

**THEME AND CHARACTER - SOME
REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORICAL
CONTEXT OF THE NDEBELE NOVEL**

by

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

I have used the following underlined terms as meaning the given definitions :

- NOVEL** The end result of an imaginative rearrangement of reality. The implication is that the content per se is not new since it cannot have been out of a vacuum. What is new is the author's capacity to reinvent, to place elements in a way in which they have never been placed. It is a rejection of conformity as it offers new ways of grappling with problems
- THEME** The tone of the story, the mood the contents of the story are presented in.
- MOTIF** Recurring theme in creative works.
- CHARACTER** The aggregate of traits and features that form the nature of some person in the story (Shaw 1972)
There are two types:
- Flat : those who are seemingly unaffected by their background. They are pre-disposed to a certain behaviour and they will not change.
- Round: those who change with the social contexts they find themselves in.
- RELEVANCE** The author's ability to address pertinent issues. The ability to select appropriate repertoire for the appropriate era or prevailing atmosphere.
- REALISM** The recognition and application of historicity in creative works.
- INGANO** Ndebele folk story. It usually has an element of truth.
- INGANEKWANE** Ndebele fantastic make believe story used to pass instruction/ warning to younger members of society.
- INKONDLO** Ndebele poetry recital. It is usually a performance.

SUMMARY

According to Chiwome, '... a writer's social vision is a socio-spiritual and historical product. A response to a complex process of indoctrination ' (1996: 16). The response can be a reaction depending on whose interests the issue is considered.

The Ndebele novelist finds himself caught in the crossfire between two great traditions. He tries to be true to his background while still having to do justice to his newly acquired skill of graphically presenting his thoughts, feelings, and experiences. He is a victim of socio-political systems bent on giving education which moulds the mind to built-in choices. Both political eras use the printed word to further their ideologies. The Ndebele novelist finds himself having to remould his artistic genius if he is to fit in. In the process the goals of novelistic practice are missed.

The novel will not communicate effectively since it has to answer to particular external forces. These forces derive, '... from the urge of power to protect itself, to perpetuate itself, to prevail ' (Chiwome 1996 :22).

On the threshold of the two eras, the novel becomes a political statement. It is this political aspect of the novel which continues to create what Chiwome (1996) has called creative timidity and mediocrity.

KEY WORDS

Theme

Motif

Character

Realism

Relevance

Commitment

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY PERSPECTIVE

1.1 PREAMBLE

For a long time scholars have neglected the Ndebele prose form. Ndebele readers have been content with being presented with cut and dried works. Not many scholars have bothered to find out why good should always triumph over evil in our novels, why those who survive on quasi-legal and illegal dealings always seem doomed at the end of the novel. A clear ideology is painted: seek the wealth of this world and you shall perish, disobey your master and you are doomed to a life of failure and misery. Why should all the heroes and heroines who do not conform to the status quo be given a raw deal and an unceremonious exit at the conclusion of every other novel?

Many a time it has not been realised that the Ndebele novel is actually the brainchild of the indigenous Ndebele people's tribulations. These are ordeals of an identity crisis, a people who have been dismissed as not knowing their comings and goings.

It has been instilled in them that they are incapable of holding their own so frequently that they also believe it now. Such seems to have been the pre-occupation of both the colonial and post colonial exploitative powers. The Ndebele novel thus becomes a piece of work arising out of an incredulous background.

The question is : Is it the influence of church education, which always painted African life as grotesque and unrefined that is affecting our novel or is it the corrupt tendencies prevalent in most independent African states - the big brother syndrome, the failure to draw a line between political party propaganda and intellectually creative arts, where authors sacrifice their calling as positive critics to patronise the leadership for safe guarding personal interests? Have our novelists not come of age yet to give the readership classics the likes of those works from socio-politically mature authors from other regions of Africa?

What is the place of young artists in our literature vis-à-vis the present political milieu? The politics of Africa is very inhibitive. The artist does not have the freedom to be independent of the ruling party and as a result they end up throwing themselves into escapist themes or consumption literature. They are reluctant to be who they are, suffering both self and state censorship. What kind of voice can the consumers of literature hope for from such perverted minds? The dissertation seeks to probe and expose that sad story hidden in the depths of the Ndebele novel. I believe that the Ndebele novel is much more than what catches the eye of the consumer, it is much more than just a story in bound form. It is a mirror, a glimpse at those forces that shape the psyche and life of the artist and hence the novel itself.

1.2 RATIONALE

To date not much has been done in terms of analysing Ndebele literary art. Those wishing to have an in-depth knowledge of Ndebele prose

form have had to rely on Shona critiques, comparing those studied Shona novels with Ndebele ones. While it could be argued that both literatures obtain from the same economic, social and to some extent the same political atmosphere, it is also true that there are peculiarities within the existing similarity. In the light of this admission there is need to have a critique of the Ndebele novel per se.

It is my contention that Zimbabwean literary work, Ndebele literature in particular, can not afford not to be realist fiction if the literature is to fulfil its main purpose of giving the reader 'a greater understanding of human behaviour...move humanity towards more and more tolerance' (Kunene D.P 1994:155). My concern in this work, is to examine the functioning of Ndebele prose in its capacity of realist art as a tool of understanding on the individual and socio-economic and political levels.

I subscribe to Michael Zeraffa as quoted by Simon Gikandi, when he states that the novel should 'confront(s) us openly with the issue of the meaning and value of our ineluctable historical and social condition' (Gikandi S 1987:x). In the light of this admission, I am unable to share in the common view that the task of producing works that incite the readership is the work of professional propagandists. My contraposition is that no literature can ever be politically neutral and that since Ndebele literature was intended largely for the school curriculum consumption, to inculcate into the young minds particular ideals and morals, the authors are automatically rendered propagandists and should therefore be criticised in this capacity. The

issue of the place of the novelist vis-à-vis propaganda is subjective in its own right, however, it is on the mentioned premise that I have looked at the Ndebele novel.

It is an examination of how the Ndebele novelist has reflected the social consciousness of the different historical epochs he operates in, how the novelist has, if he does, advanced the all important politically emancipatory perspective in the face of colonialism and nationalism both of which can not operate to the benefit of the people. The dissertation seeks to enable the reader of the Ndebele novel to have a clear view of the parameters the author operates in, to experience the authors universe since the [novel] is not mere content or mere form: it is the process of form recreating reality in the terms set by authorial consciousness, constituting a world which might resemble external reality, but is also the novelists' own universe' (Gikandi 1987:x)

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

According to Moody (1987) realism is the quality of anything which accurately reflects the actual world, while relevance will refer to the quality which something may possess of relating very closely to something else, usually a less important to a more important thing. In literature realism will refer to the accurate reflection of the actual world while relevance is the quality of relating closely to prevailing socio-politico-economic contexts.

For a long time the Ndebele novel, like other African literature, has been subjected to eurocentric aesthetics in the name of literary authenticity. African art is functionalist and communicative, it does not subscribe to art for art's sake and it is on this premise that I want to examine the Ndebele novel.

The aim of this research is to determine the authenticity of the Ndebele novelist in the depiction of a truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances and the relevance of the said depiction. If the truth of art is synonymous with self-awareness of the human species then how far has the Ndebele novelist gone in appreciating his subjects and himself too, as historical beings? Ndebele novelist should write with a definite vision and in this regard my major concern is the apparent 'lack of vital relevance between the literary concerns of (Ndebele) authors and the pattern of reality' (Gugelberger (ed) 1985:35)

It is my contention that literature, any literature be it oral or otherwise does not arise out of a vacuum. There are present economic, class and ideological determinants of the way an author will write. In this regard the socio-politico-economic background of the Ndebele as a people should determine the way a Ndebele artist will express himself.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Chung¹ in Moyana (1988: vi) colonial education is characterised by its lack of creativity, neatness, rigidity, control and

respect for tradition and authority, it produces people who can only be obedient to orders from above. Such people are neither able to create and control existentiality for their own betterment nor solve problems according to their own context. They are a people who have no guts to stand up on their own; they are scared of their own ability to tame the struggles they encounter. These are an unfulfilled people whose actualisation lies outside themselves, in the system which controls them.

Moyana (1988) is a kindred soul to Paulo Freire - the spokesman the world over for education for liberation. Freire has telling quotations from colonial ideologies, such as what Lord Macaulay said on the education policy in British India. He said:

We must do our best to form a class who maybe intèrpreters between us and the millions whom we govern ... a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tasks, opinion, in morals and in intellect. (Moyana 1988:v).

It is clear that education was an extended arm designed to further facilitate the colonialists' political cultural and economic imperialistic tendencies.

The explicit aim of creating a small group of the colonised to govern the natives on behalf of their colonial master was also apparent in the Rhodesian education policy from Huggins² to Todd³. The schools of the time preached pacifism and brotherhood of whites and blacks. These were cultural greenhouses in which a crop of African colonialist enthusiasts were fed on moral idealism and the myth of Europe's

civilising mission to Africa before they were released into the world to promote colonialism. Many educated Zimbabweans internalised this colonial mentality leading to the phenomenon of pseudo-blacks. It is from this pool of pseudo-blacks that most of the first generation Ndebele authors are drawn.

While one will perpetually feel indebted to the missionaries for their immense contribution towards introducing literacy to the indigenous lot, one can hardly ignore the extent the same missionaries went to inhibit the development of Zimbabwean literature, especially Ndebele and Shona literature. It was all part of the grand plan - first Christianity the cultural arm of colonialism was to work towards the degradation of the African's traditional symbols and then education was the second step. Education was designed to work on the intellect of the African to further convince him of his inferiority. If this is the kind of education which resulted in a literate Zimbabwean what effect did it have on the literate Christian convert-cum artist?

Freire says of the oppressed:

So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything - that they are sick, lazy and unproductive that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (Freire 1968:49)

The best platform to sow these seeds of low self esteem was in the schools. In Rhodesia, like other African states, the education system served to create around the exploited persons an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which would then lighten the task of

policing. Education was an immobilising and fixating force designed to maintain the submersion of the exploited's consciousness. Under such circumstances man is not acknowledged as an historical being. If the Ndebele author does not recognise himself as a historical being what character can he produce given that the novel is the holistic understanding and experience of the author?

An attempt is made by Veit-Wild (1993) to give an analysis of the influence of social history on Zimbabwean writers. Due to language barrier problems she is able to look at only a few Ndebele novels. She concentrates on post modernist Zimbabwean English works. She makes valid observations on what determines the plots and themes of Ndebele novels. She mentions that there are present such themes as may be considered sensitive and those which are the common everyday kind of themes. Viet-Wild concurs with Kahari (1986) that the basic and sole intention of introducing the African to formal education was to convert the pagan, a task which would have been very difficult without first teaching him how to read. Missionaries deployed themselves in strategic positions on the Zimbabwean plateau from which they conducted systematic studies of the various spoken dialects. This was easily done, especially in Matabeleland with missionaries coming into the region via South Africa where there are other dialects of Nguni to which Ndebele belongs.

The Ndebele was to be taught how to read so that he could read the Bible. The people were being converted to be hearers and doers of the Word. In this way, the same hearers could be informed and also

manipulated. The end result would be a total rejection of the African religion and way of life. Such a stance would then make the task of policing easier. What can a people caught up in such a situation do to change it? Literature has a role to play in the liberation movement of a people. This liberation would not be just the displacement of the undesirable agent but a whole process of '... 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' (Sumaili in Ngara 1989: 102). According to the Marxist literary theory all literature can not be divorced from history. Man is an historical being and man is the subject of an author's work, so in the light of this statement artists should not ignore the plight of the historical subject of their works. Doing so would render their work incomplete and an untrue reflection of a historical being. The issue is have the Ndebele authors given characters who are aware of the fact that they are part of the larger historical process?

Modern Historians have given glaring accounts of the dehumanising conditions the Africans had to put up within the urban centres, and the famine they faced in the rural areas during the colonial era and in some cases even in post independence times. From these historical accounts it is clear that most of the problems experienced by the people during colonial era have overflowed to the post independence period. Apparently a number of issues have not been addressed. The absence of this vital historic evidence is so conspicuous in the Ndebele novel one wonders what statement the absence is making. Granted the Ndebele novel is not a history text, it is realist fiction (see section 1.2). It is only the characters who are fictionalised otherwise all else

including the cultural, social, political and physical environments are real. Are there authors giving characters attempting to tackle their socio-economically unfavourable conditions or are they tracking to the past for the same old oversubscribed themes of an escapist nature?

Do Ndebele authors realise that as artists their position should be on the offensive, ready to point out and criticise for the sake of the ordinary masses who do not have the licence and voice to? The Ndebele novelist should be the *Imbongi* (poet) of yesteryear. After all, it is the responsibility of the writer to '... hasten decolonisation ... make ready, for good decolonisation without after effects' (Cesaire in Ngara 1989:11). Ndebele literature should be seen making its contribution towards the alleviation of the suffering of the people, the liberation movement and the period of reconstruction. After political independence authors should not just register the joys and pains of rebirth, they are to constitute a source of critical consciousness for the nation. The experience of the liberation war that Zimbabwe has recently undergone has changed the people's expectations and at times even behaviour. Since Ndebele literature is an important part of this experience the novel should be seen to mirror(s) and interpret(s) the experience from the point of view of those who write about it '(Gaidzanwa 1985:8). The question is, are the Ndebele novelists showing this change.

1.4.1 APPROACH

Three modes of investigation were employed. An actual study of Ndebele novels will be carried out. The history of published Ndebele literature started in 1958. Prior to this the Ndebele writers had intermittently published folk tales and short stories in the African newspapers of the period. There are two broad periods which will be each further divided into two epochs of history.

A. *Colonial literature*

- i) those focusing on the pre-colonial past.
- ii) those focusing on the colonial past.

B. *Post colonial literature*

- i) those considered neo-colonial literature
- ii) those considered post independence literature.

A conscious effort was made wherever possible to look at an author's works from the two historical eras in an attempt to trace any discernible development. It could not have been possible to use all published Ndebele novels. I will look at a cross section hoping the chosen works will justifiably represent the general trends of the novel of the time. Any peculiarities will be treated as such.

Interviews will be carried out with some of the writers whose works will be consulted. From the interview it should be clear that while one can not speak of a national literature of Zimbabwe, there are common experiences, there is a legacy. There is a specific national history of literature. The authors' approaches, styles and outlooks differ greatly,

so do the ways in which the writers have tried to come to terms with their past and present.

A wide range of literary works will be consulted as secondary sources. To date there has not been any published works that could be used as critiques for Ndebele literature per se. Most of the available work is unpublished in the form of dissertations that have been submitted to the University of Zimbabwe for Honours and Master's degree purposes. As a result most of the published works consulted are either Zimbabwean English works, Shona literature critiques and works on the African novel in general. Several history texts will be consulted. These works are particularly those which look at the economic development of Zimbabwe from colonial times to the present. The works form an integral part of the study because man is an historical being and he is also the subject of the novel. To effectively study the man in the novel, one needs to have a clear view of the conditions under which man operated. History is the socio-economic and political record of a people while literature is a product of this history. The study of the history of Zimbabwe should also shed light on the numerous colonial and post-colonial myths Ndebele authors could have succumbed to. The collected information will be synthesised and discussed under chapters representing the different historical epochs the novelist have experienced. The work will be presented in five chapters as follows:

1.4.2 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.4.2.1 CHAPTER TWO:

The historical background of the novel

The chapter will look at the socio-politico-economic forces prevailing during the era of the nascence of indigenous writing in Zimbabwe. This is the period around the early 1950s during the years immediately before the establishment of the Literature Bureau in 1954. Before then any literary works by indigenous Zimbabweans existed in the form of short stories and poems intermittently published in the African papers of the time.

Zimbabwe indigenous writing is a product of the first elite of educated Africans in Rhodesia, Africans who went through the Christian missionaries' education. This fact became a decisive factor in shaping the Africans' outlook of life. Most of these early authors were Christians and grassroots politicians. They were representatives of African modernisation and advancement.

These authors are characteristically liberal nationalists whose struggle seems to have been one of the cementing of brotherhood of blacks and whites, and a multiracial society based on equality. After discussing the historical context which gave rise to the birth of the novel, the chapter will also look at the development of literary publications in Zimbabwe, particularly works in Ndebele and Shona vis-à-vis the literatures of those countries from whom Zimbabwean novelists seem to have drawn their inspiration.

1.4.2.2 CHAPTER THREE:

Novels on the pre-colonial past

The chapter briefly looks at the highlights of the historical period before the arrival of colonial administration and the effects the period has on works which while based on this past are written during the colonial era. The chapter will also address the issue of Ndebele orature, the *inganekwane* and *inkondlo* culture and its effects on the literary culture.

Characterisation in novel of the pre-colonial past will be examined vis-à-vis the characterisation one finds in the Ndebele *inganekwane*. The chapter will attempt to trace the stance taken by the novelist towards the theme of *Budlabunondo*. The question the chapter should address is one of whether the attitude that is discerned is one of the rejection of the past or an inverted form of social criticism.

1.4.2.3 CHAPTER FOUR:

Novels of the colonial era

The chapter will start off by defining the colonial period on the Zimbabwean plateau. In looking at the socio-political developments of the period the chapter will try to examine the effects of these developments on the Ndebele novel in the face of the premise that the Ndebele novel has to subscribe to realism if it is to be relevant.

The themes and characterisation in the novel of the period will be examined. Both aspects should give an insight into the operations of

the system of the time. It is my contention that the issue of historicity is relevant in any work of literature produced by an authentic and committed artist. The chapter will attempt to measure the commitment of the artists of the period by the quality of the characters they have presented and the said artists' attitude towards relevant and mature themes.

1.4.2.4 **CHAPTER FIVE:**

Novels of the post colonial era

The chapter will look at a period characterised by an indigenous regime. It is a time when Zimbabweans are politically independent just like in the pre-colonial times. The difference is that, while the present system of administration may be manned by blacks, it is foreign as it is based on the ballot box and modern parliaments, as opposed to pre-colonial times when kings were born.

Socio-politically the era is characterised by a culture of celebration, high expectation despondency, political turmoil and open apathy. The chapter will trace the progression of the Ndebele novel during this period. Once again one will look at aspects such as characterisation and themes as brought out in the different novels. The issue is still one of relevance and commitment.

A comparative survey of the development of the Ndebele novel of the period vis-à-vis its Shona counterpart is made. The comparison

becomes relevant since while the novels obtain from a generally similar geographic background there are existent socio-politico-economic peculiarities within the apparent similarities. In the process, the chapter should bring out the voice of the artist as discerned in the works of the time.

1.4.2.5 CHAPTER SIX:

Conclusion

A general overview on realism, relevance and commitment in the Ndebele novel.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The argument that literature does not occur in a vacuum pre-supposes the presence of an historical background from which any literature will obtain. This being the case it becomes imperative to study the socio-historical circumstances a particular literature will arise from if that literature is to be fully understood and appreciated. A number of issues will be addressed in this respect including the circumstances which led to the birth of the Ndebele novel and the experiences the characters are drawn from. Such an awareness should prepare the reader for a greater understanding of the novels looked at in the ensuing chapters.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF NDEBELE ORTHOGRAPHY AND WRITING

The body which was concerned with the development of the indigenous languages' orthography on the Zimbabwean plateau was the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference. It was set up around 1900 with its main aim being the publication of Bibles in a medium which could be understood by speakers of all languages.

A series of meetings were held by the members of the conference in a bid to arrive at an agreeable and all encompassing orthography. The

1913 proposal by Rev Neville Jones on the need for the compilation of indigenous languages readers for use in Matabeleland and Mashonaland set the stage for the birth of the modern Ndebele and Shona novels. Rev Jones proposed that help be secured for the publication of these readers. This proposal marked the first attempt to involve government in native education. It was also the first step taken towards the publication of secular literature for the black population.

