

LITERATURE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
-The first fifty years of the Xhosa novel
and poetry

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts University of Cape Town in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of African Languages and Literatures.

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Cape Town 16 August 1993

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DECLARATION

I declare that "**LITERATURE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS - The first fifty years of the Xhosa novel and poetry**" is my work, both in conception and execution and that all sources used have been duly acknowledged.

ISINIKEZELO

Eli linge ndilnikezela ngongazenzisiyo umbulelo kubazali bam, uWinifred Nobantu, umama, nakutata ongasekhoyo, u-Oom Zot.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sizwe C. Satyo, for his guidance, the very insightful discussions I had with him and especially for letting me have access to his private library.

My thanks go also to all my colleagues in the Department of African Languages and Literatures for their help and support in many ways. I am grateful also to those friends and colleagues from outside the Department and University who responded to my letter on their views on the way forward for African literatures written in Africa languages.

Tessa Dowling assisted me with the typing of most of this work.

My sisters, my brother, my nieces and nephews my wife Tobeka and our kids were always supportive of my efforts and showed great interest in my progress. Zandile, my three year old grand-daughter, showed in many ways, that she was keen to help with the typing.

However, my greatest source of inspiration was my mother whose interest in my progress was always the keenest. This thesis is for her.

ABSTRACT

The main preoccupation in this thesis is to illustrate that, although there is no doubt that the missionaries deserve all the praise that they have been showered with, for their role in the development of Xhosa literature, there is a sense in which they can be said to have contributed as much also to its underdevelopment. It is my view that Xhosa literature has had a very unfortunate history, because of having an origin that is located in the history of Christianization. This history has haunted Xhosa literary creativity from its early beginnings to the present.

The success of the mission to convert them to Christianity was anchored on the principle of total alienation of the Xhosa from their world-view: from their culture, from their religion, from their chiefs, from their literary art, and even from their homes. The intention was to turn them into new beings - Christian and loyal subjects of the British Crown - and to make them not only reject, but also despise their past. Therefore Western-style education for the Blacks in South Africa did not come out of any sense of altruism on the part of those by whom it was introduced. It was the interests of its initiators and their country that had to be served by the education of the Blacks.

It was in this context that Xhosa literature was born. It was produced to promote the interests of the Christian church and therefore those of the British Crown. Its production was controlled by the missionaries, the owners of the publishing houses, but it was produced by the Christian and literate Xhosa most of whom had studied in mission schools. It was produced to crush the past and any aspirations that were in conflict with those of the Christian church and the British imperial designs. In short, it was a literature against its people.

However, the Christian and literate Xhosa was never accepted as the equal of the other British subjects who were White. He was excluded from all law-making mechanisms and was affected by the many Native Laws that were passed, as badly as his non-Christian brothers and sisters. He witnessed land dispossession and all the other atrocities perpetrated by White rulers. His literary art had been harnessed to legitimize and perpetrate this

situation and he dared not use his art to change it. It is in the light of this context that this thesis contends that Xhosa literature is between two worlds. It is argued that Xhosa literature, because of the writers' dilemma created by their position between these two conflicting universes, has been forced to be mute in the face of the Black people's experiences of oppression, and therefore to be indifferent to the Black people's struggles to resist colonization and to liberate themselves from this oppression.

It is however, pointed out that some works are characterised by the writers' attempts to grapple with this dilemma. Finally this thesis advocates complete liberation of literary artists from state control, indirect though it may be, and also a change in the teaching and analysis of Xhosa literature.

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 is the introduction in which is outlined the motivation for and the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 2 outlines the role of literature in society in general and also the demands of society on literary artists.

Chapter 3 surveys the role of newspapers in the development of Xhosa literature as well as the control that missionaries had on newspapers.

Chapters 4 and 5 highlight the extent to which missionaries harnessed Xhosa literary creativity (the novel and poetry respectively) for the promotion of their cause, and also how some Xhosa writers attempted to reconcile the hopelessness of their position with their responsibility as artists to guide and guard the consciousness of their community.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion in which are summarised views that were canvassed from a number of people who are involved with literature in one way or the other, on the way forward for the South African literature written in African languages. Suggestions are also made with regard to the teaching of literature and to the protection of literature from the threat of commercialisation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION AND AIM

This thesis derives from interest in and research into the relation between language and society. This culminated in an M.A. dissertation written in 1987 in my present Department at the University of Cape Town. This interest and research were activated by experiences of teaching an African language, Xhosa, to White university undergraduate students. One of the insights that flow out of sociolinguistic studies and research is the insight into the effect of some extra-linguistic factors on the shaping of language attitudes as well as into the extent to which language can be manipulated to facilitate the fulfilment of the intention to manipulate people. An example of this is the phenomenon of language standardization, which brings out the connection between power and language. This link between language and power is in turn, a confirmation of the link between language and historical reality - that is, the struggles of men to protect themselves against the threat of oppression or to liberate themselves from oppression or to entrench themselves in their position of superiority. History has provided many examples of the involvement of language in men's struggles towards self-realization, such as the Basque revolution in Spain and the struggles of the Afrikaner against the English in South Africa. It was also interesting to notice the extent to which language was implicated in the recent revolutions in Eastern Europe.

If language could be so closely bound up with history, the curious question that attracted further interest, was, seeing that language is the medium of literature, to what extent was literature itself bound up with the history of its time? When one attempts to look at Xhosa literature with regard to this, one is struck by the similarity to the situation in theoretical linguistics. In the same way that linguists have been slow in accepting language as anything else other than an abstract set of rules, the approach followed by teachers and critics of literature written in African languages in South Africa does not seem to allow for the raising of the issue of the relation between history and literature. The main concern, both in pre-tertiary and tertiary institutions, is still with aesthetics and structure. In most tertiary

institutions, especially universities, literary studies include a very small component that deals with the history of the literature of the language or languages offered in their respective departments of African languages and literatures. Invariably this involves two things: first, a laudatory account of the contribution of the missionaries and, to a lesser extent, of the earlier travellers such as Heinrich Lichtenstein, in the reduction of African languages into writing and consequently in the development of African languages' literature. This is then followed by a chronological breakdown of the publications that came out of the mission presses, starting with newspapers and significant contributors thereto, and then the various books and their authors. It is for this reason that Gerard's *Four African Literatures* has become the bible of students of literature written in African languages. There can be no doubt about the plausibility of the inclusion of this component in literary studies, for it certainly must go a long way in enabling the student of literature to contextualise the object of his or her study. However, this type of history is what Bennett (1990:4) calls "a history of surfaces without any hidden depths or secreted interiors to fathom." Bennett goes on to say that

... literary history, properly conceived and executed, should concern itself with the examination of literary functions, - of production, communication, consumption, - and their determining institutional conditions.

ibid.

Quoting Barthes, he says:

In other words, literary history is possible only if it becomes sociological, if it is concerned with activities and institutions, not with individuals.

1990:3

Since the publication of Frederick Engels's letter to Mrs Margaret Harkness there has been a great interest in the issue of the relation between literature and historical reality. This interest has manifested itself in the publication of many books on what has come to be known as Marxist literary criticism. This approach to the study of literature rejects the illusion of the neutrality of literature. It also stretches the subject of the sociology of literature to accommodate not only the issues of the publication of books and their distribution, readerships and authors, but also the examination of literary texts "for their

'sociological' relevance, raiding literary works to abstract from them themes of interest to the social historian" (Eagleton:1976:3). Eagleton goes on:

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of the authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the "social mentality" or ideology of an age.

1976:6

In this, Eagleton is commenting on Georgy Plekhanov, the Russian Marxist critic, who observed that in the history of art and literature there is always evidence that the "social mentality" of an age is conditioned by the social relations of that age. Therefore the function of literary criticism should involve more than just literary appreciation of a text for its aesthetic value. Maughan-Brown describes the function of literary criticism as follows:

The essential function of literary criticism is to establish the conditions of a work's production and the ways in which the work is determined by those conditions. The ideology within which the work is produced will be among the most important determinants.

1985:11

As far as Xhosa literature is concerned - and this is true of other South African indigenous languages - the question of the conditions of its production has, to my knowledge, never been fully addressed in any work that deals with this subject. It is in the light of this that motivation to undertake this project developed. The history of Xhosa literature is bound up with the history of Christian missionary work, as it will be shown in chapter three below. For this reason therefore, it is also equally closely linked to the history of Western-style education, and therefore, with the whole process of what has come to be known as westernization. Christian missionary work in South Africa did not take place in a historical vacuum. There were other historical processes in progress which had direct bearing on it, and the most significant of which were British imperialism and colonialism and the capitalist interests that went with them. These had a well orchestrated impact on the work of the missionaries and as literary production was part of the work of the missionaries, it was natural that the impact of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism should extend also to literature.

However, before we look at the way in which the work of the missionaries was implicated in the process of colonising South Africa, it may be necessary to consider the concepts of imperialism and colonialism. For this we shall rely on the definitions and explanations given by Nkrumah (1979) and Said (1993). According to Nkrumah:

...imperialism is the policy which aims at creating, organising and maintaining an empire. In other words it is a state vast in size, composed of distinct national units and subject to a single, centralized power or authority. This is the conception of an empire: divers peoples brought together by force under a common power.

1979:1

Nkrumah goes on to say that imperialism involves the use of superior technological power by one nation or state for the subjugation and the economic exploitation of another nation. "Colonialism," says Nkrumah, "is the policy by which the 'mother country', the colonial power, binds her colonies to herself by political ties with the primary object of promoting her own economic advantages" (1979:2). In his analysis of these concepts he emphasises the economic motives of the imperialists.

On the other hand, Said in his, emphasises the methods by which imperialists create support systems for their colonialist designs. His analysis goes beyond the economic motives and includes also the abstract aspect, which is working on the consciousness of the colonised peoples. His definition of imperialism and colonialism is not different from those of Nkrumah, though. He says:

... 'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements.

1993:8

Quoting Michael Doyle he goes on:

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence.

ibid.

One of the pillars of imperialism and colonialism is the commitment of the citizens of the imperial and colonial power to their success. This commitment has as its driving forces patriotism and the individual's desire to immortalise himself by carving his name in the

history of his nation. It was perhaps this commitment which Joseph Conrad had in mind when he said:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea - something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ...

1971:7

It is because of this commitment that people are ready to uproot themselves and put their lives at risk by undertaking long and dangerous journeys to unknown lands where they endure immense hardships. This commitment according to Said made "decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjugated" and also to think of the empire as an "almost metaphysical obligation to subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples' (1993:10). There are of course other minor forces such as the hope for profit, the spirit of adventure, the search for a new life and others. But as D.K. Fieldhouse says:

The basis of imperial authority was the mental attitude of the colonist. His acceptance of subordination - whether through a positive sense of common interest with the parent state, or through inability to conceive of any alternative - made empire durable.

in Said 1993:11

The point raised by Said here brings to mind Althusser's concept of interpellation by which individuals are driven into accepting the propositions of an ideology, and whose success is manifest in the individual subjecting himself to the ideology or ideologies of the dominant class, thereby helping to reproduce the existing relations of production. Culture and intellectual activity are directly implicated in this interpellation.

The British missionaries who came to minister among the Xhosa were, to all intent and purposes, loyal subjects of the British Crown whose decision to come to Africa was motivated, inter alia, by the love of their country. The Cape of Good Hope was a spoil which Great Britain had gained from the defeats of Napoleon Bonaparte and which had been confirmed as a British Colony by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It is highly unlikely that the missionaries were not relishing the idea of territorial gains by their country, as these

were signs of its greatness. Besides, the missionary societies had a very close working relationship with the imperial state, and the history of relations between the Xhosa and the British in the eastern frontier shows enough evidence that the missionaries acted as facilitators of the process of colonising the Xhosa. To illustrate this co-operation between the coloniser and the missionary and the patriotism of the missionaries, Majeke quotes one of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, Dr John Philip as saying:

While our missionaries are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilization ..they are extending British interests, British influence and the British Empire ... Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way, their dependance upon the colony is increased by the creation of artificial wants ... Industry, trade and agriculture spring up.

n.d.:8

Even the use of the term "prejudices" here is part of colonial discourse, for what Philip here calls "prejudices" is most probably the spirit of resistance to colonialism. This type of discourse is a conscious effort to sanitize the atrocious methods used in cracking that resistance as well as the complicity of the missionaries. Thus, Majeke observes that in order to understand the function of missionary activity, it must be viewed as a part of "a great historical movement, the expansion of capitalism."

To come back to the question of the contribution of the missionaries in the elimination of "prejudices" against the colonial government, in the creation of dependence upon the colony and in the acceptance of subordination by the victims of colonialism, it is important to consider their *modus operandi*. There were two major ways in which the missionaries furthered the aims of British colonialism. The first was the direct involvement which saw them as paid agents of the colonial government, a capacity by which they became an extension of the British authority over the Africans. The missionary societies found a biblical justification for this position, as when the Glasgow Missionary Society accepted the proposition that the state be asked to sponsor the salary of William Ritchie Thompson who was to be sent to the Cape. In welcoming this relief it was said:

The Directors here think themselves called, without regarding intricate reasonings about connections of church and state, to accept with humble gratitude this instance of the fulfilment of Scripture prediction, 'Kings shall be thy nursing fathers'.

Shepherd 1941:30

It was in this capacity that missionaries acted as intermediaries between the colonial government authorities and the chiefs, allaying the latter's scepticism of the former's overtures. The missionary Joseph Williams was sent to settle among the Ngqika because the government sought means by which it would be "kept in touch with events in the domain of Ngqika and other chiefs. The presence of an English missionary in Ngqika's territory would, it was thought, be helpful in this connection" (Shepherd 1941:15). Indeed it was the same Joseph Williams who at the instance of Governor Lord Charles Somerset, prevailed upon Ngqika to attend the fateful meeting at which Somerset brought to fruition the British principle of divide-and-rule (Bennie 1935:). The second way in which the missionaries worked was more effective because it had to do with the consciousness of the Africans. This involved alienating the African from his own religion and culture through Christianising him and putting him through a new process of education whose ultimate aim was to change him into a loyal British subject and to make him look down upon African values. The achievement of this aim would ensure that the product of the labours of the missionaries were a new breed of docile African who would shun the idea of taking up arms against the British troops. This was the expectation of the colonial government and the missionaries were always at pains to prove that those who were converted to Christianity and put through missionary education were peace-loving, the so-called friendly natives. Daniel P. Kunene has described this product of the labours of the missionaries as follows:

The African intellectual who came out of the missionary school was not only literate, but also he was a changed being. He looked about himself and saw nothing but evil. He saw his 'heathen' brothers singing and dancing and drinking and loving in pursuit, as they thought, of Good Life, and he shook his head in pity. For suddenly these things had become ugly and sinful ... The process of alienation had begun, complex and divisive - Christian and non-Christian drifted; worse than that, they began to hate each other.

in Shava 1989:19

Although this observation by Kunene is a bit of an over-generalisation of the situation - because many a political leader who devoted their lives to fighting the evil of colonialism and apartheid came from the missionary school - it does portray the extent of the negative side of mission work. This is taken up in chapter three of this work.

As part of cultural activity, the literary art of the African was harnessed to give support to this process of alienating the African. Thus, when the missionary John Ross brought the small printing press in 1823, he was ushering in a new era in literary expression among the Xhosa. But he was also bringing in an instrument of mass indoctrination.

It is therefore the aim of this study to demonstrate that, because of the historical context of the early beginnings of Xhosa literature and because of the socio-political context of its development, it has not been possible for Xhosa creative writers to produce literature that is a genuine mirror of the vision of the Xhosa with regard to their position in both the South African and world societies and to their culture values. Nor could they produce literature that was a true reflection of the role of the Africans in the historical processes involved in the shaping of this country, and of the aspirations of the Africans regarding their national destiny. On the contrary, Xhosa literature, as a product of a community that was forced to develop a double consciousness and whose literary creativity was forcibly appropriated to serve the interests of British imperialism and colonialism, reflects the dilemma of artists whose art is practised between two conflicting universes. The manifestation of this dilemma has been that, instead of using literature as a mouthpiece of the people, Xhosa literary artists were forced to assume the roles of mediators and apologists - mediating between their new cultural world and their old forsaken one, while simultaneously apologising to the old one on behalf of the new one for the cultural discontinuity that was made prerequisite for acceptance into the new world. The dilemma that faces committed literary artists today is that there can be no free literature within a subjugated society, yet on the other hand, because artists have an obligation to promote, protect and guide the growth of the national consciousness of their people, art in all its forms, including literary forms, is a necessary instrument in the elimination of all forms of subjugation. This dilemma is usually manifest in the lame and often concealed murmurs of protest in the works of a very small minority of Xhosa writers.

The study aims also to demonstrate further that, despite the vast laudatory literature that has been put out on the contribution of the missionaries in the development of Xhosa literature, it is also possible to look at Xhosa literature as a monument of the contribution of the missionaries in the underdevelopment of the literary forms of African art. Because of their

editorial practices and because of the conditions they created which made writers apply self-censorship when writing, the missionaries ensured the production of a literature which was not a reliable representation of the existing socio-political relations. The kind of literature that the missionaries approved of is summed up by Shepherd, when he says:

... Bantu (*sic*) writers who have escaped from a purely utilitarian or propagandist view of literature and whose souls are dominated by ideas of art for art's sake, will arise and make known the soul of Africa.

1955:178

The irony of this statement by Shepherd is that it was made in the context of condemning writers who he said had "spoken in wildness of passion and protest." There is a contradiction in the vision of having African writers who engage in art for art's sake, but at the same time succeeding in "making known the soul of Africa." For how can the soul of Africa be made known without mentioning that it has been thrown into an abyss by the joint efforts of the imperialists and the Christian missionaries? When Jordan in his *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*, shows what westernization has done to the African soul, Shepherd decides not to see this, but instead to put the blame on the African soul's difficulty with coping with "a higher type of life." For depicting the tragic consequences of cultural alienation, Jordan is criticised by Shepherd who says:

At the close of the book the forces of evil, of paganism and reaction, win, and there is a veritable blood-bath.

1955:179

The manipulation of Xhosa literary creativity by the missionaries can be demonstrated by a number of anomalies that characterise this literature. For example, outside and within the church and the school, events that reflected dissatisfaction with the consequences of mission work and conquest predate the appearance of Xhosa written literature. But this dissatisfaction failed to find expression in literature, because control of education and publishing houses was in the hands of the missionaries. The stereotyping of urban centres as places of moral degeneration is another example. This anomaly or stereotype results in the criminalization of those who relocate to these urban centres. Thobelakhe in Bomela's *Umntu akanambulelo*, Nolishwa in Ndawo's *UNolishwa* and Ndopho in Sinxo's *Umzali wolahleko* are just a small fraction of such criminalised characters. It is also striking that

White characters are invariably portrayed as virtuous in the very few instances that they are mentioned. It is inconceivable for instance that missionary publishing houses would accept a story such as that of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* which contains a scene in which White lovers are committing adultery on the back seat of a car and one in which a White officer's wife is sexually attracted to a Black messenger.

As far as Xhosa literature is concerned what Ngugi (1981:73) calls "the strangulating embrace of western imperialism" changed hands in 1953 with the passing of the Bantu Education Act by the Nationalist Party government. This Act transferred the control of the education of the Blacks from the missionaries to the central government's Department of Bantu Education. Needless to say, for literary artists this was a case of moving out of the frying pan into the fire.

Ngugi has observed that:

... there is a sense in which no writer of imaginative literature ... can really avoid the big issues of the day, for literature, to the extent that it is a mirror unto man's nature, must reflect social reality or certain aspects of social reality.

1981:74

For this reason therefore, this study also attempts to demonstrate the struggles some of the writers in devising strategies of revealing some aspects of socio-political reality, despite the "strangulating embrace" of missionary and government control.

1.2 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

The main thrust of this study is presented against the background of a discussion of the role of literature in society in general. This discussion which is in chapter two, is based on secondary material that dates as far back as the ancient times of the Greek epic. This includes views that have been expressed by political leaders as well as by philosophers and sociologists of modern times on the role of literary artists, and on the vexed question of the autonomy of literature. This section of the study ends with a brief analysis of the role of literature in pre-literate African societies. This is done with a view to restating the already-

widely accepted fact that long before the advent of White settlers in Africa, African societies had a rich cultural heritage which included a variety of literary forms of artistic expression.

This is followed up in chapter three by the analysis of the role of missionaries in the establishment of newspapers and the role of contributors to newspapers in setting the scene for the development of Xhosa literature. This has involved digging into the archives for all the Xhosa newspapers or newspapers with sections written in Xhosa published up to 1909. Of these, emphasis was more on *Indaba*, *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, *Imvo zabaNtsundu* and *Ilizwi labaNtu*, although stories from *Isibutho samavo* have also been found useful. The focus has been on the contributions on short stories, essays and in poetry. However, the letter to the editor has also been treated as the real forerunner of Xhosa literature. Those that have been quoted in part or in full in the study have been rewritten in the current orthography. In some cases even the original punctuations have been slightly changed to adapt them for readers familiar with today's forms of punctuating. This section ends with the analysis of the contributions in Rubusana's *Zemk' iinkomo magwalandini*.

The rest of the work has involved analysing of the novels and poetry (chapters four and five respectively) that appeared in the fifty years from 1909 to 1959. This analysis is geared towards uncovering those features of the Xhosa novel and poetry that demonstrate the extent to which Xhosa literature was harnessed to further the aims of both missionary work and the imperial designs of Great Britain, as well as the attempts of some writers to give expression to their true feelings about the socio-political issues of the day. In a study of this nature it is inevitable that reference be made to historical events and movements in order to establish their influence or lack of it on literature. Thus, the study has also involved the use of historical secondary material, including the history of missionary work in Africa in general and in the Eastern Cape in particular. Current debates on literature, education and culture, in newspapers, in conference papers and in seminars and workshops on these, have also been followed and used. Discussions with and correspondence from individuals involved with literature in one way or the other, have also been engaged in.

As has been pointed out in 1.1 above, the teaching and analysis of indigenous literatures in South African schools, colleges and universities has always been concerned with matters aesthetic and structural. In other words, if the students have been taken through the plot of the text and have been sensitised about literary appreciation, it is usually the end of the story. Going outside the text is realised only by inter-genre comparisons, which involve making students aware of the differences or similarities between genres and between certain types of poetic expression. All this is a necessary exercise. Its only short-coming is that it results either in indifference towards or ignorance about the issue of the socio-political context of literary production and that of the responsibility of the literary artist to his or her community. It tends to negate the now widely held view that there is no such a thing as art for art's sake.

It is hoped that this study will bring a new dimension in the study and teaching not only of Xhosa literature, but also of other indigenous literatures in general. It should also pose a challenge to literary artists - practising and prospective - not to flinch from the painful responsibility to liberate Xhosa literature from the shackles of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and enable it to address itself to the task of serving the interests of Black people. It is hoped too that literary artists as well as students of literature will restore to Xhosa literature its original synthetic capacity which once enabled it to combine the aesthetic, the intellectual, the cultural and the religious aspects of African life. This after all characterises all liberated literature. This work is not an advocacy for a literature that links itself to any particular ideology. It is an advocacy for a literature that is a reliable representation of reality and also supportive of people's struggles to liberate themselves from any form of enslavement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. First, it is to examine the relation that holds between matters of the large-scale socio-political structure of a given society and its literary production. By doing this it is hoped to validate the view that is at the centre of this thesis, namely, that the literary artist, as any artist, cannot and should not be indifferent or hostile to the consciousness that characterises those for whom his literary production is intended, since the literary artist himself is a product of this consciousness and since he, as stated in the previous chapter, has an obligation to guide and protect this consciousness.

In examining the relation between literature and society an attempt will also be made to show how, in communities with conflicting consciousnesses, literature can be used to alienate people from their own consciousness, and create in them radical scepticism about the wisdom of attaching any value to it (their own consciousness). This examination of the relation between literature and society will be taken from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the earliest commentators on literature (even though views on literature ascribed to Socrates by Plato may be the latter's). Although perceptions of what literature is have undergone drastic changes since Plato, a treatment of these differing perceptions will be regarded as being outside the scope of this chapter.

Views on the relation between literature and society, naturally, have had a bearing on approaches to the study of literature. However, our examination of this relation will steer off a discussion of these approaches, except those that have relevance for this thesis, that is, the development of alienated and alienating literature and whose treatment of literature has built-in strategies for the retrieval of a literature that has been thrown into an abyss by the circumstances of its production.

Secondly, the chapter aims to examine, briefly, how literature fulfilled this obligation in the pre-literate African communities in South Africa.

This chapter is intended to form the background against which will be discussed the main contention of this work that Xhosa literature is an example of alienated literature.

2.2 LITERATURE BEFORE PLATO

Although Plato and his mentor, Socrates, may be regarded as the first recorded commentators on European literature, it may be appropriate to look at some of the actors in the literary arena in Greece before Plato. This may serve to throw light on the heritage out of which Socrates's and Plato's views on literary art and artists were born.

2.2.1 Homer

Homer is the writer of the two Greek epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Of these epics Oates writes:

The two towering epics of Homer, the first monuments in Western literature, present a curious combination of profundity and primitive simplicity.

1972:4

For our purposes here it is not the poet's skill at narrating, nor is it the narrative itself that is deserving of attention, but "his implicit expression of the most significant of human values" (Oates 1972:5). In substantiating his view that Homer was an "aural" rather than an oral poet, Whitaker, in his inaugural address at the University of Cape Town, says of Homer:

Although Homer is of course a superb narrator, he is not primarily interested in narrative; in neither the Iliad nor the Odyssey is "the story itself and telling of it ... paramount." The poet's deepest concern is rather with certain fundamental human issues, questions of heroism and achievement in the face of death, the relationship between man and the gods, the functioning of Justice in human society. It is not the case that these issues are merely implicit in a dominating narrative: they actually have primacy, it is they that create and inform the structure of the epics.

1990:8

The views of Oates and Whitaker are echoing Rieu's outlined in the introduction to his translation of the Iliad. Rieu sums up the paramountcy of the "expression of ... human values" in Homer when he says of the Iliad:

...the Iliad was written not to glorify war (though it admits its fascination) but to emphasize its tragic futility.

1988:XVIII

It would be possible to present an in-depth treatment of the "fundamental human values" that Oates and Whitaker are making reference to and which are implied in Rieu's remark above. However, here we focus on and exemplify only those that we consider as, in the words of Oates, "the most significant" and one of which is "the quality of indomitable courage" (1988:5). When King Agamemnon refused Chryses' ransom offer in return for the latter's daughter whom the former had taken as a war prize, the refusal was motivated not only by "unexampled greed", but also by callousness that is apparent in his reply:

Old man, do not let me catch you loitering by the hollow ships today, nor coming back again, or you may find god's staff and chaplet a very poor defence. Far from agreeing to set your daughter free, I intend her to grow old in Argos, in my house, a long way from her own country, working at the loom and sharing my bed. Off with you now, and do not provoke me if you want to save your skin.

Homer 1988:23

Not even the divine punishment of these misdemeanours left him with any remorse. Instead, when told that the defeats of the Greek armies at the hands of the Trojans was as a result of his treatment of Chryses, he unjustly takes Achilles' war prize, Briseis, to replace Chryseis' daughter whom he has been forced to return to her father, and also to let Achilles know that:

...I am more powerful than you and to teach others not to bandy words with me and openly defy their King.

Homer 1988:28

This portrayal of Agamemnon as a greedy, callous and unjust leader affords the readers the opportunity to witness Homer's attitude towards these vices. Also in this portrayal of Agamemnon is found the poet's conviction that men's iniquities will be divinely visited

upon them. Another example of this is the death of Aegisthus, Agamemnon's murderer, at the hands of Prince Orestes, son of Agamemnon (Homer 1946:33).

In touching upon the issue of divine intervention in the affairs of men, the poet is touching upon the "relationship between man and gods," even though Homer gives these gods anthropomorphic characteristics, and even though

the values to be derived from Homeric religion or theology are by no means clear, because of the somewhat inchoate state of the poet's thought in this area.

Oates 1972:7

Another human value that Homer celebrates is valour. An example of this is when Hector, one of king Priam's sons, convinces his wife, Andromache, that he had to go back to rejoin the Trojan armies because

...if I hid myself like a coward and refuse to fight, I could never face the Trojans and the Trojan ladies in their trailing gowns. Besides, it would go against the grain, for I have trained myself always, like a good soldier, to take my place in the front line and win glory for my father and myself.

Homer 1988:128

Helen displays the same attitude towards the war when she urges her husband, Paris, "not without eloquence", to return to the front (Homer 1988:126). The quality of indomitable valour manifests itself, inter alia, in one's love for one's country, for the preparedness to die for the glory of one's country is enhanced only by bravery.

The scene in Hector's house is also an example of man's love for family. It is also this love of family that readers witness when Achilles' mother comforts her son when weeping at the loss of his war prize to Agamemnon and promises to entreat Zeus to cause defeat of Agamemnon's army by the Trojans. Penelope's love for her husband, Odysseus, enabled her to successfully frustrate the advances of her many suitors during all those years that she was separated from him. The spirit of filial love carries Telemachus, Odysseus' son, against all the odds, to Pylos and on to Sparta in search of information about the fate of his father who failed to make the journey back to Ithaca after the sack of Troy.

Man's need to strive for excellence is illustrated in Hippolochus's advice to his son, Glaucus, which the latter repeated to Diomedes:

Let your motto be I lead. Strive to be best. Your forefathers were the best in Ephyre and Lycia. Never disgrace them.

Homer 1988:122

It is this striving for excellence that strengthens a leader's understanding of and commitment to the responsibility that goes with being a leader.

2.2.2 Other writers of the Archaic Period

The main concern of the other writers of the archaic period, it would seem, was grappling with the questions of the relationship that holds between humans and the gods on the one hand and between the gods themselves on the other. Aeschylus, for instance, concerned himself with the questions of the existence of the Godhead and of justice, while Sophocles, with his *Oedipus, the King*, tried to show that, while man was intellectually impotent, he still remained morally answerable (Oates 1972:14). Euripides deals with the issue of orgiastic worship and seems to suggest that when taken to orgiastic levels, religion becomes unmitigated evil. Simonides of Ceos, one of the Gnostic poets, was concerned with moral and ethical notions.

2.3 PLATO AND SOCRATES ON LITERATURE

A traditional view of Plato's attitude towards literature is summed up by Lindsay when he says of him:

Plato rarely refers expressly to art without denouncing it as a sham and a deception.

1952: viii

He goes on:

He could not afford to pay art the doubtful compliment of calling it an excellent purgative of fear and pity or a useful occupation for leisure time; he could not regard it as a necessary stage on the way to that full enlightenment which is philosophy.

Ibid.

This view of Plato's attitude towards poetry derives from statements he makes in Books II, III and (in an even more piercing manner) X of *Republic* with regards to poetry and why he advocates the exclusion of poets from his utopian city (Halliwell 1988: 69). The dialogues with Ion and Meno are also pervaded by this animadversion on poets.

The line between Plato's and Socrates's views on poetry is not easily discernible since Plato's views are expressed through the dramatization of those of Socrates with a view to "keep alive and celebrate the style of philosophical enquiry pursued by Plato's teacher" (Halliwell 1988: 1). This does not, however, put in doubt Socrates's interest in poetry, since it is unlikely that Socrates could have been indifferent to the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, and the writings of such poets as Homer. For Socrates the path towards the attainment of true knowledge and wisdom had to start with the acknowledgement of one's ignorance, for such acknowledgement enhanced one's propensity to search for wisdom. His charge against poets was that when he tested them for the wisdom they were reputed to possess, he found them wanting, as he did the politicians. In his address to the court during his trial, Socrates said of his findings on poets:

I soon made up my mind about the poets too. I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find with seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean.

Plato 1959: 51

Without this inspiration which came from the Muses only occasionally, poets are deprived of their reason. It is for this reason that Plato regards poetry as removed from intelligible reality and those "logical processes by which truth is attained" (Lindsay 1952: xv).

Apart from scepticism about their wisdom, there were other reasons for Plato's quarrel with poets. His theory of ideas or forms compelled him to judge artists as incapable of representing the forms as they truly are in the world of thought. Poetry, and indeed all art, was unrepresentative imitation of the essence. Moreover, for Plato poetry had some "diabolical" moral defects which were inexcusable and some of which bordered on the blasphemous. Poetry has to be not only pleasurable but also instructive. But Plato was not convinced that poets cared about ethical standards as they did about the pursuit of giving

pleasure to their audiences, and felt that the deleterious effects of poetry on its audience was debasing it and put in doubt its centrality in education. This charge against the poets of purveying ethical falsehoods and immorality is summed up in Republic X 605c when Socrates tells Glaucon that the "mimetic poet puts an evil government into the soul of each individual ..."

Plato's aversion for poets had also a theological foundation. The attributing of anthropomorphic traits to the divine beings drew fierce objection from Plato. The poets presented the patron gods as belligerent beings who engaged in endless warring, thereby giving credence to the view that battles between warring tribes in the phenomenal world had their "precise heavenly counterparts between patron gods" (Elias 1984:8). In Plato's theory of forms ideas in the world of thought are characterised not only by ultimate beauty but also by permanence and ultimate perfection. The gods, as creators of ideas, the eternal essences, were therefore not liable to change. Yet the poets made reference to instances in which the gods changed their shape. Plato's objection to this was that what was already perfect did not need to change.

Poets also ascribed arbitrariness to the manner in which man's destinies were handled by the gods as the following shows:

You know that Zeus, the Thunderer has two jars standing on the floor of his Palace, in which he keeps gifts, the evils in one and the blessings in the other. People who receive from him a mixture of the two have varying fortunes, sometimes good, and sometimes bad, though when Zeus serves a man from the jar of evil only, he makes him an outcast, who is chased by the gadfly of despair over the face of the earth and goes his way damned by gods and men alike.

Homer 1988:451

Plato objected to the presentation of the gods as having such traits as anger, lust and "other examples of excessive emotion" since these tend to impede rational judgement. Ascribing these traits suggested that the gods could be irrational (Elias 1984:8). Such a view conflicted with Plato's view of the gods as the epitome of the rational to which men must aspire, and which enabled men to control the spirited and the appetitive parts of their being. Moreover the poets' presentation of immoderate grief on the part of the gods and men conflicted with Plato's view of the soul as immortal. For him grieving over death was inconsistent with the

belief in the immortality of the soul and was also an expression of a desire to stay alive eternally. The gods cannot be bribed by sacrifice and the priests cannot bring about any desired divine intervention by spells and incantations, despite the view to which the poets were lending credence.

Once a breakdown of the major objections of Plato to poetry has been made, the question to ask is whether Plato succeeds in stripping poetry of all its value. A closer look at what Plato has said about or against the poets will reveal that not only was Plato prepared to accept in his hypothetical ideal city certain forms of poetry, but also that, by objecting to the effects of poetry on the human mind, he was, consciously or unconsciously, conceding that poetry was a very powerful medium by means of which a society's consciousness can be shaped and controlled. In fact, Plato was never in doubt about the value of poetry. It was only some form of censorship that he was advocating. Hence the statement about the role of literature in the education system of his hypothetical ideal city:

Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest. We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to their children and so mould their minds and characters rather than their bodies.

Plato 1960: 115

Poets whose work he considered to be for the good of man were acceptable to Plato. Hymns to the gods and praises of good men he considered acceptable poetry.

If poets induced their listeners to honour justice and "the rest of virtue", they deserved to be given audience. He considered valour to be for the good of man, and therefore literature that advocated it was acceptable in his ideal city. Hence the statement:

But when a poet tells or a dramatist presents tales of heroic endurance against odds, then we must give him an audience. For instance, when Homer makes Odysseus strike himself on the chest, and "call his heart to order" saying, Patience my heart! You have put up with fouler than this.

Plato 1960:128

Halliwell (1984:6) has come to the defence of Plato by saying that his attack on poetry is, in fact, an attempt to provoke lovers of poetry to come up with a more vigorous exposition

of the value of poetry. Oates's defence of Plato is that Plato's rejection of art and poetry is made primarily in the interest of what he considers to be a higher value," namely, "good life for man" (1972:40).

Thus Plato was, in essence, so mindful of the intrinsic value of poetry that he made it his task to engage in a relentless attack on those tendencies of poets that he felt had the potential to result in its devaluation.

The relevance for this thesis of Plato's views on art and literature is the implicit message embodied in his attack, namely, that literature is unsuitable if it cannot produce in a society a fighting spirit that enables the members of that society "to prefer death to slavery as free men should" (Plato Republic III 1960:123).

2.4 ARISTOTLE ON LITERATURE

Perhaps the earliest response to Plato's attack on poetry came from his own pupil, Aristotle, whose views on poetry seem to have no trace of his master's influence. While Plato was convinced that imitation was not capable of presenting a true picture of what was being imitated, Aristotle saw man's capacity to imitate as one of those features that set man apart from other animals. It was part of human nature to imitate. Aristotle saw imitation as the source of origin of poetry. Imitation is the initial mechanism by which man establishes a relationship with the world around him. Imitation in early childhood makes learning possible. The other plausible aspect of imitation, according to Aristotle, is that it is beneficial not only to the one who imitates but also to those who witness the act of imitating, since "it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation" (Aristotle 1973:673).

