference to the performance elements manifest therein, and how they contribute to South African theatre history. The study uses Afrocentrism as a theory to investigate the cultural ideology and worldview that focuses on the history of Black Africans especially in South Africa and how scholars like Asante (1990), Kershaw (1992), Keto (1989) and Baldwin (1981) respond to issues of Black descent. To begin this chapter, it is important to clearly understand the creation of apartheid and its relevance for Black theatre in South Africa.

2.2. Apartheid and Black theatre in South Africa

It is imperative at this stage to clearly understand how the creation of apartheid influenced the nature and form of Black theatre history in South Africa. This is sufficiently needed in the sense that the social and political contradictions of this region developed militancy in Black theatre in South Africa. Jordan Ngubane, writing in the 1960s, attempted to explain the root cause of these contradictions:

To understand the factors which have produced this state of mind, we have to go back to 1652. For Jan van Riebeeck, Hollander, landed at the Cape of Good Hope with a group of men and women who had been sent out by the Dutch East India Company to establish a victualling station for its ships sailing between Europe and the Orient. The arrival of white settlers and their establishment of a separate colony on land that the Africans regarded as their own was an important assertion of white initiative as the main factor which was to regulate relations between black and white (Ngubane, 1963:4-5).

Ngubane proceeded to argue that the friction that later developed was reached about a year after van Riebeeck's arrival in 1653, a time when the people that were then called Hottentots by the colonisers, now variously referred to as Khoekhoe, Khoikhoi, Khoisan or Bushman, made bold attempts to stop white encroachment on their land. They desperately invaded van Riebeeck's company cattle post, murdered the herd-boy, David Jansen, and made away with nearly over forty of the company's cattle (Ngubane, 1963). Recalling further Ngubane posits:

By 1660, van Riebeeck had been compelled to pursue a vigorous policy of residential segregation in endeavors to protect his group against the Hottentots. After the war he fought with Kaapmen [another Hottentot group] during that same year, he took over the Liesbeeck lands and enclosed them within a fence to mark them out as white territory. The whites were to keep to one side of the fence, the Africans to the other (Ngubane, 1963:6)

It is therefore very clear that the problem of racism in South Africa began when van Riebeeck set foot on the Cape. Similarly, Louw and Frances noted that the first apartheid law was passed in 1660, only a few years after whites arrived in the Cape, when van Riebeeck planted his hedge of bitter almonds to keep the 'Hottentots' and free burghers apart). Although this thesis is centered on creative interpretations of the Nongqawuse story as represented in dramatic literature, the circumstances of Black people in South Africa and the way in which they were forced to suffer cruel discrimination have been central themes in their theatre history and therefore are essential when providing background to the Nongqawuse prophecy.

Historically, White South Africans, according to Epskamp (1992) owned the means of communication: Blacks were too poor to own, run or have access to formal forms of media, like

newspapers, radio and television, and were also compelled to find other means to publically communicate and express themselves. The only forum that could serve as a possible medium of expression was theatre as well as other forms of performance, such as dances and rituals which have been referred to by scholars as “the roots of African theatre” (Banham, 2004:xvi).

Epskamp (1989:69) also notes that throughout the centuries and in various parts of the world, theatre has been used in transferring all kinds of information and knowledge, both educational and entertaining (and this also makes the creative representation of the Nongqawuse story as captured by playwrights like Dhlomo, Bailey and Mkonko important both as an educational and entertaining story). As a vehicle for non-formal education in Third World countries, the Nongqawuse story has attracted increased attention. Notwithstanding, change and developments in Black theatre were influenced by theatrical performances by White settlers and missionaries (Williams, 1985).

Similarly, Black people in South Africa, having been denied political means, used cultural means to express their political and social aspirations. What developed further was Blacks’ skin colour consciousness, provoked by discrimination and oppression by White settlers that gave rise to a positive notion of theatre in the cause of Black liberty. The meaning of Black theatre therefore espoused the principles of Black consciousness as noted by Hatch and Shine (1996:45) “it reintegrated Blacks into their history and culture to forge solidarity and political consciousness”. In the desperate face of apartheid, Black consciousness became the only potent instrument to unite Blacks and theatre was to be part of this attempt. Ndebele observed that,

At the end of the fifties, and following the banning of ANC and the PAC, we begin to see the emergence of what has been called protest literature. This kind of writing follows the disillusionment that came in the wake of the banning of

the major political organizations. Here we see the return of the concerns of Dhlomo. We see the dramatic politicization of creative writing in which there is a movement away from the entertaining stories of *Drum*, towards stories revealing the spectacular ugliness of the South African situation in all its forms: the brutality of the Boer, the terrible farm conditions, the phenomenal hypocrisy of the English-speaking liberal, the disillusionment of educated Africans, the poverty of African life, crime and a host of other things. (Ndebele, 1994:44)

In this context, Black Theatre became politicized as black playwrights sought means to address issues of concern under the apartheid system. Hauptfleisch and Steadman (1984) argue that for Black Theatre, the major contradiction was hinged on the inherent co-existence of the privileged few with the oppressed in South Africa. Therefore, playwrights and theatre practitioners created major works in Black Theatre to expose the contradictions of this ideology. Similarly, Epskamp (1989:60) maintains that by explicitly juxtaposing ‘theatre’ and ‘politics,’ theatre-makers of the 1960s and 1970s accepted social responsibility with respect to the State (the administrators and policy makers), the Regime (the politicians) and that part of the population which they called the people. Rangoajane says in his dissertation titled, “Political shifts and black theatre in South Africa” that

At any time there was friction between political and state interests on the one hand, and the interests of the people on the other, theatre-makers used ‘popular’ or ‘people’s’ theatre as a political instrument in the struggle for social change (Rangoajane, 2011:9).

It can also be argued that the reason Black Theatre assumed this political role is that theatre was not only an accessible and cheap means of communication for the oppressed Black masses, but was also the most effective since it could not easily be monitored, sanctioned, suppressed or

censored by the apartheid system the same way the system did with literary works. Epskamp observes:

Popular workers confronted the authorities with a new phenomenon that they did not know how to control, by opting for new forms, theatre groups discovered gaps in the oppressive system. The performers created points of reference for the audience by sticking to the forms that the audience appreciated, thus making the message acceptable. It was expected that these critical actors had something more to offer than a straightforward play (Epskamp, 1989:61).

Subsequently, South African Black playwrights became able to conceive, write and produce plays based on their own experiences and those of their people as observed by Steadman (1990) who says: “theatrical performance in South Africa has expressed oppositions to hegemony in ways directly parallel to political developments” (Steadman, 1990:211). Apart from that, the fact that productions were minimalistic permitted production companies to move from place to place with ease (Pereira, 1977:37). Because of that, Black playwrights could reach the widest audience possible within the oppressed Black people. Ernest Pereira observes:

Theatre had many advantages; it was cheap, mobile, simple to present, and difficult to supervise, censor, or outlaw. Clearly it was the one medium left to the people to use to conscientize, educate, unify and mobilize both the cadres and rank and file (Pereira, 1977:37).

The significance, effect and effectiveness of Black Theatre under apartheid are widely acknowledged by a number of scholars including Williams (1985), Mollette and Mollette (1986) and Hatch and Shine (1996). This is borne out by anti-apartheid activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s forward to Williamson’s (2010) “Resistance Art in South Africa” where he affirms that the

arts played a crucial role in the life of Black people, and that protest theatre was a powerful instrument in people's struggle for liberation. Tutu further argues that:

Enacted on the stage for the audience to see were the experiences of Blacks' daily lives; the shame, the attacks on their dignity, their failures, triumphs, joys and laughter. (Tutu in Williamson, 2010:7)

Tutu refers to the cathartic function of liberation theatre, which moreover empowered people and gave them agency to confront antagonistic forces. Tutu is also of the opinion that somehow "the denouement of plays did say something about good and evil" and argues that "there was a nemesis in the scheme of things" that, even if the plays did not directly state this, there was a belief that "evil would be defeated" (Tutu, in Williamson, 2010:7). Similarly, Gcina Mhlophe one of South Africa's prominent Black women playwrights, explains that "theatre played a very important role in the past. It allowed Blacks to speak about things they were not allowed to by the apartheid system. It gave Blacks a voice" (in Rangoajane, 2011:10).

Theatre also functions, among other things, as mirror to, or watchdog of, a society and consequently reflects the nature or state of a society at a given time. David Pammemter explains:

Theatre, at its best, is the communication and exploration of human experience; it is a forum for our values, political, moral and ethical. It is concerned with the interaction of these values at a philosophical, emotional and intellectual level (Pammemter, 1980:42).

The same might be said specifically about Black theatre: that it was, and still is, informed by the experience of South African Black playwrights and their people as will be reflected in the plays to be discussed in this study. Black theatre expresses social as well as personal experiences of racism (Waters, 2007), and therefore, while acknowledging Fugard's role in promoting theatre that spoke

to Black experience in South Africa, it cannot be denied that, as Coplan argues: “Since the arrival of the first missionaries, the slur of primitivism and moral inferiority cast upon indigenous culture by whites has hindered the efforts of Western-educated black leaders to employ historical culture in creating solidarity and positive identity among Africans” (Coplan, 1986: 152).

I need to contest the notion that White playwrights like Athol Fugard, and even some Black actors working in collaboration with Whites, like John Kani can ever successfully translate Black experience into meaningful, authentic theatre that truly represents Black lives as lived in South Africa. It is important to note that to these South African white playwrights Black Theatre was and still is a literary subject, a profession and most of all a business which is oftentimes capitalist in nature. Terry Eagleton, a foremost literary critic, comments on the capitalist nature of literature by pointing out that,

Literature may be an artifact, a product of social consciousness, a world vision; but it is also an industry. Books are not just structure of meaning, they are also commodities produced by publishers and sold on the market at a profit. Drama is not just a collection of literary texts; it is a capitalist business which employs certain men [authors, directors, actors, stagehands] to produce a commodity to be consumed by an audience at a profit. Critics are not just analysts of texts; they are [usually] academics hired by the state to prepare students ideologically for their functions within capitalist society. Writers are not just transposers of trans-individual mental structures, they are also workers hired by publishing houses to produce commodities which will sell (Eagleton, 1976:59).

Eagleton’s explication of capitalist forces inherent in the production of literary works, including drama, has resonance for the South African theatrical scene. White dramatists and producers recognized that presenting Black lives to Whites was a profitable endeavor, even if those

presentations were often fantastical and far off the mark of what was actually experienced by oppressed Black South Africans. It can be argued that Black Theatre was, and still is, based on Blacks' lives and experiences, for they were the ones who suffered the effects of oppression and understood the necessity of liberation (Freire, 1970).

However, since this study does not focus substantially on the contradictions of White and Black theatre or writers, the background presented is sufficient in establishing a social and political context from which to understand the narrative around the Black prophet (Nongqawuse) and her prophecy and how it is reflected creatively and performatively by the selected playwrights. It is therefore essential to now present the Nongqawuse prophecy and understand the central beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856.

2.3. The Nongqawuse Prophecy and the central beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing

Although one cannot be categorically certain on the exact narrative content of the Nongqawuse prophecy, most of what has survived is based on what has been handed down from generation to generation. However, one of the most insightful accounts of the prophecy is contained in Helen Bradford and Msokoli Qotole's 2008 article "Ingxoxo enkulu ngoNongqawuse (a great debate about Nongqawuse's era)." Since I believe it is critical to read the prophecy in the original isiXhosa language (the language of the prophecy) as well as its English translation³, I take the liberty of here reproducing the texts as it appears in Bradford and Qotole's article, with the isiXhosa in the

³ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S025901902008000100004&script=sci_arttext&tlng=es for the full transcript and translation

original orthography of the time. The authors used as their original source the isiXhosa newspaper *Isigidimi samaXhosa* (March 1, 1888, 22-23) and the following article penned by W.W. Gqoba.

The Nongqawuse Prophecy

IsiXhosa presentation of the Nongqawuse prophecy of 1856	English translation of the Nongqawuse prophecy of 1856
<p>Kwati kwa Gcaleka, ezitenjini [sic], kwesika Mnzabele ngomnyaka we 1856, ati amantombazana emabini, eye kulinda intaka emasimini, enye igama ngu Nongqause intokazi ka Mhlakaza nenye ingumtshana, emlanjeni ekutiwa kuse Kamangeni, abona kufika amadoda amabini, afike ati lamadoda kula mantombazana. - "Maze nisibulisele emakaya, nixele ukuba singo Nantsi (awaxela amagama andikohlile) atsho azibiza ngamagama ke wona. Abafa kudala. Ze nixele ukuba umzi uza kuvuka wonke ekufeni, nenkomo mazixelwe zonke ezi zikoyo kuba zifuywe ngezandla ezincolileyo, kuba kuko nabantu abapete ubuti.</p> <p>Makungalinywa, makumbiwe izisele ezikulu ezitsha, kwakiwe ne zindlu ezikwa ntsha, kubiywe nenq'ili ezinkulu ze ntlanti kusikwe intsuba, kulukwe nengcango zobuka zibe ninzi. Zitsho inkosi u Napakade into ka Sifuba-sibanzi. Abantu</p>	<p>It came to pass in the country of Gcaleka [Transkei], in the isiThembu branch of Gcaleka's Great House, in the district under <i>inkosi</i> Mnzabele in the year 1856, that two young maidens went to the cultivated land to await birds, to drive them away, the one being Nongqawuse by name, Mhlakaza's daughter, and the other being his sister's daughter, and at a river called the place of the Khamanga, the Wild-Banana, they saw two men arrive, and these men immediately spoke to these unmarried maidens. 'Do remember us to your homes, reporting that we are So-and-so (they reported their names, which escape me), and in speaking they called themselves by these very names. Of people who died long ago. Do report that the entire <i>umzi</i> is about to rise from the place of death, and also that all cattle that are present must be slaughtered, for they have been bred by polluted hands, for people who handle <i>ubuthi</i>, poison, are present as</p>

mababulahle ngokwabo ubuti, bungade bumbululwe ngamagqira. Efike ekaya afike awa ngazo, kuloko engapulapulwanga mntu, kusuke kwahlekiswa ngawo.

Kuse epangela kwa intaka, kwati kungasenini, babuye bafika ababantu, babuza kumantombazana ukuba afike axela na ekaya, nokuba kufike kwatiwa nina? Axelile amantombazana ukuba, lonto ifike yayinto yokuhlekisa, ayipulapulwanga mntu. Kusuke kwatiwa siteta intsomi. Lonto yayisenzeka ecwebeni le Gxara kwa Gcaleka. Bate aba bantu kula mantombazana, ze niti kubantu abakulu, mababize zonke inkosi ezakwa Gcaleka, ezakwa Tato, ezakwa Ngqika, kude kuse ema Gqunukwebeni. Umhlakaza uke waya ehamba neqela lamanye amadoda, asuke la

well.' 'Let cultivation cease; let great new grain-pits be dug in cattle-kraals, and new dwellings built too, and great strong cattle-kraals constructed also; hides are to be cut into milk-pouches, and doors also woven from the rope-like *ubuka* creeper, many of them. So say lords, Naphakade, For Ever [Christ], the son of Sifubasibanzi, the Broad-Chested [God.] Let people cast away poison of their own accord, that it be not ultimately exposed by *amagqirha*.' On reaching home the young maidens immediately reported the news, but not a person listened, on the contrary they were ridiculed.

On the morrow they arrived even before the birds, and after a long time these people arrived again, and asked the young maidens if they had indeed reported at home, and if anything were said in reply. The young maidens reported that: 'That thing immediately became a matter for ridicule, and not a person listened. On the contrary it was said that we were telling fabulous fiction.' That was happening at the lagoon at the Gxarha river's mouth, in Gcaleka's country. These people said to these young maidens, 'Do say to the older people that they must summon all royalty, from Gcaleka's Great House of

madoda akavela. amane eteta no Nongqause eviwa nguye nenye intombazana, bemane betolika kwa le nteto iti. - Makuye kubizwa inkosi zonke ukuze bavele. Kuqaliwe ke ukuyiwa komkulu kwa Rili e Hohita, kulo Gojela, kwafike kwawiswa esi simanga sitetwa yile ntombazana ka Mhlakaza. U Rili ususe abantu kwa oko, wabab'aza kulo lonke ilizwe. Gxebe pambi kokwenjalo wesusa u Botomane inkosana kwa yakwa Gcaleka, lowa waye no Mapasa e Zipunzana ngo Nc'ayecibi, ukuke aye kuqonda ngokwake, aye kwa Mhlakaza, abavuma ukuvele nakuye. Kukuze kutiwe, makuze zonke inkosi kuqala, pambi kokuba bavele, kuba bengamanyange, besiza nenkosi yabo u Napakade into ka Sifubasibanzi. Wasusa abantu ke u Rili, baya kuwo onke amaziko.

Xhosaland, from Thatho's Great House of Thembuland, from Ngqika's Right-Hand House of Xhosaland, extending unto Gqunukhwebe's people.'Mhlakaza once went with a party of other men, and these men did not then appear, *-vela*. They were often speaking to Nongqawuse, being heard by her and the other unmarried maiden, who were often interpreting just this pronouncement: 'Let all royalty be summoned that they might appear, *-vela*.' And it was only then that people went to the Hohita river, to Rhili's Great Place, to the House of Gcaleka, and this wonder related by this young maiden of Mhlakaza, this *isimanga*, was successfully divulged. Rhili immediately sent forth people, and laid great stress on the tidings in all the land. That is, before doing so, he sent forth Bhotomane, a lesser member of royalty also from the House of Gcaleka, who went with Maphasa to Zipunzana during Ngcayechibi's war, to go and find out personally, and he went to Mhlakaza's, and before him, too, they refused to appear, *-vela*. This is why it was said, that all rulers must first come, before they appear, *-vela*, because they are ancestral forebears, coming with their lord, Naphakade, For Ever, the son of God-the-

Kwa Tato, kwesuswa u Maramnco into ka Fadana yecala lase kunene ihamba nomtshana wakona u Shwele, into ka Zozi. Kwesama Ndungwana kwesuka u Dlulaze, into ka Qwasha ezalana no Ndarala. Kuma Tshatshu kwesuswa u Mpeke into yase Mfeneni.

Kwa Ngqika kwesuka u Namba into enkulu ka Maqoma. Kwa Gcaleka ngu Rili no Lindinxiwa into zika Hintsu, no Ngubo into ka Malashe, no Nxito into ka Lutshaba. Kwa Ndlambe kwesuswa u Nowawe into ka Ndlambe. Ema Gqunukwebeni kwesuswa u Dilima into ka Pato.

Yonke lo nto yasinga ecwebeni le Gxara, e Kamangeni, kwa Mhlakaza. Inteto yayite kwa mhla mnene, maze bahlelwe abantu abayakuya kwa Mhlakaza. Kute ke kufikiwe kona kwatiwa uti u Nongqausi [sic]- Mayihlelwe kwakona impi eyakuya e cwebeni, ikolise ngenkosi. Kwenjiwanjalo

Broad-Chested. And then Rhili sent forth people, and they went unto all the royal centres.

From Thatho's Great House of Thembuland, was sent forth Maramnco, son of Fadana in his Right-Hand House, travelling with a sister's son, Shwele, son of Zozi. From the supporting Ndungwana House came a son of Qwasha, Dlulaze, related to Ndarala. From the Right-Hand Tshatshu House was sent forth Mpeke, of the amaMfene clan.

From Ngqika's Right-Hand House came Namba, the Great Son of Maqoma. From Gcaleka's Great House are Rhili and Lindinxiwa, sons of Hintsu, and Ngubo, son of Malashe, and Nxito, son of Lutshaba. From Ndlambe's supporting House was sent forth Nowawe, son of Ndlambe. From Gqunukwebeni's people was sent forth Dilima, son of Phato.

That whole group was bound for Mhlakaza's homestead, at the lagoon at the Gxarha river's mouth, at the Khamanga stream. The pronouncement had gone out from the first, that people going to Mhlakaza's should be selected. Then on arriving there it was said that Nongqawuse said: 'Let there again be a

ke okunene. Kute kuba abantu sebe nendawo eyoyikayo, noko kwati xa kuyiwa kulomfula uli Kamanga babaninzi abate k'ote imiqala, abanxanwayo. Kwaye bekokelwe ngu Nongqause, intokazi eyenze izazobe zembola, intwazana engenininani. Bavakele abanxaniweyo besiti - Angaselana umntu onxaniweyo? Ute u Nongqause - Osukuba engenabo ubuti angasela angoyikeli nto.