The task of creating a single approved way of writing was characterised by arguments as the different denomination authorities each wanted its local dialect to be the standard. This was particularly so in Mashonaland where there are more than six dialects of the Shona language. While these problems were not existent in Matabeleland where there is basically one dialect whose language affiliations could only be found across the Limpopo river, the deliberations in Mashonaland tended to delay the process for both provinces.

In 1931 the government approved the new orthography which had been finally arrived at through the efforts of Clement Doke¹ who had been invited to lend his expert advice to the conference. It was only in 1950 that the conference asserted its influence by requesting that schools and the Bantu press accept the use of the approved orthography. Doke recommended that an advisory committee be set. According to G.P Kahari, although the recommendation had been effected, the committee was resuscitated emerging as the Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau in 1954.

2.3 EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR REPRESSING THE AFRICAN'S PSYCHE.

While in the process of acquiring education the black man found himself caught in the cross fire of, while not so conflicting but, clashing interests between the church and the state. From the beginning the British South Africa Company wanted African education developed along lines different from European education. African education was to concentrate on the industrial rather an academic aspect.

This was to ensure that Africans could not receive an education which would enable them to compete with Europeans in the job market. While not opposed to this, missionaries were equally anxious to promote formal academic education as this would enable them to acquaint themselves with the local people, their customs and languages. If to the Department of Native Development education was seen as an outdoor training in industrial trades for the Africans, to the missionary the school was to provide the nerve for Christian work.

If the state was to enjoy administering a servile and obedient African the church had to be allowed time with the native. The missionary thus became an auxiliary of exploitative settlerism in situations where the resilience of traditional cultures was making the task of polarisation difficult. The white settler realised that if allowed to keep his culture the black man would be of very little use to him. Only cultural change could break the apathy. It was at this stage that the message of the church was the only force with the ability to achieve this.

Christian missions functioned as aides of the white settlers' exploitative designs. The missionaries ran schools whose education was patterned to mould the characters of the blacks in such a way that would ensure that they became loyal and responsible members of the white community. The missionaries' major commitment was to pacify the blacks for easier exploitation by their settler brethren. The missionaries were thus agents of cultural imperialism. At the mission school African students were to internalise western values to remain loyal to the system. So while the church was determined to give full academic education to the African, the curriculum also had characteristics of the governments' aim of keeping the African in his seemingly God given status of servitude. Both the church and state education systems adopted an approach which rendered the school a processing plant for the alienation and domestication of the African child. This was designed to turn the African into an obedient, pliable and worshipping servant of things that are white and western. The school was intended to turn out alienated functionaries of the oppressive order. While the church concentrated on the academics the state was bent on giving the African training in rudimentary skills designed to make the African better workmen and more useful servants to the settler community. State education was thus characterised by training in agriculture, bricklaying and hygiene - skills which were obviously to be used back in the African villages, or to enable the African to fetch and carry for his European superior in the industries.

Largely the African male would have training biased towards gardening while the female would receive training with an inclination towards domestic sciences.

While the vocational curriculum was patterned to exploit African labour to the best advantage, the academic curriculum was structured to create an African elite divorced from the masses and allied to the white oppressors in exploiting the indigenous lot. A major approach used to alienate the oppressed from their culture was distancing the subject matter of the school from the home, the culture and the country of the oppressed. Deliberate steps were taken to bring through the school curriculum topics as alien as possible for the consumption of the African students.

According to Moyana (1988), two thirds of the colonial Geography syllabus were on the British Isles, the British Empire and the commonwealth. The last third was on map work, so that the focus was either on the very general or on the distant. The African student was called upon to have in-depth knowledge of sheep farming in New Zealand and the Prairies of America while they remained ignorant of their own environment and its potential. There was hardly any mention of the country the students lived in.

Topics in the history syllabus were arranged in a manner that was likely to arouse in pupils an admiration for distant places and heroes who were likely to be admired as standards of achievement. The aim was to get ingrained in the African student a European view of history as a progression, thereby giving the student an interpretative tool when he looks at his own history. The student was much more likely to accept his own people's inferiority by placing them at the tail end of the given linear development scale. The subject was not supposed to teach a

sense of worth and awareness. Clearly, '... the government painstakingly guarded the portals of African knowledge and understanding' (Moyana 1989).

The English syllabus could not have been any better. It was characterised by books notorious for their distant contexts. Generally the list of literature books consisted of British literary classics like, Oliver Twist, Treasure Island and others. The use of any literature which dealt with topical life issues was strictly forbidden. It is not surprising to learn that in 1968 the Government Inspectorate sent out to the schools a circular prohibiting the studying of the novel, To Kill a Mocking Bird². The novel was deemed unsuitable since studying the text would have necessitated an in-depth analysis for examination purposes. This would have been counter-productive to the exploitative system whose interest lay in changing the consciousness of the oppressed not the situation oppressing them.

If African contexts were used in books, the tendency was to present Africa in the eyes of the touristic white foreigner. Such novels like H Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines were safe for use in African schools as the author presents Africans as barbarous voodoo magicians with a grotesque life style. It would break the canons of cultural imperialism to let the country be seen through the eyes of the native African. English works by local artists were subjected to so much censorship there were hardly any published in the country. The value system of African education was patterned to complement the socio-economic imperatives of white domination. It emphasised on

Christian values and devotion to manual labour, neatness, punctuality and other mannerisms that were unAfrican. Such cultural invasion could have led to cultural unauthenticity of those invaded as they respond to values, standards and goals of the invaders. As Moyana says 'the inferiority complex, docility and dependency mentality of individuals educated in such manner become a feature of society as a whole' (Moyana 1989).

The Literature Bureau set up in 1954 was tasked with teaching the prospective writer to produce good literature. Good literature is that which will not subvert the minds of the readership, that which would not go against the system that produces it. Forty-three years and one whole political order later, the Literature Bureau is still the government's watchdog, set to safeguard the government's position within the literary arts circles. The task of ensuring the production of good literature could not have been an easy one, neither in the colonial era considering the unlikelihood of having something that is good for the master being equally good for the servant in an atmosphere of race determined opportunities, nor in an independent state where the same opportunities are class determined. The Literature Bureau was part of the Ministry of Information which fell under the Department of Native Affairs. The department was set up to promote the smooth administration of natives. Today the Bureau is under the Ministry of Education whose aim is to teach the masses through dissemination of information.

Information in any political climate implies propaganda. During the colonial era propaganda came in the form of myths that cast the white settler as natural master and the African as a natural servant. Later myths cast some black Africans as being more equal than others. It was up to the Department of Native Affairs to enforce the myth that colonisation was a humanitarian duty, the civilising mission of the western man upon whom fell the burden of lifting the African to the level of other men, just as it is today up to the Ministry of Education to conscientise the people about the government's good intentions for the betterment of the people's lives.

Years after attaining political freedom the young Ndebele artists find themselves subjected to a new education system. The new government comes in with its own ideals and policies on education. No more shall education be for a few, it is education for all. Unfortunately, the free education for all gesture has nothing to do with philanthropism although it is extended in the name of nationalism. The new leaders are aware of the might of literacy and printed word, so they see a possibility of using the medium the same way the colonial church and the imperialists used it - to manipulate the people. Each political system is convinced of the rightness of its convictions and will fight hard to ensure everyone has an understanding of what it purports to stand for. The only difference could lie in that the colonial system appealed to the intellect of a select few while the new order strives to embrace all.

This analysis of the education systems experienced by Ndebele authors is by no means an attempt at blaming education for the quality of the novel we are presented with by our authors. I realise that education does not resolve problems that arise out of the basic nature of socio-economics and political systems, nor does it provide all answers to problems of under- development because it operates within the dictates and confines of socio-economic and political dynamics. However, education plays an important part as it can assist efforts towards achieving wider social reforms, although it does not determine those changes. Granted, education does go a long way towards influencing the way an individual reasons, but it is only one of the many factors that can determine processes of social change.

2.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY FOR BLACK LABOUR EXPLOITATION

The Land Apportionment Act saw Africans being moved from the lands of their forefathers to what the colonial regime called reserves. No consideration for the number of Africans was taken in allocating these reserved lands. The Land Apportionment Act was a direct cause of African misery, more so after the 1951 Land Husbandry Act. After 1951 there was a lot of unrest in the rural areas. To restrain this agitation the settler government sought the support of the nascent African middle class. This union saw a shift from the government to that of racial partnership. It was an unequal partnership, one similar to the partnership existing between a donkey and its rider. The aim of the

colonial administration was to create a buffer between the settler state and the African masses.

Due to the oppressive and impoverishing nature of the Land Apportionment Act Africans rushed to urban centres in search of employment, selling their labour power at wages below subsistence levels. The Land Apportionment Act was to be later complemented by the Land Husbandry Act which aimed at concentrating land in the hands of a small number of African farmers and generally reducing the native herd of cattle. The settler government hoped this would eliminate the land rights of urban African's and thus stabilise the labour force.

By 1943 reserves were showing signs of overcrowding of both human and livestock population. The resultant overgrazing and low productivity was worsened by the influx of white settlers after World War Two. Most of them wanted to be farmers so more blacks had to be evicted from those lands earmarked for future whites settlement into the already overcrowded reserves.

The areas set aside for African settlement were largely those found in Region Five³, dry, tsetse fly infested broken regions of the country. The same lands the black masses are occupying today.

The postcolonial scenario is not very different. The people have to be kept in these regions to maintain them on the register of drought relief recipients. The idea now is to keep the people perpetually indebted to

the government for the food and seed packs so that in the end they are emotionally blackmailed into voting for the same party. For those who are professionals the government will give with one hand only to take away with the other hand by way of taxes and other levies.

In 1949 the Danziger Committee was set up to look into the problem of Africans. The committee stated that all Africans had to have permanent homes in the reserves. Africans were wanted only as migrant labourers whose permanent homes were in the so-called reserves where the Land Apportionment and the Land Husbandry Acts had been effected, eating away his land rights and reducing the herd of cattle. ESAP⁴ and the Resettlement schemes play the role of the infamous Land Acts. Productive Lands are still not within the reach of the ordinary man. Multinational companies own huge expanses of acreage, rich European farmers and a select class of black entrepreneurs. The lot of the average Zimbabwean has not improved much as the poor are getting poorer while the rich are getting richer. Once again the African has to sell his labour at below going rates.

2.5 NDEBELE AND SHONA LITERATURE ORIGINS

In looking at the development of Ndebele and Shona literature there is need to look at the types of career development amongst the first generation writers.

Most of them were drawn from the ranks of teachers, journalists, editors and a few academics. The general trend seems to have been

to start as a teacher and then move into either journalism, education inspectors or even priesthood, as did David Ndoda and Patrick Chakaipa who joined the ranks of the clergy in the Salvation Army and the Catholic denominations respectively. Some managed to supplement their studies and they ended up undertaking degree studies in universities outside the country. It was while these academics were abroad that they were able to assess their situation back home. It was from these assessments that the terms of black African nationalism in Rhodesia were laid down. These academics are authors like Peter Mahlangu, Ndabaningi Sithole, Solomon Mutswairo and Bernard Chidzero.

In the literary arena these early nationalists manifested themselves in the first novels written in the two main indigenous languages. While it was not feasible to write on overtly political issues, the early novelists produced works which dealt with historical themes in a bid to re-establish African identity and pride.

2.5.1 PIONEERING AUTHORS

The first three years of the establishment of the Literature Bureau saw the production of four novels, two from each language group:

YEAR	AUTHOR & TITLE	AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND
1956	Sithole N: <u>AmaNdebele KaMzilikazi</u>	Minister of Religion, President of ZANU (Ndonga) ⁵ Nationalist Party
1957	Chidzero B: <u>Nzvengamutswairo</u>	Academic, member of the pre-independence ZANU PF Central Committee, Zimbabwe's third Minister of Finance
1957	Mahlangu P: <u>Umthwakazi</u>	Academic, one of the first black African School Inspectors, a staunch supporter of the policy of brotherhood of black academics and whites.
1957	Mutswairo S: <u>Feso</u>	Academic, also a supporter of brotherhood of blacks and whites

A few more works were written within the first five years of the establishment of the Literature Bureau. These are works such as Isaac Mpofu's, Akusoka Lingenasici (There is no one without faults), David Ndoda's UVusezindala (One who brings up past issues), Patrick Chakaipa's Karikoga Gumiremiseve (My only child) , all produced in 1958. However, it is the first four novels mentioned which are peculiar in that they were a response to a political awareness which was kindled outside the borders of the country.

For those authors who did not study abroad their themes were characteristically pastoral, usually dealing with the adverse effects of colonialism and calling the readership to a seemingly glorious past. A good example of this is David Ndoda's UVusezindala.

While the printed novel only dates back as far as 1956 authors had long started writing stories which were serialised in the African newspapers of the time. To date there are more than one hundred and fifty Shona, and one hundred Ndebele novels published.

The trends set in the first novels is discernible in the poet of the period. Characteristically romantic and pastoral, the poetry was influenced by seventeenth century English romantic poets.

The first ten years of the Literature Bureau saw the production of two Ndebele poetry anthologies. The first was published in 1959. By 1969 there were poets who were already dominating in the anthologies, these were also the novelists of the time.

Unlike novels which are single authored, to date there are no single authored poetry anthologies in Ndebele. Like the novel, Ndebele poetry did not obtain from a vacuum. It got shape and direction from the struggles encountered by the people who produced it, whose aspirations and feelings are reflected in the poems. Just like the novel, the poetry of any people should '... truthfully depict(s) reality, from the standpoint of the majority' (Chiwome 1996:34).

There are three dominant themes in pioneer poetry. Poets discuss ruins, death, and pastoral concerns. Death is treated at the levels of death in the physical sense and moral decadence. The latter seems to have been brought about by industrialisation. On the same theme is the sub theme of children's rhymes. The inclusion of children's rhymes and games could be twofold: the expression of nostalgic tendencies or a rejection of the imminent forms of modern recreation for children. This could therefore be an attempt to offer the children socio-psychologically healthy forms of recreation which would not have undesirable side effects as would result from substance and alcohol abuse.

At all the three level the poetry ceases to be a mere expression of deep emotions, it becomes a quest to preserve what is left of black culture. Being pioneer poetry, it is likely that the poets are still trying out the new form since up to 1959 poetry was largely performed. The poets could well be a lost lot, '...that is why the search for tradition, identity and home is important in their poetry, a lost generation is trying to find its roots' (Chiwome 1996:48).

In 1959 Sigogo produced a poem *Amanxiwa* (ruins) In the poem he laments the derelict state of a once flourishing village which was his home. It is a poem with a deep sense of despair as the poet suffers at the en masse displacement of blacks from fertile soils to the arid Native Reserves. While the village is now derelict the poet still feels an attachment to the rural setting. He goes on to give a vivid description of the physical terrain of the village.

There is in the poetry a special feeling of belonging as the poet displays a sense of longing. The poet goes to great lengths to describe the rivers, and mountain ranges. This appears to be a preoccupation with black African poets in Rhodesia as none of these trends are found in the settler poetry of the time. In comparing black poets with their white counterparts McLoughlin says:

...the black writers have noticeably more concern about a sense of places. They seem critical, anxious and at times sentimental about places and people who give identity to a particular place. The white poets on the other hand, using the same kind of images, write more inward and metaphysical experiences free from preoccupations about their environment (McLoughlin 1976:7-8).

On the same observation Chiwome says:

Obsession with old homes is part of a deeper despair arising from physical displacement:

The mountain ranges... other geographical features are part of the black writers' identities. In the mountains the ancestors are buried... whites have no roots in the same land and therefore cannot express the same sentiments (Chiwome 1996:49).

The nostalgic sentiments found in the first anthology are also present in the second one. The poems lament the loss of pre-colonial life with the poets castigating the new economic order which has impoverished the lot of the indigenous people. None of the poets offer any solutions to the more pressing existential problems being experienced by the people. They are simply preoccupied with anthropological poetry and one wonders where this places pioneer poetry in terms of artistic function. There is no answer in trekking to the past and the old African village could not have been as perfect as the poets paint it. In this regard, poets should be suggesting constructive moves towards taming the new economic order instead of assuming this escapist stance they have taken.

The first Shona poetry anthology was produced in 1958 with the next coming sixteen years later in 1974. To date there are at least fourteen published anthologies.

While the first anthologies were published in 1958-59 poetry per se had been in existence as orature as far back as the nascence of the Bantu tribes.

Due to its inclination towards Zulu poetry, Ndebele poetry, is characterised by themes which have been expressed in styles and techniques based on the Zulu traditional praise poetry. Looking at the early anthologies one could say that the performed Zulu poetry was a crucial source of inspiration and most probably a source of information too for the poets. To date there are about ten anthologies in print.

Like its prose counterpart poetry pieces could be found in the African newspapers of the time, especially papers like The Daily Bulletin in Salisbury and Bantu Mirror in Bulawayo.

Drama developed rather later than the other two genres. Generally Ndebele and Shona plays started off as enactments of bible stories. The first drama piece to be printed was a Shona translation of Father Pedro Calderon de la Barca's El gran thatro del Mundo. The translation, Mutambo Wepanyika (Plays of the world) was an attempt by Catholic priests to communicate a Christian message to the Shona language group. The second play to be printed was once again a Shona one, Ndakambokuyambira (I warned you before) by Paul Chidyausiku twelve years later in 1968. To date there are at least eighteen Shona plays in print.

Ndebele drama developed much later with Mambo Press printing the first Ndebele play in 1976. This was Ndabezinhle Sigogo's Indlalifa Ngubani? (Who is the heir?). To date there are about six printed Ndebele plays. Apparently the genre was not as popular in the Ndebele authors' camp as it was in the Shona camp. However, the

plays are similar to the Shona plays in that they also concern themselves with the problems faced by an individual in an industrialised monetary economy. As one looks through the plays there is one feature which comes out clearly - the plays were not meant for a stage. In true African orature form, the stage could have been the village.

Generally the formative years were characterised by a literature which did not follow any specific political agenda. The content of the work was largely romances and others, love, crime and other stories. As Flora Veit-Wild says that these works were tentative moves in a completely new direction. The works largely mirrored the immediate pre-occupations of the artists and were basically Christian in outlook as a result of the process of acculturation they were part of.

It would be incomplete to discuss the development of indigenous literature without examining the forces which served as incentives to produce creative texts. The following were apparently the major incentives as deduced from the answers given in a questionnaire distributed to the early artists.

2.5.2 PAN AFRICANISM IN LITERATURE

After the conversion of Ndebele and Shona languages into an acceptable orthography the artists realised that there was a possibility of gaining a place in the literary realm, just like the whites had. Writing was more or less a refusal of having their languages relegated to

second class status. The artists saw, in writing, a change to rise above the humiliating conditions the vast of the African peoples existed in. The argument was that if the English could produce imaginative texts in English why not the Africans in an African language. However, the introduction of English as the official language meant less and less use of the two main indigenous languages. Schools and other public offices demanded the use of English as a medium of expression and this was seen as a threat to the existence of Ndebele and Shona. In order to preserve the language for both the present and future generations artists resorted to the printed word.

2.5.2.1 AFRICAN MAGAZINES

The set up of these magazines which were edited by Africans for Africans meant it was now possible for Africans to read about fellow blacks. The biggest plus for these magazines was that there were pages devoted to local languages. Most authors mentioned Drum magazine as having had the biggest impact on their writing instincts. Drum and its Rhodesian counterpart African Parade were two most influential magazines to the authors as some started off by submitting short stories and poems for publication in these magazines. Ndabaningi Sithole's Busi was the first English story by a black writer to be serialised in an African magazine.

2.5.2.2 SOME CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES

Some artists were motivated by religion. They were largely concerned with the triumph and forward march of the Christian civilisation. They saw themselves as the custodians of good morals and values. The above incentives and the setting up of the Literature Bureau prepared the stage for the production of literature in indigenous languages. The Literature Bureau was to play a role which was twofold. It was set up not only to guide the emerging literature further along the course it had already taken but also to prevent the emergence of literature which was overtly political.