What Plato saw as the putting of "an evil government into the soul of each individual" was understood differently and more positively by Aristotle. For him it did not matter what effect the imitation had on its audience as long as they were learning something out of it, for "to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also

to the rest of mankind... (Ibid.). Homer was the "poet of poets" not only because he wrote heroic verse but also because of his dramatic imitation of the ridiculous. Aristotle's commentary on poetry was clearly not intended to be a reply to Plato, since the surviving portion of his *Poetics* is concerned only with such matters as definition of tragedy; plot; diction; and characters. However, his commentary on literature contains a lot that vindicates the poets whose art Plato vehemently condemned. Literature is imitation of life in its entirety - "action, happiness and misery." Since human life is inalienably attached to the divine beings outside the phenomenal world, poets could not be blamed for wanting to imitate what they imagined to be the goings-on in the world of Plato's forms or ideas. Plato himself in his *Phaedrus* had presented life as a composite of charioteer and two horses, one white and the other black, ugly and mean. The latter horse represents the baser tendencies of man, while the former represents the nobler emotions of man. Life consists in the struggle of man to control and bring into harmonious relationship this ill-matched pair. How then could poets be expected to exclude from imitation this aspect of human existence, if they were to be realistic. The importance of poets in a society emerges from Aristotle's commentary clearly as that they fill in the knowledge gap between man's horizon of knowledge and Plato's world of true knowledge and wisdom, for he says the function of the poets is to describe, not what has happened but what is possible.

Hence poetry is something more philosophical and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals...

Aristotle 1973:682

Another significant aspect of poetry, according to Aristotle, was that poets were opinion-makers. The stories about the gods, therefore, even if they may be wrong, as Plato objected, were in accordance with opinions held about them. With regard to whether what the poets said was morally right, Aristotle said that in passing that kind of judgement one had to take into account...

... not only the intrinsic quality of the actual word or deed, but also the person who says or does it, the time, the means, and the motive of the agent - whether he does it to attain a greater good or to avoid a greater evil.

1973:709

From this it is clear that Aristotle regarded poets also as custodians of morality whose responsibility was not only "to sing hymns to the gods and praises of good men'" but also to expose the misdemeanours of the evil, with a view to curbing the escalation of evil.

2.5 LITERATURE AND THE HELLENISTIC SOCIETY

The Hellenistic period, which extends from the conquests of Alexander the Great to the annexation of Egypt into the Roman Empire, is associated with the birth of the literary genre that today is known as the novel. This is the period that also marked the end of the homogeneous city state communities. Hägg describes classical Greece as follows:

Before Alexander, Greece consisted of a number of small city states around the Aegean, bound together by a common language and culture but politically divided into varying constellations.

1983:82

This is the period which was dominated by the epic which was the anchor of the power of the national consciousness. But Alexander's unification of Greece and his expansionist policy resulted in the creation of a very wide new empire in which converged peoples of different cultures and languages and which bordered on India in the East. The convergence of the oriental cultures and the Greek culture resulted in the development of a new culture, the Hellenistic culture and, naturally, in the levelling out of the Greek language - pure Attic into Hellenistic Greek. Athens ceased to be the centre of the Greek intellectual life. The cultural and the intellectual initiative shifted to the big new cities such as Alexandria in Egypt. One mark of this new society was the increased level of heterogeneity - the society breaking into distinct strata of workers, farmers, slaves, well-to-do middle class and the top stratum of high officials in the cities. Levels of literacy improved and improved modes of travel led to increased social mobility and opening of new routes.

But this was not a period of untempered bliss. There is always something ephemeral in the glory of conquest and territorial expansion. The Hellenistic society was marked by very sharp boundaries between classes which unfortunately coincided with ethnic divisions. This led to political instability. Organised piracy was rife and was sometimes even officially

sponsored by rival states (Hägg 1983:87). However, the darkest side of the Hellenistic period is the extent to which the individual was gripped by a sense of insecurity, which Hägg explains as follows:

The bigger the world grows, the smaller the individual feels. He feels helpless before the immensity of things, he grows passive and feels himself being arbitrarily tossed about by fate.

1983:89

Physically the individual's liberty had become very transient, in the face of pirate kidnappings that were triggered by the need to satisfy the demands of the slave market. The spirit of the individual was diverted from the ideal of attaining true knowledge of the universe and from the search for the apprehension of the beautiful. The individual's mind was focussing now on the question of how to attain true happiness and security. Fatalism was the pervading force that conditioned the collective thought pattern of the Hellenistic society. This force drove people into embracing the new oriental faiths in which they saw their salvation. Olympian gods became relatively less important. Religious life in the Hellenistic society was syncretic. The words of Choerilus of Samos written in the 5th century B.C. had more relevance for the mood that pervaded:

Now, when everything has been portioned out and the arts have reached their limits, we are left behind in the race and one looks everywhere in vain for a place to drive one's newly yoked chariot.

Hopkinson 1988:xv

The effects of this "newly yoked chariot" reverberated at all levels of the social edifice. Philosophical enquiry was directed at explaining how best happiness could be attained. Political thinking turned in utopian directions in which were sketched ideal communities from which were excluded all the degenerate aspects of Hellenistic civilization, and which were characterised by "a classless social structure, common ownership of property, equality of sexes, a simple way of life in harmony with nature ..." (Hägg 1983:80). The individual mind set out on an Eldorado expedition in search of romanticism and idealism. The epic's magic power to hold the community together around a set of values personified in its heroes and heroines was diminishing quite considerably. Its unifying force was fast becoming incompatible with the centrifugal tendencies of the Hellenistic communities. This social

mood produced not only new styles of writing poetry, but also a completely new mode of literary expression - the novel.

The authors of the novel captured the mood of the Hellenistic society by means of characters who were lovers and whose circumstances led to their forced separation. The plot of the novel had its foundation on the changing fortunes of the lovers in their struggle to be re-united. They would eventually be re-united. Examples of such novels are Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale*.

Although these love stories, the non-sophistic novels, were in all respects inferior to the epic, the intention of the author did not lack the seriousness of the teller of the epic as far as the concern for stability in the society was concerned. They were certainly more serious in tone than the Roman comic novels referred to below. They are significant for our purposes here, because they reflected the prevailing consciousness of the society in which they were produced, and the characters in them provided the individual in the society with a mirror in which he could see himself. The rise of Greek nationalism and cultural production which were triggered by the advent of the philhellenic Roman Imperial Period resulted in the elevation of the novel to higher levels of intellectuality - the birth of the so-called sophistic novel.

The reflection in literature, of the prevailing consciousness of the society in which it is produced has persisted throughout the various periods of literary production. The Roman novel such as that of Petronius, *Satyricon*, mirrored, in a satiric manner, the mood of the Roman society during the time of Nero in which prevailed such vices as hypocrisy in religion, learning and wealth (Hägg 1983:174). This society is one in which the walls of piety and purity are collapsing and in which "no man's honesty and no woman's virtue are unassailable" (Tägg 1983:88).

The growth and spread of Christianity gave birth to literature in which heroes were either saints or apostles or martyrs, *Paul and Thecla*, *The Pseudo-Clementine*, *Barlaam and Joasaph*, being notable examples.

2.6 THE WRITER AND THE DEMANDS OF SOCIETY

From the above paragraphs it is clear that literature, whatever its form and stage of development, is, as Eagleton puts it "... in fact deeply conditioned by its social context" (1989:90). The social context is, in turn, a consequence of the historical processes that are in progress during a given period in the world communities. Because of change in the historical processes, the face of literature inevitably changes from one era to another and from one society to another.

In Britain the Norman Conquest (of 1066) ushered in a period whose pervading features were Norman theology and enthusiasm for religious life. The literature of the Renaissance reflected a society that was determined to free itself from the shackles of the Old Church and the scholasticism of the monks and friars. The Elizabethan literature reflected a society that was awakening to a sense of its strength. The decline of this strength during the reign of the Cromwells drove this same society into the hands of puritanism which Gardner (1901:546) describes as:

... the habit of looking for more than was to be achieved by human nature, till the search for ideal beauty and goodness led to the contemptuous blindness to the beauty and goodness inherent in our mingled nature ...

This mood or "habit" is nowhere else more clearly captured than in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and John Milton's *"Paradise Lost"*. When Thomas Mann spoke of the genesis and nature of his novel, *The Magic Mountain*, at the Princeton lecture in 1939, he characterized it as a "document of the European state of mind and spiritual problematic in the first quarter of the twentieth century" (Marcus 1989:126). When Engels wrote his celebrated letter to Margaret Harkness in 1888, he claimed that all he knew about the French society and its history, he learnt from Balzac "than from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period together" (Petrey 1989:69).

This, however, does not in any way imply that literature is at the mercy of history. On the contrary, while literature can be said to be a social product, it is also a "social force affecting society and continually involved in the process of social development" (Routh and Wolff 1989:4). It is capable of political education and social transformation. It can

therefore be said that literature and society are bound together by a reciprocal relationship, to the extent that while literature is produced by society, literacy activity, either by design or fortuitously, produces society in one way or the other. This is so because, as the historical processes are unfolding, the writer does not take a neutral position outside of these processes where he can watch them unfold and allow himself to be swayed by them from one inspiration to another or simply use his literacy skill to document them, couching them in metaphorical expression. The writer is immersed in these historical processes and his preferences or position and wishes are clearly discernible in his writings. Because of the power of his product the writer may be, and indeed always is, under severe pressure from a motley of forces to produce with a particular goal in mind, that is, to influence the collective consciousness of the society towards a particular direction. This is because of its power to "shape our attitudes to life, to the daily struggle with nature, the daily struggles within the community, and the daily struggle within our individual souls and selves" (Ngugi 1981:6).

This is not to deny that literature does have an autonomy of its own as a social institution, but to state that its power to influence the collective consciousness of a society makes it difficult, if not impossible, for those forces that have interest in the direction of historical processes, to absolve the literary artist of certain obligations which are socio-politically grounded. Thus the literary artist invariably finds himself implicated in the dialectical relations of the forces that are in operation during a given period. An added burden on the literary artist's shoulders is the uncompromising expectation of these forces and his consumers, readers, that he can and should, achieve all this without abandoning Aristotlean position that literature has to be located on the aesthetic.

This dilemma of the literary artist is nowhere clearer than in Thomas Carlyle's changing views on literature. Once he advocated the aesthetic value and autonomy of literature when he asserted that

Art is to be loved ... not because it is useful for spiritual pleasure, or even moral culture, but because it is Art, and the highest in man, and the soul of all Beauty.

Demetz 1967:41

No sooner had Carlyle pronounced the autonomy of literature than he scathingly attacked literature for being fashionable, thereby influencing Engels to attack "all fashionable literature ... as tedious and sterile as the jaded and hollow fashionable society" (Demetz 1967:44). This was reference to the English literature of the 1840's.

Engels's views on literature were themselves a clear illustration of the literary artist's dilemma that flows out of his dual position as the determined and determiner. He expressed himself as clearly opposed to tendentious literature. Of Engels's position on the problem of tendentiousness in literary art, Demetz writes:

The late Engels was distinctly averse to explicit partisan bias ... Political postulates, declared Engels, must not be superficial concern of the work of Art; they "must arise out of the situation and action itself, without express reference being made to them"; the writer must not feel moved by his political enthusiasm "to hand his reader the future historical solution to the social conflicts he describes".

1967:129

However, Engels does not say the writer must be oblivious of or indifferent to political reality, for he insisted that beneath the aesthetic structure should be concealed a political message which is capable of demolishing the "prevailing conventional illusions" (Demetz 1967:130). For him realism implied, "... besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Demetz 1967:132). What Engels was saying, in essence, was that truthfulness in literature meant that literature has to be faithful to the original situation, but the writer should be capable of, if need be, mythifying the truth, so as not to scare away some of his readers for whom such truth may present a challenge to their privileged position. The crucial point is that what the writer has succeeded to mythify, the readers must be able to demythify and relate it to those aspects of their historical circumstances which are, or can be defined as, problematic. Only in this way will realism (including that which has been presented in a mythified form) achieve its key objective which, according to Engels and Marx, is to confront and destroy the ideology of the bourgeois society "which seeks to present existing social relations as unchangeable" (Birchall 1977:96).

The question of "social relations" was at the centre of Marx's views on the role of the literary artist in society. In his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* he writes:

... a distinction should be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

Burchall 1977:94

Thus, for Marx one of the features of society is that conflict is central to it and, therefore literature is one of the weapons that man uses to "fight it out". Literature, therefore, like all other forms of ideology, has to be seen as part of the total process of man's social being. The social relations into which men enter in the "social production of their life" result, among other things, in the separation of some sectors of society, the proletariat, from the product of their labour. This alienation of man from his labour forms the basis of Marx's view of all human history as the history of class struggle. Literary activity is engaged in within this struggle - not just as its mirror, but as work carried out from a particular stand-point. And the historical position of the writer will determine the stand-point, that is, a writer will write within the demands and constraints of the class to which he belongs. It is in this sense that Marx saw art as part of the whole superstructure that emerges out of the economic base, and whose main function it is not only to legitimize and perpetuate the power of the ruling class, but also to ensure that its ideas remain the dominant ideas. Marx himself nearly had the experience of being pressured to produce a literary work that would extol the dominant class, when his father, Heinrich Marx, recommended to him in 1837 that he chose as the subject of his intended tragedy "one of those moments of Prussian that proved the timelessness of the Hohenzollern ideals" and that "an important emphasis should be put on the genius of the monarchy, personified by Queen Louise" (Demetz 1967:53).

Just as the writers from the dominant class are producing literary works that support and perpetuate the ideology of their class, at the opposite end stands the proletariat writer whose responsibility is, or who is under pressure, to fabricate literature that negates the reification of the proletariat as natural and immutable. Thus emerges the dichotomy of the

establishment literature and the *literature of liberation*. Lenin explains this situation as follows:

There are two nations in every nation ... there are two national cultures in every national culture ... The elements of democracy and socialist culture are present, if only in a rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form not merely of elements but of the dominant culture.

Ngugi 1981:10

The advocates of the proletariat cause call upon the literary artist to challenge the ruling class system, and to exhort the proletariat to believe in its power to chart out its own destiny. This is why Engels queried the depiction in Margaret Harkness's novel, of the working class characters "as a passive mass, unable to help itself and not even making an attempt at striving to help itself", but only dependent on the intervention of the Salvation Army. He believed that:

The rebellious reaction of the working class against the oppressive medium which surrounds them ... at recovering their status as human beings, belong to history and must therefore lay claim to a place in the domain of realism.

Demetz 1967:132

Lenin went even further than this in his demands on literature when he said:

Down with non-partisan writers! Down with literary superman! Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, a "cog and screw" of single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the working class. Literature must become a component of organised, planned and integrated Social-Democratic work.

Burchall 1977:99

From this we see that the acknowledgement of the force of literature by political leaders and governments invariably manifests itself in the exertion of pressure, either directly or indirectly, on literary artists and, therefore on the appropriation of the latter's skills for political or revolutionary ends. This pressure takes a variety of forms which differ from period to period and from place to place. It can be in the form of governments' or revolutionary movements' encouragement of the formation of writers' forums and bodies, and their active interest in these through sponsorships and subsidies and maintenance of

links with them, or any other means that will ensure their continued influence on the direction to be taken by the collective output of the members of these bodies. Since literature is part of the cultural produce of a society, pressure on writers could also be through influence, and even control of national organisations that have been set up with such aims as preserving cultural heritage, to promote cultural activity and to inculcate intercultural understanding and tolerance. A body of literary works will come out of these organisations, in full support of the ideology of the sector they consider themselves to be in alliance with. These works will have their support systems in the other forms of art such as performing arts, film industry and music. The diffusion of this literature will then be taken care of by mechanisms that have been plotted by the government and political organisations, such as budget votes for the subsidization of the purchases of state, provincial, municipal and school libraries. Mechanisms are also developed to enhance the vitality of this literature in the face of other competing or challenging literatures - literatures that promote opposing ideologies. Apart from ensuring that influence is maintained in publishing houses, institutionalized watchdogs are set up in the form of Censorship Boards, which will block the publication of "unacceptable literature" in the name of curbing the total onslaught on the national moral fibre, and of preventing the discrediting of the good office of one public servant or the other. The real aim is to curtail access to opposing ideologies and thereby to nullify any potential sympathy for them.

An example of the direct pressure on literary artists are the addresses of Mao Tse-tung given in 1942 at a conference in Yen-an, China on the Problems of Art and Literature. In his opening address he stated:

We have called this meeting for the express purpose of making literature and art part of our revolutionary machinery, so that they may become a powerful weapon with which to unite and educate our people, to attack and destroy the enemy, and to help our people fight the enemy unitedly. ... Our cultural army must undertake the task of exposing the atrocities and treacheries of our enemies, of making it clear to them that their defeat is inevitable, and encouraging all anti-Japanese forces to rally with one heart and spirit in determined battle against our enemies.

1950:8

At the centre of Mao's message to the writers was the echo of Lenin's view on non-partisan writers, for like Lenin, Mao rejected the view that artists should or can practise their art in a non-sectarian manner:

There is no such thing as art for Art's sake, or literature and art that lie above class distinctions or above partisan interests. There is no such thing as literature and art running parallel to politics or being independent of politics

1950:29

Our use of the term "pressure" here is not intended to imply that writers are always bundled into a position which they find themselves rather having to willy-nilly adopt. On the contrary, the historical processes that yield conflicting ideologies and the triumph of one over the others, yield three sets of writers: Writers who support the dominant ideology because they identify with the dominant class. For these writers' pressure will come from within themselves than from outside and will thrive on the support systems created for them by their (ruling) class. The second set are writers who will write from a position of helplessness, because they belong to a section of the society that has been subjugated by the dominant class. These writers are prisoners of conscience, because their position makes it impossible for them to identify with the dominant class which, in any case, does not accept them. And so they are forced to shuttle between singing praises for the heroes of the dominant class and extolling its values on the one hand, and on the other, searching for outlets in metaphorical discourse. The third set of writers are those writers who refuse to succumb and to let their literary talents be roped onto a cause they do not identify with. These are writers who are always the victims of reactionary action by the ruling class and whose literature is always the object of censorship and who, in extreme cases, resort to self-imposed exile. The Russian writer Alexander Soltzhein and a list of South African writers such as Bloke Modisane, Denis Brutus and Ezekiel Mphahlele, are some of the examples. Those who do not go into exile will resort to such informal means of disseminating their literature as poetry reading sessions. If they are lucky, sympathetic or literary publications - newspapers and journals - the so-called progressive press, will publish their works, and in this way these become accessible to the newspaper reading public. A recent trend in South Africa is the establishment of liberal publishing houses that publish literature that the mainstream publishers are not, or unlikely to be, keen to publish. Skotaville Press and Buchu Press are examples.

It should be noted that the premise of the second and third sets of writers is similar, in that they both are victims of the same socio-political degradation - of the same "enemy". Also noteworthy is the fact that our categorization of writers here is no more than mere expediency, because in reality the positions of some writers in any society easily defy such categorizations. There have been a number of examples of writers that have taken positions that conflict with their province. These are the writers whose conscience has forced them to risk contempt of and condemnation by their own class, because they commit the crime of "treason" and "treachery" by "exposing the atrocities and treacheries" of their own class. At the time of writing this thesis the Sunday Times of 27 September 1992 provided an example of how those who feel betrayed by a writer react, when it reported that the town council of a conservative Transvaal town had decided to ban Koos Kombuis's (André Letoit) novel, *Paradise Redecorated* and the works of Andre Brink from their library. Warren and Wellek write of Balzac:

... though his professional sympathies were all with the old order, the aristocracy and the church, his instinct and imagination were far more engaged by the acquisitive type, the speculator, the new strong man of the bourgeoisie

1961:93

According to Georgi Plekhanov, even those writers in our second category who seem to have resigned themselves to the fate of their community or who seem to have allowed themselves to be assimilated by the system of exploitation, are not necessarily indifferent to their condition. Instead their hostility to the system surfaces in the form of defeatism in art for art's sake. Plekhanov argues that the doctrine of art for art's sake

... develops when artists feel hopeless contradiction between their aims and the aims of the society to which they belong. Artist must be very hostile to their society and they must see no hope of changing it.

Warren and Wellek 1961:97

The relevance for African languages, of the point that Plekhanov is raising here, will be considered further in chapters four and five.

Modern history has provided us with numerous examples of situation where the unfolding of historical processes has resulted in the writers in the third category branching out into two groups. This is when the ruling class has been defeated - either in the battle field or

at the polling stations. While some of these writers devote their energy to literature that consolidates the newly-acquired freedom, there will be those that feel - even while the sounds of victory celebrations are still ringing in the ears of many - that the new order is a betrayal of the cause for which they fought and for which many paid with their lives. They therefore feel compelled to continue the fight for justice and total liberation. The post-colonial societies in Africa have had their fair share of this category of writers. Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru* and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* are some of its examples. The fate of Ngugi wa Thiongo, the exiled Kenyan writer, is proof of the truth in Kafka's observation that:

At the end of every truly revolutionary development there appears a Napoleon Bonaparte As a flood spreads wider and wider, the water becomes shallower and shallower and dirtier. The Revolution evaporates, and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy.

Janouch 1971:120

These are the situations of crushed hopes and disillusionment, where the masses discover painfully that what they have been fighting for had nothing to do with democracy. To use Kafka's analogy, they discover that after crossing the Red Sea you enter a desert. Unfortunately in some situations this disillusionment drives some writers into the hands of the former oppressors and/or their allies. One example of this disillusioned writer would be the Cuban writer, Jose Luis Llovio-Menendez, author of the autobiography, *Insider - My hidden Life As a Revolutionary in Cuba*. A revolutionary himself during his university days and afterward, who witnessed the death of many of his comrades at the hands of Fulgencio Batista's forces, he survived the revolution to witness what he regarded as the post-revolution betrayal of the people by what they called the *mayimbes* - "ironically an Afro-Cuban term that means 'ruling or powerful class' the bosses." This was a reference to Fidel Castro's revolutionary government which replaced that of Batista in 1959, of which Llovio-Menendez says:

They inhabit an exclusive world in which the rest of the people's living conditions are not only not mentioned but barely even known. In short a closed caste has been created, separated from the rest of society by an abyss that grows deeper each day.

1988:278

This brings us to the question of the autonomy of literature. Is there room for it in modern society? In the above paragraphs we have outlined how literary activity can be regimented by the ruling elite in the direction of achievements that are in opposition to the true objectives of literary art. We have also outlined how literary artists can be betrayed by the post-revolution bureaucracies. The question of the autonomy of literature raises another question, that of the committed writer. What should committed writers be committed to, what is the destination to which they should take society and what will their role be when that destination is reached?

It would seem that autonomy of literature is a pre-requisite for the practice of committed literary practice. Thus the writers' commitment is, first and foremost, to their disengaging themselves from any alliances and allegiances whose aspirations and actions are incompatible with those of pure art. This was the basis on which the manifesto of the planned International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art was founded. According to the authors of this document, Diego Rivera and Andre Breton:

In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape from all constraint and must under no pretext allow itself to be placed under bonds.

Trotsky 1970:119

They go on to explain the position which writers ought to take:

To those who urge us, whether for today or for tomorrow, to consent that art should submit to a discipline which we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula complete freedom for art.

Ibid.

Truly committed writers therefore, are those that are committed to the ideals of truth, justice and freedom. They are committed to complete freedom and radical construction of a society which will allow for the achievement of these ideals. It is in this sense that literature of commitment is always linked to the struggle for liberation - revolution. Because these ideals coincide with those of a true revolution, true artists and true revolutionaries find one another and form an alliance which offers itself to the service of the oppressed people's freedom. Literature targets the psyche of the readers and aims to dispel from it "inertia, ignorance,

prejudice and false emotion" (Sartre 1978:ix). But, Sartre observes, the writer does not stop there, because

... he also requires that they return this confidence which he has given them, that they recognise his creative freedom, and that they in turn solicit by a symmetrical and inverse appeal.

1978:36

In this way the alliance of literary art and the revolution finds consummation, because once literature has succeeded in helping readers extricate themselves from these inner obstacles, they begin to display the propensity to support the revolution in its commitment to remove the outside obstacles - the oppressors. However, the fact of this alliance is purely chance; and therefore committed writers will refuse to subordinate their labour to the whims of the revolutionaries. They know that victory which finds its realization in the substitution of the oppressive governments with revolutionary ones, is not necessarily synonymous with the achievement of the ideals their writing and the revolution were about. The post-revolution position of the committed writer is aptly described by Trotsky when he says:

Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws - even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity. Art becomes a strong ally of revolution only in so far as it remains faithful to itself.

Trotsky 1970:114

If on the other hand revolution attains for society freedom in its totality - and this still has to happen - writers will devote themselves to the consolidation, entrenchment and protection of the newly-attained ideals through literature that does not only celebrate the attainment of these ideals, but also enhances their vitality through the promotion of values that have the potential of becoming the support systems of these ideals, such as the values of morality, patriotism and devotion to work. Such societies, however, still remain an ideal, which Trotskyists believe will be achieved through permanent world revolutions, and which Marxist-Leninists believe will be achieved through the creation of a classless society. However, because these societies are still an ideal, literature does not postpone until its achievement, the promotion of those values that lend support to the ideals of truth, justice

and freedom, for man needs them to enhance his capacity to succeed in reaching this ideal socio-political situation.

In concluding this section, it is necessary that it be emphasised that, to the extent that literature is truth, and truth beauty, commitment and beauty are not incompatible. Literature should radiate joy to the readers, for joy, as Kafka observes is "food to the human soul. Without it, life is only a form of dying" (Janouch 1971:122).

2.7 LITERATURE AND THE PRE-LITERATE COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA

Many of the early Western visitors to Africa who came from a culture of writing were unconsciously compelled by the magic of the written word to falsify human values in Africa. This falsification manifested itself in the remarks they made in some of their writings. Literature did not escape this falsification. Speaking of the South African black languages, William Boyce wrote:

The languages of the aboriginal tribes offer no literary treasures for the amusement or edification of the student.

1838:iii

One hundred years later, a descendant of the Dutch settler community in South Africa, Jan Christiaan Smuts, confirmed this when he gave the Rhodes Memorial Lecture at Oxford University in 1929, when he said of the South African Blacks:

This type has some wonderful characteristics. It has largely remained a child type with a child psychology and outlook ... No indigenous religion has been evolved, no *literature* (my emphasis), no art, since the magnificent promise of the cavemen and the South African petroglyphics, no architecture since Zimbabwe (if that is African).

Opland cites an anonymous traveller who commented on Xhosa music:

I could not hear of any traditional songs. The wild chant in which the red Kafirs uplift their united voices when they assemble for a feast, is most monotonous. A sort of see-saw chant, from highest pitch to lowest bass, continued without variation, except as it is now and then broken by a shrill whistle or long-drawn howl. *One cannot imagine it expressing any kind of sentiment* (my italics).

1983:5

Although the African situation has long been vindicated by anthropological and literary research, it is still a puzzle how some of the pioneer visitors to Africa could have come to these conclusions. It must be true of all human societies that once man was compelled by the circumstances of his existence to forsake what Rousseau calls his "state of nature" and enter into a union with other men to form a community - the body politic - they had to develop support systems for this union. Key words in this union were loyalty and power. "Power" here is used to refer to "powerfulness". Explaining the loyalty aspect of this union, Rousseau says:

Each one of us puts into the community his person and all his powers under the supreme direction of the general will; and as a body, we incorporate every member as an indivisible part of the whole.

1968:61

Powerfulness was necessary for the collective preservation of the members of the community.

As elsewhere in the human world, in the pre-literate communities in Africa there evolved a culture on which the stability of the community was anchored. This culture was to help man adapt to the change that resulted from passing from the state of nature to civil society. The vitality of this culture depended on the observation of a number of rules of conduct. As the organisation of these communities centred around some form of leadership or other, justice was one of these rules of conduct. As the individual members of the communities had surrendered themselves to the sovereignty of their leaders, the latter had to reciprocate by exercising justice and accepting answerability to the people. It is this reciprocation that ensured the principles of democracy.

Another rule of conduct was humanism. This was a behavioural construct having such elements as altruism, virtuousness, love (of life, family and nature), neighbourliness, truth, peace-loving, hospitality and respect. Coupled to humanism were the values of valour, diligence and humility. One of the many features of this humanism was the responsibility it gave the individual to place his talents at the service of the community. The medicine people had to use their talents for the benefit of other members of society; the old people

had the responsibility to educate the youth. Education was necessary to promote awareness of the importance of these values for the stability of the communities.

It is in the area of education that literature played a significant role in pre-literate communities. Folk-stories were improvised, performed and disseminated and handed down from generation to generation with each generation or locality adapting them to suit the changing times and circumstances. These stories consolidated the values of the communities and each of them emphasised one or more of these values. The individual in these communities was not only *homo sapiens* but also *homo ludens*. Therefore the aesthetic needs of the people were not neglected, but catered for in the education system. Together with art, riddles, song and dance, prose narratives and poetry satisfied both the pragmatic and the aesthetic needs of the community.

Rousseau (1968:59) maintains that one of the reasons man decided to change his mode of existence was that he reached a point where obstacles to his preservation "proved greater than the strength that each man has to preserve himself ..." The "obstacles" Rousseau is referring to here are forces within man's objective world. To remove these obstacles therefore, men had to use their newly-acquired might to conquer nature and harness it for the perpetuation of human life - both material and spiritual. Harnessing nature meant having to understand its ways. Thus African communities were not less curious to gain knowledge of nature. Nature did not only provide for their material needs, but also served as a source from which they drew part of their collective wisdom which formed the basis of their philosophy of life. This wisdom was captured in their idioms, proverbs and metaphors. Knowledge and understanding of nature enhanced their love and respect for it. Mphahlele explains the role of poets in this respect thus:

The poet, then, out of his most flexible imagination, establishes relationship between man and the elements of his environment which he is constantly trying to master. The mastery of one's own environment is tied up with economics, that is, one's way of making a living, of creating shelter and protecting oneself against excessive cold or heat or rain or storms.

1986:14

The quest for knowledge went beyond nature. Man was curious to know also about his past and that of his community. This knowledge gave him a sense of pride and belonging and

also a certain degree of readiness to go into the future. The task of the elders to impart this knowledge within family structures, was complemented by that of the poets whose praise-singing incorporated allusions to genealogies of kings, achievements of national heroes and heroines, significant historical events, successes and failures of their communities. But the human mind was not content with this knowledge.

That the African communities evolved religion must have resulted from man's curiosity to know about his being, about the origin of life, about its essence and about its destiny. The vast fund of mythology that is found in every African culture is testimony to the motley of answers that were given to the question: "What is the origin of life?" Explaining the role of myth, Setiloane says:

In myth there is something of a communal memory of the group as it has grappled with the questions of its and all human origins, life on this earth, being (what is the human person?) and even the hereafter.

1986:3

Answers to the question of "life on this earth" found expression in the many myths that explained some of the relations that hold among the other animate species, some of their physical features and behaviour patterns. Questions about the destiny of life led to myths about the origin of death. A most significant outcome of these questions, however, was the collective belief that there was a Cause of life on earth and all nature, a "Vital Force, the essences or the Supreme Being. This force is present everywhere" (Mphahlele 1986:14). How this Supreme Being's relations to humans was perceived, was apparent in the names that he was given: *Omnipotent Being, The Unknown, Provider, Controller of Life, Owner of Us, Owner of Life, One who remains and does not die, The one who penetrates and permeates all being, The Source of Being, The Breath of all life* (Setiloane 1986:17).

The Supreme Being, as giver of life, also reproduced it, and never destroyed it. As a source of life, he was perceived as the final home to which all terrestrial life returned. Thus the presence of this force provided knowledge about the destiny of life. Those whom the Supreme Being called back to the original home through death, assumed a new role, that of being intercessors between the living and the Supreme Being.

This relationship with the living dead is the humanistic affirmation of the continuity of life, whose central pillar of support is the bond between people of a family at one level and people of the community at another ...

Mpahlele 1986:17

The living dead, the ancestors, were (and still are) therefore the links between the living and the Supreme Being, and as such were the the ones who were entreated for the satisfaction of all human wants, especially the showering of blessings and the provision of food and protection. By the same token, they were the ones who meted out punishment on the living, and also the ones through whom offerings to the Supreme Being were made. Hence the message to Minah Thembeke Soga in Mqhayi's poem in *Inzuzo* on the occasion of her trip overseas:

Uz' uzixelele izizwe neentlanga, Thina kwaNtu besihlala noThixo, Simnyusel' amadini nemibingelelo, Esezal' amanqath' eenkomo zethu.

Please announce it to others that we Africans used to live with God, giving Him sacrifices and He inhaled the smell of fat from our cattle.

p.58

The Supreme Being was perceived as sacred and therefore, being was itself also regarded as sacred. Hence the Tswana adage; "Motho ke Modimo" (the human being is Divinity) (Setiloane 1986:13).

An outstanding feature of the relationship between African communities and the Supreme Being was that his supremacy was never doubted, and that he was never perceived to have competition in the form of a Counter Force which vied for the control of human life and nature. He was not feared but revered. He was regarded as the giver of talent through the living dead - the ancestors - and so the poets who were the chosen of the ancestors, were entrusted with the responsibility to strengthen the bond between all these strata of life - the people, their chiefs, the ancestors and nature - and the Supreme Being. The poets were not only intercessors between people and their kings on the one hand and between kings and ancestors on the other, but they, like the tellers of tales, were also educators. The role of poets and folk-story tellers as educators is discussed further in chapters four and five respectively.

From the above paragraphs it is clear that pre-literate communities in Africa did have a literary culture, which was linked quite closely to their religion and their world view. Evidence in the Bible shows that, apart from the fact that they were not literate, communities in Africa were not very different from those communities out of which the Bible came and from those who accepted its teachings. Examples of this evidence would, inter alia, be the myths about the origin of human life and nature, the origin of the different languages of the world, as well as the tendency to give genealogies of leading figures in stories.

And this then, was the Africa to which missionary societies in the West sent their representatives.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MISSIONARIES AND THE FORERUNNERS OF XHOSA LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to outline the role of the missionaries in the birth of modern Xhosa literature, and how the forerunners of Xhosa literature reflected the dilemma in which the Xhosa literary artists found themselves. It is also to show how the link between the school, the church and literary production served to aggravate this dilemma. The forerunners of Xhosa literature referred to here are the poetry, essays and short stories that appeared in the newspapers. W.B. Rubusana's *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini* will also be treated in this chapter, since its appearance in 1906 signalled the advent of a new era in Xhosa literary production. The reason the newspapers have been preferred as a point of departure is that it is in them that the disappointment surfaced of the educated Xhosa with the position in which Christianity and education had put them. It was also in the newspapers that the converted and literate Xhosa began to use their ability to write in furthering the aims of the Christian mission, thereby forming an alliance with the missionaries who used the newspapers as a platform from which they attacked not only Xhosa culture, but also those Xhosa converts who appeared to be straddling the two worlds by not forsaking Xhosa culture in its entirety and live by the standards set by the mission and the mission school.

As the first novel appeared in 1909 with the publication of H.M. Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* poetry written after this date will not be treated in this chapter.

The treatment of these fore-runners of Xhosa literature will be carried out against the background of a brief description of the socio-political consequences of the advent of the missionaries. This description will not include any chronological detail on the individual missionaries' work. Emphasis will be confined to the collective socio-political effect of their work.

3.2 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF MISSIONARY WORK

When the London Missionary Society was founded on 21 September 1795 its most outstanding founding principle was "sending Missionaries to the heathen and unenlightened countries" to take "the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to the heathen" (Shepherd 1940:2). Shepherd describes this founding principle as:

...one of the numerous tokens... of the largeness of mind and spirit characterising the fathers of the modern British missionary movement.

1940:3

Thus despite what has been said in paragraph 2.7 above about the religion of the pre-literate communities, the "little company of ministers" who sat in Baker's Coffee House, Change Alley, London, on 4 November 1794 and in "Castle and Falcon" Aldersgate Street on 21 September 1795, believed that the concept of a Super Being was unknown to these communities, and therefore considered it their sacred responsibility to go and bring it to their knowledge. This misconception which Shepherd sees as one of many "tokens of largeness of mind and spirit" was destined to result in the worst contradictions in the lives of the Xhosa (and indeed of all Africans) and to be the most significant factor in the disintegration of the Xhosa society and in the collapse of those pillars that had hitherto held them together - the pillars of cultural and religious heritage.

When the first missionary to minister among the Xhosa, Dr Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp, arrived in 1799, two wars had already been fought between the Xhosa and the White colonists - one, the First Frontier War, in 1779 and the other, the Second Frontier War, in 1793. The relations between the Xhosa and the White colonists were characterised by sporadic skirmishes whose frequency had so escalated that the task of converting the Xhosa into the Christian faith had to be carried out within an atmosphere which had rendered the Xhosa somewhat distrustful of the White man.