Yesuk'apo into ka Pato u Delima, igora elikulu, wayiti tyá paya ingubo yake wanqwila wasela. Amane esiwa ngo kuwa amabandla ka Nomagwayi wase Mbo.

UMBONO OWEHLAYO.

Kute xa kunjalo, kwavakala kudilika amatye amakulu kunene eweni elise mantloko e Kamanga, into leyo eyabeta abantu bafakana amehlo, zako nendawo

selection of the force that will go to the lagoon at the river mouth, mostly from royalty.' And, truly, so was it done. Despite going to this stream called Khamanga, Wild-Banana, there were many thirsty ones, whose throats dried up, *khothe!*, because people were now facing a fearsome matter. They were led by Nongqawuse, a woman in her fertile years who had adorned her face with ochre, a young maiden possessing not a thing of value. The ones who were thirsty were heard saying - 'May one who thirsts drink?' Nongqawuse said - 'Whosoever has no poison may drink and fear naught.'

Thereupon Phato's son, Dilima, an extremely brave man, flung his mantle yonder, *tya!*, and crouched down and drank. The assemblies of Nomagwayi from the land of the Mbo [towards Natal] continued expressing divergent views.

A WONDROUS AFFAIR THAT OCCURRED

Just then, there was heard the tumbling, as if from rain, of truly big rocks from the

zokundwebela ukungati kuko nto iza kuququmba kweli liwa, kwabako isizotongo sobunzima obunjalo.

Kute kunjalo yati intombazana kanibekise amehlo enu elwandle. Bate bakuqwalasela emazeni olwandle kwanga kuko abantu okunene, kwanga kukonya nenkunzi zenkomo, kwa nenkabi, yasisibiba esimnyama esimane sibuyabuya, sade sabuyasemka sayakutshonela kwase lundini paya emazeni olwandle, baqala bakolwa ke bonke abantu.

INTETO YESI SIBIBA.

Lo mkosi uselwandle awuzange wapuma usondele ezinkosini apa. Nenteto yawo ayiviwanga yiyo yonke lonto ngapandle ko Nongqause. Ute ke yakumka yakuya kutshonela lo mpi wati - Ziti inkosi godukani niye kux'ela zonke inkomo kungabiko nto niyifuyileyo, ukuze uvuko lukauleze. Maze ningalimi, yimbani izisele ezikulu ezitsha, niyakubona sezizele

precipice at the headwaters of the Khamanga stream, which struck people, and they caught one another's eyes, also dreading that some unknown thing in this precipice might explode, and such a tribulation's giddiness existed.

Just then, the young maiden said: 'Do cast your eyes unto the sea'. When they focused on the waves of the sea, it was as if people were truly there, and as if bulls were bellowing also, and oxen too, and a distant black mass constantly went backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, until it again departed and disappeared over the horizon yonder, in the waves of the sea, and then all the people believed for the first time.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF THIS DISTANT DARK MASS

This army in the sea never emerged to approach royalty here. Even its pronouncement was heard by no one apart from Nongqawuse. When, then, that force departed and disappeared, she said: 'The lords say: "go ye home, that you may slay all cattle; not a thing that you have bred is to exist, so that the resurrection may hasten. Do refrain from cultivation; dig great new grain-pits in cattle-kraals,

kukudla okutsha. Dimbazani neninako eziseleni niye kukulahla. Yakani izindlu ezintsha, nenze nengcango ezininzi nizenze ngobuka, nize nizivalele ezindlwini, namhla ngovuko kuba kuyakuti ngosuku lwesibozo xa upumayo umzi omhle usiza nenkosi yawo u Napakade into ka Sifuba-sibanzi, zonke izilo zehlabati nezemilambo, nenyoka, ziyakuba zizibadubadu kulo lonke ilizwe. Ukuze nisinde zenivale ngengcango ezininzi, niqamangele ukubopelela, nilahle bonke ubuti.

ENYE INKOSI KWAKONA.

Utsho wati - Kuko nanye inkosi, ikwela kwihashi elingwevu, igama layo ngu Ngwevu, elinye ke ngu Satana. Wonke ke umntu ongazix'elanga inkomo zake uyakuba ngoka Satana, akayi kububona ubungcwalisa beyetu inkosi u Napakade into ka Sifuba-sibanzi.

Nantso ke imbangeli yokuze kux'elwe inkomo kususela ku 1856 kucitakalwe nge 1857.

you will see that they are then full of fresh food. Extract from the grain-pits even the food that you have, that you might cast it away. Build new dwellings, and also make many doors, making them with the rope-like *ubuka* creeper, and then shut yourselves up in the dwellings, even on the day of the resurrection, because it will come to pass on the eighth day, when the beautiful *umzi* emerges, coming with its lord Christ, For Ever, the son of God-the-Broad-Chested, that all hurtful creatures of the earth and of the rivers, and snakes, will become strays in all the land. That you may be safe, do close up with many doors, and fasten them tightly, and cast away all poison."

ANOTHER RULER IN THE VERY SAME PLACE

She spoke thus saying: 'There is another ruler, riding upon a grey horse, his name is Grey, but his other name is Satan. And every man who did not slaughter his cattle would be Satan's, and would not see the sanctification of our own lord, Christ, For Ever, the son of God-the-Broad-Chested.'

There it is, then, the origin of cattle being slaughtered, commencing in 1856, the

UKUVELA KUKA NONKOSI.

Kute kusenjalo kwavela enye intombazana kwa Nkwitshi into yasema Kwemteni, yakwa Ndlambe. Yona ivele e Mpongo apa (Macleantown). Inteto yona ikwanye neka Nongqause. Apo kubehle kwabonwa nabakweta abatshila ecibini elise Mpongo apo. Izizwe bezibutelana kona kube yinto ebomvu, zisombela kona intokazi, zivuma imiyeyezelo, ide ingqongqo irazukele kona, kusombelelwa abakweta abatshila ecibini apo.

Nayo leyo ibiteta kwa inteto ka Nongqause, eteta ngovuko lwabantu nenkomo kupela.

break-up as a people, *-chithakala*, being in 1857.

THE APPEARANCE, *-VELA*, OF NONKOSI

Just at this time, there appeared another young maiden, from the homestead of Nkwitshi, of the Kwemta clan, of the House of Ndlambe. She appeared, *-vela*-ed, here at the Mpongo river (Macleantown). Her pronouncement was one and the same as Nongqawuse's. Initiates into manhood were soon seen there as well, dancing the dance of initiates there at a pool in the Mpongo river. Close-knit groups used to gather there and it became a 'red' scene, of non-Christian ochre people: women were keeping time at that place, ululating, until the drum was torn there, keeping time for initiates into manhood, dancing the dance of initiates there at the pool.

She, too, was saying just what Nongqawuse said, speaking only about the resurrection of people and cattle.

**UKUVELA KWE MPONDO
ZENKOMO.**

Kwezinye indawo bekude kubonwe nempondo zenkomo sezivelile, kuviwe nokunxakama kwendlezana, kuviwe nokukonkonta kwezinja, nokumemelela kwabasengi njalo-njalo.

UMTETO WAMAKOSI.

Zite ke inkosi zakuba zibuyele ngendawo zazo, zafika zabuta izipakati zonke yashunyayelwa namhla lento yokuvuka kwamanyange, namhla selematsha, nokuvuka kwazo zonke inkomo eziyakux'elwa nezafa kudala. Wayete u Nongqause, ze kuti nokuba umntu uye kuyenza isimausi inkomo yake, nokuba uyitengisile, awuqashe umpefumlo ukuze ivukele yena mhla ngovuko. Baye, bonke abangax'elanga beya kupepeteka sisaqwiti esikulu baye kweyela elwandle.

**THE APPEARANCE, -VELA, OF
THE HORNS OF CATTLE**

In other places, even the horns of cattle were at last seen, having now appeared, -*vela*-ed, and the lowing of milch-cows was heard also, and the barking of dogs was heard too, and the humming of milkmen as well, and so forth, and so forth.

ROYALTY'S COMMAND

When, then, royalty returned unto their places, and promptly gathered all their general councils, what was now preached was the rising of ancestral forebears, already young and healthy this very day, and the rising of all cattle that would be slain and that had died long ago. Nongqawuse had said that whether a man bartered beef like a peddler, or sold his beast entire, he should acquire its breath, its soul that it might rise for him on the day of resurrection. And all who failed to slaughter would be swept away by a great tempest and sink into the sea.

UKWAHLULELANA KOMZI.

Umzi wasema Xoseni wafika we qwenge kubini, omnye awake uvume ukux'ela inkomo zawo, pofu usazi ukolwa eluvukweni lwabefileyo ukuba loze lubeko olwabantu, lungelulo olwenkomo.

Kwabonakala kusahlukana uyise nonyana, nonyana bamntu mnye, inkosi nabantu bayo nemizalwana njalo-njalo, kulo lonke elasema Xoseni. Kwavela amagama amabini ala macala mabini. Elinye kwatiwa nga Matamba, oko kukuti ngamagqob'oka ka Nongqause. Elinye ngamagogotyia. Ukugogotyia kukuhlala ungayenzi into, ume nganeno kwayo, kutiwe ke - U Nantsi uogotyile.

USUKU LWESIBOZO.

Kute kaloku zakuba zikolisiwe ukux'elwa inkomo kuba elikulu omninzi umzi wawungokolwa kule nto, uninzi lukolise abanye inxenye ngokoyika ukubulawa ade akolise ukusaba amagogotyia kaloku xa indlala sel'ibungena xa sekujongwe usuku

A HOUSE DIVIDED

The Xhosa *umzi* promptly split in two, *qwenge!*, and one section completely refused to slay its cattle, knowing and believing, in fact, in a resurrection of dead people, which would be of *people*, not of *cattle*.

The sight was now seen of father divided against son, and brother against brother, and ruler against his people, and blood relation against blood relation, and so forth and so forth, in the whole country of Xhosa's people. Two names for these two groups appeared. The one was called *Amathamba*, the Compliant, that is to say, Nongqawuse's pierced ones, her Christian converts. The other was called *amagogotyia*. To *gogotyia* is to stay unmoved, not doing something, stopping short of it, and then it is said: 'So-and-so *gogotyia*-ed.'

THE EIGHTH DAY

Now when cattle were being slaughtered in general, because a large number, much of the *umzi*, were believers in this thing, the majority gave others more than enough, some from fear of being put to death, and finally *amagogotyia* mostly

lwesib'ozo, sekubu mamauseka [sic] kuninzi, inxenyel' ilamba kanye, sel'ipila kudla impotsha kupela.

Kute ke kuba kwaku sekujongwe usuku lwesibozo, usuku ekwakutiwe, loze ilanga lanele ukupuma libomvu lize libuye litshone kwasesibakabakeni, kuzekubeko umnyama omkulu lelo xeshake kwatiwa maze abantu bazivalele ezindlwini ukuze banga dliwa ngama ramnco. Enye yendawo ekwakutiwe maze kuhlangukane kweli lingano kwe Nciba ukulindwa usuku lwesibozo, sekukangelwe kulo lonke, nelamatamba kwane lamagogotya. Lapuma ilanga lifana namanye, amatamba agoxa ngezindlu yonke lomini avala aqilingela ngengcango ezininzi, selemane enyondla ngezituba ukutshona kwelanga aye amanye abe ngakolwa kade engazenzanga zonke ezinye izinto ngapandle kokuxela inkomo, ayesebenza into zawo nangalomini.

fled, and now, when starvation was already making inroads, when the eighth day was already faced, now the majority was anxious, now some were exceedingly hungry, now surviving only on stolen stock. And so did it come to pass, because the eighth day was now faced: the day, it was said, when the sun would no sooner rise red in colour than it would again sink from the sky, and there would be a great darkness, that being the time when people were ordered to shut themselves in their dwellings, that they were not devoured by beasts of prey. One of the places in this country where people were told to gather together for the eighth day to be awaited was on this side of the Great Kei river [cis-Kei]; it was now beheld in all the country, that of *amathamba* and of *amagogotya* too. The sun rose like any other, and that entire day the compliant *amathamba* withdrew into their dwellings, and closed up and fastened tightly with many doors, now constantly peeping through gaps for the sinking of the sun, while others, having long disbelieved, having done none of the other things apart from slaughtering cattle, were doing their work even on that day.

As Bradford and Qotole point out, the isiXhosa language is often difficult to translate:

Even when words are understood, some appear to have no English equivalents. The problem of conveying the polysemic nature of much isiXhosa vocabulary looms even larger. Four meanings, for example, exist for ‘uNongqawuse’: the person; the cataclysmic era with which she was linked; a wondrous phenomenon; an impossibility. But ‘Nongqawuse’ carries no such wealth of connotations in English. (2008: 70)

In another article on the same topic Bradford (2008) also remarks on the fact that Black intellectuals of the time had different attitudes to the Cattle-Killing – “many simply bypassed the colonial obsession with Cattle-Killing... others injected alternative concepts, causes, periodisation, analytical foci” (Bradford, 2008:226). Bradford goes on to argue that the reason why we do not hear these different points of view is that most historians have not been able to understand African languages, the medium in which these Black intellectuals were writing (Bradford, 2008:226).

In addition to the language issue, ever since the revelation of the vision, there has been series of increasing debates as to the reality and adequacy of the prophecy. But to be specific, it is important to begin by stating the statistics involved in the cattle-killing. Pieres responds to the statistics by stating thus,

During the thirteen months of cattle-killing (April 1856-May 1857), about 85 per cent of all Xhosa adult men killed their cattle and destroyed their corn in obedience to Nongqawuse's prophecies. It is estimated that 400,000 cattle were slaughtered and 40,000 Xhosa died of starvation. At least another 40,000 left their homes in search of food. The dogged resistance to colonial expansion which the Xhosa had sustained for nearly eighty bitter years was abruptly broken by their own actions, and almost all their remaining lands

were given away to white settlers or black clients of the Cape government
(1987: 44)

Despite the spectacular magnitude of the statistics, there has been apparent incomprehensibility in interpreting the numbers involved in the Cattle Killing. This has provoked explanations as fantastic as the movement itself. Peires (1989:122), posits that “Governor Grey and colonial historiography blamed the cattle-killing on a conspiracy by the Xhosa chiefs to foment war. Most Xhosa today blame the cattle-killing on a plot by Grey to fool their simple forefathers”.

Despite this position, it seems recent research into millenarian movements have yet been applied to the Cattle-Killing. The most perceptive accounts so far are those of Wilson (1969) and Zarwan (1976) who tried to point out some of the obvious components of the Cattle-Killing belief. To be specific, Wilson (1969:70) writes that “the insistence on purification, renouncing witchcraft, and sacrifice was all part of the traditional pattern.” Zarwan (1976:19) on the other hand thinks that “the cattle-killings were traditional in form and the leaders were diviners of the traditional pattern.” Masoga (2001:7) notes “the importance African people ascribe to divination and the central role oracles play in their lives” but also cautions that prophetic genres and styles (Masoga, 2001:175) can be imitated which begs the question as to whether Nongqawuse had so absorbed these “prophetic genres” (both traditional and from the colonizing religion) that she was swept away in a performance. It can be noted from the positions of Wilson and Zarwan that their emphasis about the Cattle-Killing is on ‘tradition’. However, scholars like Peires see their argument as misleading and thus explains that,

Although various forms of purification, divination, sacrifice and witchcraft were practised in Xhosaland long before the cattle-killing, these practices were far too diverse and far too liable to change over time to be fossilized conceptually as

'traditional patterns'. Whatever 'traditional patterns' may have existed in Xhosaland before 1856, they certainly did not include mass destruction of basic subsistence needs or the expectation of an imminent resurrection of the dead. (Peires, 1987:45)

Despite the debates as can be noted in Wilson, Zarwan and Peires's arguments, I think the three scholars have at the end of the day tried to point out key fundamentals which are in line with tradition, superstition and the long running impact of the Cattle-killing. Moreover, Peires again proceeds in another interesting position to explain that,

Historians and anthropologists have contented themselves with the order to kill cattle and with the prediction that the dead would rise, and have thus begged a great many questions. Who were the spirits who appeared to Nongqawuse? Were the cattle to be sacrificed or merely killed? Where did the idea of the resurrection come from? Which dead exactly were going to rise? What was supposed to happen after the resurrection? (Peires, 1987:45)

The questions raised by Peires appear as both fascinating conjecture as well as a logical attempt to demystify the underlying dimensions and reception of the Cattle-Killing prophecy as already narrated above.

In all the articles mentioned above, it can be recalled that the ontology and significance of the Cattle-Killing rest on a close understanding (and sometimes misunderstanding) of what really constitutes amaXhosa culture and how these catastrophic events were reported both in terms of narrative and with regard to how the isiXhosa language reinforced the meaning of the prophetic statements.

2.4. Language and Culture: IsiXhosa in Perspective

IsiXhosa-speaking people belong to the Nguni family consisting of amaXhosa, amaZulu, amaNdebele and amaSwati. The Nguni family is part of the South-Eastern Bantu language-speaking people, which also include the Sotho family (Setswana, Sesotho and Sepedi/ Sesotho sa Leboa). IsiXhosa-speaking people who occupy the Eastern Cape province of South Africa number roughly seven million (Census, 2011).

The term 'Xhosa' was often used to refer to regional affiliation rather than common descent (Mphande, 1991:46). Myburgh notes that amaXhosa heritage and ancestry is very important because the ancestors are believed to have influence over the lives of the living. This belief in the mediation and influence of ancestors is common among most African cultures (Mphande, 1991). As time passed by, Xhosa society became very diverse, yet each member is still able to tell which lineage he/she is descended from. Political power was often defined as control over land (*umhlaba/izwe*) and water (*amanzi*). According to Mphande (1991), an influential chief might be praised in oral histories by the claim that he had power over the land (*Aah! Zwelinothile* or *Zwelibanzi* or *Zwelenkosi* which can mean 'Lords' or Lords of the land). IsiXhosa oral histories, such as those included in the work of Peires, tell of installing a royal lineage amaTshawe (people of Tshawe), probably by the early 17th century.

This royal family, the Tshawe, continued to dominate other Xhosa clans for more than a century (Peires, 1982:13). AmaXhosa lived by cattle herding, and cattle were an important part of the ritual life of amaXhosa, a part of which culture the Nongqawuse vision can be ascribed to. Apart from their ceremonial significance, cattle were used for different purposes and were central to the

economy and crop cultivation (crops such as *umbona* [corn], *amazimba* [sorghum], *amathanga* [pumpkin] and *icuba* [tobacco] thrived in years with adequate rainfall). Hunting game, woodworking and ironworking were important men's occupations (Mphande, 1991). Homesteads were usually built near the tops of the abundant ridges that overlook the rivers of the area, including the Mbashe River, the Fish River, the Keiskama River, the Buffalo River and the Great Kei River (Tyhulu, 2006). Xhosa farmsteads were systematized around the clan groups, with descent traced through male forebears.

The Xhosa family was an open community that was able to communally bring together a very large number of people of the same clan. Siqwana-Ndulo in her article on the "Rural African Family Structure in the Eastern Cape" refers to "the home as being a collective" (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998:415) and argues that the rural home was never limited to just the husband and wife but would include a collection of people who lived together and who were related via family affiliation or through marriage (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998:415). The Xhosa family constituted the father, the mother and both the internal and extended families. Due to the patriarchal nature of amaXhosa society, the authority of the father was the strongest cohesive force. He agreed marriages for his children and helped with the payment of their dowry (Kwatsha, 2009).

Women, as is common among African cultures, had their own social ranking which was much lower than that of a man in this patrilineal society (Mandela, 1993) although some men argue that it was not that females were viewed as inferior but rather were seen as treasured. It is, however, an undeniable fact that women did not enjoy the same amount of power and respect as the patriarch, and as Kwatsha argues this respect was taught by mothers – daughters were expected "to show

respect to any male person in the society” (Kwatsha, 2009:132). Lineages, organized along patriarchal lines, and the large clans formed by groups of related lineages, provided the centre of Xhosa social organisation (Myburgh, 1981).