In 1953 the Secretary for Native Affairs recommended that 'some effort to fill the vacuum or the hunger in the mind created by schooling must be made if undesirable influences are not to come in' (Annual Report 1953, 12). In 1956 he further argued that 'the demand is far ahead of supply and there is therefore, every opportunity for purveyors of morally and politically pernicious literature to gain a foothold (Annual Report 1956, 87). Manuscripts submitted to the Literature Bureau were thus subjected to a thorough vetting.

Later the Literature Bureau could have been seen as more of a hindrance than a facilitator for the development of Ndebele and Shona literature.

The Ndebele novel arises out of such a historical background. The issue is what role the artist is supposed to play. The modern novelist

should be a contemporary version of yesteryear's inganekwane narrator. In traditional African art there is a tendency to stress in all forms of art the '... quality of significance as a criterion of beauty and virtue' (Kofi 1980:8). The underlying aspect is that of functionalism as evident in African orature and dance. If the novelist is like the traditional narrator is it therefore not his duty to advance an emancipatory perspective for the readers? What is good for the people should determine what is fitting in art.

CHAPTER THREE

NOVELS ON THE PRE-COLONIAL PAST

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term pre-colonial refers to that period in history before the official take over of the administration of the Zimbabwean plateau by the imperial forces of Britain. In relation to the Ndebele this was the period between their arrival on the plateau and the arrival and subsequent take over of Ndebele territory by Europeans in the 1800s.

3.2 THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PERIOD. THE ORIGINS THE NDEBELE PEOPLE

The Ndebele are one of the Nguni groups which fled north during the historic *Mfecane* period. Initially they were of the Khumalo clan which existed as a vassal state of Tshaka's Zulu state. The leadership of the Khumalo clan was entrusted to Mzilikazi the son of Matshobana in recognition of the former's unwavering support and loyalty to Tshaka. Mzilikazi was one of Tshaka's most trusted army generals thus the latter saw it fit to honour him with such an important appointment. Since the Khumalo were a vassal group and more so to show allegiance to the king, Mzilikazi had to pay tribute to Tshaka. Basically they were part of the larger Zulu group.

It was after a raiding expedition embarked upon at the king's orders that Mzilikazi decided to keep the spoils including a breed of cattle considered royal among the Zulu people. By withholding the cattle Mzilikazi was declaring himself royalty. When the king realised that no spoils were forthcoming from Mzilikazi and after confirmation from his intelligence network the king sent his messengers to Mzilikazi for an explanation. Mzilikazi's response so infuriated the king that he sent his armies to go and punish the Khumalos.

After heavy losses of both humans and livestock Mzilikazi and the surviving Khumalos fled up north in a bid to create space between themselves and the Zulu kingdom.

It was during their flight north that they acquired the name Tebele later Ndebele, from one of the groups they encountered before they crossed the Limpopo river. The name was apparently a description of the long shields the Khumalo soldiers used in battle. Their journey up north was characterised by the group members' unity of purpose and bloody wars which were fought against fellow African groups and at least three European groups.

The tribe arrived on the Zimbabwean plateau as two groups. One group was under chief Gundwane settled at a place the group called Gibixhegu while the other group led by the king himself settled around the Zambezi area for about three years, only to rejoin the rest of the group after word got around that one of the king's sons had been prematurely installed as king.

Ndebele society in Zimbabwe was divided into three sections. There were the *Zansi* made up of original Khumalos and other Nguni elements, second in importance were the *Enhla* who comprised of elements incorporated into the Ndebele before the tribe crossed the Limpopo river, the last and least in importance were the *Hole* who were largely Shona elements who were found on the plateau. Although the group was made up of different peoples unity was fostered through encouraging all the members to speak Ndebele. Although intermarriages were not shunned by the rule there were no intermarriages between the *Zansi* and the *Hole*.

When Mzilikazi settled in the western part of the plateau he defeated the *Rozvi* living in and around the area. While it is true that these *Rozvi* groups were defeated in physical battle, it is also true that some were defeated in principle only. All these groups were required to pay tribute to the king in the form of grain or domesticated animals. This system of tribute payment together with the '*ukulagisa*'¹ system formed the basis of Ndebele economy.

Due to the various language groups which formed the Ndebele tribe, the Ndebele as a people enjoyed a legacy rich in orature and other cultural practices for instance, the Ndebele adopted the *Rozvi* religion as they also observed the existence of *Mlimo* the *Rozvi* God whose headquarters were said to be in the Matopo hills. The Ndebele also had to depend on *Rozvi* herbalists for their ailments as their own herbalists had no knowledge of the herbs found in the plateau. They were

involved, albeit on a small scale, in barter-trade with the people living in and around the Ndebele sphere of influence.

Like other parts of Southern Africa the plateau was at this time inundated by Christian missionaries who were working amongst the people. Until the late 1870s the whites found on the plateau were largely missionaries and hunters. In the late 1880s politically motivated Europeans infiltrated the plateau. After two major wars the Ndebeles had waged against the Europeans they were subdued and forced to endure European administration. This effective take over marked the end of Ndebele pre-colonial existence.

3.3 NDEBELE ORAL LITERATURE. THE *INKONDLO*² AND *INGANEKWANE*³ CULTURE.

When one discusses Ndebele orature one finds that it is difficult to talk of Ndebele oral literature per se especially since it has been agreed beforehand that the Ndebele people are actually a combination of various language groups. It has to be understood that what is termed Ndebele oral art could actually be a combination of different aspects of this genre from the different subgroups making the tribe.

Ndebele orature embraces various elements like *Inkondlo*, song and dance and *inganekwane*. The basic characteristic of all these forms is that they are all performed art forms. My main interest is in the first and third forms mentioned above.

The Ndebele are an expressive people but typical of all African art their artistic genres are functionalist. They will sing and dance or make dance motions to the rhythm of the work they are engaged in as they till their land, as they harvest their crops and as they thresh their corn. At the same time they will engage in praise poetry recital performances to encourage each other in battles, in ritual gatherings, in the bedroom and even in criticism of a bad administration. The latter is the task of the King's official praise poet. The Ndebeles will also tell *inganekwane* to entertain, teach and warn the younger members of the group. I will discuss the two genres in turn.

3.3.1 INKONDLO/POETRY

Looking at Ndebele poetry one finds that it exists at different levels:

(a) At national level

There are two possible poets at this level. The first poet is the king himself as he performs ancestral veneration poetry. In such circumstances there is no need for a participating audience as this is actually a prayer for the protection of the nation. The king will be pleading for protection and other favours from the forefathers of the nation.

The second poet at this level is the King's official *imbongi* (praise poet). This status was a preserve of a particular family. As the King's poet

has got older a younger man from the family was chosen as an apprentice until such a time that the poet was too old to perform upon which time the apprentice would take over. During his term as an apprentice the young man is taught the history of the nation and the King. He was required to be the custodian of the nation's history. He had to be incorruptible but he still had to have a quick eye to see what was happening and a keen and sharp ear to hear all that was said. The poet was the people's mouthpiece to the king since he had the special licence and preserve to criticise the King in the process of singing the King's praise names.

At this level the poetry was a detailed outline of the nation's history. The praise poems of the King form a rich and crucial source of the history of the whole make up of the nation. The poetry was never just a poem - it was a true story. It was a never-ending story, the poem got longer and longer as the King lived and accomplished more and more victories. A few excerpts from Mzilikazi's praise poetry may illustrate this point clearer.

Oral history says that when Mzilikazi kept the spoils he had brought from a military campaign. Tshaka sent two regiments to attack Mzilikazi. The first one failed but the second one succeeded with the help of Tshaka's spies. Mzilikazi suffered heavy losses in terms of human lives and livestock. When the second regiment retreated they were of the belief that Mzilikazi was completely defeated, never to rise again. Even though he had been defeated Mzilikazi still intended to carry on with his pursuits.

Fleeing from Tshaka's attack at Ngome, Mzilikazi went west where he encountered Nyokana whom he subsequently defeated. It was after this victory that his praise poet said of him:

...the moon the Zulus thought was in its last quarter Yet it was
a new moon in its first quarter. It was a new moon through
Nyokana of Mpeyana

Inyang' abath' ifil' uZulu kant' ithwasile
lthwase ngoNyokana kaMpeyana (Sibanda in Nyathi 1994:49).

Historically this could have been around 1821.

According to Cobbing in Phimister (1976) when Gundwane arrived on the Zimbabwean plateau he set up his capital at Gibixhegu and when by 1839 the group had still not heard news of the King, Gundwane and the other chiefs installed Nkulumane the heir apparent King. When the news reached the King he travelled to Gibixhegu to punish the chiefs. Many chiefs were killed and in the process new praises were added to the King's praise names. The names were hinting at the King's invincibility as the poet said:

... the grass grows tall in Mahalihali
It shall never dry up,
the year it dries up it
it shall dry up with

the loin skirts of men

... utshani bude beseMahalihali
Abutshi nakutsha
Bothi nyakana butshayo
Buyokutsha lemitsha yamadoda'
(Sibanda in Nyathi 1994:48).

It is interesting to note that this addition was in 1839 some eighteen years after the Nyokana incident of 1821.

(b) At regimental level

Prominent chiefs had their own poets who for the sake of observance protocol were relevant only in their regimental towns. The praises of the chief could be performed only before his troop and away from the King's *isigodlo*. Mbiko Masuku the rebel commander of the Zwangendaba regiment had his praises sung as follows:

... the klipspringer whose hooves
are rough from the mountainous terrain
You can never follow his tracks
... him who fought at Jingeni
Until Ndaleka perished
We are grateful to the sons of
Balakhulu of Langeni
Who protected him until the spears

the Lawu were bent.

...impungutshe emagegegege

ngokugegelel' izintaba

Umzila way' ungewulande

... Owazemb' oJingeni

kwanuk' umswane kaNdaleka

Sibong' amadodana kaBalakhulu waseLangeni

Abamsingatha ngezihlang' oJingweni

Imicibitsholo yamaLawu yapheca!

(Sibanda in Nyathi 1994:69).

It is important to note that the praise poems of royalty were not only on highlighting the strengths of a King's character. As stated earlier the poet took the chance to criticise the King. Excerpts from King Lobengula's praise poetry prove this.

... the eagle whose knees are red from

kneeling on the blood of his brothers.

You are cruel to the sons of your father

the King prefers strangers the King is

unkind to those of his father

'... ingqungqulu emadol' abomvu

ngokuguq' enazini labafowabo

Umubi kwabakayihlo

Inkos' ithand' ezizweni

Inkos' ilolaka

Hayile kwabakayihlo

(Nyathi 1994:107)

(c) At village level

This could be when the man of the home or the herd boy is addressing either the whole herd of cattle, one of the cows or the bull. The poetry is pastoral and while it is different in that it is addressing animals it is still performed as the poet would be using gestures and other body language in front of the herd. Once again the audience urges him on either verbally or simply by clapping their hands. Usually most such poems address the cows in the herd as these are believed to be the ones nurturing the whole herd. It is therefore not surprising that one finds poems like this one below:

... You are beautiful Jolikazi;
You are well attired Jolikazi;
You have the dignity of a human being
Cry out old maiden,
The children are awaiting you,
You maiden who will not age,
The other maidens will age
Do you think MaNdiweni was this beautiful
in her youth?

Umuhle we Jolikazi
Ugqiz' uphelele, Jolikazi
Ulesithunzi somuntu
Khala, ntomb' endala

Bakulindel' abantwana
Wena ntomb' engaguqiyo
Ezinye ziguqa
Uth' uMaNdiweni ebutsheni bakhe
Wayemuhle kangaka?
(Sithole 1956:24)

A poem like this one gives a clear picture of the attachment existent between man and his herd. It marks a deep-seated appreciation of the value of the cow to the whole family.

Poetry at village level could also be the clan names of a particular family. Usually this kind of poem only focuses on the positive aspects of the family. This is more so because the praises are sung by the family members themselves. The following is an excerpt from the praise names of the Sibanda clan:

Male lion !
The one who roars
The one who stands unperturbed
You who roared and men ran
around in confusion!
Scrunch! Did you hear that!

Dawuduna!
Bhonga
Jamela

Wen' owabhong' amadod' atatazela!
Bhubhunu!, Zwana ke!
(Sigogo interview 1997)

Such a poem could have been performed as a gesture of respect or an expression of gratitude for favours done.

(d) Intimate level

According to Sigogo (1997) there was love poetry which spouses used to perform for each other. It existed within the confines of the couple's sleeping hut. Like the other types, it was designed to serve a particular purpose.

Largely at this level the poetry could exist as clan names used by couples in lovemaking. Traditional African culture does not encourage a free expression of emotions by women. Intimate poetry was therefore the only way a woman would express her joys and expectations of her man's potency.

Because talking about sex is a taboo subject in Ndebele there is no published intimate poetry. It exists as an open secret, where while everyone knows of its existence, no one has ever had the nerve to have it published. However, there are some clan names with sexual innuendoes (by Ndebele standards), for instance the Matshazi clan names include:

You Sojambo are beautiful
your beauty even extends to your thighs.

Wena Sojambo omuhle lasemlenzeni.

This is all Ndebele poetry can admit to in expressing an appreciation of sexuality. On the other hand, Shona poets do not seem to suffer the cultural censorship Ndebele poets have imposed upon themselves. In 1978 the Oxford University Press published an intimate poem composed by Aaron Hodza. Part of the poem reads:

That's it lion!
I am getting more excited
Do not scratch the surface
search the depth
That's it lion!
you have reached the soft spot.

Hekani Shumba!
Ndorohwa nebuka rinoomesa mitezo yangu soruware
Radzirai Shumba
Musanyenya muchiurura napamusoro,
Dzisai murove hwendedzo,
E-e Shumba!
Mazondibaya mbariro dzechityu
(Chiwome 1996:26).

The major setback is that such poetry is very contextual, once it is taken out of its context it becomes impossible to get the inspiration to compose. At the end of the day this could well be the reason a conservative people like the Ndebele find it even harder to commit the poetry to frozen form.

3.3.2 INGANEKWANE/FOLKTALE

There were two types of folk tales in Ndebele. It has often been argued that *ingano* is different from *inganekwane*. Apparently the difference lies in that while one is basically on human to human interactions the other can be human to animal or animal to animal interactions. In other words *ingano* is said to be based on proven facts while *inganekwane* is more fantastic imagination. I subscribe to the said differences and will therefore discuss the two types as separate entities.

(a) Ingano

As stated above this folk tale genre is based on facts either proven or generally observed as true by the community. As such the story may be told at any time of the year. The presence of a large audience is not necessarily a pre-requisite. Most times a single person can constitute an acceptable audience.

The story is told as a way of ensuring the transmission of the history of the tribe or clan. It is often told to someone whom the family

elders reckon is capable not only of keeping the history but also able to transmit it to the next generation in such a way that none of the important aspects of the family or tribe are forgotten. In this regard the genre was not intended for the children, it was a responsibility.

Unlike the other types of orature which are characteristically audience involving *ingano* does not necessarily require any participation from the listener. However, the listener is at liberty to ask questions relating to those aspects of the story he may not be clear on.

The story is usually characterised by space and time. It has very little, if any, direct speech be it monologue or dialogue. The story is likely to be biased in favours of the tribe, clan or family it is based on. Its ending is usually definite.

The stories usually focus on how a particular group settled in a certain area, the difficulties they faced and how these were solved. The ending is never the happy ever after type. The listener who is usually male is thus a custodian of the history and secrets of a particular group. It is to be noted that as a rule the narrator is male. Matters of the kingdom were a male preserve.

(b) **Inqanekwane**

This type is characterised by people to animals or animals to animals interactions. It is a performance and the "stage" has to be right for effective communication. Some of the stage props would include a

dark moonless night, a fire, and an attentive audience over and above a talented narrator who can cleverly exploit body language and differing voice intonations. The season has to be appropriate folktales may not be told before harvest is over. The narrator is always an old woman. Inganekwane is characterised by the opening remark, '*Kudala kwakukhona*, or, '*Kuthiwa kwakukhona*'- both meaning there once existed. This introduction adds a characteristic both mythical and mystical to the story. It also casts the narrator as one whose wisdom is unquestionable as she immediately assumes the position of a custodian of events which happened long ago. The other assumption which comes out is that the narrator is only a mouthpiece and therefore she may not be questioned on any un-plausible aspects of the story.

The stories all end the same way with the concluding remark, '*Yikho ukuphela kwayo*', or, '*Iphelela lapha*', both meaning this is its (story's) end.

Unlike *ingano*, *inganekwane* is audience involving as the audience anticipates through chanting rhymes, singing songs and at times through dances. The songs and chants are usually non-Ndebele being either *Karanga*, *Kalanga* or *Suthu*. Unlike in *Ingano* the audience of *inganekwane* does not have the liberty to interrupt the narrator by asking questions.

Generally *inganekwane* has not definite location of both the physical and the time settings. The narrator is able to evade all the possible questions on this aspect since the audience may not participate

through questions. The stories can be scary too. The target group is the younger members of the family. These stories seem to fill in the children the void which would be filled by proverbs in adults. The narrator is at liberty to lengthen the story or to cut it short as long as she feels her point has been or has not been driven home.

The nomenclature in inganekwane is characteristically particularist thus stories with names like:

Mahlakanipheni (the clever one) - for the hare

Sithuthandini (the stupid one) - for the baboon

Jim *Mahlakanipheni* (clever Jim)

Jim *Sithutha* (stupid Jim)

The end result is flat characters who never develop. The names in the stories are used to advance the narrator's point of view.

3.4 NOVELS FOCUSING ON THE PERIOD

There are at least six works of literature which focus on this period. These are the following:

1. Umvukela WamaNdebele (The Ndebele Rebellion) by Ndabaningi Sithole
2. Umthwakazi (Ndebele descendants) by Peter Mahlangu
3. Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni (King Solomon's Mines) by Nicholas Ndlukula

4. UMBiko KaMadlenya (Mbiko Son of Madlenya) by Mayford Sibanda
5. Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma (The Kidnap of Sukuzukuduma) by Geshom Khiyaza
6. Igugu LikaMthwakazi (The Treasure of the Ndebele) by Phathisa Nyathi

Umvukela WamaNdebele was the first to be published in Ndebele.

The original title : AmaNdebele KaMzilikazi (Mzilikazi's Ndebele) was changed as the authorities then felt it was too militaristic, fearing that it might incite readers to undesirable thoughts and behaviour. The alternative title was acceptable as it suited the aim of safe literature. The next work was Mahlangu's Mthwakazi in 1958.

Almost a decade later Ndhlukula produced Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni which was followed a year later by Sibanda's UMBiko ka Madlenya, this was subsequently followed by Khiyaza's Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma in 1979. Thirteen or more years later Nyathi produced Igugu LikaMthwakazi.

The chapter will focus on Umvukela WamaNdebele, UMBiko KaMadlenya, Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni and Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma. Umvukela WamaNdebele and UMBiko KaMadlenya are not outright fiction. They are fictionalised history. In both works the omnipresent narrator is at the very core of the thinking processes of the characters. Both authors enjoy the privilege of being privy to the character's unspoken emotional responses to the external

stimuli motivating their behaviour (Msimang 1996) One can not say the same of Mthwakazi and Iqugu LikaMthwakazi which was basically history texts. Actually the blurbs of both works hint that the intention is to make people aware of their true history. As a result, these two works are bound by historical facts with no latitude for the authors' imaginative genius.

The element of newness is absent and as a result the two authors can hardly be counted as novelists - they are historians who can only '... resort to conjecture based on external observable behaviour...' (Gikandi 1987:)

The third and fourth novels to be analysed are Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni and Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma. These two differ from the first two in that they are not historic accounts. Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma is in a class of its own as it comes out as an obvious inganekwane that has been committed to frozen form. Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni is peculiar in that it is not really an original text. It is a Ndebele translation of Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines.