This distrust is dramatised in Rubusana's *Zemk' iinkomo magwalandini*, in debates between the Christians and non-Christians. Initially the colonial government officers were sceptical about the presence of missionaries among the Xhosa and part of this distrust resulted from

some of the things said by these officers and colonists to the Xhosa about the missionaries. But later evidence of collaboration between the missionaries and government officials intensified this atmosphere of distrust even further.

One of the stipulations that was set up by the Glasgow Missionary Society as the "best mode" by which missionaries had to introduce the Gospel into "a heathen land" was "that, as circumstances admit, they should devote a part of every day (the Sabbath excepted)

...to acquire such knowledge of the language of that country where they minister, that at last, by the good hand of their God upon them, they may be able to translate some parts of Scripture into it, beginning with the Gospel of John, and some of the Psalms, as the XXIII, LXXII, CX and CXXI.

Shepherd, 1940:26

This stipulation showed that the Society realized the centrality of language to the success of the mission to convert the Xhosa into the Christian faith, but little did they know, when they laid it down, that they were planting the literary seed that would yield, *inter alia*, Xhosa literature. Thus on arrival

...in Kaffirland (*sic*), or some time before arrival, the missionaries would apply themselves to the acquisition of the Kaffir (*sic*) tongue. It would appear that by the early forties most of the missionaries...had a working knowledge of the language, being able to preach in it.

Williams 1960:201

However, initially missionaries had to rely on speakers of the Dutch language who could speak Xhosa for interpretation. This meant that they first had to learn Dutch. The situation was far from satisfactory. Williams sums up the communication crisis as follows:

By and large the interpreters were a poor lot, spiritually and otherwise. They were usually people who had at some time or another had some association with missionary institutions, both inside and outside the colony. Intellectually they were mediocre, and in character they left much to be desired.

1960:198

He goes on to cite, as an example of this intellectual mediocrity, John Witbooi, interpreter to Shrewsbury, who was described by the latter as

a man of imbecile mind, and from the weakness of his understanding, he was frequently involved in the most childish disputes, and too often gave way to tempers that were trying to the missionaries...

ibid.

Whether these complaints and accusations were manifestations of the missionaries contempt for the intellectual capacity of those who were not of European descent or of their ingratitude, is not our concern here. Their significance for our purposes here is that this situation compelled the missionaries to resort to the use of "Native Agents". Even though the missionaries had managed to acquire skills in communicative Xhosa as a result of immersion into the communities of their converts who had been won over to the mission villages, it still remained necessary to train Xhosa agents for reaching the hearts of the Xhosa. The importance of "Native Agents" was clearly explained in the Glasgow Missionary Society Report of 1827 which said of the first two such agents, Robert Balfour and Charles Henry:

They can say to their fellow-countrymen, "We have felt the power of what these men declare!" They are acquainted with all the associations and springs of action which lie hidden in the bosom of a Caffer (*sic*) from the eye of a stranger, and therefore are enabled to wake up many a sympathy and come upon them by many a mode of appeal which foreigners could never employ.

in Shepherd 1940:77

Thus literacy became a key factor in the success of the convertor in his mission to make his message reach as wide an audience as possible. The agents had to be able to read from the Book and interpret it to their fellow-countrymen, and on the other hand it became crucial that it be made possible for the latter to acquire literacy that would enable them to read what was put out by the missionaries with the co-operation of the Xhosa agents.

The education of the Kaffir (*sic*) was as essential to missionary success as the mere preaching of the Gospel and thus Thomson insisted that the Native Agents should teach as well as preach. But he was aware that an untutored person might do more harm than good, and it appears that during the second half of 1825 and the opening months of 1826 he withdrew Robert Balfour from service, encouraging him to attend - with other "promising" Kaffirs - a "course of learning" which would better equip him for the task ahead.

Williams 1960:204

By 1829 there were three Xhosa agents preaching and teaching in the Amatola Basin and the Kat River area, with Charles Henry and John Burns having joined Robert Balfour. They were each placed at one of the mission stations of Tyhume, Lovedale and Balfour. Thus the years between 1823 and 1840 saw the missionaries of the Glasgow Missionary Society at pains trying to convince the Directors of the Society that there should be opened in "Kaffirland" a training centre with a view to increasing the number of "Native Agents." The three types of helpers needed were schoolmasters, interpreters and exhorters (or readers). The latter would eventually be allowed to qualify as ministers (Williams 1960:206). The culmination of these efforts was the birth in 1841 of Lovedale Seminary,

and the dominant impulse was the realization that it was essential to provide willing but wanting Kaffirs (*sic*) with the elements of an education in order that they might assist in the promotion of Christianity.

Williams 1960:107

From this it is thus clear that in introducing schooling, the missionaries were not motivated by any knowledge of or hope for any resultant material benefits which would accrue to those who were to go through the schooling process. Schooling did not hold any promise of compensation for those for whom it was started, nor was it ever intended to do so. On the contrary, the biggest motivation initially was, first and foremost, the success of the mission to bring the "glorious Gospel of the Blessed God" to the acceptance of the "heathen". This had to be so, since the Directors of the Missionary Societies could measure the success of the missionaries in Africa only by the number of converts and by the extent of the proliferation of mission stations and out-stations in each region. Therefore Western education for the Black person in South Africa did not come out of any sense of altruism on the part of those by whom it was introduced. It was the interests of the initiators and their country that had to be served by the education of the Blacks.

There was another side to the mission of conversion for which schooling was a necessity. In order to facilitate the process of conversion, the converter had to embark on a very vigorous programme of changing the whole being of the convert or prospective convert, in order to rid him of all those aspects of his world-view that would, in the opinion of the converter, inhibit unequivocal acceptance of the new faith. This meant that schooling had to be also a process of transforming the converts into new beings, something which required complete severing of ties with their old world - new values, new beliefs, new hopes, new

needs and new aspirations. In fact the success of the mission of conversion depended on alienating the converts from their cultural values, their religious values, as well as from their national aspirations. Although this alienation later manifested itself in a multiplicity of forms as history unfolded further, resulting in the grips of Christianization and colonization getting tighter and tighter, initially it was the kind which Abramson says applies

... to all states of being that appeared to stress man's isolation from his fellows, from his own creative activity and from nature, and which placed him in thrall to unseen forces that determined his actions.

1989:71

The converts were enthralled by the fear of spending their lives after death not with their ancestors, but "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." This form of alienation found apt and symbolical concretization in the gently and discreetly enforced requirement that the converts forsake their old places of abode to settle within the precincts of the mission station, because:

To the missionaries it seemed they would ask too much if they expected converts to live a Christian life amid the down-drag of their heathen environment.

Shepherd, 1941:57

In this report is to be found the discreteness of the requirement, for the physical severance by the converts of ties with their world was presented as if it was for their convenience, when in actual fact it was for the convenience of the converter. It secured the quick transformation of the whole being of the convert. The result of this plan was that as early as 1827, Thomson was able to report to the Glasgow Missionary Society that:

A neat little village has been formed, inhabited by those who a little while ago roamed the world at large, as wild and savage as their neighbours, the lions and the tigers of the forest. They imitate us in all things - even in their dress; and now beads and baubles have fallen in the market, and clothes are in demand. The bullock's skin dress is laid aside. Others of the people begin to imitate our people in their building, gardening, dress and manners. If you except the black faces, a stranger would almost think he had dropped into a little Scotch village.

Shepherd, 1941:67

Despite the eagerness with which the converts were persuaded to forsake their communities, and despite the satisfaction reflected in the above report by Thomson, there were no indications that the converter would be ready to accept the convert as his equal after

completion of the conversion process. The post-conversion agenda did not extend beyond the use of the converts in getting more converts. Neither did the converts themselves at first feel any need to inquire about this aspect of the mission. The new faith was accepted in good faith, without any suspicion that such acceptance would not earn them full acceptance into the world of those who preached the brotherhood of men, and that instead, it would earn them rejection by those they had elected to leave behind in the "down-drag of their heathen environment." This rejection, together with the realization that the converter was not ready to accept them as his equals, developed in the converts a sense of double consciousness, the pangs of which became more and more severe as the demands of the new life exerted more and more pressure on them to despise the old self, and as the true meaning of mission work and its relation to conquest were becoming clearer and clearer. The twoness inside the individual convert was projected outside by the new names that were given "to the converts...mostly in honour of prominent Glasgow citizens." (Shepherd, 1941:81). This is how Noyi came to be Robert Balfour, after the first secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society. The double consciousness that resided within the individual convert was nowhere else more clearly illustrated than in the case of Robert Balfour. He was one of the first five converts to be baptized at Tyhume Mission on 29 June 1823 and who were regarded as the "foundation of a church in Caffraria." He was the first "Native Agent", but by 1831:

He had not laid down "his native indolence..." He was a fractious and unco-operative individual, refusing the directive of Presbytery to move from Chumie to Balfour in 1829. In 1834 he took up arms against the Colony when the war broke out...During 1842 he was associated with passive resistance against the missionaries at Lovedale. In 1845 he was censured by the Presbytery for "unjust and oppressive" behaviour in appropriating the property of one Joubert (a Hottentot).

Williams 1960:208

Another example is Jan Tshatshu who had to be excommunicated after taking part in the War of Mlanjeni.

The foundation of this double-consciousness was in later years explained in a question asked of Dr James Stewart, principal of Lovedale, when he was giving a lecture. The question was, "Can you make a black man white, and still have him black." (Stewart :) Developments outside the mission village showed that the converts could do nothing to get

rid of their double consciousness. Instead more and more Xhosa, forced by their position of helplessness which resulted from the triumph of the colonialists' military might, found their way into the mission villages and into the new world in which acceptance depended on one's readiness to reject one's old self and become a tool in the hands of the converter to win more converts. Thus the mission villages' communities became inevitably, communities of hopefuls whose disappointment with their new life was matched only by their knowledge that there was no turning back.

The mission station became a concrete symbol of this double consciousness. The school, which was born out of the mission village, became an extension of this symbolic double consciousness. The school education was intended to supplement the church education in its goal to transform the "heathen" to a Christian and make him the more usable in the perpetuation of the conversion process. Stewart summed it up thus:

The essential aim of Lovedale is to Christianize, not merely to civilize. The conversion of the individual soul to God is the result of the highest value, is our greatest anxiety, and is regarded as the aim most worthy of effort, and to which other efforts are properly and justifiably subordinate.

ibid.

A lighter side of this twoness is cited in Shepherd (1955:25) when he tells of a Sunday service held in the open-air at Gwali when some racing oxen went past. "To some of the worshippers," he says "the temptation proved too great, and they went off in haste to see the result."

While the mission to convert the Xhosa into the Christian faith was in progress, the process of colonization was also gathering momentum. Resistance to colonization resulted in a series of further wars between the Xhosa and the British troops. A feature of these wars that reflected one of the consequences of missionary work was that it was left to the unconverted Xhosa to continue the struggle against land dispossession. These were the so-called "hostile Natives." Although there were cases who disappointed the missionaries by taking part in the wars against the Colony "along with their unbelieving countrymen" (Shepherd 1942:84), the Christian converts were the "friendly Natives" who fled with the missionaries from one place of safety to another. Right from the beginning the missionaries

had been under pressure to prove to the colonial government authorities that the fruit of their labour would not be militant Xhosa, but loyal Christian subjects of the British crown.

This division of the Xhosa, coupled with the triumph of the British military might, had tragic consequences for the authority of the Xhosa chief. As more and more people defected to the mission villages and, as more and more land was taken away from the jurisdiction of the chiefs and placed under that of the magistrates representing the colonial government, the chiefs gradually lost their authority over their subjects. This authority finally came to an end with the flight of Sarhili and the sad death of Sandile during the ninth and final war of resistance of 1877. It is worth noting that Lovedale, through the *Christian Express*, advocated the drastic reduction of the power of the chiefs, claiming that:

the gigantic evil to which all the chronic insecurity and warfare was due was chieftainship with its crimes of murder, lust, inquisition for witchcraft and grinding tyranny which had made the continent a den of misery for ages.

Shepherd, 1940:191

However, although 1877 marked the final crushing of military resistance by the Xhosa, this did not mean the final triumph of Christianity over traditional Xhosa religion, nor did it result in the narrowing of the gap between the newly-created community of Christian converts and that of the unconverted. The bitterness of the latter against the missionaries and their converts still continued and got worse. The converts were objects of immeasurable hatred of the unconverted. At times these would get so bad that the converts would hide their true identity, remembering the day in 1847 when Sandile said that "only the worst type of death was good enough for the inhabitants of the institutions" (Williams 1960:327). The non-Christians clung as vehemently as they had been doing hitherto, to their arguments that their ancestors did well without Christianity and that it deprived them of country and nationality and that they could not be party to it because "with all its numerous and endless forms worship is a punishment imposed on the Jews because they crucified the Son of God." (*The Christian Express* March 1871). The final destruction of the Xhosa military might and resultant social and political disintegration as well as the emotional insecurity, opened the way for the missionaries to double their labour to Christianize and civilize the Xhosa.

From a literary point of view the significance of the year 1877 is that from then on (up to 1960) the pen had to replace the spear as a means of resistance. Defeat in the battle fields meant that it was left to the intellectual to carry on the fight. But the intellectual of the time, while witnessing the ravages of colonization, was constrained, partly by his Christian principles and partly by the fear of betraying his mission alma mater by being on "the wrong side". But disappointed and dissatisfied, he was. His problem of reconciling this disappointment and dissatisfaction with the obligation to his community was aggravated even further by the fact that these could be expressed only through a medium whose control was invariably in the hands of the missionaries - the newspaper.

3.3 THE NEWSPAPERS

As we have seen from the preceding paragraph, one of the most significant consequences of the advent of missionaries was the birth of a literate section of the Xhosa society. It was for this section of society that the missionaries started newspapers written in Xhosa. It was from it that contributions to newspapers would come. Although these contributions spread out to encompass many other issues that affected the lives of the Xhosa, as time went by and as the people were becoming aware of the helplessness of their situation, the overriding aim of the establishment of newspapers, from the missionaries' point of view, was to promote the "Spiritual Enlightenment of those for whom it is specially designed" (*Indaba*: January 1862). In line with this aim the first issue of *Isigidimi samaXhosa* stated that the newspaper would "represent no denominational body, but the causes of the missions generally and the interest of the native people." Because *Isigidimi samaXhosa* was the successor of *Indaba* at Lovedale, it can be assumed that "the interests of the native people" referred to here did not include their political interests, but those mentioned in the first issue of *Indaba*, namely "Mental Improvement; Social Elevation, and above all Spiritual Enlightenment..." With regard to their political interests it was stated:

In every department, local and party politics will, as far as possible, be avoided.

This founding principle of Xhosa newspapers was very significant, coming as it did, from the owners of the means of production; and it was destined to have on Xhosa literary

production an effect that would linger for decades, haunting literary artists even long after the missionaries' departure from the publishing scene.

Although in the preceding paragraph we have said that the final defeat of the military forces of the Xhosa meant that the responsibility to carry forward - by means of the pen - the struggle against colonization fell on the shoulders of the intellectuals, it took the latter quite some time before they took advantage of this newly-created medium to make some restrained murmurs of discontent with the government. Instead, the initial contributions to the newspapers by the literate and Christian Xhosa were in the form of tirades that betrayed group self-deprecation which was characterised by self-pity. The contents of their contributions reflected a society that had turned its back to its former religion, glories and virtues, a society that saw nothing good about its past existence; and whose sense of gratitude to the missionaries blinded it to the negative side of missionary work and to the positive side of life before the advent of Christianity. Although it was clear that land dispossession, the collapse of communalism, the breaking up of family unity by movements to the labour centers, the growth of slum settlements in these areas, alienation from those who ruled and many other factors, had resulted in numerous forms of social and moral degeneration, earlier writers of articles and letters to the newspaper failed to raise even a murmur of complaint against those that were responsible for this new social situation. All criticism was reserved for the victims of the new order. Excessive consumption of liquor, absconding from work, polygamy and such other cultural practices as circumcision and girls' initiation (*intonjane*) became the most regular targets of this criticism. The sale of liquor by White traders and the factors that drove people to excessive drinking, conditions of work and treatment of workers at the workplace were spared all criticism. The following extracts from two letters to the editor of *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, are typical examples of the barrage of verbal missiles that were launched against the behaviour patterns of the Xhosa. The irony of letters and articles of this kind was that the majority of their targets, perpetrators of these "sins", could not read:

1. Kulungile bazalwana ukuba kuthethwe ngezinto ezibonakalayo, noko ngathi ziluchuku. Ewe zilulo, kodwa ke ikwazezi nto ziluchuku ezifisa umsebenzi kaThixo. Unyanisile uW.K. Ntsikana ukuthi aba bantu balukayo bayazibangela ngokwabo inkathazo, abenziwa mntu; basuke bacaphuke bakukhathazwa ngabalingane babo, bakuthetha apho bakhona ngokwaluka ...

John Mahaley (*Isigidimi 30 June 1872*)

(It is correct dear brothers that we should talk about things even though they may be sensitive. Yes, they are sensitive, but it is these sensitive things that destroy the work of God. W.K. Ntsikana is correct when he says that the people who go for circumcision have themselves to blame and nobody else; because they get embarrassed when their friends talk about circumcision in their presence)

2. Kwabakolobhayo eBhayi

Shiyani abantu abathembekayo ezindaweni zenu xa nisimka eBhayi. 'Msani ukuhlala iinyangana ngambini nibuye nimke besaqala ukunihela abeLungu. Le nto abeLungu baseBhayi bayakhala ngayo. Bathi abanye kulunge ngaphezulu ukuqesha amaLawo, wona angamana emka njengamaXhosa. Umntu wangaphandle ngoku uza kuqeshwa ethandatyuzwa ngamanene athanda ukugcina izicaka, ngale nto yokufika ngoMarch, asebenze uApril noJune emke ngoJuly, abuye ngoAugust emke ngoOctober ... Azifuneki ezi zijungqana nala manqakwana ezikolobho: athiyiwe nangabeLungu. Thina bantu baziwa kakhulu ngabeLungu apha eBhayi siva into embi. UmLungu uthi ngokusazi asicele ukuba simfunele isteady boy, uze uthi wakuthumela iboy yaseKafile ...

Isigidimi samaXhosa, May 16 1884

2. To those who take up jobs in Port Elizabeth

Please leave reliable people in your jobs when you leave Port Elizabeth. Don't stay for just two months in the jobs and then leave when the White people are beginning to get used to you. The White people of Port Elizabeth hate this. They say it is better to employ Coloureds, because they don't move in and out of jobs as the Xhosa do. It is now going to be difficult for someone from outside to be employed by gentlemen who like to have servants, because people come in March and work April and June and then leave in July, and come back in August only to leave again in October. Those short spells are unacceptable and White people hate them. And we who are very well known to the White people feel very bad about this. Sometimes a White person who knows you asks you to get him a steady *boy* and then when you send a *boy* from Kaffirland ...)

Looking at these early contributions today, it is difficult to make out whether the contributors were merely trapped in the tradition of these newspapers, or were convinced that they were part of the converter's society or were merely writing to please the missionary. However, as one reads further and begins to witness the change in the tone of these contributions, it becomes clear that the contributors were in fact trapped between two conflicting universes. Historical developments outside the mission village showed that the process of colonization had no intentions of making a distinction between a Christian and literate Xhosa on the one hand and the unconverted and illiterate one on the other. The

literate and Christian Xhosa were dissatisfied with these historical developments as well as with the attitude of the newspapers, but could not openly express this dissatisfaction in the newspapers for two reasons - one being that they were constrained by their attachment to the missionary programme, and the other, that the newspapers were owned by missionaries. Thus, even in the 1880's during which the African witnessed the final resolution of the scramble for the colonization of Africa through the Berlin Congress of 1884, their disappointment and frustration which were now approaching their water-mark, could find only very limited expression in the articles, letters and poetry that were sent to the newspapers. The extent of the African's disappointment and frustration caused by the ruthlessness of the new order did not find full expression in these media. But what is significant is that the anger, the disappointment and the frustration of the African had by this time welled up so high that he was compelled to relieve them by sending in snippets of protest to the government authorities and the missionary controllers of the newspapers. Even these, however, met with vicious censorship as the following letter to the editor of *Isigidimi samaXhosa* shows:

...indawo endingayo yile yokungathi phakathi kwe*Sigidimi* nabafundileyo abaPhesheya kweNciba, akukho kubukana kakhulu. Isizathu ngathi sesi - uluhle olufundileyo luthi ubuhlanga be*Sigidimi* alubuqondi. *Isigidimi* sibuthuntu malungana neendaba zolawulo. Imvo yaso ingakwabaMhlophe, ngohlobo lokuba athi ovakalisa ngaso umoya ongecala elintsundu, simqondise ukuba akanguye owasekhaya. Umfo owakhe wabuzela uLangalibalele wathi esavele ngempumlo ihagile samntywilisela buphuthu-phuthu phantsi kwamanzi okuthi cwaka; wathi owathi leyo nkosi yibhokhwe ilwa nendlovu wabekwa, nentetho yakhe yahlokoma kwimilomo ngemilomo encomayo. Ngathi luthi uluhle lwakowenu ngezi mini zeemfazwe eziphela kade noxolo olufutshane luphe ngexesha elifanelekileyo, ubude nobubanzi nobuphakamo beendaba zasebandla. Kanjalo, tshayela ibala lamadoda anezimvo ngezimvo azixoxele kulo iindaba ezayamene kangaka nentlalo-ntle yawo kwanaye wonke umntu oNtsundu ukuze size kuyazi into esiyenzayo. Kuloo nkundla kovala amaciko, neembongi zohlanga eziya kubonga ngecala lethu nangelinye icala.

April 1883:4

(...I am discussing the hostility that exists between *Isigidimi* and its readers across the Kei. The reason would seem to be this, that the younger intellectuals say they can never make out the true nationality of *Isigidimi*. *Isigidimi* never takes up a clear stand on political matters. Its sides with the Whites, for whenever a writer voices the feelings of the Blacks, *Isigidimi* immediately makes him understand that he belongs to the side of the enemy. For instance a writer who tried to put in a word for Langalibalele (a Hlubi chief) was quickly immersed under the waters of silence: while another writer, who expressed the idea that Langalibalele was a mere goat trying to fight against an elephant was given

praise and his words were echoed far and wide. In these days, when the nation is sickening to death, in these days of long-lasting wars and short-lived peace, it is demanded of you by the youth of your fatherland that you give them the length and breadth and depth of national news. Moreover, it is demanded of you that you make a clearing that you have to keep clean for men of conflicting views, so that in this clearing they may discuss all the matters that so affect the welfare and the welfare of all the Blacks. Only then shall we know what we are doing. As a result of this practice, there will emerge in this clearing national orators and bards, some praising our side, and others praising the other side.

(A.C. Jordan's translation.)

Some of the letters of this nature were murmurs of protest against the social and moral degeneration that resulted from industrialization, living conditions in the labour centers as well as the dangers to which people were exposed at the work place, some of which led to loss of life. The tone of despair and sadness that pervades the following letter written to the editor of *Isigidimi* by a mine-worker at De Beer's New Rush, Diamond Fields, underscores the extent of misery the Black people were thrown in by the new situation:

Iindaba zalapha kukwenzakala imihla yonke. Yathi enye indoda yagilwa yinqwelwana yamashe, yeyela apho kumbiwa khona. Yayinxilile, isebenza kodwa ... Izinto endizibonayo apha zininzi... Enye into kubhubhe umntu apha kaMr A. Welsh, waseBedford. Lowo mntu wayenxilile kuqala, waza waya kukhathazana nabanye abantu. Ubehleli ndawonye neLawo, kuloonkosi yakhe; belimsonga iLawo lisithi, "Mus'ukuhamba unxilile," wathi yena, "Hayi, andiyi kukhathaza mntu." Liphendule iLawo ngokuthi, "Hamba uye kulala," kanti akayanga. Uthe wangena endlwini yamaLawo, wakhathaza abafazi bawo, bamngxolisa, wada waphuma. Uphume apho wangena kwenye indlu wafika kukho indoda nomfazi, indoda iphethe isingqusho. Yaselibetha indoda leyo ngaso entloko wawa, yabuya yaphinda imbetha kwangaso entloko. Ndinazisa ububi bentlalo yalapha. Yonke imihla ihlala inengozi, kusifa abantu. Kunjalo nje sisemaweni. Kufudula kusithiwa siziimfene; ndiyayingqina ukuba sizizo, ngokuba sijinga kwakusasa ezintanjeni sixele iimfene eweni.

W. Folisa 30 June 1872:7

(The news here is daily injuries. One man was hit by a horse-cart and fell into a ditch. He was drunk, but at work... I witness many terrible incidents here. One man, an employee of Mr A. Welsh from Bedford, has died. He was drunk when it all started, and so he went about bothering other people. He lived at his employer's place with a Coloured who had said, "Don't go out because you are drunk," and he said, "I'm not going to bother anyone." The Coloured said, "Go and sleep, please." But he did not do that either. He went into a house owned by Coloureds and bothered their wives, who had to reproach him before he could leave. From there he went into another house and found a man and his wife; this man had a wooden pestle. He then hit this on the head and knocked him down, and hit him once more while on the ground. I'm telling you about how bad life is here. Every day witnesses an accident, some of them fatal. Our lives are

hanging precariously on a precipice. It's been said we are baboons; today I accept that indeed we are, when I look at the way we dangle on ropes in the early mornings, like baboons on a precipice.)

Although here we shall focus on poetry and prose (stories and essays) contributions to the newspapers, it is clear from the letters quoted above that the significance of the letters to the editor cannot be emphasized enough when dealing with the role of the newspapers in the development of Xhosa literature. To the extent that most of the poetry came as tail-pieces to letters and articles, letters to the editor can stake a claim to being the real forerunners of Xhosa literature. For our purposes here, the significance of the letters to the editor is twofold: First they signal the kinds of themes that were to dominate the creative works of future Xhosa writers, such as the themes of education, religion, effects of urbanization, the ravages of excessive liquor consumption, and others. Second, as they reflect the dilemma of their writers in dealing with the disappointment and frustration they experienced, they signal the strategies that future creative Xhosa writers would adopt in dealing with this problem.

In his letter above, uHadi Waseluhlangeni, for instance, presents the dissatisfaction of the "readers across the Kei" in the form of a report. In this way he himself stands outside this group of dissatisfied young intellectuals. He places himself in the position of an observer who is not implicated in this issue. Moreover, the first part of the letter - not quoted here - deals with a topical issue, namely the use of English adoptives in Xhosa when dealing with concepts for which Xhosa has no lexical equivalents. This enhanced the contribution's chances of acceptability as an item of public consumption.

W. Folisa, in his letter, also does not seem to be overtly putting the blame on anyone's doorstep, when he portrays the miserable life he witnesses every day at De Beer's New Rush. On the contrary, his letter, on the surface at least, seems to suggest that those whose lives are miserable, as well as those who lose their lives, have themselves to blame, because they drink excessively and they steal. However, the last sentence encapsulates this writer's feelings, and once his readers have succeeded in decoding the metaphorical language used in this sentence, they are left in no doubt as to at whose door-step he puts the blame for all this misery and loss of life. "It's been said that we are baboons, and today I accept that

indeed we are..." The ambiguity of this sentence provides the writer with a screen behind which to hide his disillusionment, and even anger, with the Black people's new situation of "enlightenment." The ambiguity of the sentence lies in the fact that the writer could be interpreted as saying that the drinking and stealing mentioned in his letter make him agree with those who have said "we are baboons," while he could also be interpreted as saying that, because of the treatment meted out to the Black people, he has no doubt that the tormentors of Black people sincerely believe that the life of the latter is not worth more than that of a baboon - "...we dangle on ropes in the early mornings, like baboons on a precipice" is obviously a reference to the risk of death that a mine-worker faces daily. There is therefore some vicious sarcasm in Folisa's letter which is directed at the exploitative and dangerous conditions under which people work and live.

A writer to the editor of *Imvo zabaNtsundu* uses the scriptures in pleading for the release of Xhosa chiefs and other prisoners of war that were confined in Cape Town, during the Queen's Jubilee. This plea is backed up by quoting from Leviticus 25:10 where "the Lord spake unto Moses in Mount Sinai, saying:

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."

26 May 1886

The editor of *Imvo* was so impressed with the writer's skill in voicing an issue that was of great concern to the Xhosa, that he covered it in his Editorial Notes column which was written in English. He supported this writer unreservedly, citing in his argument the example of the Jubilee of George III in July 1809 during which prisoners were let free, and ended by saying:

If Kreli and UMDitshwa (before he died) could be peaceably settled, surely the magnanimity of our Government may be extended to the wretches now on the Table Harbour Works.

Ibid.

Another feature of the letters to the editor was that on the whole, the writers preferred to use pseudonyms. Some of these names were suggestive: Lilazingasulwa (Crying-without-comforter), UHadi Waseluhlangeni (The Harp of the Nation). In doing this, these writers

were drawing from the Xhosa culture of naming by which people expressed their inner feelings regarding any situation through the names they gave to their children. Sometimes this practice extended to nicknames and to the names of dogs, cattle and horses. Whatever the reasons were for the use of these pseudonyms, it would not be far-fetched to speculate that this practice was a result of, inter alia, writing between conflicting universes. It may be that the writers did not wish to stigmatize themselves in the eyes of their local ministers and magistrates, both of whom expected undivided loyalty to the British Crown which had to be manifest either in silence or in public praise. However, despite this dilemma,

Those who had accepted the teachings of the missionaries were no longer blindly optimistic about the motives of the White man. All this, and more, is reflected in the writings of the sixties to eighties of the last century.

Jordan, 1974:54

Thus, as their eyes became more open, some realized how tenuous their position had become. The reality of the White man's motives was coupled with the reality that the destruction of the Xhosa military might had shifted the responsibility of nation re-building to the intellectuals. Literary production that succeeded the letter to the editor reflected how the writers wrestled with this tenuousness. In grappling with their position, writers took a variety of positions: some steered off political issues; others addressed them indirectly and a few addressed them directly. However, all were aware of the socio-political disintegration of their society that had resulted from conquest and industrialization. These positions were reflected in the poetry that was sent to the newspapers.

3.3.1 Newspaper Poetry up to 1909

The Xhosa newspapers before *Isigidimi samaXhosa* did not publish any poetry. The first contribution in a newspaper appeared in the *Isigidimi samaXhosa* of 1 September 1871 sent in by J.A.C. (most probably the Rev. John A. Chalmers). This was a two-verse piece mourning the death of the Rev. Tiyo Soga, who had died at Thuthura on 12 August of that year. The piece ran thus:

Wavuleni amasango ngamasango
Yenzi banzi indlela yenkosi
Waphumeleni onke amazibuko
Zikhawuleze iindaba zikaYesu.

Zibikeni kwiintlanga empumalanga
 Zibikeni kwiintlanga entshonalanga
 Nakwezo ziseNode mazivakale
 Nakwezo ziseSude mazivakale.

(Open all the gates
 And make wide the path of the Lord,
 Cross all the bridges/drifts
 And let the gospel of Jesus spread quickly
 Make it known to peoples in the east
 Announce it to those in the west
 And let it be heard by those in the North
 And by those in the South.)

Although this poem did not have anything to say about the Rev. Tiyo Soga, it was a significant contribution in its own right. It set the scene not only for the type of themes that were to dominate poetry contributions for many years to come, namely, death and religion, but also for the style of writing that many contributors would attempt to follow, namely, the use of stanzas and rhyming lines. It also represented the third step taken in the appropriation of the literary creative art of the Xhosa for use in the diffusion of Christianity. The first had been the adoption and use of Ntsikana's song and the subsequent composition and use of hymns in communal and family worship; the second was prose narrative.

The poems that were sent to the newspapers can be thematically divided as follows:

- (a) illness and death
- (b) religion
- (c) people
- (d) current issues
- (e) events and
- (f) nature

The line between our categories here is, on the whole, very thin. Poems on illness and death on the one hand and those on religion on the other could be grouped together, since, as can be seen from the above example, writing about the death of an individual offered the writer an opportunity also either to preach to the living or reminisce about the religious life of the deceased. Events too, invariably involved people. The above categorization is

merely for expediency, based more on premise than on content, since writers pegged a variety of issues on poems, which, from their titles, seemed to fit one of these categories. For instance, a contributor to the *Isigidimi samaXhosa* of 1 August 1872 sent a poem entitled "Ngaselwandle" (At the seaside) - the only nature poem in this newspaper and in *Imvo zabantu* up to 1909. After marvelling at the enormity of this "attractive" but "awe-inspiring" wonder of nature for the first four stanzas, he devotes stanzas five, six and seven to the Creator who can still this monster. He diverts with a series of rhetorical questions such as:

Xa ke wen'ungaka
 Ungakanani na
 Lowo unguMdali
 Owadala wena
 Kwaneziny'izinto.
 Low'umthobelayo
 Xa esithi zola?

(If you could be this mighty
 How mighty then must be
 The one who's your Creator
 And of other things.
 The one you obey
 When he says be still?)

However, there was something common among poems in these categories. They were pervaded by the mood of the double consciousness that had gripped the Christian section of the Xhosa society. As Jordan (1974:63) observes, this poetry reflected a society that was at the cross-roads. The fullness of life that Christianity promised was attainable only via a path that was completely "incompatible with tribal life and institutions." He goes on:

To the semi-literate one, the new road, though preferable, is misty. He is not far removed from the old ways as not to be attracted by them. The intellectual has a clearer understanding of both roads. He prefers the new, but is keenly aware of the changing attitude of the conqueror. The fullness of life that was promised him is not to be realized in the foreseeable future.

ibid.

An admission of this double-consciousness was once cryptically voiced by a delegate at a church conference in 1883. In June 1882 I.W.W. Citashe advocated that a petition be sent to the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, requesting the release of chiefs who had been

imprisoned (*Isigidimi*, 1 June 1882). This delegate, the Rev. Mzamo, felt like singing praises to Citashe for his bravery in initiating this noble action. However, he could venture only five lines as he feared that, "Ndakuthi ndakubonga nithi wenzani n' umfundisi" (*Isigidimi*, 1 July 1883) (If I sing praises, you'll say what is the minister up to now). From this, it can be inferred that praise-singing, which invariably was a public performance at gatherings, was one of those activities that had earned the censure of the missionaries because of its association with the heathen world. Consequently it became taboo for Christians, let alone ordained ministers of religion, to perform praise-singing. This inference cannot be far off the mark, if it is remembered that praise-singing revolved mostly around the chiefs and other heroes and heroines as well as significant events in the history of the people, and that it had the effect of making people the more keenly prepared to dedicate and rededicate themselves to the upholding and protection of all the values personified in these heroes and heroines of the nation. As also a vehicle of religion and religious expression, to the missionaries this would have meant refusal to embrace the new world and therefore an impediment to the success of their mission.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Rev. Mzamo's utterance is the extent to which it reflects the burden borne by an individual who is driven to being an extension of this suppression machinery by engaging in self-censorship. A poem sent to the *Isigidimi samaXhosa* of 1 March 1873 by an anonymous contributor whose use of language shows that he was not Xhosa, also supports this inference. The title of the poem is "Okwakudala nokwanamhla." In it the writer, in very unsavory and patronizing language, condemns every aspect of Xhosa life before conversion to Christianity, and his exaggerations betray lack of understanding of Xhosa value systems. Chiefs and those who sing their praises were not spared in this tirade, as the following lines show:

Mbongi weenkosi ezindala, masive siqonde kaloku, Xela siwev'amathuba;
zazibongwa ngani na?

Manxa zidlwengula ngamandla, manxa zibulala ngomsindo:
Ngexesha zadla abantu, manxa zibawela iinkomo:
Zibiz'isanuse ngasese, saxel'umphakath'osityebi:

...
Khumbul'ukudliwa kweenkomo, khumbul'
ukubelwa komgwetywa.

...
Mbongi weenkos'ezindala ziindawo zokubongwa na ezo?
Babongi beenkosi ezindala!

Hina! Ngasekuphathweni kwabantu nxa sebedadala?
 Begotywa minyaka mininzi, umzimba ushwabene:
 Ooyihlo nxa sebaluphele khebeva inceba yini na?

(Singer of the praises of the chiefs of old, lets hear,
 Tell us clearly; wherefore were they praised?
 For being malicious rapists and for their brutal murders:
 For the fines they imposed when craving cattle:
 For conniving with the diviner, so he points at a rich subject

Remember the fines in cattle, remember the attachments
 that amounted to theft

...
 Singer of praises of the chiefs of old, are these worthy of praises?
 Singers of praises of the chiefs of old!
 Nay, what of the treatment of the aged?
 Bending under the weight of years advanced, wrinkled all over:
 Your fathers in old age, did they ever taste compassion?)