In about the 17th century, amaXhosa were also among the first Bantu groups to receive European settlers in Southern Africa because of their close habitation to the coast. Due to the consistent contact that emerged between the Europeans and amaXhosa, it made it possible for them to observe and distinguish their life style as different. Mgqwetho (1920) clearly shows the distinction between the subcultures of the Westernised and the traditionalists in her poem *Imbongi u Chizama* translated as ‘Chizama the poet’. The poem criticises the influence that Western people were beginning to have on amaXhosa, their increasingly commercial attitude and the way in which they despised their traditional way of life *kaloku satengwa ngo dula dula / Inyama ye Komponi* (Because unfortunately we were bought by mines money and meat). The poem is reproduced here from the original as it appeared in *Umteteli wa Bantu* (23rd October, 1920). I have also included my translation of the poem in the English language to enable a better comprehension of it.

IMBONGI U CHIZAMA.

Nkosi mhleli wo Mteteli wetu,
Wanga ungapila u bom obude,
Mzukulwana wamadoda afela kwa-
Hoho Taru Gatyeni hamba,
Sokulandela.

Hom zajika,
Amadoda afela izwe lawo,
Afa kunyene Nkosi yawo Sandile

Hom bo'
Tinasokulandela kubasingabantwa
na lo Gaga u Gago lubamba lu
Gongqoza lukwezi Xesi u Ndanda
Ko Veco u Xesi Magqagala
Umtunzi wa bantu bonke bengaka
Nje nditsho ku Sandile mna.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Kuba akuzange kupume ntammani
Kowenu.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Kuba tina simadoda nje asizange
Siyibone kowetu imbongikazi,
Yenkazana kuba imbongi inyuka
Nenkundla ituke inkosi.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Nezi imbongikazi Tina sizibona
Apa kweli lo laita ne bhokile.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Asizi tina nokuba ngaba isono
Sontammani saxolelwana?

Hamba Sokulandela,
Kuba ne sidenge (a fool) siyazi
Ukuba umntu olambileyo akangeze
Akokele acebise mzi.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Tahotsbo uzalwe Nkosi bantu,
Sanga eso sonka asingepeli kuba

Site sakuvela kwapuma ink
Eyimyeli good on you Nkosi
Bantu.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Nawe mazi esifuba sikulu eyati
Gqi nomaweba ku Baxton,
Kwavuleka intolongo.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Mazi eyapuma izinto nge pass
Kwapuma izinto kwa tambu
Mlungu exwayi kati ngabula
Nojekwa.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Mazi eyateta e Nancefield yatsho
Amadoda e Komishoni apupa
Kakubona.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Mazi eyalandela amadoda
E-Komishoni kwada kwase Bhat
Indlovu ndifungu Ledi.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Nawe Cete nto ka Nkombisa,
Chizama bamb'i ntambo ama
Kowenu akugxeleshile kunje.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Nto ka Mbambisa Radebe Tina
Siyakwazi nase zintongeni
Ungotuswa mzi ngqeqe jonga
Ukupuma kwe nkuluinja.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Mfo ka Maxeke kuba tina
Ksloku satengwa ngo daladula
Inyama ye Komponi.

Hamba Sokulandela,
Kuba lempi ifuna ukubona
Yodwa unyaka ozayo Ho! Ho!
Ho! Sakubona Fish.

Hom Mazijike, izibuko libi,
Ndoka ndime Mhleli taru ndobuye
Ndivele.

Nkosi Sikeleli Africa.

English translation of *The Poet Chizama*

<p>THE POET CHIZAMA</p> <p>My king, our defender, May you live an everlasting life, Grandson of men who died in the bush of Hoho Taru, Gatyeni go well, we will follow you, King in the house of Sandile, We will follow you, Gaga of Gago, Go well in those hills of Xesi, Magqagala of the shadows of black people in their whole, I speak about Sandile. Go well we will follow you, Cause there was never a sell-out from your home, Go well we will follow you, Because we men never saw a female poet in our kraal, Because poets sometimes insult even the kings. Go well we will follow you, The current poets we see them in villages, drinking around, Go well we will follow you, We do not know whether the sin of a sell- out can be forgiven, Go well we will follow you, Even a fool knows that a hungry person cannot lead and represent the people. Go well we will follow you, Good luck that you were born, And I wish this luck should never end, Beause when it came good things came as well Oh my king, king of the people. Go well we will follow you,</p>	<p>And you woman of pride Who came with a pen to Buxton, And the prison doors were opened. Go well we will follow you, A woman who resisted, Even white people were shocked. Go well we will follow you, A woman who stood up and spoke out in Nancefield, Even men of the commission were shocked to see you. Go well we will follow you, And you Cete, Son of Nkombisa, Chizama hold the reigns, Your ancestors are with you. Go well we will follow you, Son of Mbambisa, Radebe, We know you even in sticks fighting, You were leading. Go well we will follow you, Son of Maxeke, Because unfortunately we were bought by mines money and meat. Go well we will follow you, Because this battle wants brave men, Year in and year out This year, next year Ho! Ho! Ho! Sakubona (we see you) fish. Ho the spectacle must change, It's terrible outside, I am sitting down chairperson (or MC), I will come back on the stage later. “Nkosi, Sikelela iAfrika!”</p>
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Industrialisation and urbanisation meant that many rural amaXhosa people migrated to cities such as Kimberley and Johannesburg where they offered cheap labour in the mines and other low-

paying jobs (Yekela, 2011:24). As people began to move away from their rural homes to the urban areas and cities, complications developed because they began to lose their grip on their cultural identities. Cultural values were also beginning to lose their power and were becoming less important as Westernisation was gaining ground in the minds of the patriarchs who were supposed to defend those values (Simelane-Kalumba, 2014).

Simelane-Kalumba (2014) continues in her explanation that the 20th century was a time of tremendous turmoil for amaXhosa with the Western belief system and cultural values taking a greater hold and eroding traditional beliefs. According to Cocks, Dold and Vetter (2012) in their article “God is my forest’: Xhosa cultural values provide untapped opportunities for conservation” observe that although the amaXhosa believed in ancestors, they were nevertheless monotheistic “The amaXhosa believed in the existence of God, known as Qamata. This belief was cyclical in nature where they saw the ancestors as intermediaries between the living, the dead and the unborn” (Cocks, Dold and Vetter, 2012: 5). Soyinka (1976) in his book, *Myth, literature and the African world* explains this African belief quite clearly. It is also understood within this ontology that whatever the ancestors communicate must be adhered to, failure of which will constitute serious punishment. Ngcingca-Ndolo (2008) supports the view that amaXhosa would religiously follow their customs and traditions because it was believed that if there was any calamity such as an illness in the family or failure to succeed in life, it was due to punishment from the ancestors. According to Ngcingca-Ndolo, the Xhosa people’s response to what they believed was ancestor involvement was recorded in folktales, myths, legends, proverbs and oral poetry. Simelane-Kalumba (2014:4) notes that A.C. Jordan’s book *Inqumbo yeminyanya* (The wrath of the ancestors) gives a fictional

account of Xhosa interpretations of life's misfortunes and catastrophes which are all seen as stemming from ancestors' anger at their people's lack of knowledge of ritual.

As can be noted from the discussions above, the influence of Western practices developed a shift from the original Xhosa culture including their language to what I will describe as 'Xhosalised' versions of European lifestyles and codes of communication. AmaXhosa started to try to copy the new but alien culture while European missionaries, entrepreneurs and farmers were also attempting to learn and translate some of amaXhosa life, culture and language in order to evangelize and make commercial profit.

The advertisement below, published in *Imvo zabantsundu* newspaper on 22 December 1892, less than 40 years after the Nongqawuse saga, is testimony to the fact that English speakers were mangling the isiXhosa language in order to market their goods, the header *Ivenkile ye mpahla ezibuhlungu* (Shop for painful clothes) making no sense whatsoever, and the rest of the advertising copy clearly having been translated directly from English into isiXhosa. At times the copywriter does not even bother to find the isiXhosa word and just hastily writes "best" in English. The company called Beauchamp, Booth and Co. is demonstrably keen to attract wealthy and fashion conscious amaXhosa who will be attracted by the muslin, satin and tweed materials of their clothes and accessories. They are less worried about the correctness of their isiXhosa translation, which could be indicative of the general attitude of Whites learning isiXhosa at the time – their endeavours were motivated by evangelical and commercial concerns.

Beauchamp, Booth-Co.

(EBIYEKA J. J. IRVINE & CO.)

Ivankile YE MPAHLA EZIBUHLUNGU NGA-
MAXABISO ANGATSHIPU.

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

ITYALI—Zintle kodwa ziyalahlwa, ziqala kwe-
ze 4/6 to £2 inye.

I PRINTI ezi "best" ezihlanjwayo 6d. yard.
Edluliseleyo itshipu i Satin Emblope ne Cream
i Muslin yokunxiba enemigca 4½d. yard.

I Satin Ezimhlope nezi Cream, 10½d., 1/-, 1/6 nge
yard.

Ingubo Zabatshekazi ezenziwa nge zintsha ifa-
shini.

Iifawa Zabatshekazi. Izigubungelo Zabatshe-
kazi.

Ingubo Zokutshata Zamadoda, Izitofu zokwenza
Ibhulukwe Zokutshata ZiyasiKwa.

Ibhatyi Ezimnyama ezi "best" Zetwidi.

According to Neethling (1996:55), having been exposed to the influence of Westernisation in all its forms, amaXhosa have been and still are in a state of 'transition'. Before a system for writing isiXhosa using the Latin alphabet was devised by Christian missionaries during the early 19th century, isiXhosa was only an oral language (Kropf, 1899). Their oral traditions were passed on from generation to generation through proverbs, idioms or riddles, praise poems and names. Context and shared knowledge played a major role, so it was possible to leave much unsaid or indirectly implied.

Through this literature review I have attempted to show that conventional understandings of South African theatre, the history of its dramaturgy and the interpretation of historical events are all contested areas that require scrutiny and debate. I have also demonstrated that some of the richest areas for further studies into isiXhosa transitional stages can be found not in books, but in popular newspapers of the day.

CHAPTER THREE

AFROCENTRISM: THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.1. Introduction

Adeleke (2015:1) referring to works by Blaut (1993), Smedly (1993), Afikgbo (1977) and Uya (1984) notes that:

The black experience worldwide, has borne the burden of Western history: the history of negation. Blacks confronted a formidable and combative historical tradition that legitimized a worldview of negation. “The Dark Continent”, “Heathens”, and “Barbarians” were some of the racist epithets that “enlightened” Europeans mobilized to launch the imperial phase of “The White Man’s Burden”. This worldview denied peoples of African ancestry a credible space among civilized beings. It nullified African history and culture, and mandated Europeans to lead Africans and Diaspora blacks toward civilization, and historical and cultural rebirth.

The above quote is true of the conditions of Blacks which have remained a consistent cause for lamentation from time immemorial. However, the concern of this chapter is not to re-echo such lamentations. Rather, this chapter focuses on a close examination and application of Afrocentrism as a theory in the context of the shared experiences of Blacks in South Africa with a particular focus on the Nongqawuse story of 1856. The study engages in the interpretation and representation of the Nongqawuse story in Dhlomo’s *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935), Bailey’s *The Prophet* (2003) and Mkonko’s *Nongqawuse* (2000). It further posits that, despite the numerous critical analyses of the Nongqawuse prophecy from historical, political, cultural and economic dimensions, there has been no critical reflection on how the prophecy is creatively represented in

the plays I am studying. More so, there has been no effort in trying to understand the story from a theatrical dimension. To proceed with this chapter however, it is important to first comprehend the concept of Afrocentrism and how it serves as a functional theory for literary analysis.

3.2. Afrocentrism: Fundamental ideas and historical development

As the word implies, Afrocentrism can simply be understood as an ‘African-centred’ ideology. According to Schiele (1990:3) in his article “Organizational theory from an Afrocentric perspective” the “Afrocentric paradigm is predicated on traditional African philosophical assumptions that emphasize the interconnectedness and interdependency of natural phenomena.” The perspective here as explained by Schiele indicates that all modalities as well as the realities of the African people is viewed as one. Asante, who is arguably the most provocative voice in the discourse on Afrocentrism, in his book *Kemet, Afrocentricity and knowledge* explains that “Afrocentrism is a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualization of African agency within the context of history and culture” (Asante, 1990:23). In an earlier work Asante (1984) summarily points out that the oneness of Africans can be located both in their spiritual and material as well as in their substance and form. The position of Schiele and Asante is re-enforced by Nobles (1980:26) who opines that “all natural phenomena are functionally connected, and to destroy one part is to destroy the whole universe, even the creator”.

In another development, Oyebade (1990) in his article “African Studies and the Afrocentric Paradigm: A Critique” attempted to comment on the historical development of Afrocentrism by saying,

This paradigm of studying Africa which has its theoretical foundation in the works of contemporary scholars in the United States is, to be sure, not an entirely new perspective in African intellectual thought. Africa-centred historiography, in fact, dates back to the closing years of colonial rule in Africa. In the early 1960s this approach found increased expression in the works of African scholars, who consciously grounded their research in African methodology (Oyebade, 1990:145).

Although Afrocentric ideas had developed earlier among Africans, as a theory and philosophy, it was not until the 1980s when diaspora writings began engaging with it more vigorously (Oyebade, 1990) that the theory really took hold amongst intellectuals in the continent. The most prominent scholars on the Africa-centred theory and philosophy as noted by Mazama (2003) include (but are not exclusive to) Molefi Kete Asante, Tsheloane Keto, and Mualana Karenga.

The writings of these influential scholars on Afrocentric thought essentially centre on the placement of Africa at the centre of any analysis of African history and culture, including the African-American experience (Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, 1990). Keto (1989:1) puts it more succinctly that: "The Africa-centred perspective of history rests on the premise that it is valid to posit Africa as a geographical and cultural starting base in the study of peoples of African descent". This view by Keto clearly underscores the need for a more sensitive position towards understanding Africa's past and present activities including the continent's stories, culture, language and art. Taking this view into account it is imperative that the case of the Nongqawuse prophecy, and its subsequent interpretations, are examined against the backdrop of an Afrocentric ontology.

The need for a consistent emphasis on an Africa-centred approach for everything pertaining to Africa arises because Eurocentric ideas have tended to represent Africa in counter-balance to Western civilization. In the history of intellectual thought for Asante (2009), the Eurocentric paradigm has often assumed a strict supreme universal character placing herself at the centre of the social structure which must or should be seen as a reference point, or the yardstick, by which every other culture is defined. An example of Asante's notion of a 'yardstick' can be seen in the Western definition of civilization which assumes that Western manifestations and understandings of progress and development are the standards against which all other civilizations are judged. Because of this, the domineering status of Europe has continuously threatened and overshadowed other world views. Oyebade's (1990:146) words seem to re-enforce that of Asante's explanation when he says "the Afrocentric perspective seeks to liberate African studies from this Eurocentric monopoly on scholarship and thus assert a valid worldview through which Africa can be studied objectively".

However, it should be noted that other Afrocentric scholars like Mazama (2003), Oyebade (1990), Dove (1998) and Bekerie (1994) attempt to correct the view that an Afrocentric perspective would simply replace Eurocentricity. Rather, Afrocentricity embraces the complexity of different world-views and studies how they interact. These Afrocentric scholars, separately (in their separate research) but ideologically united, perceive the totality of a non-egoistic boasting perspective which Keto in a publication titled "Africa-centered perspective of history" calls a "pluriversal" perspective (Keto, 1989:18). He concludes by saying that the possibility of seeing the world from different centres rather than from a single lens is important if we are to have a better understanding of a diversified and multicultural universe.

3.3. Tenets of Afrocentricity and literary analysis

Most Afrocentric scholars like Asante (1980), Akbar (1976), Baldwin (1981), Boykin (1983) and Williams (1985) provide the underlying tenets of Afrocentricity with a robust focus on the idea that because traditional African philosophical assumptions progressively play a major part in the construction of the African-American's ethos, there is a need for the development of a social science or conceptual model that will reflect the cultural background and reality of the African people. Asante in his 2009 publication titled "Afrocentricity" poses fundamental questions in attempting to provide a clear picture of the philosophy of Afrocentricity and what it means to Black nations. He asks,

What would African people do if there were no White people? In other words, what natural responses would occur in the relationships, attitudes toward the environment, kinship patterns, preferences for colours, type of religion and historical referent points for African people if there had not been any intervention of colonialism or enslavement? (Asante, 2009:1)

In attempting to answer these questions, Asante (2009:2) asserts that Afrocentricity should focus specifically on the central role of the African subject within the context of African history and should remove Europe from the centre of the African reality.

In doing this Asante (2009:2) concludes that there will be a more revolutionary tendency of focusing on studies, ideas, concepts, events, personalities and political processes from the standpoint of Black people. Progressing with this thought, Oyebade articulates six tenets of Afrocentricity. He provides the tenets as follows:

1. Human beings are conceived collectively.
2. Human beings are spiritual.
3. Human beings are good.
4. The affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically valid.
5. Much of human behaviour is non-rational.
6. The axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relations (Oyebade, 1990:147).

The above stated tenets function at a collective understanding of the worldview of the African universe. The tenets provide sufficient pathways of interrogating the very heart of the African spiritual universe as well as her socio-cultural and physical life. Walker (1994) sees Afrocentricity to be a direct response to Eurocentricity. For Walker, Afrocentric ideas are intended to transform reality for Africans by presenting them as the focus of human regeneration. By critiquing the Western intellectual community's contribution to human knowledge which often concentrates on rhetoric, logic, and reasoning, he presents the Afrocentric perspective as "an alternative cosmology that critiques a Eurocentric hegemony" (Walker, 1994:27). Asante in another vein, proposes that the Afrocentrists "frame of reference has too often been Eurocentric, that is, flowing from a conceptualisation of African people developed to support the western version of Africa" (Asante, 1990:3).

Asante (1990) argues for an African renaissance which is only possible if there is an African ideology that is completely different from a Eurocentric ideology and which allows African agency, that is, a sense of self-actualisation based upon the best interests of African people. By African ideology, Asante means the African beliefs, cultures and systems which form the crux of the Afrocentric theory and which are especially relevant for the creative texts under analysis in this study.

Moses in his book “Afrotopia: The roots of African American popular history” describes Afrocentrism as “the natural product of people who have been faced with the task of reconciling the ironies and contradictions that we all perceive in our minds and in the world that surround us” (Moses, 1998:180). These people that Moses refers to are not just any people but Africans who are faced with the task of projecting their culture and beliefs and to rewrite their history. Afrocentrism offers what Conyers in his “The evolution of Africology: An Afrocentric appraisal” puts as “a critical corrective to a displaced agency among Africans” (Conyers, 2004:643). Gerald Early, on the other hand, argues that Afrocentrism, “encompasses centeredness, location, voice or agency, and it empowers African Americans to place themselves in the centre of their analysis so that they are grounded in a historical and cultural context” (Early, 1994:312).

It is sufficiently evident in the articulation of Afrocentrism that there is a constant need for not just appraising issues relating to the Black race but finding ways to keep the Black community abreast of what affects their blackness while stepping out to reclaim their contested identity. For the purpose of this study, I won’t focus my lens so much on the unending debates on Afrocentrism as a concept, but will limit it to the theoretical concern aimed at applying it as a theory to the selected texts for this study. Moreover, since this study views the Nongqawuse prophecy as a Xhosa folk narrative, an Afrocentric perspective will allow for a more nuanced interrogation of the interconnectedness of apartheid and colonization and their interpretation in Xhosa literature.

3.4. From literature, language and apartheid to Afrocentrism: a brief look

The Eurocentric idea that Africa had no literature led seamlessly to the assumption that having no written literature, there could be no theatre in Africa. However, these arguments have faded away

with the help of pioneering African writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and a host of other African critics who contested these fallacies both empirically and through their literature. South African literature on the other hand represents a unique blend of both African and European traditions, informed by both White and Black literary consciousness.

However, this literary consciousness has not existed without its problems. Nadine Gordimer acknowledged this when she said that “South African literature has had problems in common with the literary development of some countries outside Africa which nevertheless share a colonial history” (Gordimer, 1980:1). De Kock (2001) argues that missionaries and nationalist governments in South Africa created their own educational and cultural hegemonies while at the same time ensuring that African language literature and cultural forms were relegated an inferior status. Indigenous literature enshrined in oral texts was either “frowned upon” or “reified” in “artificial Bantustans” with the result that African literature has never been studied as an integrated whole (De Kock, 2001:267).