Ndabaningi Sithole and Mayford Sibanda use the history of the Ndebele as a focus for the Ndebele way of life in pre-colonial times. The works stand at the intersection of non-fiction and fiction, drawing heavily from oral history sources. In looking at the two novels one is struck by the question of identity in relation to the authors. Are they custodians of Ndebele traditions or modern day historians cum politicians?

The narrative voice in Umvukela WamaNdebele presupposes an audience which has to be influenced or persuaded. Like Armah's⁴ narrator in Two Thousand Seasons the function of Sithole's narrator is '... to enable the envisaged audience to get its bearings, to achieve a sense of direction preparatory to the supreme task of reconstruction. (Gikandi 1987) While he may also be a self-conscious narrator, he is not found on the defensive about the part he is playing. The narrator asserts common truths while waging a rhetorical war against what he perceives to be distortion of Ndebele experience.

The opening lines of Umvukela WamaNdebele are a song dedicated to the memory of the fateful day when the Ndebele King Lobhengula disappeared while being pursued by white colonialists. On reading the novel one feels the implied presence of a verbal and historical antagonist either from students of modern history who may probably feel that the novel reduces the uprising to tribal level or from the camp of those who have deliberately distorted the history of the Ndebele people. The author quickly assumes the role of an authoritative guide having prior knowledge of the facts to be recreated. Once again like Armah's narrator Sithole's narrator also finds himself at the cross-roads of time '... behind him lie a thousand seasons of African experience before him lie a thousand seasons which promise great challenges, with the hope of a better future in the distance' (Gikandi 1987:21).

It is from this vantage position that Sithole's omnipresent narrator can incite with past experience, as in the song about the disappearance of the king, and revolutionise with reminders that kingdoms have arisen

and kingdoms have fallen by the same token of weapons. After their funereal song which apathy describes the defeat of the Ndebele the narrator has to arrive at ways to show that not all is lost with the disappearance of the king.

The narrator has taken it upon himself to convince the implied audience about the suicidal implications of their present predicament. Throughout the novel there is a cliché that is recurrent. The narrator says 'what are the three kingdoms that circumscribe the totality of the life of a Ndebele?' *Yiphi imibuso emithathu yempilo yamaNdebele?* (Sithole 1956:57). Apparently the question is rhetoric as it is not necessarily answered. At some instances the narrator simply uses it to emphasise the destruction of the Ndebele way of life. Sithole's point of departure is the reaffirmation of the close relationship between the people and their ancestral land. The rhetoric cliché of the totality of Ndebele life suggests this intimate relationship between man and land. The novel is characterised by beer drinking and dance - these are pointers of a contented lot whose granaries are full of grain. The narrator also draws distinctions between the historical movements of people within their region which he treats as movements to enhance unity and survival, and those movements he sees as a design to destroy. He does not acknowledge the arrival of white foreigners as a ripple effect of the same historical purposes which forced the Ndebele to flee Zululand. The later movement is seen as initiated by foreign interest whose desire is the fragmentation of black people.

By relating the Ndebele people's experiences to the needs and demands forced on them by their environment Sithole offers a rejoinder to the colonialist argument that the indigenous African people's movements have been motiveless (Gikandi 1987:22).

According to Sithole's narrator movement of people within their own orbit is natural hence such movements do not have repercussions like social alienation and disruption. This will mark the major difference between such movements and those encountered in the novel of today. Sithole's movements are more or less identical to those described by Laye's narrator as being '... an echo to the alternation of drought and rain (Gikandi 1987).

Unlike what would be the norm Sithole's pre-colonial past is not painted as perfect. The image of the way of life is not without flaws. What is of importance is the fact that the people themselves are able to resolve their own differences. The occasional disputes between a Nguni and a Hole are not treated as such but are resolved at individual level. The idyllic existence portrayed by the narrator subtly suggests that should any aspect of this existence be disrupted then foreign invaders must bear full responsibility. As a nationalist the author is acutely aware of the fact that there could be some sectors who could disagree with his way of thinking so he adopts the role of the traditional story teller using the rhetoric question technique to convince the imaginary audience supposedly listening to him. The narrator is heard asking:

Where is the heroism of the Ndebele?

Where is the heroism of yesteryear?
Where is the heroism which held the Boer by the beard
And sent him scurrying south?
Where is the heroism of the Ndebele?
The king disappears and nothing is done?

Buph'ubuqhawe bamaNdebele?
Buph'ubuqhawe bezolo na?
Buph'ubuqhawe bezolo na?
Obatshay'ibhunu labaleka?
Buph'ubuqhawe bezolo na?
Obabamb'ibhunu ngendevana?
Labuyel' ezansi lingasaboni?
Buph'ubuqhawe bamaNdebele?
Inkosi yanyamalala akwandaba zalutho! (Sithole 1956:23)

In conclusion to this performance the narrator laments'... pity the world,
... 'Maye, yek' umhlaba!' (Sithole 1956:23).

It is not mere coincidence that the narrator soliloquises in full heaving of people who have gathered for a common purpose - even if its drinking beer. At the back of the author's mind is an audience as the result that soliloquy is an appeal to the audience and subsequently the readers. This kind of narrative serves to remind the implied audience that while the story is set in past the people are still victims of their history. The technique could also assume '... agreement between the

narrator and his audience and some measure of empathy' (Gikandi 1987).

Years later Mayford Sibanda gives the Ndebele readers another historical account of the Ndebele pre-colonial past. The novel, UMBiko KaMadlenya, opens with a meeting of *indunas*, army generals and their troops to discuss the fate of the nation two years after the death of Mzilikazi. The novel gives an account of the pandemonium and resultant civil war which shrouds the Ndebele nation. A trusted army general and the late king's son-in-law Mbiko Masuku regiment refuse to recognise Lobhengula as heir apparent. Mbiko's bone of contention is the fact that Mkhithika have allowed the despised Holo to have equal say with Nguni's in matters of the state. The novel is characterised by innuendoes of negative tribalism as the narrator repeatedly stratifies characters according to their status in the Ndebele social hierarchy.

The work ends on a sad note with the death of Mbiko Masuku. The author could have carried the readers further by showing how the removal of the upstart Mbiko and his ilk improves or worsens the lives of the people. Mbiko as an individual should not be of importance, of greater significance should be the life of the whole group.

In looking at UMBiko KaMadlenya one can see the glaring difference between Sibanda's narrator and the narrator exploited by Sithole. A narrator is actually the life of a piece of writing. His position in relation to experience is central to the form, value and meaning of a historical novel or any other piece of writing for that matter. He is the '...link

between characters, their individualised experiences and the larger historical event being dramatised in the novel'. A narrator is the agent of particularisation and his narrative voice serves to link one event to the next. There are differences in the way Sithole and Sibanda have exploited the narrator.

The narrative voice in Sithole's work carries with it a vision and belief in an eventual unification of all Ndebele peoples for the purpose of fighting the enemy. This is symbolised by the frequency of well-attended ritual dance and poetry incidence in the novel. On the other hand Sibanda's narrator is content with the division rampant within the state. The narrator constantly refers to the character's position in the Ndebele state social hierarchy.

Sithole's act of remembrance is apparently characterised by the duality of a memory of a past of oneness and fears of an uncertain present. Sibanda lacks this trend. His narrator does not treat his characters like historic beings. His interest is in the one isolated incident which he has divorced from the mainstream history of the people. Sibanda's main character is rather elitist, pushed forward not forward for the love of the nation but for purely selfish motives. This element makes the trend different from that followed by Sithole who makes it clear that individuals are only relevant not as individuals but within a group. Mbiko Masuku will thus be seen as a symbol of a power which can be enhanced for the advancement of historical ends but he is a rebel against such power. His relevance in the novel is that of a character

whose personal feelings and grievances affect the future of the rest of the people.

The third novel looked at is Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma by Khiyaza. The work is fiction set in the pre-colonial times. It differs from the other two in that it is not historical, rather it leans towards the traditional Ndebele inganekwane. Other than the social, political and to an extent the cultural environment portrayed there is nothing historically true in the novel.

Due to the above characteristics of Khiyaza's work he is able to exploit the advantages of an omniscient narrator and direct speech without sacrificing the plausibility of the plot. The narrator is thus able to explore the general truths and myths of the period.

The work centres round a young prince who is abducted and enslaved by an enemy tribe. He is only able to retrace his steps when as an adult he has a visitation from his ancestors. Although the author does not mention it the readers can determine the identities of the two rival tribes.

The author has relied heavily on imagination which clearly fed by the inganekwane culture and imperial myths. The suspense, sensationalism and register exploited are all from inganekwane. The setting is characteristically one of mysticism and magic. It is thus not surprising when at the end of the novel the protagonist has a vision

where he is told that the feuding will come to an end when kneels men, the white birds of the sea rule over the land.

The fourth and final novel to be looked at is Ndlukula's Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni as stated earlier is a translation of Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. Ndlukula traces the journey undertaken by Allan Quatermain and his friends in search of King Solomon's Mines and George Curtis. With these men is an African, Mbopha, whose quest is a bid to reclaim the throne usurped by his uncle.

Ndlukula's work is in the first person narrative. The story is told by Khothamani (Allan Quatermain) who is a participant in the story. While the first person narration limits the point of view to what the first person narrator knows the implication is that the readers are presented with proven facts.

Like Khyaza's Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma, Sithole's work has a setting shrouded in mysticism and magic. There are a few geographically proven settings in the novel. One can only trace the journey from Thekwini in South Africa to Nyathi in Zimbabwe. Thenceforth the settings are characteristically enigmas. Khothamani, one of the characters says of the mountains of Kukuanaland 'when I looked at across the desert at the horizon all I could see were the misty bluish mountains, these were Suliman's mountains bordering Solomon's mines, ...*ngathi ngiphosa amehlo ngale kwenkangala ngabona into esayezana eliluhlaza ikhanya kancinyane, kanti yizo izintaba zikaSuliman* (Ndlukula 1970:15).

The narrator makes it clear that it is only the strong who can cross the foreboding desert. Khothamani and his white friends have a duty to find George Curtis, a responsibility of such magnitude can spur one on to hitherto untouched places. The question one asks is the plausibility of sane men risking their lives for knives. There is hardly a point in one having a good knife when one is dead, so the inclusion of guides whose payment will be good knives does not give much credit to the intelligence of the black Africans. The only black person whose participation in the search is purposeful is Mbopha albeit no one knows about his motive until the near end of the story. The other black people's participation seems to be without intelligent motive, unless the value of a blackman's life can be equated to the value of good hunting knife. The story teller says, 'We managed to get three people who would carry our water gourds because we promised them a reward of good hunting knives, *Saphumelela ukuthola abantu abathathu bokusithwalela izigxingi zethu zamanzi ngoba sibathembise ingqamu zokuzingela ezinhle* (Ndlukula 1970:28)

On getting to Kukuanaland Khothamani and his friends rid the otherwise beautiful land of the savage blood thirsty King Thwala, his equally evil son and the much feared magic practicing centurion Gagulu. Mbopha is able to reclaim his throne. Khothamani and his friends are not only able to tame the Kukuanas, they get the diamonds from king Solomon's mines. It would not have been true to a colonialist novel if the man had failed to find George, so true to form they are able to find George in the mountains as they retrace their steps to South

Africa. After an analysis of the four novels one wonders if the authors are aware of the extent of the influence of colonialism in their works.

The system does not content itself with the simple imposition of its rule upon the present and future of the dominated. It does not simply empty the brain of all content and form, it delves deeper, distorting and destroying the past of the oppressed. In the process, the people's pre-colonial history is devalued. The major effect of the devaluation of the people's past would be the native's belief that if the settler were to go back to his homeland the native would fall back into barbarism and bestiality (Moyana 1988). The state machinery of the colonial times does not leave anything to chance. All necessary steps are taken to attain the ultimate effect of convincing the colonised that the system is actually a philanthropic mission.

Works set in the pre-colonial era are seen as an attempt to promote the preservation of Ndebele tradition. While this could be a noble idea, against the backdrop of colonial education whose history syllabus started just before the advent of the occupation of the Zimbabwean plateau, the authors are ill equipped to tackle pre-colonial historical themes.

While Sithole's work may be credited for a politically mature stance one feels that the conclusion of the novel is a let down. The final sentence in Umvukela WamaNdebele has innuendoes of finality. This is counterproductive to the morale of a people who are faced with the task of having to claim their heritage through armed combat by ignoring some important historical facts the author makes a mockery of the

whole concept of liberation. According to Sithole it took one unarmed man to quell the deep-seated seething anger of the Ndebele people. Historically, Rhodes was with a party of other men and it took more than just one meeting to reach a conclusive agreement.

One feels that Sithole's title is a misnomer. The work is knitted around the 1896 *Imfazo* 1⁵ which was a Ndebele uprising against the imperialist administration. That being the case the uprising can not be termed a rebellion. Rebellion implies illegality, it implies a mutiny against legal forces. By whose standards can a national uprising be deemed illegal? If rebellion also implies a rejection of a lawful and set order then the 1896 war was not one since there was nothing lawful about Rhodes and his regime. In the light of this statement any people who rose against the imperialist forces were not being rebellious.

On the other hand, Sibanda's conclusion does not tell much, it does not carry the audience forward as the narrator has nothing to say after the death of Mbiko. He does not address the people in so far as the question of the life of the nation after the removal of an upstart element. In fact, the author unconsciously effectuates the imperialist tactic of divide and rule. It appears to have escaped the authors artistic genius that while his work is set in the pre-colonial past his target readership is made up of victims of the colonial system. Constant references to one's belonging to a particular social group reduces the novel to cheap politicking. At a time when Sibanda should be advocating the unity of all language groups against a common

adversary, he is found sacrificing a national cause for tribal sentiments. He seems to have preferred his tribe to his nation.

One feels both authors have not managed to link the lives of the characters to history. On one hand, the civil strife in UMBiko KaMadlenya is given as an isolated incident when it is in fact an eventuality of foreign influence in the nation's affairs. On the other hand, the causes of the 1896 uprising are artlessly given. Sithole does not treat the war as a result of the 1893 war of dispossession, he merely treats it as a mutinous attempt by a united people. These two novels can be interpreted as a mere manipulation of history by the elite to embrace colonialism. However it has to be appreciated that historical novels could have little room to manoeuvre as compared to outright fiction works.

Khiyaza's Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma has done little to give a realistic picture of the pre-colonial past.

On reading the novel one can almost feel the relief of the narrator when the character Sukuzukuduma has a vision where he is told that there are birds of the sea coming to put an end to the bad blood between the Sakade and the Tembula tribes. The intruding imperialists are not seen for what they are. The impression given is that these imperialists will put an end to tribalism. Is this not a failure by the author to appreciate the fact that it is the colonialists themselves who invented tribalism? Tribalism is the imperialists problem, it is as exotic as its inventors and therefore it is a problem to be solved by its perpetrators. In the process of solving this problem the imperialist should not be

confused for a humanitarian as there is hardly anything particularly philanthropic about correcting one's own errors.

The conclusion of Khiyaza's work leaves readers anxious about the future. The implication is that Africans can not solve their problems, there is need for a third force, an honest broker. At this point, Khiyaza's birds of the sea are at once seen as a force coming to restrain a fundamentally perverse lost from managing to commit suicide and from giving free reign to its evil instincts. The work sounds like an appeal to embrace a new and superior force.

In looking at Imigodi Yenkosi USolomoni one has to consider what could have compelled Rider Haggard to produce his own novel. According to the blurb of the novel it is the adventure story, Treasure Island, which inspired the writing of the novel King Solomon's Mines. There is nothing amiss about a white imperialist writing a thriller story of the expense of the dignity and pride of the black man. The disturbing thought is what could have prompted a black man to translate such a piece of work. One wonders if this could be an act of self-denigration.

The translation of the novel cuts across language barriers as those who can not read the English version get the story in their own language. It is as if Ndlukula wants to convince his people of their ignorance, their barbarism and their cannibalistic nature. He gives vivid accounts of the battle between Mbopha's men and Skalaga's troops. This battle is seen through the eyes of a whiteman who quickly dismisses the war as African barbarism.

It is interesting to note that it takes white foreigners to explain to the Kukuana people a natural phenomenon of an eclipse. The people had until then never experienced an eclipse. Like Gagulu, Thwala and Skalaga the absence of any knowledge of the eclipse are all fantastic creations of a fertile mind coined to express the extent of the blackman's savagery and ignorance. One wonders if the translation of the novel is not in fact effectuating the colonial myth that Africa was, before the arrival of European foreigners, a haunt of savages.

At another significant level the translation of the novel could be a means of exposing the white colonialists for what they are. Could this be a conscious effort of an inverted form of social criticism?

The reader takes the narrator as his work more so because the narrator swears that his story is true. He says '... I will tell the truth, nothing but the truth, ... *ngiyafunga ngithi ngizakhuluma iqiniso lodwa elingelalutho olungasiqiniso*' (Ndlukula 1970:1). In this regard Ndlukula could have aimed at exposing the foreigners' perverted point of view on Africans.

The author exposes the missionaries as vehicles of imperialism. In a letter written by Jose da Siliva when he was dying in a cave, it is mentioned that to get to the diamonds '... the troops would have to be accompanied by preachers as the Kukuana people practise magic, ... *kuzamele ukuthi impi iphelekezelwe ngabafundisi ngoba*

abeKukuwana ngabantu bemilingo' (Ndlukula 1970:8). Apparently the troops would have a licence to kill since the express advice is that Gagulu should be killed if the whites are to get diamonds. In that same breath da Saliva requests these same people to pray for his soul. This is a mockery of the white man's god who seems to have double standards.

It is apparent that black people are regarded as items to be used and discarded at will. In looking for locals to accompany them Khothamani wanted '... strong and faithful people who would defend ... should need arise, ...*sasifuna abantu abaqotho njalo abalezibindi, ababengasivikela aluba sekukubi'*(Ndlukula 1970:12). These were obviously men who would be willing to sacrifice their lives to save Khothamani and his friends. True enough Khiva and Fentifoli die doing exactly that. When Mbopha approaches Khothamani to offer his services in return for being allowed to join their party, he has to strip for a physical inspection. After being scrutinised and deemed fit Mbopha is allowed to join them. It is not his intelligence which qualifies him, rather it is his physique. This is reminiscent of the days of slavery.

Ndlukula's translation could be an attempt to expose the blatant exploitation of Africans by Europeans. The author is mocking the impression that since Africans could not use their wealth imperialism was not the moral sin that it is. The greatest mockery of European egocentricism is in the eclipse incidence, and how Khothamani uses the people's ignorance to his advantage. The whole work abounds with European misdirected egocentric stance vis-à-vis their relations

with the black folk. At this level one feels the translation could actually mark a certain level of socio-political maturity in the Ndebele authors.

After an analysis of the novels set in the pre-colonial past one wonders if the works are set to instil a culture of silence or they are simply a refusal to forget the past regardless of how it (the past) has been painted by the prevailing system.

Works on the pre-colonial era seem to be a celebration of African heritage. At one level the authors could be explained as celebrating the arrival of a new civilisation, one set to improve the lot of the indigenous African. At another level the works are sarcasm, a mockery of colonial attempts at emptying the heads of the colonised. The works are quests to the past. Authors are journeying to the past either to convince the people of the benefits of colonialism so that they embrace the system or to expose European egocentric myths as an appeal to the pride of the literature class of Africans.

3.5 THE INFLUENCE OF ORATURE IN THE NOVEL ON THE PRE-COLONIAL PAST

After analysing Ndebele orature and a few of the novels it becomes clear that the novel could well be an extension of the inganekwane. This is true of those novels which are based on the pre-colonial past. Whether the same assertion stands true for other novels or not remains to be seen in the next chapters.