This explains the reason for there being only one poem about a chief in *Imvo zabaNtsundu* between 1883 and 1909, and none in *Isigidimi samaXhosa* until its discontinuation in 1888. The poem in *Imvo zabaNtsundu* of 14 November 1895 is about Sixhaxha (A! Mantanzima!) Sandile, iXhonti laseBholo, who died on 10 November 1895. Like many other poems in newspapers, it was a tail-piece to an article that was announcing his death. This poem is one of the significant examples of the twoness that had developed within literary poets, and indeed all literary artists who made use of newspapers. The son of the great Sandile Ngqika, Matanzima had distinguished himself as a military leader during the Ninth Frontier War of resistance (Imfazwe kaNgcayechibi), and his success at Draaibosch, referred to later, had made him very popular among the Xhosa. The writer of the article starts in an apologetic manner by stating that he does not wish to write an obituary, because he does not consider himself to be the right person to do that. However, later in the article he acknowledges, as though unconsciously, the bravery of this chief and the very significant role he played in the war of Ngcayechibi, and he describes how he always "lent against his gun, day and night." He then tries to find a religious justification for praise-singing when he likens it to the gift of prophecy which was once given to Saul in biblical times. Yet the poem itself does not say anything about Chief Matanzima Sandile's achievements, but is confined to consoling "Umzi kaPhalo, owakuloMbombo nowakuloZala" - the Xhosa in general, and those of his regiment in particular. This poem contrasts quite markedly with

the one in Rubusana's *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini* which is a recording of Matanzima's praises by traditional poets. While the writer of the poem in *Imvo zabaNtsundu* is clearly shuttling between his true knowledge of Matanzima's achievements and his own obligation as a Christian not to praise the chiefs "of old", the traditional bard in *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini* does not pull any punches, as can be seen from the last line:

"Intw'ede yaf'ingazang' irhafe."

(The great one who refused to pay tax up to his death.)

It was S.E.K. Mqhayi who would not let his Christian principles take away his respect and love for Xhosa chiefs and chieftainship, in which was embodied the values of justice and democracy. His contributions to *Izwi Labantu* included tributes to Chiefs Sigcawu Sarhili and William Kama. Even his praises of the editor of this paper and of the year 1900 were characterised by allusions to chiefs.

The constraint which the newspaper poets displayed in dealing with the Xhosa chiefs and national issues that adversely affected the Xhosa nation, was in contrast to the relish and freedom with which they sang praises of the new heroes - the missionaries and the officers of the colonial government. Magistrates, missionaries, the English royal family, as well as Governors were the recipients of poetic accolades in the newspapers. These they shared with newspaper editors. Praises of the newspaper editors, especially John Tengo Jabavu of *Imvo*, were poems of defence and encouragement. Some defended him against "detractors", while others encouraged him on issues he raised in his newspapers.

The issues that were expressed in poetry contributions to newspapers were quite diverse, even though most of them seem to steer off politics. The translation of the Bible, the question of orthography and loan-words, the effects of language contact, education, and the ravages of liquor seem to have been the dominant issues that people wrote about. After 1880 some contributors began to raise issues of a political nature in their poetry. The first such contribution was the one sent in by I.W.W. Citashe to the *Isigidimi samaXhosa* of 1 June 1882, which we quote below:

Zimkile! Mfo wohlanga
 Phuthuma, phuthuma
 Yishiy'imfakadalo,
 Phuthuma ngosiba,
 Thabath'iphepha ne-inki
 Likhaka lakho elo.

Ayemk'amalungelo
 Qubula usiba,
 Ngxasha, ngxasha nge-inki
 Hlala esitulweni,
 Ungangeni kwaHoho;
 Dubula ngosiba.

Thambeka umhlathi ke
 Bambelel'ebunzi;
 Zigqale iinyaniso
 Umise ngomxholo
 Bek'izitho ungalwi,
 Umsindo liyilo.

(They are gone, lover of nation
 Give chase, give chase
 Leave the rifle behind,
 Give chase by means of the pen
 Take paper and ink
 For that is your shield.

Your rights are going
 Grab a pen,
 Aim, aim with ink
 Sit on a chair,
 And do not go into the Forests of Hoho;
 Fire with the pen.

Slant your head
 And support the forehead
 Take heed of the truth
 And face reality
 Be cool and do not be aggressive
 For anger is a spoiler.)

Although by today's standard this is a very conservative text, by the standards of its day it was quite radical even if only by reason of the issue it raised - the issue of the release of the imprisoned chiefs. While the writer is bringing attention to the loss of rights - civil and human - he calls the nation to battle. But it must be a battle waged by means of the pen. The irony of this call is that the writer cannot be explicit while he is making it by means

of the pen, and that is an indication that among the rights that are lost is the right to free expression, no matter what the medium. However, the most significant aspect of this poem is that it represents an admission by the educated that, now that resistance to conquest has been crushed, the responsibility for liberation and land recovery has shifted to them. The poem also set the scene for the kind of protest poetry that Xhosa poets were to write - restrained and metaphorical.

This poem was followed in the following year by a less restrained one from the pen of The Harp of the Nation (UHadi Waseluhlangeni). As if in response to Citashe's call, The Harp of the Nation, in a tail-piece to the article quoted above criticizing *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, contributed a poem in which he pulled no punches in attacking the ruthlessness of the British conquerors. This is the first part of this poem:

Vukani bantwana
 Bentab'eBosiko,
 Seyikhal'ingcuka,
 Ingcuk'emhlophe
 Ibawel'amathambo
 'Mathambo kaMshweshwe,
 'Mshwesh'onobuthongo.
 Phezulu entabeni.
 Siyarhol'isisu
 Ngamathamb'eenkosi,
 Ubomv'umlomo
 Kuxhaph'uSandile
 Ishiywe ngamendu
 Ngunyana kaHintsa
 Sisu sikaRhili
 Simhlophe kukrwelwa;
 Le nt'ukubaleka
 Kukufa, kusinda.

(Arise, ye sons of the Mountain-at-Night (Thaba Bosiu)
 The hyena howls, the white hyena,
 All ravenous for the bones of Moshoeshoe,
 Of Moshoeshoe who sleeps high up on the mountain.
 Its belly hangs heavy and drags on the ground
 All gored with the bones of warrior-kings;
 Its mouth is red with the blood of Sandile.
 It was shown a clean pair of heels
 By the son of Hintsa
 But the belly of Sarhili
 Is white with scratch marks

How dangerous it is to flee
It's a matter of life and death.

(First seven lines from Jordan's translation.)

The context of the metaphors of "hyena", "snake" and "mamba" suggests that the writer has no intention of keeping his readers guessing who he could be referring to. The atrocities perpetrated by the British, such as the killing of Sandile, highlighted the contradictions of the new world which the Xhosa Christians had entered. These contradictions brought out to the surface the twoness bottled inside these Christians, exemplified in this poem by the anger at the murder of Sandile and the homelessness to which King Sarhili was subjected by being reduced to a fugitive in his own land, as well as by the concern for the imprisonment of chiefs referred to in Citashe's poem above. This anger and concern were visible signs of suppressed loyalties and of hidden unhealed wounds of history.

The Harp of the Nation was disappointed - to the point of being angry - with the hypocrisy of those who called themselves upholders of civilization and Christian values. This drives him into seeing Christianity as a trap in which the Xhosa will spend the rest of their lives.

In a contribution to the *Isigidimi* of 1 February 1884 he wrote:

Andikholwa zizo zonke,
Iinkohliso zezi mini;
Siya kufa sirhawulwe,
Yivangeli encumayo.

(I turn my back on the many shames
That I see from day to day;
It seems we march to our very grave
Encircled by a smiling Gospel.)

(Jordan's translation)

Because he found it difficult to reconcile the belligerence of the British with the zeal with which they professed to be Christians from a civilized country, bringing light to a dark continent, he felt that adultery was preferable because:

To the adulterer
Children are born
While the slain
Never rise from death.

In this same collection *The Harp of the Nation* expresses scepticism even with the adoption of Western life style and culture, citing the manner of dress by ladies in particular. He pleads with the ladies:

Ningabophi amacala
 Ngeebhoslokhwe zabeLungu
 Umkhitha awuveli
 Kunyingeko lonameva

(Avoid these tight-fitting
 Bush dresses of the whites
 Your beauty does not come out
 For these give you a wasp-like figure.)

Feminists today would feel very patronized by this kind of poetry, which they would see as one of the many manifestations of male chauvinism. However, for our purposes here an even more serious aspect of this contribution is the extent to which it gives testimony to Jordan's observation that "...at this period the Christian African is at the crossroad" (1973:63). It depicts an African trapped between the convenience of the products of Western Civilization and the inconvenience, not only of being weaned from his own culture but also of the soul-destroying experience of witnessing the negative effect of embracing the denigration of that culture. The item of fashionable dress referred to here is seen as one of the symbols of imperialism and socio-cultural degeneration. In his *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka also echoes this view about the White man's items of dress being examples of how Africans can get trapped by cultural imperialism. He does this by his portrayal of his character, Lankule, the school teacher, whom he has dressed in such laughable manner that one of the characters calls him a "scarecrow" (Soyinka 1990:34). But the Xhosa poet dared not urge the "ladies of my nation" to return to "amajikolo" and "iincebetha", because:

On the other hand, he regards the tribal institutions as backward and only serving to delay this fulness of life for himself and his people.

Jordan, 1973:63

Another aspect of this contribution from the *Harp of the Nation* which is worth noting is that it was the first sign in Xhosa literary production that some Christians were beginning to realize that the African culture did not deserve all the denigration it was subjected to and that it was not entirely incompatible with Christianity and Western culture.

In the *Imvo Zabantsundu* of 28 January 1899 The Harp of the Nation sent a very long poem on the general election of 1898 in which he made reference to the bad treatment of Black people at the work-place, and said, among other things:

Sisebenza nangolophu
 Nangemvula nangengqele
 Singcwatyis' okwesele
 Sikrotyozwa ngoomatshini
 Siyakhatywa eskwatini,
 Sidl'ukudla kweengulube
 Kusiilume de sibhubhe

(We work in extreme heat
 And in the rain and in the cold
 And we're buried like frogs
 We are crushed by machines
 We are kicked at the lines
 We are given pig's feed for food
 Which upsets our tummies and even kills us.)

The most touching of these, however, was the one sent to the *Imvo zabaNtsundu* of 12 June 1906 by Bhozwa Buhele of Queenstown. It was a tail-piece to an article on miscellaneous news from this town. The last paragraph of the article was:

Impatho yelali igadalala; yhini na
 torho beLungu, bode baphumle nini na
 abantu bakowethu - Maskas. Bayachithwa
 nalapha eLocation ngaphandle kokunikwa
 iindleko zabo. Kunjalo nje kunzima,
 kunendleko ukwakha eKomani.

(Treatment in the townships is very
 ruthless; When, oh when, dear White people,
 will our people ever rest - my goodness!
 They are moved out of their houses without
 any compensation. Yet it is so difficult
 and expensive to build here in Queenstown.)

This is then followed by this short but very incisive description of the ruthlessness and hypocrisy of the White rule personified in its administrators:

Tarhu Nkantula!
 Nc' olumashiyi
 Masiza-mbulala.

Tarhu Nkantula!
 Vungul'aginye,
 Khaka kampethu,
 Qanda mqolo
 Tarhu Nkantula!

Cheba axhele
 Achebe nesikhumba
 Tarhu Nkantula
 Ngabantu loo nto.

(Mercy, mercy, Office
 You, wolf-in-a-sheep's skin
 Who veils murder in a mantle of passion
 Mercy, mercy, Office!

Devourer of everything
 You who may not be relied on
 Unscrupulous one
 Mercy, mercy, Office.

You shear and slaughter (you exploit thoroughly)
 You shear even the skin (you exploit even the poor)
 Mercy, mercy, Office
 Understand, we are also people.)

These, however, were lone voices in a wilderness of despair, because the majority of contributors continued to take refuge in issues of religion, illness and death and in singing praises of fellow-Christians and of the passing of the years. Some, like the one who called himself Ntengu, were even hoping against hope, that unity between Whites and Blacks was possible:

UmXhosa nomLungu makuvisiswane
 Mazikhandwe izikhali zibe ngamakhuba.

(Izwi laBantu 9 November 1897)

(The Xhosa and Whites should co-operate
 Swords must be beaten into ploughshares.)

Even Mqhayi himself who had displayed such great love and respect for the African heritage despite having embraced Christianity, still deluded himself into believing that "we are British" (*Izwi laBantu* 13 March 1900). The relish with which he describes the military

might of the British and the manner in which they vanquished the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War leaves the reader in no doubt about Mqhayi's admiration of the British and about his pride in being a British subject. In 1900 Mqhayi was only twenty five years old; as he grew older and gained in experience, he was to discover how misplaced this pride and admiration were.

The socio-political condition of the African, in the meantime, continued to get worse and worse and the division between Christians and the non-Christians was getting wider and wider. There was now no doubt on whose side the missionaries - most of whose sons had become magistrates over the Xhosa - were. The non-Christians' poets were unrestrained in expressing their dissatisfaction with British rule and British colonial officers. By 1902, when the Peace of Vereeniging ended the Anglo-Boer War (now sometimes referred to as the South African War) it was clear even to the most garrulous Christian and literate African that the Whites did not consider the African as worthy of acceptance in the partnership of governing. Their exclusion from the National Conventions at which the Union of South Africa was planned and agreed upon, was the last nail in the coffin of African optimism. Although these treacherous acts of the White ruling class provoked African politicians into action, such as the delegation to England and the formation of the South African Native National Congress (which became the African National Congress - ANC - in 1925), the reaction of some of the Xhosa literary artists manifested itself in some vain attempts to rescue the Africans. These attempts were two-pronged.

Realizing that a return to arms would be futile at the time, some of these literary artists targeted unity while others advocated respect for African heritage, by recording the achievements of traditional heroes and heroines of the Xhosa nation, as well as the genealogies of Xhosa chiefs and their praises. The latter were published in Rubusana's *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini*. Stories and essays that were contributed in newspapers were later included in W.G. Bennie's *Imibengo*, published in 1935, and Rubusana's collection.

3.3.2 Newspapers Stories and Essays

One of the leading contributors of short stories and essays to newspapers was Tiyo Soga who wrote as UNonjiba Waseluhlangeni. His first contribution was about Gxuluwa, a Xhosa who distinguished himself as an accomplished hunter, who succeeded in outwitting the Bushmen who had ambushed him and his companions while they were skinning a buffalo. The story's focus is on the mental alertness of Gxuluwa who eventually killed his captors.

The collapse of the authority of the chiefs and the contempt of the Christians for the person of the chief did not escape the attention of Tiyo Soga who was concerned that such an attitude was not only making the task of converting the non-Christians difficult, but also was in conflict with the injunction of the scriptures. In the *Indaba* of June 1864 he contributed the essay on "AmaKrestu neenkosi zeli lizwe" (Christians and Chiefs in this country). While Tiyo Soga's emphasis here seems to be on the reconcilability of earthly sovereigns and governments with the kingdom of God, it is clear that he is disturbed by the extent of the gap between the Christian and non-Christian Africans. He, like Mqhayi in the next century, was disappointed with the contradictions in the mission of the British. An essay he contributed to the *Indaba* of June 1863 drew attention to the contradiction of the link between the mission to convert the "heathens" and the capitalist interests of the White people. In the essay on "utywala" (liquor), he indicts the White people for bringing about the social degeneration in the African society through sale of liquor and the proliferation of liquor stores (White-owned) in African villages. He observes that hitherto unknown disgraceful behaviour patterns have become part of life among the Xhosa (Intselo yotywala ivelise namanye amanyala abengaziwa emaXhoseni...."). These crevices in the moral edifice of the African community were in stark contrast with the gains that were made by the White traders from the sales of commodities that satisfied the new needs that Western civilization had created among the Africans. Tiyo Soga mentions "iingubo zeengcawa, noozibhulukhwe, noozibhatyi, iminqwazi, iipuluwa, nemihlakulo yentsimbi, izixengxe, izihlangu, ikofu, iti, iswekile, izonka zengqolowa" (blankets, trousers, jackets, hats, ploughs and steel spades, axes, shoes, coffee, tea, sugar, flour bread).

Writing an introduction to A.C. Jordan's *Towards an African Literature*, Lindi Nelani

Jordan says of Tiyo Soga:

Tiyo Soga's writings do not reflect the cries and anguish of the African people, but rather an exhortation to the people to join the new society...

in Jordan, 1973:ix

The harshness of this observation is understandable, but unfortunately, inaccurate. It is, however, significant, because it is an indication of the vulnerability of writers who write being between two worlds, between hope and despair. Tiyo Soga was fully aware of the gaping wound of the African society which was received from contact with the West through the colonialists and the missionaries. He was aware of the lost values of "ubuntu", as can be seen from his essay on "Amakholwa namaqaba" (The believers and the pagans), but he dared not explicitly pronounce this the consequence of the encounter with the Whites. On the other hand the elite were generally groping for remedies for the wound of African society. The reality of the socio-political situation of the Xhosa was that the pen had become mightier than the sword. This did not make the task of writers any easier, because in those days the call to education had become inseparable from the call to Christianity. Although the biggest problem facing the Xhosa society was lack of unity between the two sectors - Christian and non-Christian - it was clear that there was no return from Christianity. Therefore some writers advocated the reconciliation of the two worlds. While still embracing Christianity, they initiated a search for true African identity and a return to African values and attacked the individualism of the new order. Stories were contributed outlining the history of the Africans such as "Amakhosi akwaZulu" and "ukukhula kukaZulu" by Vimbe (*Indaba*, June and December 1864 respectively), "Imbali yaseMbo" by Gqoba, "UNokhonya" by W.K. Ntsikana, and many others, all of which gave a picture of a people with a respectable history and achievers. It was in this context that Rubusana announced in the press that he intended to publish an anthology of poetry and stories, and invited contributions.

3.4 ZEMK'IINKOMO MAGWALANDINI

In paragraph 2.5 an attempt has been made to draw a picture of the Alexandrian society - the Hellenistic society. The effect of Christianization and colonization of the African society approximated that of the conquests of Alexander. The spirit of communalism was overtaken by individualism; the chief's great place had lost its power to hold the society together; industrialization, especially the mining industry, and urbanization had created a centrifugal African society; the church and the school had become concrete symbols of a divided society, the prison that of subjugation and the shop and the liquor store those of Western capitalism. This situation, together with the political connivance of the British and the Boer, as has been observed above, provoked some Africans into political action. From a literary point of view the significance of this situation is that it gave rise to what can be called literature of assertion. *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini* was the first example of such literature. In it Rubusana included contributions on the history of the Xhosa, on anthropological topics, on the history of Christianity and Ntsikana Gabha, previously published stories from newspapers and others from individuals, Xhosa proverbs and poetry in general. The most significant feature of this book was that it included what the editor referred to as "izibongo zamaqaba" (poetry of the pagans). This obviously is reference to the praises of the chiefs that he either collected himself or received from other people. He notes that the explicitness of these praise singers may be found objectionable by "the educated whose modesty makes them reluctant to call a spade a spade." It is quite significant that Rubusana, in his introduction, says that the reason poetry dominates his book is that in it (poetry) is contained all the oratory of the Xhosa as well as the richness of their language. The significance of this lies in the fact that it was felt that the restoration of the respectability of African languages had to be part of the self-assertion programme, especially in view of the fact that in some quarters the vitality of these languages was perceived as uncertain. It was believed that these languages would not be able to withstand the pressure exerted on them by the European languages. Even with *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini*, according to what Rubusana says in the preface of this collection, there was pressure that it be written in English, but Rubusana resisted, as that would be a contradiction of the spirit of its compilation.

The content of the praise poetry in this collection was in stark contrast with that of most of the newspaper poetry before it. While the latter poets shunned any allusion to the dignity of African royalty, the tribal bard, as Jordan calls these poets, did not only celebrate the dignity of the institution of chieftainship and the heroic achievements of the individual chiefs, but, in the true fashion of traditional praise singers, he also pointed out their weaknesses, as well as the objectionable aspects of the British - of which there were many.

In the praises of Sarhili Hintsa, reference is made to his banishment to the Bomvana across the Bashe River where he was taken care of by the Bomvana chief Moni, son of Ntshunqe.

The latter is also thanked for this:

Ude wanceda mhlophe kaNtshunqe
Umntwana'enkosi ukumnik' indawo yokuhlala.

(Our thanks to you son of Ntshunqe
For providing His Majesty with shelter.)

This word of thanks is in fact a sharp criticism of those who brought about the homelessness of such an important figure as the king of all the Xhosa. Until the advent of the British, homelessness was unheard of among the Xhosa, let alone a homeless king.

The Xhosa had been accused by the Whites of enslaving the Fingoes with a view to creating division between these two groups, despite the kindness with which Hintsa received them and his instruction to the nation that they be treated as brothers and sisters. The bard who praises Sarhili responds to this accusation and defends Sarhili's action of 1877 against the Fingoes and says Governor Frere should not intervene on their side, because "they are being chastised by their father who gave them protection when they came." The issue of the Fingoes is brought up again in the praises of Sigcawu, Sarhili's son. Although the Fingoes were always blamed for being ungrateful collaborators, the bard indicts Ngqika for opening the way for the British to divide the Xhosa:

Hay'uNgqika owanqand'umLungu!
Owabeth'amaMfengu ahamba ngegunya
Asiphangele kade asing'emandleni
Uyabona ke ilizwe aligqibile.

(What a pity Ngqika brought the White man
Who made the Fingoes arrogant
Now they have robbed us of power
And now they are all over the country.)

Respectable and popular though Ngqika was, the Xhosa always remembered that it was because of him that some Xhosa fought as allies of the Whites against Xhosa in the Fifth Frontier War of 1819, and that it was he who signed the land away in treaties he entered into with the British without consulting his superiors. But the headmen, Xhosa and Fingo, who were installed over the people by the British, also did not escape the attention of the bard who urged that their authority should not be recognized:

Ningab'izibond'ezi niyazibulisa,
Ezi zamaMfengu nezasemaXhoseni,
Ziyawugqwetha lo mhlaba kaPhalo.
Zifumen' abantu ngoNgcayechibi.

(Let it not be that you salute these headmen,
Be they Fingo or Xhosa
For they turn Phalo's land upside down,
They got people through Ngcayechibi

(i.e. their authority was given them by Whites after our defeat in the War of Ngcayechibi)

The traditional bards paid tribute to the chiefs who distinguished themselves with bravery during the wars of resistance to the British conquest. Maqoma Ngqika is described as "ingwe kaFuldayis'eMthontsi", because of the way his army routed Col.Fordyce at Water Kloof during the War of Mlanjeni, and as "umafel'esiqithini kwesomLungu", because he died as a prisoner at Robben Island. The metaphors and hyperboles used by the bards to describe the courage and the military achievements of the chiefs were even taunting their opponents, the British soldiers and their allies, who were shown to be vulnerable at times, despite being in possession of highly advanced (by the standards of those days) instruments of warfare. Sixhaxha (A Matanzima), one of Sandile's sons, with the help of Makinana, attacked and repulsed the police and soldiers when they clashed at Draaibosch (Meintjies, 1971:291). It is obviously a reference to this when the bard says of him:

UNkanunu eyaduma kwaMathole,
Abalek'amagwal'eza kweli lizwe
Abalek'amagwal'aphaphatheka.

(The Cannon that sounded in the Amatola basin
 Causing the cowards to flee to these parts
 Running like men possessed.)

The inclusion of the praises of cattle and horses and the description of traditional marriage in Rubusana's collection indicates that culture was recognized as one of the necessary anchors of unity and national stability. The juxtaposition on the one hand of these, the praises of the chiefs from which could be gleaned the history of the nation and proverbs from which could be gleaned the Xhosa's philosophy of life, with the poetry of the literate poets on the other, makes for a symbolical pattern of the vision of Rubusana and those with whom he shared it. Contributions from the literate poets included praises of ministers of religion and poems from newspapers. Notable contributions came from the pen of the late W.W. Gqoba, from whose family the editor got his unpublished works, the most important of which were the debates between a Christian and a non-Christian and the one on education. Both these debates are reminiscent of Plato's presentation of Socrates' exposition of his ideas. This juxtaposition indicated belief in the view that the values of the two worlds could very easily enrich one another, and could therefore be plaited into a cord of harmony that could bind Africa and the West together. It is as if the editor is focussing on equality, but being mindful of the responsibility to nudge his people to the awareness that such equality would be achievable only if contact with lost values is re-established. This could be done only through a process of disalienation and what Wole Soyinka calls "a continuing process of self-apprehension whose temporary dislocation appears to have persuaded many of its...irrelevance" (1990:xi).

It was on 20 September 1899 when Christianity met the Xhosa, in the persons of Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp and Ngqika Lwaganda Mlawu respectively (Shepherd, 1941:8). Thus more than a century had elapsed between this event and the publication of *Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini*. "Away go the cattle, ye Cowards" is Mahlasela's translation of this title (1982:7), and "Preserve your heritage" is Jordan's (1973:40). There are various ways in which this title can be translated, but what would be common to all of them would be the urgency of the action to which the people are called. The "cattle" are the lifeline of the Xhosa, bound so inextricably to their economy, religion and military might. "Cattle" here is synonymous not only with self-determination, but also with land propriety and even with

being itself. To label the Xhosa "cowards" is to invoke the kind of national pride that Napoleon must have invoked to the Spaniards when he called them "a nation full of monks".

But of what effect could this call be? The reality of the situation was that the odds against these lone voices were too much, especially given the fact that even the chiefs had by now been turned into civil servants of His Majesty's Government. Political and economic designs of the colonialists militated against their accepting the African as an equal partner.

The struggle was destined to be long and hard; but unfortunately from a literary point of view the regiment was wanting in numbers and resources. The means of production - the press and funds - were in the hands of those opposed to artistic and cultural development of the African. It is for this reason that Rubusana's collection did not survive long in its complete form, but only in its abridged form from which poetry has been excluded.

Thus literary production to which Rubusana's collection gave impetus reflected literary artists who were grappling with the dialectics of their inner world on the one hand, and on the other, the dichotomy of the worlds between which their art had placed them.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF THE XHOSA NOVEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter it has been observed that the encounter of the West with Africa yielded a society that was reminiscent of the Hellenistic society described in paragraph 2.5 above. Education and literacy opened the way to a new form of literary expression, and so, traditional literature which had dominated the earlier period mainly in the form of prose narrative and praise poetry, now existed side by side with its Western counterpart, modern literature. The result of this co-existence was that the vitality of traditional literature was threatened because the younger sister from the West was tied to a culture that was made stronger by the fact that its bearers, as we have seen above, were far more advanced in man's struggle to harness the natural world. On the other hand traditional literature was linked to a culture that was now seen to be unworthy of further existence because of its association with pagan practices.

As has been seen in chapter two above, the African literary artist tried his hand in this new form of literary expression and went beyond the newspaper short story and embraced another and longer form of prose narration - the novel. This new vehicle of literary expression, he thought, would enable him to convey his true response to the new socio-political situation, thereby continuing to perform the traditional task of his call as a literary artist. However, the missionary who owned the means of producing this art and whose loyalty was inalienably linked with the British Crown, harnessed these literary skills for the promotion of his mission. In doing this, he took full advantage of his position and virtually put iron weights on the artist's writing hand to ensure that the African artist never had a free hand in the practice of his art. Thus, as if the centralization of literary productivity was not enough, modern African literary produce was put through a very fine-meshed funnel through which nothing could pass that had potential to promote sentiments that would pose a threat to the mission to Christianize and to the imperial designs of the British Crown. The effect

of this was to alienate creativity from practice, and to drive the literary artists to political reticence.

It was in this context that the Xhosa novel was born. The Xhosa novelist had to grapple with this situation and devise strategies of refining the particles of truth so finely that they could go through the mesh. In this chapter we shall look at the novels that were produced during the fifty years from 1909 to 1959. In doing this we shall look more closely at the various positions the novelists took in responding to the conflicts of their respective inner worlds and the morbidity of the external world they shared. The novels of this period include the following:

1909	<i>Uhambo lukaGqobhoka</i>	H.M. Ndawo
1912	<i>UThandiwe wakwaGcaleka</i>	L. Kakaza
1914	<i>Ityala lamawe</i>	S.E.K. Mqhayi
1918	<i>UNomalizo</i>	E.S. Guma
1922	<i>UNomsa</i>	G.B. Sinxo
1923	<i>UNozipho</i>	S.V. Mlotywa
	<i>UZagula</i>	J.J.R. Jolobe
1924	<i>Umzali wolahleko</i>	G.B. Sinxo
1927	<i>Umfundisi waseMthuwasi</i>	G.B. Sinxo
1929	<i>UDon Jadu</i>	S.E.K. Mqhayi
1931	<i>UNolishwa</i>	H.M. Ndawo
1934	<i>Kuphilwa phi?</i>	B.A. Bangeni
	<i>UMandisa</i>	V.N. Swartbooi
1937	<i>UNomathamsanqa noSigebenga</i>	H.M. Ndawo
1938	<i>UJujuju</i>	Z.Z.T. Futshane
1940	<i>Ingqumbo yeminyanya</i>	A.C. Jordan
1952	<i>UNtabaziyaduma</i>	L. Tsotsi
1953	<i>Intombi yolahleko</i>	E.F. Gwashu
1954	<i>Ikamva lethu</i>	D.Z. Dyafta
	<i>Inzala kaMlungisi</i>	W.K. Tamsanqa
	<i>Kufundwa ngamava</i>	M. Dana
1957	<i>Amasalela</i>	E.F. Gwashu
	<i>Hayi ke beth' iinto zomhlaba</i>	A.A.M. Mqhaba
1958	<i>Ukufika kukaMadodana</i>	S. Dazana
	<i>Kukhe kukhiwe iidiliya</i>	D.M. Lupuwana
1959	<i>Abantwana bethu</i>	M.A.P. Ngani
	<i>Elundini loThukela</i>	J.J.R. Jolobe
	<i>Izinto zodidi</i>	G.I.M. Mzamane
	<i>Umntu akanambulelo</i>	B.M. Bomela

Although this list defies classification, these novels will be considered under the following categories:

- (a) The existentialist novels
- (b) The novels of assertion
- (c) The idealistic novel
- (d) The socio-cultural novels

Therefore our treatment of these novels is not going to be chronological, but typological.

4.2 THE EXISTENTIALIST NOVEL

A representative of this category is H.M. Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* which appeared in 1909. It has been said that Ndawo in this book "shows a heathen finding Christianity after many battles with animals, elements and men" (Jahn, 1969:104), that "the work was heavily influenced by Soga's translation of *The pilgrim's progress*" (Scheub, 1985:556) and that "it relates the experiences of a person in his attempts to become a Christian" (Qangule, 1968:17). These, and other statements not quoted here, reflect the kind of attention this very important milestone of Xhosa literature has received from commentators on this literature. It does strike one today that despite its position in the history of Xhosa literature, this work has not yet received more than mere mention in two or three sentences. Groping for something more to say about the book than what has been quoted above, Qangule goes on to say:

This is a short book which gives a good insight into the causes which may contribute to the conversion of a Xhosa to Christianity.

(ibid)

Apart from the fact that the reader struggles to figure out what the writer is trying to say, the cynicism of the conclusion that the book is about "a Xhosa" is literary sacrilege that trivialises an otherwise very significant contribution to our literature. However, the worst "sacrilege" is that committed by Vilakazi who in contradictory terms would have his readers believe that Ndawo's story does not represent spiritual struggle, and claims that the work

outlines "an imaginative progress of a Native from heathenism to Christianity, through much struggle with wild beasts and men,...". Such "progress from heathenism to Christianity through much struggle" is spiritual struggle, because it is not physical. All humans who resolve to embrace Christianity, irrespective of their nationality, struggle to deal with the disorders of human existence. It is like suggesting that John Bunyan's *The pilgrim's progress* is about an Englishman seeking Christ. It is, however, possible that Ndawo was influenced by Tiyo Soga's *Uhambo lomhambi* (The pilgrim's progress) and that it is because of this that critics have paid fleeting attention to *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka*. On the other hand our view here is that in view of the social consequences of Christianization and conquest outlined in paragraph 3.2 above and in view of the similarity of the South African situation to that of the Hellenistic society, *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* could easily have been written even if *Uhambo lomhambi* had not appeared before it.

We take this view here because it seems to be the one that allows for a more penetrative analysis of this work, while it does not reject the influences of *The pilgrim's progress*. Also this view acknowledges Ndawo's capacity to respond analytically to his new situation. Moreover, this perspective helps in the universalization of the effects of colonialism, capitalism and Christianity.

Perhaps it may be necessary at this stage to explain why we classify a 1909 novel as existentialist when existentialism itself developed in the late 1920's. Our classification is not intended to imply that Ndawo was an existentialist, but that his work can be analyzed better in existentialist terms, in the same way that Christian existentialists have explained or analyzed the New Testament in existentialist terms. Our position here is that Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* is about human existence or, to be more precise, about how humans grapple with the understanding of life and death. Although this human endeavour can be traced back to the classical period to which we alluded in Chapter two, that will not be done here. However, when one is prepared to gloss over the terminological differences among the thinkers that have ventured explanations on this issue, one manages to find common ground on which views that have been expressed over the years, converge. That is that man is an alien in the objective world. Novack says of existentialism:

Existentialism, for example, teaches that alienation is built into the very nature of man as an enigmatic castaway on this planet.

1986:6

Novack goes on to say that whatever man may do to overcome the situation still, "born of an awareness of the meaninglessness of existence, he can find no exit from his fate" (ibid.). Christian existentialism, however, does not subscribe to the view that man finds no exit from his fate. Thus, here we wish to advance the view that *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* can be analyzed better in terms of Christian existentialism.

But before we look at Ndawo as a Christian existentialist (without knowing it, obviously), it is necessary that we first look at those factors that set people thinking more seriously about human existence. Although the view that man on earth is alienated is not difficult to accept, it is clear that the extent to which this alienation is pronounced depends on his life condition. In communalistic societies, such as the pre-literate African societies mentioned in paragraph 2. where members of society are bound together by common values and in which the emphasis is on the principle of "*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*", the individual is less likely to feel his "lostness" to a point where he agonizes over his existence and destiny. In the case of Ndawo's society the disruption of this order came in the form of Christianity and capitalism. As has already been remarked, individualism was one of the consequences of missionary work and industrialization among the Africans. It must be remembered at this point that Christianity was brought to the Xhosa by missionaries of the protestant churches, and some of these churches were puritan in orientation - the Presbyterian church being a notable example. Unlike the Catholics, these de-emphasised the concept of the communion of saints, and emphasised direct communication with God. They preached eschatology during which:

... the Son of Man will come in glory; there will be a judgement at which all must give account; the faithful will pass to their reward in heaven; and the wicked will receive their punishment in hell.

Macquarrie 1970:314

In this it is the individual who passes to the reward, and it is also the individual who receives the punishment. Thus Christianity has the effect of cutting the individual off from

the social whole. Because the advent of Christianity among the Africans coincided with the advent of capitalism, the process of cutting the individual off from the social whole was therefore two-pronged. Capitalism thrives on this because social wholes are inimical to it.

It was out of this situation that *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* was conceived and born. In it Ndawo gave expression to his view of existence in the light of this new religion and social situation. Prior to the advent of Christianity the philosophy of existence of the Xhosa did not leave any room for fear of what happened to one's being after death. Death was a passage to the community of ancestors, the departed of one's family or race. Qamata did not punish, and punishment by the ancestors was meted out during one's lifetime and would never extend to exclusion from the communion of ancestors. In the light of this new religion, which incidentally gave new answers to earlier questions about human existence, Ndawo, in pondering this question, comes to the conclusion that the story of Jesus Christ demands that new questions be asked about human existence and new answers be ventured. This is not surprising if it is remembered that even the views of such great thinkers as Plato and Aristotle had been challenged and rejected as a result of Christianity. Ndawo then comes to the conclusion that his religion, ancestor worship, has some gnostic gaps which Christianity was capable of bridging. This becomes clear when Gqobhoka says:

Ndiyakholwa nguThixo, mfundisi; ndakholwa ningekafiki kweli lizwe; ndandiswele umntu wolu hlobo ongandikhanyiselayo ngokufezekileyo, kodwa uNyana wakhe andimazi kwanoMoya lowo oyiNgcwele uthetha ngaye.

(I believe in God, Minister, and for that matter I believed in Him even before you came to this country; I, however, did not have someone to enlighten me more, but His Son, I do not know, nor this Holy Spirit you are talking about.)

p.70

So Christianity is not, for him, necessarily in conflict with the African's earlier religion, but is an extension to it. He shows this by first drawing a picture of almost untempered bliss:

Abantu belo xesha bekungekho nokuba bebethandana. Unyana ubemva uyise, unina, umkhuluwa wakhe nabadala kunaye. Intombi ibimazi unina, ihlonele nabanye abangengabo oonina. Umolokazana ubewuhlonela umzi ngentlonelo ephakamileyo, ebaphakamisel' aph' uyise noninazala engavumeli moya mbi ukuba ugene phakathi kwabo. Izihlobo ezilunge kulo mzi uyazazi, uziphakamisel' apha. Olu thando belusuke lwenze ukuba imizi ibe ziingqili; kusithiwa ukwahlul' imizi kukwahlula uthando nokunciphisa amandla.