The issue of language and literature therefore is one that was and still is a problem especially for South Africa during apartheid and even in a post-apartheid South Africa. However, the importance of language as an expressive machinery in every existing society cannot be over-emphasised. Tollefson in his “Planning language, planning inequality” says

(Language) is built into the economic and social structure of society so deeply that its fundamental importance seems only natural. For this reason, language policies are often seen as expressions of natural, common-sense assumptions about language in society. (Tollefson, 1991:2)

Neville Alexander in his article, “Language, class and power in post-apartheid South Africa” in emphasising the place of language proposes two notions: the power of language and the language of power where he expressly say that the power of language is derived from “the ability of the individuals or groups to realise their intentions (will) by means of language (empowerment) or, conversely, the ability of individuals or groups to impose their agendas on others (disempowerment) of the latter” (Alexander, 2005:2). There is no denying the fact that the power of language lies in what a person or a group of persons intends it to serve. However, Alexander puts the explanation more succinctly

For human beings to produce the means of subsistence, they have to cooperate and in order to do so, they have to communicate. Language is the main instrument of communication at the disposal of human beings; consequently, the specific language(s) in which the production processes take place become(s) the language(s) of power. To put it differently, if one does not command the language(s) of production, one is automatically excluded and disempowered (Alexander, 2005:2).

From the positions of Alexander (2005) and Tollefson (1991) one can clearly see where the language problem in Africa lies especially in South Africa. There is no denying the fact that the language of empowerment in South Africa, as noted by Alexander, is the English language. English does not serve as just a language of communication but as an international language of trade and investment in post-apartheid South Africa. This indicator already leaves us at the cross-roads of attempting to preserve the mother-tongue language while at the same time learning the language of power.

Now, how can the Nongqawuse prophecy, which I have presented in the previous chapters of this study, be located as a product of art (literature) and how does the language of the prophecy enable a fuller understanding? This question re-emphasises two fundamental subjects: literature and language, which, as I will demonstrate constitute the ideological thought of Afrocentrism (the guiding theory for this study).

3.5. Applying Afrocentrism as a theory to the texts: fundamental questions

The selected plays in this study, as already mentioned, are based on the prophecy of Nongqawuse in relation to the cattle-killing saga of 1856. Despite the debates and criticisms surrounding the prophecy, it remains as central to amaXhosa as it is to South African historiography, literature and theatre history. Since the thrust of Afrocentrism is based on the ideology of the centrality of African lives, beliefs, culture, religion and in fact their entire universe and epistemological efforts, I believe the Nongqawuse prophecy constitutes a discursive narrative of Afrocentric thought. I think some of the questions raised by Mgbeadichie (2015) are very important for a better application to the literary texts for this study. Mgbeadichie poses the following questions,

- i. If the goal of Afrocentrism for the early Afrocentrists was to break what they saw as a vicious cycle of racist oppressive practices, what should be the focus of the Afrocentric theory for contemporary Afrocentrists in the twenty-first century? Should they continue to conceptualise Afrocentrism as a historical response to years of colonial oppression or a challenge to oppressive systems inherent in African traditions?
- ii. To what extent should Afrocentric theory protect and promote African traditional practices? In what ways does a critique of *South African* traditional cultures and practices undermine the external critique embedded within Afrocentrism?

- iii. How have contemporary *South African* writers improved/hindered what should be the new focus of the Afrocentric enterprise? (Mgbeadichie, 2015:18)

The three plays selected for this analysis are specifically based on a significant incident in the life and culture of a South African people. For amaXhosa, the Nongqawuse prophecy did not only account for the spiritual interconnectedness of the ancestors and the people but also demonstrated a desperate need to restrain the forces threatening the social and cultural well-being of amaXhosa at the time. As a prophecy based on Black lives including their immediate surrounding, the Afrocentric theory becomes apt especially in a 21st century society where Black society and cultural practice is facing the dilemma of asserting self-hood still using, and being compounded by, Eurocentric ideas and languages. As Iannaccaro argues, the fictional retellings of the Nongqawuse story present counter-narratives, which I contend are more Afrocentric in their approach than Eurocentric historiography:

The fictional twentieth-century retellings of the story of Nongqawuse and the Cattle-Killing Movement present elements of primary interest, not only because they feed on historiography – thus contributing to revisiting an astonishing and controversial episode in the colonial history of the Eastern Cape – but also because they create a counter-narrative to the discourse of history through aesthetic means. (Iannaccaro, 2014:193)

The questions and view points enumerated above will serve as a potential context to view and channel the needed energy towards understanding the Nongqawuse story not just as a historical enterprise but as one with a continuing impact towards understanding the creative vision of the story as pleasurable, creative and educative especially in theatrical parlance. The versions of the Nongqawuse prophecy as creatively represented by the selected playwrights in this study will be

looked at from an Afrocentric lens and will pay specific attention to the ways in which language reinforces the message.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSING DHLOMO'S *THE GIRL WHO KILLED TO SAVE*

4.1. Introduction

My creative writing is the greatest thing I can give to my people, to Africa. I am determined to die writing and writing and writing. And no one...can stop, fight or destroy that. It is the soul, the heart, the spirit. It will endure and speak truth even if I perish...I have chosen the path to serve my people by means of literature, and nothing will deflect me from this course. (Dhlomo in Visser and Couzens, 1985:ix)

The above quote is from Dhlomo's interview as recorded in the prefatory note of his play *The Girl Who Killed to Save*⁴ and is a testimony to his passionate commitment to the enduring power of literature. This chapter will therefore engage in a critical analysis of one of Dhlomo's plays titled *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935). The play is Dhlomo's creative expression, dramatic presentation and an historical interpretation and understanding of an important event in South Africa - the Nongqawuse prophecy and the eventual Cattle-Killing of 1856-57.

I begin this chapter by looking at three basic issues; the history behind the play, the synopsis of the play and the author's dramatic/theatrical vision. This is important in that *The Girl Who Killed to Save* is an historical creation of Dhlomo's artistic and creative vision of an actual event that occurred among amaXhosa of South Africa. The understanding of the actual history that occurred

⁴ The title of the play is sometimes given as *Nonqause: The Girl who Killed to Save* at other times it is *uNongqawuse: The Girl Who Killed to Save* or *The Girl Who Killed to Save (uNongqawuse the Liberator)* and sometimes just *The Girl Who Killed to Save*. I will use the latter in my discussion.

before the play was written (although this has been touched in the previous chapters of this work) will strengthen our understanding of the story created by the author. The author's dramatic vision will then be looked at to comprehend the influence of his artistic and creative writings.

The chapter will then analyse the play, paying attention to how it develops and interprets the Nongqawuse story through dramatic voices. By so doing I hope to strengthen my own argument that calls for a fresh understanding of an almost apocalyptic event in South Africa's history, and particularly that of amaXhosa. Moreover, this chapter adopts Afrocentrism as a guiding theory for this study.

4.1.1 Taking a glimpse into Her[story]: Nongqawuse

I will not give a detailed account of the Nongqawuse story here, rather the intention is to represent the core narrative of the story with the view of following a clear thread of the discussions in this study and how Dhlomo's work constitutes a critical reflection.

During 1856 South African tribes were confronted with the most extraordinary episode, the Nongqawuse prophecy. In that year, there arose among amaXhosa renowned seers such as Mhlakaza who was assisted by his daughter Nongqawuse. While Mhlakaza's vision was none other than a resurrection from the dead, his daughter declared that she had an encounter with the spirits of their dead heroes who informed her that they had witnessed with sorrow the destruction of their race through the oppression of the conquerors from overseas. According to what the young Nongqawuse said, "the dead heroes informed her that they would no longer be silent spectators of the wrongs and insults, it was therefore their intention to come to the rescue and save their people from destruction" (Visser, 1974:5). They promised to appear once more in flesh on the condition

that the people exterminate all animals, both great and small, with the exception of horses and dogs. They also informed her that all grain was to be thrown away and the fields left untilled. They concluded that as soon as the people had done what was required as instructed by them, vast herds would emerge from the ground and the country would eventually smile again with enough grain and there would be plenty in the land. At the advent of the resurrection, the dead heroes would be preceded by a frightful whirlwind, which would sweep off all members of the tribe who refused to obey the order of the spirits (Peires, 1989). As a result of this persuasive power of Nongqawuse's prophecy, in all of the districts occupied by amaXhosa particularly amongst the Gcaleka tribe, cattle began to be slaughtered. The people feasted to their satisfaction and there was still plenty left.⁵ After the delusion had been at work for ten months, Nongqawuse came with the prophecy that within eight days all cattle must be killed. This prophecy and the preparations involved kept everyone busy. Cattle-kraals and corn pits were enlarged and cleaned, while huts were re-thatched so as to resist the coming storm. On the eighth day, being the 27th day of February, 1857, heaven and earth, it was said, would come together amid darkness, thunder, lightning, rain and a mighty wind, by which all unbelievers including the White men would be driven into the sea. The sun would rise blood-red and at noon descend not to the west but to the east (Steadman, 1994).

However, when the day came and the people had done what the prophetess had prophesied, those who had destroyed their property sat in their villages with starvation staring them in the face, but still hoping for the fulfilment of the prophecy. Every morning, the kraal and corn-pits were eagerly inspected. People suffered and many died. It was estimated that 20,000 men, women and children

⁵ This is the detail of the prophecy as oral narrative: how it was passed down by my elders and how I heard it from my parents

perished, while 150,000 cattle met their death (Visser, 1974). This historical story sets the background for Dhlomo's play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save*. Now the synopsis of the play.

4.1.2 Synopsis of The Girl Who Killed to Save

Dhlomo's play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, is written in English but it resonates with idiom and expression unique to isiXhosa. Couzens in his article "The New African: A study of the life and work of H.I.E. Dhlomo" (1985) points out a sensitive critique to the language used in Dhlomo's writings. He observes that "among the difficulties readers are likely to experience with Dhlomo's writing, the greatest is doubtless his language, and indeed language is in the way of becoming a 'standard problem' in the study of early black South African writing" (Couzens, 1985:xii). A further explanation by Couzens reveal that Dhlomo, like his other predecessors and contemporaries, wrote under an unusual set of constraints and influences making his language seem stilted, artificial, even pompous. One reason for this peculiar verbal style of Dhlomo was the influence of mission education and the literature presented to students in mission schools (Mootry, 1973). In another observation, the eminent Zulu poet and scholar, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, in his MA dissertation titled "The conception and development of poetry in Zulu" (1937) comments rather amusingly on the endless memorising and reciting of Romantic and Victorian anthology pieces insisted upon by mission educators – a practice that no doubt influenced both the style and content of Dhlomo's writings:

Such exposure, combined with the comparative accessibility of Romantic and Victorian poetry, seems to have led Dhlomo to a somewhat narrow, and even elitist conception of literature as a particular kind of elevated utterance and to the notion that literature was or should be undertaken in an attitude of breathless respect. Moreover, his work reflects what was probably an even more important

constraint on the language of the early writers: an apparent need to prove his credentials, as it were, to an English-speaking audience” (Vilakazi, 1937:57).

The observations of Couzens (1985) and Vilakazi (1937) explain Dhlomo’s idiosyncratic use of the English language in his works. However, my analysis of *The Girl Who Killed to Save* goes further since it will provide critical detail of how Dhlomo blends, in an inimitable fashion, his understandings of the idiom of both the English language and the isiXhosa language, both of which were second languages to him, as he was a first language isiZulu speaker. First the synopsis.

The play is woven around the characters: Kreli who was the chief paramount leader of amaXhosa during the time of the Cattle Killing, Mhlakaza (the great Xhosa witchdoctor), Nongqause⁶ (Prophetess, daughter of Mhlakaza), Charles Brownlee (Gaika commissioner), Mrs Charles Brownlee (Charles Brownlee’s wife), Hugh Thompson (Mrs Brownlee’s brother), Daba (A Xhosa convert), Mrs Daba (Daba’s wife) and a Missionary, a Doctor, Councillor, Headman, Women and Messengers.

(I)

The play begins with a cheerful gathering between Nongqause and her friends Nozizwe and Tandeka roasting meat and chatting. Although Nongqause is moody about the topic of discussion, the others converse about how Nongqause is loved by men especially with her astonishing beauty and gift of prophecy. As they discuss among themselves, they are visited by an old man who complains to Nongqause how the Selantos (The Selantos is a fictional creation of the author to reflect a certain group) have manipulated her prophecy for their interest. The old man went further

⁶ I use the orthography used by Dhlomo in his play

to explain how the Selantos instead of killing the cattle as prophesised now lobola (use them as bride price) with them. In the words of the old man

...today Nongqause's prophecy has changed their cunning minds. Times of national distress, upheaval and reform enrich the unscrupulous. Today, the Selantos are willing to pay even more than I asked...they dare even to ask for another of my daughters...all because cattle are valueless today. They give me what neither they, nor I can use. Instead of killing cattle they lobola with them (Dhlomo, 1935:6).

The old man, after expressing his fears about the reality of the Nongqause prophecy, is sent away. Shortly after the exit of the old man, other visitors arrive to see and verify from Nongqause the actuality and reality of the prophecy. Nongqause begins to express a sudden tiredness due to the many visits. She is unhappy that people seem not to believe in her prophecy. Nongqause confirms however that what she heard were sounds and not words, but she instinctively feels that her prophecy was going to have a positive impact on her people. An old woman who has all along been with her advises her not to be weary nor tired else she will be killed. Nongqause bravely confronts her with the following words:

Let them kill me. Death is better than the pangs of uncertainty, than the misery of indecision. I help them because I honestly believe we shall get new cattle and grain again, and that the dead shall arise. If somehow my doubts could be proved true, I would run now and tell the people that the whole prophecy is a lie, you hear – a lie (Dhlomo, 1935:11).

The scene ends with an argument between Mazwi and Nongqause. Mazwi is insisting that Nongqause leads her people to a different place but she refuses, saying she is staying back for “the people! The truth!” (Dhlomo, 1935:11).

(II)

The scene follows with a messenger who elegantly announces the presence of their mighty one - Kreli. The messenger gathers the people together to be addressed by Kreli himself. Kreli begins his address by trying to find out why the spirits are angry with them and why they have refused to accept their offerings. He admonishes the people that the time to find out is imminent. He pronounces that there are some bad people around who do not believe in the prophecy and the chief seer will have to do his work and identify those people. Kreli orders Mhlakaza the seer to step out and name the offenders of the land. The people are made to form a circle as a requirement for Mhlakaza to do his work. As a circle is formed, Mhlakaza dances in a spiritual trance and begins to speak,

I hear the cows lowing in the caves, waiting to come to life. I see standing out of the caves yonder, the horns of thousands of cattle trying to come above ground. By the side of the rivers and along the sea shore I see a crowd of risen warriors armed heavily trying and crying to come and help us against the Whiteman. What prevents warriors and cattle from coming? Who is keeping these blessings back? Yes! Yes! I hear you, spirits of my fathers. Do you say the evildoers are among the county's leading men? Bayete! The elephant was right. (Dhlomo, 1935:13)

Mhlakaza's prophecy is encouraged by Krelu who orders the people to go ahead and destroy their cattle and farms, failure to do so would result in a serious punishment even in the form of death for any defaulter. Krelu encourages the people to rise up and protect their land before it is taken away by the White man or Europeans. The people are encouraged and declare their readiness and loyalty to the Almighty king - Krelu. Some of the Xhosa soldiers begin to sing and gyrate in readiness for war. Scene ends.

(III)

It is the commissioner's house: Brownlee and his wife Mrs Brownlee are engaged in a discussion. Mrs Brownlee raises an issue to her husband about something she considers a rumour going on in the community about cattle-killing and the destruction of grains. Brownlee informs his wife that what she hears is not rumour but in fact what he has personally witnessed happening. They both begin to think of what they must do to halt the 'craze' before the people wage war against the Europeans or before starvation and hunger kill and ravage the entire community. As Mr and Mrs Brownlee discuss the impending destruction, they are visited by Hugh Thompson and a Missionary. They all join to discuss the same issue and what they must do to intercept the calamity. They decide to tread with caution to avoid triggering the Chiefs to contemplate starting a possible war between the Europeans and amaXhosa – they want to avoid another bloody rising.

Mr Brownlee, Hugh Thompson and the Missionary consider the impending action of amaXhosa as uncivilised and lament that any attempt at trying to civilise them to become a 'peaceful' and 'efficient' people (according to European tenets of 'peaceful' and 'efficient') has proved difficult. In the words of Hugh Thompson

...that is what I've been talking about. It is true, is it not, that both the missionary and the Administrator have long been trying to civilise the black man, turn him into a regular efficient worker and into a peaceful citizen? (Dhlomo, 1935:17)

Brownlee's house receives different visitors including messengers who come with disturbing messages regarding the destruction going on in Xhosaland. It becomes obvious to the White man (represented by Brownlee, Hugh and Missionary) that they are under threat of elimination. Once again, they take the decision to proceed cautiously so as to avoid further tension. Despite the fears about the prophecy of Nongqause and its aftermath, Hugh presents to the others a critical perspective. He says

...yes, I know that historians and writers will condemn Nongqause as a fool, traitor, and a devil-possessed witch. But is that everything that can be said about this? I hope to God not. No, I will not believe, I cannot believe that the tragedy which is now upon us can be explained in that way only. There must be something deeper. I believe that in the distant future, someone will catch the spirit and get the real meaning of this incident and write about it. Who knows? (Dhlomo, 1935:18)

The scene closes with series of other people coming to inform Brownlee about what is going on in parts of the community, with an emphasis on the cattle killings. Scene ends.

(IV)

It is Brownlee's house, he gathers a group of helpers with food and water to help the dying souls occasioned by the prevailing destructions of cattle and grain. Men, women and children troop to his house, starving and crying out for help. He, alongside Hugh, Missionary, Buku and others render humanitarian services to the desperate troubled victims of the calamity. It is a tense scenario punctuated by cries and wailings from women and children who have no other place to run to.

Brownlee, Hugh and Missionary lament the near consequence of their deepest fears and express disappointment at having to cater for the same people who insist on executing the prophecy of Mhlakaza and Nongqause. As they share food with the needy, they also use the opportunity to preach salvation to the people, a message amaXhosa have refused to accept since the arrival of the missionaries. The scene ends with praise and worship.

(V)

The scene takes place in the interior of a Christian but ‘raw’ Xhosa home. The scene reveals the emptiness and pain that life has to offer for their survival. A sudden realisation of a total loss. The people are discussing the famine brought about by the Nongqause prophecy and how their acceptance of Christianity and new salvation has brought them out of misery.

The scene focuses on the ill health of Daba, one of the Xhosa converts whose sickness brought many sympathisers. Despite all efforts to make him recover using traditional means, his health does not improve. In the process, some missionaries alongside Soga (a Xhosa doctor) come in to see Daba. The White man administers treatment to Daba and he gets strong.

Nongqause admits her fault for been a product of ignorance and advises the people to follow the teachings of the missionaries if they are to be liberated. The missionaries are happy with Nongqause and they celebrate her as the liberator of amaXhosa. She represents one who has taken her people to two worlds and who has shown them the right path towards liberation for amaXhosa. “She is the light that shineth” (Dhlomo, 1935:24). After Daba witnesses the reconciliation between his people, Nongqause and the White man, he dies. End of play.

4.1.3 H.I.E. Dhlomo's dramatic/theatrical vision

No playwright writes in a vacuum. All over the world, playwrights engage themselves in creating particular stories that relate to society and humanity. What is different and what distinguishes one playwright from another is how s/he uses his/her own social and educational background, creative experience and artistic orientation to create an original aesthetic production. Dhlomo's theatrical vision is inspired by a combination of several factors that directly or indirectly sharpen his dramatic and theatrical vision:

- His cultural background in which ancestors are viewed as having a real impact on the lives of those still living;
- His early contact with Western Christian education;
- His involvement in communal rites;
- His belief in redemption.