For the purposes of this section the influence of orature is analysed at the level of those novels which are based on the era of orature in Zimbabwe. The following observations drawn from the comparison of the oral and the literary cultures demonstrate the influence the former has had on the latter.

3.5.1 THE LANGUAGE FACTOR

The language employed in *ingano* and *inganekwane* is different. *Ingano* is usually characterised by formal register like the language exploited in Umvukela WamaNdebele and UMBiko KaMadlenya. The two works fit in with *ingano* as they are the kind of stories told for the preservation and transmission of the people's history. The language exploited is traditional register found in proverbs and praise poems - genres usually targeted at the mature members of society.

The language employed in the two above is so unlike the language used by Khiyaza in Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma. Khiyaza's work is characterised by simple childlike register just like the simple language found in *inganekwane* whose target group was the children of the community.

3.5.2 THE PLOT BASED ON MYTH

This is characterised by the use of the impossible and highly exaggerated fantasies. This is especially true of Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma. The hero is made to be larger than life as he

survives under water. This is an exaggeration which even goes against the laws of human nature. The same protagonist's ability to communicate with the dead whom he never knew is a characteristic of *inganekwane* myths. He communicated with them in a language which he has never been exposed to. These are the people who tell him his identity and true to *inganekwane* form the most despised member of a community turns out to be a prince.

When one reads of the magic powers given to the protagonist one quickly sees a similarity between the novel and a particular Ndebele *inganekwane*. Sukuzukuduma can lick his spear to change into any animal of his choice. These supernatural powers are similar to those found in Hlakanyane in a certain folk tale. Hlakanyane is said to have been fleeing from his cannibal brothers-in-law when he gets to a flooded river. Realising that he could not cross the river he turned himself into a pebble. Meanwhile when the brothers-in-law get to the river they are frustrated that their prey has disappeared and they start picking pebbles and throwing them across the flooded river. One of the pebbles happens to be Hlakanyane. As the pebble lands on the ground across the river it changes back to Hlakanyane who then laughs at the folly of his brothers-in-law. In like manner Sukuzukuduma uses his magical powers to get his own way from his captors. The other works do not exploit this mythological factor as they are basically history texts.

3.5.3 USE OF SONGS

Traditional *inganekwane* are punctuated by songs. This is meant to capture the attention of the audience from the beginning of the story. The song will feature in the middle of the story to assure the narrator that her audience is still attentive and to wake up those of the audience who may have fallen asleep.

The song found in Umvukela WamaNdebele is used to the same effect. Most of the chapters are punctuated by the same song which keeps recurring. The song, '*Kudala Kwakungenje*', later becomes a protest song during the liberation struggle.

In Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma the protagonist sings just before and after the many visitations from his ancestors. In both cases the song is used for purposes similar to those of the song in the traditional folk tale which is to highlight the emotional state of the protagonist.

3.5.4 CONCLUSION OF NOVELS

The ending of a traditional folk tale carries undertones of finality. All the undesirable elements are removed from society as if to suggest that the solution lies in removing them. This is the same ending which has been exploited in Umvukela WamaNdebele and Ukuthuniwa KukaSukuzukuduma.

The final sentence in Umvukela WamaNdebele says, '...this is how Rhodes ended the Ndebele rebellion,... *Kwabe yikuphela komvukela wamaNdebele uqedwa nguRozi*'(Sithole 1956:60). The sentence

suggests finality, as if this was the end of the problems when historically the uprising marked the beginning of African resistance.

In Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma old King Mjaji orders the death of all his diviners whom he now realises lied to him. The widow of the diviner who was killed for telling the truth is rewarded. This is a way of ridding society of people of a dishonest nature on one had and promoting honesty on the other. However, the king himself has to be removed for failing to use his wise judgement in deciding on matters of national importance. In true inganekwane form King Mjaji dies in his sleep.

At this stage one would say that although there was no direct transition from oral to written literature, the former played an important role in shaping the latter.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOVELS OF THE COLONIAL ERA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

After the introduction of formal education for the Africans there was an apparent lack of readers for the mission scholars. To curb the shortage African scholars were encouraged to write novels which would then be used as readers in the few schools existing then.

To encourage literature in the two major languages the Literature Bureau introduced literary competitions. This saw an upsurge in the production of literary works with the period between the early sixties and the late seventies having some thirty-six Ndebele novels published. Other than just the prospect of a literary prize novel writing was seen as a way of promoting the African languages. The author could have seen this not only as a chance to celebrate the coming of the printed word but also as one to preserve African tradition in the face of an arrogant imperialist force. Until then works in indigenous languages were only short stories published in the African weekly papers of the time.

Most of the authors who operated during the colonial era were drawn from the ranks of teachers, preachers, clerks and other civil service offers. These were the people who made up the African middle class and their understanding and world view is likely to have been different

from that of the peasant and labouring classes who made up the majority of their readership.

4.2 FIRST GENERATION WRITERS

In 1958 David Ndoda produced what was to be one of the first novels to be published in Ndebele. The novel Uvusezindala (One who brings up past issues) is the story of the experiences of an illiterate young man who journeys to Goli in search of employment.

In his naivety Vusezindala realises that he has to earn a good wage to be able to look after the girl he has chosen to marry. However he fails to recognise the importance of his presence for the sustenance of the relationship.

While Vusezindala is in Goli his future father-in-law marries off his daughter to Banda a migrant labourer. Upon his return Vusezindala is infuriated. He convinces his former girlfriend Sithembize to help him kill Banda. The idea was that after killing Banda the two would run away to Goli to start a new life. Before they can start on the journey Vusezindala makes another demand on Sithembize. He asks her to kill her son. In a bid to prove her love for Vusezindala, Sithembize complies. She throws her infant son into the flooded river.

As soon as she has thrown her son into the river Vusezindala accuses her of being cold hearted and treacherous. He dissociates himself

from Sithembize asking her to go her own way as he can not live with a murderess.

At this juncture the author gives a vivid description of the terrain Sithembize traverses as she retraces her steps home. The flooded river she crosses is laden with logs and boulders. This could be a metaphor to express Sithembize's heavy and bleeding heart. The murders she has connived in committing are weighing heavily on her heart and her emotions are as tumultuous as the raging river. She breaks into a heart rending Christian song which is actually a confession of the sins she has committed. It is like a prayer, a cleansing ritual before she can give herself up to the law enforcing agents. It is at this stage that the white police catch up with her. Sithembize has to pay for her crimes in the hands of the faceless white police.

The author is, however, not as kind to Vusezindala. He is not given the chance to get to Goli to start all over, instead he commits another murder - this time it is his own life he takes.

Vusezindala has to die since his return to Goli and the subsequent starting over would have made a mockery of the colonial administration. Since he can not confess he has to die.

The author uses Vusezindala's death as a culmination of evil deeds while Sithembize's death is given as an expression of the mercies extended to sinners by the almighty. If Sithembize can find solace in a

death inflicted by a system why can't Vusezindala find the same in a death that is self-inflicted?

Peter Mahlangu's UNcagu kaMbena(Ncagu son of Mbena) is also knitted around the life of a young man who is also forced by circumstances to leave home. Ncagu's life becomes one of wondering as he tries to create distance between himself and his father's magical powers. To protect himself Ncagu religiously heeds his late grandfather's advice on the importance of ancestral veneration.

Ncagu's nomadic life stops when he settles at Mputshini, a mining village, miles away from his home. Ncagu's white superior notices his industrious nature and arranges that he be taken to Bulawayo for rudimentary skills training. On his return Ncagu is given an office, a big house and is generally set apart from fellow blacks. He becomes the mine owners' mouthpiece through whom the management communicates with the general labour force. As if physically setting him apart will not suffice Ncagu also spiritually and psychologically distances himself from his fellow blacks when he embraces the white man's religion.

At this time Ncagu has stopped ancestral veneration. However, unlike before his return from the city, this rejection of ancestral intervention has no ill effect on him. When he finally goes back to the rural areas to set up a home Ncagu is said to be a much better man than before he left as an illiterate boy. Not only is he educated, he is also a Christian.

He is said to have become an example of the perfect combination of Christianity and rural life for the black folk.

Ndabezinhle Sigogo is by far the most read of the first generation authors. In 1962 he produced USethi Ebukhweni Bakhe (Sethi at her place of betrothal) a novel which became a classic of the time.

The novel is set in rural Matabeleland. It centres around the love of two young people who come from different backgrounds. Sethi is a beautiful and virtuous girl who comes from a polygamous family which believes in ancestral worship. Her lover is Lizwi a learned young man who is the headmaster of the local school. Lizwi comes from a God fearing family of fairly literate people.

Life seems to be going well for Sethi and her family. Things change when Toki, a young brother of Sethi's father visits the family. Since the children do not know Toki, Ndlovu introduces him to his children. He tells the family that in case of his death Toki is the man who will be their father as per custom. He said to his family:

Look here my children, this is your father.
There is no one else who will be your
father after I die. I repeat, when I die here
is you father, he will look after you
just like I would have.

Bonanini lapha bantwabami ,nangu uyihlo

*Kakho omunye ozakuba nguyihlo aluba ngifile
Ngiyaphinda nxa ngingafa nangu uyihlo uzaligcina alahlulele
konke njengoba lami bengingenza (Sigogo 1972:18).*

Toki is envious of his brother's wealth. He decides to kill him. So when Ndlovu visits Toki at the farm where the latter is a labourer Toki takes the chance to poison his brother. After some time Toki takes over his brother's estate including the wives. He abuses everyone and gambles away his brother's wealth.

When the Ncubes (Lizwi's family) send a team to negotiate for marriage Toki sends them away. Instead he gives Sethi away to two of his former workmates. When Sethi gets to the place of her betrothal she commits suicide. Sethi's brothers are enraged by the news of her death and they kill the man who brought the sad news. Meantime when Sethi's mother hears of her daughter's death she also commits suicide. When Toki gets home in the evening Sethi's brothers proceed to kill him too. When Lizwi reads of the tragedy which befell the Ndlovu family he decides to join the priesthood. After a few months of running away from the law, Sethi's brothers are caught and sentenced to thirteen years in prison.

The last work to be looked at from the first generation is Isaac Mpofo's Wangithembisa Lami (1972)(You promised me too). The novel is set in rural Matabeleland. It centres around the life of a newly married couple whose happiness is dampened by the sudden reappearance of the

wife's ex-lover. The lover, Mlahlwa, claims that Solakele broke a promise she had made.

The story starts when Nyembezi and Solakele are getting married and the Minister is helping them through their marriage vows. The author seems interested in the vows as coming from Solakele and is hardly interested in Nyembezi's vows. The highlight of the marriage ceremony is Solakele's declaration when she says:

I, Solakele Ndlovu know no cause and see no reason that can stop me from being joined to Nyembezi in holy matrimony.

Mina Solakele kangisoli lutho,njalo kangiboni sithiyo sokuba ngingahlanganiswa loNyembezi ngomtshado ongcwele (Mpofu 1972:14).

A few months after the wedding Mlahlwa waits for Solakele at the well. He tells her that as far as he is concerned she is still his girlfriend. Solakele pleads with him in vain.

At this point the author goes back in time to give his readers Mlahlwa's background. He is born of a third wife in a polygamous setting. His mother is chased away from her matrimonial home because of her uncontrollable fits of jealousy. When she leaves she is pregnant with Mlahlwa who is later delivered at his maternal home. His mother becomes a prostitute and she runs away from home to the mining settlements. Mlahlwa grows up without any maternal love. As a youth

he works for the local mine owner. After an argument with his master's son Mlahiwa beats him up and leaving him for dead he flees to Goli.

It is when he is back home as a Goli returnee that he and Solakele fall in love. When Solakele's parents get to know of the relationship between their daughter and Mlahiwa they are very angry and they tell Solakele to stop the relationship as Goli returnees are not people to be trusted. Solakele tells Mlahiwa what her parents have said. When Mlahiwa asks her what she thinks of what her parents have said, Solakele says to him:

'It is only the refusal of elders Mlahiwa. Let us not terminate the relationship. As for me I will hold on to you and they will have to squash me on you like a tick'.

Yikwala kwabadala. Bazaze bavume. Asingayekelani;mina ngizanamathela kuwe njengomkhaza baphele bangipatshazele kuwe njengomkhaza(Mpofu 1972:53).

After some time Mlahiwa finds that his savings have been exhausted and he has to go to town to look for work. It is while he is in Bulawayo that Solakele meets and marries Nyembezi.

Mlahiwa refuses to accept that his former girlfriend now belongs to another. For several times he tries to kill Nyembezi but when he realises that he is not likely to win he decides to pester Solakele instead. When Solakele asks if it is the gifts he used to buy her which

he is bitter about Mlahlwa denies this. Solakele suggests that Mlahlwa should give her time to explain to her husband so that he gives her the money to repay all the cash and presents she received from Mlahlwa. To this Mlahlwa says:

What is so special about this one whom you call your husband.
I am also your husband, after all you promised me too.

*Lowo othi ngumkakho nguye onjani? Lami ngingumkakho.
Wangithembisa lami (Mpofu 1972:69).*

One day when Solakele goes to the shops one of Mlahlwa's boys spots her and he alerts Mlahlwa who then waylays her on the mountain. When Solakele gets to the place where he is hiding Mlahlwa jumps out of hiding and gives Solakele an ultimatum:

Choose beautiful maiden. Its either you remain here (on the mountain) as food for the lizards or you come with me and I throw you into the pleasures of Goli

*Kangikubambi ngamandla ntokazi. Zikhethela: sihambe manje
lokhu, loba usale usudliwa ngamagwababa entabeni lapha
(Mpofu 1972:69).*

As Mlahlwa says this he stoops to pick up his match box and while he is in that position Solakele seizes the chance to run away. Before she can get far Mlahlwa catches up with her and stabs her to death.

Nyembezi suspected from the beginning that it was Mlahlwa who had killed his wife. When his suspicions are confirmed he decides to avenge the murder of his wife. He waylays Mlahlwa and kills him. Nyembezi and his uncle who was helping him are eventually arrested and they are sentenced accordingly. The story ends when the Filabusi community has been freed of all forms of undesirable elements: Mlahlwa and his gang all die, Solakele the woman with a fickle nature dies and the law takes its toll on Nyembezi and his uncle.

The four novels outlined above were the classics of the generation. An analysis of the themes and the characterisation of the four novelists will give an idea of the operations of the six novelists who make the first generation of Ndebele authors.

4.3 THEMES AND CHARACTERISATION

The first generation authors are operating during the period of rapid social change which is accompanied by numerous emotional and psychological disturbances and as such they try to harmonise the conflicts their society is exposed to. They seem caught between traditionalism and modernity. Viet-Wild (1993) has called Sigogo an innovative traditionalist and I believe all the artists of this period can be called by the same name.

The most dominant theme is one of individualism versus tradition. This theme is complemented by the Christian ethical values the authors

seem to be propagating. These values then become sub-themes brought out in the fate met by the different characters.

The theme of individualism versus tradition is a contradiction which reflects the clash of concepts in the mind of the Africans. While they do embrace modernity these authors still give works which carry undertones of a desire to adhere to traditional customs. The authors' Christian education allows them to subscribe to individualism. Love relationships can no longer be the concern of the extended family. Here, the influence of Christian education is evident since Christianity frowns upon arranged marriages. Their characters are defined as individuals set apart from their surrounding. They are individuals left alone with their emotions and they are thus seemingly left to find their own way out of difficulties.

This could explain the many deaths which are found at the conclusion of most of these works. In UVusezindala, Vusezindala kills Banda before he commits suicide and Sithembize is hanged after she has killed her son. In Wangithembisa Lami, Solakele, Mlahlwa and most probably Nyembezi all die for their errors. In USethi Ebukhweni Bakhe, Sethi, Toki, MaTshuma and Antoni all die for their part in the plot of the story. In all these novels it is the main characters whose absences would affect the flow of the story who die.

It is also possible to see the deaths as a revelation of yet another theme - one of the lost is found motif. The aspect of being lost does not necessarily have to be literal. The character can be morally lost

and the issue is that ultimately the character has to be redeemed. Redemption is the aspect of being found and usually this is through physical death. Characteristically the protagonist has to be aware of his errors before he meets his redemption. In USethi Ebukhweni Bakhe, Toki is aware of the error of giving Sethi a husband as the two boys repeatedly tell him so as they beat him to death. In Wangithembisa Lami, Nyembezi makes Mlahlwa aware of his error before he kills him. The redemption comes when Mlahlwa pleads with Nyembezi in vain. When Sithembize is hanged in UVusezindala she has been made aware of her errors by the prison chaplain and death becomes her redemption. Together with this theme are such sub-themes as wealth (money) is the root of all evil and the wages of sin is death. It is for his brother's wealth that Toki commits the sin of murder. He gets the wage due him in his death. It is because of frustrations brought by the unsatisfied monetary need that Mlahlwa murders Solakele. Sithembize kills her son because of the prospects of a rich life in Goli. Like all of them she pays for it with her own death.

While they seem to adopt certain modern views these authors remain traditionalists at heart. This is manifest in the way they frown on what will represent modernity in their works. According to the authors the city is the deathbed of all morals and decency.

Most of the characters are shown as suffering from the conflicts brought about by social and economic changes in the family and the generally degenerating effects of the cash economy on traditional habits. Ndoda actually sets the tone of his novel by beginning with a

criticism of the modern version of *lobola*. The pre-occupation of these authors seems to be the effects of the cash economy on the black community. Again one gets the subtle Judaic connotations of money and wealth being the root of all evil. In UVusezindala, the protagonist's character changes when he becomes a Goli returnee. He is no longer the respectful young man he was before he went to Goli. The implication is that in order to get money Vusezindala's character had to be corrupted. In UNcagu kaMbena, when Ncagu gets to the city he becomes a petty thief. His character is re-established when he returns to the rural setting. This gives the works pastoral qualities as there are innuendoes of a rural set up as a custodian of positive morals.

One aspect which is striking as one reads these novels is the blatant male chauvinism found in the novels.

The roles of female characters are defined through the male characters. There are no female characters who are portrayed as legitimised individuals unless they are married.

When Ndlovu dies his wives remain single and as such when Toki takes over he is the one who passes all the rules of the homestead. The women are fearful of making decisions in their own home. When Toki refuses to open negotiations with the Ncubes all the women fail to stand up against him despite the fact that they know the Ncubes are a decent family. One of the wives, MaNkomo says:

What can we say Ndlovu? We are only women and we are looking up to you.

Singathini kambe thina singabafazi Ndlovu?, sikhangelele kuwe *thina* (Sigogo 1962:96).

In UVusezindala Sithembize does not seem to have a mind of her own. As a single girl she is in love with Vusezindala but she still accepts Banda's marriage proposal. After Banda has been killed she is told to kill her only child.

In Wangithembisa Lami, Solakele is feeling uncomfortable that all her young sisters are getting married before her. She hurriedly marries Nyembezi before amicably concluding matters with Mlahiwa. In the end it is the male world which castigates her as fickle and for this she dies through the hands of a male character.

Generally the female characters are sacrificed to make a moral statement. These females are patronised and as a result they cease to be real people in real circumstances. If there is a warning message to be put across this is done through the follies of female characters. If it is wrong for Solakele to be in love with two men, then it should be wrong for Mlahiwa to have the many girlfriends he is said to have been having. If it is wrong for Sithembize to accept Banda's proposal, then it was equally irresponsible for Vusezindala to stay away for so many years without communicating with his girlfriend.

One feels that the chauvinism found in the above works is exaggerated as it is apparently a deliberate ploy especially considering the names of the characters.

Generally the authors do not allow their characters to develop. Realism subscribes to realistic characters in realistic situations and the former is apparently lacking in the discussed novels. The characters are largely flat and pre-disposed to a certain behaviour by their names. A character with a particularised name is clearly morally born, they are not a historical being and they do not grow out of realistic circumstance.