Izithebe beziphambana kube luthuli, kungekho mfazi ungaphekiyo, ziqokelelana kwindlu enkulu. Abantwana bebhulela kwayisemkhulu bebaliselwa iintsomi ngamaxhegokazi angooninakhulu, zikhothana ezitshaba, kungekho kugxeleshana ukuthabathela komnci kude kuphathelele exhegweni. Ngaloo mihla ookhokho babenengqondo eyodwa; babesingethe amasiko angawo, phantsi kweenkosi ababelunge kuzo, ikratshisa into yokubona bewaphethe ngohlonele.

Ndawo (undated):1

(People at that time loved one another a great deal. The son was loyal to the father, mother and older brother and to anyone else older. The daughter obeyed the mother and respected the other people also. A young married woman showed the greatest respect for her new home; she held her mother-and-father-in-law in very high esteem and never allowed any ill between them. She extended this respect also to the relatives of her in-laws. This love yielded stable families; it was even believed that to cause divisions among families was to temper with love and to weaken stability. There was no want of food and all families were well provided. The children grew up under the watchful eyes of grand-parents who told them stories; the people supported one another and peace prevailed among the young as well as among the old; they observed their customs under the guidance of their respective chiefs, and it filled one with pride to witness this kind of respect for customs.)

He portrays briefly, but incisively, all the facets of this communal life: the division of responsibilities, the economic, the military, the recreational, the educational and the religious. However, this existence is not without disorders and the worst of these was the threat of war. This placed enormous strain on males whose arms always had to be nearby:

Ngexesha esilalayo besiqamela ngeentonga imikhonto, namakhaka ethu.

p.4

(At bed-time our sticks, spears and shields served as our pillows.)

Witchcraft was another which he mentions. It is for this reason that we have refrained from describing this situation as that of complete bliss. In addition to these disorders there is also the anxiety about death. It is feared, but the nature of this society is such that this aspect of being is never addressed: the communal structure makes it easy to push this matter under the carpet:

Ukufa besikoyika gqitha; bekunganyamezeleki ukuba umntu ahlale, alale apho isidumbu sikhona... Eyona nto iyiyo akukho bani ubesazi apho abafi baya khona kanye kanye. Bekungekho namnye othabatha inkxamleko yokusityhilela indawo eyiwa ngabafi.

p.5

(We feared death a lot; to stay where there was a corpse was unbearable ... The real problem was that no one knew exactly where the dead went. Nobody took the trouble to reveal to us where the dead went.)

He also identifies some polarities of human existence that characterized this society. The first polarity is the opposition between darkness and light, which is symbolized by night and day respectively:

Awona maxesha ayebalulekile mabini: imini nobusuku. Imini yaziwe ukuba yimini ngenxeni yokukhanya kwelanga. Ubusuku baziwe ngokuba busuku ngenxeni yokutshona kwelanga kusuke kube mnyama kuthi thsu.

p.2

(There were two very important times: day and night. The day was so called because it was the time of sunshine. The night was so called because it was the time of complete darkness that came because of the setting of the sun.)

These are later personified in Bumnyama and Khanyo who accompany Gqobhoka in his pilgrimage. This polarity is reminiscent of Plato's of the white and the black horse.

The second polarity is the opposition between the community and the individual. Community, as we have seen, is "intrinsic to existence and there could be no existence apart from it." (Macquarrie 1970:56). However,

Every existence is someone's own, each one looks out upon the world from the point of view of some particular ego and there is privacy about every existence. ibid.

This is to say that each member of the community is individually answerable for the manner in which he deals with the polarities of existence. Ndawo uses the dream element to bring out this polarity and to separate the individual from the community and set him on an expedition in search of his true selfhood. Traditionally the dream was the only direct line of communication between the individual member of an African communal society and the ancestors. This belief on the importance of a dream as a means of direct communication with ancestors is still strong today, even among Christians. Dwane (1979:27) tells of a minister of religion who, in times of trouble, would go to the kraal gate pillars (amaxhanti) and address his ancestors and appeal to them to "appear to him (bamvelele) and to show him the cause of umonakalo (state of disintegration)." Thus Ndawo uses a familiar device

to bring the individual to the awareness of the existential reality that he is individually liable to search for his true being in a power that lies beyond human existence itself. So because of a dream Gqobhoka, Ndawo's character, sets out on this pilgrimage which is in search of his true being. To achieve this he must succeed in dealing with the disorders of his natural existence that impede the attainment of spiritual existence. It is at this point that the readers are made to witness how faith helps man deal successfully with this polarity, for his society places enormous pressure on Gqobhoka not to undertake the pilgrimage. His friends were persuading him to join them in recreational activities, some think he is possessed, and his father believes he needs medical attention and consequently he (the father) consults a diviner to treat him, but the dream persists. In other words, his faith prevails. Discussing faith in his book Macquarrie (1970:68) says that faith is anchored on commitment and acceptance. However:

The man of faith, for his part, is not to be thought of as complacently anchored by his faith, for any faith worthy of the name will be subject to testing, and will not be a permanent possession but an attitude that has to be continually renewed.

Macquarrie 1970:71

Thus, once he has detached himself from the social whole of which he has hitherto been part, Gqobhoka's faith is put to a variety of tests. Ndawo concretizes these in the metaphors of animals, forests, rivers, snow and near-insurmountable mountains. But the "initiative of that toward which his faith is directed" sustains him, that is, "his quest for the sense of existence is met by the gift of a sense for existence" (Macquarrie 1970:75). Thus, as the individual progresses in his search for authentic human existence:

He experiences this initiative from beyond himself in various ways. In so far as it supports and strengthens his existence and helps to overcome its fragmentariness and impotence, he calls the gift that comes to him "grace".

ibid.

It is therefore by God's grace that Gqobhoka is able to withstand all the tests, and this grace which is God's way of giving himself in Christ and of encountering man in his hour of need, is the reward for faith. It is also a sign that man is drawing nearer to understanding the unification of his natural being with his spiritual being, that is, a "new understanding of both himself and of the wider being within which he has his being..."(ibid.). This point, according to Macquarrie can be called revelation.

Gqobhoka is made to reach this point by means of a dream and a vision. So Ndawo devotes the last two chapters of his book to the notion of revelation. In this dream is revealed the cosmic and individual destinies. Ndawo explains all the eschatological ideas here: judgement, heaven, hell, the kingdom of God and eternal life. His view of eschatology is that it will involve not only the individual but also the cosmos. (p.76). After the judgement, he explains, the righteous will be elevated to eternal life in heaven, and all the unrighteous will be banished to hell, "ube ke uyaphela umhlaba, neYehoshafate isithele." The concepts of trinity and resurrection are revealed.

To emphasize that man at revelation attains full understanding of his existence, Ndawo makes Gqobhoka have a vision in which the experiences of his pilgrimage are interpreted. It is at this stage that Ndawo expands another polarity in human existence, namely the opposition between responsibility and impotence. In simple Christian language, man is summoned to leave everything and take up the cross and follow Jesus. This is a responsibility which man may lack the strength and will to carry out, because "while the summonses of conscience may be clear enough, the will to obey this summons may be too weak" (Macquarrie 1970:58). The New Testament provides an example of this polarity when at Gethsemane Jesus uttered these words to three of his disciples who showed themselves to be impotent for the responsibility to keep watch with Him: "Keep watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41).

To illustrate this polarity, Ndawo juxtaposes the reality that in earthly terms one's manhood finds actualization in a woman and vice versa, and the existential reality that humans have the responsibility to find the fulfilment of their being beyond themselves. Like those who choose monastic life, Gqobhoka and an unnamed female character sacrifice life partners in favour of the search for true selfhood, while two couples (also unnamed) are impotent to make this choice, and therefore suffer the consequences. It is also significant that the author has decided not to name these characters. This emphasises the universality of human impotence in dealing with the polarities of life. Although in the context of feminist criticism we may agree with Mtuze (1989:38) when he says Ndawo has used these females to project women as the cause of man's fall, from an existentialist point of view it is

difficult to agree with Mtuze - especially if it is remembered that the "two co-pilgrims sent to hell because they succumbed to sexuality" were couples. It would seem that what is at stake here is human impotence irrespective of sex, because the other co-pilgrim who withstood the test was female. She also proceeded to her reward.

In concluding this section it may be necessary to explain two things: first why we said earlier that Ndawo does not see any discontinuity between Christianity and African religion of ancestor worship; second the position of *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* in a literature that we describe as being between two worlds.

In the dialogue that Gqobhoka had with his great-grandfather on the eve of his departure, Ndawo is obviously attempting to uncover the gnostic gaps in the religion of his community. This dialogue also shows this religion to be somewhat esoteric, to the extent that its deeper understanding seems to be the monopoly of the chiefs and the adult members of the society, such as Gqobhoka's great-grandfather. Besides these gaps - the genesis of man and the cosmos, life hereafter, the nature of the Super-Being - there is nothing in this religion that is said to be in conflict with Christianity. Therefore Christianity serves to fill these gaps in the same way that it did in the European communities resulting in a re-interpretation of widely held views about God and death, among other things. One example of this revisiting of old views is the Platonic view of the immortality of the soul, which was later superseded by the belief in resurrection.

A number of scholars in Black theology today support this view that there is no discontinuity between African religion and Christianity. They take the view that the two religions are mutually enriching, as can be seen from what is said by Dwane below. A number of the so-called charismatic churches who traditionally were known for their conservatism and their aversion to African customs, have today accepted that it is impossible to take away Africans completely from their customs.

It is also significant that Ndawo makes Gqobhoka go and get blessings from his great-grandfather before setting out (p.26).

Ndakuba ndikufezile oku ndisinge ngasebuhlanti ndiye kuthabatha iintsikelelo kwindoda endala.

(When I finished doing all this, I then went towards the kraal to get blessings from the old man.)

Equally significant also is the fact that Gqobhoka takes with him articles of clothing, his weapons and food provision from Mhlangeni. He takes *utshongo* (ground popcorn), *ingubo yenkomo* (ox-hide blanket), *ikhaka* (shield), *ikhohlombe* (spear-sheath) and *iimbadada* (sandals). All these are symbols of continuity between the traditional religion and Christianity. Praise poetry is sung throughout the pilgrimage.

One aspect of Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* which has consistently been overlooked by commentators on this book is that it is not merely theological in content. There is an aspect of the book which is a comment on the consequences of colonization. Because Ndawo knows that this is a sensitive subject which the missionaries wished to keep out of literature, he pegs it into Gqobhoka's narration of the dream he had after crossing the swollen river. In this dream he met White people. Some had rifles and others had the Bible. When he wakes up, the dream is interpreted to him by Khanyo. Of the White people Khanyo says:

...uhlanga oluya kuthi ngqo luze eMhlangeni luhlanga oluya kuba neengcwangu, oluthanda ukuhlasela kwezinye. Loo ntonga imnyama baya kuchitha ngayo into eninzi yezizwe; iinkosi zonke zeli ziya koyiswa lulo, zikhonziswe, budake ubukhosi bazo, kungabikho nceba yokubuphakamisa... Olu hlanga luya kuza lujonge into eninzi, kuba loba luvela kwimbandezelo enzima yempilo yeli lizwe. Luya kuthanda ukukhangela amalungelo alo kuqala odwa, lungandule lubanakele ntweni abemi beli. Luya kuxakwa kukulawula abantu abahluke kakhulu kowabo umbuso nombala.

p.78

(...the race that will come straight to Mhlangeni will be a vicious race that delights in attacking other races. With their black stick they will cause destruction among many nations; they will overcome all the local chiefs and subject them to their government, and the sovereignty of these chiefs will collapse and nobody will be sympathetic enough to revive it...This race will have their eyes on a variety of things, because of the hardships through which they have been. They will be selfish, concerned only with their own rights and privileges and they will not easily attach any importance to the rights and privileges of the locals. They will have problems with governing those whose form of government and colour are different from theirs.)

Here Ndawo is protesting the consequences of colonization: loss of civil and human rights, the ruthlessness of the new government, the destruction of the authority of traditional chiefs, racism, indifference towards traditional African values and government. But in doing this, he absolves the missionaries from implication in this political crime. Of the missionaries he says:

Kambe ke phakathi kwalo kobakho abaphethe umqulu, kulapho ukumiseleka kohlanga kofika kuvele khona.

ibid.

(However, among them will be some carrying the big Book, which is where the nation will anchor its stability.)

These, he says, will be kind-hearted people whose influence in government issues will, unfortunately, be very minimal.

Having thus absolved the missionaries Ndawo draws attention to the psychological consequences of Christianity.

Kothi umqulu wakufundwa kakuhle kubekho ukuphambana kwengqondo yemvelo ebantwini.

p.79

(Once the big Book is read thoroughly, man's mental faculties will be at the crossroads.)

In the preceding chapter reference was made to the twoness that Christianity gave rise to in the African communities. We would like to believe that in the above sentence Ndawo is referring to it when he talks of the mental faculties being at the crossroads:

Abantwana baya kuba ngabangevaniyo, izitshaba ziya kuthiyana, kobakho ukungevani phakathi komolokazana nabomzi wakhe, kophela uthando phakathi komfazi neyakhe indoda, iinkosi zingaziwa ngabantu bazo,...

ibid.

(Children will not see eye to eye, countrymen will have hatred for one another; a young newly-wed woman will not see eye to eye with her in-laws; affection between husband and wife will cease; chiefs will not get their due respect from subjects...)

While this may sound like a prophecy of doom, it is one of the reasons why we believe *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* is an existentialist novel. The situation described above is not that of chaos, but that of people who have just woken up to the reality of their individual liability to make sense of their existence. Having realized that he is an "enigmatic castaway on this planet", each is confronted with two choices. He either has to take the Sartrean position which considers the human being as a "useless passion" or to accept the Christian existentialist view that in order to succeed in making sense of his existence and in dealing with its disorders, he must have faith that his existence will find fulfilment beyond humanity itself. This latter group:

...baya kubhaphathizwa egameni loYise eloNyana neloMoya oyiNgcwele, babuye bazisule ngokuthi bagcine imithetho kaThixo, bamoyike bengazenzisi.

p.79

(...will be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; they will then seek solace in obeying God's commandments, and earnestly fear Him.)

The finitude of their existence will be eliminated at resurrection:

Ndiza kulala ubuthongo obukhulu bokugqibela emva kwala mazwi endikhuthaza abasaya kulima ilizwe eli. Ndilindele ixilongo lokugqibela eliya kusihlanganisela ngaseNtabeni yeMinquma...

p.92

(I am going to sleep the eternal sleep after these words by which I encourage those who are still to remain in this world. I am waiting for the last trumpet that will bring us all to Mount Olive...)

4.3 THE NOVELS OF ASSERTION

The two novels under this category are *Ityala lamawele* by S.E.K. Mqhayi and *Elundini loThukela* by J.J.R. Jolobe. These two writers are possibly the most written-about writers in Xhosa literature, as can be seen, for instance, from Patricia Scott's bibliographic sketch of Mqhayi. Of these two Mqhayi is the one who straddled the 19th and the 20th centuries, having been born in 1875. He lived until 1945. Of the prominent Xhosa writers, Mqhayi is the only one who had foresight enough to realize that posterity might need to know more

about him. So he bequeathed his autobiography, with the result that most commentators and researchers owe their insight into this writer to his *UMqhayi waseNtabozuko*. Therefore we shall here not say anything on his life as such. Instead we would like to look at how his historical environment contributed to the shaping of his socio-political ideas such as they emerge from his writings. As an educated person, he witnessed, through reading, how the West conquered the natural world. As a British subject he seems to have taken pride in being associated with a country with such an illustrious history, and a government that was perceived to be a model of true democracy. Advances in industrial and technological realms in Great Britain and the national valour that went into making Britain great were indeed very enviable.

As a Christian, he hoped this Christianity which he had embraced and the African traditional religion would blend together in a manner that would be mutually enriching. Mqhayi was an optimist, to a point of being an idealist, as we shall see in paragraph 4.4 below. Once in 1903 he wrote to the *Imvo zabaNtsundu* of 27 October on the issue of the relations between the Xhosa and the Mfengu. This was a very thorny issue and had been aggravated by the role of the Mfengu in the last war of resistance in 1877. Calls were being made by concerned individuals that "we should all be Xhosa, Mfengu and Xhosa." For Mqhayi unity was achievable without one group assimilating the other, for he wrote:

Makhe nditsho ndibuze ke, Mhleli nabalesi bakho, kanene kungenxa yokuba umXhosa neMfengu kungenako na ukuvana le nto isithethi siphikele ukuthi masibe ngamaXhosa sonke? Nantso ke kanye mnumzethu, le ndawo ndithi iyimposiso enkulu; kuba uMdali odale iintlanga ukwenze oko ngengqondo. Ke kaloku nina zithethi zakowethu nizama ukuphikisana naLowo ungaphikiswayo, ndikhangele nje; yiyo le nto ingafiyo le nto yobuhlanga isuke yasisilonda;

(Let me ask this question from you editor and from your readers: Is it because the Xhosa and the Mfengu can never co-operate that the speaker (writer) keeps on saying we should all be Xhosa? This, sir, is where I think we make a big mistake; because the Creator who created different races did that purposely. Now, you my countrymen, are trying to dispute the decision of the One whose decisions are never questioned; that to me is why tribalism which has now become a sore, has also become difficult to eradicate;...)

Mqhayi's argument here was that the identity of a people should be respected together with all that goes into making that identity. No race should undermine the existence of the others and want or force them to abandon their identity. He goes on:

UmXhosa makabe ngumXhosa, iMfengu mayibe yiMfengu,...kuviwane ke, kukhothwane ke sibe ngabazalwana noodade, sisebenza ilungelo leAfrika siyimbumba.

(Let the Xhosa keep his identity and the Mfengu his,... then we work together and support one another and be brothers and sisters working as a united front towards the realization of the right of Africa.)

One sees from this the broadness of Mqhayi's vision; he was not parochial, but thought in terms of the whole of the African continent, because of his awareness of the ravages of the fire of colonialism which was threatening to eat the continent up. What is more, in saying this to his fellow-Africans, Mqhayi was addressing himself to a wider audience: on the one hand he was calling Black Africa to unity; on the other, he was appealing indirectly to the colonizers that they refrain from undermining the identity of the African and all that goes into making that identity, because reconciliation of the two worlds was not impossible.

However, great disappointment was awaiting him. Having had a royal upbringing, he learnt to treasure the cultural heritage of the Xhosa, the language, the chiefs and the judiciary system. As any child who grew up at the Great Place, he had an insight into the history of the Xhosa and it was this insight that instilled in him interest in world history, the knowledge of which is discernible throughout his writings. Perhaps it was this sense of history that threw Mqhayi into the abyss that lay between his optimism and the despair that was created by the manner in which historical processes unfolded around him. In 1878 when the final battlefield defeat of the Xhosa was effected, Mqhayi was only three years old, but because he grew up to be one of the educated elite, the onus to re-establish Xhosa nationalism - the Black consciousness of the time - fell on his shoulders as well. The following are some of the historical events that, during his lifetime, served to drive hopefuls like him deeper into the throes of despair:

- 1885 The Berlin Congress
- 1886 Discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand

- 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War ended by the Treaty of Vereeniging, May 31, 1902.
- 1909 National Convention at which the Union was planned and from which the Blacks were excluded.
- 1910 (May 31) Union of South Africa
- 1912 (January 8) Founding at Bloemfontein of the South African Native National Congress (its name changed in 1925 to the African National Congress)
- 1913 Natives Land Act which prevented Africans from acquiring land outside of "reserves" then 7% of land area.
- 1914-1918 First World War and sinking of the Mendi
- 1918 Broederbond formed
- 1922 The Rand Strike of White mine workers Founding of the South African Communist Party
- 1936 Native Trust and Land Act by which "reserves" land was increased to 13%. Also elimination of African parliamentary voting rights.
- 1938 Centenary of the Great Trek
- 1939 Outbreak of World War Two

As it can be seen from the above list of significant events in his lifetime, as he grew older, his optimism found very little to anchor itself on. It is to his credit that up until his death he never abandoned the hope for a democratic and non-racist government in South Africa. His *Ityala lamawele* continued the initiative of Rubusana dealt with in chapter three above - to encourage the African to take pride in his heritage and also to convince the colonialists that Africans were a people with a proud history of democracy and justice. Although this novel may be said to be mainly about the judiciary system of the Xhosa and how democracy is realized in African communities, a significant aspect of this novel is how the author juxtaposes these with the contradictions of the British rule as manifest not only in the behaviour of its officers, but also in the attitudes of some of the missionaries. This can be ascribed to his disappointment which was caused by the evolution of historical processes as exemplified in the above events. Thus, in the fashion of Rubusana under whom he

worked, Mqhayi came out in defence of the African traditional values through *Ityala lamawele*.

In it he drew attention to the fact that the African was alienated from his culture, his chiefs and his language. From the introduction to the book, it is clear that he is concerned that attitudes towards the Xhosa language are far from healthy, and so he calls upon the youth of the Xhosa to consider seriously what next will collapse. This he ascribes to the Word and enlightenment that came with the "races from the West, the sons of Gog and Magog" (Mqhayi 1914:v). It is significant that in 1900 Mqhayi was saying, "We are British," but in 1914 he was calling the British the "sons of Gog and Magog." This shows the extent of his disappointment with the British. What then are the assertive aspects of this novel?

As it has been remarked Mqhayi focuses on language; that is, the importance of valuing and preserving one's language; the democratic nature of the rule of Xhosa kings and chiefs; the thoroughness of the judiciary system of the Xhosa; the communalistic nature of the Xhosa society; the role of the praise-singer in Xhosa society; the kindness of Xhosa kings as exemplified in the manner in which Hintsá received the Mfengu; the manner in which the aged are valued in Xhosa society, as exemplified in their role in this book. Of language and culture he says:

Intetho nemikhwa yesiXhosa iya itshona ngokutshona ngenxa yeliZwi nokhanyo olukhoyo, oluze nezizwe zaseNtshonalanga, oonyana babakaGogi noMagogi. Yindawo yomlisela nomthinjana wasemaXhoseni ukuba ukhangele ngokucokisekileyo ukuba iya kuthi yakutshonela iphele le ntetho nale mikhwa inesidima yokowawo kutshonele ntoni na emveni koko.

p.v

(The language and culture of the Xhosa are disappearing gradually because of the Word and enlightenment that were brought by the races from the West, the sons of Gog and Magog. It is up to the young men and women of the Xhosa to consider very seriously what else will disappear after their dignified language and culture.)

He goes on:

La ke ngamazwembe-zwembe okuzama ukuxhathalaza kuloo msinga uza kutshayela isizwe siphela.

ibid.

(These are desperate attempts to prevent this flood that is threatening to wipe out the whole (Xhosa) nation.)

In the previous chapter we have referred to social degeneration that resulted from industrialization and urbanization and the high rate of alcohol consumption as well as the collapse of the authority of the kings and the chiefs. It has also been shown how hard the missionaries worked to destroy the culture of the Xhosa. It should also be remembered that some European scholars were predicting that African languages would not be able to withstand the pressure of English and therefore would disappear. These statements and the efforts to promote English had a negative effect on the attitudes towards African languages. To Mqhayi all this was like a "flood that would wipe out the nation." The metaphor of the flood shows the extent of Mqhayi's concern at the ravages of westernization.

He then takes his readers on a sentimental journey to the days of Hintsa's rule and then takes them on a guided tour of this society, which to him is a microcosm of all African societies. King Hintsa is quite clearly his favourite. The extent to which he relishes regaling his readers with the majesty of this man is as if he is saying to the British imperialists: "Can you see how much you have destroyed in your greed and callousness." Readers are given a running commentary on the laws by which His Majesty King Hintsa ruled his subjects: the law of inheritance, the law of civil procedure, the law of evidence, the law of delict, the laws of births and deaths registration. He draws also a picture of the structure of the judiciary. What is more significant is the emphasis on the thoroughness with which cases are handled; and the role that the community plays in the hearing of court cases.

Mqhayi uses this thoroughness to bring out the richness of the culture he described as "dignified" in his introduction. We witness this when the king sends out messengers, first to Lucangwana and then to Khulile at Nqabarha. There is security on the way, but more important than this is the kindness with which travellers are showered as they pass through the villages. When the King's messengers went to fetch Khulile from Nqabarha, we are told that it was a very nice day, sunny and cool and the air was filled with the chirping of the crickets and the chirruping of the tinktikies,

...aye amanqilo ebatshayeleda, benqula beyincoma indlela yabo ukuba isikelelekile.

p.17

(...and the Cape longclaws were also cheering them, and they would respond by giving praises to the ancestors and were excited to see these symbols of a blessed journey.)

Here not only is the writer drawing a picture of a society that was living in harmony with nature, but he is also making a religious statement. Although the West called them heathens, the Africans were believers who believed in the existence of a Super-Being, as Ndawo also tries to show in paragraph 4.2 above. As the Christians used their advanced tools to carve symbols (the cross, Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Angels), nature provided the African with symbols of his faith. Hence the Cape longclaw is seen as the concretization of the presence of the spirit of the ancestors to bless the journey and guard the travellers.

The messengers break their journey so that the writer can go on to the issue of ubuntu - humanism. They put up at Qwaninga at the Great Place of the chief of the area.

Bamkelwe kakuhle apha ngobubele obukhulu, baxhelelwa...Balele iintsuku zambini apho.

ibid.

(They were very warmly received and a beast was slaughtered for them...They spent two days there.)

In this society visitors are treated with special kindness and the responsibility of looking after them is shared by the whole neighbourhood. A visit is an occasion for the neighbourhood to celebrate. When the messengers reach Khulile's place, the writer expatiates further on how African humanism operates in the context of hosting visitors. They were at Khulile's for two days without being asked what their mission was. (Ababuzwanga ndaba, kwade kwalusuku lwesibini, kodwa bayinikwa ngokukhulu yona imbeko ebafeleyo.)

Sithe kanjalo isizwe sakhupha iindlezana zeenkomo ukunqoma la maphakathi akomkhulu, logama alapha, ukuba asengele iimvaba zawo. Isizwe sifumene

kuyimfanelo yaso ukuyenza loo nto, kungengako ukuba uKhulile akanakutya kokutyisa iinkosi eziya,...

p.19

(Moreover the people brought cows in abundant milk to leave them at the convenience of these visitors from the King's palace, so that they could milk during their stay here. The community found it necessary to do this, even though this did not imply that Khulile did not have enough food to feed these guests,...)

They spent ten days and were allowed to leave only after their anxiety pricked them to ask for leave to return; and so they returned on the eleventh day with Khulile, to put up at Qwaninga again. It was festivities again at Qwaninga:

Singe sibizwe ngexilongo isizwe ukuza kubona la madoda akomkhulu, wayi-wayi-wayi, yabetha yayinkungu nelanga kwangoku. Kwaxhelwa inkabi yenkomo, kwagwadlwana naloo nyama ubusuku obu. Aye onke amadoda echwayitile kusombelwa, kuxhentswa, bada bahamba ubusuku.

p.21

(It was as if a trumpet was blown to call the people to come and see the men from the King's place; in no time the place was full. An ox was slaughtered and there was feasting throughout the night. And the men were making merry; they were chanting and dancing until the small hours of the morning.)

This scene is repeated when Khulile and his entourage arrive at the King's Palace. Again the writer uses "*singe isizwe sibizwe ngexilongo ukuza komkhulu*", to emphasize the communalistic approach to the hosting of visitors.

The portrayal of African humanism is carried beyond the story of the twins itself when the writer draws the attention to Hintsá's response when he heard about the arrival of the Whites among the Ndlambe and that of the Mfengu in his part of the Xhosa kingdom. Of the Mfengu he instructed that they be looked after well. Of the Whites he said that they should be taken good care of, if they were destitute. However, if they were aggressive, they were to be resisted. Mqhayi uses the arrival of the Mfengu, the Whites, as well as the reporting of Nxele and Ntsikana, to show how the issue of answerability worked among the Xhosa. For Ndlambe and Ngqika, even though they were physically separated from

Gcalekaland, they still felt and observed the obligation to report to the Senior House in Gcalekaland.

In this novel the author also brings out the importance of praise-poetry and the role of the praise-singer in society. We are first shown that it can be offensive and be very poorly received if the singer is not skillful in his choice of words. Bhukwana is severely censured by his elder brother, Ndlombase, for criticising the majority decision to send for Khulile and for presenting Hintsa as an impotent bull in his praises. After the passing of judgement and the finalization of the case, the poet laureate, Dumisani, petrifies everyone with his praises of Hintsa. Mqhayi devotes the next chapter to the effects of good praise-singing. These are obviously deliberately exaggerated also to bring relief from the seriousness of the preceding chapters, but the author, a praise-singer himself, here is emphasizing the importance of praise-singing.

The writer also brings out the religious aspect of African life, when he tells of the cleansing of the bereaved Vuyisile family. Later the King visits the family to perform the ritual rites that end the family's period of mourning. On each an ox is slaughtered as an offering to the ancestors.

Although the writer expresses concern at the threat that confronts the Xhosa language, he does not make any direct reference to language in the story. The part he promised to play in the defence of the language is played indirectly through the richness of the language used in this story. However, we shall not go into a critical appreciation of Mqhayi's language and style of writing, as that is outside the scope of this thesis. We can note, however, that part of what has gone into making *Ityala lamawele* a classic, is the beautiful language in which it is written.

The most significant feature of this book for our purposes here is the extent to which it reflects the writer as an example of someone writing between hope and despair. At the end of the story of the twins, which ends with the rites of ending the mourning period of their family, the writer moves to historical events. It is here that he pours out his disappointment with the British colonialists' behaviour towards the Xhosa and with their true agenda which

becomes manifest in these events. The first area of disappointment was the manner in which the missionaries and other Whites drove a wedge between the Xhosa and the Mfengu.

He notes that:

NoNgqika inkosi eyeza nolo hlanga wayengasaqondani nalo, kuba wahle walufunda ukuze athi nje "NgooQhina kaQhonono/Oomayizal'inkomo sidl'isigqokro/amabandl'akoNibe."

(Even Ngqika himself, the chief who brought this race, was no longer in good terms with them, because it did not take him long to see through their hypocrisy, which is how he came to refer to them as the Tricky and Unscrupulous Ones who care for their own interests only, the Regiment of Nonibe.)

The disappointing behaviour of the Whites in this issue of the Xhosa-Mfengu relations is emphasised by juxtaposing their hypocrisy with an illustration of the pains Hintsá took to ensure that the Mfengu were treated justly. We are told of the heavy fines that were imposed by this king on those who ill-treated the Mfengu. Eventually the Mfengu were taken away and a missionary, Ayliff was heading this operation.

The death of Hintsá in 1834 and the events leading to it are told with such a feeling of sadness and despair, that the reader wonders how Mqhayi managed to remain a Christian and an avid admirer of the British military might. In his own account of Hintsá's death in *Ityala lamawele* (1914:71) he tells of how one of Ngqika's sons, Xhoxho, was shot in the head by British troops who were accusing the Xhosa of stealing cattle. It was this that made amaNgqika to prefer to die in a war than by such cruel means for a crime they did not know anything about. Hintsá was never involved in this war as such, even though his subjects, the Gcaleka were determined to help amaNgqika. Although he was at pains to talk his people out of the war, Hintsá was arrested and asked to pay in unreasonable numbers of cattle and horses - 51 000 cattle, 2 000 horses, 100 000 sheep and goats. When he asked to be released to go and persuade the people to collect this 'indemnity', he was not allowed. Worried at the way people were being killed, he decided to escape to go and end the war by arranging for payment of this unreasonable war price. Ironically this man of peace was killed; and he died with his hands up pleading for mercy, from the bullet of one Southey. The soldiers of a Christian government representing a country that was supposed to be the model of democracy, then cut his head off and took it away as a trophy, having sworn off his teeth.

Mqhayi's account of the experiences of Maqoma and the missionaries and the colonial government officials is further evidence of his disappointment with the contradictions of the British colonial rule. Maqoma is portrayed as a very wise and brave ruler who not only had the gift of oratory, but also was a stickler for thoroughness and justice in the hearing of court cases. In fulfilment of his father, Ngqika's dying wish, he "tried his best" to be good to the missionaries. However, he had reservations about their true intentions:

Indawo angayiqondanga uMaqoma kubafundisi ibe kukuthi umntu akukholwa liliZwi, ahluthwe lowo, angaba sazama nenkosi yakhe; ubesitsho futhi ukuthi - "Akwaba eli liZwi belingezanga nani." Waye ke ngelo xesha sel' enezinto ezithile abakrobileyo ngazo, waqonda ukuba balwela ikowabo.

p.93

(However, what Maqoma could not understand about the missionaries was that once a person converted to Christianity, he would be taken away completely from his chief; sometimes he would be heard saying - "O, how I wish this Word had not been brought by you." By then he had seen through them and was convinced that they were out and out to fight for their fatherland.)

The extent of Mqhayi's grief at the atrocities of the British is summed up in his preamble to the chapter on "*Irhafu yamakhandam!!!*" (The Head Tax) (a reference to the Bhambatha Revolution). In it he quotes Verse 12 of Chapter 3 of Lamentations:

He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows.

It is significant that in this book's outline of contents Chapter 3 is under "Punishment and hope". The condition of the African, according to Mqhayi, was similar to that of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is common among the Xhosa to ascribe a condition of hardship to the wrath of the ancestors. This is unfortunate, because it tends to make people look only into themselves and not outside of themselves for the cause of their destitute condition. Consequently they cling to some hope that one day patience will prevail.

Though beaten and insulted we should accept it all
The Lord is merciful and will not reject us for ever.

Lamentations 3:30-31

While clinging to this hope Mqhayi does not see any light at the end of the tunnel. Thus after consoling the children of Senzangakhona on the Bhambatha massacre, he turns to the Lord and says:

O! Yehova sikhumbule
Kunini n' usilibele?
Namhlanje khawusilamlele
Nal' igazi liphalele

p.85

(O, Lord, please remember us
Have You forgotten us all this time?
This day, please rescue us
Here is (our) blood flowing.)

The history of the eastern frontier written by White historians has indicted the Xhosa as transgressors and stock-thieves, and this, it is said, led to the disruption of peace and to wars. Mqhayi feels compelled to clarify this for his readers. With regard to transgressions he says:

Umntu oMhlophe wenza izigqibo nomntu wokuqala adibene naye, - engento.

p.122

(The White people have a tendency of entering into a treaty with anyone they meet first - even though the person is nothing.)

This is allusion to the Whites' lack of respect for the African protocol. This results in "transgressions" because people do not feel bound to honour unofficial treaties. With regard to stock theft he says:

Ukufika kwabantu abamhlophe kweli lizwe babengamahlwempu kakhulu, bengenankomo, bengenanto. Ezi nkomo zabo siziginyel' amathe kangaka asifumani ukuba yayiziziphi na yayisithi nje abaneenkomo?

(When the Whites came to this country they were very poor, with no cattle, and nothing at all. Now these cattle we are supposed to have craved so much, it is not clear which ones they were, because we are the ones who had cattle.)

Mqhayi concludes that the White people did not want to see the Black people advance; they were scared and jealous of them. They kept the Black person down by giving him very low

salaries and these were reduced even further by unreasonable taxes. They set the Black people against one another to prevent them from uniting (ibid). It is for this reason that Mqhayi never ceased to call for unity. However, because the missionaries owned the publishing houses and, as we have seen in chapter three, had unlimited control over Xhosa literary production, *Ityala lamawele* was abridged, by leaving out the section that revealed the atrocities of the British and the hypocrisy of the missionaries.

To stifle the Africans' effort to re-establish contact with their culture, the missionaries refused to publish Mqhayi's novel on "*ulwaluko*" (circumcision).

Another novel which continued the trend of African reassertion is Jolobe's *Elundini loThukela*; even though it appeared towards the end of the first fifty years of Xhosa literary production. It is based on the history of the amaHlubi. It is virtually the only Xhosa novel in which circumcision and life at the initiation school feature so prominently.

4.4 THE IDEALISTIC NOVEL

A representative of this category is Mqhayi's *uDon Jadu*. The book has been described by many critics as utopian, and with some of them this epithet is applied in its common usage, which is to describe something in condemnatory terms, as being unrealizable. Gerard (1981:194) even remarks that "this utopian tale was already outdated by the time it reached print, not only because racial discrimination had become firmly entrenched, but also because younger Xhosa writers had introduced a more realistic type of prose fiction." Qangule (1968:16) also has reservations about the idealism of this book because "his solution for the remains unreal, because he does not take the real position into consideration." Even Jordan himself (1983:109), in his commentary on this book, has done no more than merely summarize the author's ideal state. None of this book's critics has so far deemed it fit to focus on the concept of utopianism itself - its origin and role in society. It would seem that more justice can be done to Mqhayi by analysing *UDon Jadu* against the background of a broader perspective of utopianism. It is also necessary to consider the historical conditions that drove Mqhayi into utopian thoughts, since utopianism is always a product of a

particular condition in the history of a people. This will be done by looking not only at the historical condition to which Mqhayi was reacting, but also at how *UDon Jadu* fits in into Mqhayi's hopefulness and disappointment described in paragraph 4.3 above.