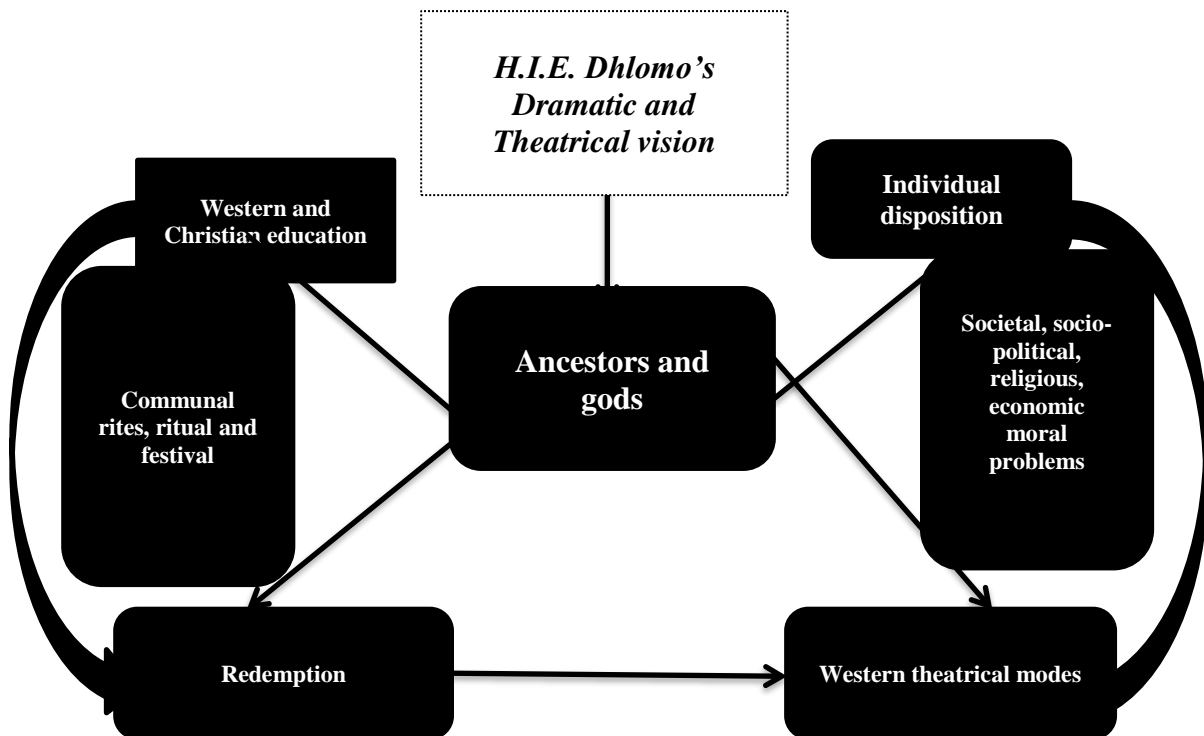


Figure. 1.1: H.I.E. Dhlomo's dramatic and theatrical vision

Dhlomo's dramatic and theatrical vision is also related to his growing up as an African child (Mootry, 1973). Having lived in a village and experienced the world of festivals, traditional rites, rituals, mask and masquerades he developed an attraction for ceremonial life that became the underlying basis for most of his dramas (Mootry, 1973:112). Based on his high intellect and education, he was also able to intuit the philosophical origins of the cultural and traditional practices of his community more than his age mates. The fact that he was steeped in the epistemologies of his own culture is reflected in (and later empowered) his dramatic and literary creative works such as *Ntsikana*, *Cetshwayo* (1936) which brought out his African-ness and which explain his incorporation of folklore, oral narratives, evocation, pantomime and a host of other performative elements that would have shaped his own sense of self both as an African and as a creative writer working within an African context.

In addition, the fact that Dhlomo chose to write in English, sometimes relying heavily on a quasi-Shakespearean style but at other times allowing the Nguni idiom to take centre stage, clearly shows how this author was able to make English work as a vehicle for African ideas and experiences. I will now discuss this issue of Dhlomo's use of language in more depth.

4.1. Language, communication and culture in *The Girl Who Killed to Save*

According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his essay "The language of African literature" (1985:109) every writer writes in the language he/she thinks in. Language represents the medium of expression through which ideas, feelings and the worldview of a people is communicated. In Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, the playwright's dominant language of expression is the English language

with occasional lexical interceptions in isiXhosa which re-enforce and are descriptive of particular cultural habits of the people. Moreover, Visser (1977) in his “Literary theory and criticism of H.I.E Dhlomo” observes that

Dhlomo wrote in a period when the orthographies of these languages (Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, etc) were undergoing considerable revision, a situation further complicated by the existence of several popular English spellings and pronunciations of better-known proper names (Visser, 1977:40).

The observation of Visser finds expression in the way which Dhlomo adopts some of the spelling of Xhosa names. For example, Dhlomo adopts the spelling *Nongqause* in his play which is uncommon to the usual ‘Nongqawuse’ of the revised orthography, which was difficult for many creative writers and intellectuals to adapt to (see Peires, 1979:159).

Interjections such as ‘*nxi*’ as used in the very beginning of the play (Scene One, page 5) signifies disgust and irritation. The word does not only represent an expression but is in fact a common mannerism associated with amaXhosa and isiXhosa. For Dhlomo, his belief in Western-style education, ‘civilization’, moderation, anti-tribalism, and equality for the ‘best sections’ for white and black society influenced his choice of language as a medium of writing. *The Girl Who Killed to Save* is written in the English language but the playwright is nevertheless addressing a cultural, historical and traditional issue experienced by amaXhosa. In the play, although writing in English, Dhlomo conveys creatively his response to the entire event as an important step towards the regeneration of a people whose authentic voice had been silenced by the linguistic and cultural imperialism of their colonizers. Dhlomo uses local names for some of his characters that are original in the context of the real event but who are characteristically different from the real event.

The way in which the English language is manipulated by Dhlomo to reinforce and explain the cultural universe of amaXhosa is evident in the many monologues and in the narrative discourse, peppered with Nguni exclamations, interjections and allusions to cultural totems. For example, in Mhlakaza's outburst:

Yes! Yes! I hear you, spirits of my fathers. Do you say the evildoers are among the county's leading men? Bayete! The elephant was right. (Dhlomo, 1935:13)

Dhlomo is reproducing poetic patterns of isiXhosa and isiZulu *izibongo* (praise poetry) in which lofty high-ranking people are addressed, here in the form of ancestors – 'spirits of my fathers'. The juxtaposition, contrast and opposition created in *izibongo* by positive phrases like 'spirits of my fathers' with negative ones like 'evildoers' has been noted by Opland (1998:137) who also argues that these oppositions are normally followed by a resolution (*ibid*) which here is rendered by 'The elephant was right'. The cry "Bayete!" is actually a Zulu royal salute as glossed in *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (see Silva et al., 1996:52). The same dictionary also glosses the salute as "also extended as an honour to prominent persons or high officials" (*ibid*). The inclusion of reference to "the elephant" is also indicative of Dhlomo's writing being influenced by Nguni language discourse since *Ndlovu* is an "honorific title used in Nguni society of kings and princes, as a clan name, praise name, or surname" (Silva et al., 1996:312).

The playwright foregrounds the ritual practice of amaXhosa as portending a collective and re-collective memory of Xhosa spirituality so that its linguistic roots are not altogether lost. It is obvious that within the context of post-colonial cultural politics, the concept of ritual tends to be

absorbed as a casualty of linguistic imperialism. Ritual has been viewed in this instance as a completely Eurocentric term. As such, industrial and scientific reasoning has given ritual a pejorative interpretation of a meaningless exercise and a mundane routine between western societies and the emergent postcolonial cultures of the third world (Soyinka, 1976, 1984). This argument however, seems to fade away in an African discourse where the centrality of ritual is inseparable from the people and where it serves an ultimate connection with the universe. This line of thought espouses further the argument that rituals are expression of human needs and desires. In Africa, rituals are instrumental in satisfying such human needs and desires. Because the human need is vast and varied, there are several prototypes of rituals to take care of them (Eck, 2002). Importantly, African rituals are not devoid of sacrifices either animal or human sacrifices which are used as atonement for any communal problems. Human sacrifice itself provides for the need to re-actualize direct relations between a people and their god in a drive towards seasonal regeneration of sacred forces. Although this form of undeniably harsh ritual may vary from place to place, it did however serve the social needs of the people.

In Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* the act of cattle-killing as well as the destruction of grains represents a spiritual revelation as prophetic and as needful towards saving the community. Hence, the play takes us first through the stages of spiritual confrontation with Nongqause trapped in a spiritual trance as described in Scene One's stage directions "*Nongqause, feigning to be seized with a hysteromania-like trance, laughs, cries, spins round and falls down on her knees and hands- and acts what took place at the river, with additions proposed by Mhlakaza*" (Dhlomo, 1935:8). This trance establishes a contact between her and the dead heroes who reveal to her the problem in the land and what the people must do to rescue themselves from catastrophe and hardship.

Secondly, the suggested remedy for restructuring the community and saving it from further incursion of the Whiteman or Europeans is by sacrifice. Not any sacrifice but the complete elimination and annihilation of all cattle and grain failure of which means death of community men and women. The Chief Councillor in an earlier conversation says:

Chief Councillor: We are here to find out why the spirits of our great ancestors do not hear our cries, and accept our offerings. There must be something wrong. There is something wrong. Someone is wrong and evil minded. The race suffers through the sins of its highly-place leaders.

The Assembly: Ee, Ee. Go on. We hear, thou mouth of the Elephant!

Chief Councillor: The spirits live. The spirits live not only in and around our kraals and fields, but in our hearts also. They hear our very thoughts and feelings. They would help us if they could, they could help us if we would. But there are stubborn ones here, who stand against the Will of the Nation – fools who doubt the word of the Lion and the prophecy of his renowned seer. Today we have come to find out the rascals. Come forth thou doctor of the Chief, and tell us who be the offenders. (Dhlomo, 1935:12)

Since rituals are designed for atonement, the community must get rid of any person or thing that will affect the communal relationship with the spirits. As revealed in the dialogue above, the intended act that the Chief Councillor proposes is to flush out any member of the community who stands as threat for the prophecy to be actualised. Dhlomo again uses the English translation of another Nguni honorific when he speaks of “the word of the Lion”. A lion in Nguni languages is *ingonyama* and is used as “a hereditary title of Zulu and Swazi kings” (Silva et al., 1996:503).

Dhlomo’s own construction of the play departs from the seriousness of a spiritual exercise, what he demonstrates is to use the prophecy as well as its concomitant effect to recreate and establish a resolution which sees the destruction ironically as a way of liberating the people. Dhlomo

dramatically down-plays the tragedy and elevates it to a necessary evil that will in fact unite the people. The play argues a rather naïve and utopian idea that progress is a good thing, that even the Cattle-Killing was beneficial since it destroyed tribalism and brought the people into a modern age.

4.3. Tradition versus modernity in *The Girl Who Killed to Save*

Tradition as a distinctive practice of the people is one that circumscribes their socio-political and economic life. Among the AmaXhosa tradition remains intrinsic and strengthens their belief in their practices. However, Xhosa tradition, irrespective of its integral nature, came under strong siege because of external incursions aimed at dislocating and disintegrating the age-old existing structures. The external incursion represents modernity that sees such a tradition as ‘barbaric’ and not worthy of being allowed to thrive and as an impediment to progress.

In his article “Dreams and Medicines: The Perspective of Xhosa Diviners and Novices in the Eastern Cape, South Africa” Hirst (2005) advances in his ethnographic research the status of ancestors in Xhosa culture as related to deceased males and community leaders. The ancestors become a link between it and man. In *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, the belief in the existence of ancestors as intercessors to human problems is not in doubt. This belief manifests itself in the play right from the beginning where Nongqause is represented as a prophetess who is able to bring to the people messages of their dead heroes who have now become ancestors. The conversation below explains the expectation of Nongqause as a prophetess.

Old woman: Well, what do you want here?

Old man: The advice of the prophetess. I want the prophetess to prophesy. She has not prophesied far enough. The prophet who makes a prophecy should also give a prophecy about the prophecy. The prophet should tell us not only what will happen, but also the aftermath of the event. The trouble with seers and prophets is that they do not see far enough. Where will all this end? Prophetess prophesy! Is lobola to cease? Are our children to be given away for nothing?

Nongqause: Feeble old man! You have answered yourself already. You said near death shine life. Our present plight, as you call it is a passing one. We are being prepared for new life. There'll be more cattle, better cattle for lobola. Nothing will be destroyed. Life is only being organised on a higher scale. Like you, the country is near a new birth, a greater day, a happier life... (Dhlomo, 1935:7)

Dhlomo enforces his voice through Nongqause to showcase his close belief in ancestors as well as the ritual process. However, he still distorts the usual argument that surrounds the story of Nongqause as tragedy and aligns the calamity to his own interpretation of the story as a new birth and a new life of not just ama-Xhosa but of all South Africans. Dhlomo is very critical in his choice of language as expressed by Nongqause. The depth of his ideology can only be understood even from his cultural knowledge that ancestors are not harbingers of death or bad omen, but if the people critically understand their prophecies as revealed by their living agents, then truly there will be 'a new birth, a greater day, a happier life.' This phrase, with its very English expression of degrees of comparison ('greater'/'happier') are translated very differently in isiXhosa which does not possess degrees of comparison as suffixal morphemes (-er/-est) but rather makes use of the *kuna-* (than) or the emphatic absolute pronoun. For example, the phrase 'the biggest day, the best

life' would be translated in isiXhosa as *olona suku lukhulu, obona bomi bumnandi*. The fact that Dhlomo uses such phraseology as 'a greater day, a happier life' is evidence of the extent to which he had absorbed a Western linguistic epistemology.

In Scene One of the play, after some of the community men and women doubt the prophecy that instructs them to kill all their cattle and destroy their grains, chief Kreli summons the people to Nongqawuse to receive word from her. The following exchange takes place:

Kreli: Nongqause, I have here Mhlala's doubtful men who will kill their cattle only when they have heard you yourself tell the story of your vision. If Kreli, the Mighty, chose he could kill all who doubt, but Kreli, the Father of the race desires to convince his poor children!

Mhlakaza: (*Giving her medicine to drink*) Drink! (*He sprinkles another preparation over her body.*) Speak!

(*Nongqause, feigning to be seized with a hysteromania-like trance, laughs, cries, spins round and falls down on her knees and hands-and acts what took place at the river, with additions proposed by Mhlakaza.*)

Nongqause: Nice water. Let me drink a little. (*Lifts up vessel and suddenly puts it down.*) What's that? (*She sings her song*) Who is singing? (*She makes a noise like the lowing of cattle. Jumps up, afraid.*) Cattle lowing from under the ground! What can it mean? (*She makes a great noise in imitation of horses carrying warriors.*) What is this great cloud of dust? Who are these warriors riding past and vanishing? Oh! I am afraid! What? Who is speaking? Who are these? Ndlambe, Hintsu, Nqeno, Mdushane, Gaika! Marvellous! I should not fear you say! Why? You want to whisper. (*Pretends to be listening to a whispering voice.*) Wonderful! Amazing! Triumph! Yes, yes I shall run now and tell it to father and to the Great one, the Lion – the Chief. Yes I shall return tomorrow. The AmaXhosa will win! Great tidings! Victory! Victory! Victory! (*Faints away while Mhlakaza revives her with medicine, the visitors shout excitedly.*)

Visitors: Wonderful! Great! It is true! True, true! We believe, we believe! Hail Kreli! Long live the Lion! Victory! Salvation!

Kreli: Now you have seen for yourselves, my people. Go, kill everything. Go destroy all. Go, tell the country. (Dhlomo, 1935:8)

I have quoted extensively the above conversation including the stage directions as creatively represented by Dhlomo intentionally. This is because the conversation and actions that ensue in the passage seem to be a disconnect between what actually would have happened, and how Dhlomo realizes it. Mhlakaza, who represents the seer, administers something like a liquid concoction to the young prophetess. As soon as she drinks from the water, she experiences something of a trance-like feeling that takes her back into the actual drama of her previous encounter with the ancestors at the river. Such characteristic affinity portrayed by Nongqawuse in an attempt to dramatically represent her vision is Dhlomo's way of using the power of language to communicate a cultural process of divinity and spiritual connectivity. As already referred to above, but referred to again here because of its enormous impact on her followers and their subsequent futures, the stage directions in which Nongqause's trance is described are pivotal turning point for the whole drama:

Nongqause, feigning to be seized with a hysteromania-like trance, laughs, cries, spins round and falls down on her knees and hands-and acts what took place at the river, with additions proposed by Mhlakaza (Dhlomo, 1935:8)

Dhlomo in the above description should not necessarily be seen as attempting to imitate the Shakespearean method of existential (and often, to the outsider 'insane') experiences of divinity, spirituality or cosmic dramatization of man's relationship or veneration of spirit beings (as in Ophelia, Othello or Macbeth). What Dhlomo rather describes is his understanding of Xhosa-divinity and the processes involved in attempting to establish a communication with the ancestors.

The act is not seen as a psychic problem but a way in which communication is established between the living and the dead. The hysteromania-like trance in which Nongause is trapped is an invoked act occasioned by the administered water and/or concoction prepared by Mhlakaza. The spinning, cries, and laughs are but a spiritual-hallucination in which Dhlomo draws us to the mythical world of amaXhosa. The end-result of the entire exercise is a recollection and re-dramatization of Nongqause's prophecy. The act also serves as a validation of the prophecy and a collective assurance of the message as intended by the Kreli.

Therefore, when Nongqause returns from her trance, she falls and the people now believe her. The Kreli afterwards pronounces for the immediate killing of all cattle. In his words "now you have seen for yourselves, my people. Go, kill everything. Go, destroy all. Go tell the country" (Dhlomo, 1935:6).

It should be noted that, the prophecy revealed by Nongqause reflects a clash of traditional Xhosa culture with that of modern Western culture. While traditional Xhosa culture pays particular attention to beliefs in spirits and ancestors, Western culture introduces to amaXhosa another religion, Christianity which is taught in such a way as to clash diametrically with an understanding of the importance of appeasing the ancestors. Brownlee expresses his fears when he says:

Brownlee: If we interfere with the scheme-plot, we should call it - for no obvious reason, the chiefs would say the Europeans want to fight the AmaXhosa, and soon there would be another bloody rising. This we must avoid if possible. I'm afraid the plot behind the whole movement is to starve the people into fighting the European. The leaders are playing on the people's feelings to cause trouble. (Dhlomo, 1935:16)

It is therefore clear that Nongqawuse's prophecy, as understood by Dhlomo through the character of Brownlee was seized upon cynically by whites as a way of demanding spiritual allegiance from amaXhosa in their time of need.

Ironically, the two despairing worlds of the Black and White, African and Western are resolved in the play. AmaXhosa, under the leadership of Nongqawuse as represented in the play, are advised by her to follow Christianity/Western civilization. The Missionary (representing the West) reinforces her unique position

Missionary: Nongqause may reduce at a sweep what legislation and missionary endeavour have so far failed to fight against – the power and influence of the witchdoctor, the tyranny of custom and tradition, the authority of the chief, the isolation of the Xhosa nation. By isolation I mean that the AmaXhosa are a self-sufficient community, hostile to and not eager to come into contact with Europeans. The Nongqause Drama will break down this self-sufficiency, this hostility, and force the AmaXhosa to throw themselves – literally and metaphorically – into the arms of their white neighbours. Nongqause will give the AmaXhosa that dependence, by robbing them of their food and national solidarity, which spells progress. For it is one of nature's charming paradoxes that dependence is born of dependence. (Dhlomo, 1935:20)

Every writer has a character through which he enforces his voice and channels his energy towards a reconstruction of a social, political or cultural issue. The position as expressed by the Missionary represents the voice of Dhlomo who believes that destruction should not be entirely viewed with negative connotations but rather should be seen from a futuristic beneficial angle in which physical destruction equals spiritual rebirth. Whatever devastation

that was wreaked upon amaXhosa as a result of Nongqawuse's prophecy can be viewed (as Dhlomo would have us view it) as a liberation from stifling cultural practices and dependencies towards sufficiency and ultimate independence.

4.4. Drama, Script, Theatre and Performance in *The Girl Who Killed to Save*

Scholars such as Schechner (2004), have noted the difficulty of separating out terms like drama, script, theatre and performance, but for the purpose of this thesis I will follow the view of Brockett (1968) that all of these elements feed off each other, and are linked, and culminate in the 'performance'. Be it drama, script, theatre and performance, the vehicle that activates and creates that visual and virtual result is the power of language. Albert Gerard in his "Four African literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic" comments on Dhlomo's language and how it functions towards the dramatic construct of his play by saying that,

...the construction of some of Dhlomo plays and short stories is likely to prove something of a barrier to readers. His short stories especially are often crudely constructed, shifting awkwardly from narrative to play-like presentation, mixing tenses, and lapsing too frequently into melodrama (Gerard, 1971:70).