In UVusezindala, the protagonist is Vusezindala (one who brings up past issues) and his girlfriend is Sithembize (holding onto nothing). The names of these two characters will dictate their behaviour in the story. In Wangithembisa Lami, the heroine is Solakele (blameworthy), her husband is Nyembezi (tears), while the jilted lover is Mlahlwa (outcast). The minister who marries Solakele and Nyembezi is Mfundisi Sola (Reverend Suspicious). In USethi Ebukhweni Bakhe, one of the brothers who murder Toki is Sigwebo (sentence) and he is the one who is sentenced for the crime while the other one, Mkhutshwa (the released one) is never apprehended.

The use of particularised names in the novel is a carry over from the folk tale culture where names of characters are used to advance the narrator's point of view.

4.4 SECOND GENERATION AUTHORS

At another level there are authors whose ages place them in the category of second generation authors. These are writers who were at one time pupils taught by most of the first generation authors. The major characteristic of second generation authors is that they are not necessarily mission school graduates. They belong to the first crop of African pupils to attend urban government schools. The other trait is the authors falling in this category went as far as General Certificate of Education Ordinary level and beyond in their schooling.

While they still come from the ranks of civil servants they are not church pastors and ministers. They are largely teachers who have possibly experienced the unequal funding forwarded by the government for the education of black and white pupils. The question is will this fact have a bearing on their works since their experiences differ from those of the first generation writers?

In the 1970's Barbara Makhalisa and Mthandazo Ngwenya produced novels outlining the plight of educated black women who are caught between tradition and modernism.

In Makhalisa's Umendo (Marriage), Gugu the heroine goes to Bulawayo in search of her husband who has clearly absolved himself of all responsibility towards his wife and two children. When Gugu gets to town she discovers that Ndaba, her husband, is keeping a mistress.

He does not hide the fact that his wife and children are not welcome in their matrimonial home.

When the children contract measles, Ndaba is very angry and he blames Gugu for the illness. Gugu suffers a lot of emotional stress as Ndaba insists on keeping his mistress in the house. Gugu is kicked out of the bedroom so she sleeps on the floor in the living room. Gugu's situation is worsened by the death of one of the children. When Ndaba gives Gugu money to go back to the rural areas until she is called for as tradition will have it, she secretly goes to a former schoolmate who is a nurse in Gwelo, with the hope that she could get a job. As things turn out the friend has moved to another town, however, she is able to stay with a male former schoolmate.

Eventually, before she has had to compromise her virtue, Gugu gets a job and is thus able to fend for herself and her daughter. Just when she has made a life for herself, her husband comes to her, ill and destitute. Gugu suspends the plans of terminating her marriage. This is not for long as Ndaba is fatally stabbed by a gang of drunken youths at a gambling school.

The disappearance of Ndaba's mistress and the death of an abusive spouse leave Gugu free to pursue a new life.

Makhalisa's work is characterised by rhetorical questions as Gugu questions what is seemingly the set order. Some of the questions Gugu asks are why Ndaba should forsake her for an unfaithful woman

of easy virtue, if God cares why should her son Ndumiso die when she has vested all her trust in God? Why should she suffer looking for a job when she has a full 'O' level certificate? This is a ploy to evoke thought and insight into the educated African woman's problems.

In 1978 Mthandazo Ngwenya produced the novel Ngitshilo Ngitshilo (I have said it and I mean it) a story of a young nurse, Nhlokotshiyane, whose parents refuse her to marry the man of her choice.

Nhlokotshiyane is a liberated woman who refuses to succumb to her father's bigotry and pressure to make her marry Mayihlome, a young man who has only fifth grade education to his name.

After the beating she received from her father Nhlokotshiyane goes to Bulawayo, buys herself a house and continues her affair with Johannes the man she is in love with. She continues working in the hospital until she has to attend to her father who has been taken ill and referred to the hospital in Bulawayo. She cares for him and he realises that his daughter is living in an environment which is different from that of her rural home. Finally he relents and Nhlokotshiyane is free to marry the man of her choice.

Like Gugu in Umendo, Nhlokotshiyane is not derogated because she continued to behave correctly, in the way single women are expected to behave. Both women could have cohabited but they do not. The two authors are sympathetic of their heroines. The two women fight

their wars as individuals without the help of a third force and they are rewarded for this. They are both set for happiness on their own terms.

In the late 70's two more novels on women were published. One was Geshom Khiyaza's Izimanga Ziyenzeka (Wonders do happen) and the other was Eunice Mthethwa's Kutheni?(What happened?) I shall outline them in turn.

Izimanga Ziyenzeka is centred around a young woman who finds herself a widow after the sudden death of her husband. She is left with an infant son in a foreign place as the couple had moved to Mzinyathini barely a month before the husband's death. After the funeral life goes back to normal for everyone else except the young widow and her son.

When she realises the burden of being a single parent in a foreign place the young widow abandons her son and flees to town. In town she joins her aunt Stella and the reader gets to know that the young widow's name is Eliza.

Back in Mzinyathini the infant is picked up by a small girl and her grandmother decides to adopt the boy. He is christened Bhekisipho.

When Bhekisipho grows up he decides to go to town to fend for his sister and his grandmother. Once in town he is taken up in the pleasures of the city. When at last he decides to go back home he finds that his grandmother has been dead for some time. In his disappointment he goes back to town.

In town he finds that his friend has a new girlfriend called Stella. The friend decides to 'fix' Stella's sister Eliza for Bhekisipho. When Eliza agrees to the suggestion the two start a lovers' relationship.

Eliza and Stella run a shebeen and all goes well until one day when two patrons fight. One is murdered and the police are called in. It is during the subsequent interrogations that Eliza realises that she has been co-habiting with her son.

In Kutheni the story centres around a young couple who move away from their parents' home after the in-laws accuse the girl of being barren. When the mother MaMthombeni discovers that Ntombi had faked pregnancy she suggests this to her son. Ntonga becomes angry accusing his mother of trying to separate him from his wife. At this the couple move away to town.

Once in town Ntombi neglects Ntonga and in the process she feeds him a love potion which would render him quiet and 'blind' to her exploits. Ntonga becomes very sick and Ntombi runs away with other men. Thieves break into the house and steal everything.

Ntonga manages to go back home to his parents. His parents attend to him and they discover that he has been fed a love potion by Ntombi. The parents get a traditional healer who 'fixes' Ntombi and in the early hours of one morning she finds herself sitting outside the hut she used to sleep in when she was still home with her husband. Ntombi's

parents are brought to court and they are found guilty of marrying off a daughter whom they knew was barren.

Ntonga's family's cattle are returned and he is able to marry another woman who bears him children.

4.5 THEMES AND CHARACTERISATION

The second generation authors are apparently pleading a case for Ndebele women. There are two motifs which are discernible in the works of this generation. I shall discuss these motifs in turn.

There is a clear descent and return motif which seems to exist largely at psychological level. Gugu and Nhlokotshiyane know where they want to go with their lives and thus the return is basically to self. Gugu makes a bold move away from her husband Ndaba and all that he stands for. She is determined to start a new life as a single parent. The men and women of the likes of Ndaba and Jenny are the rough terrain the heroine has to traverse as she struggles towards maturity.

On the other hand, Nhlokotshiyane risks everything in a bid to make a statement about her emotions for the man she loves. All the emotional stress pays off as in the end she is able to marry the man of her dreams.

One can not say the same of Eliza and Ntombi the semi literate women.

The women are typical rural bumpkins who move away from the familiar rural area to the city. It is on this aspect that one gets the second motif. While the circumstances that lead to their move into the urban centre are different these women share a common front in that they are both not salaried and their means of livelihood in the city lie outside themselves in the males who appreciate their bodies. After experiencing traumatic experiences both women move back to familiar environs. Once again the familiar environs need not be physical. The readers are not told what trauma Ntombi suffers all we are told is that she is 'fixed' by Ntonga's parents and she makes a physical come back. Meanwhile Eliza's traumatic experience lies in the psychological torture she suffers when she discovers that her long-standing boyfriend is actually her son.

For both women the experiences are like a cleansing ritual since the implication is that the forces of nature have been wronged. The redemption is meant to leave one a much wiser individual.

There is a general tendency in the thinking of second generation authors. They are oriented towards the upward mobility and social advancement of blacks. They give an outlook of a modern African pleading the case for monogamous marriages based on the free choice of an individual. There is a marked difference in the way characters have been portrayed between the first and second generation authors.

The one outstanding feature is the nomenclature of the characters who feature in the second generation novels. The names are non-particular and the characters are thus able to develop with the progression of the story. The characters found in the novel of the second generation are therefore more likely to be realistic portrayals of realistic situations.

The roles of feminine characters are defined in their own right. None of the characters is seemingly needing a man to be legitimised. While the backgrounds of the two pairs of women may be different, with one pair being educated and salaried and the other pair being semi-literate, there is one striking similarity. Both pairs of women are determined to meet life's challenges on their own terms. The semi-literate women are as determined as the literate ones to carve themselves a comfortable life in the city. The only difference is in the means the women employ to acquire the comfort they desire.

From the novels looked at it is apparent that the concerns of first generation writers were not the same with those of second generation authors.

When the first crop of African students graduated from the mission school they found themselves educated natives who, while being better than their fellow natives, are still not at the same economic, social and political levels with the white settlers. They find themselves in a class of their own, creating a buffer between the settlers and generality of the indigenous folk. They are alienated from their fellow

black people who misunderstand them and yet they still remain unacceptable in the settler community. Will the quest for the all-important acceptance into the better circle not make the literate African a perfect mouthpiece for the white imperialists?

The author is given a chance to celebrate the coming of the printed word by being encouraged to write scripts to promote Ndebele as a language. However this freedom, if this gesture may be so termed, is within limits. The settler regime is aware of the potential destruction of twentieth century ideas which can infect and mislead young minds.

The government of the day is aware of how literature can contribute towards the development of the downtrodden. In this regard, authors can only produce safe literature - literature which will not go against the system which produces it.

The Literature Bureau went to great lengths teaching authors how to produce good literature which usually gets the settler as the natural master and the black African as the natural servant. The author was called upon to create a climate where what is good for the master is good for the servant. However, realistically, such a situation is not possible in a climate where opportunities are determined by the colour of one's skin.

The propaganda indoctrinated in the authors while at the mission school leaves them without the ability to draw a line between official truth and a truthful depiction of reality. In a situation where mimicry is

likely to enable him to retain his new social status is the author not prone to content himself with effectuating the theories, contentions and myths, advanced by the government of the day. Through the education he has received, formally and non-formally, the author has made efforts in defiance of historical truth to fabricate the myth that Africans have always been in positions of servitude in relation to other races.

The main characters in the novels are portrayed as journeying from the reserve to an urban or peri-urban setting and back to the reserve. It does not seem to mean much to the author that while the African does make money in the city, he still does not get it. The African makes money not for the betterment of his own life but for the settler economy. In fact there are subtle suggestions that the African is better off without money as it seems to confuse him. The African is given as uncomfortable in wealth, in fact most characters seem to thrive in poverty. The characters depicted are not historical beings, they do not understand the journeys they embark on.

According to Ndoda and Mahlangu the Ndebele belongs to the reserves which are characterised by overcrowding and semi arid sandy soils. Such harsh and uninhabitable areas have been termed traditional settings by the imperialist government. The authors do not realise that reserves are a creation of colonialism, designed to trap and restrict the movement of the indigenous lot. To the authors the reserves stand for perfection and purity while the city represents everything bad. This is a myth the settler has exploited to convince the world of the sanity of the policy of separate development.

Instead of showing the readers the negative implications of the policy of separate development, which rendered the African in town a temporary resident with improvised conditions of living, the authors moralise. According to Professor Ngwabi Bhebe (1988:48), urban African life was casual and precarious, nourished by roots that went no deeper than the daily contingencies of living. It was to such a life that the rural Ndebele folks flocked in search of employment. Failure to find jobs and accommodation forced many to enter into quasi-marriages of varying degrees of permanency, or to try and make a living through commercialised vice centres, prostitution, illicit beer brewing and thieving.

There is an indication of mediocrity on the part of the authors in the way they portray an African character in town. The character is seemingly completely thrown off balance, destabilised and confused. He is given as a simple mind in the midst of sophistication. When Ncagu gets to Bulawayo he becomes a thief constantly in trouble with the police and yet when he gets back to the rural setting he is a respectable gentleman.

At a time when the African was to pay hut tax of 1sh 8d per month the average monthly wages found in Bulawayo and other centres were 2 pounds 14 sh to 2 pounds 14 sh 6 d without food and accommodation (Bhebe 1988). Brutal exploitation of this nature was likely to breed the undesirable elements found in the towns and other peri-urban places. The gambling schools in Mputshini and Vusezindala's petty thieving are

all ways of supplementing income. Authors have not acknowledged this fact - they have switched from economic issues to morals.

The authors have failed to acknowledge that the African is not thrown off balance by the sophistication of the settlers' town. It is the latter's lack of consideration for the welfare of the African which is to blame. It is not only the absence of decent accommodation which the African has to contend with, he also has to try and keep his head above the turbulent waters of the domestication of the colonial process. Ndebele artists seem to ignore these socio-historical economics of the urban African.

Action and character plots often end with the return to the rural home thus circumscribing Ndebele society to peasantry. In UNCAGU KAMBENA, Ncagu is not developed as a learned supervisor lest he becomes a manager, a position reserved for whites, so he is made to go back to the rural areas.

First generation Ndebele novels abound with Judaic truisms of the prodigal son. A character's physical home coming is the moralisation of the author. The idea is that the deviant has been defeated. This conforms to colonial labour policies. While still in the rural areas a character will visualise the city as a possible eldorado which could improve his life. When he does get to town he finds that the town is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. It is a world without spaciousness, a crouching village wallowing in the mire. The scenario is usually of drunk people leading loose lives (Fanon:1985). This is the

typical town of the colonised people. These people envy the white men's town which is still in the same city with their own 'town'. This other town is brightly lit, strongly built, well fed and generally easy going. It is characterised by spaciousness (Fanon 1985). When the characters look at this other town they forget that they are historical beings. They have this strong belief in fatality. The cause of misfortune and poverty is attributed to God as if to suggest that there is truth in the myth of black inferiority being sanctioned by God.

The first generation Ndebele novels portray a stereotypical white person who always appears to save the African from hostile situations. After performing such a noble act the character recedes into the background never to be heard of again. This character is usually viewed with awe by black characters - he is always a hero. The narrator in the novel will usually give a point of view which expresses an admiration for whites who are always in the right. White characters are portrayed as being in positions of authority over black people who are usually appreciative and proud of the white person's stern characteristics.

Looking at the second generation authors one delineates a difference in the approach and stance they take when comparing them with the first generation authors.

These authors are operating as victims of the system hence the emotional pressure most of the characters are subjected to. While the authors enjoyed better education facilities than those in the first

generation they still experienced great financial problems for their education. These financial obstacles at times necessitated a situation where the whole family had to step in to help secure an education for the child. Under such circumstances usually the male child was preferred to a female one. This put a strain on the beneficiary hence characters like Gugu and Nhlokotshiyane finding themselves sacrificed. This is more so because these are females who are generally considered visitors in their homes as they will eventually get married and move away.

The voice that comes out clearly in the works of the second generation authors is one of stress and despondency. In reading the works of these authors one feels the effects of acculturation. The schools of the time were instrumental in changing and moulding the ideas and attitudes of the pupils who came under their influence.

The shift in the political stability of the time had visible effects in the literature of the period.

While at one time the Ndebele novel could have been faithfully serving the interests of the colonial regime the birth of African nationalism saw a shift with the first generation writers being replaced by a new, younger breed of authors who found themselves victims of the same system embraced by their predecessors.

There is no direct rejection of the status quo otherwise these second generation works could never have been published. The younger

authors are able to exploit Mambo Press, a publishing house belonging to the Catholic Church. Unlike the overtly prescriptive Literature Bureau, Mambo Press did not have hard and fast rules although the subject of politics in novels was also not permissible.

Makhalisa and Ngwenya discuss an issue which until then has not been touched by any author. They seem to question the status accorded to black women, especially the literate black women. Those authors are possibly products of schools where there were female white teachers. They thus base their argument on the rejection of the notion that black women are merely vessels designed for child bearing only, a lot with very little, if any, ambition at all. The works could be an acknowledgement of the potential vested in black women by their ability to fend for their families regardless of the prevailing socio-economic conditions. All the novels are characterised by non conformity. Religion is not necessarily a pre-requisite to any aspect of life, it is an individual issue. For this reason both the morally upright and decadent characters are allowed happiness in their lives. Christians and non Christians suffer alike. Like the authors, the characters seem conscious of their status as historical beings.

There are two voices discernible in the Ndebele novel of the colonial era.

The first generation writers seem to have been preoccupied with pacifism and brotherhood of whites. This could be a result of the mission education they received. These schools were designed to be

cultural green houses in which a crop of African colonialist enthusiasts were fed on moral idealism before they were released into the world to preach the same.

Their works openly pander to the supremacy of European settlers and their system, exploiting the missionary and traditional strategies of patronisation and persuasion.

While the first generation authors wrote out of reflection, with a desire to impart the seemingly desirable education of the mission school, or an attempt to teach the people about their history and culture, it was different with the younger authors.

For the second generation authors, writing seems to have been an urge to vent out pent up emotion, a means to contain an existential crisis. They are questioning the system under which they operate thereby challenging their readers to do the same.

The voice of the first generation writers is an appeal for acceptance and identification with a "g2eign culture. On the other hand the second generation authors make conscious efforts to avoid any association with foreign ideology per se.

Unlike those found in the works of the first generation writers, the journeys found in the novels by the second generation authors are not necessarily physical. They are characteristically quests for a better understanding of one's place within a system. In spite of these

differences there is no denying that both generations of literary works leave a mark on the map charting the course of the development of the Ndebele novel.

CHAPTER FIVE

NOVELS OF THE POST COLONIAL ERA

5.1 LITERARY DEVELOPMENT

Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980 after a war which protracted for almost two decades. With political independence came several changes on both the social and economic fronts.

Political leaders urged the people to take a conciliatory stance towards each other irrespective of colour or creed. The leadership promised amongst other things: free education, free health facilities and black economic empowerment. They appeared determined to effect the war time slogans.

The period was characterised by anxieties, expectations and impatience as people awaited the demystification of the independence Pandora box. Each person nursed his own expectations of independence, depending on the individual's view of the war itself. This saw the birth of new slogans which carried a lot of promises for the people. The promises in turn created a new culture of self and myth making. To the bourgeois leadership the war was a pressure mechanism to weaken the intransigence of the settler regime vis-à-vis the majority rule. For the general ordinary black folk the war had expressed the desire to achieve national self determination and full democratic rights. To these simple folk independence was

synonymous with good land while to the educated black people it meant well paying jobs which were previously a white preserve, freedom of all sorts press, speech, association and a general display of democratic transparency.

Different social classes celebrated independence in their own peculiar ways. The educated took the chance to improve their academic qualifications as evident from the sudden upsurge in enrolment at the country's University and other tertiary institutions. The simple folk took the chance to move into white farms, setting up homes and clearing out large pieces of land for cultivation. Later these people are called illegal settlers and they are driven to resettlement areas, places which are basically glorified Tribal Trust Lands.

Two years after independence the nation was thrown into civil turmoil as a few members of one of the armed wings of the struggle go back to the bush demanding an equitable distribution of the national resources. One part of the country felt left out in the development issues and generally segregated against because of tribal differences. There was a rift amongst the leadership as the affected part of the country became a forgotten region as all funds for development were exhausted on one region.