It is not our intention here to vindicate Mqhayi. However, it is part of our intention to reject the dismissal of *UDon Jadu* simply as utopian without going into the antecedent conditions that explain the nature of such utopianism. The danger of such a dismissal is that it absolutizes the status quo which served as the stimulus for this utopianism, and in so doing, it entrenches or affirms the interests of the perpetrators of the stimulative conditions. We reject it because it is reactionary criticism, whether it is conscious or unconscious. In some cases this dismissal of *UDon Jadu* betrays inexplicable lack of understanding of the concept of literary utopianism. An example of such a case is John Riordan who comments somewhat haughtily:

The hero passes from town to town, solving all problems overnight, and leading raw tribesmen from a primitive state to an advanced civilization in a matter of weeks. Thus does Mqhayi allow his imagination, fostered by a repulsive hunger for self-glorification, to run riot and escape into a world of pure fancy, where probability is grossly violated and logical development unknown. True, Mqhayi's imagination is colourful and productive, but it is not disciplined.

1961:53

He then goes on to criticize the language used by the writer, claiming that the writer "tries to impress by playing with big words and archaisms." This latter remark is utterly preposterous, if it is remembered that it was made in 1961, while the writer was born in 1875 and wrote *UDon Jadu* in 1929. Apart from its haughtiness Riordan's comment also shows the absurdity of attempting to comment on a text without proficiency in its language. A reader proficient in Xhosa would never have missed that advance into civilization by those whom Don Jadu met was not "in a matter of weeks." The critic obviously has difficulty either in understanding *UDon Jadu* or in crediting the writer with any capacity to contemplate an alternative to the present reality.

Before we consider Mqhayi's utopianism, let us look at Jordan's summary of this book.

Next to *Ityala lamaWele*, Mqhayi's most important prose work is *UDon Jadu*. Through the influence and guidance of Don Jadu, a highly educated African, the *amaRanuga* (detrribalized Africans) of the Eastern Province acquire land of about the area of the

Transkeian Territories. All kinds of industry begin to spring up in this new province of Mnandi (Sweetness). As a result, in a few years the population is double that of the Transkei. The Union Government becomes interested, and vote large sums of money to promote the scheme. Self-government is granted to the people of Mnandi and, the Union Government having disappeared from the scene, Great Britain assumes guardianship. Don Jadu is the first president.

There is neither racialism nor isolationism in Mnandi. Immigration is encouraged, and experts of all races and shades of colour come from the four corners of the earth to make a permanent home there. There is full social, economic and political equality. According to the constitution, women are free to go into parliament, but the sensible women of Mnandi decline this offer on the grounds that there is enough work for them to do at their homes! Mnandi is a Christian state, and Christ is the "President" of the Ancestral Spirits. Ministers of religion are officers of state, and their stipenda come from the general revenue. Magistrates and ministers of religion work in close co-operation. In fact, Church and State are so closely knit together that there is no distinction between the police and deacons' courts. Education is compulsory. Xhosa is the first language, but English is such an important second language that no one who is not strictly bilingual may hold an office of state. Baby boys are baptized and circumcised in the Temple eight days after birth, and Holy Confirmation forms part of an initiation ceremony held in the Temple eight days after birth, and Holy Confirmation forms part of an initiation ceremony held in the Temple between the ages of fifteen and twenty. All these ceremonies are supervised by the magistrate and the minister of religion together. The marriage ceremony is conducted by the magistrate and subsequently blessed by the minister of religion. Divorce is prohibited by law. The importation or sale of liquor is prohibited by law. Home-brewing is allowed, but anyone found drunk in public places is locked up in a lunatic asylum, dressed in the uniform of the asylum and is for seven days subjected to the same treatment as the legitimate inmates of that institution. People who are sentenced to penal servitude receive wages for their labour. There are no prisons.

Jordan 1973:109-111

What is missing in Jordan's summary is the description of the conditions before the establishment of Mnandi. These conditions are brought out through the experiences of Don Jadu during his journey to his paternal aunt's place.

The key word in this aspect is "*iinkcithakalo*." There is no lexical equivalent in English for this word, but the following are the closest: "disintegration", "dislocation" and "disruption". The writer is referring to the social disintegration that resulted from the defeat of the Xhosa and in particular to the move to towns and the farms.

...kwathi qatha kum into yokuba ndikhe ndiye kubona udade bobawo, intombi kabawomkhulu, eyayendele phofu kwasekhaya yaza yathi ngeenkithakalo ezi yafudukela emaRhanugeni.

(...it suddenly occurred to me that I should go and see my aunt, my grandfather's daughter who was married to a local man, but because of the disintegration had moved to the farms.)

As a result of this disruption in the social order, the African had become a stranger in his own land. He had to carry a pass, an identity document, any disregard of this requirement being punishable by law. Mqhayi brings this out when Don Jadu is confronted by the two policemen who demand his document. The writer reacts to this curtailment of movement by making Don Jadu assert his claim to free movement by saying, "*Andizange ndiyiphathe loo nto*" (I have never carried that thing). This loss of freedom of movement is related to land dispossession that has led to the proliferation of White-owned commercial farms. Mqhayi also refers to the burden of taxation and the prevalence of diseases (p.25). Crime and thuggery are a feature of this new social order. Don Jadu had a very narrow escape from death at the hands of muggers.

Mqhayi laments this social condition and the high rate of child illiteracy. The thoughts in Don Jadu's mind after each incident reflect Mqhayi's concern about the ravages of colonization. It is for this reason that he idealizes an alternative to the present situation. The existing socio-political order disturbs him so much that his desire for socio-political transformation drives him to utopianism.

Despite what Riordan has said in the quotation above, utopianism is not something "fostered by a repulsive hunger for self-glorification." It pervades the Bible - the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah 66:17-25, Micah 4:1-4 and Revelation 21:1-7, are notable examples of biblical utopianism. Modern society's chiliasm based on Revelation 20 is also another example of utopianism that has its foundations in the Bible. The messianic hopes of the future liberation of Israel, which were triggered by prophecies of the Judaic period, and which even led to zealotry, formed the basis of modern conceptions of socio-political utopias. Perhaps, nearer home, an example of a socio-political utopia is the vision of a Boerestaat as envisaged by some Afrikaner politicians, even though this may be rooted in calvinistic thinking. However, it does show that modern man's socio-political condition can

drive him to secularizing biblical utopianism. "Utopianism", says Marsden (1991:11) "has its origin in the innate tendency in human beings to desire and strive to create a better world." In classical times Plato wrote his *Republic* in which he describes what he considers to be an ideal state. This too is an example of utopianism. Utopianism is not synonymous with flight of fancy. It represents a vision of a new society, a vision that "nurtures a form of consciousness which calls into question the existing social order, and which is enthused by the prospect for change" (Marsden 1991:13). The images of the future portrayed in literary utopias pose a challenge to people to devote themselves to working for their realization. Bauman's view on the importance of utopias in human history is summed up as follows:

Utopias relativize the present. One cannot be critical about something that is believed to be an absolute. By exposing the partiality of current reality, by scanning the field of the possible in which the real occupies merely a tiny plot, utopias pave the way for a critical attitude and a critical activity which alone can transform the present predicament of man. The presence of utopia, the ability to think of alternative solutions to the festering problems of the present, may be seen therefore as a necessary condition of historical change.

1976:13

Literary utopias have the effect of making people wish to remove the inertia and tyranny of the status quo, and to work for "not just any alternative future, but a qualitatively new future, an ideal future, which embodies principles such as justice, peace and social harmony" (Marsden 1991:12).

Our view here is that it is in the context of a broad perspective of utopianism that *UDon Jadu* should be analyzed. Only in this way can Mqhayi's reaction to the socio-political condition of his time be understood. This brings out his vision of a return to former glory by the African. In this way, we see also some of the issues that today are the subject of political debate in South Africa: the return of land to its rightful owners, the language policy, education, the constitution, etc. Privatization is rejected in Mqhayi's ideal state as the land that has been reclaimed from White settlers is used for state projects. He advocates total socio-political transformation. An apt description of Mnandi is provided by Ernst Bloch, the Christian socialist, when he says:

Once man has comprehended himself and has established his own domain in real democracy, without depersonalization and alienation, something arises in the world

which all men have glimpsed in childhood: a place and a state in which no one has yet been. And the name of this something is home or homeland.

in Marsden 1991:92

Scholars like Ernst Bloch and Paul Tillich would insist that in *UDon Jadu*, Mqhayi is advocating Christian socialism.

A significant aspect of *UDon Jadu* is that although the writer is clearly opposed to the present reality, he does not advocate the expulsion of the colonists from South Africa or the rooting out of colonialism. Instead he still recognizes the sovereignty of Britain over this "new state" of Mnandi. Although one is tempted to accuse Mqhayi of being a revisionist, one is also mindful of Mqhayi's admiration of the British. This is also a measure of the double consciousness that Christianization and colonization caused among literary artists. Perhaps writing between two worlds as Mqhayi did, demanded that he appeased the one world with which he was disappointed by giving to the oppressed masses only a part of South Africa the size of the Transkei. This contrasts with the attitude projected earlier in the lines in his poem on John L. Dube in *Inzuzo*:

Bholish' ikhrikithi Langalibalele!
Bholishani nzima nikhuph' iBrithani!

p.52

(Bowl the cricket ball, Langalibalele,
Bowl furiously and take Britain out.)

The possibility should also not be ruled out that *UDon Jadu* was a mental experimentation in Christian socialism or revolution without violence, an African version of the Glorious Revolution.

4.5 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL NOVELS

Novels in this category can be said to be the real descendants of the letters to the newspaper editors that are referred to in Chapter 3. Some of them, especially the earlier ones, are

reminiscent of the stories found in *Isibutho samavo* (A collection of short stories), the Wesleyan Mission Press newspaper published between January 1843 and July 1844. They deal, on the whole, with similar themes: religion, education, excessive consumption of liquor, superstitions, the effect of urbanization on the African moral fibre and the conflict of traditional and modern views on the choice of marriage partners. The result is that a prominent feature of these books is the extent to which the authors are silent about some aspects of the cultural life of the Xhosa. Circumcision, *lobola*, *intonjane*, traditional baptismal (*imbeleko*) and many other cultural practices, have been so carefully avoided that a person who knew only how to read Xhosa without any knowledge of Xhosa culture, would never know that this is an area in which Christianity failed completely. According to Sartre, the worst crime that literary artists can commit is the crime of silence. As he puts it:

This silence is a moment of language; being silent is not being dumb; it is to refuse to speak, and therefore to keep on speaking.

Indeed these Xhosa writers were not dumb. But why would they refuse to speak? They would not say anything about the socio-political condition of the Africans that had led to the social degeneration that seemed to concern them so much. They stereotyped the town and the city as dumping sites for morality without saying anything about the conditions under which Africans lived in the towns and cities. Sometimes the reader is tempted to think that these writers were not in favour of Africans settling in urban areas, and therefore supported the spirit of the Land Acts and therefore the system of migrant labour. Novels of this period abound in cases of characters who became villainous because of having gone to town or whose villainy is consummated by removing them from a rural to an urban situation. In this way a fifth division was created among the Xhosa: the Mfengu, the Xhosa, the Christian and educated, the non-Christian and now the urban. Against these characters would be those few who go to the urban centres and return with their exemplary characters unscathed. These are the model characters who are presented as deserving of emulation. Sinxo's Ndimeni in *Umzali wolahleko* and Nomsa in *UNomsa* are some such examples that come to mind.

Although the lives of Africans were - and still are - bound up so tightly with those of the Whites and even though a great deal of the Africans' misery is due to the White man's laws and treatment, White characters are conspicuous by their absence in Xhosa novels. Sartre maintains that writing - in the sense of literary creativity - is to commit oneself in the universe of language, and the universe of language is the universe of meaning and once one enters it one cannot get out of it:

Thus, if a writer has chosen to remain silent on any aspect whatever of the world, or according to an expression which says just what it means, to *pass over* it in silence, one has the right to ask him a third question: "Why have you spoken of this rather than that, and - since you speak in order to bring about change - why do you want to change this rather than that?"

1986:15

Although we do not necessarily agree with Sartre that writers will, all the time, write to "bring about change", we do agree with him that "the function of the writer is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world...", - their world in particular. In the case of the Xhosa novels in this category, it is especially clear from the didactic nature of most of them that the writers are bent on changing the behaviour patterns and attitudes of the Xhosa. Sartre's question is therefore pertinent: Why do they want to change the Xhosa behaviour patterns and attitudes only and not also those of the Whites? A writer, says Sartre, is essentially a "revealer" of reality (1986:26). It is our view here that the Xhosa writers of the period under discussion must have been as capable as any others of carrying out these tasks. However, their socio-political context drove them into committing the crime of silence. It is, however, highly unlikely that they all supported the system about which they were silent. This silence was definitely not a sign of content; it was a reflection partly of the general helplessness of artists who did not own the means of production, and partly of their conviction that the African had to make a break with his past, as well as their other conviction that it was impossible for this break to be complete. Certain institutions in the African community were just not going to be easily destroyed. Even a writer like Sinxo whose didacticism seems to have been the strongest, had to admit that no amount of Christianity would eliminate circumcision. Thus his character Ndimeni in *Umzali wolahleko* had to be circumcised in order to have the confidence of a real man:

Kwathi kuyasa ngemini elandelayo, uMzwakhe waya kufuna ingcibi ukuba yaluse umtshana wakhe, ukuze aqonde ngenene ukuba mdala ufikile ebudodeni.

(On the following morning Mzwakhe went to find someone who was a professional in performing circumcision surgery, to circumcise Ndimen, so that he could realise that he indeed had reached manhood.)

The issue of *lobola*, the bride price, was another one which the missionaries tried so hard to discourage, but the writers could only avoid it and mention it in passing and never condemn it openly. In this same author readers see snippets of protest at the treatment of Africans by the Whites. In East London Ndimeni is sacked from his job because his White employer was tired of listening to him asking for a raise. When he starts his own business, buying and selling empty bottles and bones, these are destroyed by the municipality officers because he did not have a trade licence. In Port Elizabeth he is sacked from work because he stayed away from work because of serious illness. It is then that his friend, Dr Zinobee Jameson, advises him to go back home at Njwaxa and "plough the ground, cultivate the ground and be an agriculturist", because:

...bonke abeLungu aba bavumelene ngento yokuba bamhlawule umvuzo ophantsi umntu oMnyama. Uya kuba ngaya naphi na, ufike omnye umLungu efana nomnye ngohlobo lokukuphatha nelokuhlawula. Mnye ke umLungu ongekho kwelo bhunga labo, ngumhlaba lo.

(..all the White people have conspired with one another to do one thing, and that is that they should never pay a Black person a decent salary. You can go anywhere, and you will find White people having the same attitude towards treating and paying a Black person. There is only one White person not involved in that conspiracy.)

A writer of this period who painted a very vivid picture of the psychological consequences of the twoness that was created by westernization, was A.C. Jordan. His novel, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*, tells the story of a young intellectual chief, an ex-student of Fort Hare University College, who had to return home in the Transkei to take up his hereditary position as the chief of amaMpondomise. Imbued with the spirit of progress and civilization, he is bent on bringing light where he believes darkness still reigns. Having been won over by mission school education to Christianity and European civilization, he is convinced that their world is the best of all possible worlds, and this drives him to undermining the loyalty of the illiterate to their own world. Jordan portrays a picture of two conflicting consciousnesses, the old universe of the traditional Africans who believe in

ancestors, and that of the Europeans with its schools, churches and universities. Between these he places the literate and Christian Africans, and through this young chief, Zwelinzima Majola, he shows the difficulty of living with two consciousnesses trying to reconcile them to each other. As a representative of this elite, Zwelinzima is convinced that the old universe has become outdated and does not have any chance of further survival, and that all its norms and values are a hindrance to human development as he has come to understand development to be. On the other hand those that believe themselves to be living in the old universe see the other universe as a curse of the nation, a destroyer of the whole edifice of national stability, an evil that has to be resisted to the bitter end, and those that live in it, the literate and Christian, are seen as traitors to their race. Refusing to accept this reality leads to Zwelinzima and his family having a tragic exit from the scene.

It has been said that Jordan made the forces of evil triumph over the forces of virtue. Whether this is a valid accusation or not is not our concern here. However, it would seem that it was never this writer's intention to pit virtue against vice in this novel. *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* is a psychological novel in which the writer's main preoccupation seems to be with bringing to the fore the tragic nature of the double consciousness that was created by Christianization and colonization in the African communities. He advocates syncretism, which he cites as the best strategy which can be adopted by the elite that have been uprooted by education and Christianity from their traditional world view, and whose responsibility it has become to bring the Africans together once more. Jordan is a realist whose realism is pronounced through the Thembu chief who advises Zwelinzima:

Ukuba ngaba ke, Jolinkomo, ufuna ukwazi ukuba *inkosi yabaThembu* iyakholelwa na 'kulaa ntshwaqane', impendulo ithi "Ewe". Kanti ukuba ufuna ukwazi ukuba *mma, ingqobo yam*, ndiyakholelwa na, impendulo ngokugnathandabuzekiyo ithi "Hayi."

p.170

(If Jolinkomo you want to know whether the *Chief of the Thembu* believes 'in that nonsense' the answer is "Yes". However, if you want to know whether I personally believe it, the answer undoubtedly is "No".)

For him the double consciousness is a reality that should not be wished away. The two sections in the African society will, in his opinion, be brought together by those who have skills in the management of this double consciousness, and not by those whose ambition is

to drag everybody to the White man's world, which has no place for even them in the first place. As this later became a popular theme among African writers of post-colonial times, Jordan can be said to have been ahead of his time.

In concluding this chapter, it is our view that those literary artists whose art found expression in poetry seem to have found it easier than their novelist counterparts to weave into their work some elements of protest against the status quo.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF XHOSA LITERATE POETRY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we shall look at the works of the literate poets who wrote poetry in the years between 1909 and 1959. We shall, however, not make a detailed analysis of the work of each poet. A general overview will be given of the types of the poetry that was written during this period, themes that were treated in poems of the narrative type and subjects of praise poetry. These will be exemplified not only from the poetry books, but also from contributions in the primary school readers as well as from Bennie's anthology of stories and poetry *Imibengo*. The main focus of the chapter will be on the extent to which the poets succeeded or failed to bring out in their poetry the socio-political reality of their community and the extent to which some poets grappled with the dilemma of writing poetry between two conflicting universes. Poems that exemplify this dilemma will be treated in greater detail. This will be done against the background of the role of poets and of the significance of poetry in society as described in chapters two and three. Poetry that was produced in this period was to a large extent a continuation of the trends set by newspaper poetry and by contributions to Rubusana's *Zemk' iinkomo magwalandini*. Therefore our analysis will include also the question of the missionaries' influence on literary production.

The following are the major poetry books that were published during the period under discussion:

<i>Imihobe nemibongo</i>	-	S.E.K. Mqhayi (1927)
<i>Izala</i>	-	J.P. Solilo (c1928)
<i>Izibongo zeenkosi zamaHlubi</i>	-	H.M. Ndawo (1928)
<i>UMyezo</i>	-	J.J.R. Jolobe (1936)
<i>UMhleleazi uHintsisa</i>	-	S.E.K. Mqhayi (1937)
<i>Inzuzo</i>	-	S.E.K. Mqhayi (1942)
<i>Amaqunube</i>	-	G.S. Mama & A.Z.T. Mbebe (1950)
<i>Izicengcelezo zaseDikeni</i>	-	J.J.R. Jolobe (1952)
<i>Indyebo kaXhosa</i>	-	G.S. Mama (collector) (1954)

<i>Intlabamkhosi</i>	-	A.Z. Ngani (1952)
<i>Izibongo zeenkosi zamaXhosa</i>	-	D.P. Yali-Manisi (1952)
<i>Indyebo kaXhosa</i>	-	G.S. Mama (1954)
<i>Izibongo zabancinane</i>	-	L.T. Manyase (1954)
<i>Khala Zome</i>	-	L.M.S. Ngcwabe (1955)
<i>Imvaba</i>	-	W. Sob. Nkuhlu (1956)
<i>Iintsika</i>	-	R.M. Tshaka (1957)
<i>Indyebo yesihobe,</i>	-	J.J.R. Jolobe (1959)
<i>Ilithi</i>	-	J.J.R. Jolobe (1959)
<i>Ikhwezi</i>	-	St.J.P. Yako (1959)
<i>Umtha welanga</i>	-	St.J.P. Yako (1959)

5.2 AN OVERVIEW OF TYPES AND THEMES

As we saw in chapter three, one of the consequences of literacy was the development of a new mode of poetic expression. Immersion into Western-style education meant, inter alia, exposure to poetry of foreign nations, especially Latin and English poetry, as these were the only foreign languages that were taught in African schools. This poetry differed from the traditional praise poetry of the Africans not only in themes and subjects of praise, but also in structure. We shall, however, not consider the differences in structure here. We shall look only at the themes and subjects of praise. This will be done by attempting to make a breakdown of the poetic types that the literate poets produced. It should, however, be remembered that, although the tendency is to associate traditional praise poetry with pre-literate communities, literate poets did produce praise poetry and published it with their other poetry. Thus the classification of poetry types below includes also praise poetry. The following are some of the main types of poetry that were published in the period under discussion.

5.2.1 Children's poetry

The recitation of poetry by young children was something that was not part of the traditional literature of the Xhosa. The closest that Xhosa children came to the recitation of children's poetry or nursery rhymes was with the repetition of verbal charms such as the one either

repeated or chanted repeatedly to beg the sun to come out from behind the clouds when on a cold and partly cloudy day the children are basking in the intermittent sunshine:

Thunzi, thunzi, bhek' eMbashe,
 Langa, langa yiza nganeno
 Thunzi, thunzi, bhek' eMbashe,
 Langa, langa yiza nganeno.
 Vela, langa, vela,
 Umntan' akho ndakumph' ingqaka
 Vela, langa, vela,
 Umntan' akho ndakumph' ingqaka.

(Shadow, shadow go away to Mbashe,
 sun, sun come this way.
 Come out sun, come out
 I'll give your child some curd.)

These verbal charms were more recreational than ritual. In addition to these were the imitations of sounds made by birds especially, which were put in some fascinating and cryptic phrases such as:

Makhulu, makhulu, ndiph' isidudu. (doves)

(Grand-mother, grand-mother give me some porridge)

Qhu ndindedw' ekhaya!
 Kusizungw' ebusuku! (owl)

(I swear I'm the only one in my family!
 It is lonely at night!)

Phezu komkhono, phezu komkhono! (cuckoo)

(Above the front leg, above the front leg!)

There were also the little chants that children sang for birds and other creatures, such as:

Qob' intulo, khawuvez' ingotyō
 Sibon' int' oyityayo

(Rock lizard, please open your anus,
Let's see what you eat!)

Some of these were sung to tease older people, an example of this being the one sung to tease a horseman galloping his horse past the children:

Phalis' ihash' elo Somgqutsuba
Asilolakho, Somgqutsuba,
Lelikayihlo, Somgqutsuba,
Ukubolekile, Somgqutsuba!

(Gallop the horse, Somgqutsuba,
It is not yours, Somgqutsuba,
It is your father's, Somgqutsuba,
He has lent it to you, Somgqutsuba!)

Young girls who also helped with looking after their baby sisters or brothers, could chant or say lullabies. Some of the Xhosa folktales contained some repetitive utterances which the performers presented in a poetic rhythm, and which writers of folktales usually present in verse form. These could either be secret coded messages or desperate pleas for help or some forms of coercion. On the whole, performers would sing these, but there were some that were spoken, such as:

Vukuthu! Vukuthu! Vukuthu!
Bathi nguTiyazana, ufile ekhaya phaya
Izim lime ngengqotho ekhaya phaya
Vukuthu! Vukuthu! Vu-u-u-u-u!

(Stewart Xhosa Readers 2 p.12)

(Rock-pigeon! Rock-pigeon! Rock-pigeon!
They say it's Tiyazana, she's dead back home
The *izim* (cannibal) is standing in loin girdle
back home - i.e. he's busy causing havoc -
Rock-pigeon! Rock-pigeon! Rock-pigeon!)

This is a search message that some helpful pigeons would utter to anyone they met to alert Tiya of the threat of death facing her twin-sister, Tiyazana, who has been made captive by an *izim* that devoured their grandmother. Tiya had left long before to go and sell bangles, and her whereabouts were not known to Tiya.

All these provided the writers of children's poetry with a very rich source from which to draw, and with a firm foundation on which to build their own collections.

The first collection of children's poetry was S.E.K. Mqhayi's *Imihobe nemibongo* which appeared in 1927. From what the author says in the introduction, this collection was made at the insistence of the Chief Inspector of Schools (probably W.G. Bennie). This was done with a view to meeting the need at the schools and to close a gap in the fledgling Xhosa literary treasure. He writes:

Sekulithuba elinobom kufuneka ukuba ibekho incwadana elolu hlobo, yokufundisa izifihlelo kwintsapho efunda ezikolweni zemini.

(It has for a very long time been necessary that there should be a book of this nature to bring to the attention of the youth attending day schools the hidden literary wealth.)

Thus the targeted readership of this collection was the children at school from Grade 1 to Grade 9. For this reason the collection ranges from the simple and recreational nursery rhymes and lullabies to the more serious didactic and exhortative poems. The collection is divided into two sections, with the first section containing what is clearly intended for children in Grades 1 to 4. It is this that shall be exemplified in this paragraph. The poetry in the second section, though from the simplicity of its language and style it is clearly intended for children in Grades 5 to 9, will not be treated in this paragraph.

To enhance the recreational value of the collection, there have been included also some extended tongue-twisters in the fashion of the one that has come to be known as the click song, popularized by Miriam Makeba. Satyo, in a forthcoming Reviews Supplement of the South African Journal of African Languages, refers to these poems as "click poems". He observes that "a careful examination of these all three of them indicates that they are meant to reflect the aspirations of the Xhosa people ..." The three poems of this type are: "Iqaqa liqhawuk' uqhoqhoqho", "Iqoqa lengqongoqo" and "Ixoxo nomxhaxha womxoxozi." Some of these children's poems were based on dialogue games that children in pre-literate times used to play and which invariably would end with both interlocutors speaking simultaneously, sometimes with body action:

Ngubani na lo?	NguYeye.
Uhamba nabani?	Noyise.
Umphathele ntoni?	Amasi.
Ngendeb' enjani?	Ngebomvu.
Wayibeka phi?	Esibaya.
Kwesingakanani?	Kwesikhulu.

Kunye: Hi, mayisele, zidenge zodwa!
Hi, mayisele, zidenge zodwa!

(Who is this?	It is Yeye.
With whom is he?	With his father.
What did he bring him?	Sour milk.
What is the colour of the container?	It is red.
Where did he put it?	In the sheep's pen.
How big was it?	Big.

Both: Oh, let it drink, they're all fools!
Oh, let it drink, they're all fools!

Another example of this type of game would be "*Unogayoyo*" (not in Mqhayi's collection, but its extended version is found in Bennie's Stewart Xhosa Readers 1. p.26):

Wena Nogayoyo, uyawaphetheni?	Ndiyawapeth'inja.
Uyawayisa phi?	Ndiyawayis'endle.
Ekhaya kunani?	Ndoyik' uGayoyo.

(Hey, you, Gayoyo, what are you carrying? I am carrying a dog. Where are you taking it to? I'm taking it to the veld. Why not take it home? I'm scared of Gayoyo.)

Mqhayi's initiative was taken up by a number of other writers of poetry who, together with him, contributed to Bennie's Stewart Xhosa Readers, and who included in their own books some poetry intended for young children, such as the following: "Ikati yakowethu", "Umanyano ngamandla", "Umqhagi wakowethu" and "Inja yokowethu" in Jolobe's *Umyezo*; "Eyokombelela intombanane", "Imaz' esengwayo", "Iinkomo zasekhaya", "Eyomalusi", "Ngqusha mfazi", "UNomaphamba yimpelesi" and "Ufikile na mkhozi" in Ngani's *Intlabamkhosi*; "Amatshivela", "Ikhaya lam", "Iinkokeli zethu", "Kwendimthandayo" and "Xala ntliziyo" in Mama and Mbebe's *Amaqunube*; "Izibongo zabantwana" in Tshaka's *Tintsika zentlambo yeTyhume*; "Abantwana nekhaya", "Abantwana ngorhatya", "Phambi

kwezo nkabi", "Impi yamagramza" and "Mfana wam" in Ngcwabe's *Khala Zome*. Mama and Mbebe published *Amaqunube* in 1950 and were followed by Jolobe in 1952 with his *Izicengcelezo zaseDikeni* and by Manyase in 1953 with his *Izibongo zabancinane*.

The emphasis in the children's poems was mainly on teaching children about nature so that they could understand and appreciate their environment. In Manyase (1954) for example are found poems such as the following:

"Inkunzi yenkomo"	(The bull)
"Ukhetshe"	(The kite)
"Umlonji"	(The canary)
"Amatakan'eegusha"	(The lambs)
"Imvula"	(The rain)
"Ihagu"	(The pig)
"Impuku"	(The mouse)
"Ingonyama"	(The lion)
"Imbongolo"	(The donkey)
"Indlulamthi"	(The giraffe)
"Uxam"	(The leguan)
"Ukwindla"	(Autumn)
"Isandi somoya"	(The sound of the wind)
"Iinkwenkwezi"	(The stars)
"Inja nekati"	(The dog and the cat)

The list may be longer in Mama's and Mbebe's *Amaqunube*.

A few poems were religious. The majority of these children's poems were didactic, teaching the children about such human virtues as honesty, truth, diligence, generosity, respect, cleanliness, etc, while warning them against such vices as greed, laziness, dishonesty, jealousy, stinginess, delinquency, drunkenness, etc. They also sensitized the children about the daily socio-economic activities on which the subsistence of society depended, about such cultural activities such as weddings, and about the importance of the role of the aged. It can be seen from this that children's poetry had the same functional value as the folktales. The difference was that the teaching of children's poetry was much

more explicit than that of folktales. A very striking difference between this modern children's poetry and folktales, however, is that in the former, teaching about bravery is conspicuous by its absence.

An interesting inclusion in Manyase (1954) is the following poem:

UKUMKANIKAZI

Aa! Kumkanikazi weBritane
 Siyakubulisa thina bantwana.
 Siyalibulisa kwanetshawe,
 Ukumkani ongangathi bantwana;
 UCharles indlamafa yakomkhulu,
 Yena ngokwakhe engumntu omkhulu.
 Sivova ngamadola phambi kwenu.
 Bonk' abantwana bayazigoba.
 Hlalani nihleli kwikhaya lenu.

p.31

(THE QUEEN

Hail, Queen of Great Britain
 We children salute you.
 We salute also the prince,
 The king as old as us children;
 Charles the heir of the Great Place,
 He too being a great person.
 We salute you, we curtsy to you!
 We bend our knees in front of you.
 All the children are curtseying.
 May you live long in your home.)

What is interesting about this poem is that of all the children's poems in the works listed in paragraph 5.1 above, it is the only one that addresses the issue of loyalty to royal personalities. It is also the only one that can be said to be linked to or based on the history of its time. What is even more striking about this poem for our purposes here is that it advocates loyalty to the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, and even goes further and makes it clear to its readers - the children - that they must be ready to extend this loyalty to Queen Elizabeth's heir, Prince Charles. To the credit of Manyase it may be argued that this poem fulfils one of the functions of literature, which is to mirror history as well as the changing currents of ideological thought from one period to another. Therefore the importance of this

poem is in the extent to which it confirms the connection between ideology and literature. The question, however, is what ideology is Manyase supporting here; why is he supporting it and to what extent is he conscious of the ideological current beneath his text? Clearly, it is not possible to say whether a writer is or is not aware of the ideological undercurrents of his text, since the position of the writer is different from that of the critic. In this poem the ideology that is promoted is British colonialism. It is possible that Manyase's acceptance of his being a British subject and his admiration of the British royalty, compelled him, without his being aware of it, to attract to his way of thinking the youth of his nation. This would be a confirmation of Plato's image of a magnetic stone by which he described the effect of poetry on listeners and readers. It is also an example of the socio-political spin-offs of missionary work. First Christianize, then educate and finally indoctrinate for the acceptance of a mythical political reality. According to Maughan-Brown (1985:10), the prime function of a myth is to give a historical intention a natural justification. He goes on to observe that myths and ideology are interdependent and quotes Monica Wilson as saying of myths:

Myths...provide a moral basis for a social system. They imply, if they do not state specifically, that a given system is right and just.

ibid.

This view of myth is shared also by Barthes whom Maughan-Brown quotes as saying:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. If I state the fact of French imperialism without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it is natural and goes without saying: I am reassured.

Ibid.

The myth that Manyase is justifying in this poem is that of the naturalness of the African's socio-political condition and of the magnanimity of the Queen of England. Indirectly the myth is also perpetrated that the Queen of England obtained her sovereignty over South Africa through the consent of the owners of this land, the Africans, via the treaties into which her country entered with their chiefs. It may be argued by those who want to defend Manyase, that the minds of the readership of this kind of poem, the children, are very unlikely to linger any longer than the moment of its recitation. However, it is a fact that,

in the same way that the teachings of a folk narrative outlive its performance, impressions of the superiority of England created by memorization and recitation of the poem can and do sink even faster and further than the teachings of folk narratives. Therefore such argument would absolve Manyase from the guilt of confirming myths. One of the myths confirmed by Manyase's poem is the myth that African chieftainship was one of the symbols of backwardness and cruelty, the strongest medium of promoting this myth being the history that the children were, and are still, taught. This history presented the kings and chiefs of the Xhosa, and indeed of all Africans, as pugnacious villains who were hindrances to the diffusion of civilization. Children's poetry supported this view by virtue of its exclusion of Xhosa royalty and the inclusion of the British.

The above remarks on Manyase's poem on Queen Elizabeth II are not a suggestion that the poet was ignorant of the historical processes that led to South Africa being a British colony or that he is insensitive to the lamentable socio-political state of his community. A writer, a poet in particular, is a kind of historian, although writers, like all artists, differ from the way they respond to their historical condition. As it was shown in paragraph 2.6 above, some writers, because of their own position in history, aim to produce literature that reproduces the historical condition, while others write to destroy the ideology and myths that form the base for that historical condition. The crucial question, however, is why would a victim of this historical condition either be reticent about it or wish to reproduce the colonial condition that pervades the life of his community? In paragraph 2.6 we quoted Plekhanov arguing that the doctrine of art for art's sake thrives where artists are so hopeless that they do not see themselves capable of changing their historical condition and that of their community. Because the historical condition of the African in South Africa was at its worst at this time - 1948 Malan's Nationalist Party takes over government; 1951 Bantu Authorities Act; 1950 Group Areas Act and Suppression of Communism Act; 1953 Bantu Education Act - Plekhanov would then argue that Manyase's poem was an expression of the principle of "better the devil you know" or that as a result of these laws, he lost all hope of changing the prevailing historical condition. This, despite the defiance campaign launched by the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Indian Congress. Whatever else could be the reason for this type of literary production, it is also a manifestation of double

consciousness, the genesis of which is the poet's occupation of a position between two worlds.

In concluding this paragraph, it should be noted that Ndawo's poem "Izimanga" in *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka*, should, by its very nature, rank as the first written children's poem to be published, although it was never intended as such. The writer intended this poem to be a description of the tranquility of nature far from the human threat, as well as that of the closeness to nature that was experienced by his character, Gqobhoka.

This is its text:

IZIMANGA

Kwathi xa ndikhweza loo mahlathi
 Ndalibheka-bheka lonk' ilizwe.
 Ndaphuml' emthunzini womth' omkhulu,
 Ndahlabela ingoma yabelusi.
 Ngebhaqo ndoyiswa bubuthongo
 Ndalala, ndaphumla, ndidiniwe.
 Ndavuswa kobo buthongo buhle
 Zizingqi zenyamakaz' enkulu,
 Eyayibalek' ingandiboni.
 Ndahambela ngentla kwamahlathi
 Apho ndabonana nezimanga;
 Ndada ndathetha ndindedwa.
 "Kwakuqhaqhazel' iqaqa phaya!
 Urhoqotyen' exhents' ezibuka
 Phezu kwamaty' anobulembu!
 Phantsi kwelitye ngasemanzini
 Kwakukekel' ixhego lenkala!
 Kwithala elaliseliweni
 Kwakugcakanyelw' ilanga khona
 Yinkunzi yembila necilitshe!
 Kwade kwathi tshe isithunzana
 Sexhalang' elimaphikw' ankone!
 Kwizadungana ezingekude.
 Yakhony' ikhonyile indubule!
 Kuloo miqhokrwana mincinane
 Kwakuphitizel' iinyoka zodwa;
 Kwiqul' elimanz' angcwengileyo
 Kwakudlalwa icekwa ngamandla
 Ziinkosana zalowo mhlatyana
 Inkwil' entle nonojubalala.