Although Albert Gerard may be right in critiquing such Dhlomo's works like *Cetshwayo* (125 pages in typescript) and one fragment which in incomplete form runs to 260 pages (Gerard, 1971) it may be that he comments pejoratively on Dhlomo's works when he place them side-by-side with most Western dramas. Moreover, the language of Africa with its fullness of detail, idiom and poetry informs the way in which Dhlomo styled his works – a factor which may have been lost to Western critics unfamiliar with the nuances of African languages.

While Dhlomo is silent on the subject of the construction of some of his works, especially his short stories, he seems to have had a clear generic design in mind for his plays such as *The Girl Who Killed to Save*. Dhlomo has repeatedly written that African playwrights should attempt to write ‘literary drama’ rather than ‘acting plays’ (Dhlomo, 1935:10) an assertion that, taken in the context in which it occurs, seems to place the emphasis on the magnitude and thematic seriousness of a play rather than on its effectiveness as a vehicle for the stage.

The belief in the need for literary drama as inspired by Dhlomo, through my observation, was closely related to his early interest in historical drama (such as *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, *Valley of a Thousand Hills* and *Cetshwayo*) an interest that eventually gave way to a concern with contemporary themes and conditions. Dhlomo’s *The Girl Who Killed to Save* and some of his earlier plays, as mentioned above, deal with the past which justified his belief that he lived in a time when men suddenly become conscious of the wealth of their threatened old cultures, the glories of their forefathers and the richness of their tradition (Steadman, 1984). This death of culture is then linked to the destruction of important elements of the belief system of a people, and in that way the Cattle Killing can be seen to be bringing the spotlight onto a common theme in African oral literature, that of “death” (see Seema, 2004:148). Another theme that Dhlomo explores is that of madness (helped only by access to the ‘civilizing sanity’ of the colonialists), although this theme of psychosis, as Kwatsha (2007) notes, can be found in classic texts written in African languages such as Thembeke’s descent into insanity in A.C. Jordan’s *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*.

Creatively, *The Girl Who Killed to Save* is clearly divided into five scenes, and just like Aristotle's pattern of plot construction, Dhlomo has the incidents of his play progressing from beginning (Scene One) where Nongqawuse and her friends discuss their personal stories and life experiences. This plot construction is not dissimilar to that of Xhosa oral narratives (*iintsomi*) in which the storyteller first introduces the story and the problem, moves to the drama and culminates in a climax in which the 'moral' of the story is revealed (see Scheub, 1975)

The play makes use of stage description to deepen and explain certain activities that would bring out the detail for effective understanding and dramatization. This style is unique for most plays that are written for the stage. He occasionally uses generalized, un-named dramatic characters like "Voice", "Old man", "Old woman" as a technique to eliminate a condensed possibility of having to create a multitude of specific characters with their own separate identities and individual roles. Wenzel (2005:53) mentions the fact that although Tiyo Soga makes an appearance with a White missionary in Dhlomo's play, he remains silent about the issues at stake. Wenzel argues that "The silent presence of Tiyo Soga in the final scene, however, offers a glimpse of the ambivalences in the play, in both its "style" and "content" (Wenzel, 2005:57) and goes on to argue that a close reading of Tiyo Soga's letters after the Cattle-Killing reveal that he saw it both as a calamitous event but also as an opportunity to evangelize amaXhosa.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSING XOLANI MKONKO'S *NONGQAWUSE: A DISSERTATION OF TRUE LIES*

5.1. Introduction

History must never pass untold; it must be relished as it catapults to the next generation and be rectified where necessary. Significance of a nation's history must be preserved and upheld as a heritage. The story of Nongqawuse, the Cattle killing is our undeniable heritage and it is imperative for us as South Africans to acknowledge it. We need to take pride in it and learn from our past to build a better future. Therefore, it is obligatory for us as writers to pen down such a story, to redefine our history and to construct a strong social stance. Though the story was a catastrophic act of irrational thinking due to dexterous conspiracies laid upon our people by notorious westerners, beneath such horror there is still much to learn (Mkonko, 2017).

The above are the words I received from Xolani Mkonko himself on the 4th of May, 2017 regarding his decision to write the Nongqawuse story as a musical drama. A creative re-rendering of the story is Mkonko's interpretation and understanding of the historical Nongqawuse event. He points to the underlying politics of the Nongqawuse story and how the event is still of contemporary relevance. Although a very short play, Mkonko experimentally creates a musical drama that directly unveils the dialectical nature of the Nongqawuse story through the character of "Narrator."

Xolani Mkonko is perhaps the one South African dramatist whose works cry out to be given more sustained attention than they have attracted up to now. The reasons his oeuvre has been passed over so cursorily are themselves worth thinking about (passed over by critics and literary

historians, that is, not by audiences, for whom Mkonko's plays represent a constant attraction). Mkonko is more of a theatre practitioner who creates his own plays, rehearses them with a group of actors and actresses and then tours such productions to different theatre houses in the country. He is also involved in creating productions for organisations and institutions in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Because of this, his plays are often more appreciated on stage than as literary texts. In this thesis I hope to introduce Mkonko as not only a theatre practitioner, but also as writer whose texts deserve serious literary consideration and analysis.

This chapter therefore introduces Mkonko's dramaturgy and pays particular attention to the creative presentation and dramatic representation of the Nongqawuse story of 1856. Of concern in this chapter, will be a critical analysis of one of his plays entitled *uNongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*. The purpose of the selection is to draw attention to how the Nongqawuse story is creatively realised by Mkonko. This chapter will be in line with previous chapters in applying Afrocentrism as a guiding theory, I hope to treat his work not as an example of theatre in the Western sense, but as illustrative of an African writer responding to African history creatively.

5.2. Synopsis of Xolani Mkonko's *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*

The play opens with the narrator who creatively recounts the story, first reminding the audience that what they are about to witness is a historical narrative of the Nongqawuse event and how the historical narrative cannot be separated from the distorted messages imbued in the way it has traditionally been understood.

Most importantly, the play is an experimental piece which allows characters to improvise and develop additional lines/dialogue during performance which is characteristic of the orality in traditional African performances which John Conteh-Morgan (1994:1) calls “social ceremonial” (secular or sacred). He proceeds by saying that for “the perceived theatricality of African Cultures inheres in the very orality” of the cultures and the interactive mode of communication this feature imposes (Conteh-Morgan, 1994:4-5). In Scene One of the written script (the lines of which could be added to, or improvised) the narrator points out the presence of the White settlers - they are standing far off watching the villagers singing high up on the hills of Transkei. These White settlers observe, what appears to them, the clumsy and uncivilized manner in which the villagers co-habit and relate. To the Whites such characteristic behavior of the villagers is one that needs civilization. The conversation below is an ensuing one among the White settlers.

(At this time the English {Settlers} have arrived and set themselves afar from the villagers hidden above the hills of Transkei meticulously observing the villagers whilst they sing and dance).

Settler 1: General have these shameless creatures gone insane, they look rather clumsy.

General: Shut up soldier, with your loose dangling lips, I'm rather enjoying watching this enchanting Paganism experience. What is that smoke ... *(Peering deep through his binocular)*

Settler2: Such horrible noise...

General: This is so absurd ... *(Clenching his facial muscles)*

Settler 3: Unpalatable indeed ... *(Puzzled)*

General: Gracious dear God ... These creatures need to be civilized...

Settler: How can you possibly civilize such backward savages?

General: You are still a crawling lad soldier ... you watch and learn. (Mkonko, 2000: 2)

The play continues with Scene Two which shows Nongqawuse dreaming and screaming out to her uncle Mhlakaza. She screams out, “*Bayeza!* They are coming! Hey please go... please go away from me”. (Mkonko, 2000: 2) Mhlakaza discovers that Nongqawuse is dreaming and tries to wake her while noticing that she appears to be turning on her bed in a mysterious manner. As Nongqawuse remains trapped in her dream world, Mhlakaza begins to ponder on how bad things are beginning to fare with his people. He thinks aloud “the world has come to an end. The land of our fathers is getting apart, my people are suffering... witchcraft and disease are ravaging our land...” (Mkonko, 2000:3). As Mhlakaza ponders aloud, the choir appears singing a sorrowful song to depict the mood. Mkonko does not limit his script to a particular mournful melody but indicates in his script that the song can be improvised. He did not however specify the language of the song, but it is instructive that playwrights often weave the mother-tongue in to the narrative by way of songs and chants but exclude it from the main dialogue which could be the possible outcome to Mkonko’s creative liberality.

The third scene progresses with Mhlakaza who instructs Nongqawuse and her friends to chase the birds off the cornfield. This scene is friendly and delightfully innocent as Nongqawuse and her friends chat playfully together. In this way the playwright highlights the notion of the communal nature of African societies as advanced in Soyinka’s *Myth, literature and the African world* (Soyinka, 1976).

The remaining parts of the play progressing from Scenes Four to Seven reveal how Nongqawuse shares her prophecy with her uncle and how its fulfilment will lead to a whole new chapter among amaXhosa. The destruction of cattle, farmlands and grains as prophesied by Nongqawuse is only her

reporting a directive from the ancestors, and according to her, this directive was revealed to her by the dead heroes as the solution to the problems confronting the community.

5.3. The language of the play: Mkonko and *Nongqawuse* in perspective.

Mkonko's experimental play/musical drama is carefully constructed in the original isiXhosa language with an equal presence and usage of the English language to deepen the historical understanding of the Nongqawuse prophecy and its contemporary implication. Far from the debates that have hitherto surrounded the original story as reviewed in the previous chapters, Mkonko rather departs a little and creatively fashions a drama out of his own ideological disposition and understanding of the event as it was originally related in isiXhosa. He sets out the play powerfully with the opening scene of the 'Narrator' who introduces the creative dimension of the play in English. He narrates thus after stopping a stick fight:

Narrator: Let us come to you tonight and tell the story, an unfolding historic narrative that took place almost two hundred years ago in a remote rural village of Transkei in April of 1856. It began when two young girls were sent to chase birds away from the cornfields near the river Gxara. We know the story will bring back old wounds, it will blow the dust that had settled after the blazing tormenting winds, a sorrowful wind that nearly swept away all the Xhosa nation right down to extinction. This is a story of a nation proud of its heritage, traditions and customs, a story of bravery, resilience and unwavering resistance. An unfolding gesture of a heroic and territorial gallantness. This story is sleeved neatly in between the dusty pages of history, remained in our hearts dare never to be told. Let us present to you tonight a riveting yet a brazing, enthralling musical story *uNongqawuse* a "dissertation of true lies". Was it a lie *maXhosa amahle*? Or was it a truth blurred by distortions of cruel intentions? Who was in the river? Let's turn the pages of history never told! *Qulani*, my brothers! (Mkonko, 2000:1)

The first thing to note above is that the English in Mkonko's play is sometimes ungrammatical, and at times does not quite make sense (example; "remained in our hearts dare never to be told"). This could be Mkonko's way of allowing us to see how English discourse came across to amaXhosa of the time – grand and yet at times incomprehensible. It is a clever device that enables the playwright to use the cadences of the English language, rather than its meaning, to create an atmosphere that speaks to colonial dominance and inscrutability. On another note, one thing that must be observed in the beginning of the play as presented above is the use of a stage direction which describes, "*The narrator is preceded by the exhilarating stick fighting until he stops it after one fighter fell.*" The idea of stick fighting is Mkonko's creative representation of his cultural affinity that defines amaXhosa. Stick fighting demonstrates the physical agility, strength and resilience of able-bodied young men in the community and although the practice is described in English, the visualization of the scenario of stick fighting is one that has its roots among amaXhosa. This reveals how language in this context is able, without much explanation, to describe actions and create a mood and atmosphere that is clearly meant to be interpreted as culturally appropriate creating a physicality that signifies 'Xhosa'. In this way Mkonko clarifies his intention to retell history from his own angle. He creates a linguistic attraction by blending English and isiXhosa to make the play have what I will term a 'glocal appeal.' By this I mean a global and local (glocal) aesthetic, one that will resonate with both international and domestic audiences. Western and African readers of the play and even spectators will be able to follow the dramatic construct of the play as well, but at the same time not lose sight of the fact that although much of the narrative is in English, this is not an English story, the isiXhosa lexicon acting as the playwright's device to emphasise this fact.

Mkonko uses popular isiXhosa words to associate his play with the general South African masses. Such words as '*Bayeza*' (Mkonko, 2000:2) as used by Nongqawuse which translates the English 'They are coming', as well as words like '*Bayete*' meaning 'All hail'. The greeting '*Bayete*' specifically communicates that the person being addressed is of a high social status in traditional Xhosa kingdoms. The fact that Nongqawuse addresses her uncle as *malume* also sets the scene as one that is driven by Xhosa linguistic protocol, *hlonipha*, respect, requiring that the young girl not address her uncle by his name, but as *malume* (uncle).

The world of dreams is also creatively revealed in the play with its accompanying interpretation in amaXhosa cosmology. The conversation below is useful:

Nongqawuse: Uncle, *Bayeza*! They are coming *malume*...

Mhlakaza: Hee Nongqawuse, who are coming, please tell me. Nobanda, bring water (rushing for water) *he eke*, drink some water, Nongqawuse, you just had a bad dream...*lala*, please sleep my child (*Nongqawuse appears confused she hurries slowly to her resting place.*) (Mkonko, 2000: 2)

Such exclamations and discourse markers as '*Hee*', '*he eke*', and imperatives like '*lala*' are usual day-to-day words, which are almost like linguistic mannerisms to the majority of South Africans who speak an African language. They convey not only concern from one person to another, but also offer insight as to the inner workings of Nongqawuse who is seen here dreaming. Mhlakaza believes only water can bring Nongqawuse out of her dream world to the real world, but he still wants her to rest, this concern of his is embodied in the word '*lala*' sleep. Mhlakaza himself is

troubled by an apocalyptic vision for amaXhosa which requires redemptive assistance from God and the ancestors.

Mhlakaza: The world has come to an end ... *umhlaba wobawo uyankuthuka. Qamata kaTayi, Mvelinqambi*, God of our people, what have we done? Take away darkness, and give us light. The cattle and the land of our fathers must remain with us, and our nation be healed and even prosper. Ah! *Ntaba!* I am calling to the God of Mountain and to the God of Water, to be with us. The whites must never settle in this land and our cattle remain with us. Never allow the foreigner to invade us. Ah *Sifuba sibanzi*, who is likewise the great chief of the Xhosa, Bless us with the wisdom of Nxele, Mlanjeni and Maqoma, render us your unwavering assistance to drive away the curse that has bestowed upon us by the evil spell. (Mkonko, 2000:3)

In the exhortation above Mkonko applies and employs the technique of code switching which is a common technique among bilingual speakers of African languages and is here used to demonstrate the psycholinguistic state of the character of Mhlakaza. According to Riehl (2005:1945) certain items of vocabulary can ‘serve as a trigger for the alternation from one language to the other’ and in the above extract, it is clear that while English dominates, it is the appellation of deities and ancestors that prompts the mother tongue. Also, significantly, the word *umhlaba*, which can be glossed as ‘world’ triggers the longest sentence in isiXhosa in the piece *umhlaba wobawo uyankuthuka. Qamata kaTayi, Mvelinqambi*. Here the world ‘*umhlaba*’ is seen as the ‘world’ that belongs to a spiritual father, rendered by the possessive of the Class 3 noun *umhlaba*, being *wa-* prefixed to the Class 1a noun, *ubawo*, the resulting vowel merger realized as *wobawo* (of the father). The *Greater Dictionary of Xhosa* (Pahl et al., 1989:10) glosses *Qamata* in isiXhosa as:

Elinye lamagama awayebizwa ngawo uThixo phambi kokuza kweLizwi emaXhoseni nabafundisi; amanye ngala: uDali, uDalidiphu, uDalibom, uTayi.

(One of the names God was called by before the coming of the Word to the Xhosa and ministers; others are these: Dali, Dalidiphu, Dalibom, Tayi.)

The gloss for *uTayi* is given as:

Elinye lamagama awayebizwa ngalo uThixo phambi kokuza kweLizwi.

(Another name God was called before the coming of the Word.) (Pahl et al., 1989:253)

Just after we hear Mhlakaza say, in English, “Never allow the foreigner to invade us” we hear yet another appellation given by amaXhosa to their deity, *USifuba- sibanzi*, the author clearly wanting to establish for the spectators and readers the fact that Xhosa spirituality is perceived as being linked to ancestors and traditional understandings of the deity. The English glosses for *USifuba -sibanzi* in the *Greater Dictionary of Xhosa* (Pahl et al., 1989:191) are:

- 1 lit: Broad-chest God (as used by Rubusana)
- 2 Jesus Christ (as used by Mqhayi and Ntsikana);
- 3 Christian

The polysemous nature of *uSifuba-sibanzi* allows Mkonto’s audiences to choose any meaning of the word that provides them with comfort and context. Mkonko’s use of the word *uyankuthuka* which is a common slang township word in the Xhosa community which usually refers to something ‘decaying’ or ‘being messed up’ is a means of crying out to the Xhosa God (*uQamata*) to intervene to rescue the

land from the invaders who are portrayed as White colonialists in the play. Mkonko uses this particular word (*-nkuthuka*) to reveal his agony about the sad situation of the land: *umhlaba wobawo uyankuthuka* – ‘Our land [literally: the land of Our Father] is being messed up.’ The use of this word also reveals the influence of township upbringing in Mkonko’s life.

Finally, Mhlakaza’s calling out of the names of Nxele, Mlanjeni and Maqoma is significant since these powerful prophets and warriors are invoked to ‘drive away the curse’, implying that it is the ‘foreigner’ who brought about this ‘evil spell’. Analysing the passage therefore it is easy to juxtapose the problems of amaXhosa (rendered in both isiXhosa and English) with its solutions (rendered by the calling of the isiXhosa names of previous heroes and of the names for supreme deities).

5.4. Nongqawuse: Mkonko’s dramatic vision

Mkonko attempts in his play to derive an experimental approach towards the re-telling of the Nongqawuse story. Although he most definitely views it as a tragic story, he nevertheless does not follow the usual Aristotelian concept of plot construction but rather the African understanding of plot construction as explained by Biodun Jeyifo in his essay “The Truthful lie: essays in a Sociology of African Drama” (1985) where he explains that African tragedy or idea of plot construction must not necessarily start off with a clear beginning as laid out by Aristotle but rather argues that African drama can be a continuation of real African experiences and problems whose roots often date far back in history. So the idea of a beginning, a middle and an end may not be applicable to African performance structure. The use of music and improvisation that Mkonko weaves into his drama gives room for a more diversified understanding and dramatization of the story significant with performance in African settings. Unlike Dhlomo, who in his *The Girl Who Killed to Save* began the play with an opening

conversation between Nongqause and her friends, Mkonko chooses the Narrator technique by allowing the storyteller to emerge at the opening part of the play to introduce the play. This technique saves the playwright the effort of having to use multiple characters to create an understanding of the play and to provide the critical lines which explain his direction towards a creative retelling of the story.

Aristotle's *Poetics* is primarily viewed as influencing Western forms of dramatic construction and presentation, but in fact most of African dramaturgy was also influenced by the principles laid down by Aristotle. Molette (1995:25) explains that "The African tradition operates totally outside the context of Aristotle. It is not anti-Aristotelian: it is a-Aristotelian." Molette goes on to argue that Afro-American drama hinges not on the plot, but the form, "the patterned arrangement of the actions" (Molette, 1995:25).

In his play, Mkonko offers an insight into the nature of dramatic narratives as noted by Cohen (1997). It is a form which relies on the connection between voices and speakers, language and bodies. Just like in the pondering state of Mhlakaza in Scene Two, the audience expects specific actors and specific words to be inextricably linked. In many types of fiction, a solitary voice represents and speaks for several bodies. Such is the case with oral storytelling.

In most of Mkonko's creative dramas, there is a break from strict dramatic form into scenes that more closely resemble oral narratives which justifies his use of improvisation and music (Scheub, 1975). Like the role of the narrator as used by Mkonko, individual characters tell oral narratives in which their singular voice relates the actions of several bodies rather than having several bodies act out the narrative with the help of their individual voices. While this could be seen merely as a device for plot

condensation, Mkonko often uses oral narratives to relate crucial moments of the plot. Through the use of oral storytelling techniques within dramatic action, Mkonko detaches language from specific speakers and physical bodies in order to unsettle the minds of both the characters and the audience.