A state of emergency was declared in the affected region and its grand entrance was characterised by the disappearance of prominent political figures, popular artists and thousands of ordinary folk. Once again a new culture was born - a culture of fear and insecurity. At this point the

freedoms of speech, press and association become a blur illusion in the affected region. It is only some five years later, after the Unity Accord between the two major political parties that the region enjoys a semblance of peace and calm. Such is the socio-political background the independent Zimbabwe Ndebele novels obtain from.

In the literary arena independence is celebrated through fiction depicting the war of liberation. This gives the authors a chance to contribute towards the mainstream history of the nation albeit in retrospect. The novel seems to have suffered as a result of the civil turmoil experienced. As a result there is a void, a period of silence in the development of post colonial Ndebele literature. After this silence the excitement of independence wanes as the country becomes more and more entrenched in the economic warfare.

5.2 NOVELS OF THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

For the purposes of this section independence novels will refer to those works based on the themes of war and independence. I will discuss at least four, two produced just after independence and the other two will be from those works produced just after the signing of the Unity Accord.

Immediately after the attainment of independence the Literature Bureau which by now is manned by blacks made an appeal to artists, young and old, to produce literary works on the war of liberation and independence. The result of this appeal was the Literature Bureau

edited Izigigaba Zempi Yenkululeko (The disasters of the liberation war), which becomes a classic of the time and Robert Mele's Impi (War).

Izigigaba Zempi Yenkululeko is a collection of about thirty short stories as different authors make a concerted effort to record events and incidences which characterised the war of liberation.

Being a collection of several stories it is not possible to look at all the individual contributions. However it is possible to delineate a trend. The works are restricted to episodic descriptions of gun battle between the Rhodesian armed forces and the freedom fighters. The interest of the authors is mainly in the manifestation of the guerillas' military might against their enemy. In the process there tends to be a mystification of the fighters and their weapons. This aspect appears to have been Mele's pre-occupation in Impi. Each of the nineteen chapters in Impi is an episode of an encounter so that one can hardly link the different chapters.

There is a conscious effort to deify that gun and as a result one is bound to see the two works as being a celebration of violence. The war is not seen as a process justified only as a practical intervention to negate anti-humanist trends, nor is shown as a creativity which takes society to the next stage. This stance has reduced the potentially serious war literature to adventure stories to be read for escapist purposes.

After the two novels above there is a lull in the production of political novels in Ndebele due to the unstable political situation in Matabeleland.

The year following the signing of the Unity Accord experienced a new but short lived type of novel. This is a situation peculiar to the Ndebele novel since the civil disturbances of the early 80s are experienced in Matabeleland. These disturbances provided the novelist with a topic to dwell on. One wonders if the coming in of this novel soon after the Unity Accord is merely coincidence or a glowing example of the restrictive nature of the politics of a neo-colonial African state. The theme is ushered in by new authors who have since withdrawn into an unknown background as they have not published any work after the novels in question.

Unlike the authors who have gone before them Ezekiel Hleza and David Magagula show how the same gun that won the people independence has been used to negate the same people's freedom. The gun is no longer a weapon of peace but one of destruction. These are a new breed of Ndebele authors who experienced the war as either fighters or refugees in sympathetic neighbouring countries.

In his novel, Uyangisinda Lumhlaba(This world beats me), Ezekiel Hleza gives an account of how the peace prevailing at a place called Dlomodlomo is disrupted by a group of ex-freedom fighters turned bandits. They have been demobilised from the mainstream army and sent back to the village to live as ordinary civilians. With no formal

training in any trade, the demobilisation package is soon exhausted and the young men find themselves having to join the ranks of the unemployed. Thinking back on the promises made by their leaders they find that they have been used and conveniently discarded with. The conversation of these gangsters is characterised by innuendoes of dissatisfaction as the group terrorises the people in the area, looting and killing in the process. These are a group of young men who suddenly find that independence has nothing to offer them. They are depicted as being bent on enriching themselves in order to be like their war time superiors who are now wealthy.

Hleza uses flashback to expose the negative aspects of the war. The war is portrayed as having been used to settle petty jealousies and hatred amongst the ordinary folk. Bhekize, the local young man who was an active freedom fighter was able to use the gun and emotional blackmail to win the love of Noliwe whose boyfriend, an old time foe of Bhekize, is away in Zambia as a political refugee. After the war the boyfriend returns home as a learned young man having been able to use the war pursuits. The resultant social standing of Noliwe's now ex-boyfriend infuriates Bhekize who by now is a demobilised soldier. Poverty, an inferiority complex and bitterness lead Bhekize to retrieve the arms he hid during the war. He uses the prevailing situation of the inequitable distribution of national wealth as an excuse for his criminal activities.

Uyangisinda Lumhlaba is knitted around the falsity of the illusions created by slogans such as the 'year of the people's power.' The novel

depicts the suffering of starving, out of work, mentally deranged ex-freedom fighters. While those who are insane are helpless, the sane ones rely on their guns for livelihood. It is an account of a disappointing home coming. The sources of dissatisfaction are amongst others: democracy that has strings attached and the general unequal distribution of wealth. There are in the novel, undertones of a people who find themselves having to face problems they thought had been solved. Hleza's work gives vivid scenes of the murders of fellow villagers and describes in detail the theft of government food handouts and the general rampant embezzlement of government funds by ministers, members of parliament and all those whose hands can reach for the state coffers.

According to Hleza these were not opportunists who were out to make money. Apparently the stance they have taken is the last resort - all else had failed. The ex-fighters feel cheated and used. One character actually comments that since all else has failed the only thing is that they use guns to survive.

The inclusion of a character like Thuthani the mentally unstable ex-fighter in Hleza's work touches on a sensitive subject hitherto untouched by any novelist except Tsitsi Dangarembwa in Nervous Conditions which is written in the English medium. He deals with the war theme at a psychological level as he exposes how the system has invalidated war casualties banishing them to the rural areas without any form of rehabilitation. According to the novel, now that they have been used and done with, they are liabilities the state will not concern

itself with. The question of whether it is for the state to look after these people or not is another issue altogether.

While Hleza treats the dissident issue as a result of the shortcomings of the politics of an independent state, David Magagula the whole issue of dissidents is viewed as a problem in itself. The same people are treated as misdirected opportunists who use tribal differences to loot and plunder. According to Magagula these people are bent on destabilising the independence of the country.

Sasisemeveni (We were sitting on thorns) is largely episodes of wanton killing, the rape of defenceless women and dagga smoking sessions. Magagula shows how Dabulamagusu and his gang are used by an evil traditional healer to get human parts. All this they do in exchange for sacks full of dagga. The group apparently has no agenda and it does not surprise the reader when this group readily agrees to an amnesty. The author does not discuss the cause of the presence of these people.

It is interesting to note that both Hleza and Magagula make the gangsters reach a point of realisation, (be it a false realisation or otherwise), at the same level in the plots of their works. At a point in the novel when the reader expects to experience with the author the solving of a thorny issue the non-conformists are made to give up. One wonders why these people are made to simply surrender their weapons and join the mainstream. The question then is - is this all that can be done, are these problems as artificial as the authors have given

them? There is a danger here of interpreting this stance as implying that the system is perfect it is only the general masses who need to be chiselled to fit in.

For works discussing such a sensitive issue, especially considering the political atmosphere prevailing at the time, are the conclusions not an anti-climax?

5.3 THEMES AND CHARACTERISATION

There are two distinct themes which come out in the independence literature.

The first two novels are characterised by a celebratory stance. This celebration can be noticed in the way the authors give episodic accounts of the conquests of the guerrillas who are depicted as larger than life figures who are committed to the liberation of the masses.

These two works are committed to the Literature Bureau's plea of the production of works that celebrate independence. In the process of producing such works the authors fail to depict the true feelings of the people who participated in the war. The sacrifices and suffering of the peasants become under-represented in the celebration of counter violence.

The two works give characters who are flat and thus incapable of personal development. Unlike the characters found in the first generation colonial novel, the development of the character found in the war novel is not limited by his name. Rather, it is due to the authors desire to display the invincibility of the freedom fighter which dictates that the latter should never succumb to any form of human ills and flaws. The freedom fighter has to be above all the laws of nature. In the end one finds that the characterisation in the war novels resembles that found in the historical folk tale.

Looking at the other two works one finds a completely different stream of consciousness. There are two motifs which complement each other in the political novels produced after the unity accord. On the hand there is the quest motif as exploited to depict the struggle of the people of the disadvantaged region and on the other had one can discern innuendoes of what Kahari (1990) has termed the escape of self or the rescue of another motif.

The attainment of political freedom was meant to be a rescue from an oppressive system. However, the disenchanted guerillas, view this as a mere change of faces. Effectively the rescuers, represented by Mkhohlisi in Uyangisinda Lumhlaba and Mdaia in Sasisemeveni, have turned into new oppressors.

In the character Mkhohlisi, Hleza satirises the guerilla politician who after rescuing the people from colonial injustice finds himself doing the same things which were done by the imperialists much like G

Musengezi has done in his The Honourable MP. Mkhohlisi says to the people of his constituency:

Since you will vote me back into parliament these beautiful cars I am using will be yours for use when you go looking for your cattle in the bush

...njengoba lizahle lingivotele ngibuyele ephalamende izimota lezi ..sizabe sizisebesnzisa ukuyadinga inkomo egangeni (Hleza 1991:85)

Hleza recognises the fact that the rescue operation per se has not failed, rather it is the rescuers who have been corrupted by the system thus a character who is an incumbent independent MP says:

I do not believe our fallen heroes died so that people can embezzle state money and take all the best lands as personal farms while those whom they purport to represent (in parliament) die of hunger. I leave it to you to make a wise choice

...angithembi ukuthi amaqhawe ethu aleleyo emahlathini
...ayacabanga ukuthi kulabantu abathi bamele abantu bahuquluze iihlaba bathi ngamapulazi abo, kukanti labo abathi babamele behawula besifa ngendlala....khathesi ingqobe isikini ukuthi likhethe ... (Hleza 1991:87)

Magagula's Sasisemeveni does not seem to exploit this motif. His stance is apologetic throughout and his appeal is that the people themselves should understand the leadership, a notion which is in

opposition, a notion which is in opposition to that expressed by Hleza. Magagula's former freedom fighter sees nothing wrong with the system and he questions the existence of non-conformists.

Hleza's characters find themselves confronted by the mammoth task of fighting the challenges brought by political injustices. It is at this level that the author's work displays the quest motif. Apparently the quest exists at psychological level.

In a typical quest motif protagonists are overcome by forces which they are expected to cope with. They are confronted by challenges which symbolize the struggle towards maturity and wisdom.

There is something very striking about Hleza's quest motif. His protagonists perish in the 'line of duty'. As a result the quest has an unusual ending. However, it is of importance to note that Hleza's protagonists perish with integrity and new knowledge. Integrity becomes an issue here in so far as the non conformists stand firm on their conviction to the end. New knowledge is in the fact that before they meet their death they are afforded the realisation that the rhetoric of 'milk and honey for everyone' was a mere war time illusion, and that after political freedom the search for equality and a kind of freedom that is just becomes a side show.

While one finds characters who are real in Uyangisinda Lumhlaba and Sasisemeveni, (the latter only to a certain degree), the characters are sacrificed to make a political statement in the same way that the novel

of the colonial era has sacrificed its feminine characters to make a moral statement.

While I have no qualms about Magagula's nomenclature I find his characters still very trivial and unreal. They have no element of life in them and there can be no mistaking them for anything but a simple coinage of a mind which is not very imaginative. They are typical characters found in a typical thriller novel and their existence is limited only to the story. The character Nyathi is made to refuse to accept the presence of dissidents while another character John who holds a full "A" level school certificate is apparently content to be a peasant farmer. Such a careless oversight on the part of the author trivialises the characters.

Hleza's characters are given particular names and this limits their ability to develop since any development in the character would necessitate not only a change of name but it would also upset the plot of the story. He has given the leader of the non-conformists the name Bhekize (Hopeless) and the former refugee-cum-academic is called Dingilizwe (search for land). The inept Member of Parliament is called Mkhohlisi (impostor) while the mentally deranged former freedom fighter is Thuthani (move away).

With names so particular it becomes difficult for the author to give his characters room for development. He simply uses them to advance his plot. While I subscribe to the functional aspect of Ndebele

nomenclature I still feel Hleza could have given his characters non particular names if he had wanted realistic characters.

5.4 NOVELS OF THE POST INDEPENDENCE ERA

To date authors have not written on the ill fated economic structural adjustment programme which has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. After the dissident era, writers seem to continue along old story lines. They deal with the same sensibilities of domestic issues, narrow moralism, and to a certain extent colonial myths.

This section looks at the non-political novel of the post-independence era, at a time when neo-colonialisation is fully entrenched in Zimbabwe. There were two types of novels found in twenty or so publications of the time. Two novels are looked at each being representative of the type it falls under.

UMevisi (Mavis) by Jabulani Khumalo is set in Bulawayo and Gweru. The story centres around the life of a rural girl Mevisi who has enrolled for teacher training at a college in Bulawayo.

As a college student, Mevisi enjoys a relationship she has with Nkosana who is an apprentice in the city. Life goes on well for the lovers until Mevisi meets Deni the medical doctor. She falls in love with Deni and so terminates her relationship with Nkosana who does not really take the rejection kindly.

When Mevisi gets pregnant, she is expelled from college and she goes to Deni whom she expects will marry her. It comes as a shock to her when Deni tells her that he is a married man and his wife is furthering her studies abroad. Deni kicks her out and the latter finds herself with nowhere to go.

Mevisi finds herself having to go and face her parents as a jilted pregnant college dropout. Her father is very angry and accuses Mevisi of being selfish and insensitive. He tells her that as an only child, Mevisi had been looked upon as the one to up lift the family. Once again, Mevisi finds herself out in the cold as the father kicks her out of home.

She moves to the town of Gweru where she looks for employment. She is given accommodation by a girl who is a prostitute as Mevisi was to discover later. After failing to secure employment, Mevisi is forced into prostitution after the birth of her son.

Years later, her aged parents decide to look for her. When the mother finds her Mevisi is entrenched in prostitution, it is the only life she knows and consequently she refuses to go back home with her mother. This is the life she leads until she falls ill and dies of a sexually transmitted disease. Her parents take her son to the rural areas where he is said to have grown into a fine young man.

The second novel looked at is Eggie Makhali's Ukhethwe Yimi(I chose you).

Ukhethwe Yimi is set in rural Matabeleland. The story is knitted around the life of a Mafu family of Nguni descent. Mafu is a traditional Ndebele man who still measures a man's worth by the number of cattle he has. Mafu is also a staunch believer in the superiority of the *Zansi* people. Because of his love for cattle and his tribalistic tendencies, Mafu pledges his eldest daughter Buhle to Dlodlo whom is an old polygamist in exchange for a specified number of cattle.

After her primary education, Mafu is ready to marry off his daughter. It is only after the intervention of school authorities that Mafu relents. It takes more negotiations and persuasions for Mafu to allow Buhle to proceed to teacher training.

After training, Buhle has to work for sometime to pay back the loan the missionaries had for her education. It is while teaching at a primary school close to her home that she meets Nkosana Sibanda, a young man of *Hole* descent.

During one of the school holidays, Dlodlo sends a delegation asking for his wife. The cattle have already been paid and Mafu has to comply with Dlodlo's demand. On the morning Buhle is to leave for Dlodlo's village, she runs away to Mozambique. Dlodlo later sent messengers to Mafu explaining that he cannot marry Buhle anymore as she is educated and young.

Buhle is deported from Mozambique and the Zimbabwean police arrest her. Finally she is reunited with her family. A delegation is sent to Dlodlo pleading that he marries Buhle. Dlodlo is adamant and in despair, Mafu agrees to meet the Sibandas for marriage negotiations.

To date, authors have not written on the ill fated Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes which resulted in a wider gap between the affluent and the poor. After the works of the independence period, writers seem to continue along themes set in the colonial era. They deal with the sensibilities of the domestic issues and narrow moralism.

Khumalo's UMevisi is patterned along the lines of the rural bumpkin motif, especially considering that she moves from rural Gweru into the urban settlement. It is important to note that Mevisi is forced to move away from home, it is not her free choice. The author puts the final nail on the coffin when Deni refuses to accept her even after she has been kicked out of home. The author is not fair to Mevisi.

By closing all the possible avenues which the protagonist could have used to start life anew, the author makes Mevisi's problems permanent. Khumalo castigates the presence of young ladies like Mevisi but he says nothing about characters like Deni who are willing to use their money to lure financially vulnerable girls. Khumalo is repeating an old theme found in the novel of colonial times. He sacrifices Mevisi to make a moral statement so that when Mevisi dies, the readership feels that she has received her due. Such reasoning borders on narrow moralism on the part of the author. Khumalo's approach is immature

and renders potentially serious issues trivial works to be read for entertainment. This defeats novelistic practice as there is no lesson to be learnt.

Because Khumalo wants to make a moral statement, his are simple child people who are not afforded the chance to think a problem through. The protagonist is denied the opportunity to and it will appear as if she was doomed to die from the beginning. The readers are not given the background of the relationship between Mevisi and Nkosana so that they are able to appreciate Mevisi's behaviour.

Khumalo's stance is that he outrightly condemns prostitution and who practice it. He makes no comment about the men who buy these services offered by these women. The author does not look at the socio-economic forces which push people like Mevisi and Deliwe into prostitution. The author has created entertainment out of a tragedy of modern African history. Khumalo should have highlighted the factors which force a literate woman to find herself so desperate she has to sell her body for livelihood.

Makhalima, like Khumalo, continues the trend of dwelling on domestic issues whose validity is questionable. Makhalima appeals to her readership to back trek with her to that time in history of the Ndebele when the *Zansi* people were the *creme de la creme* of the tribe.

The relevance of this theme becomes questionable when one considers the socio-economic standing of the country. When peasants

and workers have so many problems, tribal identities become counter-productive. The sense of tribal identity the author is perpetrating could be fatal as it can prevent effective association to remedy ongoing community suffering. Makhalima should be seen working at breaking barriers which were created by colonialists and later fostered by History academics.

Makhalima's work is a celebration of a rather low form of development and a vain attempt to relive childhood. It is not likely to help the readers confront reality as the capacity of the people to sustain themselves cannot be retrieved by searching for past glory among themselves.

5.5 THEMES AND CHARACTERISATION

Looking at the novels of the post independent period, one finds that unlike the literatures of other languages in Zimbabwe, especially Shona, Ndebele literature does not seem to possess a single uniform voice. One particularly noticeable feature is that the literature suffers a period of slumber when there is no significant work published.

Unlike the voices of celebration and expectancy evident in Shona novels, Ndebele works seem to lack that zeal for a forward thrust. There is little evidence to show that the euphoria of independence which gripped other parts of the country spilling over to the literature from the same areas could have been experienced by Ndebele authors. The excitement of independence is conspicuously lacking in Ndebele literature.

Of the more than twenty publications of the period, no more than six are on the war itself- a theme which seems to have pre-occupied Shona literature for a whole decade. Even then the few available titles simply look at the war as episodic encounters between the freedom fighters and the Rhodesian soldiers.

The absence of a distinct artistic voice could be due to a number of reasons, the deciding factor being likely to be the socio-political atmosphere which prevailed in the particular part of the country for the first seven years of independence. Authors in the region could not enjoy the artistic freedom enjoyed by artists from other regions. While the Shona artists could have dwelt on political themes, Ndebele authors could not if the system was to safeguard its interests. As a result when the other literatures were developing, Ndebele literature remained in a state of dormancy as authors continued to dwell on prescribed themes.

Reminiscent of the colonial days, Ndebele authors of the independent era cannot dwell on politics. Once again there is fear of the might of the printed word on the part of the powers that be. The system could be aware of the fact that no literature can ever be apolitical and as such a socio-politically harassed artist cannot produce work that will be in favour of the system which causes him discomfort.