(THE WONDERS OF NATURE

As I was skirting those forests
 I looked around and watched the world.
 I rested in the shade of a big tree,
 And started singing a herdboys' chant.
 Suddenly slumber vanquished me.
 And so I slept peacefully in my tiredness.
 I was woken up from that peaceful sleep
 By the thudding of the feet of a big animal,
 Which was running past unaware of me.
 I went onto a hill formation overlooking the forests
 Whence I saw the wonders of nature
 Which made me speak to myself
 "Yonder were glittering the colours of the polecat!
 The rock lizard was rocking proudly
 On moss-covered stones!
 Beneath a stone close to the water
 An old crab was scuttling;
 On the flat top of a krantz
 There basking in the sun
 Were the male dassie and the lizard!
 And a quick shadow flashed past
 And it was that of a spotted-winged vulture!
 From the puddles of water nearby
 Came the incessant bellows of a bull frog!
 In the small rockeries
 Snakes of all kinds were slithering around;
 In the pool with very clear water,
 There playing the touch-touch game
 Were the princes of that area
 The *inkwili* and the tadpole.")

This poem was used in many junior schools for recitation by children.

5.2.2 Poems of nature

In Xhosa traditional poetry praises of nature were very limited. It was highly unlikely that a chief's or king's praise singer would make nature the main subject of his praises. The main subjects were people (chiefs, kings, heroes and heroines) and significant events in the history of the nation. The praise singer at this level - the poet laureate - would use nature mainly as a source of his metaphor with which he glorified or decried the achievements of his subject. The natural physical world would also be brought into the praises, if it somehow featured in the event that is the subject of the praises, or connected in one way

or another in the life of the person for whom the praises are sung. King Sarhili was metaphorically referred to as:

Inamb' enkulu ejikel' eHohita

(The big mamba that coils itself around Mount Hohita)

In his praises of John Ross, Mqhayi makes a reference to Mtshiza Forest as follows:

Eli hlathi likaMtshiza ndinamanwele -
 Ihamba' ihamb' indod' ime ilijonge;
 Ngathi lingaphum' impuhle ngeny' imini.
 Ndide ndakha ndev' int' isithi "Harfu!"
 Ayaba ngulube, ayaba ngonyama;
 Side sakha sazithath' iintonga,
 Kulok' oosiyazi abasisanga kude.
 Bath' elo Hlathi linaMninilo phakathi.

in Bennie 1935:207

(This Mtshiza Forest scares me -
 One apprehensively walks in it and then stops to scan it
 One day a monster will come out, I dare say,
 Once I even heard a roar coming from it.
 It was neither a wild pig nor a lion
 At some stage we even went to the seers
 And they didn't hesitate to tell us
 That the Forest is harbouring a Monster in it.)

Later he has the line:

Mahlath' eTyhusha ndiwayatyhutyhile;

(I have traversed the forests of Tyhusha)

The reference here is to the areas at which John Ross ministered.

There are certain animals, birds and reptiles which feature in traditional praise poetry and which are associated with greatness and powerfulness, for example:

ixhalanga ikhwababa untloyiya irhamba	>	birds
ingwenya inamba isikhotsholo izilenzi	>	reptiles
ingonyama indlovu inkabi/inkunzi inyathi	>	animals

In their association of these with the appearance, behaviour or power of the subject of praise, their own behaviour would be brought out and this would lead to their understanding and appreciation by the listeners, thereby making the community take note of the marvels of nature. For the praise poet at this level therefore the significance of nature was that it provided him with a window through which he could look at human behaviour. As we shall see in the next paragraph, this tradition turned out to be very helpful to the literate poets who decided to use nature to protest the behaviour of the Black people's oppressors.

At the lower levels of praise singing, however, those animals which played a vital role in the socio-economic life of the people did become the sole subjects of praises. Singing of praises among the Xhosa was not the monopoly of praise singers of the Great Place. Any individual was, in his or her own right, a praise singer, to the extent that he or she could verbalize his or her appreciation of something or his or her excitement in poetic language, even though he or she would not go by the name of a praise singer. Animals that played a vital role in the socio-economic life of the Xhosa were the cattle, the horses and dogs: the cattle were the central nervous system of religion, or specifically, communication with ancestors, and were also a means of transport, a duty that was later taken over by horses; the cattle were also one of the pillars of economic survival, because of the milk they provided as well as because of their skins from which a number of things were made. Dogs, man's best friends, also were part of the economic life of the Xhosa, because they were used in hunting which was crucial to each family's survival. The skins of the animals caught to make blankets. They were also necessary for ornamental dress and titular or

occupational dress. Thus the individual Xhosa would sing praises to these animals. In Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* we have an example of a boast about one's horse. Mphuthumi, one of the leading characters in the book, is late for a teachers' meeting. When he gets to the meeting, to forestall reprimanding for lateness from the other teachers, he draws their attention to the excellent performance of his horse. His exaggerations of this performance is wrapped up in the following praises of the animal:

'Goloz' edingeni, engasayi kufumana nto,
 Nyok' enamanyal' eyachith' umbusw' emyezweni,
 Yatshibilik' inkuku akhal' amantshontsho.
 Tshibila, mntwana, uthath' unyawo lukanyoko!
 Khonkotha, ntlok'w' enja, ngokuhlwa nda' ukuph'umphothulo.'

(The one who sits forlonly, waiting for a date who'll not turn up,
 The shameless Serpent that undermined governance in the Garden.
 The hen faltered in step causing the chickens to give pitiful cackles.
 Take a step child, and follow in your mother's foot-steps!
 Bark, head of my dog, tonight I'll give you dry porridge in sour milk.

In Mqhayi's *Ityala lamawe* we also witness praises of an ox, uGunguluza:

UGunguluza sigugude,
 UNgqob' isenqineni;
 UNkomo yabelek' iimpondo
 Kub' inamtheth' usentliziweni.
 Uya kumaNzolo noNyelenzi.
 Abakwizwe lemimoya.

p.41

(The one who strikes lightly, but still causes us to go helter-skelter,
 The one endowed with speedy legs;
 The Ox that carried its horns on its back,
 For it knows the law by heart.
 You are going to MaNzolo and Nyelenzi,
 Who are in the world of the spirits.)

These praises, as it can be seen, are very short but incisive. However, individuals could extend their praises of animals that were dear to them as is the case in Ndawo's *Uhambo lukaGqobhoka* where Gqobhoka, before he decides to move out of Mhlangeni, sings praises for his father's bull, Ngobiya.

Because of their exposure to the poetry of the English and the Greeks and the Romans, the Xhosa literate poets included nature in their poems as the main and sometimes the only subject of their praises. This was an extension of the traditional practice, described above, of describing nature in an allusive manner in the process of praising people. Some of these were presented in the traditional form, while others were presented in the modern form of poetic expression. Ngcwabe's "Ilanga", Mqhayi's "Intaba kaNdoda", "Thaba Nchu" "Thaba Bosiu" and Nkuhlu's "Sihota" are some of the examples of nature poems presented in the traditional form. On the whole, poems of nature were presented in the modern form of poetic expression. We shall, however, not go into these, as our concern here is how modern poets used these to articulate their dissatisfaction with their socio-political reality. This is done in the next paragraph. However, the memory of some examples of poems of nature lingers long in the minds of students of literature:

"Inyibiba" by Jolobe
 "Umnga" and "Intaba kaNdoda" by Mqhayi
 "IGqili" by Tshaka

5.2.3 Religious poems

In traditional poetry religion was never addressed as the main theme of the praises. Instead, as in the case of nature, allusions to religion are made in the process of singing praises of individuals to emphasize the involvement of *Qamata* and ancestors in the affairs of the living. When in Mqhayi's *Ityala lamawele* Khulile leaves with the King's messengers who had come to fetch him, the praise singer has this to say in his praises of Khulile:

Hamba nelo shologu lakowenu

(Go in the company of your family's spirit)

In Mpinda's "Aa! Zam' ukulunga!" there is a reference to the Cape longclaw:

Zwity'! Zwity'! Zwity'!
 Ntakani na le itshoyo, ngathi linqilo lindandazela

...

Zwity'! Zwity'! Zwity'!
 Itheni na le ntak' ingasayeki sivile nje,
 Madoda yiyekeni, yothi kant' ixel' isanga.

(Zwity'! Zwity'! Zwity'!

Which bird is that, sounding like the Cape longclaw in the air with open wings

Zwity'! Zwity'! Zwity'!

Why is this bird not stopping even though we've heard

Men, leave it alone, it may be predicting something big.)

As we saw in chapter four above, the Cape longclaw is a religious symbol, because it represents the presence of the spirit of the ancestors, and therefore it is indicative of the blessedness of a journey. Thus by referring to it the poet is alluding to the religious beliefs of the Xhosa. Ritual chants are the closest that pre-literate communities came to the direct praising of the Supernatural Beings - Qamata and the ancestors.

The song of Ntsikana is most probably the first example of the Deity being the main and the sole subject of praise. Although song is a different genre from praise poetry, the difference between the two is very marginal. Jordan (1973:51) suggests that Ntsikana's song is a kind of bridge between the traditional and post-traditional mode of giving praises. That is why we take Ntsikana's song as a form of praise to the Lord. The significance of Ntsikana's song is that it was the first example of the transference of the traditional Xhosa form of praising individuals to the praising of deities. As it was explained in chapter three, Christianity opened the way for individuals to communicate directly with God. Thus Ntsikana's song set the trend for the literate poets to use traditional forms in singing praises of the Lord. Notable examples of this are Jolobe's "Indlov' enomxhaka" and Mqhayi's "Aa! Mhlele!" The following are the first three stanzas from each of these poems.

INDLOV' ENOMXHAKA

UDuma-barhwaqele, iNdlovu enomxhaka,
 Ulitye lenyengane, umandla makhulu,
 Bhubesi lakwaYuda, gquma bankwantye!
 UloMoya uphumla kumaza olwandle,
 Ulochith' ubumnyama, kuvel' ukukhanya,
 UDuma barhwaqele, iNdlov' enomxhaka.

Ulothetha ngelizwi, kuvele indalo;
 Ulophatha ngesandla, kuvele ubomi.
 Ulonika indyebo, abuy' ahlwempuze;
 Ulothandi womthetho, ohlwaye umkreqi.
 UDuma-barhwaqele, iNdlov' enomxhaka.

Uloqula lezulu liphethwe kwanguye,

Antywilise izizwe ngamandla omsinga.
 Ulojoja igazi, ohlway' umbulali,
 Uloduba intetho, athob' onekratshi;
 UDuma-barhwaqele, iNdlov' enomxhaka.

(THE GARLANDED ELEPHANT

The awe-inspiring one, the garlanded Elephant,
 The granite stone, the mighty one.
 Lion of Judea with an awe-inspiring roar!
 He Spirit rest on the waves of the sea,
 He repels darkness to bring forth light,
 The awe-inspiring one, the garlanded Elephant.

He speaks a word to create nature;
 He touches with a hand to bring forth life.
 He gives out plenty, he takes away plenty;
 The lover of law who punishes the law-breaker.
 The awe-inspiring one, the garlanded Elephant.

The pool of heaven (sea) too is in His hands
 He drowns the nations in its powerful current.
 He smells out hands soiled with blood and punishes the killer,
 He calms down angry talk and humbles the conceited.
 The awe-inspiring one, the garlanded Elephant.

* * *

AA! MHLEKAZ' OMHLE

Bayethe, Kumkani!
 Thole lentombi yakwaYuda,
 Wena, Sonini-nanini;
 Wena, Mahlaba zihlangana;
 Wena, Jay' Omkhulu wezihlwele,
 Ngqin' izingel' imiphefumlo;
 Zibel' imihlamb' eyalanayo;
 Lung' elikhulu lakuloMazulu.
 Bayethe, Kumkani!

Wena, mehl' anjengesibane;
 Wena, Tshawe lamaTshawe;
 Wena, Sinunza-nunza sesinunzela;
 Wena, Mhle ngokweNyanga;
 Wena, Khwezi loMso;
 Wena, Liwa laPhakade;
 Wena, Nyana woseNyangweni.

Bayethe, Kumkani!
 Bayethe, Nyana kaDavide!
 Wena, Xhwane leXhwane;
 Wena, Gqira laseSebhayoti;
 Wena, Mang' angalanywa;
 Wena, Nqaba yeNyaniso;
 Wena, Khaka leNyaniso;
 Wena, Ngonyama yeSixeko sakwaYuda.

(HAIL MAGNIFICENT ONE!

Hail Your Divine Majesty!
 Son of the maiden of Judah,
 You Everlasting One;
 You Who strikes the enemy at once;
 You Big Jay of the multitudes,
 The Seeker of souls to save;
 The Reconciler of the incompatible;
 The Kind One from Heaven.
 Hail Your Divine Majesty!

You whose eyes are like a lamp;
 You Prince of Princes;
 You Mightiest of the mighty;
 You of the beauty of the Moon;
 You Morning Star of a New day;
 You Rock of Ages;
 You Son of the Heavenly Father.

Hail Your Divine Majesty!
 Hail Son of David!
 You Lamb of the Lamb;
 You Doctor from Sebhayoti;
 You Whom all wish to see;
 You Castle of Truth;
 You Shield of Truth;
 You Lion of the City of Judah.

The irony of this kind of religious poetry is that the missionaries, as it was explained earlier, discouraged the singing of praises as a sign of heathenism. Christians even today still draw a lot from traditional praise singing when they pray or preach. The language of a prayer approximates that of praise poetry, especially in the extent to which it is built on an expanded metaphor and in the use of compounded praise names. In the examples above the following metaphors are found:

in Mqhayi:

1. Thole lentombi yakwaYuda
(calf)
2. Wena khwezi loMso
(morning star)
3. Wena Liwa laPhakade
(rock)
4. Wena Xhwane leXhwane
(lamb)
5. Wena Nqaba yeNyaniso
(castle)
6. Wena Khaka leNyaniso
(shield)
7. Wena Ngonyama yesixeko sakwaYude
(lion)
8. Wena Gqirha laseSebhayote
(diviner)

and in Jolobe:

1. ULitye lenyengane...
(stone)
2. Bhubesi lakwaYuda...
(lion)
3. uDuma-berhwaqele iNdlovu
(elephant)

We also find the following compound nouns: "Sonini-nanini", "Mahlaba zihlangana" in Mqhayi and "Duma-barhwaqele" in Jolobe. In another religious poem in which he extols Jesus Christ, Mqhayi uses the following praise names for Him:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Sifuba-sibanzi | - Broad-chested |
| Mangangalanywa | - One whom everybody wishes to see |
| Gob' egungxula | - One who bends to pull down |

- Mandi' asimanga - The One with miraculous power
- Sifuba-luGangatho - The One whose chest is muscular
- Themba-Thamsanqa - Hope-Luck

The names are in line with the ones given to royal personalities, both structurally and semantically. Functionally, praise names are cryptic celebrations of the good qualities of their subjects. They are also allusions to the physical build of the person praised and it is this that enables the literate poet to draw imaginary pictures of the deities. First he concretizes them by giving them these anthropomorphic features and then uses hyperbolic language to describe certain parts of these imagined bodies: the arm used to stroke and heal the sick and comfort those in emotional pain; the eye (which interestingly is always in the singular) that sees everywhere, the chest which is for the dejected to rest their heads on as well as for the acceptance of the faithful. To emphasize the supernaturalness of the deities, they are sometimes portrayed as having wings, under which humans are taken for protection.

It should, however, be noted that not all religious poems were written in the fashion of oral poetry. Under this category can be included those poems that are about ministers of religion, even though those qualify to be included also in the category of poems about individuals.

5.2.4 Poetry about death

Closely linked to religious poems were poems about death. In the classification of the poems in his collection, *Khala Zome*, Ngcwabe classifies these poems about death with religious poems as metaphysical poetry (*imibongo-ntyila-zwi*). Poems about death can be divided into two types. First, there are those in which the poet describes death and the inevitability thereof. In some cases the metaphor of the grave (*ingcwaba*) is used, while Jolobe has used the metaphor of a hunter in his "Ingqina ezingela imiphefumlo" (The hunter of souls). In his "Ukufa", Ngcwabe has even personified death. He then presents his poem in the form of a traditional praise poem as can be seen from the following first two stanzas:

Aa! Ngqonge-ngqongendini kaGubulegqitha!
 Ho--o-o-o-o-o-o-yina!!!
 Thambodala kade bemqongqotha!
 Diza-dala kade bemkhwahlaza!
 Wen' ukad' unethwa naziimvula!
 Gqala lamagqala,
 Tshawe lamatshawe
 Kufandin' akufi!
 Kwakudala-dala, kwamhlamnene,
 Kwamandulo phaya entlandlolo
 Wawusel' ukad' uququzela.
 Gqogq' eqhuqha, nqwelo yogoduko!
 Choph' emanxebeni,
 Xhaph' axel' ixhwili,
 Ntondini-ndini!

(Hail Vicious Pouncer who who strikes in a flash!
 Hail! Hail! Hail!
 Experienced one of many moons!
 Old Stalk of endless produce!
 You who have been through all seasons!
 Experienced one of all times,
 Prince of princes,
 You death, will never die!

Long, long ago, in the days of old,
 Way back, right in the beginning
 You were already busy at work.
 Fast Raider, flight to life's final destination!
 Leaker of wounds,
 Mouth blooded like a wild dog,
 Sadist of all times!)

Mama and Mbebe have: "Ukufa inqwelo yezizwe" in which the metaphor of a wagon is used to describe death. This metaphor enables the poets to draw a picture of something concrete with physical features and a colour, which in this case is "black as soot."

The other type are those poems about individuals who have died, the so-called elegiac poems. These are poems with which poets pay respect to the deceased who distinguished themselves in one way or the other, during their life time. In the poetry of the newspapers we saw the tendency of subscribers to end death reports with a verse or two of the praises of the deceased or God. These individuals whose death was being reported in the newspapers did not need to have been people who had distinguished themselves nationally

and internationally, although they may have been prominent members of their respective communities or churches. One of the traditional responsibilities of poets was to comfort the nation during times of emotional discomfort, whatever the cause. One of these times is the time of bereavement, the sense of which is felt beyond the family and the deceased's neighbourhood. Some people distinguished themselves not so much by the work they did as by their positions in society during their life time. Royal personalities and ministers of religion fit into this category. Thus, while Ngcwabe has included in his collection a section about death, Mqhayi in his, has included a section about the dead. This includes personalities such as His Majesty King Griffith Seeiso of Lesotho; W.G. Bennie, editor of *Imibengo* and the *Stewart Xhosa Readers*, the Rev. John Solilo, writer and poet, and many others who served the nation.

Some poems of the dead are not about specified individuals; instead they are about nameless members of a group who have been wiped out by some disaster or who have fallen in battle. As we saw in chapter four above, one of the disorders that characterized the pre-literate societies was the threat of wars. At the end of a war, when the soldiers came back, whether victorious or not, it was the praise singer's responsibility to welcome them in praise. These praises would include the consoling of the members of the families of those who fell and, therefore were not part of the returning group. Words of consolation would extend to the king or chief, their returning colleagues who survived the war and to the nation in general. A notable example of this type is "Ukutshona kukaMendi" by Mqhayi, from which we find the following stanza:

Thuthuzelekani ngoko, zinkedama
 Thuthuzelekani ngoko, bafazana.
 Kuf' omnye kakade, mini kwakhiw' omnye
 Kukhonza mnye kade, zekuphil' abanye.
 Ngala mazwi sithi thuthuzelekani,
 Ngokwenjenje kwethu sithi yakhekani,
 Lithatheni eli qhalo labadala
 Kuba bathi, "Akuhlanga lungehlanga!"

Bennie 1935:90

(Be comforted then, you orphans
 Be comforted then, you young wives
 Because one has to die for many to survive
 One has to die to save the lives of the others.)

With these words we say be comforted
 In this way we say be courageous
 Take heed of the adage of the elders
 For they say, "Death is an age-old phenomenon!")

In this poem the poet mourns the death of the six hundred and fifteen African volunteers who died when their ship, Mendi, collided with a Russian submarine when they were on their way to France to assist the Allied Forces during World War I. This poem is a very good example of the oratorical skills which the poet used to make light the burden of bereavement. Out of six stanzas, the above stanza is the only one that addresses the bereaved directly. The first four are addressed directly to the deceased, which is a confirmation of the belief that death is not the end of life, but a passage to a higher life. ~~†~~The dead are alive and are capable of listening to what is said to and about them. Thus Mqhayi here comforts the living by addressing the dead, showing how their deaths are just means of proceeding to a higher life. As we shall show in the paragraph below, Mqhayi was opposed to the enlisting of Black people into this kind of service, but because he had no power to change the decision of those in authority, he had to carry out his responsibility as a praise singer, even though he may have carried it out under the weight of an "I-told-you-so" feeling. And so his opening lines:

Ewe! Le nto kakade yinto yaloo nto!
 Thina, nto zaziyo, asothukanga nto.

Bennie 1935:89

(Yes! This thing is a becoming thing!
 We, who know, are not at all surprised.)

This first stanza outlines the view of the poet (he uses the plural probably to refer to his kind and the elders in the community), that this sad occurrence was to be expected. He then resorts to the African view about going to and dying at war, which is that those who fell are the sacrifice of the nation. By listening to the words of the poet about the exploits of the deceased, the bereaved forget about their bereavement and the extent to which their death was no more than a national sacrifice. In the final stanza he attributes the sinking of the Mendi to the greatness (weightiness) of its load and not to the collision, and in this way he diverts the attention of the bereaved from the real cause of the accident. It is as if the

ship sank because "Iint' ezinkulu zeAfrika" were too heavy for it. This can only fill the bereaved with pride that their loved ones were too heavy for the Mendi, and therefore it could not take their weight. This also fills the deceased with pride and it diverts their attention from their own sense of loss. In "Amagorha awe emfazweni emantla eAfrika", Jolobe comforts the nation thus:

Musan' ukulila bafaz' abakhulu
 Kunamhla enithe kanti nizel' oonyana
 Ziimin' ezinje eziphuhlis' amadoda.
 Asimihla yonk'' evelisa amaqhawe.
 Thuthuzelekani nani bafazana.
 Lo mhla ubonis' kuba nendile.
 Ngubani na obengakhusel' ubunyulu
 Ukuba angqengqa ezintlant' amadoda
 Wakuhlatywa umkhosi ezintabeni?
 Zisuleni iinyembezi zintombi bantwana
 Bathe kanti abantakwenu nooyihlo
 Ngabantu begazi, abantu bomnikelo;
 Nithe kanti kuhleliwe nje mthinjazana
 Nithandana nomlisela wedini.

Umyezo p.82

(Do not cry, you old women
 Today is proof that you gave birth to sons
 It is days like this that bear witness to manhood.
 You too, young women, be comforted.
 This day proves that indeed you are married
 Who would protect sanctity
 If the men were to lie down next to the kraals?
 Wipe the tears out, you young girls
 This has been a revelation that your brothers and fathers
 Are people of blood, people of sacrifice;
 This has been a revelation that you young girls
 Had sacrificial lovers.)

The other aspect of the significance of the poems of death is that those that are about the dead are a record of history, and as such they afford the poets the opportunity to comment on the historical reality that forms the context of the life and death of the person or group of persons for or about whom the praises are sung. In the poem about the death of Major W.L. Geddes, for example, the poet has this to say:

Uyint' eyawel' apha ngeyamaJamani
 Yanyathela kwakany' elwandle,
 Elesibini latsho ngaphesheya.

Wakhal' uKheyizala wabalasela!
 Wathi basithumel' amagongqongqo.
 Amazim okusidla krwada.
 Watsho wela ngophando
 Yaphela loo mini imfazw' amaJamani!

Inzuzo p.47

(You're the big one who crossed here during World War I
 And stepped into the sea,
 and the second on the other side
 Overawed the Kaizer exclaimed
 And said they have sent us monsters.
 Ogres to devour us uncooked.
 And then dipped his head into the ground
 That day ended World War I.)

Here, in hyperbolic language, the poet is commenting on Geddess' participation in the First World War, and in so doing he records history.

5.2.5 Poetry of educational institutions

Although, like nature in traditional praise poetry, institutions of education were alluded to in the course of singing praises of an individual, there are poets who wrote poetry on educational institutions. Examples of these are: Mqhayi's "Imbutho yakwaBhulayi" in *Inzuzo*; Tshaka's "Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume" in *Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume* and Ngani's "Inkulungwane yeLovedale" in *Intlabamkhosi*. The content of these revolves around either the history of the institution or the individuals associated in a significant manner with the institution, or both. In his poem, for example, Tshaka mentions some of the principals of Lovedale during its early years: Govan, its first principal; Stewart; Henderson; Wilkie and Shepherd. Ngani in his, goes as far back as the arrival of the pioneer missionaries such as Van der Kemp, William, Thompson, Bennie, Ross and Brownlee. In Mama and Mbebe's *Amaqunube* there is "Siyakubulisa Lovedale!" and "Ukhulile Bhencuthi".

As it can be seen from some of these poems, this type of poetry is quite closely linked to praise poetry, for it seems to be at the border of praise and narrative poetry. Allusions to

individuals associated with these institutions, such as the former principals of Lovedale listed above, enables the poet to cross over quite easily to a traditional mode of poetic expression.

5.2.6 Didactic poetry

One of the responsibilities of traditional poets was to act as custodians of society's moral values. This they did by including in their praises condemnation of unbecoming behaviour among certain individuals in the community, or the youth, and even on the part of the chief, or people in other positions of leadership. This was done in a very implicit manner, but the guilty ones would know, as would the other members of the community who were aware of such behaviour. The praises of Ngqika, for example, have the following line:

Ubumlala nj' unyok' ubusithi woyiva phi
n' imbathu kwedini?

Rubusana 1911:246

(When you had sex with your mother, who did you think you would be mothered
by, boy?)

This is a reference to his abduction of Thuthula, his uncle Ndlambe's wife. In Archie Velile Sandile's praises we find the following lines:

Siyamdela thin' umfo kaNikani, okaNikani sitsh' uSisusenkomo
Ndlela zini n' ezi zineentsana namaqhekeza?
Sikhe sakholwa ngemihla kaZimasile

Opland 1982:38

(We despise this fellow Nikani, we mean Sisusenkomo.
What paths are these, littered with broken bottles
What a good time we had in the days of Zimasile!)

Velile had become a heavy drinker and the praise-singer is pointing a finger at one of his associates, Chief Nikani, whom he accuses of having been a bad influence on Velile. He (the praise-singer) says during his association with Councillor Zimasile, Sandile was not drinking heavily. Thus, not only the chief's over-consumption of alcohol is condemned, but

also the behaviour of one of his councillors who is perceived to be encouraging the chief's habit of drinking too much.

Modern poets are much more explicit than this, however. Although missionaries were opposed to praise singing, the literate poets drew from this tradition to carry out the work that was supportive to the mission to convert the Xhosa to Christianity. Thus, poetry collections abounded in what Ngcwabe breaks down into poetry of chastisement (*ezingoluleko*) and poetry of human behavioural types (*ezingomntu*). Under the latter sub-type he has titles such as: "Umntu oneenkani" (A stubborn person), "Umntu onobubele" (A kind person) "Umntu onothando" (A loving person), "Umntu onesazela" (A person with a guilt complex), "Umntu onekratshi" (A conceited person). Under the former he has: "Ixesha" (Time), "Uxolo" (Peace), "Imbumba yamanyama" (Unity), "Ubugwala" (Cowardice), "Ubugorha" (Courage) and "Ungatatazeli" (Do not panic.) To these can be added titles such as "Inyaniso" (Truth), "Umona" (Jealousy) by Mqhayi; "Udlomdlayo" (Liquor) and "Umemezo" (The call) by Tshaka.

Although we have categorized this poetry as didactic poetry, it may also be preferable to refer to it as guidance poetry, since it may be argued that in essence all poetry has something to teach humanity about, especially poetry under our next category, narrative poetry. However, we have used the term "didactic" here to underline the moralistic character of the poems mentioned above, and any other poetry with similar features.

5.2.7 Narrative poetry

One of the features of traditional praise singing was the tendency by the praise singer to take the listeners down memory lane by relating something that took place either in the recent or in the remote past. It may be something that the listeners witnessed, or something that is part of the history of the nation. This may be done to emphasize the gravity of the condition that is being alluded to. One example is the praises sung by Hintsá's praise singer when the Gcaleka returned from the battle of the Amalinde in 1818, when he says in *Ityala lamawe*le:

Latsh' izwi lesigodlo, mini kwandulukwa,
 Kwakhal' uphondo lwenkom' ukusihlanganisa,
 Mhla sayiwela le Nciba siqule sagqiba;
 Mhla wesuk' uZanzol' engenazwi lamlomo,
 Sesibon' ukuphuma kwamadangatye ngamehlo,
 Sesibon' ukuphokozeka kwemisi ngeempumlo,
 Sesisiv' inzwinini yamakhwelo ngeendlebe.
 Wath' umntu namhlanj' isilo sijongolekile.

p.60

(The sound of the horn was heard on the day we left,
 The horn of an ox was blown to call us together.
 The day we crossed the Kei armed to the teeth;
 That day Zanzolo left without uttering a word,
 All we saw were flaming eyes
 All we saw was a smoking nose,
 All we heard was whistling piercing our ears.
 Someone said today the king sees red.)

Sometimes this is done to underline some outstanding quality or qualities in the person that is being praised, usually the qualities of valour, physical strength, intellectual power, wisdom and even the gift of poetry. The outstanding deeds of the person's fore-fathers would be recalled.

The literate poets took this skill and used it as a foundation on which to build a new type of poetry. This type of poetry resembled the folk narrative in many ways, the main difference being in the structure. This poetry can be divided into: the folkloric type, narration of historical and biblical events and the anecdotal type. The folkloric are those poems in which a folktale is presented in verse form. The purpose is the same, even though the poem does not have some of the performance features of the folktale. Ngcwabe has many examples of these poems: "Isikhukukazi saseTsomo", "UNomathemba", "UTOzi nesele", "UNoliwa", "Ingoma yomlambo", "Imfene nengwenya". In Jolobe's *Umyezo* we find "*Ukubhaqwa kwezimba*" and "*Ukubethwa ngemvaba*."

Some historical events have been retold by the literate poets in verse form. "UThuthula", "Ilanga likaQilo", "Imfecane", "Amaqhawwe awe emfazweni eMantla eAfrika" (from *Umyezo*) and "Ingqawule" (*Ilitha*) are examples from Jolobe. In Ngani's *Intlabamkhosi* we find

"Ukutshona kwelang' emini" and "Utyelelo lokumkanikazi kuMzantsi weAfrika" and "UKama kaChungwa". In Tshaka's *Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume* there is "Siya kuthoba kwiBhilithane", "Kwahlw' emini", and "IMendi". Mqhayi has "Umkhosi wemiDaka", "Ukutshona kukaMendi" and "Esandlwana."

This type of poetry indicates the continuation of one of the poet's responsibilities, which is the recording of history for posterity. Mqhayi had another method of doing this, which was to write poetry on the passing and coming of years, a tradition which was started by the newspaper poets. Tshaka's "UNogumbe" is an example of biblical narrative.

The anecdotal type of narrative poetry approximates an improvised short story, and apart from the length, the main difference between it and the short story is that the story of the anecdotal narrative poem invariably revolves around one character. Sometimes they have a moral to convey and at other times they are simply of entertainment value, although, being anecdotal, they are all characterized by humour. The following poem from Jolobe's *Umyezo* is an example of this type of narrative poetry:

UDABA LOBUSO

Undwendw' oluyimfundi kwilali yasemzini,
Lwabakho efihlweni lelunga lentokazi.
Ngesiko lamaphandle ukumhl' entloko umntu,
Lwacelwa lwenz' intetho kwinkonz' ezukileyo.

Lwathi, "Imbonakalo yobuso iyincwadi.
Isihange sifundwa ngokubhalw' ebusweni.
Ufukuko lobuso obulifutyufutyu
Luxel' ukuthi umntu yindlamanzi yenene."

Lwahambisa, "Kobale nzwakaz' ingqengqe apha
Besibon' ubulali nothando maxa onke.
Makalale ngoxolo umfikazi. Ngale nto
Ufundise lukhulu." Ancwina amanina.

Ekhaya umfazana ondoda yayisela
Wathi, "Yise kaTutu kuthethiw' edlakeni."
Encuma wahambisa, "Yaz' uthe utitshala
Akuthetha ngobuso ndakhangela kobakho."

Yashiya mpasalala njalo intombi yomntu.
Yathi kant' ifezile. Waguquka loo mfana

Ngokuyinkcenceshela ngemfefa yobuchule
Imbewu ehlwayelwe kwintetho ngomfikazi.

(THE STORY OF A FACE

An educated visitor in one village
Attended a funeral of a kind lady.
As rural people are wont to do, they pounced on him
And asked him to conduct the funeral service.

He said, "The face is like a book.
You can tell a thug by his face.
A bloated face is an indication
That the person is a real alcoholic."

He continued, "In this beautiful lady's face
We saw kindness and love of all times.
May she rest in peace. By this
She taught a great lesson." The women sighed.

At home a young woman whose husband was an alcoholic
Said, "Father of Tutu, it was spoken at the grave side."
Smiling she said, "You know when the teacher
Spoke about the face, I looked at yours."

She left it vaguely like that.
But it was effective. That young man reformed,
Through tactful tending of
The seed put in through the talk about the deceased.

5.2.8 Heroic poetry

In his description of the Basotho heroic poetry, Kunene says:

The heroic poems of the Basotho have, as their subject matter mainly the heroic deeds of warriors and kings. The chief purpose is to praise - to extol the virtues of manly prowess, of courage, of valour and of fighting skill.

1971:1

In the traditional sense of heroic poetry, Kunene's description is equally true of Xhosa. However, as it has already been pointed out, praising was not the only preoccupation of praise singers. Much has already been said in chapter two about the role of poets in the pre-literate African communities. Our purpose here is to show only that the literate poets continued the tradition of extolling the virtues of those who distinguished themselves. Only

now the arenas of "distinguishing" extend beyond the arenas of chieftainship and war. It should also be remembered that the practice of singing praises for chiefs and individuals did not die out because of the advent of Western civilization. It is still surviving today. Some literate poets were praise singers and most young praise singers today are literate, and so write down most of their poetry. Yali-Manisi and Mbuthuma are only two examples of living praise singers who also write their poetry.

The written poetry of the period under discussion has many examples of poems written to celebrate heroic deeds of individuals who were neither kings nor chiefs. It also has many examples of the praises of chiefs. As far back as 1928 Ndawo continued the initiative of Rubusana when he published *Izibongo zeenkosi zamaHlubi nezamaBhaca*, a collection of the praises of the Hlubi and of the Bhaca chiefs. In 1937 Mqhayi wrote and published his long poem in memory of His Majesty King Hintsa, "*Umhlelezi uHintsa*". This poem is dealt with in the next paragraph. Yali-Manisi published his *Izibongo zeenkosi zamaXhosa*, which, in spite of its title dealt with other individuals who were neither kings nor chiefs, but who had made some significant contribution in the community, people such as John Knox Bokhwe, Rubusana, Mqhayi and others. There are also poems mourning the deaths of some outstanding individuals, religious poems and poems on some events.

Apart from the royal figures there are various other categories of people who are the recipients of praises. These include historical figures such as "UMontgomery", "Injengele uSmuts", "USir George Grey" in Tshaka's *Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume*; biblical figures such as "UMosisi" and "UYoshuwa" also in Tshaka. Mqhayi's collection includes even individuals who went overseas: uJohn Tengo Jabavu, uMafukuzela (uDr J.L. Dube) umkaJohn Knox Bokhwe and uNkosazana Minah Thembeke. Another interesting category of heroes is the category of sportspeople. What makes this category interesting is that, although there have been some outstanding Black sportspeople like Jake Tuli, Steve "Kalamazoo" Mokone, Eric Majola and many others, in the fifty years under discussion only two poems were written on sportspeople. These two poems are not on individuals as such, but on unnamed members of teams. Yali-Manisi wrote "Abadlali bombhoxo" and Tshaka had "Ziinto zoshumi elinanye", a poem dedicated to a soccer team. Yali-Manisi, however,

does mention some of the players by their names, because his poem is about a particular rugby match played between Lovedale and Fort Hare.

In concluding this section of the chapter, it may be important to mention the fact that not all the poems written in the first fifty years of Xhosa poetry fit into our categories above. There are a couple of poems outside these categories, which can be lumped together as miscellaneous. These would be poems such as those that celebrate the beauty of women in particular, such as Jolobe's "UNomhi" and Tshaka's "Inzwakazi". Others would be those that celebrate human inventions such as trains, as in Nkuhlu's "Uloliwe", Yako's "Imoto" and Mqhayi's "UJujuju kwelakwaNyawuza". Poems about money and newspapers would also be in this category.