Moreover, Mkonko's script is short in its written form with scenes demarcated as First Scene, Second Scene, Third Scene, Fourth Scene, Fifth Scene and Sixth Scene providing room for the performers of the play to improvise lines in the context of the storyline of the play. Music is integral in Mkonko's play to creating the ethos of the drama in that it stands for culture and an African non-textual form of expression. Table 1 below summarises the scenes, language and inclusion of music and dance in Mkonko's work: *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*.

Table 1: Scenes languages and and music used in Mkonko's Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies

Scene	Languages used	Music and dance
Narrator introduces the play	English	Xhosa stick-fighting with accompanying music
<p>First Scene</p> <p>White settlers engage in a discussion on how they view Africans especially the amaXhosa.</p>	<p>Stereotypical upper-class British, e.g.</p> <p>General: Gracious dear God ...</p> <p>These creatures need to be civilized</p> <p>Settler: How can you possibly civilize such backward savages?</p> <p>General: You are still a crawling lad soldier ...</p> <p>you watch and learn</p>	<p>The traditional Xhosa choir is set at the middle of the stage at upper platform. The lower platform is set for the band. The right stage is set for the elders and left stage is set for elderly woman. The centre is set for the young men and women of the village. The village is abuzz!</p> <p>The song and dance for king Sarhili begins.</p>
<p>Second Scene (Dream Scene)</p> <p>The scene is about Nongqawuse and her dream encounter. is woken up by his uncle Mhlakaza whom she would later share her dream.</p>	<p>Mkonko uses both English and occasional and familiar isiXhosa words and interjections like 'Bayeza' 'hee', 'lala'</p> <p>Mhlakaza also calls out the names of dead heroes like, Nxele, Mlanjeni and Maqoma from whom he requests wisdom.</p>	<p>Sounds and drums accompany the dream scene in which Mhlakaza uses water to bring Nongqawuse back to reality.</p>
<p>Third Scene</p> <p>The scene is between Nongqawuse and her sister Nombanda. As they discuss, she chases the others away to the cornfields.</p>	<p>Mostly isiXhosa with some English. Examples include the conversation below:</p> <p><i>Nongqawuze hambani niye phaya emasimini niyokugxotha ezaa ntaka zigxoba-gxoba amasimi am pha [Nogqawuse is ignoring her uncle's call]</i></p> <p><i>Nongqawuse sukudukisa ndithetha ubuqhiya-qhiyaza apha uxel'inja ingqungela ukulala ... shukumani nihambe.</i></p> <p>(Translation: Nongqawuse, go to the plantation and chase the birds away. [Nongqawuse is ignoring her uncle's call])</p>	<p>None</p>

	Nongqawuse, I am talking to you, you are delaying, just go to the plantation and do as I have told you))	
<p>Fourth Scene</p> <p>The scene is Nongqawuse’s encounter with the ancestors who reveal to her what amaXhosa must do to avert the calamity that befell them.</p>	<p>The language used is a combination of English and isiXhosa as above. Examples include</p> <p><i>Nongqawuse sukusondela emlanjeni sekurhatyele ngoku masihambe, uMalume uzakusibetha.</i> (Translation: Nongqawuse, do not get closer to the river. It is getting late now, let’s leave now, uncle will beat us.)</p> <p>[Nongqawuse continues to move forward ignoring her sister, at this time the drums are roaring]</p>	<p>Strange sounds, drums</p> <p>At the cornfields near the River Gxara an uncanny sound begins to roar as the girls continue to chase the birds away and Nongqawuse begins to have hallucinations.</p> <p>They gradually move closer to where the sound is coming from. This strange sound is accompanied by misty fog as they plod towards their destination, the young sister is now starting to be afraid and Nongqawuse is just emerging through the thick fog. A strange sound whispers Nongqawuse's name.</p>
<p>Fifth Scene (Mhlakaza’s house)</p> <p>Nongqawuse returns from the river in a very terrible condition and heads for her uncle Mhlakaza’s house. She is accompanied by her sister Nombanda who is only able to explain to Mhlakaza Nongqawuse’s encounter at the river Gxarha.</p>	<p>English and isiXhosa , e.g.</p> <p>Mhlakaza: <i>Nongqawuse kwenzeke ntoni? Nombanda kwenzeke ntoni kutheni uNongqawuse enje? Ndinixelele ndathi ningabuyi ngorhatya ... jongani ngoku ... Nongqawuse vuka, ndim uMalume, vuka mtana ka dade'thu ...</i> (Translation: Nongqawuse, what happened? Nombanda, what happened? I told you not to return at sunset. You see now... Nongqawuse, wake up, it's me your uncle. Wake up my child)</p>	<p>None</p>

<p>Sixth Scene (River Gxarha)</p> <p>Mhlakaza visits the river with Nongqawuse.</p> <p>Mhlakaza and Nongqawuse are preparing a small ritual to appease the people of the river, burning <i>imphepho</i>⁷ preparing <i>isalawu</i>⁸ shaking it from the calabash until the brownish bubble foam appears signalling the acceptance of the ritual.</p>	<p>Mainly isiXhosa, e.g.</p> <p><i>Mhlakaza: Ah nina bakhulu! Ndim lo ndizosabela kuni zintlanga zomlambo, ndizosabela kuni zilo zeSizwe sakwaXhosa. Nimyalele umntwana ukuba mandize kuma kule ndawo, thethani ndive zinto zobawo. Mabudede ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya, makube cosi kube hele ... Camagwini</i></p> <p>⁹<i>Zithwalandwe!</i></p> <p>(Translation: Ah my ancestors! It's me, you people of the river. I am here to listen to your call. You have told the child that I should come here. So please talk, my ancestors, I am listening. Take away darkness and give us light. So that we are healed. Hail you, the greatest of the great.)</p>	<p>There is traditional music that is played by the musical band who have been part of the play from the very beginning. As Mhlakaza and Nongqawuse prepare the ritual background traditional music is getting stronger and stronger. Music fades and drums take over</p> <p>Storm sound effects</p>
<p>Scene Seven</p> <p>Mhlakaza visits Paramount king, King Sarhili at his royal Kingdom to break the news of the Cattle Killing. The Paramount king is shocked and does not receive the news very well. The scene appears as the King and his people had already been told - the villagers burst into chaos.</p>	<p>English and isiXhosa</p>	<p>Music and sad songs conclude the end the play.</p>

It is important to comment on Mkonko's use of the 'Narrator' who appears only once in the opening scene of the play. The narrator device is a typical and primordially inherent process associated with African storytelling which is given voice in isiXhosa with the opening lines of the *intsomi* (folk tale) as "*Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi*" which translates as 'Once upon a time'. In using such a device, the

⁷ *Imphepho*: A traditional herb for communicating with ancestors. The whites usually call it a traditional grass which is regarded offensive by Nguni people (Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, etc)

⁸ *isawalu*: A mixture of herbs that is used to call the ancestors to better the situation of the caller. The caller usually drinks it.

⁹ *Camagwini!*: an interjection used to appease, calm, soothe, pardon also an invocation of the ancestral spirits for guidance (see Tshabe and Shoba, 2006:262)

narrator only sets the scene and the mood but does not necessarily drive the action which is passed over to the individual actors.

More so, the improvisational technique adopted by Mkonko in his play accounts for the liberality of the use of isiXhosa as a linguistic imperative to the performativity and atmosphere of the play. This is different from the other plays analysed in this study. Thus the flexibility of this play structure enables actors to harness their own linguistic creativity, to speak of the event in ways that have contemporary resonances for young speakers of isiXhosa. Moreover, Mkonko does not prescribe specific songs in the play but allows the choice of songs to be made by the directors or actors as they deem appropriate in line with the dramatic incidents of the play.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSING BRETT BAILEY'S *THE PROPHET*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter, like the two chapters before it, will critically analyse the play *The Prophet*, Brett Bailey's creative interpretation of the Nongqawuse story. Chapter Four of this study looked at the creative interpretation of Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) while Chapter Five focused on Mkonko's unpublished play *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*. The chapters provided interpretatively contested positions towards the understanding of the historical event that occurred among amaXhosa in the years 1856-57. Since this study has been able to establish a common and yet wide range of understanding of the Nongqawuse story from various academic, anthropological and cultural sources, it would therefore be interesting to look at Bailey's position and how he creatively represents his understanding of the story in his play, *The Prophet*.

The first thing to understand here, however, is Bailey's close affinity to African belief systems, cultural spaces and mythical worlds especially those of amaXhosa of South Africa. His doggedness as a 'White-Black-writer' (my expression) who has defied over the years a racial conditioning created by society distinguishes him as a true creative force whose focus is to 'heal' rather than 'kill' the truth of the real conditions of humanity around him. A published interview conducted by Anton Krueger titled "Gazing at *Exhibit A*: Interview with Brett Bailey" (Krueger, 2013) reveals the creative and artistic vision of the playwright and how his understanding of the spiritual world in relation to South Africa's racially divided past, as well as the many atrocities hatched in it, forms

a critical nerve towards many of his works. Krueger summarizes what Bailey's works represent.

In his words

Bailey is the most consistently innovative, intelligent, mind and soul-bending artist from South Africa — and, actually, the world, one might go as far as to say. He first came to prominence in the nineties with a trilogy of plays recounting stories about the amaXhosa people living in the Eastern Cape. These plays dealt with ritual in a way that hadn't been seen before, and for that he was awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award in 2001.... Brett Bailey's works are idiosyncratic and iconoclastic. It's about colonialism, and postcolonialism. All of his productions seem to have something to do with relations between Africa and the West (Krueger, 2013:2).

As noted by Krueger and as evidenced in Bailey's trilogy (*Ipi Zombie*, *iMumbo Jumbo* and *The Prophet*) his mastery and knowledge of the ritual processes and spiritual significance of Xhosa divinity distinguishes him from many South African writers especially as a White playwright writing on Black lives. Moreover, Bailey also reveals in his works a dispassionate recognition of the often eugenic posturing of most of his fellow White brothers on Black affairs. In the further part of the interview conducted by Krueger, Bailey himself admits to the interpretation of the themes of his works as centring on Western and African issues, colonial matters as well as on the African spiritual world and the innate power of dreams and myth in the African cosmic order. Reinforcing this position, the Matshikizas have this to say about Bailey's courage in writing about Black African lives:

To be a white man dabbling in black territory is still taboo – to both sides. Whereas Fugard and Simon might have been skating on the surface of social issues that affected the lives of Black people, Bailey breaks through into

forbidden territory – the fractured inner spiritual world of black African culture (Matshikiza and Matshikiza, 2000:10).

Brett Bailey, as his name suggests, is of British ancestry, a third generation South African who grew up in Cape Town. In his interview with Krueger's interview he observes that the only Black people whom he encountered whilst growing up were either maids: domestic servants from small villages in the Transkei, or ex-convicts, since they lived near Pollsmoor Prison, where Nelson Mandela was also incarcerated for a time. Sometimes they would see prisoners escaping. In his own words, whilst growing up in the seventies and eighties, his first encounters with African people were either "tamed black women" or "wild black men" (Kruger, 2005:2).

This chapter therefore focuses on another understanding of Bailey and his play titled *The Prophet*, a creative interpretation of the Nongqawuse story. The chapter will also look at how the language used by Bailey is realised in an English code that nevertheless allows an African idiom and understanding to radiate through the text. Added to this, the dramatic construct of the play will also be explored within the ambit of theatre elements generally. Just like the previous two chapters, this chapter will also uphold Afrocentrism as the central theory for this study. I begin this chapter by first providing a summary of the story of *The Prophet*.

6.2. Synopsis of Bailey's *The Prophet*

The play is structured to take the form of a ceremony and begins with the gathering of Mamas and Priests accompanied by traditional songs sung by community men, women and children. The Priests invoke the presence of the Jujus to foretell what must be done to liberate amaXhosa from

their impending problems. The Juju and Priestess carry out various forms of ritual display and begin to speak to the people.

Priestess: (*moving around the room, talking to the audience*) Nobody knows where she came from – nobody knows Nobody knows where she came from – nobody knows. She said: “The dead will rise, any day now, any day now. They are waiting,” she said with her eyes rolled back in her head, “They are watching us from below. Waiting,” she said, “With their eyes rolled back in their heads, Their breath comes out of the ground, hot with waiting, hot, hot, hot –”

Juju: (*beginning their slow, sweeping, synchronised gestures*)

In the beginning everything was quiet

Everything was quiet when things began

Then the ground split apart and the first people walked out

They walked out driving the cattle before them

Cattle red as the sun, blacker than night

Cattle white as the clouds

This – is the way – it happened. (Bailey, 2003:2)

The play progresses with King Sarili who is faced with the complex problem on how to solve their impending troubles. He recounts the good old days. The days when the community was full of honey and the people lived without fear. The days of good harvest and plenty to eat. Again, the Praise-Poet asks where all the bounty and richness of amaXhosa has gone to. The King Sarili assures his people that everything will surely return to normalcy and he will do everything within his powers to take a decision that will be of benefit to the entire community.

Again, the villagers are gathered in the palace of the king to find a way out of their problem. The juju (one with mystical powers) is summoned and in the presence of the praise poet and the priestess, invokes the great seer Mhlakaza (referred to by the villagers in isiXhosa as *Gqir' elikhulu* – 'big traditional healer') to go into a spiritual trance. After series of ritual displays Mhlakaza informs the King that he has a message for the community:

Mhlakaza: My king! I have great news, news that will bring the spirit of happiness and power back into your heart!

Villagers: *Hawu Gqir' elikhulu!* What is the news?

Mhlakaza: *Mbr! Mbr!* Ha! I have heard the message of the greatest army! They promise to come and save us!

Sarili: You bring wonderful news, Mhlakaza! Where is this army?

Mhlakaza: At the Gxara River below my homestead, my King. I have seen the shining horns of their cows and their glittering spears sticking out of the river! They have chosen my young niece as their messenger.

Villagers: Your niece!

Man 1: This is very strange to us, *Gqir' elikhulu*. Why does an army give a message to a little girl and not to the king directly! (Bailey, 2003:5)

The message of Mhlakaza and his added revelation that his young niece has been chosen as a messenger by their ancestors to bring the prophecy of liberation becomes a source of worry. The villagers, including the king, feel unsure of Mhlakaza's communication and they wonder why, among everyone in the community, their dead heroes would stoop so low as to give a message to the niece who is so young, and a female at that. Mhlakaza replies by stating his confusion as well but assures them that he witnessed the encounter and he can tell them for sure of the certainty of the prophecy. Sarili summons at once for Nongqawuse to be brought to the palace. The following conversation takes place between Sarili and Nongqawuse:

(Nongqawuse, who is concealed in a white blanket, is helped onto the platform by Mhlakaza.)

Sarili: *Ntombazana*, your uncle, the reputable sangoma, uMhlakaza, has told us that you have spoken to our forefathers. We have never heard such a thing before - that our ancestors will come back. Can you tell us more?

(Nongqawuse's voice is greatly amplified and full of echoes. Still hidden in her blanket she delivers her message tonelessly, hypnotically, swaying to the droning tune of the Juju who start humming as she speaks.)

Nongqawuse: Listen to this now: I have been sent to you by our forefathers the chiefs of our nations and the ancient ones I'm told to order you to leave all the fields leave them for the birds only
open up all your grain pits
even the old ones with their lids
broken by the hoofs of the cattle
throw all the corn on to the ground
there should be no contaminated grain left
children should go right down into the pit
and make sure every grain is thrown out to rot
then when this is thoroughly done
each and every one of the cattle must be killed
each and every milking cow and racing ox and calf
all of these – even the *lobola* cattle
and the funeral herds of the chiefs
all of these must be killed
until there is not even one living anymore
also all the people having witchcraft items
at their homesteads must go immediately
to throw them into the rivers
so that the land can be pure again
this is what the ancient one's command
burn even the houses and kraals

and throw your possessions outside
then you will see...
when you have done all these things
a new spirit will come into you
all the children who have died will wake up
also their mothers and fathers
and grandmothers and grandfathers
– everyone – it will be a wonder
no one will ever be tired again
no child will be sick or hungry
there will always be fire for warmth
and porridge in the pots
more than anybody can eat
there will be no shortage of anything at all
nobody will be sad or lonely
nobody will even die again
everything will start anew. (Bailey, 2003:6)

As Nongqawuse explains the implication of the message and what must be done before things return to normalcy, Sarili demands that Nongqawuse provide proof that what she is saying is true. After Sarili's request that Nongqawuse substantiate her prophecy is advanced, she transforms her mood to a deep, sober, trance-like reflection and begins to sing and speak in different voices of some of the great men who died long before she was born, including the voice of King Sarili's late son. In a trance-like tone Nongqawuse utters the following:

Nongqawuse: (in a young man's voice) See the red beads you gave me when I became a man. See your white stallion given to you by Moshoeshe after your own circumcision: we travel together now. My heart is happy to see you again, father. I am coming, father, we are all coming back. We will give our nation her strength back again (Bailey, 2003:7).

The above is Nongqawuse speaking in the voice of King Sarili's son who had died years before. This singular demonstration convinces King Sarili as well as a number of the villagers present. The people are overwhelmed and the king immediately instructs that Nongqawuse's prophecy must be followed to the letter. Mhlakaza amplifies that:

Mhlakaza: (*clutching a bible*)

Abantu, truly these great things will happen as my niece, Nongqawuse, has prophesied!

Listen to the good news! When the commands of our forefathers have been obeyed these things will happen!

On that day the sun will rise blood red.

When it gets to the middle of the sky, it will stop!

It will stop, turn and then go back to where it came from!

Then the sky will darken, the ground will shake and open like a mouth.

Then our forefathers will come out bringing cattle that will never die.

All these things Nongqawuse has shown me!

The Great Day is coming! Obey our fathers! Obey our chiefs! (Bailey, 2003:10)

The Villagers are very happy and cheer themselves with the knowledge that very soon all their problems will be over. However, after the king has given the instruction for the destruction of all cattle, grains and farms, it surprises everyone that their situation does not change. Sarili summons Mhlazaka to hear from him. The conversation ensues:

Sarili: I have called you uMhlakaza, because I am very worried about this situation in our land. Many people have killed all their cattle; the valleys are filled with bones. The dogs and the vultures grow fatter every day, and soon they will be eating human beings. The rains are falling but there are no seeds in the fields. You promised that the dead would rise, but you lied to us. Our country is heading for disaster and you are to blame.

Mhlakaza: My king, it is not me but my niece, Nongqawuse, who is responsible. I am merely her humble interpreter – *makhosi!*

Sarili: So what answer does the humble interpreter give? Why have these ancestors abandoned us?

Mhlakaza: My king, let me consult with my spirits. *(He throws his bones)*
Makhosi! Ah! See here, there are many stubborn and selfish people in our nation. They are guilty! They do not slaughter all their cattle as our ancestors have ordered. They are still storing bewitched mealies and cultivating their fields. Time after time I have said: change will not come until our land is cleaned out! People will not obey!

Sarili: *(gripping his head in despair, starts to wail)* Oh, my people give me your advice, this thing is tearing me apart...

(Two factions of Villagers – the Believers and the Non-Believers – rise up amongst the audience and sing their cases to a traditional chiShona melody)

Believers: Mighty Python of the amaXhosa, don't you see our brothers are dividing us? Their disobedience will be the death of us.

Non-Believers: Great Elephant of the amaXhosa, can't you see the English are deceiving us? This thing is a trick to wipe our nation out. (Bailey, 2003:12)

As discontent develops and heightens to a crescendo, the Villagers divide into two camps of Believers and Non-Believers. However, the Juju still sends a message of warning on why the prophecy has not come to fruition. They explain that some of the villagers have not destroyed anything, but are rather hiding them. Furthermore, that the fulfilment of the prophecy will only come if the people are true to themselves and obey the conditions of the prophecy completely.

The play ends with the conditions of the prophecy executed leaving many weak, sick and dead. The Priestess, Juju, Nongqawuse are all possessed with demons, the villagers fall dead before the spirits leave them.