Due to the prescriptive nature of the government's Literature Bureau, there are no young authors who take up the challenge to write

immediately after independence. It is the old first and second generation authors who continue to produce consumer literature. The absence of young authors after independence could be a statement in it's own right. It could be that the third generation artists find nothing in the past to write about since the past is not part of their experience, or could it be a case of frustration and despondency? While the first and second generation writers can escape the present by going to the past, the third generation authors find that they are a part of the present, which they may not write about, and therefore they have nowhere to run to. At another level it is possible that the third generation authors are so revolutionary that if the system will not allow to write about what they see they will gladly put their pens down. These authors could be finding that independence is a depressing an historic stage as colonialism was. There is also the possibility that the continuation of over-subscribed themes is an inverted form of criticism- an appeal to journey to the past because the present has nothing to offer, now and in the future.

Looking back one discerns four stages in independent Zimbabwe literature. There is a short lived period when the literature is almost a part of the general excitement of independence. The period is brief being immediately substituted by a period of slumber when the province becomes an island in terms of literature due to political disturbances, reminiscent of Rhodesia during the years of economic sanctions. This second period is later replaced by a stage peculiar to Ndebele literature. The stage is characterised by some bold attempts by young and revolutionary authors who openly discuss the political

disturbances shrouding the region. To these artists the point of departure is the post-independence situation in Matabeleland- a situation of a wounded province. The works make little effort to hide the scathing sarcastic comments about the corrupt state machinery.

After this period the literature suffers another anti climax when its authors revert to old oversubscribed themes which make no reference to the present predicaments of the region and the country at large. The works resume to dwell on the evil nature of the women folk, detective stories patterned after the English detective novels, and tribal identities.

Considering the socio-economic atmosphere prevailing and the stance taken by the government one could come out with an interesting psychographic profile of the authors, most of whom are male. The most pronounced characteristic of most works is the treatment of the female characters. Why should the post independent artist treat his female character in a manner similar to the way the colonial artists portrayed the women folk in their works? If it was the oppressive political system which forced the man to turn to the physically weaker sex to legitimise himself as a man what is compelling the post colonial artist to use the female character to validate himself?

The years of silence automatically throw the literature a number of years back when compared to other literatures in the country. Under the prevailing atmosphere one wonders if the author will not find his work affected by the same forces which affected the novel on the colonial time.

At this point one needs to revisit the responsibilities of an artist. The present day writer is playing the role of the poet of the pre-colonial times. The poet was the only person licensed to criticise the king. The poet could have been the voice of the voiceless and it was a wise king who gave the poet's recital an intent ear. In like manner, as according to Aime Cesaire (in Ngara), it is the responsibility of the artist to be a positive critic in an independent state. This calls for a bold rejection of the status quo, it entails challenging the leadership to better administration in all aspects of their government.

If it would have been folly for the yesteryear poet to perpetually shower praise even in unbecoming circumstances, is it not a flaw on the part of the Ndebele author to fail to point out irregularities where there are?

Under the foregoing economic climate the poor people are willing to obtain jobs at below the going rate of pay. Those who fail to find employment survive as best as they could in the interstices of the ghetto economy. Vices like gambling and prostitution are habitual and theft is rife. Gangs modelled after the gangsters of Johannesburg rule the streets by night. These are Ndebele young men who have fallen victim to the government's policy of the economic structural adjustment and its failure to create employment. There seems to be an oversight on the part of Ndebele authors' view of these people. They are not treated as victims of uneven neo-capitalist development, nor are they treated as being at the receiving end of the government's failed economic policies. Authors simply dismiss these people as social

misfits who are the pathology of an otherwise healthy governing system.

The government's economic policies have brought frustrations and poverty which are manifest in the high incidences of murder and suicide. Spousal battering and child abuse and molestation are the order of the day. Men kill each other over negligible debts. Poverty has reduced men to destitution, they feel they are no longer in control as head of the families. Psychologically, the man will feel demeaned, his ego rejects this and to assure himself that he is still in charge he reacts to any small provocation violently. In the midst of the suffering he receives from the people's government the man's last resort is to defend his personality from those close to him. The victims of such a man are the women and children. Ndebele authors ignore this psychological aspect of their characters, in fact the characters do not seem to arise from the realistic economic climate of the country they obtain from.

During the war there were promises of redistribution of wealth, the land formerly owned by whites being passed on to the people. While the country's society was in transition to socialism the government was to provide the people with basic democratic rights. None of this has happened, instead the country has become fully entrenched in the Western camp as it systematically strengthens ties with imperialist countries. Frustration has been on the increase with the passing of years after independence. People feel betrayed, although there are a

few still hopeful that the government will provide them with land and improve their general conditions of living.

None of the authors have written on this, nor has any author written on the atrocities perpetrated by the Fifth Brigade in one part of the country. Instead of producing works that expose this characteristic of the state's independence authors revert to oversubscribed themes.

Proverbs and other verbal formulae which comprise more than fifty percent of the titles of modern fiction are used as titles of novels. They recur in the plots to reinforce an old moral, they are used to help readers increase awareness of their world. This defeats the goals of novelistic practice.

CHAPTER SIX

REALISM, RELEVANCE AND COMMITMENT IN THE NOVEL

This study has attempted to examine the growth pattern followed by the Ndebele novel from its nascence to date. This has involved an analysis of the forces and experiences which have shaped the literature.

Experiences and historicity are a prerequisite as basic ingredients to creative writing. The experience must be both psychical and imaginative. The novel is thus a graphic representation of an author's cognition of the world, aiming at exposing thoughts and feelings that reflect one's understanding of the world. The writer tries to recreate the world through images and words. From this definition Ndebele literature is an image of reality, it can not be merely art for art's sake. It is a functional part of the wider society for the sustenance of religious values, socialisation and writing is intrinsically a liberating act.

Like other modern African literatures Ndebele literature was born in a hostile milieu of colonial conquest with people being reduced to a wretched lot. Authors are compelled by their situations to write about the experiences of their people and, at times, their continent as a whole. Historically the experience in Africa is that of imperialism,

poverty, neo-colonialisation and numerous other evils which were imposed on Africa by outsiders.

The Ndebele writer has to sensitise society about the crucial issues of epoch, selecting and highlighting those aspects which should not elude anyone. He is thus to be the most sensitive mind in an era. His calling is such that he does not just recreate awareness and widen the readers' knowledge of their surrounding. He should also suggest ways and means of grappling with those problems that concern the majority of his people. In this regard a writer can not be a mere observer, he is a partaker and a recorder. Creative writing arises out of a desire to communicate this valued experience. The struggle should therefore be one of communicating successfully by describing adequately.

The tragedy of Ndebele literature lies in this area. The writers were, and they still are, a colonised lot both physically and mentally. They are thus largely an uncreative people who are castrated in their power to recreate and to transform the world. Both political systems seem to have reduced them to spectators and not re-creators. They have thus been led to adjust to the world, limiting their creative power.

There are two levels of consciousness discernible in the Ndebele novel.

There is that consciousness possessed by authors whose idea of their problem is always expressed in biological and survival terms. They do not seem to possess a historical sense and thus they are unable to see

the exploitative systems for what they are. They have internalised the culture of the exploitative systems as instruments of the oppressors (white and black).

Most of these authors fit in the first and third generations of writers. They share a common view in seeing themselves as world improvers. They write out of reflection to impart what they consider valued experience hence the public voice discernible in their works. Both generations make appeals to the readers to fit into the existing system. Artists succumb to a culture of fear- dwelling on safe literature as dictated by the political milieu they operate in. The works are largely characterised by a conspicuous disregard for reality. Instead they fall prey to old divide and rule tactic with tribe being preferred to the state and national issues.

The bread and butter issues which matter to the generality of the relationship of the readership seem insignificant to the authors. To them, all is ordained to be thus by divine forces. It is difficult to identify the economic climate the characters obtain from. The works are patterned along the plots followed by the traditional folk story and in the process the plausibility of the works is questionable. The state of the economy is not seen as having an effect on the characters. It is as if whatever vice they engage in is a result of a destructive instinct inherent in their being.

Commerce is positively depicted by both generations. The impression given is that none of the people are disadvantaged. The colonial

author has given the impression that is logically acceptable that the African has to go to town to get means of livelihood. The policy of separate development is accepted unquestioned by both generations thus characters journey to town for employment. One quickly delineates a myth that money is from the ruling class and if the people want money they have to work at closing the distance between themselves and those in power. It is not a question of appropriate professional training and merit.

According to the first and third generation authors black Africans belong to the rural places which are characterised by overcrowding and semi-arid sandy soils. Such harsh and uninhabitable areas have been termed traditional places by the imperialist settlers, a notion perpetrated by the people's government a century later. The authors fail to realise that reserves and resettlements are creations of the ruling class, designed to trap and restrict the movement of the people. These are places designed to render the people perpetual beneficiaries of government handouts, a situation which is conducive to a mass support for the leadership who are seemingly coming to the people's aid all the time. The rural areas are seen as representing perfection and virtue. The author is once again found wanting as he fails to expose this contention as an elitist myth which the colonial elite used to convince himself of the sanity of the unfair policy of separate development. It is the same myth the new government has used to convince itself of the logic of creating the emergent black elitist class which is European in everything except skin colour.

Instead of showing the reader the negative implications of the policy of separate development which renders the African in the work place a temporary resident with improvised conditions of living, the authors simply moralise. There is a grave oversight on the part of the authors - that of not treating the African as an historic figure, a casualty of a system that is unjust.

It is from such a consciousness that the pitfalls of African nationalism are best defined. Authors are looking at the world through the eyes of the leadership. They have internalised the exploitative culture and their quest seems to be one for greater association with the political powers. Such authors present characters as objects and not subjects of the historical process, as a result their characters are morally drawn and not historically born.

The first and third generation authors are characterised by excelling in language usage; embellishing over-trodden topics with proverbial lore and other figures of speech. They are celebrated by publishers for their language mastery as is evident on the blurbs of many novels. Although language does embody and is a vehicle for expressing cultural values, it is not the crucial generator and can not alone be relied upon to supply literary criteria. Such authors could be argued to be culture workers in a rather narrow sense of preserving the language in its conservative context. Even for this they win literary prizes and get prescribed in schools. They have nothing new to say and their quest is to preserve the language. They fail to appreciate that a search for language should also be a search for collective wisdom and

sensibility. It should be intended to blend the collective volition into harmony with the demands of social development. Relevant literature should develop along with social life (Furusa 1994).

The introduction of literary awards from the government Literature Bureau resulted in a literature revolution with editors enthusiastically recommending for publication mediocre scripts whose quality was rarely scrutinised. The replication of themes represents a point in the development of the novel at which the growth becomes quantitative rather than qualitative. At this level the first and third generation novels lag behind history if they are to be instruments of unravelling the supposed mysteries about history past and modern. The writers fall short of Rebeka Njagu's expectations of a contemporary creative writer when she asserts that:

African literature must communicate.... Writing that is mere intellectualism is not for a country that is full of social ills and miserable poverty. And when we consider that most African writing ends up in the schools where it is consumed for examination, African writers must make sure that they know their audience before they take up a pen to write. (Njagu 1990:106).

The implication here is not that there should be no works set in the past. My premise is that this rehabilitation of the past was a prerequisite step for the restoration of the Ndebele peoples' self-confidence - a stance necessary in fighting colonialism. However, the

stance gets to be counter productive when it becomes a retrospective fixation. At this point the third generation Ndebele novelist is found wanting as he seems to have forgotten that unlike the situation during the colonial era his contemporary society is no longer peasant with egalitarian values. He is dealing with a society in which conflicts between the different classes are developing. Unless he wakes up to the fact he will find that events have overtaken him, and he could find himself used by the systems '...as a liberal referee an interpreter, standing on the fence between the new men of power and the people'(Gugelberger 1985).

There are authors, like Ezekiel Hleza, whose works stand out, from the rest in the generation, as a milestone towards a genre of art which is not conscious of itself. He seems to mock the falsity of the pre-independence promises as he exposes how the noble intentions of the war are sacrificed by a few individuals. Hleza further shows his readers how the fighters of the true sense have been invalidated and sidelined by their civilian leadership. However, the author apparently loses his steam as he gravitates towards the official truth bound to please the leadership. He fails to explain the upsurge in crime and prostitution, instead he chooses to give such characters an unceremonious exit - they die in the process of plying their trade. This has become the nature of the Ndebele novel. The trend is to remove from society the non conformist elements. This is an escapist stance as the author is avoiding having to face, head on, the problem of the rehabilitation of such characters.

The death or any other form of unceremonious exit of social misfits or those who refuse to conform to the system is not the answer nor can it ever be a conclusion. In fact, it can only be the beginning. The stance an author takes towards such characters is the climax and focal point of a novel. The readership should not be denied the opportunity to experience the rehabilitation of such characters and the solution of the problems exposed in the novel. A stance short of this exposes the author as being afraid of his creative ability.

These authors are born of a system bent on blaming everyone around it for its own failures and in their quest for identification with the system, they adopt the same self-absolving attitude. The death of controversial characters is one way the author distances himself from the sensitive issues he will have raised in his novel. The author ends up sending the wrong message that being a non-conformer leads to death or other social frustrations - a clear pointer of the influence of the Christian religion with its Judaic truism of the prodigal son. One does not necessarily die or suffer because of one's refusal to conform to a system, any system, be it religious or political. Mevisi in UMevisi needs not die for being a prostitute just as the dissidents in Uyangisinda Lumhlaba do not need the death exit. There is no reason for these characters to be refused rehabilitation. Denial of such a rehabilitation constitutes the author's failure to confront history and reality. It is a grave weakness on both the author himself and the wider system which produces the literature.

The public voice characterising the first generation writers gives way to a private voice emanating from the works of the second generation authors.

For these authors the situation was desperate as they had seen the harsh racial discrimination and political oppression of the 1970s. Generally their works display no recognition of religion or other traditional norms. One clear characteristic is the absence of any reference to politics. This is a period of soul searching, an inward bound kind of examination.

These are authors who were educated at a time when females were becoming a common site in the classroom fighting it out in the academic field side by side with their male counterparts. The role of the traditional woman is in jeopardy as there seems to be a new trend of literate women being ushered in. The issue is that society is not yet ready for such females and as a result their endeavours are interpreted as either prostitution or a waywardness which is totally not African. The characters given are thus seen being caught up in conflicts which are both internal and external.

The second generation writers are ready for such characters. These characters do not face death sentences for daring to be different, instead they are rewarded with a chance to start a new life. The authors are aware of the economic ability of the black African woman. They are also aware of the colonial government's aim in treating the black woman as a perpetual minor who will constantly need to be

watched over and protected from her own seemingly destructive instinct. They see this stance for what it is - a move designed to curtail the economic advancement of the black woman. Probably these authors have experienced the strength of character and the sheer determination against all odds as displayed by their mothers as they struggled to bring them up single-handedly while the men were away as migrant labourers in the colonial towns and mining settlements.

The authors thus refuse to succumb to the colonial government's attempt to kill the productive spirit in the black woman. They have seen through the system and they refuse to bend. They are aware that the answer does not lie in the death nor the unceremonious exit of characters but in giving free reign to the black woman's productive genius. These authors are waging an economic war, however they realise that there has to be a victory of a private nature before the war is declared on a full scale, thus the private rhetoric voice characterising the works.

These are the elitist crop of blacks who attended the first government schools of the time. They are out of touch with the attitude of the world improvers and at the same time they are disappointed by the prevailing political system. Due to the sense of despair and isolation that they suffer during the United Nations imposed sanctions they anticipate class conflicts beyond the life-span of both the colonial and post colonial states. The consciousness displayed is probably inspired by the corruption of nationalism in independent African countries. They seem to distrust grassroots nationalist solutions and they raise issues

which transcend the contemporary problems they find themselves in. They are operating at a time when Rhodesia's economy is reeling under the effects of the sanctions declared on her by the United Nations thus their preoccupation with economic issues.

While the authors have not spelt out Rhodesia's economic problems they have confronted the problem and even gone further to suggest a possible solution. The same can not be said of the first and third generation authors. Not only have they failed to spell out the socio-economic problems of their time they also fail to give their readership an emancipatory perspective. Instead they have chosen to dwell on morals. A hungry man may not be ready to be addressed on issues of morals before his baser needs are met and satisfied.

The destiny of man can be likened to a journey towards the fulfilment of self realisation. The author has the task of transporting the reader from his predicament towards a point of realisation and deliverance. It is the duty of the author to contribute towards the development of the down trodden. Since literature neither grows nor develops in a vacuum the Ndebele novel should be seen to be given impetus, shape, direction and area of concern by the social, political and economic forces in society. The Ndebele novelist should allow the novel to grow from among the Ndebele people themselves.

The novel should show the Ndebele family life as affected by the harsh political repression of the different historical epochs the novel has travelled through. The reader should see in the novel the effects of the

struggle on the Ndebele family and the resultant violence in the home. The Ndebele novelist gets celebrated by the masses as a teacher of the people when he is ironically consolidating his own and his people's subjugation to colonialism and nationalism both of which can not operate to the advantage of the majority of the people.

Apparently it is no longer just the imperialist church based education which has influenced the quality of the novel. The corrupt tendencies prevalent in most independent African states have affected the novel in like manner. A piece of writing glorifying the leadership, papering over the cracks of the suffering of the ordinary peasant, totally ignoring all the negative -isms being practised is likely to be recommended for publication. The Curriculum Development Unit has further jeopardised the existence of authentic work by indirectly inhibiting the growth of the Ndebele novel.

Authors are not free of the political milieu and as a result they throw themselves into escapist and consumption literature. The politics of Africa is very inhibiting. There is a thin line between political propaganda and literary arts. While I subscribe to the fact that literature can never be apolitical, I believe that a country's whole literary arts should not be controlled by the politics prevailing. Literature should be allowed to transcend beyond the inhibitions of party politics. Artistic genius should flow freely beyond human corruption.

If the Ndebele novel is to be a true reflection of the socio-politico-economic struggles of the people, then the characters therein should

arise from typical historical situations. Characters should be historically born, but the situation in the Ndebele novel is such that the characters are morally drawn. While they do represent what would happen to people who are victims of any political system, they are not mirror images of reality. They should arise from a typical historical background and proceed beyond the limits of their existential reality to chart a way out of their predicament (Chiwome: unpublished paper on the Shona novelists' journey from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe).

A stance short of this means the Ndebele novelist has failed to satisfy the requirements of realism and commitment. The quality of characters presented and the irrelevant themes dealt with have rendered the novel a glorified folktale whose validity in modern times remains questionable.

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ENDNOTES

Chapter One

- ¹ F. Chung was the first Minister of Education in independent Zimbabwe.
- ² Huggins was a Prime Minister of colonial Rhodesia in the early sixties.
- ³ Todd succeeded Huggins as Prime Minister.

Chapter Two

- ¹ Clement Doke was a linguist. It was his interest in the African languages which earned him the invitation to the committee responsible for setting up an acceptable orthography of the Shona dialects in Southern Rhodesia.
- ² A novel whose plot is based on the unfair treatment of people of colour in America. It was written by Harper Lee.
- ³ Zimbabwe is geographically divided into 5 regions based on agricultural potential. Region 1 represents the best agriculturally viable land while Region 5 represents the low lying broken lands which are dry and not arable.
- ⁴ Five year programs introduced by the Mugabe government in a bid to improve the country's economy.
- ⁵ A splinter group of ZANU. It is the only opposition party which has managed to continually have parliamentary representation in the Mugabe government.

Chapter Three

- ¹ A system of loaning cattle to the poorer members of society.
- ² Traditional poetry which was performed at gatherings.
- ³ Traditional stories told to children for entertainment and instruction.
- ⁴ A novelist who wrote the novel Two Thousand Seasons.
- ⁵ The 1896 Ndebele uprising colonially called The Matabele Rebellion