5.3 POETS BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

The previous chapter concluded with the observation that writers of poetry seem to have been better able than the writers of novels to bring out the socio-political reality of the Africans. However, in our categories above we have refrained from including a category of protest poetry. One reason for this is the fact that there are very few such poems and the protest in them is too implicit to be considered to be the main focus in these poems. The other reason is that, because of its implicitness, protest in these few poems is an example of how the poets grappled with the position in which their art had placed them. The context of the birth of Xhosa literature and the position into which literary artists were pushed and which has already been explained in the preceding chapters, explain why poets concealed their protest beneath metaphorical discourse.

But there is something divine about ^the gift of poetic art, as there is with all art. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the link between poetic art and the truth is inalienable. Therefore the forces of the suppression or distortion of truth must be very strong, and the custodians of truth must be very weak or 'helpless' for the sparks of truth inside the poetic mind to be completely put out. The enemies of truth become triumphant either when its custodians have allowed themselves to be assimilated into the enemies' way of thinking or

when they have been driven into indifference by what they perceive to be the hopelessness of their situation. In Africa in general, and South Africa in particular, the forces of the suppression and distortion of truth have been colonialism and capitalism with their ice-breaking ally, Christianity. The contribution of literary artists in the fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa and the protracted struggles of literary artists in the exposition of the atrocities of the White racist regime in South Africa, are proof of the failure of these forces.

The aim of this section of the chapter is to exemplify how the sparks of truth were made to flicker in the works of a few poets. This is to say that even though Xhosa literature is characterized by its political reticence, there are poems in which protest is implied rather than explicit. One striking aspect of this protest poetry is that when it is compared with the few examples found in the newspaper poetry dealt with in chapter three, it is noticeable that even the language used lacks the aggression of the newspaper poetry, such as is found in UHadi Waseluhlangeni's "Vukani bantwana" and Buhele's "Tarhu Nkantula". The irony of this is that the condition of the African had by this time gone from bad to worse.

In the case of Mqhayi's "Umkhosi wemiDaka" in *Imihobe nemibongo* the voice of protest is not in the text of the poem itself, but in the preamble where he writes:

Le nto umntu ayifi kukwenzeka kwento engayithandi. Sendibona sekuleli xhaphetshu kulilo nje, lokwela ukuya eFransi; asikuko nokuba bendingazi kuba kungaba nje. Kodwa ke xa iinkosi zigqibileyo zona - kuba abantu aba ngabeenkosi -ngubani na ongabuya athi khwethe-khwethe, kwaze kwathi bekuthe kwathini?

p.19

(One never dies because something has happened which one did not want to happen. When I look at all this movement, people busy preparing to go to France, it surprises me to no end, because I never thought that things could come to this. But, alas, what can one do if the chiefs have decided it that way - because don't people belong to the chiefs? Well, nobody can raise even a murmur of complaint.)

The sarcasm of the question "don't people belong to the chiefs?" and the anger of the first line are in stark contrast with the enthusiasm and the sense of pride that pervade the poem. Mqhayi is angered by the fact that the chiefs have agreed that Africans can be recruited to

participate in the First World War. Even though he does not say why, the prevailing political reality in South Africa at the time makes his reasons fairly obvious. In his dilemma he appeals to the other half of his twoness, his Christian conscience, for a rationale to accept this political anomaly of people going to participate in a war in which they have no stake, fighting side by side with their oppressors. He then goes on:

Ndithe kanjalo njengekholwa likaKristu ndakhumbula ukuba kanene, nokuba le nto ibiseyimnyama ngokwethunzi lokufa, Yena uya kuyiguqula ikhazimle nangaphezu kwelanga.

ibid.

(But as a Christian believer, I remembered that even if this thing is as dark as the shadow of death, He will make it shine even brighter than the sun.)

The preamble shows that the praises that the poet is singing, are sung with a big lump in his throat. He feels bound to perform his poetic responsibility to sing praises for the soldiers going to war, even though it is for a cause he does not agree with. His position compels him to betray his true feelings. For our purposes here the significance of this preamble is that it is the only instance where the poet lets his readers into the secret that what he was saying was in total conflict with his real feelings. Moreover, it confirms Plekhanov's view about the doctrine of art for art's sake developing when "artists feel hopeless contradiction between their aims and the aims of the society to which they belong" (see paragraph 2.6 above). It also raises the question of there being a possibility that "Ukutshona kukaMendi" was written with an "I-told-you-so" attitude. On more than one occasion when dealing with this poem in my undergraduate literature classes, some of the radical students have made it clear that they have no sympathy with those who died in the Mendi accident, as they had no business to be there in the first place.

In this same collection Ngxiki contributed a poem entitled "Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!" On the surface this poem seems to be about home sickness:

EMAKHAYENI! EMAKHAYENI!

Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!
Kudala sisebenza ezinzulwini zomhlaba,
Sisimb' igolide namaty' edayimani,
Ezants' emgodini ezimbanjen' zomhlaba;
Namhla ke sifezile. Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!

Hay' ubumnandi bekhaya, xa usekhaya kanye,
 Xa sihamb' emahlathini kumahlath' akowethu,
 Xa siphuma ingqina, sibuya nempunzi;
 Siphosis' imizimba, kwimilambo yakowethu.
 Hiji! Phulaphula! Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!

Sekuziintsuku, makowethu, salishiyayo ikhaya,
 Masibuyel' ekhaya, siyokondl' oozintsapho:
 Sibukel' iinkomo siphum' (sic) intlazane,
 Kwakunye nabafazi bevun' amazimba.
 Hiji! Khawuve! Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!

Masikondel' ukubinza, ukubinza kwenkwenkwezi,
 Sisenz' izikhali kwakunye nemikhonto,
 Sisenz' amabali, amabali ezizwe,
 Kubalw' amadabi, amadabi ezizwe,
 Kukhankanyw' amadoda, amadoda egazi;
 Nezenzo zobugorha zemihla 'mandulo.
 Huntshu! Hiji ke! Emakhayeni! Emakhayeni!

(Back home! Back home! Back home!
 Long have we been working in the bowels of the earth,
 Digging gold and diamond stones,
 Deep in the earth's bowels;
 Today our task is done. Back home! Back home!

Oh, how nice it is to be at home, real home,
 Traversing the forests, forests of our home,
 Going on hunting expeditions, returning with a duiker;
 Cooling our bodies in the rivers of our home.
 Hark! Listen! Back home! Back home!

It's quite some time fellows, since we left home,
 Let's go back home, to take care of our families:
 And watch our herds going out in the morning,
 And our wives busy reaping the sorghum!
 Hark! Hear that! Back home! Back home!

Let's take heed of the piercing of the stars,
 Making weapons and spears,
 Telling stories, the stories of nations,
 Men being mentioned, men who shed blood;
 And heroic deeds of old!
 Hark! Hark! Back home! Back home!)

Here Ngxiki is protesting the breaking up of the family unit by industrialization and the atrocity of a political system that legislates separation of families in the interest of capital. He bemoans the passing of the times when the African was free to move around unhindered

by the White man's laws. Because of his situation as a worker who has been alienated not only from the product of his labour, but also from his family and community, he is nostalgic about the days of plenty and freedom when the Africans would depend on their cattle and the produce of their land.

In his collection *Umyezo*, Jolobe had "Ukwenziwa komkhonzi" (The making of a servant) in which he traces the process by which the Black people were reified and by which they were brought under the White man's rule. The thingness into which the African was turned is captured in the metaphor of an ox which Jolobe has used in his poem. He uses the image of an ox that is being tamed for the yoke, for use in pulling the plough. In the first part Jolobe draws a picture of a free and fat ox with a shiny hide. He then goes to how it was harnessed and the vigorous but vain struggle it engaged in to resist this invasion of its freedom, until:

Standing motionless, there being no sympathy
It bellowed, pouring out cries of bitterness.

The third part portrays the condition of subjugation. This is the stage when man's alienation from the product of his labour reaches completion. The poet describes this condition thus:

I saw him ...
Soaked in sweat making profit for someone else.
Labour is sweet when there's the prospect of sharing in its product.

One of the most important points for our time in South Africa in this poem is that Jolobe draws attention to the effects of oppression on the relations among its victims:

Xa limbi ndiyibone igweba nangophondo
Kuwayo umqotyozwa wamzuzu begazinye.
Ubunzima bedyokhwe budal' ugxechwano.

(At some stage I saw him goring
His fellow-sufferer, a blood relation.
The weight of the yoke creates factiousness.)

Fanon makes the same observation in his analysis of violence when he says:

The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo petrification. The native's muscular tension finds

outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions - in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs and in quarrels between individuals... you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-a-vis his brother.

1968:54

Although Jolobe's "Ukwenziwa komkhonzi" is written in metaphorical language, it is the most vivid portrayal of how the capitalist interests of the colonialists finally succeeded in harnessing Africa for the capitalist West. The term "umkhonzi" has some biblical ring about it, and its use completes the picture of the unholy tripartite alliance of capitalism, colonialism and Christianity.

While Jolobe gives a lengthy analysis of the subjugation of the Africans, Mqhayi, in his "Iqhawe laseBritane" in *Inzuzo*, hurls some snippets at the contradictions of the British Government's policy in South Africa, when he says:

Hay' kodw' iBritan' eNkulu,
Yeza nebhottle neBhayibhile;
Yeza nomfundis' exhag' ijoni;
Yeza nerhuluwa nesinandile
Yeza nenkanunu nemfakadolo.

p.61

(Ah, but Great Britain!
She came with the bottle and the Bible
She came with the missionary hugging a soldier
She came with gunpowder and the gun
She came with cannon and the breechloader.)

p.

In his "Isikrokro" (Discontent) in *Iintsika zentlambo yeTyhume*, Tshaka addresses the issues of exploitation and racial inequality. But, as he may not be explicit, he also resorts to metaphorical language. He takes the relations among nature - the birds, snakes, mice, etc. - to depict the relations between the oppressors and the oppressed:

Yintak' enjani na l' ilixhalanga,
Kuba lithi lakudul' ihashe libizwe,
Lide liboniswe ubungqin' iliso lehashe;
Kodwa lidle liwavimb' amahlungulu?

(What sort of bird is the vulture,
 For when a dead horse is found it is called,
 And it's even given its eye as evidence;
 Yet when it feeds it won't share with the white-necked ravens?)

The first stanza is based on the widely-held belief that when white-necked ravens find a dead horse, they take out the eyes and then go out to search for vultures. This is done to alert the vultures so that they can come to open it up as they have stronger beaks. But when the feasting starts the white-necked ravens are ungratefully chased away. As we have observed in a previous chapter, the Whites were ahead of the Africans in the race to harness the physical world, because of their advanced technology. But the Africans have been in Africa before them. The point made by Tshaka here is that technological power should not be used to enslave those who do not have it. He goes on:

Iimpuku zona zimb' imingxuma
 Ukuhlalw' ihlalwe ziinyoka.

(The mice dig the holes,
 But it is the snakes which live in them.)

Another metaphor used is that of a guard dog which is fed dry bones, but is still expected to be available when the enemy comes, to fight it and protect its owner against it. This metaphor is reminiscent of Mqhayi's implicit objection to the enlisting of Africans for the First World War. There is also the metaphor of the taster and the cooks. The latter do all the work, but may not enjoy the fruits of their labour, because they are ordered:

Zeniyophule yakub' ivuthiwe.
 Ibe imilomo yabo ixwebile.

(Take it out of the fire when it's ready
 Meanwhile their mouths are dry from hunger.)

Inequality characterizes even the work place where:

Ongabiliy' ubeth' umloz' amkele,
 Abamb' isinq' atshay' inqawa.
 Abamb' ipeki kunye nefotsholo,
 Amathonts' okubila ngumvuzo wakhe.

(One who doesn't sweat whistles and gets paid,
Hands akimbo, he smokes at his pipe.
For the one who holds the pick and shovel
The drops of his sweat are his remuneration.)

The issue of land dispossession is addressed in Yako's "Ukufinyezwa nokubiywa komhlaba" (Reduction and fencing of the land) and "AmaPayini". In the first part of the former, Yako writes:

Batsho bon' abantwana begazi,
Noxa lon' ilizwe lingaselilo lethu.
Lo mhlab' uza kusongwa ngokwengubo,
Ube ngangentende yesandla.

(So say the children of blood
Although the country is no longer ours.
This land will be folded like a blanket,
Until it is the size of the palm of the hand.)

The poet then describes the socio-cultural consequences of landlessness. The loss of the freedom of movement portrayed through the use of the metaphor of a race ox (*inkabi yeleqe*) which "will bump against a fence" and which, in any case, will lack the energy as it will be too tired "from the yoke and the plough" (*yidyokhwe nayipuluwa*). Landlessness will result in the loss of stock (cattle) and so money will replace cattle as a new form of *lobola* (bride's price). Behaviour patterns change and the role relations deteriorate between parents and their children and between the young wives and husbands on the one hand and their in-laws on the other, and:

Sisong' amadolo singabinak' ukunaba
Kub' umhlab' ufinyeziwe.

(We shall keep our knees bent, unable to stretch the legs
Because the land has been reduced.)

The loss of stock has negative implications for the traditional religion of the African - ancestor worship - which revolves around cattle that are slaughtered as offerings to the ancestors. The result of this is that family ties gradually become loose and individualism replaces communalism.

Kuthiwa namhl' igazi malingaphalali,
 Ukuhlanganis' amathile namathile;
 Ukuze singakhothani njengemaz' ikhoth' ithole
 Iqhutywa luthando nabubushushu begazi.

(Today it's said there should be no slaughtering
 To bring the relatives together with other clans;
 So that we may not lick one another as a cow does its calf
 Motivated by love and the warmth of blood.)

Yako's point here is that once a community is impoverished through land dispossession, its spirit of humanity and morality is also impoverished.

An interesting aspect of Yako's other poem, "*AmaPayini*", is that the "p" of *Payini* is in the upper case in all the three instances it appears in the text. This makes it somewhat difficult for the readers to make out whether or not this is done to indicate that the "pineapple" is a metaphor for something else. However, whatever the metaphor may be, if it is used metaphorically, the concern of the poet comes out clearly. His concern is that the cultural, economic and recreational needs of the community which hitherto had been satisfied by their land, were being subordinated to those of colonialism which are satisfied by the capital that comes from the forcibly appropriated land. An example of this is the land that has been taken to be used for pineapple farming. In the line:

Ligazi lempahl' elifanel' umnt' omnyama

(What a black person needs is blood from his stock)

Yako is again drawing attention to the negative impact of landlessness on African religion. For our purposes here the significance of this line is that it is a confirmation of the double consciousness of the literate and Christian writers. Although as Christians, they are supposed to be opposed to the African religion of ancestor worship which the missionaries condemned as heathenism, they still bemoan the threat of its collapse brought about by landlessness. This becomes more significant when it is remembered that Yako was not only a Christian, but also an ordained minister of religion.

The disintegration of social stability and of moral values is captured in the sixth stanza:

Iilizwe libhukuqekile,
Amahlathi atshabile;
Asinankuni zamlilo,
Iilizwe likhutshw' isimilo.

(The country is up side down,
Forests have been mowed down;
We have no wood for fuel,
The country has been rid of respect.)

This stanza is reminiscent of Jeremiah's Lamentations 5:4: "We must pay for the water we drink; we must buy the wood we need for fuel."

As can be seen from the above paragraphs, one feature of Xhosa written poetry in the first fifty years is the poet's failure, during their time, to bear full witness to the socio-political condition of the African. As we have tried to show with the above examples, a few poets did, in a few poems, attempt to give a glimpse of the evidence as they witnessed and experienced it. Mqhayi's long poem, "UMhlelezi uHintsisa" is the only example of witness that involves advocacy. However, this is a moderate kind of advocacy, because the poet seems to be concerned with advocating the memory of Hintsisa, and not so much his vindication through a joint action to eliminate the evil conditions that allow for the brutal murder of African leaders. Consequently the instances of the repetition of such acts are countless, the latest being the murder of Chris Hani, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party. Pinsky says of the social responsibility of poets:

We must use the art to behold the evidence before us. Witness may or may not involve advocacy, ... but the strange truth about witness is that though it may include both advocacy and judgement, it includes more than them, as well. Witness goes further, I think, because it involves the challenge of not flinching from the evidence. It proceeds from judgement to testimony.

1987:11

On the whole, it cannot be said that Xhosa poets have not flinched from the evidence, because their witness, as a result of its implicitness, cannot be said to have proceeded to testimony. This could not happen, because the perpetrators of the evil of oppression have not been judged, as they are not even mentioned. Instead, as can be seen from the

following lines from Ngani's "Inkulungwane yeLovedale", some of them have even been absolved:

Mzindini waseSkotlani ninetyala,
 Ngokuphazamis' abantu bezihlalele;
 Nazis' imfazwe nekrele;
 Kambe namhl' ityala ligwetyiwe
 ISkotlan' igwetyelwe, kub' ivul' amehl' eemfama.

p.40

(People of Scotland you're guilty,
 Of disturbing the peace of the people;
 And of bringing war and the sword.
 But today you're being absolved from guilt.
 Scotland is being absolved, because she has opened the eyes of the blind.)

So this particular poet finds extenuating circumstances in the fact that Scottish missionaries opened schools. He is prepared to ignore the aggravating circumstances, such as have been revealed in Yako's two poems quoted above, and the other known consequences of conquest and colonization as well as the complicity of the missionaries in them. This, as we have indicated earlier, is not necessarily because of insensitivity of the poet. This is partly because the poet is aware of the fact that his book will see the light of day only if those own the means of its production, are satisfied that it does not draw the readers' attention to the real truth about the relation of missionary work to conquest. It is our contention here that this flinching from evidence is a feature of poets who write being between two worlds. Finally, from the poetry collections produced in the first fifty years of Xhosa poetry, it is clear that Xhosa poets have not found it traumatic to cross over the mode of poetic expression, and to transfer their African poetic skills to it. They have not only succeeded in doing this, but also in blending the two modes. This confirms the view held by Julien (1992:23) that "the exaggerated dichotomy between the orality of Africa and the writing of (orality as primitive/writing as evolved)" is greatly unwarranted. It undermines the universality of literary skills. She states:

"...the oral traditions of Africa are vigorous aesthetic and social acts, but there is nothing more essentially African about orality nor more essentially oral about Africa... What must be recognised, it seems to me, is that speech/listening is a mode of language as is writing/reading."

1992;24

The narrative poems we have classified as folkloric here and exemplified are examples of the relatedness of orality to writing. In the light of this it can therefore not be said that complicity of silence that pervades the works of Xhosa poets has to do with the fact that they are using a new medium. It can be explained in terms of the double consciousness of the literate and the Christian literary artists, which was created by Christianization, colonization and westernization. This double consciousness has been kept alive by the racist and calvinistic policies of the Nationalist Party Government, which, through numerous draconian laws, has perfected the art of oppression and eliminating opposition.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First it is intended to give a brief account of how the calvinistic ideals of the present government have served to perpetrate the stifling of African literary art, which the missionary and the coloniser initiated with the intention of realising the ideals of British imperialism. Second, it is to summarise some current views and suggestions on the ways in which African literature written in indigenous languages can be empowered, and brought into line with the real consciousness of the Black people in South Africa. This will be done against the background of a resume of the relation between literary art and the socio-political context of its production, as it comes out of the main body of this text, that is, chapters two to five.

It is clear, from the various views expressed by scholars cited in these chapters and from the analysis of the Xhosa novels and poetry published between 1909 and 1959, that there is indeed no such thing as art for art's sake. Ardent opponents of the principle of art for art's sake, such as Marx and Engels, however, are all in agreement that literature should not sacrifice aesthetic value in favour of ideological interest. The pervading view among those who are opposed to this principle is that the gift of talent of literary art, ideally, should enable the literary artist to produce synthetic texts that can combine the emotional, the intellectual and the sensual needs of consumers of their art. The spirit of these texts should at all times coincide with the undying and evolving human wish for freedom from coercion, injustice, hunger and chaos. Thus, we saw that society puts some heavy demands on the literary artist's conscience. It is for this reason that Gallagher remarks that:

These outward demands for relevance are held in tension with the inner demands of artistic commitment. Too much attention to outward demands can result in "agitprop", an art whose forms and content are formulaic and ideologically mandated.

The other side of these demands, both the outward and the inner, therefore is that they nudge the literary artist into making choices and to realise that making such choices depends solely on his or her capacity to liberate his or her conscience. It is in the context of this self-liberation that Gardiner observes that:

The novelist writes about what sense he makes of life; his commitment to one group or another enters his novel as part of, sometimes the deepest part of, the sense he makes of life. If, on the other hand, the commitment enters the novel not as part of the writer's own conception of the grand design, but as an attempt to persuade other people - then the book is not a novel, but propaganda with a story.

in Gallagher 1991:7

This observation, together with views such as have been discussed in the earlier chapters on the issue of literature, commitment and historical reality, emphasizes the complexity of the issue. The issue seems to revolve around the question of the prevailing power relations and the literary artist's own position in those relations. The choices that a literary artist makes will of necessity be conditioned by whether he subscribes to the views of the dominant class or to those of the dominated classes. It is not a question of which class an artist belongs to, it is a question of which ideological position he identifies with. We have seen in chapter two how Engels liked Balzac, even though the latter belonged to the dominant class. In South Africa there have also been examples of writers who belong to the ruling class, but who have used their literary skills to expose the evils of the apartheid policy. In South Africa too, as we have seen from the Xhosa texts discussed in chapters four and five, there have been, and still are, literary artists who, because of their position in the existing power relations, have had their art appropriated for the sustainment of the ideologies of the dominant class. This appropriation has come via the disempowering effects of land dispossession and disenfranchisement on the community of the oppressed Black masses. Talking about South African literature written in English in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, Coetzee describes this literature as an "enslaved literature... which is not fully human: being more preoccupied than is natural, with power and with the torsions of power, it does not know how to pass from the elementary relations of contestation, of domination, and of subjugation, to the vast and complex human world which extends beyond" (Gallagher 1991:7).

The irony of the situation described by Coetzee is that, at the opposite end is another literature which is under worse enslavement, but which the "torsions of power" have forced to regard as taboo the same "elementary relations of contestation, of domination and of subjugation." Instead, these "torsions of power" have imposed on this other literature preoccupation with perpetration of myths and self-subjection and with the creation and sustainment of stereotypes. The tightness of the power torsions on African literature written in indigenous languages is underscored by what Coetzee goes on to say:

The *coarseness* of life in South Africa, the naked force of its seductions, not only on the physical level, but also on the moral level, its harshness and its savageries, its hungers and its furies, its greediness and its lies make it as irresistible as it is displeasing.

ibid.

The fact that this "coarseness" of life in South Africa rarely finds expression in Xhosa literature, despite its irresistibility, is a measure of the tightness of the torsions of power. The result of these torsions for Xhosa literature, and indeed for all literature written in indigenous languages, as we have seen in chapters four and five, has been that most writers chose to resign themselves to these torsions, while a few made some isolated attempts to break free. For this reason literature characterised by socio-political indifference came out of the publishing house. Of this kind of literature Ngugi says:

...literature, any literature, is useless unless it is committed to the values of a people 'sceptreless and free', developing to the highest possible level their limitless creative potential and enjoying to the full the fruits arising therefrom.

1981:40

The main contention of this thesis is that the role of the missionaries who brought Christianity and western-style education to the Xhosa, in the development of Xhosa literature cannot be said to be that of an innocent party. The question now, is what could they have done? What should literary artists in the grip of power torsions do to free themselves? Should they have suspended writing to engage in liberation struggles outside literature? Gallagher (1991:3) mentions Chinua Achebe as an example of a writer who did just that, "leaving a career as a writer for twenty years of public service before returning to fiction with the publication of *Anthills of the Savannah* in 1988." However, if all writers were to do this, the same liberation struggles they resolved to join would be robbed of a

cultural wing, which is a *sine qua non* for any revolution. It is not the temporary renunciation of literature that is necessary, but what Sumaili calls "unshackling one's mind to the extent that one begins to feel that one is in a cause-and-effect relationship with one's own environment" (1989:7).

Sumaili goes on to say:

Defined this way, one finds that literature has not just a supporting role to play in the liberation struggle, but even a central one.

ibid

He then summarizes Lewis Nkosi's views on this issue. Nkosi suggests that writers should engage in the struggle for liberation in two ways. First by capturing in their writings, "the revolutionary impulse of which they are inalienably a part," and then after the successful conclusion of the wars of liberation, they should "constitute an important source of critical consciousness for the nation." In countries where the oppressor is also a national of the country as in South Africa, calls like these beg the question of what happens to this type of literature during the period of national reconciliation and reconstruction. Is there no danger that this literature may incite intergroup hatred by opening old wounds? One thinks here of how the English and the Afrikaners in South Africa feel when they read Afrikaans poems such as C.L. Leipoldt's '*Oom Gert Vertel*' and plays like J.F.W. Grosskopf's '*Oorlog is oorlog?*' Should this type of literature be stashed away, thereby engaging in a process of reverse censorship?

From all these views and questions and from the efforts of the missionaries to stifle the development of a free and independent Xhosa literature, it has also become clear that literature is a powerful tool for influencing human consciousness to transform society. As Said has observed it is more powerful even than those who wield the gun.

6.2 TRENDS SINCE 1959

A survey of the Xhosa literature that has been published since 1959 would show that there has been no change in the trends of literary activity in so far as reflections of literary independence are concerned. Xhosa literature has continued to be closely linked to educational institutions - especially secondary schools and teacher training colleges. As mentioned earlier, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 transferred the control of the education of Black people to the newly-established Department of Bantu Education. The extent of the tightness of the grip of the new custodians of Black people's education on Xhosa literary production can be measured by the following utterances quoted in Christie (1989:12):

"When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them."

H.F. Verwoerd, 1953. He was Minister of Native Affairs at the time when Bantu Education was introduced.

"There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour."

H.F. Verwoerd, 1955

"Educational policies in South Africa must be dictated by the apartheid philosophy."

F. Hartzenberg, 1980
Minister of Education and Training

As in the era of the missionaries, the readership of Xhosa books continued to be located in the schools. In keeping with the views expressed in the above quotes, the government ensured that literature was not produced that was honest to historical experiences of the Black people. Watchdog structures in the form of African Languages' Boards, were established. The mission publishing houses found new competition in the form of a number of mushrooming publishing houses who, through their directorates, had very close links with the Nationalist Party government. The implication of some of these publishing houses in the corruption within the area of Black education today is a matter of public debate which is outside the scope of this thesis. Publishers passed manuscripts on to the Department of Bantu Education. These were then subjected to very close scrutiny by manuscript readers

who invariably were members of the Language Boards. After reading a manuscript a form had to be completed. The reader had to indicate whether the manuscript did not have a political theme, obscene language, whether there were any tendencies to sexuality and whether the reader considered it as being worth prescribing for the schools. If a manuscript failed this test, it would never see the light of day. This procedure is still followed today. The Language Boards are still in place, and are still operating as watchdogs of the education departments of the central government and of the homeland governments. The manner in which these Boards are constituted is enough to indicate the influence of the government over them, as can be seen from the following example:

2. Constitution of the Zulu language board

- 2.1 The Minister may, in consultation with the Cabinet, constitute a board known as the Zulu Language Board which shall exercise such powers or perform such duties as are assigned to it under these regulations. This Board shall exercise these powers or perform such duties under the general supervision and control of the Department or under such terms which the Minister may prescribe from time to time.**
- 2.2 The Board shall consist of members who shall be nominated by the bodies concerned as listed hereunder for appointment by the Minister. These members shall be as follows:-**
 - 2.2.1 A Chairman appointed by the Minister chosen from the list of nominees submitted by the Department;**
 - 2.2.2 A Vice-Chairman appointed by the Minister chosen from the list of nominees submitted by the Department;**
 - 2.2.3 A Secretary who shall ex-officio be the Head of the Language Service Division of the Department;**
 - 2.2.4 Two members to represent the Department;**
 - 2.2.5 Two members to represent the Department of Education and Training;**
 - 2.2.6 Members who will represent the S.A. Universities that offer Zulu as a course of study (one from each University);**
 - 2.2.7 One member to represent the Bureau for Zulu language and Culture;**
 - 2.2.8 Two members to represent Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe (National Cultural Liberation Movement);**
 - 2.2.9 One member to represent the Bible Society of S.A.;**
 - 2.2.10 One member to represent the KwaZulu Department of Information;**

2.2.11 Two members to represent the S.A.B.C.;

2.2.12 Two members to represent the N.A.T.U.;

2.2.13 Two members to represent the Inspectors' Association;

As these Boards were transferred to the homeland governments, what their constitutions will not mention is the fact that the Minister of Education and Training in the House of Assembly or his appointee/s can veto any decision taken by these Boards.

The irony of this control over African literature is that Black children were made to read Afrikaans literature that glorified Afrikaner nationalism and vilified the champions of British imperialism, and made martyrs of the victims of the Anglo-Boer War and of the concentration camps. The obvious intention was to make the Black person hate the British on behalf of the Afrikaner and not because of what they had done to him. This was backed up by the history books that were published and prescribed for the Black schools. The fact that there has never been a Xhosa book that was ever banned is testimony to the effectiveness of the Language Boards and the co-operation of the publishing houses with the Department of Bantu Education in suppressing African literary art. The tragedy of the period of Nationalist Party Government rule, as far as literature is concerned, is that, through the inception and implementation of the homeland system, even oral poetry was eventually harnessed, through the assimilation of chiefs into the homeland system. Dissenting chiefs' praise singers were detained, to persuade them to bring their art in line with the political views of their "masters". The following is the experience of one praise singer from Umtata, Transkei, referred to by Opland (1983:267):

The *Daily dispatch* carried the story under the heading "Sabata's praise singer told to stop singing":

UMTATA - The praise singer of Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo was detained by Security Police on Saturday when he was invited to sing praises at the centenary celebrations of St John's College here. He was released on Monday after questioning.

This is an example of how inimical the homeland governments are towards independent literary art.

Despite this strangulating situation, there have been writers who, as did some in the first fifty years, tried to remain true to their inner feelings. Like their predecessors, however, they were compelled to engage in metaphorical discourse. Siyongwana's *Ubulumko bezinja* is an example of this exposition of historical reality couched in metaphorical language. In his *Impefumlelwano*, a poetry collection, Dikana has a poem which is about the coal mine disaster at Coalbrook in 1960 in which more than 400 African mine workers died. Zamela in his epic 'Imbalela' in *Yehl' intlekele*, portrays the historical processes by which the Blacks were driven into a political desert. On the surface the poem is about the natural disaster that is drought.

It should, however, be remembered that the stifling of literary art was not confined to Black literature. As one of the features of the Nationalist Government was the silencing of criticism, even some Afrikaner literary artists were forced to leave the country, because they produced dissenting literature. This was not acceptable to the Government watchdogs.

6.3 THE WAY FORWARD

The way forward for African literature written in indigenous languages will certainly involve attempts at redeeming it from the torsions of power that continue to wring it. The success of this redemption will depend largely on successes made in the empowerment of indigenous languages. This in turn will depend on successes made at the political and military levels of the struggle for liberation. However, the cultural wing of the struggle, of which literature is part, will also have to take it upon itself to contribute to this redemption operation. Talking about the need for the decolonization of African literature, Chinweizu et al. say:

Our basic assumption ... is that contemporary African culture is under foreign domination. Therefore, on the one hand, our culture has to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality, and on the other hand has to map out new foundations for an African modernity. This cultural task demands a deliberate and calculated process of syncretism: one which above all, emphasizes valuable continuities with our pre-colonial culture, welcomes vitalizing contributions from other cultures, and exercises inventive genius in making a healthy and distinguished synthesis from them all.

This could be said of African literature in indigenous languages in South Africa. However, in South Africa the initial and most urgent step is to enable literary artists to break free from state control, in order to give them room "to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality." According to Mthobisi Mutloatse, Managing Director of Skotaville Publishers (personal communication: 11 August 1993), this could be done by wrenching "indigenous languages from White control, and thereby returning them to the source - their owners." He goes on to suggest that the Department of Education and Training must be made aware that its role of being "not only watchdog, but also custodian of African languages" is not acceptable. The current political situation seems to suggest that wrenching African literature is no longer a problem, because, as Mutloatse says, "White domination - even as far as indigenous languages are concerned - is doomed." The issue is what course literary reconstruction will take once control of Black literature is wrenched from its White custodians.

As far back as 1983 Satyo called for the abandonment of the "school-market criterion in favour of one that should be more favourable to literature of a more serious nature" (1983:83). What Satyo called "literature of a more serious nature" Skotaville Publishers call literature "to liberate the mind." In 1989 Skotaville in conjunction with Betrams V.O. of Gilbeys, initiated a project to promote the production of this type of literature. In an interview with Nyameka Makonya, Administrator at Skotaville, the question was raised as to how Skotaville hoped to make this literature available to the people, seeing that readership for indigenous literature is still located in the schools. Lightly she reminded me that the present regime had only "six months" left in power. However, on a more serious note Ms Makonya explained that they were hoping to target public libraries and adult education centres in addition to the schools.

Oxford University Press has also embarked on a project of promoting literature that handles themes revolving around topical issues of today. When asked what they hoped to achieve by this, their Commissioning Editor, Mary Reynolds, explained that they hoped to create popular literature. By "popular literature" she explained that she meant literature that was not chained by the linguistic conservatism of normative modes of literary expression. Breaking with these normative conventions would mean not only using accessible language, the language of the people, but also dealing with themes that are of immediate relevance to

the times of the readers. When asked why they were doing this now instead of ten years ago, and whether the initiative was not motivated by interests of capital, she replied that they had tried before, but ran into all sorts of problems with the conservatism of the Language Board. Language Boards, for example, she said, seem to have no interest at all in children's books, because of their traditional connection with secondary schools and teacher training colleges. This perpetrates the existing reading habits. Asked why their company did not go ahead regardless, Ms Reynolds replied that publishers could not ignore the commercial aspect of publishing. The buying policies of the mainstream bookshops were not encouraging either, and using supermarkets as outlets for these books was too much of a commercial risk, because supermarkets demand unreasonably high discounts. Ms Reynolds also questions the current prescription system of the Xhosa Language Boards whereby one book is prescribed for four years. This tends to have a stifling effect on literature, as one book is made to monopolize the market for four years. She suggests that two or three books per genre should be prescribed and the schools be allowed to make their respective choices from that list. Like Ms Makonya, Ms Reynolds is optimistic that trends in literary production and prescription policies are bound to change. Her optimism, however, is based on the view that within the Language Boards themselves there are individuals who she feels are capable of transforming them.

On the possibility of liberated literature being harnessed by a post-apartheid government, given the scepticism that was expressed by some individuals after the ANC's Culture and Development Conference (CDC) in April/May 1993, and given the resultant cold war between the ANC and the newly-established National Arts Initiative (NAI) (Weekly Mail 7 to 13 1993), Head of African Languages at Rhodes, Peter Mtuze, Xhosa writer and Professor (personal communication), says "this will depend on who the gate-keepers are." The literature gate-keepers will have to be an institution outside the government framework, in the fashion of the National Arts Initiative that was established in December 1992. Such institutions would have to be founded on progressive thinking and be characterised by a readiness to recognize and protect the intrinsic value of art. The point was also raised that, given the gravity of the suffering to which Black people have been subjected, there might be the danger that liberated literature might open old wounds by virtue of its honesty to history. Ms Makanya is of the opinion that South African society will be better served by

literary artists who are prepared to face the history of their community, than by those who want it to be hidden away. Such truthfulness to history will heal rather than open old wounds. Moreover, says Ms Makonya, Black people are very forgiving. In agreement with Ms Makonya, Professor Mtuze adds that, except when writers write with a particular self-interest, literary art, like all art has an inalienable relationship with the virtues of truth and justice. For that reason liberated literature is highly unlikely to align itself to the evils of injustice.

To hasten the liberation of literary art, Professor D.P. Kunene, in a talk he gave at the University of Cape Town in July 1993, suggested that this issue must be debated widely so that pressure is put on Language Boards to be open to democratization.

Finally, it is the view and hope of this study that a liberated Xhosa literature will not only change reading habits, but also enable teachers of Xhosa literature, both at pre-tertiary and tertiary institutions, to break free from a framework that is indifferent to the natural relation that holds between literature and historical reality. The scramble to elicit manuscripts with a political theme is already on among some mainstream publishers who, all along, had been collaborating with the forces of the suppression of African literary art. In view of this, it is hoped too here that interests of capital will not be allowed to dictate the mechanisms of literary production. The suggestion here is that this can be done by, *inter alia*, establishing people's publishing houses that will ensure that the interests of cultural reconstruction are not subordinated to those of capital gains.

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Umshumayeli indaba

Isibutho samavo

Iindaba

Kaffir Express

Isigidimi samaXhosa

Imvo zabaNtsundu (up to 1909)

Ilizwi labantu

Sunday Times 27 September 1992, Johannesburg.

Weekly Mail 7-14 May 1993

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