6.3. The language of power versus the power of language in *The Prophet*

Language is a central and viable instrument of communication in any functional activity between one, two or more persons. The way in which language is used to convince, confuse or transmit people's ideas, feelings and understanding of events in their social, political, cultural, religious and economic space (wa'Thiongo,1994) is an important area of study. Brett Bailey's use of language in his play is central towards understanding his works. It is obvious that the language Bailey thinks in, and with which he expresses himself, is the English language, although he is clearly a master at creating atmosphere through his use of dialogue that does not rely on the constraints of English syntax and punctuation. In his play, Bailey does not only depend on English as a form of expression but continuously allows the poetry and metaphor of the isiXhosa language to propagate his historical interpretation and creative re-rendering of the Nongqawuse story. Moreover, *The Prophet* is a play in Bailey's trilogy (*Ipi Zombie*, *iMumbo Jumbo* and *The Prophet*) in which he demonstrates uniquely his sufficient understanding of the Xhosa cultural and spiritual world. Krueger observes Bailey's understanding of ritual form when he says:

So, here then was the beginning of Bailey's exploration into the ways of the Xhosa. His interest was not specifically anthropological or sociological, but rather spiritual. His mind still occupied by theatre, he was, very much like Artaud in Bali, in search of a more vital, primal, spiritual form of ritual in theatre which white western theatre had forgotten. When using the words "spiritual", or "religious", one must be clear on exactly which forms of religion Bailey endorses, because it is certainly not the Christian religion. In fact he is quite outspoken about "hackneyed old genres that have all the appeal of Calvinistic church services" (Krueger, 2013:9).

Krueger's observation is not only revealing but also unveils Bailey's sense of originality in attempting to investigate and offer creatively the spiritual conditions, despair and hope of

amaXhosa. Bailey himself provides insights into the motivations behind his artistic direction when he says:

Let the theatre be rich and thriving and humming like a Hindu temple, with flowers and cows and children running and bells clanging and incense smoking and devotees dancing and offering libations! or like a voodoo ceremony, with people flipping into trance, chanting and sacrificing, dust and blood and beer and gods (Bailey, 2003:9-10).

In all of the expression of Bailey's understanding of African spirituality and the ritual processes of Xhosa culture, his choice of language in *The Prophet* and the critique of it will show how he creatively achieves his art. He begins the play with a stage description as provided below:

When the audience enters the Priests are moving around the ring path, paying tribute to each of the nine Juju – they pray, light candles and incense, and ring bells – while The Mamas sing traditional Xhosa songs. The Priests take up positions, kneeling on opposite sides of the central platform, and begin their invocation of the Juju. Softly, softly the melody of a hymn flutters onto the lips of the Juju, eventually swelling to fill the room. Then they begin their sombre, slow chant (Bailey, 2003:1).

From the above description, it can be observed that Bailey is able to use the English language to carefully construct a scene that is entirely Xhosa in its ethos, character and outlook. However, in the use of Mamas in the above quote, Bailey deserves some censure for his reverting to a typecast colonial notion of black women as being 'mamas', who operate only as a large group, devoid of individual voices. It must be acknowledged, however, that Bailey is able to massage the English language to develop an entirely Xhosa atmosphere which he further embellishes by the inclusion of original isiXhosa songs and language, particularly in exclamations and salutations. The

invocations and incantations used in ceremonial events further transmit a traditional and cultural visualisation of Xhosa divinity and ritual practice.

Bailey also weaves into his narrative and dialogues common isiXhosa words like *Wena* (you), *Uyakhumbula?* (Do you remember?), *Sizwe samaXhosa* (Xhosa nation), *A Ntaba!* (Ah, Mountain!) thereby invoking a sense of cultural linguistic understanding and association with amaXhosa. Most times Bailey places the meanings of the isiXhosa expression with the corresponding English meaning such that it becomes easy for a wider audience to comprehend. Bailey allows for bilingual understandings by having an isiXhosa expression like *Uyakhumbula?* immediately followed by its English translation. The same applies to expressions like *A Ntaba! Sizwe samaXhosa*. An example of a stage direction in which the convention of the English following the isiXhosa does not occur, is one in which a stick-fighting scene is sketched. The isiXhosa *Qula kwedini! Qula kwedini kabawo. Khawuze nazo kwedini* is left untranslated in the original text, its meaning being ‘Arm yourself for fighting, boy! Come with them boy’:

VILLAGERS leap to their feet to dance and sing: “Qula kwedini! Qula kwedini kabawo. Khawuze nazo kwedini...” – a song celebrating the traditional stick-fighting of Xhosa youths (Bailey, 2003:6).

Bailey has been able to use the English language both as “the power of language” and “the language of power” to effectively transmit a cultural and historical story for the Xhosa nation and the world at large.

Table 2: Summary of isiXhosa/African languages, exclamations and songs in *The Prophet*

Exclamations/Vocatives Salutations/Commands	Full sentences	Songs	Other Languages
<i>Hawu!</i>	<i>Zimkile iinkomo zidakawo</i> (Translation: Father's cows have departed)	<i>Somagwaza, ndakugwaza ngalo mkhonto</i> (Translation: Somagwaza I will pierce you with this spear)	<i>Ndakukwaza</i> is more Nguni (for example other Nguni languages such as isiZulu and isiNdebele use the word <i>ukugwaza</i> .) The modern isiXhosa-speaker would substitute the word <i>ukugwaza</i> with <i>ukuhlaba</i>
<i>Bayete!</i>	<i>Unyanisile</i> (Translation: You are right)	Bonyoro chant Tonga chant Shona melody	
<i>Gqirha elikhulu</i> [Bailey has incorrectly spelled the word <i>elinkulu</i>]			
<i>Abantu!</i> [surely he meant to write <i>Bantu!</i>]	<i>Umam' angalila ma'ndibona ndisenje madoda</i> (Translation: my mother would cry if she could see me like this, men)		
<i>Makhosi!/Hamba!/Phuma!</i>			

A close analysis of Bailey's use of isiXhosa in *The Prophet* reveals that the author, while sensitive to isiXhosa idiom and language, is still held back by his desire to reach the widest possible audience (English-speaking) and uses the isiXhosa language mostly to add colour and Africanise his dialogue. The majority of the isiXhosa insertions used in the play are in fact just one-word utterances (see Column 1 in Table 2) or songs (see Column 3 in Table 2) while full sentences only feature twice.

The inclusion of an initiation song and chants from Uganda and Tongo would suggest that African languages for Bailey are porous, they do not identify a particular people at a particular time, but rather, an essence, a core sense of belonging to sometimes unintelligible (literally) voices – those being the discourses of the continent. Also important to note is that sometimes the isiXhosa goes unedited and proofread – this again suggests that although African languages are seen as important for creating on-stage atmosphere, they are not really valorized as legitimate chirographic representations of the spoken word. A critical, Afrocentric question to ask is who Bailey's intended audience is? The isiXhosa in the play is not enough to make the whole performance accessible to people who only understand isiXhosa and thus it has to be assumed that Bailey's intended audience is an educated, Black middle and Black upper class and Whites. While this should not be seen as a criticism of Bailey's work, the fact remains that African languages have played a subaltern role in many great South African theatre pieces.

6.4. The creative construct of Bailey's *The Prophet*

Bailey uses a village-like setting of a round 'kraal' - a traditional tribal enclosure in which audiences become part of an actual audience with the chief or king, or *sangoma* and in which appropriate ceremonies are to be performed. By creating this space Bailey allows the audience to become part of this ceremony. In *The Prophet*, members of the cast (portraying spirits of the dead) are planted in the audience. Bailey in most of his plays, and as demonstrated in *The Prophet*, uses the audience as a very active participant and one whose involvement is central to a full understanding of his play.

He uses such characters like Juju and the Priestess to connote another sense of linguistic-Africanity. He uses the *sangoma* to demonstrate the spiritual exercise and existence of African belief systems and practice. According to Hirst (2005), the *sangoma* is a diviner and healer, also known as a ‘witch-doctor’, though of the type who identifies and casts out witches. When *The Prophet* was premiered at the Grahamstown festival, Bailey used non-traditional venues normally outside of the picturesque town of Grahamstown (Krueger, 2013:6). Bailey attempts at not just saying something but doing by saying it.

Bailey’s characters invoke and call out to the ancestors, most times offering sacrifices and as they are involved in these invocations and supplications they even go into trances. By this staged representation of ritualized spirit-communication there is an interesting overlapping of ‘play’ and ‘seriousness’ which occurs, since the *sangomas* really are quite sincerely fulfilling their cultural role, as well as an aesthetic function (Krueger, 2013:5). They are not actors in the usual sense: what they are acting out is their role as intermediaries, performing not only on behalf of the audience, and the director, but also, more importantly, on behalf of the spirits, and their ancestors.

In many ways Bailey’s *The Prophet* aligns to Włodzimierz Staniewski and the theatre of Gardzienice in Poland, whose troupe initially goes on expeditions to gather, or rather assimilate the folkloric tales and songs from rural villages (Staniewski & Hodge, 2004.) Similarly, Bailey’s troupe have also travelled in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, and performed at street crossings, in community centres, and exchanged songs and swapped stories and learnt from indigenous storytellers, shamans, healers and artists. This work they then take to urban centres and the focus in both cases is, repeatedly on the religious significance of theatre, on a veneration for nature, for tradition, for a natural music arising from the performers lived experiences, and also, a

pagan sense of Romanticism¹⁰. Staniewski is more overt about his Romanticism than Bailey, but they are also both interested in intercultural experimentation and are fascinated by primitivism. Krueger argues that “...and here is where certain difficulties arise, because perhaps primitivism means very different things to European cultures and to a developing nation such as South Africa” (Krueger, 2013:6). For the European, it may well be easier to conceptualise a certain nostalgia for cultural traditions, rituals and customs, whereas in a developing country it may come as a bit of an insult (Krueger, 2013:6).

Bailey does not make use of acts or scenes but begins his play in a natural traditional setting that conveys the cultural, religious and spiritual exercises inherent in Xhosa practice. The play develops in a linear fashion with the occasional interception of songs, dances and ritual display.

¹⁰ Romanticism was a movement in arts and literature which started in the late 18th century and which stressed the importance of inspiration, subjectivity, and the pre-eminence of the individual.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This chapter draws upon the conclusive report of the creative and interpretative analysis of Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, Mkonko's *Nonqawuse: a dissertation of true lies* and Brett Bailey's *The Prophet* as presented in the last three chapters of this study. Focusing on the historical narratives of the Nongqawuse story of 1856-7, this chapter and this study summarises the guiding principles of Afrocentrism as expressed by Asante who believes in Black consciousness. To Asante, the cultural roots, tradition and the cosmic universe of the African should be consistently held in close scrutiny for the understanding of the Black man's burden. Africans in the diaspora, he contends, are also integral to promoting Black ideals, feelings, lifestyle and culture. These positions as advanced by Asante resonated in the ideological position of other scholars of Afrocentrism as presented in Chapter Three of this study. The Afrocentric narratives by these scholars enable them to serve as the guiding theory in order to come to an understanding of how creative interpretations of the Nongqawuse story were instrumental in "inventing cultural identities" (Olaniyan, 1995:7) which, in this context, are those of the British and those of amaXhosa. As Olaniyan argues:

inventing cultural identities" does not refer simply to the *cultural* definitions evident in black dramatic practice but also to the fact that subjectivity as such is inaccessible to us except through staging, representation, performance, invention, *work*—self-autonomy is never absolute and the space of the subject is always a contingent one; the notion of a subject original and central to all the elaborate processes of knowing, especially as has been constructed for the Western liberal Subject, is precisely what the existence of the subordinate discourses—Afrocentric and post-Afrocentric—give the lie to (Olaniyan, 1995:7).

Olaniyan also contests the notion that Black traditions are mere “derivatives of Western forms and traditions” (1995:12). My feeling is that Mkonko and Bailey try to break with this notion, but do not fully succeed. Mkonko creates in his play a typical traditional Xhosa atmosphere with significant use of isiXhosa (which is also actor-dependant since he relies on actors to improvise dialogue in isiXhosa) but still proceeds to create a linguistic marriage (isiXhosa and English) which affects the transient African-ness that the story would have enjoyed. The division of the play into ‘Scenes’ is not part of a typical African tradition where communality and story-telling exists in an undisturbed common place. While Bailey weaves his play with English, isiXhosa and some flashes of other African languages, what he hopes to achieve is a retelling of a typical Xhosa story. By doing this Bailey in a way betrays Olaniyan’s contestation that black traditions are mere “derivatives of Western forms and tradition”.

The study investigated the varying ideological, anthropological, cultural and historical contestations of the prophecy and foregrounded the linguistic and performative analysis as important towards a fuller understanding of the prophecy as represented in the selected plays for this study.

In my introduction I laid out the scope of my study which was to:

- i. Survey the historical evolution of the Nongqawuse story and cattle-killing of 1856-1857.
- ii. Explore the role of ritual and resistance in the Nongqawuse and cattle-killing saga and how the selected playwrights have demonstrated the story as important in the theatre and performance tradition of South Africa.

- iii. Investigate how the isiXhosa language is central to the understanding of the story from a cultural-historical point of view.

I will now attempt to summarize my conclusions for each of the above.

The historical evolution of the Nongqawuse story and cattle-killing of 1856-7

It is clear that the original telling of the Nongqawuse event was initially recounted in isiXhosa as reported in Helen Bradford and Msokoli Qotole's 2008 article "Ingxoxo enkulu ngoNongqawuse (a great debate about Nongqawuse's era)". They also accompanied the isiXhosa narratives with an English translation which later came into the historical annals by way of creative expressions and dramatic presentation. Contemporary narratives of the event rely heavily on English language or a mixture of other linguistic codes for a retelling of the story as analysed in Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, Bailey's *The Prophet* and Mkonko's *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*.

By examining an array of accounts including the earliest documentation of the event, I was able to draw attention to the larger field of interpretation within which the Cattle-Killing exists and, in so doing, reflect on broader questions relating to history, history-making and performance studies.

The role of ritual and resistance in the Nongqawuse and Cattle-Killing saga and how the selected playwrights have demonstrated the story as important in the theatre and performance tradition of South Africa.

The study explored the essence and efficacy of traditional African theatre by locating the Nongqawuse story as one that fully embodies theatre elements generally and how the isiXhosa language also re-enforces a linguistic and more nuanced understanding of the story as creatively represented in the fictional texts for this study. Drawing from the objectives of the study, the study

expanded a clear understanding of amaXhosa belief systems, cultural life and practice and how the prophecy aligns to Xhosa tradition and history.

The focus shifted from the often synchronous narrative on the political, social, cultural, anthropological and historical subject of the Cattle-Killing of 1856-7 and highlights the wider resonance of the movement as theatrical and performative within contemporary theatre parlance as well as the way the language of the plays, as already mentioned in this study, deepens a more refreshing understanding of the Nongqawuse story.

In Bailey's play, *The Prophet*, the playwright literally reimagines the calamitous event as a ceremony that allows for healing of the ancient wound of the Cattle-Killing. For Bailey just like Dhlomo, the purpose of creatively re-rendering the Cattle-Killing is not to recover it for a particular 'ethnic group', but to reposition the conversation as part of a new national history. And it is important to recognize that the healing that comes from a clear understanding and assimilation of the story is necessary for the whole South Africa nation. That is why Carver commenting on a workshopped play titled *Nongqawuse: The Truth commission* (2007), writes:

The idea was to present the different interpretations of the story rather than offer one single version... The main premise at the end was simply that South African audiences should not ignore this story, and that it was far more complicated than the simple version that "Nongqawuse betrayed our nation".
(Carver, 2007:34)

The selected plays for this study represent the very different interpretations of the Nongqawuse story as commented on by Carver (2007) in the above quote. By their use of indigenous African language idioms and codes, bold African staging and uncompromising expose of the tensions that

existed at the time, the plays re-enforce a more authentic energy that unveils the dialectics the story has consistently wrestled with. Mkonko, in his *Nongqawuse: a dissertation of true lies*, attempts, for his part, a creative re-collection of history fraught with distortions and contradictions. His sense of re-collection provides a new energizing chapter towards the Nongqawuse narratives. Comaroff tries to explain the sense of re-collection that is necessary towards understanding the interpretations that come with stories of South Africa's past. She says

An infinite regress of assertive voices threatens to postpone, indefinitely, the process of shared *re*-collection, the subsuming of difference into an overarching totality – even if only as a field of dispute – against which claims can be relativized and difference measured. If it is not to be a chronicle of the nation, then History must find other terms... that resist the privatization of human existence. Let us hope that in contexts like the new South Africa, where so much is in the balance, a moment of re-collection will soon be reached; that history will emerge not as a trading pit of alterities, nor as a 'triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate', but as an argument joined about various, reciprocally entailed histories in a *field* of interrelated narratives (Comaroff, 2003:16).

The observation in the quote above strengthens the attempts made by the creative writers in re-collecting history and refashioning it using a variety of techniques that provide a clear understanding of the Nongqawuse story. Despite the cultural variation of the authors selected in this study, an Afrocentric approach allows us to uncover the power relations that linguistic choices signify: English is the language of power, but isiXhosa emerges as a language of cultural expression and unification.

This study therefore, in upholding and critiquing some of the scholarly investigations surrounding the Cattle Killing, discovered that, by adopting a rigorous Afrocentric approach that foregrounds etymology, creative expression and interpretation from an African perspective, allowed me to explore issues of language and culture and how it affects the reading and interpretation of the texts used in this study. Furthermore, the selected authors for this study have deliberately been selected because of the way in which they wrote their plays, especially by their choice of language and how they independently understand drama in the general sense and African performance mode particularly. However, some of these playwrights seem to be aware also that they are re-imagining an historical event that took place in the medium of the isiXhosa language and that there is an obligation on them to somehow un-silence the language of Nongqawuse and her followers, to give the story a more progressive and generational voice.

It is imperative to note that, as a theatre practitioner, director and playwright I have come to the conclusion that language is what drives the energy, transmits the playwright's thoughts and creates the world in which drama occurs. Every play, be it African or Western is driven by the application of linguistic codes, symbols and sounds which can only be understood by a primordial familiarity and association of the language used. Ngugi wa Thiong'o re-enforces this in his "Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature" (1994). African playwrights attempting to document and promote their African ideals, feelings, history, culture and worldview in the English language always face the difficulty of both translation and transliteration. By this I mean every writer writes in the language he thinks and the problem is how to make these thoughts maintain their integrity (and indeed, in a certain measure, their sounds) in another language, particularly one that is not cognate.

How the isiXhosa language is central to the understanding of the story from a cultural-historical point of view.

Dhlomo in his *The Girl Who Killed to Save* draws inspiration from the historical narratives of the story by creating his own piece with a fine blend of the English language resonating with isiXhosa idioms, expressions and character-naming. Although Dhlomo is originally an isiZulu speaker, he takes care in using what I will term a more familiar “Xhosalised-Zulu” to make his case about his own entertaining and ideological interpretation of the Nongqawuse story. Moreover, being myself an African and a Xhosa person, my understanding of the worldview, cultural and traditional space of amaXhosa strengthens my analytical lense in understanding Dhlomo’s play. Added to this, my understanding of traditional African theatre which differs from the Western-centred notion of theatre and dramatic dialogue makes my analysis more sensitive from an African point of view.

Thinking in an African language and writing in English problematizes indigenous African voices which are often times suppressed if not casually silenced by the dominance of Western languages in African spaces. As a playwright I have consistently found myself in a creative dilemma of having to select a particular linguistic code especially in a society that is confronted with multiplicities of languages. While all three playwrights weave elements of isiXhosa expression into their dramas, it is instructive to look at exactly how they do this. Mkonko is possibly the most pioneering in this respect, as he allows the actors to speak their own language as they see fit – he gives them a framework within which to speak their understanding of the event. Dhlomo clings to English but when he allows the language of Nongqawuse to speak in its own voice, it is powerful. Bailey, being the only first language English speaker in the selection, uses isiXhosa and

other African languages as dramatic devices to create an Afrocentric atmosphere, but at the same time, ironically exoticises the indigenous.

I submit emphatically that the analytical propositions imbued in the selected texts only represent a creative fraction of the Nongqawuse story. The plays all employ both English and isiXhosa as languages of expression in an attempt to represent the Nongqawuse narrative but apart from Mkonko, both Dhlomo and Bailey are not first language isiXhosa speakers – their use of isiXhosa expressions and names reflect the cultural root of an African story but do not release true isiXhosa heuristics. Further research needs to be done into not only into manner in which the isiXhosa as reportedly used by Nongqawuse is interrogated and transformed in literary texts, but also how that isiXhosa was reported and translated originally. Only when such a study is done will we be able to gauge the extent to which the facts of the Cattle-Killing have indeed been lost in translation. For those of us who work in the theatre there is a greater task at hand: we need to present the linguistic dilemma of being a Black person in South Africa with more urgency and with a greater attention to the way in which African languages in this country have played subaltern roles to English.

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